

# **The Role of Social Forces in the Conversion of Kalash Community: A Case Study of Bumburait Valley, Pakistan**



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**2023**

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam  
University Islamabad, in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Mphil in Anthropology

**Department of Anthropology**  
**Quaid-i-Azam University**  
**Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**2023**

# QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY

(Department of Anthropology)

## Final Approval of Thesis

This is to certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Mr. Hamza Ali Shah. It is our judgment that this thesis is of sufficient standard to warrant its acceptance by the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad for the award of the Degree of M.Phil in Anthropology.

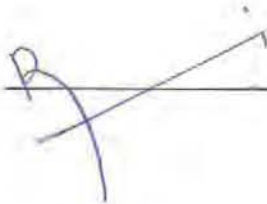
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## **DECLARATION**

I, Syed Hamza Ali Shah, hereby declare that the thesis entitled the role of social forces in the conversion of Kalash Community: A case study of Bumburait valley has not been previously submitted in this University or in any other University for any other purpose.

I also declare that neither a part of the work nor the whole of it has been published anywhere except the quotations and references which have been duly acknowledged in the concerned places.

I am solely responsible for this content of thesis, owning the sole copyrights of it.

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Syed Hamza Ali Shah

Islamabad, February 2023

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I have no words to express my deepest sense of gratitude to Almighty Allah, the Most Merciful, and the Most Beneficent, who bestowed upon me the courage and will to complete this project and contribute to the noble field of knowledge. Cordial gratitude to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) who is forever a torch of guidance and knowledge for humanity.

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to my honorable supervisor Dr Ikram Badshah who made this work possible. He provided me with an opportunity to work in the field of my interest and supported me in every way possible. His guidance and advice carried me through all the stages of writing my thesis. Dr Badshah's faith in me has led me to successfully complete this research in time. His critical insight, consistent advice and supervision, encouraged me to complete this huge task in time.

I would also like to express my appreciation and thanks to Dr. Inam Leghari, Dr. Aneela Sultana, Dr. Waqas Saleem, Dr. Rao Nadeem Alam for their exceptional teaching and guidance. Their dedication and support have played a significant role in shaping me into the person I am today. I am truly grateful for their wonderful influence on my life and academic journey. Thank you for being such inspiring educators.

I would like to express my deepest show gratitude to my parents, family and friends. Most importantly, I would like to mention my Aunt Ms. Rozina Tabassum and family friend Dr. A. Jalal Khan for their continuous support and love towards me.

Syed Hamza Ali Shah

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who were very supportive during my studies who motivated me to get education and gave me confidence to pursue field of my own interest.

## **ABSTRACT**

The present research study was conducted in Bumburait valley of district Chitral with the aim of documenting the role of social forces in the conversion of the Kalash community into other religions. Anthropological techniques and tools, including rapport building, participant observation, key informants, and interview guides, were employed to collect data from selected respondents. This study seeks to comprehend the role of social forces in influencing the religious conversion of the Kalash community.

Qualitative data from 20 individuals were collected using snowball sampling techniques, and personal interviews were conducted with local people. The research identified several key findings that shed light on the conversion dynamics within the community.

Firstly, the role of Tablighi Jamaat emerged as significant, particularly in parts of Kalash where they actively pursue the conversion of the community. Through mosque invitations and preaching, Tablighi Jamaat presents Islam as a sacred path leading to heaven, influencing some individuals to convert.

Secondly, the influx of Muslim tourists to all three valleys of Kalash has created connections with the local community, and exposure to their culture and festivals may lead to conversions among the tourists.

Another crucial finding highlights the impact of social media on the community. Once a remote area, Kalash is now accessible to various facilities, and high social media usage in the valley exposes the community to the outside world. This increased exposure fosters a desire among the youth to leave the harsh environment, leading to potential migration and religious conversion.

Economic and political factors were found to be influential in religious conversion as well. People may convert to Islam or Christianity to gain access to economic or political power, resources, or social opportunities.

Moreover, personal experiences play a significant role as a motivator for religious conversion. Profound spiritual experiences or finding answers to life's most profound questions in a religion may lead individuals to embrace that faith.

Lastly, the research observed that missionary work also acts as a social force influencing religious conversion. Missionaries may employ social pressure, incentives, or persuasion to convince people to convert to their religion.

The study highlights the significant role social forces play in the conversion of the Kalash community to accept different religions. These social forces interact with individual factors, such as personal beliefs and experiences, shaping the religious identity of individuals within the community.

**Key words:** Religion conversion, traditions, local environments, tourism, economic benefits, religious groups, modern technology.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The general culture of Pakistan a prominent preaching group (Tablighi Jama'at) is using all their influence to proselytize the follow of pagan religion such in Kalash valley of district Chitral.

Potential converts to Islam are reached through "people, institutions, or organizations" (Kazmi, 2016). These life tales are created for a particular audience, and they are meaningful, chronological (representing sequences of events), and essentially social (Elliott, 2005)

Various religious groups in Pakistan are growing in numbers and influence, including the Islahi Jamma'at who are dedicated to promoting Sufi concepts through a spiritual interpretation of Islamic principles, with a focus on the teachings of Sufi Saint Sultan Bahoo. The Ahl-e-Sunnat branch of Islam reveres the four Imams who collected and interpreted the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and apply these interpretations to Islamic principles. Shia adherents, on the other hand, have a hereditary belief in twelve pure Imams who were appointed to lead Muslims after Prophet Muhammad. Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, a prominent religious scholar, leads the Tehreek-e Minhajul Quran which aims to bring about significant political reforms.

A significant political party was established by Modudi and is called Jama'at-e-Islami.

A violent anti-Shia group affiliated with Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. The Tablighi Jama'at is a predominantly Sunni organization that derives its understanding of Islamic principles solely from the teachings of the Quran and the example set by Prophet "Muhammad" (S.A.W). Understandably, every branch of Islam strives to add to its numbers of adherents. Nevertheless, only the Tablighi Jama'at of these groups plans conversion/proselytizing missions to various locations both within and outside of the nation. The goal of Tablighi Jama'at adherents is to return Muslims to their core beliefs and win over non-Muslims. The best means for training someone to "religere," or to come together, is religion. The most typical meaning of a group of individuals sharing a certain identity. It is holy to "worship" in it. Spiritual area that establishes harmony and control in the sense of absolute vitality of people" is a common description of religion. Religion is a phenomenon that affects everyone. It has existed since the Stone Age and preliterate social behavior, a discursive form of spiritual belief, a persuasion in the existence of omnipotent civilizations. It is either consciously or unconsciously dominated by invincible supernatural creatures that

have complete power over people's actions in all aspects of life, act as a vital component of society, and uphold all moral and self-respecting values. Every member of society must participate in rituals in the same way as the high in order for the weak to live with the strong and the low to coexist. Total adherence and commitment to what has been revealed by the elders or mandated. Religion, like commandments, aids in creating a sense of collective identity. Traditions are passed down from one generation to the next (Talmage, 2012). It is often seen as a series of rituals that have been explained. It is said that this transfer affects the by myth's purity, which summons supernatural forces for the religion's core. Religion prescribes a set of beliefs, ideals, perceptions, and behaviors through which people seek to manage the realm of contemporary suitability and acceptability. The nature and intention of the achievement or prevention of the conversion of the primordial nature of religion are being influenced in accordance with the condition of man and nature. The vast, uncontrollable word world as a result, Christian missionaries have contributed significantly to locals' conversations throughout Africa and Asia.

Researchers have called attention to a serious problem with tourism. The fact that many volunteer trips explicitly aim to spread certain religious views among the host population (Bandyopadhyay, 2014; Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017; Howell, 1994) In volunteer tourism, organized religion often seems to be the "elephant in the family room" that no one wants to address, as one writer described it. Because of this, Christian ideals continue to play a significant part in volunteer tourism today, just like they did in official colonial operations. 'For instance, missionary activities in nineteenth-century Britain made the people aware that there was a world outside of Britain and that British Christians had an imperial responsibility to the rest of the globe (Bandyopadhyay, 2019).

Several publications have written about the forced conversions and their impact on the local population, which has led to some rare instances of violence, with non-Kalash residents burning Kalash effigies. A small number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been working in the region to preserve their cultural and religious status, and efforts are underway to preserve Kalash culture. Although Organizations strive to assist the Kalash in maintaining their traditional traditions, Islamic missionaries seek to convert them.

Islam's rhetoric refers to itself as "true" and "last," leading its adherents to believe that they are superior to all other faiths. Islam perpetuates the notion of being the final authentic faith more than any other major monotheist religion, or any other religious faith for that matter. For this reason, converts may sometimes assert their superior position by claiming that their

converts have improved their social status, but this is not the prime motive for the conversion. Different ideologies have various conceptions of religion. Hence, it is simple to conclude that for the majority of individuals, identity functions within the constraints of religion. Anything sensible outside of the clearly defined boundaries of religion is incomprehensible to the believers. Identity and religion often work together as one seamless entity. However, faith also builds, shapes and defines identity in such a way that a shared faith often creates a cohesive social community with a shared religion (Kazmi, 2016). Consequently, identity takes a blended form, encompassing multiple identities into a single, holistic entity. Hybridity ends up being the only concept that can adequately describe what a person develops into: a centrifugal force that pulls everything into its center and unifies everything into a single entity. In-depth interviews with Kalash people are used to gather extensive data for cultural identification. Religion is the primary divine power that manifests itself in the shape of the villages of Anish, Brun, Batrik, and Karakal. It covers the investigation of ancestors and their beliefs. Cultural customs, religious beliefs, mystic experiences, and oral history interviews all employed audio recording. Mythology and secondary data were used in this investigation. The Kalash owes their religion to the documentary programs about the mythological people of the essential idea of purity and impurity. There is a clear division between holy and profane in the material obtained from libraries through reading journals, articles, and books. It is a Kalash source. The information has been compiled in the form of floor plans, maps, drawings, and token photographs representing the Kalash people's sociopolitical power. of identity is essential to their existence as a unique cultural group (Hani, 2011).

The term "kafir" is used in Islamic theology and jurisprudence to refer to a person who denies or rejects the Islamic faith, specifically the belief in Allah and his prophet Muhammad. In Islamic scripture, the term is used to describe people who actively oppose the message of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. However, the term is sometimes used more broadly to refer to anyone who does not share the Islamic faith. It's important to note that the term "kafir" is not unique to Islam and can be found in other religions and languages, including Judaism and Christianity. In these contexts, it is often translated as "infidel" or "unbeliever." "The term "kafir" comes from the Arabic root word "K-F-R," which means "to cover up," "reject," or "deny." It has various English translations, such as "faithless," "disbeliever," "infidel," "unbeliever," "atheist," or "ungrateful." The term "kafir" literally means "one who does not acknowledge the benefits of God " reflecting its origin in the Arabic language (Cowan, 1976; Farid, 2006). Harper (2001) also presented the same explanation for Kafir.

The term "kafir" has historically been used in a derogatory way towards non-Muslims, and it has been criticized for promoting intolerance and discrimination. Some modern Islamic scholars have argued that the term should be used only in its original context of describing those who actively oppose the Islamic faith and not as a general term for non-Muslims.

The term "Kafir" has been used by some Muslims in a derogatory way towards all Non-Muslims. This term appears twice in the article - once to identify a person and once to pass judgment. When used to identify someone, the "K" in "Kafir" is capitalized, whereas when used as a judgment, the "k" is in lower case. However, throughout history, different civilizations have used variations of this term such as "kefir," "kaffir," and "cafer" in diverse ways ("Kaffirs," 1911). That's a great example. In Ottoman times, the term "Kafir" became primarily used to refer to Christians. During this period, the Ottoman Empire controlled a large Christian population, and the term was often used to distinguish between Muslims and Christians. Additionally, early English missionaries in South Africa used the term "Kafir" to describe Bantus as the equivalent of "heathen." These examples illustrate how the term has been used in different contexts and by different cultures to describe those who do not adhere to a particular religious or cultural belief system (Drwal, 2013).

The Kalash Valley is in the Hindu Kush Mountain range in the Chitral district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The valley is situated at an elevation of approximately 2000 to 4000 meters above sea level and covers an area of around 3,000 square kilometers. The Kalash people have their own language, which is known as Kalasha or Kalashamondr. It is a Dardic language, which belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family. The Kalasha language is considered endangered, with only around 3,000 speakers, according to Ethnologies. The Kalasha language is divided into three dialects: Kalasha-ala, Kalasha-mun, and Kalasha-br. Each dialect is associated with a specific valley in the region. The language uses its own unique writing system, which is a modified version of the Persian script.

The geography of the Kalash Valley is characterized by steep mountainous terrain, deep gorges, and high-altitude plateaus. The region has a cold climate, with snowfall during the winter months. The valley is situated along the banks of the river Kalash, which flows through the region and provides water for irrigation and domestic use. The valley is also home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including several endemic species. The Kalash Valley is a region located in northern Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan. The valley is home to the Kalash people, a unique ethnic and religious minority in Pakistan. The Kalash



people practice a distinct religion that combines elements of Hinduism, animism, and ancient polytheistic beliefs.

The Kalash people are known for their vibrant traditional clothing, unique architecture, and colorful festivals. They have faced significant challenges in recent years, including the threat of violence from Taliban militants and encroachment on their land by outsiders. Despite these challenges, the Kalash people have maintained their distinct culture and traditions. In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve and promote their culture, including through the establishment of a museum in the valley and the organization of cultural festivals. However, the Kalash people still face significant socio-economic challenges, including poverty and limited access to education and healthcare.

After conversion, a Kalash's identity is hybrid in every meaning of the term. The religion practiced by the Kalash people is a combination of festivals, rituals, and mythology. They believe in a variety of deities who are each in charge of different spheres of life. A pantheon of regional gods and goddesses exists alongside the creator deity. Shamans play a starring role. There is a particular connection between gods, dancing, and music. All religious events revolve on round drums, goat sacrifices, and alcohol. The Pari, or mountain fairies, are a widely held concept. Their faith is intimately associated with the Vedic faiths. They sing and dance and play music throughout their rites. Music has a vital position in all festivities, from an elderly man's passing to those at festivals. A goat is often sacrificed during religious rituals, and its blood is then sprinkled on the altar. The pre-Islamic Nuristan has had a big effect on the Kalash. Similar to Hinduism, the main principle is purity. While a woman is menstruating or giving birth, they are seen as unclean. They must be cleansed, which is why there are many rites. Their culture and religion are intertwined. That is based on what they do on a daily basis. The individual Kalash's religion is shaped by all that is spoken about them in Kalash folklore, stories, and songs, by how they fit into society, by their creation myths, by their gods, and by their demons. As a result, a story that incorporates the conversion experience is developed when that religion changes. When does a Kalash's identification become a problem in this situation, and when do individuals need to safeguard their identities? The basic answer is when there is a crisis or when identity is under jeopardy. This crisis may be brought on by a cultural invasion, modernism, or, in the case of the Kalash, a conversion event (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000). It's odd how story and identity are related. The use of narrative facilitates the recording of identity changes. In a sense, conversion is the acceptance of a new rhetorical framework that a story records. The converts must thus

declare their new loyalties in the open. The converts are informed that conversion cannot be a covert act. The conversion's open announcement serves as evidence and witness. (Sonenshein, 2010).

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

The Kalash community in Pakistan, which is a religious and ethnic minority, is experiencing an ongoing trend of conversion to Islam and Christianity. The aim of this research is to uncover the worldviews that are associated with the conversion process, as there has been little previous research on this topic. The study seeks to understand how conversion has impacted the Kalash people's identity, the socio-economic factors that contributed to their decision to convert, the reasons that influenced their conversion, and the ways in which they have adjusted to their new community. The basic purpose of the research is to dig out the role of social forces into conversion of pagan people into other religion. What are the associative incentives and rewards and how conversion is influencing the overall culture practices in the area.

### **1.2 Objectives of the research**

Some main objectives of the current

- Document the role of social forces in the conversion of Kalash into other religions,
- Document the role of Tablighi Jamat and Christian missionary in such conversion
- The role of social media, to Muslim tourists and popular culture in such conversion

### **1.3 The Significance of the research**

The focus of this study is to analyze the conversion stories of the Kalash people of Pakistan as they transitioned from traditional beliefs to Islam and Christianity. The data used in this study comes from the accounts of the converts themselves, which include their experiences before, during, and after their conversion. The present research will help the government to protect the rights of pagan people and to force into forceful conversion cases as a violation of human rights. The study will help the tourist industry and how to protect their unique culture from conversion. The present research study primarily highlights the elements that led to the religion conversion of the Kalash people, including social dynamics, regional surroundings, and the function of religious organizations, economic advantages, role transmission, and contemporary technologies. Future academic research to understand the primary causes of conversion to a new religion will be made easier by the results of this study. This research will also encourage NGOs and INGOS engaged in humanitarian work to take action for the

benefit of the local Kalash population. This research is also an excellent first step in educating the local population about the issue and helping them form their own community-based focus groups to organize their grievances and contact the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for social harmony. The research may also be important for the establishment of local social and economic policies and for government agencies working on such issues.

## 2. Literature Review

Religious conversions may take many various forms, but they always include a person making a conscious decision to abandon their prior faith. The missionaries use campaigns, door-to-door ministry, and public relations appeals to draw in susceptible converts. The methods of attraction arouse the hopes, concerns, and curiosities of a nonmember before inviting them to make a tiny commitment, such taking part in a ritual rite. The interpersonal bonds formed between group members and outsiders as well as the close contact with members before they accept a new religion have historically assisted missionaries in converting people to new religions. Attachment is the most significant social impact on religious conversion. The emotional ties that develop from frequent interaction make it easier for nonmembers to reject their own worldview and accept that of the new religion. The overall conversion process takes some time, and in order to complete it, the neophyte must go through socialization of their worldview. Neophytes are trained formally and informally during the process (Mahdi, Foster, & Little, 1987).

The transition from one religion to another is known as a religious conversion. a profound shift in all aspect of one's emotional, intellectual, and social life. According to the study, there are three basic life circumstances that might trigger conversion. The first kind of conversion is "give up" conversion. The converted person in this sort of conversion is not happy with his current religious affiliation. The second type of conversion is referred to as a "come in" conversion. In this type of conversion, the unconverted person may have lived among a group of people who practice a religion that is different from his for a longer period of time before deciding to convert solely for the benefit of peaceful relationships, social factors, or long friendships. The third sort of conversion is referred to as a "turning" conversion, in which the individual has interacted with clergy, laypeople, or academics of another faith who have given him written literature. A person may choose to reject his current religion and choose a new one when under such influence or, in certain cases, even coercion. The first and third categories of converts are occasionally connected and might have a role. (Goode, 1961)

Researchers utilized data from two surveys, the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) and the World Values Survey (WVS), to analyze the level of religious devotion in 40 countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Belarus, Canada, Switzerland,

Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United States. The analysis focused on individuals aged 30 and above who made well-reasoned individual choices regarding their religion. Based on the International Social Survey Program's findings in 1998, the conversion rates into different faiths were as follows: Catholic (13,420), Protestants (7,775), Muslim (223), Hindu (9), Eastern (354), Jewish (721), Orthodox (1,655), and Other (431). Notably, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand had higher rates of religious conversion compared to other countries (ARGENTINA et al.).

Pakistan is a diverse country with a majority of Muslims, but also has religious minorities including Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians, Buddhists, and others, all of whom are guaranteed religious freedom under the 1973 Constitution. While Islam, the dominant religion in Pakistan, supports and ensures religious freedom for all citizens, unfortunately, some Muslims in the country deny this right to other faiths. Pakistan gained independence from Britain on August 14, 1947, with the name and ideology of Islam as a guiding principle. At that time, non-Muslims made up 23% of the population. However, due to various challenges such as forced conversions, discrimination in employment and society, violence, etc., the number of non-Muslims has decreased significantly, and they now make up only around 3.7% of the population (Jawed, 1999).

On the contrary, The Holy Quran interdicts forced conversion, the Quranic Verse from “Surah Al-Baqarah” that there is “no compulsion in religion” (Quran 2:256). After the conquest of Mecca, the companions of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W were shouting “today is the day of revenge” when Prophet Muhammad S.A.W heard this he said to his companions “today is the day of mercy, today is the day of forgiveness” further he said “the captives (non-Muslims) are free now and they may go where they please”

Muhammad Ali Jinnah's statement during his presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947, was a significant declaration of the country's guiding principles. He emphasized that every citizen of Pakistan had the right to practice their religion freely, without fear of discrimination or persecution. Jinnah's words were a powerful reminder that the State's role was not to interfere with the personal beliefs of its citizens, but to provide a space where everyone could coexist and thrive regardless of their religion, caste,

or creed. He recognized that Pakistan was a country with a diverse population, and that diversity should be celebrated, not suppressed. By declaring that religion had nothing to do with the business of the State, Jinnah made it clear that Pakistan was not going to be a theocratic state. Instead, he envisioned Pakistan as a modern, democratic nation where every citizen had equal rights and opportunities. Jinnah's message of religious tolerance and inclusivity is still relevant today. It continues to inspire people around the world who believe in the fundamental principles of human rights and democracy (Anwar, Ullah, Ahmad, & Ali, 2020; Ispahani, 2017; Mehfooz, 2021).

The Kalash people, also known as Kafirs, Siah Posh, and Black Robe, reside in the three valleys of Kalash, namely Rumbur, Birrir, and Bumburait, located in the district of Chitral in Khyber Pukhtun Khwa (KPK). Though they claim to be descendants of Alexander's army, their historical and biological origins remain uncertain, with ongoing research attempting to identify them. Despite being a minority group, the Kalasha of Chitral has always attracted media attention and interest from anthropologists. The Kalasha people once ruled Chitral, but today, they are a poor community living in remote areas. Since the late nineteenth century, they have faced immense pressure to convert to Islam, especially after the Durand Line divided them between Pakistan and Afghanistan. During the 1890s, the religious King of Kabul, Amir Abdur Rahman, forcefully converted a significant number of Afghan Kalashas to Islam, while some fled to Pakistan for protection. Today, their population is estimated to be around 3,000, but they continue to face challenges from the outside world. Government schools in the Kalasha valleys follow a uniform syllabus that emphasizes Islamic studies and Urdu, which poses a significant challenge to the preservation of the Kalasha's religious and cultural identity. Additionally, there have been reports of forced conversions and the abduction of women, adding to the difficulties faced by the Kalash people (Khan, 2009).

The Kalash people have been animists for generations and have consistently resisted the pressure to convert to Islam, despite living within a predominantly Muslim country. Unfortunately, the history of the Kalash people is filled with instances of forceful conversion. For instance, during the reign of the Afghan King, Amir Abdur Rahman, Kalash inhabitants were coerced into adopting Islam. As part of this forced conversion, their temples and idols were destroyed, and women were compelled to abandon their traditional costumes and don burqas. This pattern continued in subsequent years, with two Kalash valleys, Jinjeret Kuh and Urtsun, being forced to embrace Islam fifty years later. The remaining three valleys, Bumburait, Birrir, and Rumbur, were able to maintain their animist traditions thanks to the

Prince of Chitral, who preferred to use the Kalasha people as slaves and laborers in their existing state. Despite this history of resistance, the Kalash community has experienced a shift in recent decades. Approximately 50% of the Kalash population has converted to Islam, likely due to ongoing pressure to assimilate to mainstream Muslim culture.

The researcher has studied the factors behind the conversion of the Kalasha today in recent times; he stated that the Government schools in all three valleys emphasize Islamic knowledge rather than their knowledge about religion. Children are not taught about their religion, culture, or history in schools and the majority of teachers are Muslims. This creates a sense of inferiority in children at a very young age and then leads them towards conversion. The rate of conversion is growing because of the absence of a curriculum for the Kalasha people in government schools, Islamic studies are the compulsory subject in the schools. Another leading factor behind the conversion of Kalasha is their poor economic conditions which were used as a tool for conversion in exchange for jobs. The majority of Kalasha people have lost control over larger parts of land due to low financial status. This socio-economic is an important factor for the community's decline along with its sociological effects forcing Kalash women to marry outside the community to have a better life. It is concluded that the Kalasha people are under immense pressure from the Muslim community and other socio-economic factors but interestingly, Christian missionaries are working in the shadow to convert the Kalasha people into Christianity. Christian missionaries facilitate Kalasha families with financial support and stipend for the children, more interestingly conversion through missionaries is illegal in Pakistan but these Christian missionaries visit the Kalash valleys in the shape of NGOs or sometimes as tourists and artists. (Naqvi, 1995)

The elements that contribute to the deterioration of the cultural as well as religious identity associated with Kalasha tribe in Pakistan have been addressed by a number of scholars in this journal's article on the fading culture of the Kalash valley. Several academics both locally and globally are looking at variables including Islam proselytizing, Islamic studies being taught in government institutions, an extreme degree of poverty, very costly rites, and love weddings. The publication noted how Islamic studies in public schools are one of the primary causes of Kalasha's cultural shift. There are two reasons for this: one, the Kalash do not have their own religious texts, and second, in order to register for the board examinations in grades 9 and 10, Kalasha pupils must study Islamiyat (Islamic Studies), which is a required course. The majority of instructors in government schools in the Kalash Valley are Muslims, and they convince the Kalasha pupils that Islam is superior to Kalash culture and religion as the other

linked aspect. Every year, Muslim clergymen known as Tableeghi Jumat go to the Kalash valleys to convert the locals to Islam. The magazine also looks at how globalization affects the Kalash community; although it has benefited the rest of the globe, it has also had beneficial and bad consequences on the Kalash people. The residents of the Kalash valleys are growing used to how other civilizations interact with them; national and international cultures are no longer foreign to them, and as a result, the religious and cultural aspects of the Kalash community are slowly but surely changing. With television, social media, and other technology, the traditional houses are transforming from traditional to contemporary, and the shift is obvious in their way of life, traditional homes, and apparel. Even though the Kalash tribe has benefited from industrialization and globalization, they have also become more conscious of the value of their distinctive culture. Development has also helped members get access to jobs and higher education. The very costly rites and social life of the Kalash culture, which have pushed the group toward conversion, are discussed in the journal's ongoing discussion of the reasons for the conversion of the Kalash community. According to legend, when a Kalasha passes away, the corpse is held at home for three days while the family of the dead kills a large number of animals for the feast. The dead family is expected to host the three members of the Valley family for the duration of the three days by providing them with meat, butter, and bread. The three days' expenses came to almost five laces overall. The bulk of the population is low income and cannot afford to participate in these pricey cultural practices. Although Islam is an economically feasible religion, this is also one of the reasons Kalash people desire to convert to Islam, where they are not need to pay money on such ceremonies. The conversion rate for women is higher than for men for a variety of reasons, including the fact that Kalasha girls are not permitted to live in their homes during pregnancy and the menstrual cycle. Additionally, if a woman passes away while giving birth in "Bhashaleni," a separate maternity home for Kalasha women, Kalash tradition and culture forbids family members from touching the body and they also abandon the child. After occurrences like this, Kalasha women favor converting to Islam, which is also one of the reasons Kalasha females choose or favor marriage to Muslim men. The work of several scholars on the conversion of the Kalash community has been reviewed and described in the journal article on the deterioration of the religion-cultural identity of the Kalash tribe. (Taj & Ali, 2018) has noted that while Kalasha is a minority in the area, there has never been hostility between Kalasha and Muslims. Yet, Kalasha endures prejudice and embrace Muslim culture. The children of Kalasha no longer dress in their traditional garb, and nowadays it is impossible to tell them apart from Muslim kids. The limited space between Muslims and



Kalasha in the valley, affairs ending in marriages, and eventually, Kalasha women getting converted, lead to Kalasha women abandoning their traditional outfit and switching it with Muslim outfits, such as Shalwar kameez and chadar. The physical features of Kalash women (fair skin color, blue, hazel eyes) make them highly attractive, and this is one of the reasons why men get attracted to Kalash women. (Naz, Sheikh, Khan, & Saeed, 2015) has discussed a number of reasons that are having an effect on the Kalash community's religious and cultural degradation. According to the researcher, the majority-Muslim Kalash group has been under societal pressure to renounce their faith and culture in order to pursue equal employment possibilities and excellent social and economic prospects. (Maggi, 2001) The study claims that there are many reasons behind Kalasha's rapid conversion. He claims that the influence of Tablighis and Afghan immigrants is one of the key causes. According to him, some Tablighis have in the past killed several Kalasha who refused to convert to Islam. Poverty has been identified as another factor leading to conversion. The study claims that since the government does not lend to the Kalasha people, the Tablighis are their only source of funding. Because of their extreme poverty, the Kalasha are unable to repay the loan, leaving them with little choice but to convert or leave their property to the lenders. (Maggi, 2001)) has also discussed the weaknesses of the Kalash community. At Kalash government schools, students are made fun of for their rituals and beliefs, and their Muslim instructors also preach to them about the afterlife and the idea of paradise and hell. The Kalasha language is also in grave danger of extinction because the converts abandoned it, and the loss of language is a clear sign of cultural eroding. This kind of religious preaching leaves a lasting impression on such young minds and ultimately results in converts in later stages of their lives.

The researcher claimed in the first section of the article that Kalasha appeared to have equated all aspects of Chitrali culture with Muslim culture. After converting to Islam, these individuals began acting like pure Chitralis, beginning with renovating their homes to make them look like Chitrali models and by removing all signs of their previous religion. The author goes on to say that adopting Islam for a Kalasha family or person entails a complete conversion from one culture to another, rejecting and denying all prior Kalasha actions, rituals, and traditions. The inhabitants speak the Kalasha language as their mother tongue, however, there has been discussion of switching to the Chitralian Khowar language instead. (Heegård Petersen, 2015)

The Kalash civilization has long fascinated scholars, tourists, and historians. The name "Kalash" is believed to mean "wearers of black," as noted in works by Barrington, Kendrick,

and Schlagintweit (2006) and Jahangard (2006). The Kalash people are descendants of the historic Red Kafirs of Nuristan and the Black Kafirs of the southern region of District Chitral (Darling, 1979). While the term "kafir" may seem straightforward when used to describe the Kalash, it is actually a highly contextualized word that has evolved based on the cultural traditions of the Kalash people (Kazmi, 2016). In this sense, "kafir" refers to a cultural group whose social norms do not conform to any particular predisposition (Hodder, 1990; Parkes, 2000; Sökefeld, 2014).

Participants were chosen at random. Instead, then scrutinizing them, based on a particular social class within the community, each convert who accepted to be questioned. Since the converts for the interviews were chosen at random and without any outside interference, the research's neutrality was guaranteed. (Kazmi, 2016) For the interviews, many persons were contacted. Ten of the roughly 15 participants consented to the interview. The survey needed to include both male and female converts, but only one lady was questioned while the others who disagreed were engaged in other tasks. Tablighi Jama'at is made up entirely of males, and because of cultural norms, they are unable to communicate with women. It is thus simpler for them to communicate primarily with Kalash males. As a consequence, there are more male converts. The Tablighi Jama'at may interact with the ladies of the specific home via the converts by converting males. Second, ladies are not allowed to speak to "other" guys. It was thus impossible to interview a male researcher. No married convert allowed permission to interview his wife for the same reason. One girl had accepted to be interrogated, according to a local source who arrived on the last day. Her atheist parents had grudgingly granted them approval. It is better to have one woman's narrative than none at all, and the interview provided insight into what one particular lady experienced. She cannot in any way be taken to be a representation of all the women converts.

The research team consisted of two people, the researcher and a local informant. On average, the researcher was able to speak with one respondent per day. Interviews were optional and participants had the choice of answering or not, and they took place at the converts' residences, beside a stream, or at neighborhood mosques. Each interviewee underwent the procedure alone. Semi-structured talks served as the format for the interviews. A series of preplanned questions in the form of prompts were put to all responses. The majority of the inquiries were free-form. These planned inquiries allowed them to stay on course with their narrative. Throughout the interviews, there were few outside influences and a calm setting for all respondents. Despite these attempts, the replies were packed with unnecessary information

since no one had ever questioned the respondents about their conversion. As a result, it was impossible to enforce any time restrictions on them.

The tales of the responders were recorded with their permission, and they were made aware that their comments would likely serve as the foundation for an article. Since the researcher interacted directly with converts, the accuracy of the data was ensured. Through first-hand experience and contact, the researcher was able to gain insight into the respondents' prejudices, psychological and emotional states (Kazmi, 2016). Most of the interviews took place in Urdu, but since some of the older converts lacked fluency in Urdu, the researcher enlisted the help of a native Khowar speaker. The converts spoke about their conversion experiences in Khowar, and a translator then helped with the transcription and translation of the interviews. While the converts spoke, their comments were recorded along with the original speaker's translation of their words. Due to the researcher's limited knowledge of the original tongue, the employment of the mediator was necessary. Nonetheless, mediation had little impact on the speakers' utterances. A short overview of what the responder had stated was provided after the native speaker assisted in translating the precise words. For a number of reasons, this approach was utilized. Conversion is a process that involves changes to both the individual and their social environment. It is a complex process that can have far-reaching implications. 2<sup>nd</sup>, rather than questions with a finite number of possible answers, narrative answers to open-ended inquiries served as the data source. In contrast to other methods, narratives provide a framework for revealing how widespread conversions are. Consequently, it was suitable to utilize this approach for an examination of a process as vast and complete as conversions.

In 1885, Colonel William Lockhart led a British mission to investigate Kafiristan. This was the first known exploration of the region (North). Scholars disagree on the timing of the presence of Kalash in this region (Parkes, 2000) According to one theory, King Ameer Abdul Rehman threatened to compel the Afghans to convert before bringing the Kalash there. (Rashid, 2008) Another theory is that they are the offspring of the Tajiks, a mixed-race people who originally lived in Badakhshan's plains and were gradually forced up these mountains. (Bleuer, 2012; Niyozov, 2006) claims that they were Red Kafir slaves who fled their masters' control and were settled in the valley which renowned as Kalash (Robertson, 1897). It is hypothesized that the Kafirs may have descended from Bactrian colonies, and some may even claim Greek heritage (Denker, 1981).

The Kalash people believe they are descended from the wounded soldiers of Alexander the Great's army who stayed behind after he crossed the Hindukush. (Kalash, 2021) suggests that the Kafirs were already living in the region when Alexander arrived, and the stragglers from his army lived among them, thus explaining their Greek ancestry. Rehman (2011) states that the Kalash migrated to Chitral from Afghanistan around the 2nd century BCE (Nesteruk, Helmstetter, Gramescu, Siyam, & Price, 2015).

Prior to the British leaving the subcontinent in 1947, the Kalash were enslaved by the "Mehtar of Chitral" due to Chitral being a princely state that was not under British administration. Despite Chitral becoming part of independent Pakistan, the Kalash experienced no changes in their situation except for a Pakistani civil servant taking charge. In 1969, Chitral ceased to be a princely state, and in 1972, the ruler of Chitral, the Mehtar, was denied the privilege to rule, resulting in the end of Kalash slavery (Nuristani, 1994). The discovery of the Kalash led to an increase in tourism and attracted Muslim missionaries who aimed to convert them, but the impact of conversion was not immediately apparent as older Kalash converts still maintained strong ties to their Kalash community and even participated in their rituals. One such example is a man who converted 24 years prior and remained closely associated with nonconverted Kalash (Di Carlo, 2010).

In a different article, the author highlights the pre-conversion life of the Kalasha community. According to the author's argument, the converts considered their former lifestyle as immoral and lacking ethical standards. They were illiterate and leading chaotic lives, which they believed caused disturbances and engaged them in sinful activities. The moral and immoral framework was reversed after their conversion, leading to the perception of their previous lives as dark and unhygienic. The Kalasha community is currently facing a threat from the tourism industry. Although foreign tourism is not prevalent, hotels mostly owned by Chitrali Muslims have emerged in the three valleys. However, the more significant problem is posed by local tourists from other regions of the northwest frontier who are attracted to the valleys due to their sexual fantasies about the perceived freedom of Kalasha women. While the tourism industry has brought economic benefits, it also brings the potential for converting community members. Tourism is now influencing the conversion process. Tourists sometimes establish personal relationships with local Kalasha women and influence them into marriage, posing a risk of conversion. This development means that the tourism industry is not only taking over the Kalasha community economically but is also influencing the realm of conversion. (Di Carlo, 2010)

The aim of studying the Kalash conversion narratives is to gain insights into the factors that motivate or compel Kalash individuals to convert. The narratives provide valuable information on the differences and similarities between the old and new faith, as well as the community's views on conversion. The study includes a table that summarizes the demographic information of the respondents, including age, gender, marital status, number of children, education, modes of income, and the number of years since their conversion. The age range of the converts was between 19 to 60 years old, with most being married. The converts represented a diverse range of occupations, including students, landowners, labourers, shopkeepers, and unemployed individuals. The data shows that the majority of the conversions occurred around 27 to 30 years ago, coinciding with a period of rapid religious growth in the country. The oldest convert, aged 60, also converted during this time. Additionally, the table indicates a significant increase in the number of conversions over the past 10 years, compared to the preceding 25 years.

The Kalash, the last tribe of the Hindu Kush, are a unique and ancient society who inhabit three beautiful valleys in Chitral district, alongside Muslim communities. Despite their proximity to Muslim communities, the Kalasha tribe has managed to preserve their religious beliefs, rituals, and culture in the modern world. However, their religious practices and customs are not based on strong ideological foundations but on mythological ideas such as nature, animals, and ancestor worship. The Kalash's weaker religious foundation has made them vulnerable to the influence of Islamic ideology in various aspects of their lives. Consequently, the dominant culture has subjugated the Kalash community, leading to a loss of their cultural identity. The researcher notes that the Islamic ideology has had a significant impact on the Kalash ideology, leading to visible changes in their religious beliefs and cultural practices.

## **2.1 Conversion**

In civil society spheres, the issue of 'forced conversion' of Hindus and Christians is frequently viewed as a significant challenge faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. It is often attributed to the influence of Islamization and the Islamic nature of the state. However, upon closer examination, this narrative appears to rely on ambiguous definitions and a simplistic perception of 'faith' conversions. A more nuanced understanding is necessary to explore the complexities of these incidents fully (Hussain,2020).

Through ethnographic interviews with research participants, a pervasive inclination towards converting from one faith, sect, or ideological orientation to another emerged. The study

revealed a diverse range of attitudes among different social groups towards religiosity, opposition to religiosity, and a disinterested approach to religious and ideological beliefs. Neo-converts demonstrated a renewed sense of vigor and enthusiasm in their newfound religion, while secular-minded individuals expressed skepticism and disillusionment with traditional religions. For the latter, religious conversion appeared to be an outdated institution on the decline.

In Islam, a Muslim man is allowed to marry a woman from either Judaism or Christianity, which are considered Abrahamic faiths. However, if a Muslim intends to marry someone who practices idol worship or any other faith, the person is required to convert to Islam first. This conversion is seen as a deliberate decision to fulfill the necessary Islamic ritual for marriage. It is essential to note that Islam strictly prohibits forcing anyone to embrace the religion, as free will and choice are valued principles in the faith. Numerous individuals, both males and females, expressed genuine inspiration from Islam. Their inclination to embrace the religion was closely linked to their accounts of being influenced by the charisma of specific religious clerics or spiritual preachers. Through the research conducted, no cases of forcible conversion were verified. In this context, 'force' pertains to coercion, blackmail, deception, or threats against a person or their parents to adopt Islam against their will (Hussain,2021).

Deep in the tranquil Kalasha valley, the Kalasha people speak a special language and follow a distinct way of life. Unlike having religious texts or places of worship, they celebrate the changing seasons with lively festivals, colorful attire, and captivating dances, attracting many visitors. Recently, an outside influence, Sunni Islam, has started to enter the valley, bringing changes to the Kalasha community. Around 300 Kalasha individuals have converted in the past three years, reducing the number of non-Muslims from 4,100 to 3,800. This worries the local leaders, who fear losing their cherished culture and heritage (Khan,2018).

## **2.2 Forced Conversion**

Forced conversion is a religious conversion generally without the consent or acceptance of the subject (Ali, 2014).

In Pakistan, there have been discussions about alleged forced conversions, which have sparked anger on social media and heightened tensions between Islamic groups and liberal representatives. However, the issue is not straightforward, as it involves multiple layers of

complexity that resist simple explanations from either side. A deeper understanding is needed to grasp the true nature of these incidents (Schaflechner,2018).

In recent times, the Kalash community has faced threats to its existence due to the Afghan conflict and efforts towards Islamization. Back in the 1980s, some Tablighi zealots occupied their land illegally and built a mosque, which marked the beginning of their troubles. Over the years, during the period from 1981 to 1995, Afghan refugees and Pathan Tablighi groups took control of about 70% of their land. This had a devastating impact on the Kalash people, leading to the destruction of their forests, wildlife, and traditional means of livelihood. As the vegetation diminished, their cattle suffered the same fate, further endangering their way of life. To make matters worse, the entrenched Afghan refugees and Tablighis in Chitral started forcing conversions upon the Kalash. They made it clear that if the Kalash wanted to continue living in Pakistan, they must convert to Islam, leading to further challenges for this unique community (Skidmore, 2021).

### **2.3 Social Status**

Religious conversion remains a highly debated and contested concept in both India and Turkey. In India, the topic of religious conversion has been a subject of tension, with occasional communal conflicts and initiatives for re-conversion to Hinduism. However, the Indian Constitution recognizes religious minorities such as Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians, ensuring their right to practice their faith freely. On the other hand, some Hindus, particularly those belonging to lower castes, have historically converted to Islam and Christianity in an attempt to escape the social stigma associated with their low status. Indeed, conversion can be likened to the "liminal phase" observed in rites of passage. This transitional stage represents a period when individuals undergoing conversion are status-less, temporarily detached from their previous community, and not yet fully integrated into their new community. During this transformative phase, converts experience a state of in-betweenness and often face challenges as they navigate their way into their newly adopted beliefs and social circles. Conversion is not solely a personal event leading to a spiritual awakening; it also offers an entry into a different religious community. Institutional factors play a significant role, granting access to resources, increased mobility, and the chance to connect with new religious networks. Marginalized individuals, particularly Afghan and Iranian refugees facing displacement, often find themselves disconnected from their traditional culture and social support networks. Forced migration allows them to break free

from restrictive social relationships and find new support systems. During this process, religious conversions facilitate the creation of new social networks within congregations, fostering a sense of shared destiny and building social capital over time. Factors such as long waiting periods, financial difficulties, and limited opportunities can drive interest in forming new social connections through religious conversion. Regular interactions between proselytizers, converts, friends, family, and potential converts further fuel this dynamic process. Inside ethnic churches, fictive kinship bonds are formed, providing potential converts with a space to consider the benefits to themselves, their family, and the group as a whole. The presence of Americans and other Westerners in churches often makes them feel accepted as members of transnational Christian networks. Apart from the psychological benefits and enhanced self-worth, the church also offers material assistance through donations and schooling opportunities in English for children (Akcapar, 2019).

Conversion is like a big change in a person's life. It affects how they think and feel. When someone converts to a new religion, they let go of their old beliefs and accept new ones. For example, a Kalash person who becomes a follower of a different faith stops worshipping their old gods and starts believing in one all-powerful God. This also changes how they pray and seek help. Understanding and accepting these differences is part of the conversion process. It's like a whole new way of looking at the world and what's important in life. After conversion, individuals try to fit into their new society while maintaining connections with their old one. They create a story to understand the changes around them, which helps them feel part of the new community. Some converts make friends with non-converts, while others follow the norms to belong. They attend their previous festivals to show acceptance and stay connected to their culture. Before, their shared religion brought them together, but after conversion, their relationships change. The new faith becomes the bond that holds them in their new community. In the Kalash society, there is peace, but tensions exist in how people view each other. For example, some Kalash feel upset about attacks on their religious sites and sacred items. Muslims in the surrounding areas don't always accept the converts as equals. They use the stereotype of "Sheikh" to identify the converts. When we listen to the stories of conversion, it's clear that the focus is on life before and after the change, not just the religious aspect. Some incidents during conversion were unique, like feeling unconscious, peaceful, or experiencing a sense of rebirth (Kazmi, 2016).



## **2.4 Economic benefit**

The Oxchuc municipality in Mesoamerica experienced interconnected challenges in underdeveloped Indian communities before conversion, including poverty, illness, and low literacy rates. However, following conversion, positive shifts occurred in these areas, leading to reduced poverty, improved health, and higher levels of literacy. Poverty was a significant issue for the Tzeltal people before conversion in the Oxchuc municipality. They didn't have much land, and they were often in debt because of their reliance on alcohol for social and religious reasons. This led them to spend a lot on rum, causing financial struggles. Additionally, the fear of witchcraft made it hard for them to save money or improve their lives, as they believed doing so would make them targets of witchcraft. Following their conversion, many Tzeltals in the Oxchuc municipality gained confidence and overcame their fear of the spirit world. This newfound courage empowered them to venture into the emerging rain-forest communities. In their transformed lives, Tzeltals now have options beyond farming – they can become teachers, carpenters, tailors, or even own stores. One significant change is that those who converted are no longer burdened by alcohol-related debts, as they have chosen to abstain from liquor. This decision allows them to save money that would have otherwise been spent on drinks. Moreover, the fear of witchcraft no longer holds them back. They can freely pursue their dreams without worrying about threats. In this transformed scenario, individual entrepreneurs among the Tzeltals are free to own and do what they desire, marking a positive shift from their pre-conversion challenges. Before the conversion, disease was a widespread problem in the Oxchuc municipality. The Tzeltal people often fell ill due to poverty, poor hygiene, and not knowing much about what caused diseases. When they got sick, they turned to shamans for help, even though their methods were more about the mind than actual medicine. After converting, things changed. The Tzeltals became better off financially, allowing them to afford healthier food and things that keep them well. Nowadays, when converts get sick, they visit local medical experts who have Western training, instead of relying on shamans. This shift has led to improved health for the Tzeltal people in the post-conversion period. In the past, before conversion, illiteracy was a common issue among the Tzeltal people. They didn't know how to read, and they didn't want their children to go to school. But after converting, things changed. The Tzeltals became curious about reading the materials written in their own language, and they started showing interest in learning (Turner, 1979).

In the Kalash Valley, conversion leads to extreme self-consciousness among individuals. Converts now act in accordance with Islamic norms because they feel obligated to do so. Some are content with the changes, but others find their expectations unfulfilled and may not be satisfied with the conversion. Reverting back to their previous beliefs is not an option for them. In the Kalash Valley, some converts mentioned that their lives did not experience material benefits after conversion, which they had hoped for. In Kalash, conversions were not just experimental or spiritual; they were driven by the promise of practical benefits. Some converted for better health, physically or mentally, while others were inspired by someone they respected. Economic improvement was another reason cited by some converts. Some even believed that conversion led to healthier children. (Kazmi,2016).

## **2.5 The role of state**

Pakistan, a country founded in the name of Islam, has a majority Muslim population (96%) and a minority of different faiths, traditions, and beliefs (4%). The Constitution of Pakistan grants freedom of religion to all its citizens. The founding leader, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, advocated for a tolerant state where everyone could practice their faith without discrimination. However, in recent times, there have been numerous cases of forced and coercive conversions of minorities to Islam, indicating a rise in intolerance and lack of strict legal measures. The most affected region is Sindh, especially areas like Thar, Umerkot, Tharparkar, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Ghotki, and Jacobabad. In Pakistan, the law recognizes the minority's right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as stated in the Constitution. However, the country faces challenges due to forced conversions of the already scarce minority (4%). Passing bills to prohibit such coercive acts has been difficult due to pressure from extremist groups, clerics, and religious institutions in Parliament. This poses a significant obstacle in upholding globally recognized human rights standards. To address this issue; the state must take responsibility for protecting the rights of all its citizens, including those from different religious faiths. Measures should be taken to prevent and prosecute cases of forced conversions and forced marriages, ensuring a fair resolution for the victims. By doing so, Pakistan can uphold its commitment to safeguarding the rights of its entire people (Rasool, Abdullah 2019).

On the contrary, The Holy Quran interdicts forced conversion, the Quranic Verse from “Surah Al-Baqarah” that there is “no compulsion in religion” (Quran 2:256)

In the mid-20th century, British India was divided into two independent states: Baharat (India) and Pakistan. Before the partition, there were over five hundred princely states ruled by local leaders such as Khan, Nawab, and Mir. These states were internally independent but accepted the superiority of the British Empire. When the partition took place in 1947, the princely states were given the choice to accede to either Pakistan or India. This concise study examines the extremism faced by the pre-Islamic and marginalized Kalasha tribe in the Hindu Kush region, which intensified after the events of 9/11 and the War on Terror. Prior to Zia's regime, the region, including the areas along the Durand Line, was peaceful. However, the situation deteriorated after the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan and worsened with US military intervention. The tourism industry in the Kalasha valleys suffered greatly, receiving fewer international tourists than before. The Kalasha tribe has been the only pagan community in Pakistan, practicing their unique religion and culture in the Hindukush for centuries. They have been historically peaceful and content people. Before Muslim rulers arrived, the Kalasha tribe ruled the entire Chitral valley. Their identity faced a major threat during the late 19th century with Amir Abdur Rahman Khan's actions. However, they lived in peace for a long time until the US-Soviet war in Afghanistan, which also fueled extremism in Pakistan. The War on Terror brought another wave of extremism that significantly impacted the Kalasha tribe. The essence of the Kalasha society revolves around their festivals, which are integral to their socio-religious beliefs and survival. Throughout the year, they celebrate various festivals like Zoshi, Uchaw, Pul, and Chamos, and these celebrations are intricately tied to their herds. Animals, particularly goats and sheep, play a crucial role in their festivals, rituals for death and marriage protecting these herds is vital as it ensures the preservation of their festivals and religion. The Kalasha people are an agro-pastoral society, relying heavily on their herds for their economy. Tourism is another significant source of income for them. However, both their traditional way of life and the tourism industry are under threat due to extremism. For instance, during the Uchaw festival in 2012, few Kalasha tribe members participated in the ritual dance due to fear, reflecting the impact of security concerns. An alarming incident in August 2011, when Afghan militants attacked check posts in the Chitral area near Kalash valleys, resulted in the loss of lives and raised security concerns for the tribe. Some valleys, like Urtsun and JinjiretKuh, which were once inhabited by the Kalasha but later converted, are now closed for tourists due to security reasons. While Bumburet, Rumbur, and Birir valleys are open to tourists, certain areas, including upper portions and pastures, remain inaccessible to ensure safety (Ali, Chawla, Shabbir, 2020).

## 2.6 Marriage

The year 2021 ended on a sad note for religious minorities in Pakistan, as their situation remains unchanged for decades. They continue to struggle for their rights, respect, and identity, facing an uphill battle. The government's denial of forced conversions and marriages has worsened the situation. A report by the All Party Parliamentary Group revealed a shocking truth. Around 1,000 girls from minority communities, aged 12-25, are forcibly converted to Islam and married to their abductors every year. This has led to a human rights catastrophe. Forced conversions and marriages have been increasing steadily in recent years, and the government's failure to enforce necessary legislation has worsened the problem. The laws to prevent child marriage have not been properly implemented in Sindh and other provinces. The government's slow response to this crisis has damaged the country's reputation. The failure to protect religious minorities from non-state actors and religious extremists is a significant factor in this issue. Hate preaching and religious extremism continue to pose a threat, especially to girls from Hindu and Christian backgrounds. Experts consider this situation a national and international tragedy, as Pakistan has failed to ensure the security and respect of women from religious minorities (Rafiq, 2022).

The study concludes that community identity in the Kalash society is strongly tied to lineage or Kam, which governs all aspects of life, including marriage. Traditions and norms play a vital role, and traditional weddings are adhered to without any changes. However, with exposure to the outside world, the younger generation is embracing love marriages and elopements. They see these types of marriages as a way to escape unreasonable demands and expectations from elders and avoid the financial burden associated with traditional marriages. Youngsters now prioritize marrying for love over financial considerations. In traditional societies, customs, traditions, and family expectations can sometimes bind couples to stay in unhappy marriages, giving the appearance of a successful union. However, in the case of elopement, couples have the freedom to make their own choices and are more likely to leave an unhappy marriage if they find themselves in such circumstances. Elopement provides a pathway to individual agency and the pursuit of happiness, even if it challenges societal norms. This study highlights that traditional cultures tend to remain unchanged when societies are isolated and have limited communication with neighboring communities. However, the advent of modern influences like education, media exposure, and interactions with other regions has led to a shift in wedding and marriage patterns. The people in the researched area have become more open to change, embracing liberal values and breaking

away from strict customs. While some resist change, the forces of liberalism have brought refinement to traditional ways of life, adapting to the demands of the present. The study also emphasizes that culture is not confined by time and space; it exists in an imagined space where people feel connected through technology, ideology, and media. Kalash culture has also experienced changes, with intermarriages between Muslims and Kalash individuals becoming more common. Elders intervene to resolve any issues arising from such unions and maintain a smooth process of matrimony (Naaz, Sheikh, Khan, Saeed, 2015).

## **2.7 Humans rights violation**

The growing restrictions on religious conversion have raised serious human rights concerns (Steffan, 2012).

The plight of religious minorities in Pakistan remains a matter of grave concern as the government continues to perpetuate institutionalized discrimination against them. Despite constitutional provisions, minority communities face widespread violence and prejudice, fueled by an inappropriate representation of minorities in society and educational curricula. Among these communities, women and girls are particularly vulnerable. They bear the brunt of religious discrimination, with underage girls and women often abducted and subjected to forced marriages and conversions against their will. The judicial system's failure to prevent such crimes and deliver justice further exacerbates the situation, leaving the victims without recourse. The authorities, along with the judicial system, have thus become complicit in violating the fundamental human rights of religious minorities. Their inability to protect the rights, dignity, and freedom of their citizens has brought forth a pressing need for external intervention to shield these marginalized communities from the ongoing atrocities that threaten their basic rights and freedom, According to Al Jazeera report.

## **2.8 The Conversion Incident**

The process of conversion is complex, involving elements such as connection, separation, continuity, and occasionally, involuntary separation. It entails looking back while also anticipating a journey whose significance varies depending on the individual. The act of conversion serves as a pivotal moment in a person's journey, marking a shift in their identity and profoundly altering their social standing. This event provides a means of identification and positioning for all converts, enabling them to navigate the differences between themselves and those who are not part of their community. Conversion to Islam has been a significant area of study for researchers seeking to understand the tensions between Islam and non-believers. The Kalash people practice a unique form of polytheistic religion, which is

believed to pre-date the arrival of Islam in the region. While the Kalash people have faced various challenges and pressures to convert to Islam over the years, they have largely managed to preserve their religious and cultural traditions. It is true that there have been cases where women from the Kalash community have converted to Islam due to marriage with Muslim men. These conversions have sometimes been driven by love, as the couples may wish to be married and raise a family in accordance with one religion. In some cases, these marriages may also be facilitated by economic or social pressures. However, it is important to note that conversions in either direction are not always straightforward or free of controversy. For example, some members of the Kalash community have accused Muslim men of using marriage as a means to convert Kalash women to Islam, sometimes through coercion or deception. There have also been cases of Muslim women converting to the Kalash religion, indicating that religious conversions can be motivated by a variety of factors beyond just romantic relationships. The issue of religious conversion in the Kalash Valley is a complex and sensitive topic that involves historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. The Kalash people have faced various pressures over the years to convert to Islam. These pressures have come from a variety of sources, including political and economic factors, as well as religious ones. Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, and some Muslims have viewed the continued existence of the Kalash religion as a challenge to the dominance of Islam in the region. Despite these pressures, the Kalash people have managed to maintain their religious and cultural traditions, in part due to their isolation in the remote valleys of the Hindu Kush Mountains. However, the Kalash people have also been subject to various forms of discrimination and marginalization, which have sometimes made it difficult for them to preserve their traditions. One issue that has received particular attention in recent years is the conversion of Kalash women to Islam through marriage with Muslim men. While some of these marriages may be driven by love or personal choice, others have been the subject of controversy and debate. Some members of the Kalash community have accused Muslim men of using marriage as a means to convert Kalash women to Islam, sometimes through coercion or deception. Another factor that can complicate the issue of religious conversion is the role of economic and social pressures. For example, some Kalash people may feel compelled to convert to Islam in order to gain access to education or employment opportunities that are only available to Muslims. Similarly, some Kalash women may feel pressured to convert in order to avoid social stigma or ostracism. In summary, the issue of religious conversion in the Kalash Valley is a complex and multifaceted one that involves historical, cultural, religious, economic, and social factors. While some conversions may be driven by love or personal

choice, others may be motivated by external pressures or perceived advantages. It is important to approach this topic with sensitivity and respect for the perspectives and experiences of all involved (Kazmi, 2020).

## **2.9 Post-Conversion Lives**

The act of converting to Islam often involves a significant shift in worldview for the individual. One of the first changes that many new Muslims make is to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims, creating an "us versus them" mentality. This distinction is often reinforced by Islamic teachings, which emphasize the superiority of the Muslim faith and the inferiority of all other belief systems. As a result of this distinction, many new converts may begin to view those who hold different beliefs or engage in different behaviors as immoral or evil. This can lead to conflict within the larger community, as the convert may feel alienated from their former peers and struggle to reconcile their new beliefs with their old way of life. Some critics have argued that the teachings of Islam encourage hate and violence, particularly towards those who do not share the same faith. However, this view is highly contested, and many Muslims argue that their religion promotes peace, love, and compassion towards all. After converting, many new Muslims will strive to follow the customs and practices of their local mosque. This may involve attending regular prayers, participating in religious celebrations, and avoiding haram (forbidden) foods and behaviors. For example, they may only eat halal (permissible) foods and avoid anything that has been slaughtered in a manner that is not in accordance with Islamic law. In addition to these religious practices, many new Muslims may also feel compelled to give zakat (charity) and engage in other acts of service as a way of demonstrating their commitment to their faith. Ultimately, the decision to convert to Islam is a highly personal one, and the experiences of each individual will be unique. The Kalash converts often used adjectives like "clear/enlightened," "hygienic," "beneficial," and "peace" to describe their post-conversion lives. There are a few possible explanations for this. Firstly, it is possible that the respondents found it difficult to translate their native language into Urdu. Therefore, they adopted the language and terminology of the missionaries who introduced them to the religion. They may not have been able to find the exact words to express their ideas, so they learned all the terms that conveyed the meaning they wanted to convey. Secondly, the converts were in a vulnerable position, and the missionaries lacked an understanding of the challenges that someone speaking a different language with a different cultural background might face. As a result, the converts may have adopted the Tablighi Jama'at's terminology to the point of

appropriating it. They were provided with a limited range of interpretations, and this interpretation of the term became weighted and hegemonic: a convert acquired something beneficial (faida) along with the religion. After converting, the individual became eligible for a blessing (rehmat). The term "blessing" (rehmat) can have several meanings, and in this context, language has become a tool of propaganda. With limited understanding, the converts not only learned the necessary language but also continued to repeat it. They never referred to anything in a creative manner, and their knowledge was limited to correctly carrying out the religious rituals (Adams, 2020).

After converting to Islam, many individuals found social acceptance and happiness, as they felt their choice was honorable and were welcomed by the Muslim community. They made new friends, underwent transformative experiences, and felt that their prayers were being answered. By converting, they shed the stigma of being considered "ignorant" and "unclean" kafirs and were now seen as "normal" members of society. However, some converts also expressed disappointment with the behavior of some Muslims who seemed to forget about them after their conversion. The stigma of their previous kafir identity continued to haunt them, as they were now labeled as "Sheikhs". Conversion also posed challenges in marital relationships, as Islam does not recognize unions between Muslims and non-Muslims, making marriages invalid upon conversion. To continue living together, both partners had to convert, which was the only way to conform to the new religion's established norms of "normal" behavior. This power dynamic meant that while converts were moral outcasts, they had no other choice but to conform to the morality of the powerful in order to belong to the "high caste" of society. The article discusses the impact of modern Islamic missionaries in places like Kafiristan, where native individuals are converting to Islam at an increasing rate. When Kalash converts adopt a new set of beliefs, they create hybrid social realities that can be confusing for them. This conversion process often involves conflict, as converts may feel pressured to make choices they wouldn't have made otherwise due to social violence and religious coercion. The article examines various aspects of the conversion process, including the motivations behind it, changes in social and emotional behaviors, the results of conversion, factors such as race and geography that contribute to the formation of old and new identities, efforts to readjust, and causes of alienation from existing culture. The conversion process is not seen as a standalone event, but rather as a social gathering and development on many levels. It is a time bound event that elicits social, psychological, bodily, spiritual, and metaphysical responses, ultimately resulting in an identity shift for the



convert. There are various reasons why individuals decide to convert to a different religious belief. Some may be driven by financial motives, while others may have had distinct social or spiritual experiences that led them to feel called to the faith. For some, it may be a matter of cultural conformity. When it comes to the Kalash people who converted, some found their previous religion to be immoral, unethical, unclean, obscure, and unnatural, and felt that conversion was the only option. After converting, they were led to believe that they were superior or blessed compared to their former social group. However, some converts eventually lost faith in the new religion, but societal pressure and the new faith prevented them from straying. Religious organizations promoted the feeling of superiority, leading some converts to distance themselves from their previous social circle. Their conversion was not based on cerebral or theoretical reasons, but rather the result of a personal exploration of religion that led to change. While some may have been influenced by the practices of the new religion or encouraged by friends, the majority were convinced by persuasive arguments made by preaching missionaries such as the Tablighi Jama'at. Emotions played a strong role in their conversion, and their stories were a result of their personal search for truth and their belief in divine favor.

The conversions that occurred in Kalash were driven by the promise of practical benefits rather than purely spiritual or experimental reasons. Some individuals believed that becoming a Christian would improve their physical and emotional wellbeing, while others were motivated by their former employer. Additionally, many converts claimed that their financial situation improved after converting, and some even attributed the birth of healthy children to their newfound faith. Conversion is a transformative experience that affects an individual's personal, social, psychological, and emotional life, and brings about ideological changes that require the abandonment of old beliefs and the acceptance of new ones. For Kalash individuals, converting to a new religion also involves a shift in their cultural accessories. For example, a Kalash person must let go of their belief in multiple gods who have real presence, in favor of believing in an all-powerful, all-knowing God who controls everything and cannot be opposed. A Kalash woman seeking a safe delivery must now turn to Allah (God) instead of the goddess Dizalak. These conceptual differences between the two religions must be deeply understood by converts, particularly students who must learn to apply these new concepts to their lives. The conversion stories of the Kalash people illustrate the complex relationship between religion and identity. When individuals convert, they must navigate their new faith while also maintaining their previous identity. In order to integrate

into their new society, converts must make adaptations, such as developing a narrative to make sense of their changes. Some converts try to socialize with non-converts, while others attempt to fit in by adopting accepted norms. However, expressions of superiority after converting to Islam are common, leading to tensions between different religious groups. While the Kalash culture has remained relatively peaceful, there are tensions present in stories and interactions between individuals.

The research found that the converts did not pay much attention to the religious shift itself and often encountered hostility from their families. However, some of the initial hostility abated, and the converts continued to maintain social relationships with their previous group. Religion played a significant role in determining acceptance or rejection, and changes to fundamental religious beliefs had various effects on behavior. The behavioral adjustments made by the converts contributed to their dislike of the kafir Kalash group and their fondness for the Islam side. Overall, the conversion stories illustrate how religion interacts with other components of identity to shape an individual's behavior and relationships within their community. The converts found themselves pitted against their fellow members, revealing a sense of isolation and alienation. Despite the physical unity of the Kalash group, there was still a sense of hatred towards the other and a divide between those who identified with the dominant social structure and those who did not.

Lastly, there are a lot of NGOs in the area that promise prosperity and expansion while still wanting to preserve the Kalash people's position as a religious minority. The NGOs brought foreign "development and growth" norms with them (Parkes, 2000). These norms have begun to be followed by people in an effort to make them seem more "developed." Positive and conservative philosophies are at odds because the concept of development has been used as a cover by missionaries. In the center are the Kalash. These initiatives have also led the Kalash to accept the notion of what it means to be a Kalash held by outsiders. Fundamentally, both concepts are alien. They shouldn't have to conform to anything because of another culture's subjective ideas. Yet, the impact is clearly audible. The Kalash have begun to perceive them differently from how others do. The missionaries seek to integrate the Kalash into society, while the NGOs want to preserve their uniqueness and provide incentives for doing so.

Highlighting the significant contribution of Muslims in enabling conversions is essential. Although the jama'at members are Muslims, the decision to convert has frequently been influenced by Muslim friends and acquaintances residing in close proximity. In many instances, it was observed that the conversion process was initiated by friends and family

members of the Kalash community. Overcoming the pre-existing beliefs and cultural attitudes of the indigenous Muslims was a significant hurdle for the converts. Achieving complete recognition and acceptance within the Muslim community presented one of the most arduous challenges for the Kalash converts.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Research methodology is a set of systematic techniques and procedures applied by researchers to obtain reliable and valid data, which aids in investigating research problems and drawing valid conclusions" (Kumar, 2019, p. 3).

#### **3.1 Methods of data collection**

##### **3.1.1 Rapport building**

In anthropology, rapport building is the process of establishing trust and mutual understanding with the individuals or communities under study, fostering a positive connection that facilitates access to valuable cultural insights" (Johnson, 2018, p. 67).

For a researcher, it is very hard to conduct research in an area where he or she is not from. Gaining the trust of the local people is essential for data collection. Before going on my fieldwork, I studied the locale and gained knowledge about the community. Additionally, I conducted a pilot visit to the target area.

When I visited my locale, at first, it was very hard to get familiar with the community as I was an outsider. However, after spending some days and roaming around the valley, I became friends with some of the locals and shared the purpose of my visit. After gaining the trust of the community, I started conducting interviews. Rapport building is very important for a researcher while doing research.

##### **3.1.2 Key informants**

The key informants are those individuals who are socially, popularly, socially accepted and have a special insight into the principles of their life, culture and history of the area where they live, during the field work, I selected local informants. They happened to be very supportive, friendly and have through knowledge of any location.

The key informants of this research were Wajid Khan, Khalil-Ur-Rehman and Rheka. These were the people who allowed me to have direct access to the respondents and respondents trusted them enough to give interviews. However, their role was helpful only in accessing and they did not remain present throughout the process.

##### **3.1.3 Participant Observation**

This research used the most important tools of ethnography: participant observation for the collection of data for this research thesis. It was used as the main tool to carry out the research process. The field work lasted for seventy days. I visited some people at their homes.

Initially, they were very uncomfortable, and I was hesitant as well but when I told them the purpose of my research, they were open with me. They were very hospitable. Along with interviews, I observed all their activities and behavior in different situations. I have gained confidence of the people and collected all the required information easily.

### **3.1.4 In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews in research refer to a qualitative data collection method where a researcher conducts one-on-one conversations with participants to gain detailed and comprehensive insights into their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives.

I conducted interviews using my semi-structured interview guide, which consisted of 30 open-ended questions. During the interviews, I analyzed people's perceptions and behaviors, which helped me, build good relationships with the local community.

### **3.1.5 Interview guide**

Interview guide is a tool that helps the researcher gather its respective data and answer to all the queries. A set of semi-structured questions was developed to encompass nearly all aspects of the research topic. Prior to beginning fieldwork, an interview guide was formulated and a pilot study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the research guide. The interview guide was prepared in the light of relevant literature and was used to gather the required data from targeted sample. The interviews were conducted in the safe spaces of their own comfort i.e., wherever the respondents were ready to be interviewed. The questions were asked multiple times in a different manner so as to proof check the reliability of data. In addition, the researcher built an open-ended interview guide which was morphed accordingly during the interview, which allowed the researcher to expunge that added personal bias or sticking only to a pre-determined list of questions.

### **3.1.6 Case study**

A case study is a research method that involves an in-depth examination of a specific individual, group, event, or situation. By thoroughly examining multiple case studies related to the topic, I gained valuable insights into the perspectives of the respondents, significantly enriching my understanding of the subject matter. These case studies were instrumental in broadening my viewpoint and providing real-life examples to support my research findings.

### **3.1.7 Field notes**

Everything I saw and experienced in the field was hard to retain for a long time. For my personal convenience, I used to take notes of everything in the field, so that I could save the

data of people's daily activities. I wrote down field notes during field work and used a jotting pad to note down any event, action or conversation related to my primary data. It helped me to record daily events, different situations and people's reactions.

### **3.1.8 Audio recording**

Due to lack of time, audio recording is used where recording of data in handwritten form is not possible. It helps the researcher to collect the data without wasting time and save it for future reference. I used this tool to record most of the respondents' interviews and then analyze them for results.

### **3.1.9 Sampling**

The data were gathered from 20 individuals using a snowball sampling approach. Participants were chosen at random. Instead, then scrutinizing they based on a particular social class within the community, each convert who accepted to be questioned. Since the converts for the interviews were chosen at random. Instead, then scrutinizing them based on a particular social class within the community, each convert and non-convert who accepted to be questioned with their permission, the respondents' accounts were recorded, and they were made aware that a research study would likely be built on the replies they provided. Since the researcher interacted directly with converts, the accuracy of the data was ensured. The researcher was able to gain insight into the psychological and emotional states, as well as the prejudices of the respondents due to his direct experience and contact with them. While most of the interviews were conducted in Urdu, the researcher sought the assistance of a Kalasha speaker, as some of the older converts were not fluent in Urdu. I interviewed 13 men and 7 women, with 14 respondents falling in the 14 to 40 years age group and 6 respondents in the 40 to 90 years age group. Among the women, their age group ranged from 14 to 21. The majority of the respondents were employed with government institutions, while a few were unemployed. The female respondents included students, housewives, and shop owners in the valley. Eight respondents received higher university education, while the others were students; shop owners, landlords, and two of them were politicians. Fifteen respondents were married, three were single, one was engaged, and one was divorced.

This approach was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, conversion is a complex process that has an impact not only on the individual but also on their social surroundings. Secondly, the data was sourced from open-ended inquiries that required narrative responses, rather than questions with a limited number of possible answers. Narratives offer a framework for

understanding the extent of conversions, which makes this methodology appropriate for studying a process as broad and multifaceted as conversion.

Table 1: The general information of the respondents.

| o. | S.N | Age (years) | Gender | Jobs                | Marital status | Geographical location     |
|----|-----|-------------|--------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1  |     | 26 years    | Male   | Rescue 1122         | Married        | Brun Village, Bumburait   |
| 2  |     | 70 years    | Male   | Unemployed          | Married        | Brun Village, Bumburait   |
| 3  |     | 86 years    | Male   | Landowner           | Married        | Brun Village, Bumburait   |
| 4  |     | 60 years    | Male   | Qazi (Priest)       | Married        | Karkal Village, Bumburait |
| 5  |     | 50 years    | Male   | Qazi (Priest)       | Married        | Brun Village, Bumburait   |
| 6  |     | 33 years    | Male   | Govt School Teacher | Married        | Brun Village, Bumburait   |

|   |          |      |            |         |                              |
|---|----------|------|------------|---------|------------------------------|
| 7 | 40 years | Male | Shop owner | Married | Batrik Village,<br>Bumburait |
|---|----------|------|------------|---------|------------------------------|

|    |          |        |                           |         |                              |
|----|----------|--------|---------------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| 8  | 43 Years | Male   | Govt School Teacher       | Married | Birrir Valley,<br>Kalash     |
| 9  | 25 Years | Male   | Govt School Teacher       | Married | Aneesh Village,<br>Bumburait |
| 10 | 37 years | Male   | Clerk at Bumburait Museum | Married | Brun Village,<br>Bumburait   |
| 11 | 27 years | Male   | Pakistan Navy             | Married | Karkal Village,<br>Bumburait |
| 12 | 39 years | Male   | Vice Chairman             | Married | Aneesh Village,<br>Bumburait |
| 13 | 30 years | Male   | Guest house owner         | Married | Karkal Village,<br>Bumburait |
| 14 | 25 years | Female | Housewife                 | Married | Aneesh Village,<br>Bumburait |



|    |             |        |  |          |                                 |
|----|-------------|--------|--|----------|---------------------------------|
| 15 | 32<br>years | Female | Single                                 | Divorced | Aneesh<br>Village,<br>Bumburait |
| 16 | 14<br>years | Female | Student                                | Single   | Karkal Village,<br>Bumburait    |
| 17 | 23<br>years | Female | Student                                | Engaged  | Karkal Village,<br>Bumburait    |
| 18 | 27<br>years | Female | Receptionist at<br>Museum<br>Bumburait | Single   | Karkal Village,<br>Bumburait    |
| 19 | 32<br>years | Female | Politician                             | Single   | Brun Village,<br>Bumburait      |
| 20 | 41<br>years | Female | Shop owner                             | Married  | Aneesh<br>Village,<br>Bumburait |

## **4. AREA PROFILE**

### **4.1 Chitral**

Chitral, located in the northwestern part of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK), is globally recognized for its alluring beauty and rich cultural heritage. The valley is bordered by Badakhshan and Nuristan in the northwest and southwest respectively, while Dir and Swat districts of Pakistan are situated to the south, and the northern areas of Pakistan are its eastern neighbors. Until 1969, Chitral was an independent state, after which it became a part of KPK province in Pakistan. The Chitral culture is exceptionally diverse and captivating, but the Kalash people, who inhabit a small group within the region, have an especially enchanting culture. The Kalash valleys of Birrir, Rumbur, and Bumburait are home to the Kafir-Kalash, a primitive pagan tribe renowned for their unique way of life. In the chitral district, 1-2 percent of the total area is suitable for cultivation. Due to rough ecology, it has a low population density i-e approximately 80 individuals per kilometer. Ninety-five 95 percent of its land, suitable for agriculture is fed through traditional water channels (kool). In the past, this land this land was utilized only for one crop of maize, but now due to the introduction of a new variety of seeds are fertilizers, about forty percent of the land is used for two crops in a year. Now people of the area have started cultivation of wheat as an alternate crop and fruit trees. In the south, the road links it with the rest of the country via lower pass and is complicated, risky, and even impossible during the winter month, because all the area is covered with the heavy show. Chitral lies in the rain-shadow of the lower range, the major reason for the aridness of the area. Agriculture is dependent on irrigation systems developed artificially. The Chitral River is too fluctuating and wild to allow drainage of water through the irrigation canals. So, the human settlements at the altitude of 1480 meters, and the fields situated on old terraces, are irrigated by water from the tributary streams coming out from the side valleys. The natural vegetation in district Chitral can be divided into zones up to the mountainside, however, the altitude of a given vegetation zone varies, with the start and rise of a slope. The lowest part is covered with, willows and popular trees along the streams. Higher up a zone of evergreen holm oak forest covers the land/ridges. The humidity increases due to the rise in altitude so that clouds and dew deep aid help in the growth of coniferous vegetation.

### **4.2 Locale**

The research conducted in district Chitral. The present state of Chitral is found in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This state was once a single country, with borders

reaching up to Badakhshan Bashgal in the northwest and the Kunar valley in the south to Chaghaswari. However, due to the continual development of the neighboring states of Gilgit and Kashkar, the state's border was not permanent. Kalash's Bumburait valley is part of Chitral, and it claims a territory of steep slopes 35 kilometers south of Chitral, which opens up to the Kunar River. The kingdom of Chitral was annexed to Pakistan in 1959. The total area of bumburat valley is 180 km sq out of which 51 km sq is habitable and cultivable. There are six main pasture units at an elevation of 3500m above sea level and occupy about half of the total geographical area of the valley. The Kalash villages in all three valleys are located at a height of approximately 1900 to 2200m the climate is generally semi-arid. The valley is inhabited by the Kalash people and has become a tourist distinction. However, their populations are rapidly declining. In this regard, a qualitative and descriptive approach has been adopted towards the events and issues related to the socio-cultural dimension of religious conversion practices of Kalasha valley. The study is confined to both Muslims and Kalash (non-Muslim) living in the valley of harsh mountains. The Kalash valley is composed of three valleys i.e., Bamburet, Birrir, and Rumboor where the non-Muslims of Kalash are residing along with the Chitrali Muslims. The data was collected from 20 individuals through anthropological techniques: participant observation and in-depth interviews. The total number of respondents was 20 including both males and females of age 20 and above from Aneesh, Brun, Karkal and Sheikhande villages of Bamburet Valley Kalash. The collected information has been thematically narrated and extracts from interviews have also been given in support of the narrated data. Besides, (Respondent, Number, and Name) and complete confidentiality is ensured for the secrecy and exposure of the data. Finally, the data has been classified and the results have been given in the form of separate headings (for each category) and a conclusion has been drawn. The details of the ethnography and other field information are provided in the descriptive form in the following passage.



- Figure 1: Researcher with Kalash kids

### **4.3 Architecture and Housing of Kalash**

It was indeed a pleasant sight entering Bamburait valley. Sky blue river tributary flowed aggressively down on our left and the right-side was completely walled with pointed hills with sharp slopes, scoring a dangerous height. The moment we enter the first village of the valley, our brains are aroused with the fragrance of juniper wood because of carpenter workshops. Steadily the low-profile markets begin to appear projecting surreal handcrafts and Kalasha ornaments at multiple souvenir shops. The first kalasha village Palawande was pointed out by the driver far above the street level. Clustered together we could see the homes, eloquently fixed into each other midway up the hill, denoting unity in a compromised space. Those houses were made from wood and stone. Climate and geography influences communities, at a certain time and place, both physically and mentally. A sheer presence of humans in any environment molds the routine behavior of the members. I would like to emphasize here that the material needed for constructing an indigenous house is extracted

from the immediate environment a community dwells in. For instance, in Punjab plain land villages, houses are constructed with a mixture of clay and hay, as the soil is most abundantly available in that part of the country. The material used in the construction of houses in 27 Chitral is directly connected with what is abundantly available in the environment. Stones from the hills and woods are what I saw most abundantly in Chitral and surrounding valleys, hence, the construction even of the recent houses were done with these materials. Very rarely do I see any house constructed from processed bricks and cement. This directed me to reconsider my definition of culture slightly. Culture is derived from the word cultivation. The latter means the manipulation done by indigenous people upon the environment for personal usage and subsistence. Therefore, culture most immediately emerges with the innovative activities and practices carried out in the environment by people living in that space. However, a difference of faith rarely affects the sort of material used for house construction. I saw Muslim homesteads as well, that were made from the same material. Therefore, culture sometimes travels across the mundane culture.

#### **4.4 Language**

Kalashamun, also referred to as the Kalash language, belongs to the Dardic group of Indo-Aryan languages and is closely related to the Khowar language. Previously, Kalasha was spoken in a broader region of southern Chitral, but now it is mostly restricted to the valleys on the western side, with Khowar gaining more prominence in the area. The Kalash people, estimated to be around 3,800, primarily earn their livelihood through shepherding and farming. A few members of the community own personal businesses, while only a small minority has government jobs. The Kalash people heavily rely on their livestock and farming for sustenance. The Kalash language, or Kalashamun, is one of the defining features of their cultural identity. The Kalash language is a member of the Dardic group of Indo-Aryan languages, which also includes languages such as Kashmiri and Khowar. While it was once spoken over a larger area of southern Chitral, it has now become more restricted to the western side valleys, with Khowar becoming more dominant in the region. In terms of livelihood, the Kalash people rely heavily on their livestock and farming. They practice a subsistence-based economy and mostly engage in agriculture, cultivating crops such as wheat, maize, and vegetables, as well as raising livestock such as goats, cows, and sheep. Some members of the community also own personal businesses, such as shops or restaurants, which cater to the influx of tourists who visit the Kalash valleys. However, due to their remote location and limited access to modern amenities, the Kalash people face several

challenges in terms of their economic well-being. Poverty, lack of infrastructure, and limited access to education and healthcare are some of the major issues that impact their livelihoods. As a result, many young people have had to leave the valley in search of better economic opportunities elsewhere.

#### **4.5 Climate**

The climate of Bumburait is extreme. The winters are always below freezing point temperatures starting in November/ December and last during March. During this time, the valley receives heavy snowfall, covering everything with snow. Restricting life and movements, confining every family to their house. Agriculture activities also come to a halt.



- Figure 2: Brun village of Bumburait valley

#### **4.6 Seasons**

Spring starts from March and lasts till the end of May when the moderate temperatures start to rise. In some ways, the end of winter and the beginning of spring is a different time for the

villagers because their food and fodder supplies are almost finished, living a theme to cope with harsh conditions for one or two months before reaching favorable conditions again.

#### **4.7 Economic expenditure**

According to the collected data, the women are to use their self-earning by their own choice. The sharing of the cash income with their husband and family is also the common trend if they would not share their income the male member of the family could not force them to share it. But the backwardness of the area and poverty of the people allow them to share the income and to maintain the daily expanse of their household. Commonly the male and women share their cash according to the need of the family. The common trend of the image of their income in the education of child, which is the first preference of the female, secondly the usage of the income is by their own choice the male member of the family has no control by utilizing the cash. 36 And it is not considered the family earning the earning is considering the women own earning and it is the result female work.

#### **4.8 Dress patterns**

The kalasha women commonly wear long black frocks with cowries' shells embroidered on them. In this case, they were referred to as "the black kafirs" in Chitral, and they were dressed in Pakistani shalwar kameez, with children wearing 39 tiny versions of adult attire after the age of four, and women wearing shushat headgear. is a band of hand-woven woolen cloth that fits over the head with a wide decorative streamer hanging down the back. The shushat is normal wear for all Kalash women and girls.





- Figure 3: Kalash women dress: Source fieldwork

There are many festivals celebrated around the year the three main Kalash festivals are namely chilam justh (spring festivals). And the next one is chomus (winter festivals). And the last one is the uchal (summer festival). Kalash is a happy person, generous, humorous, and loving. Kalash women have a withdrawal way that is charming, delightful, and unexpected. Kalash has four interesting carnivals. Each spiritual ritual is complete by dancing and lyrical recite. Women wearing their black robes and decorated with dyed jewels, dance in a group. One hand is apprehended around the waist of the companion and the other around the shoulders. Ancestral chiefs in unusual dresses recite stories of past days and events. To the Kalash, these festivals are the culmination of religious life, and they unite the people



## **5. KALASH PEOPLE'S CULTURE**

### **5.1 Culture**

Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a particular group of people, shaping their way of life and influencing their interactions with the world around them (Hofstede,1980).

### **5.2 Kalash Culture**

Kalash culture is a unique culture in the district of Chitral, Pakistan. The Kalash represents the last tribe of the Hindu Kush and an ancient society. The Kalash people believe in a supreme being called Dezau. The Kalasha culture is special and attracts tourists from around the world who come here to experience the beauty of this unique way of life.

### **5.3 Social Norms**

The Kalasha people have a society that is open and free for both genders. Women have the liberty to move about and interact with men publicly. Additionally, women possess complete autonomy in selecting their spouse, and even after getting married and having children, they are free to elope with whomever they choose. Women also participate in singing and dancing in public, and there are no punishments for sexual offenses in Kalash society. In contrast, their Muslim neighbors have stringent regulations and punishments for women engaging in sexual activities. Being a minority community residing alongside Muslims, it was natural for the Kalasha people to re-examine their sexually liberated culture. The Kalasha community is known for its open and egalitarian society, where both genders have equal rights to move and interact freely in public spaces. Women are empowered to choose their life partner and can even elope with someone else after marriage and having children. Women also participate in singing and dancing in public without any restrictions. In contrast, their Muslim neighbors have strict rules and punishments regarding women's behavior and sexual activities. However, living in close proximity to Muslims has led to the Kalasha community reevaluating their free-spirited lifestyle. A sense of honor is now emerging within the community, leading to a growing discomfort with the presence of outsiders in their villages. Despite their historically hospitable and kind attitude towards tourists and outsiders, some aggression has been observed due to sexual engagements, which were not previously tolerated in Kalasha society.

## **5.4 Marriage by Elopement**

In Kalash society, elopement is a customary way of getting married and is considered lawful. This custom involves a couple deciding to get married without seeking advice from their elders. The Kalasha community generally accepts this practice, and parents make all the necessary arrangements for the marriage. Additionally, married women have the right to leave their husbands and run away with another man who is willing to pay a double bride price. However, the Kalash community is surrounded by Muslim societies who often view this practice as cowardly and dishonorable. As a result, incidents of wife elopement in Kalash have led to conflicts between families. Recently, several cases have been reported where abductors have been beaten by the affected husbands and their clan members. Furthermore, In Kalash society, elopement is a well-regarded tradition where a couple can legally marry without consulting elders. The decision is solely made by the couple and their parents arrange the marriage. Interestingly, women also have the right to leave their husbands and elope with another man who pays double the bride price. However, the surrounding Muslim communities view this custom as cowardly and dishonorable, causing conflict when women elope. Recently, there have been several reports of husbands and their clans physically assaulting the abductors in response to these incidents.

## **5.5 Concept of Hereafter**

In Kalash religion, the concept of the hereafter is not as clearly defined as it is in some other religions. The Kalash people believe in the existence of an afterlife, but the specifics of this afterlife are not well-defined. The Kalash people believe that after death, the soul of the deceased travels to the realm of the dead, which they call "purgatory." This realm is believed to be located somewhere in the mountains, and it is believed that the journey to purgatory is difficult and perilous. The Kalash people believe that the soul of the deceased must pass through seven narrow mountain passes and cross seven bridges, each of which is guarded by a spirit. Once the soul reaches purgatory, it is believed to be judged by a deity known as "Munjegal," who is the god of the dead. Munjegal is believed to weigh the deeds of the deceased during their lifetime and determine their ultimate fate. The Kalash people believe that if the deceased led a virtuous life, they will be rewarded with a place in paradise, known as "Harsomt." This paradise is believed to be a place of eternal happiness and peace, where the deceased can live in harmony with their loved ones and the gods. On the other hand, if the deceased led an evil life, they will be punished with eternal damnation in a place called "Jahannam." This place is believed to be a realm of darkness and suffering, where the souls

of the wicked are tormented by demons and other evil entities. It is important to note that the concept of the afterlife in Kalash religion is not as clearly defined as it is in some other religions. The specifics of the journey to purgatory, the judgment by Munjegal, and the nature of Harsomt and Jahannam are not well-defined and can vary depending on the beliefs of individual Kalash people. However, the overall belief in the existence of an afterlife and the judgment of the soul based on their deeds in life is an important part of Kalash religion.

## **5.6 Burying of death bodies**

The Kalash people in Pakistan have a unique burial tradition. In the past, it was customary for the Kalash community to place the deceased bodies in wooden boxes and leave them in the open air along with their weapons and jewelry. However, due to external pressure and theft of valuable items, the Kalash people now bury their dead in coffins. The Muslim neighbors of the Kalash community objected to the practice of leaving the coffins in the open air due to the unpleasant odor of decomposing bodies and the use of expensive alpine wood for the coffins. As a result, the Kalash community has shifted to underground burials in recent times. Despite the change in burial practices, the Kalash people maintain their unique cultural identity and traditions. Until the 1970s, it was customary for the Kalash society to place the deceased bodies in wooden boxes and leave them in the open air with their weapons and jewelry. However, due to pressure from their Muslim neighbors and an increase in thefts of the valuable items, the Kalash community now buries their dead in coffins. The Muslim neighbors objected to the practice of leaving the coffins in the open air due to the unpleasant odor of decomposing bodies and the use of expensive alpine wood for the coffins. The influence of the Muslim community on the Kalash culture and practices played a significant role in changing the tradition of open-air burials to underground burials.

## **5.7 Use of Wine**

The use of wine is a significant aspect of Kalash culture, particularly during their religious ceremonies and festivals. The Kalash people make their wine, which they call "tu" or "tum", from various fruits such as grapes, mulberries, apricots, and apples. Wine is an essential part of the Kalash people's daily life, and it is also offered to their gods during religious ceremonies. The Kalash people believe that wine has healing properties and is a means to communicate with their gods. However, it is important to note that the consumption of alcohol is not encouraged in Islam, which is the dominant religion in the surrounding areas of the Kalash community. Despite this, the Kalash people have been able to maintain their unique cultural practices, including the use of wine, which is an integral part of their identity.

Wine plays a vital role in Kalash culture, where it is made locally and stored in buckets and underground tanks for use during festivals, births, marriages, and funerals. Wine is also freely consumed in the daily life of the Kalash community. However, due to its popularity, local brands of Kalash wine are often smuggled and sold illegally in Muslim areas, and non-practicing Muslims also visit the Kalash valleys to try the local wine. To restrict the consumption and trade of alcohol, the local Muslim population, with the support of government institutions, has imposed strict restrictions on the Kalash community. As a result, the Kalash people are now only permitted to produce wine for their personal consumption. They are prohibited from selling or exporting wine to the Muslim areas, and failure to comply with these regulations could result in a complete ban on wine production for the Kalash community in the future. Thus, the socio-religious activity of producing wine has come under restriction due to the influence of Muslims in the surrounding areas of the Kalash valley.

## **5.8 Concept of God**

The Kalash people believe in a supreme being called Dezaou or Katzaou, who is the creator of the universe and all living things. Dezaou is believed to be omnipotent and omniscient, meaning that he is all-powerful and all-knowing. He is also considered to be a benevolent deity who cares for his creations. Dezaou is not actively worshiped in the same way as the other gods and goddesses in Kalash religion. Instead, he is seen as the ultimate source of power and the one who provides blessings to the other deities. Therefore, the other gods and goddesses are considered to be intermediaries between humans and Dezaou. The Kalash people believe in six major gods and goddesses who are responsible for different aspects of life. Mahandeo is the god of love and beauty, and he is often depicted as a handsome young man. Jestak is the goddess of motherhood and protector of infants. She is often portrayed as a motherly figure, carrying a child in her arms. Imra is the god of weather and crops, and he is believed to control rainfall and the fertility of the land. Goshidai is the god of war and battles, and he is associated with bravery and strength. Sorizan is the goddess of the moon, who watches over the crops and ensures good harvests. Sajigor is the goddess of forests and animals, and she is believed to protect the natural environment and wildlife. The Kalash people worship these gods and goddesses through elaborate festivals and ceremonies. The festivals are held throughout the year to celebrate different events, such as the harvest season, the birth of a child, or the start of a new year. During the festivals, the Kalash people sing and dance, wear traditional clothing, and make offerings to the gods and goddesses. Animal sacrifice is an important part of Kalash religion, and it is performed during the festivals as a

way of showing gratitude and asking for blessings. The sacrifice of goats is most common, although other animals such as cows, bulls, and even horses may be sacrificed on rare occasions. The meat from the sacrificed animals is shared among the members of the community as a way of strengthening social bonds. Overall, the concept of God in Kalash religion is a polytheistic one that revolves around the worship of multiple gods and goddesses. These deities are seen as intermediaries between humans and the Supreme Being Dezau, who is the ultimate source of power and blessings. The Kalash people believe in the importance of maintaining a good relationship with these deities through worship and offerings to ensure their protection and well-being.



- Figure 4: Kalash god's old idols

## **5.9 Taboos**

Taboos are cultural or social practices that are considered unacceptable in a particular society. In Kalash culture, there are several taboos that are strictly followed by the community. These taboos are an integral part of Kalash culture and are strictly followed by the community.

The detailed are given below;

### **5.9.1 Eating beef**

The Kalash people do not consume beef, as they consider the cow to be a sacred animal.

### **5.9.2 Incest**

Marriage between close relatives is strictly forbidden in Kalash culture.

### **5.9.3 Menstruating women**

During menstruation, women are not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies or touch religious objects.

### **5.9.4 Cutting down juniper trees**

Juniper trees are considered sacred by the Kalash people, and it is forbidden to cut them down.

### **5.9.5 Killing of certain animals**

Certain animals, such as the snow leopard, are considered sacred in Kalash culture and are not to be hunted or killed.

### **5.9.6 Breaking a promise**

Breaking a promise is considered a serious offense in Kalash culture and can result in social ostracism.

## **5.10 Muslim Impact on Kalasha Cultural Practices**

The Kalasha people are a unique and ancient tribe residing in the Hindu Kush Mountain range in Pakistan. Their culture and beliefs are distinct from the dominant Muslim culture of Pakistan. However, due to their proximity to the Muslim world and the spread of Islam in the region, the Kalasha people have been influenced by Muslim traditions and practices. Some of the ways that Muslim culture has impacted Kalasha cultural practices:



- Figure 5: Researcher with community member of Kalash

### 5.10.1 Dress

The traditional dress of the Kalasha people consists of brightly colored robes and headwear. However, over time, many Kalashas have adopted more modest clothing styles, similar to those worn by Muslims in the region. Women have started to wear headscarves and long dresses, while men have started to wear more conservative clothing.

### 5.10.2 Food

The Kalasha people are known for their unique cuisine, which includes dishes like roasted goat and fermented milk. However, with the influence of Islam, some Kalashas have started to avoid consuming pork, which is forbidden in Islam. Additionally, some Kalashas have started to avoid alcohol, which is also prohibited in Islam.

### 5.10.3 Festivals

The Kalasha people are famous for their festivals, which are centered around their animistic beliefs. However, with the rise of Islam, many Kalashas have started to celebrate Muslim festivals as well, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.

#### **5.10.4 Religious Practices**

The Kalasha people are known for their animistic beliefs and their unique religious practices, such as animal sacrifice. However, with the influence of Islam, some Kalashas have converted to Islam and adopted Muslim religious practices. The Kalasha people have maintained their unique culture and beliefs, the influence of Islam has led to some changes in their cultural practices over time. The influence of Islam on the Kalash people has been a complex and ongoing process, shaped by a range of social, historical, and political factors. The influence of Islam on the Kalash people has been a complex and ongoing process. Some of the key factors that have influenced the relationship between the Kalash and Muslims include:

#### **5.10.5 Geographic proximity**

The Kalash people live in close proximity to Muslim communities, which has allowed for cultural and religious exchange over time.

#### **5.10.6 Historical interactions**

The Kalash people have a long history of interacting with Muslim conquerors and traders, which has shaped their cultural practices and beliefs.

#### **5.10.7 Social pressure**

Over time, some Kalash people have converted to Islam due to social pressure from Muslim communities.

#### **5.10.8 Economic incentives**

Some Kalash people have converted to Islam due to economic incentives offered by Muslim communities.

#### **5.10.9 Political dynamics**

The relationship between the Kalash people and the Pakistani government, which is predominantly Muslim, has also influenced the interaction between the Kalash and Muslims.



## **6. Social forces role in Conversion**

### **6.1 Social forces**

There are various social forces that can influence an individual's decision to convert to a religion. The main force is of family and community. Family and community influence is one of the most significant social forces behind religious conversion. People are often raised in a particular religious tradition and may convert to that same religion or a different one due to family or community pressure.

In Kalash culture, a family follows the directions of only one male who is head of the household. If he converts his religion; all family members accept that religion to keep unity and peace within the family. There are no forceful conversions in kalash culture. The conversion process is a long process, from primary school to the adulthood. Children get fascinated from Islamic stories in their textbooks, so when they grow up, they get converted because they carry these stories and knowledge of Islam from school to their Muslim friends and neighborhood. Tourism has played a major role in the conversion of people's religion. Tourist from different areas makes relations with the local community. The fascinating lifestyles of tourist impress the local girls and families and they accept the marriage offers and convert their religion. Though the divorce rate is high because often, the tourist portrays their self as rich person to impress them but later on, they appeared to be an imposter.

Cultural and historical factors can also play a role in religious conversion. For example, individuals living in a multicultural society may be drawn to a religion that resonates with their cultural background. Some people may be drawn to religion because of a personal desire to seek spiritual fulfilment or a higher power. These individuals may convert to a religion that they feel best satisfies their spiritual needs. Personal experiences, such as a near-death experience or a profound encounter with a religious leader or community, can also influence an individual's decision to convert. It is important to note that the reasons behind religious conversion are often complex and multifaceted, and individual factors may differ greatly from one person to another.

Most of the respondents were having a view that one of the factors could be that in kalash religion there is no divine book or written materials like other religions, so people started questioning about the origin of religion, where it came from and what do we have proof as written materials. The other factor should be that people also get converted into Islam due to domestic issues, like if father gets angry with their children over anything the children choose to convert out of anger or commits suicide, there is no third solution to that. In past death

ceremonies used to be very costly and those who had no resources to perform it were vulnerable to conversion and many people did convert due to non-affordability of death ceremonies but now we have made a committee to facilitate those who can't afford death ceremonies.

Some of the respondents believed that the Education system of Kalash, both kalasha and Muslims study together from primary to secondary into government schools, also the faculty members are from both religions, so this has huge impact on the conversion of kalash community into different faiths. Because when the students grow up, they have already had the knowledge of Islam from their Muslim classmates and teachers. The other reason behind the conversion is the curriculum of the primary and secondary schools. All the subjects except science have Islamic stories, the subject of Islamiyat is a compulsory subject for all the children at school, but this is not the only problem because General Knowledge, Urdu and English subjects also have Islamic knowledge and stories of Prophets, he said. All the books were published by Kpk Text book board Peshawar.

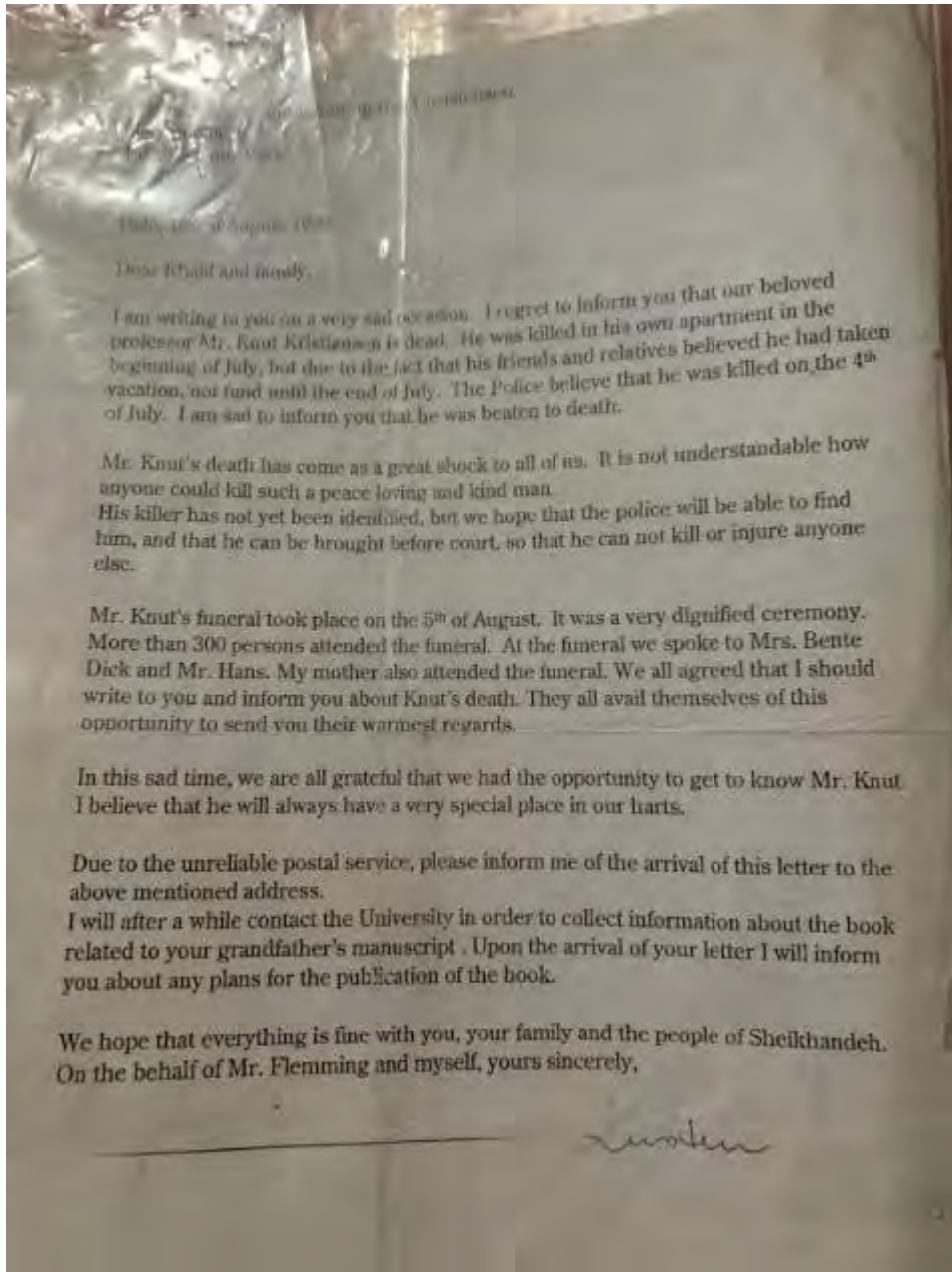
Another interesting fact was that many people have converted into Christianity as well. Missionary projects have been doing their work for long time in the shadow but because this is a sensitive issue and those have converted into Christianity wont revel themselves publicly. For that the missionary people give these converted people a handsome amount of money, lands and jobs in different cities of Pakistan.





- Figure 7: Government of primary school of Kalash valley

Christian missionaries offer free education along with different scholarships and financial assessments to children of Kalash valley in big cities of Pakistan to convert them to Christianity. The important case study of a respondent of vice chairman of Bumburait valley explains the in-depth study of Kalash valley in terms of its history and his father's relation with the well-known researcher from Norway, known for his ethnography in the Kalash valley about Kalasha culture and language and his articles are cited by multiple researchers around the globe. The visitor stayed for a month two times with the local respondent during his ethnography of the Kalasha language and translations. The relationship was long-lasting, the visitor researcher used to write letters to the local respondent informing him about the book he was working on but unfortunately, the researcher was found dead in his apartment in Oslo, Norway. The responsibility of the book was handed over to an Italian researcher who is widely famous for his deep analysis of Kalasha culture and its identity.



- Figure 8: Letter to Khali Ur Rehman from Oslo, Norway

Some close relatives of the respondents also wrote books on their conversion process to Islam and the sight of foreigners for the first time in Kalash valley. Some respondents was converted to Islam at the age of 25 and published book on the journey of religion conversion. Some glimpses from the published book “My Heartrendingly Tragic Story” is;

“It was the season of Mulberry fruits and I was with two or three friends we were eating mulberry fruit near Brun village of Bumburait. We saw two foreigners with bodyguards across the river and we were shocked to see someone wearing jeans and shirts and they were fishing they called us and we went and they asked for insects in Khowar language. The two

foreigners were British officers. The next morning the respondent's grandfather was called by the officers who were refused by the great grandfather of the respondents but later the officers themselves visited their home and invite the respondent's grandfather to take him with them and educate him.

The respondent's grandfather stayed with the British officers for 22 years and he writes in his book that;

*{Aa Kal'as'a ais a kafir ais,Aa angriz afsar as som para ae christian hawis,Aa tasi som india paara tasi mander ae pahaman ais,kyawat ki geri a Peshawar a my malgiri angriz afsar as kai telegram aris ki bo maza araw,phato tasi kai Shukuria aris my tan som apaw dehekas bati,khas kai kapten james a aur tasa Babas,ajo a Musulmani qabool kai am,aur my thara kia dhabhaw ne ashish,my mi marzi ashish ki a shama noa' mahazab aur tae ijazat khojim dae goi aur tasa telegram as jawab shen praw ki Tae chit kia kas haw phato se musulman hawaw local masjid una}* (When I was at Kalash I was kafir (non-believer) when I went with the British officers I became Christian and I visit India with them I used to go Hindu temples and when I came back to Peshawar city I telegram to my British friends that I thank you for keeping me and taking care of me especially captain James and his sister but now I want to accept Islam and there is no pressure on me it's my choice to accept this new faith and I need your permission and they answer his telegram by saying you are free to do anything and he converted to Islam in a local masjid).

My key respondent was of the view that the word "Kafir" which means non-believer was given to us by the authors and researchers and we were non-believers. In 1894 the king of Kabul forced converted us into the Muslim faith and we migrated from Afghanistan to Pakistan to avoid forced conversions. While talking about conversions of the Kalasha community, the respondent shared his opinions that the young generation has started questioning their religion and they find many errors in their religion. E.g the spring festival of Kalash valley "Chilam Joshi" why is being celebrated? What is the purpose of celebrating other festivals in the year, and what is the relation between festivals and praying to God? To answer these questions on religion and its relation with festivity they ask the priest (Qazi) who has limited knowledge and mixed stories about the festivals and religion of Kalash. Conversion to religion among young ladies is a personal decision that is influenced by various factors such as family background, social environment, personal beliefs, and experiences. Some young ladies may choose to convert to a religion because they find solace and meaning in its teachings, while others may do so due to peer pressure or family

expectations. It's important to note that the decision to convert to a religion should be based on one's own beliefs and not due to external pressures or influences. Young ladies should be free to explore their spiritual beliefs and make their own choices without fear of judgment or coercion.

It's also important for young ladies who are considering converting to a religion to research and learn about the beliefs and practices of the religion they are interested in. This can help them make an informed decision and ensure that their beliefs align with the teachings of the religion. Ultimately, the decision to convert to a religion is a personal one that should be made with careful consideration and without external pressure or influence.

Young ladies are more vulnerable to conversion due to love affairs and marriages. The traditional culture is changing to commercial; tourists visit these areas, especially during the festivals and money has become important for the people of Kalash rather than their identity and unique culture. Some respondents fears that Christianity will rise in the upcoming years, Christian missionaries distribute brochures in every home also they are giving free education to children and financial assessment to their families and the respondent believes that I see the culture of Kalash is divided into different forms, religions, and cultures.

Another key respondent, while giving me the interview called his wife to ask whether the dress of Kalashi women could be one of the factors to conversions as they won't be bound to carry this heavy dress anymore. His wife was of the view that yes it could be one of the factors to conversion because of her personal experience the Kalashi women dress was hard to carry and it takes them 10 days to make it with a lot of effort so washing the dress was also a huge task. The other factors that she mentioned were that there is no daily worship like other faiths especially Muslims and the priests (Qazi) have no knowledge about their religion. She is happy in her new home, speaks fluent Pushto language, and expecting a child.

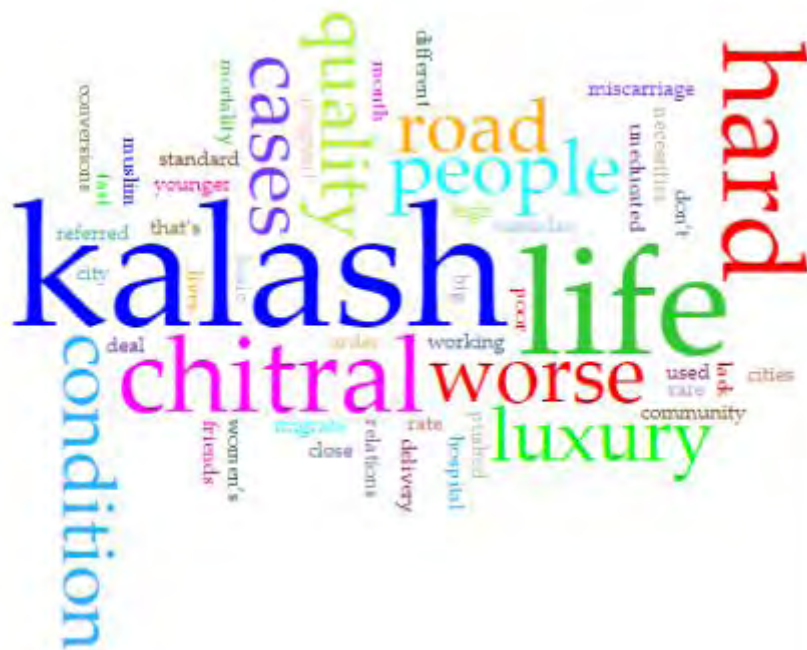
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## **6.2 The perception and local environments**

Kalash is a hard area; mostly people are uneducated, poor and live a hard life. Life is hard in kalash, they don't have basic necessities of life, and the road to kalash is in worse condition.



No hospital to deal with the delivery cases and such cases are always referred to Chitral and that's why we high mortality and miscarriage rate in pregnant women's due to worse condition of road to Chitral city. Luxury is very rare in kalash community, lack of quality life also pushed people of kalash into conversions and migrate to different big cities in order to have the same luxury and standard quality life.



- Figure 9: Basic keywords identified of perception and local environments

In some important case studies, another respondent who appeared to be the well know personality of Karkal Village explained that in kalash religion if someone fell in love with another person wife in order to get her (if she is willing) has to pay double bride price of the marriage to the ex-husband but due to the poverty and low income of the people what they do is to convert into the islam (both male and female) and now the new husband is not bound to pay double Haq-e-Mehar but single. Another factor he told me that Kelashi women likes handsome boys or fair skin color and if someone is not handsome or have fair skin, they remain single for long time so this is also a reason for them to convert into Islam and get married easily.

The perception of local environments can play a significant role in conversion to religion. When people experience significant changes or challenges in their lives, they may be more open to exploring new belief systems and ways of understanding the world around them. In some cases, the local environment itself may also play a role in shaping a person's religious

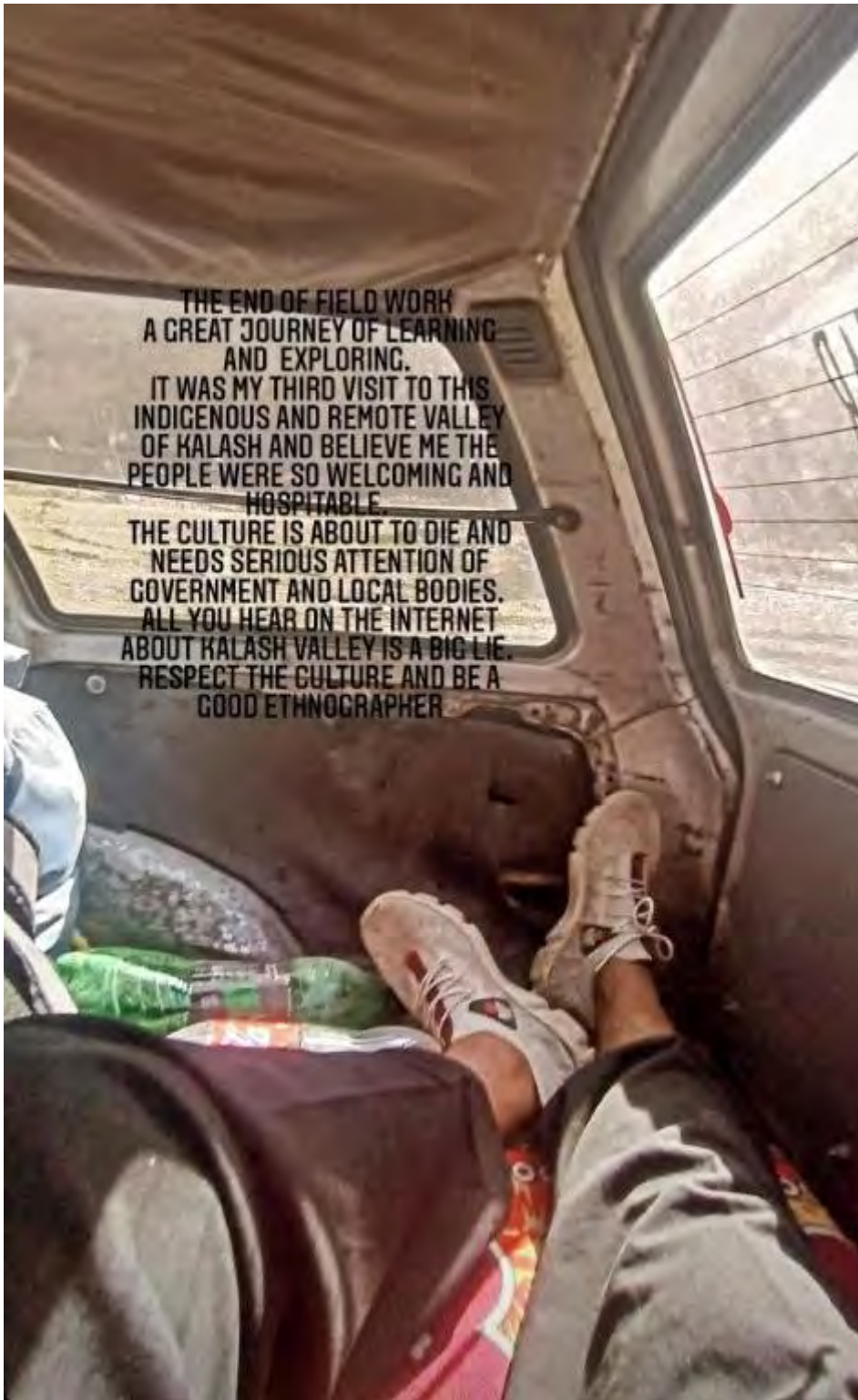


beliefs. For example, if a person lives in an area with a strong religious tradition, they may be more likely to adopt that tradition themselves. Alternatively, if a person moves to a new area where a different religion is dominant, they may be more inclined to explore that religion and potentially convert.

The local environment can also influence the specific beliefs and practices that are emphasized within a particular religion. For example, a person who converts to Christianity in a predominantly Catholic area may be exposed to different interpretations of scripture and different traditions than someone who converts in a predominantly Protestant area.

Additionally, the perception of the local environment can also influence how a person understands and interprets their religious beliefs. For example, if a person lives in an area with a high degree of social inequality and poverty, they may be more likely to emphasize religious teachings related to social justice and charity.

Overall, the relationship between local environments and religious conversion is complex and multifaceted, with a wide range of factors influencing how people perceive and engage with religion in their communities.



- Figure 10: Researcher after completion of field work



- Figure 11: PTDC guest house Bumburait valley of Kalash: Source fieldwork

Another important case of a respondent was also very interesting. He is the only converted person in his family, his first-born son died at the age of 30 after falling from the mountain while the second son is a special child. The respondent was suffering a lot physically and psychologically and couldn't bear the pain very well, and then he thought maybe changing his religion might bring the peace and it did. The respondent still suffers from the loss of his child, but he has the satisfaction in his heart that he is in better place now and it was God's will.

Construction of a road to Bumburait from Chitral city may bring development and facilities for the people of Bumburait but at the same time, it can bring disadvantages. The proper concrete road may increase tourists from different parts of the country and similarly, the conversion ratio will go higher as many people will come and many young girls will fall into the trap and get converted.

Conversion to a new religion often involves a significant shift in perception and perspective. The individual's local environment plays a crucial role in this process. The local environment can include factors such as the individual's social network, family, community, cultural background, and the physical surroundings in which they live. These factors can influence a person's perception of religion and spirituality. Similarly, an individual's personal experiences and encounters can also play a role in their conversion to a new religion. For example, a person who has experienced trauma or hardship may seek solace and comfort in a new religious belief system that offers a sense of purpose and meaning in the face of adversity.

Overall, the local environment and personal experiences of an individual can significantly influence their perception of religion and spirituality, and ultimately, their decision to convert to a new religion.

### **6.3 The role of Tablighi Jamat**

The increasing impact of such religious networks is an important marker of today's world. The Tablighi jamat programme in the locality of Kalash was almost identical to practices in other Tablighi jamat branches. The local Tablighis convened weekly Thursday night meetings at local mosques. There they called for the formation of voluntary preaching groups, which in turn moved to other towns or areas to spread their message among the local Muslim communities. The missionary trips for Kalash, was also extended. They would go from door to door to invite Muslims to prayer sessions at the local mosque. The idea was to involve a larger number of (supposedly secularized) Muslims in preaching and praying to revive regular religious practice among them. The new recruits would study the Faza'il-e 'Amal, the collection of Hadith (Prophetic traditions) compiled by one of the founders of the movement, which was supposed to help them transmit more formal religious knowledge through the Tablighi jamat's six-point programme of action, which was said to capture key elements of Islam. Separate gatherings were organized to address women, together with their spouses or close male relatives. The one great factor about the conversion of Kalash community into Islam is the Tablighi jamat. They often visit to these areas and preach Islam. Some of the religious men also know the holy ayats to treat the patients. In the locality some



Muslims fellows believe in Taweez or Dam Darood, so in past and still Muslims do taweez on people in order to convert them into Islam. For example, in one case respondent had abdominal obesity and heart problems and his health was getting worse each and every day even after going for regular checkups and consulting doctors in Chitral City but no luck. Then something divine happened, he said. Different religious scholars came to see him and made a Taweez for him and respondent used to wear it on his arm all day and night, and by the Grace of God his obesity and heart problems get cured and quickly after that he converted into islam. Respondent says that it was God will and I was among the lucky ones to convert into this beautiful religion. The above story behind his conversion into Islam was shared with my local friend.



- Figure 12: Basic keywords identified for role of Tablighi Jumat behind the conversion of religion of Kalash people.

There are many issues in collecting such types of cases. The purpose of not revealing the story was that some people used to be Qazi (the priest) of Kalasha people and this might create problems for them in the future. Religious groups can play a significant role in conversion to a new religion. These groups may actively seek out individuals who are interested in converting, or they may provide resources and support to those who are exploring new religious beliefs. One way that religious groups can facilitate conversion is by offering a sense of community and belonging. This can be especially important for

individuals who may feel disconnected or isolated from their previous religious or social networks. Religious groups can provide a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose, which can be appealing to individuals who are seeking new connections and relationships. Religious groups can also provide educational resources and guidance to those who are interested in learning more about a new religion. This can include literature, classes, and mentorship programs, which can help individuals, better understand the beliefs and practices of a new religion. In some cases, religious groups may also provide practical support to those who are converting, such as assistance with finding housing, employment, or other basic needs. This type of support can be especially important for individuals who may be leaving behind their previous religious or social networks and need help establishing themselves in a new community. Overall, religious groups can play an important role in conversion to a new religion by providing a sense of community, educational resources, and practical support to individuals who are exploring new beliefs and practices.

#### **6.4 Religion conversion as a source of economic benefits**

Kalash culture is a unique and expensive culture; people can't bear the expenses of this culture, such as marriage and death ceremonies. The marriages are costly in kalasha faith, and that could be one of the reasons behind the conversion of kalasha community into the Islamic faith. The process of marriage and entertaining the guests lasts till the first-born child. Getting a wife of your own choice is a very easy job in Kalash Community, but the process of marriage makes it worse. After two or three days the parents of bride come over and we greet them with by sacrificing goats and give money to each member of the family member of bride family and arrange transport to take them back home. After that, the cousins of bride come visit the groom home and the same process continues, sacrificing the goats and giving them money on the basis of your income. Bride's Uncle takes a lot of it; either it's a cow or the amount equivalent of cow along with a rifle. After some months, the Groom takes the bride to visit her hometown, now the groom is supposed to visit each and every relative of bride's family and the groom is bound to give money and sweets to every household he visits. But here comes the first born of newly wed, all the known people of bride come over at her place and the groom family entertains them by sacrificing around 15 to 20 goats and arranges every necessary thing for their stay. On 2<sup>nd</sup> born, only close relatives visit bride place, Costly and long process of marriages could be one of the reasons behind the conversion of Kalasha community into Islamic faith.



community. For example, a new convert to Islam may find job opportunities within the Muslim community, such as at a mosque or Islamic school.

Another economic benefit of religion conversion is the potential for increased social capital. Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and trust that exist between individuals and within communities. When individuals convert to a new religion, they may gain access to new social networks and resources that can help them succeed in their personal and professional lives. For example, a new convert to Judaism may find new business connections within the Jewish community. Religion conversion can also have economic benefits for religious institutions themselves. When individuals convert to a new religion, they may bring financial resources with them in the form of donations, tithes, or other contributions to the religious community. This can help support the ongoing work and mission of the religious institution, such as building new facilities or supporting charitable causes. Overall, while the decision to convert to a new religion is primarily driven by personal and spiritual factors, it can also have economic benefits for individuals and communities, including new job opportunities, increased social capital, and financial support for religious institutions



## **7. Tourism and social media**

### **7.1 The role of transmission and modern technology**

The utilization of modern technology has played a significant role in the conversion of the Kalash people's religion. In the past few decades, the advancement of communication technology has led to a significant increase in conversion rates, causing a shift in the religious landscape for millions of people. This trend has prompted major religious institutions to adopt live-streaming technology to reach out to their followers and attract new ones, using established sites of worship as a means of outreach. Live-streamed religious media is now widely accessible to believers not only in the privacy of their homes but also in public places such as hospitals, shops, and retirement communities. Modern technology and communication have played a significant role in the conversion of the Kalash people's religion. With the advent of advanced communication technologies, the people of Kalash have had greater access to information about other religions, and this has led to increased exposure and understanding of alternative belief systems? Additionally, the use of technology has enabled religious institutions to reach a wider audience through the use of live streamed media and online platforms, making it easier for individuals to connect with other communities and learn about different beliefs. The use of modern technology has also made it easier for individuals to research and explore various religious options, and to communicate with individuals from other religions. This has contributed to an increase in religious diversity and a decline in the dominance of traditional belief systems. Overall, the transmission of religious beliefs and practices has been greatly influenced by the advancements of modern technology and communication, leading to changes in religious identities and practices for the people of Kalash and beyond.

For example, in one case, a female student studying in class 9th in the Karkal Village. She has three sisters and two brothers; two of the sisters are converted and get married in different parts of the country. She was off the view that in her school at Karkal village majority of the teachers is Muslim while only a few belong to the Kalasha religion and that is why conversion to Islam is happening in Kalash valley. The teachers do not preach Islam but their approach and style of teaching lead to indirectly preaching. She has three sisters and two brothers, two of the sisters are converted to Islam and live in different parts of the country with their husbands. Converted sisters do visits their hometown Karkal, especially during the time of festivals, and enjoy themselves with their family members and relatives but at the same time, they also perform Muslim duties, like praying Namaz or covering their heads. {Aa

*aksar tikoko sawzem dae aur tre hazr jhon my followers an,May pakistani Drama Bo khosh aur myl khosh actor o Fawad Khan}* (I frequently use TikTok and have 3k followers on TikTok App. I like Pakistani dramas and my favorite actor is Fawad Khan)

Transmission and modern technology can play a significant role in conversion to a new religion. With the rise of the internet and social media, it has become easier for individuals to access information about different religions and connects with religious communities around the world. Social media has a major role in the conversion of Kalash valley, especially among young girls and boys. They frequently use Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and many other social apps which inspires them to migrate from these hilly areas and see the other parts of the country, and that is why many young girls prefer Muslim boys from other parts of the country to get married and get released from the valley and see the unseen beauty which was revealed through social media. One way that transmission and modern technology can facilitate conversion is by providing access to religious resources and teachings. Many religious institutions have websites, social media pages, and online forums where individuals can learn about their beliefs and practices. This can be especially helpful for individuals who may not have access to physical religious communities in their local area. Another way that transmission and modern technology can facilitate conversion is by providing opportunities for virtual connection and community. With the advent of online communication platforms, individuals can now connect with religious communities around the world in real-time. This can be particularly important for individuals who may not have access to physical religious communities or who are seeking to connect with individuals who share their religious beliefs and practices. In addition, modern technology can provide new forms of religious expression and engagement. For example, some religious institutions have developed mobile apps that provide daily prayers, scripture readings, and other religious content. This can allow individuals to integrate their religious practices into their daily lives in new and meaningful ways. Overall, transmission and modern technology can play a significant role in conversion to a new religion by providing access to religious resources and teachings, facilitating virtual connection and community, and providing new forms of religious expression and engagement.

## **7.2 The role of Tourism in Kalash valley**

Tourism is a thriving industry in Pakistan, especially in the Kalash valley. People from different parts of the country visit this region to experience its indigenous culture. There has been a noticeable rise in the number of foreign tourists exploring all three valleys of Kalash.

Among these valleys, Bumburait Valley stands out as the most prominent and popular destination, attracting a large number of visitors due to its well-maintained roads, excellent hotel and guesthouse facilities, and an ancient Kalasha museum, a creation of the Greek government. The Kalash culture is open and vibrant, with festivals celebrated throughout the entire year. These festivals involve dancing and feasting, and tourists are welcomed to participate without any restrictions. Every festival attracts a significant number of visitors from various parts of Pakistan, drawn by the captivating dances and colorful attire of Kalasha women. Tourism has brought significant financial benefits to the Kalash community. They have established hotels, guest houses, and shops to cater to tourists, which has helped boost their income. Additionally, tourism has provided them with global recognition, putting the Kalash community on the world map. The people of Kalasha warmly welcome tourists and ensure they are provided with all necessary amenities. However, alongside these positive impacts, tourism has also brought about alarming negative changes in the Kalash valley. Kalash is known for its open culture, where women have the freedom to choose their life partners based on their own preferences. This empowering practice allows them to decide on a husband according to their own will. The enchanting beauty of Kalasha women, with their hazel eyes and fair skin, serves as a magnetic attraction for Muslim tourists from various parts of the country that come to explore the captivating Kalash valley. Muslim tourists often arrive at Kalash valley in luxurious vehicles, bringing along expensive gifts as a gesture to impress the women of the community. During my fieldwork, I encountered numerous Kalash women who had been manipulated into marriage by Muslim tourists. Eventually, these women were coerced into converting to the Islamic faith and accompanying their husbands to larger cities in the country. Unfortunately, they faced discrimination and domestic violence in these new environments. As a result of the mistreatment and deceit from their Muslim husbands, many of these women got divorced and now live in the Kalash valley without any financial support.



- Figure 14: Researcher with Syed Mohammad Ahmed in Kalash valley

During the interview, a respondent from Aneesh village, Bumburait, aged 32 and a mother of three, shared her story. She narrated how her husband, a policeman from Punjab, used to visit Bumburait every year for festivals, leading to interactions between them. Over time and after several meetings, she fell in love with him and decided to embrace Islam in order to marry him. However, even after spending three years together, their understanding of each other never developed, and her husband subjected her to physical abuse and torment. As a result, she made the difficult decision to leave him and eventually got divorced. Currently, the respondent lives in her hometown, Aneesh, with her children, facing the challenge of caring for them without any support. { *Homo som Kia paisa as genaw madad ne shiaw shonja,abi gezhi aik aur shaya Dura apaw dek dae,Moch homa madad ne kan dae,ne adhena thi bhay am ne o al'ela'.A khundamocar thaw thi am*} (We don't have any financial support right now. We are alone and living in this house. People don't help, and I'm neither from here nor from there; I'm stuck in the middle) Tourism has brought about negative changes to the unique and beautiful culture of the Kalash people. With the increase in tourism, the rate of conversion has risen as visitors deceive the simple locals, leading them to accept Islam in order to marry.

Additionally, Kalash is a challenging area lacking many facilities available in other cities of Pakistan. Consequently, the younger generation desires to leave this rugged region and seek a more comfortable life in bigger cities. As a result, the Kalash people have become vulnerable to the influence of tourists, the harshness of their environment, and the lack of facilities, which compels them to leave the area and move to more developed places. Thus, tourism is contributing to the conversion of the Kalash people.

This case study revolves around a respondent from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who currently runs a guest house in the picturesque Bumburait Valley of Kalash. Five years ago, he relocated to this beautiful valley and enrolled in an engineering college, where he met his future wife. After spending some years together, he proposed to her, and she accepted, converting to Islamic faith on their wedding day. Presently, she resides in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a mother, while her husband continues to manage the guest house in the valley. This respondent's story illustrates how tourism can bring about changes in the Kalash community and lead to conversions to Islamic faith, as it is often considered necessary for a non-Muslim to convert in order to marry a Muslim individual. The young boys and girls of Kalash Valley aspire to explore the country and seek better living conditions. However, Kalash Valley poses challenges as it is a difficult area to travel in. The journey to Bumburait takes around 3 hours on a narrow and dangerous road. Moreover, the absence of maternity hospitals leaves expecting women with no choice but to undertake risky trips to Chitral city on steep roads, leading to unfortunate incidents like miscarriages and even death. Additionally, the heavy workload on women exacerbates the situation. Capitalism and the influence of social media have prompted young girls in Kalash to consider conversion in order to relocate to different cities, where life is comparatively easier than in Kalash. Converting to Christianity is also prevalent in Kalash Valley. However, those who choose to convert to Christianity often keep their newfound faith hidden from society, unlike the acceptance that comes with converting to Islam. Christian converts prefer to stay discreet, operating in the shadows without revealing themselves openly. Christianity missionaries visit Kalash Valley under the guise of NGOs and offer relief work to the community. Nevertheless, their main objective is to convert the locals to Christianity. They provide stipends and financial support to families and enroll their children in colleges located in various cities across the country, raising them as Christians. During my weeks spent in Bumburait Valley of Kalash, I discovered that Christian conversion remains active in the community. However, those who embrace Christianity work as a cohesive group and gradually convert others to Christianity while maintaining a low

profile. In an interview, a respondent shared the story of his uncle, who was taken by a foreign NGO when he was just a child. The NGO promised to provide education, work opportunities, and financial support to the family. However, it turned out that their main agenda was to convert him to Christianity. After years passed, he grew into an adult and visited his hometown, where he revealed his decision to move to America. Presently, he resides in America with his Christian wife, and they practice the Christian religion.

## Summary

The research titled "The Role of Social Forces in the Conversion of Kalash Community: A Case Study of Bumburait Valley" elucidates the numerous social, economic, and environmental factors underpinning the indigenous and captivating culture of Kalash Valley. Situated in Chitral district, Pakistan, Kalash Valley's physical allure, vibrant attire, festivities, feasts, and distinctive cultural practices gather national and international appeal. However, the community faces a grave threat of religious conversion to Islam and Christianity. One of the social factors behind the conversion in Bumburait Valley relate to the costly marriage and funeral ceremonies, demanding significant funds that pose challenges for a community predominantly under the poverty line. Consequently, some opt for Islam due to its emphasis on simplicity in these rites. While the community has assisted impoverished families in these rituals, the repercussions remain. Education emerges as another catalyst; the curriculum in Kalash's government schools adheres to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) syllabus, mandating Islamiyat subjects but neglecting Kalash religious content. This early exposure to Islam influences children's beliefs, rendering them vulnerable to conversion in adulthood. Additionally, the presence of Islamic faculty members inflames this influence. Another driving force for conversion is the presence of Tablighi Jamaat, advocating Islam within mosques and praise the purity and rewards following conversion. Vulnerable communities often attract diverse influences; Christian missionaries, camouflaged as NGOs and donors, provide scholarships, enticing Kalash children to major cities for conversion to Christianity. While Islamic conversion is acceptable, Christian converts conceal their new beliefs. The absence of definitive religious texts, spirituality, and daily worship in Kalash religion prompts questioning of its origins. Dissatisfaction with answers spurs some to adopt Islam for its comprehensive doctrines and rituals. The heavy, time-consuming black attire worn by Kalashi women contrasts with the ease of wearing light clothes in Islam, influencing some to convert. Tourism, while boosting the economy with guesthouses, hotels, and cafes, also bears adverse effects. Tourists, participating in festivals, affect the community's dynamics. Empowered Kalash women's choice in marriage and elopement contrasts with Muslim tourists' manipulation of girls into conversion and marriage, often ending in abuse and divorce. Social media significantly contributes to conversion as the younger generation, exposed to popular culture, seeks urbanized living. Kalash's remote location and limited infrastructure drive migration, especially among young girls due to inadequate healthcare. These migrations inadvertently foster conversion. With Kalash culture dwindling, urgent

action from local and governmental bodies is imperative to safeguard this national treasure.

Key words: Dwindling, inadvertently, inadequate, camouflaged, catalyst, elucidate.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, after conducting an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing religion conversion in the Kalash community, it becomes evident that forceful conversion is not a significant driver. However, this does not diminish the importance of various other social, environmental, and economic forces that come into play, shaping the intricate dynamics of religious change among the Kalash people. Social factors play a paramount role in the process of religion conversion. The presence of religious communities and their impact on the individual's sense of belonging and identity cannot be underestimated. The strong sense of community provides a support system that may sway individuals to explore and embrace new religious beliefs, seeking a deeper connection with like-minded individuals. Moreover, the influence of family, friends, and cultural norms within the Kalash society also greatly shapes the religious decisions of its members. The interplay of these social dynamics creates a web of factors that either reinforce or challenge the existing religious affiliations. Further exploring the environmental factors, we find that access to religious resources and teachings plays a pivotal role in facilitating religious conversions. The availability of religious texts, places of worship and religious leaders all contribute to the dissemination of information about different belief systems. For instance, the introduction of Tablighi Jamat and its role in influencing the local community highlights the significance of religious outreach programs. The impact of modern technology, especially the internet and social media, has also been instrumental in reshaping the religious landscape. Youngsters, in particular, are more susceptible to these technological advancements, often leading them to explore various religious media and ideologies from around the globe. This access to diverse perspectives can spark curiosity and open the door to religious exploration and possible conversion. Economic factors cannot be overlooked in the context of religion conversion among the Kalash people. The grandeur and expense associated with Kalash rituals may act as a factor leading some individuals to consider converting, as they perceive potential economic benefits offered by other religions. Additionally, religious institutions often provide job opportunities and social capital to those who convert, further encouraging and supporting religious changes. Furthermore, converts may bring financial resources with them in the form of donations and contributions to their newly embraced religious communities, creating a cycle of mutual benefit. It is crucial to recognize that religion conversion is a multifaceted and intricate process. The convergence of these social, environmental, and economic factors creates a unique tapestry of motivations and experiences for individuals who choose to convert to a

new religion. Each person's journey is shaped by their personal encounters with religious communities, their surroundings, and the information accessible to them. In conclusion, the absence of forceful conversion in Kalash does not negate the significance of the social, environmental, and economic forces at play in shaping religious choices. To foster a deeper understanding of religion conversion, it is imperative for researchers, policymakers, and the community itself to recognize the complex interplay of these factors. By doing so, a more nuanced comprehension of the motivations behind religious change can be attained, leading to greater harmony and mutual respect among diverse religious communities within the Kalash region. In essence, the exploration of these multifaceted factors emphasizes the dynamic nature of religious transformations in the Kalash community. As individuals navigate the intricate pathways of belief and identity, the interplay of social, environmental, and economic forces continues to shape the ever-evolving religious landscape within this culturally rich and diverse region. By acknowledging the significance of these factors and promoting informed dialogue, we can foster a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of religious choices, ultimately enriching the cultural fabric of the Kalash community and beyond.

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

Based on the conclusion, some potential recommendations for future studies on religion conversion could include:

- Further exploration of the role of social networks and communities in religion conversion, including how these networks influence individual decision-making and the factors that contribute to the formation of these networks.
- Investigation of the impact of environmental factors on religion conversion, such as the availability and accessibility of religious resources and teachings, and how modern technology is changing the landscape of religious transmission.
- Examination of the economic forces that influence religion conversion, including the role of financial resources and job opportunities in the decision to convert, and the impact of new converts on the financial health of religious institutions.
- Investigation of the interplay between social, environmental, and economic factors in religion conversion, including how these factors interact with each other and contribute to the overall process of conversion.
- Further study of the experiences of individuals who convert to a new religion, including the challenges they face and the ways in which their lives are impacted by their decision to convert.
- Overall, future studies on religion conversion should aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex forces that drive this process and their impact on individuals and communities.

## Annexure

### Glossary

- Angooti. *Guest room*
- Apak. *Mouth*
- Brar. *Brother*
- Angar. *Fire*
- Bachi *Auntie*
- Bhoot. *Shoes*
- Bas. *Day*
- Bagi. *Passage*
- Baaru. *Husband*
- Chuchi. *Tomorrow*
- Cheer. *Milk*
- Droch. *Grapes*
- Daar. *Wood*
- Gaak. *Cow*
- Gach. *Eyes*
- Gik. *Coming*
- Hanum. *Today*
- Hayman. *Winter*
- Istor. *Horse*
- Istree *women*
- Kar *ears*
- Korum. *Work*
- Lai. *Blood*
- Legeeni *Tongue*
- Manu. *Guest*
- Mandajoo. *Kalash graveyard*
- Neesheey. *Sit*
- Naan Taat. *Parents*
- Oshak. *Cold*
- Phunk. *Dance*

- Phur. *Hairs*
- Pakhti. *Rice*
- Qazi. *Priest*
- Shun. *Lips*
- Sha. *Black*
- Shato *lassi*
- Trin. *Yogurt*
- Thoam *Smoke*

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## INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do you think the religious conversion of kalash community is a threat to the overall social set of the society?
2. Do you agree the mostly people say that religious conversion in kalash community is a forced conversion?
3. Do you agree that forced religious conversion is a human right violation?
4. Do you agree religious conversion of kalash community is a threat of its unique culture?
5. What do you think are the factor responsible for the religious conversion of Kalash community?
6. Do you agree freedom of religion is fundamental human rights?
7. What are the consequence of religious conversion for the over the peace full environment of Chitral?
8. What should be the role of governments to control the forced conversion of Kalash community?
9. What do you think the government and human right should do to control the forced religious conversion?
10. Do you agree that socio economic problem is the causes of religious conversion?
11. Do you agree that POVERTY is also a cause of religious conversion ?
12. Do you belief people mostly convert to other religion without knowing its effects on their culture and social setup?
13. Do you think role of Kalash community itself is necessary to aware people about force conversion?
14. Do you agree that Kalash people cannot afford their culture that is why they convert their religion?
15. Do you think the religious conversion of Kalash community is threat to the overall social set of the family?
16. What are the main reasons of love marriage in Kalash community?
17. Why the Kalash people convert to Islam?
18. What are the main factors due to conversion and why?
19. Do you belief people mostly convert to other religion without knowing its effects on their culture and social setup?
20. Do you think role of Kalash community itself is necessary to aware people about force conversion?

21. Do you agree that Kalash people cannot afford their expertise and that is why they convert their religion yes or no?
22. Do you think the religious conversion of Kalash community is threat to the overall social set of the family?
23. What are the main reasons of love marriage in Kalash community?
24. Why the Kalash people convert to Islam if there is any force conversion or by choice?
25. What are the main factors due to conversion and why?
26. How many festivals that Kalash people can celebrate in a year?
27. Do you agree that mostly girls or women are converted if there is any facts are not?
28. Do you know if there is any foreign help to Kalash people yes or no?
29. Do you agree that the outsider comes and say you people are so unique please do not convert your religion?
30. Do you explain that how the kalash people celebrate their marriage ceremony?