

Anthropological Insights about the Intersection of  
Climate Change, Women Agency and Food Security:  
An Ethnography of Maloch Swat, Pakistan



BY

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## Final Approval of Thesis

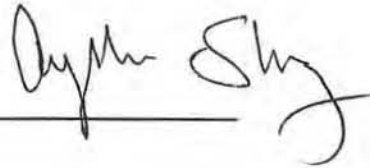
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my work to all the women who have stood the test of time in their communities via their efforts to empower women, reduce vulnerability, and make their society more equitable. The most attractive thing a woman can wear is confidence; above all, play a protagonist character in your life rather than the loser.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Climate change is an international phenomenon which is affecting lives of human beings across the globe. There are significant changes in observation where economic, social, agricultural, political and cultural aspects of lives of different communities have been negatively affected. Many research works have documented the effects of climate change on food production and agriculture with clear illustration on impact of these climatic changes on food storage system and livelihood. Also, women play a key role in the production and providing food security to their families. To highlight these key factors and examine the nexus among climate change and women agency and household food storage is the main objective of this study. Lack of precipitation and ever lowering under-ground water table in North-West Pakistan i.e. Swat district has affected crop production / yield in some villages of Swat. Maloch village of tehsil Kabal faces such shortfall which is affecting household economy. Secured annual food supply has been a centuries' long cultural practice of local families with additional dairy products from household livestock. Recently families have not been able to store enough food grains and lost livestock as well. This is directly affecting health of women and children. The research is ethnographic in nature to hold a grasp on how and why families have been getting away from cultural practices and how their lives positively or negatively being affected. The approach used in this research is deductive in nature. Purposive and snow ball sampling is used for selection of the sample. An open-ended questionnaire and semi structured interview guide are designed as a data collection tool.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Woman Agency, Food Production, Household Food Storage

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 OVERVIEW

The global climate represents an intricate interplay of interconnected factors, encompassing the sun, Earth, oceans, winds, precipitation, ecosystems, and human activities. This intricate system undergoes climate change marked by persistent shifts in weather patterns spanning prolonged periods, often extending over decades. These transformations, which encompass amplified warmth, escalated precipitation, or heightened aridity, emanate from a synergy of natural mechanisms and human-induced influences like greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation. These factors give rise to comprehensive repercussions on ecological, social, and economic fronts. Effectively addressing climate change mandates an all-encompassing strategy that harmonizes scientific investigation, policy formulation, technological advancement, and collective societal commitment, culminating in the mitigation of causal agents and the adaptation to resultant effects. This comprehensive endeavor serves to preserve the environment and uphold human well-being for present and forthcoming generations, ensuring a sustainable legacy (Cameron & Scheel, 2001).

The phenomenon of climate change is distinguished by its prolonged and gradual evolution, marking a departure from the innate volatility inherent in natural weather patterns. Weather, inherently dynamic, unfolds in a myriad of fluctuations on a daily basis globally. The historical record of Earth's climate reveals a recurring pattern of transformations, oscillating between epochs of glaciation and warmer phases. The escalating temperatures we currently experience play a role in the progressive thawing of ice in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions, alongside the diminishing extent of glaciers and the reduction of snow cover spanning various geographical terrains (Thompson, 2010). The process of glacial melt gives rise to water influx into the Earth's oceans, leading to a discernible elevation in global sea levels. This phenomenon, in turn, poses a substantial risk to smaller landmasses covered by ice, as their vulnerability to potential disappearance becomes increasingly pronounced. Notably, the ongoing rise in sea levels imperils the existence of these compact ice-encrusted regions. Examining the geological annals, our planet has undergone a sequence of five major ice ages, with the most recent concluding approximately 11,700 years ago.

This historical perspective underscores the cyclical and dynamic intricacies of Earth's climatic history, serving as a pertinent reminder of the recurrent shifts that have shaped our planet over millennia (History, 2015). Within the realm of historical climate dynamics, the current prominence of this concern comes to the fore. Notably, from the initiation of industrial advancements, there has been an unparalleled hastening in the elevation of Earth's mean temperature. Referred to as global warming, this phenomenon can be directly attributed to the heightened discharge of greenhouse gases stemming from human activities (Schneider, 1989). For numerous years, meteorologists and climatologists across the globe have been engaged in persistent and systematic observation. This steadfast commitment to data collection and analysis has spanned a considerable timeframe, reflecting an enduring dedication to the study of atmospheric and climatic phenomena. This collective effort, carried out on an international scale, underscores the meticulous nature of the scientific pursuit, emphasizing the meticulousness with which experts scrutinize weather patterns, atmospheric interactions, and long-term climatic trends. These diligent endeavors contribute to the comprehensive understanding of Earth's intricate climate systems, facilitating the identification of patterns, anomalies, and potential shifts that hold pivotal implications for both scientific understanding and societal well-being (Kouchak, et al., 2020).

(Drolet, 2012) perspective accentuates a critical contention: while greenhouse gases naturally constitute a component of our planetary equilibrium, their prevalence has been unambiguously amplified by human agency. It is imperative to acknowledge that activities such as the incineration of fossil fuels, the relentless engagement in agricultural practices, the rampant deforestation, and the uncontrolled degradation of waste materials within landfills are incontrovertible contributors to this escalating predicament. The consequential outcome of these human-induced actions is a marked and concerning escalation in the concentration of greenhouse gases, undermining the very balance of our ecosystem and warranting a thorough reevaluation of our stance on sustainable practices and environmental responsibility (Drolet, 2012). The role of greenhouse gases, akin to a shielding mantle encircling the Earth and capturing the sun's radiant energy, is notably encapsulated by the greenhouse effect. However, the augmentation of this effect beyond permissible limits engenders a cascade of emerging challenges, with a particular emphasis on the sphere of health, which demands rigorous scrutiny and action. As we navigate this juncture, it becomes imperative to engage in a

comprehensive evaluation of the repercussions stemming from an intensified greenhouse effect, culminating in a discerning discourse on the imperative steps required to safeguard both the environment and human well-being (Andersson & Wallin, 2000).

Climate change can contribute to hunger refugee flows and more. The escalating temperature trends have far-reaching implications, notably exemplified by the hastened evaporation of oceans resulting from their heightened warming. This accelerated evaporation not only contributes to an increased frequency of storms but also amplifies their ferocity, subsequently intensifying precipitation patterns. Consequently, the overarching impact of global warming is starkly evident in the escalation of extreme weather phenomena, encompassing prolonged droughts and the exacerbation of heatwaves. These repercussions extend further, as the depletion of soil moisture coupled with elevated temperatures during drought conditions heightens the susceptibility to devastating wildfires. Such discernible manifestations of heightened temperatures, spanning both terrestrial and aquatic realms, intrinsically disrupt the intricate balance of Earth's ecosystems, profoundly influence societies, pose a challenge to cultural heritage, and cast a shadow on economic sustainability. As stewards of our planet, the onus is upon us to critically assess these ramifications and engage in decisive action to mitigate their adverse effects (Drolet, 2012).

The surge in sea levels stands as an undeniable catalyst for calamitous inundations that plague a multitude of nations. These devastating floods, characterized by their dual impact, not only directly jeopardize human lives but also unleash a relentless assault on the very foundation of sustenance – agricultural fields and farms. It is imperative to recognize that this ecological upheaval is not merely a localized crisis; rather, it constitutes a global conundrum demanding an assertive response. As we confront the harrowing consequences of rising sea levels, we are compelled to address the multifaceted challenges posed by these deluges, transcending geographical boundaries and compelling us to chart a course towards sustainable solutions that safeguard both livelihoods and the delicate balance of our food systems (Memon & Sharjeel, 2015).

The impact of these intrusions leaves no individual unscathed. Climate change is proving to be a catalyst for multifaceted repercussions, extending well beyond the



realm of the global economy. Its influence is far-reaching, triggering disruptions within the social fabric, health paradigms, and geopolitical landscapes of numerous regions, particularly those categorized as developing countries. The scarcity of vital resources, including sustenance and energy, coupled with the absence of avenues to access these essentials, has become a crucible that spawns novel conflicts in the human experience. It is imperative to recognize that the environment functions as a cornerstone, underpinning both our well-being and the intricate mechanisms of our economic framework (Brown, 2001).

The notion that these intrusions solely impact individuals is far too narrow, as the reverberations of these phenomena extend their grip well beyond the confines of personal experience. Climate change's influence is not to be confined merely within the parameters of the global economic domain; rather, it operates as a catalyst for disturbances that infiltrate the intricate tapestry of societal equilibrium. This ripple effect engulfs diverse dimensions including health, geopolitical dynamics, and the cohesion of societies, with its most pronounced tremors being felt in regions grappling with multifaceted developmental challenges. The dearth of crucial resources, notably sustenance and energy, compounded by barriers to accessibility, becomes a crucible in which novel strains within the human narrative gestate. Herein lies the crucible for the emergence of fresh frictions in the human experience. The environment, far from being a passive backdrop, assumes an instrumental role, akin to an indispensable scaffold that bolsters both our well-being and the edifice of economic pursuits.

This orchestration of roles accentuates its pivotal significance, transforming it into a bedrock pillar that underpins the very essence of our existence. The correlation between heat exposure and escalated morbidity and mortality rates underscores a critical discourse that demands comprehensive exploration. In this pursuit, delving into the intricate interplay of physiological, social, and economic factors becomes not only prudent but imperative. It is through this holistic lens that we can effectively decipher the intricate tapestry of adverse health outcomes attributed to heat stress, thereby unraveling the complexities that govern their manifestation within diverse populations (Klinenberg, 2015).

Our reliance on unpolluted air, pristine water sources, and a consistent climate is indisputable; indeed, a thriving economy hinges upon the bedrock of climatic

stability. The present reality underscores the gravity of climate change's repercussions on both our ecosystem and economic landscape. The surge in temperatures casts a pervasive influence, reverberating across flora, fauna, and critically jeopardizing human well-being. This pertains particularly to vulnerable segments including the youth, the elderly, outdoor laborers, and women. The intrinsic relationship between climatic shifts and their cascading impacts mandates an acute focus as we navigate these intricate dynamics (Costello, Abbas, Allen, Bell, & Bellamy, 2019). The symbiotic relationship between our prosperity and the fundamental elements of clean air, unpolluted water, and a stable climate demands unwavering attention. It is unequivocal that a robust economy thrives within the parameters of climatic stability. This axiom is underscored by the prevailing reality, where climate change's encroachments cast a formidable shadow over both the environment and our economic fabric. The rise in temperatures, a hallmark of this transformation, exerts a far-reaching influence that reverberates through the intricate web of life, engendering repercussions that reverberate from the realm of plants and animals to the very foundations of humanity. The consequences are particularly pronounced for the most vulnerable segments of society, including the young, the elderly, outdoor laborers, and women. The urgency of addressing this intricate interplay between climatic perturbations and their cascading effects cannot be overstated, for the ramifications transcend environmental borders and permeate the fabric of our societal and economic paradigms.

The meticulous exploration of women's agency in influencing significant life junctures forms a central focus of discussion. Furthermore, it unveils a mechanism that augments a sense of security and predictability within the contexts of the research areas, achieved through distinct demarcations encompassing women's autonomy, cumulative household earnings, and the overall sense of security and stability within households. These multifaceted dimensions are inevitably impacted with a strategic aim to uphold the existing status quo. The narrative shifts its gaze to the resilience displayed by women as they navigate these unfavorable consequences, thereby providing a nuanced perspective on their steadfastness in the face of adversity (Carr, 2008).

The discourse delves deeply into the critical theme of women's agency in shaping pivotal life trajectories. This inquiry not only sheds light on an essential aspect of women's lives but also uncovers a pivotal mechanism that engenders a profound sense of security and certainty within the research areas. This is achieved through a

meticulous dissection of the spheres of women's self-determination, overall household income, and the overarching safety and assurance prevalent within households. These interconnected facets invariably experience the impact of intentional measures, aiming to preserve the established status quo. As the focus shifts to the remarkable resilience demonstrated by women, navigating the complexities of these adverse outcomes, a robust argument emerges one that underscores the inherent strength and unwavering determination exhibited by women amidst the intricate interplay of these multifaceted dynamics.

The concept of livelihood encompasses a comprehensive spectrum of competencies, resources, and engagements essential for sustaining one's existence. It exerts a profound impact on how families and communities confront challenges and strive to navigate through adversities. The intricate interplay of livelihood shapes the strategies employed to address pressures and disruptions, underscoring its pivotal role in resilience building within both individual and communal contexts (Carney & Ashley, 1999).

It is expounded as a distinct form of livelihood that intricately underscores the paramount importance of unobstructed access to a spectrum of assets and engagements. This access is fundamentally molded and informed by the complex interplay of social relations, encompassing vital dimensions like gender, class, kinship, and prevailing belief systems. Notably, these interwoven social dynamics converge with the overarching influence of institutions, resulting in a deeply intricate tapestry that defines the array of livelihood strategies and opportunities (Ellis, 2001). Apprehending the strategies harnessed by individuals reliant on natural resources to navigate the intricacies of climate change is intrinsically intertwined with comprehending the broader contours of their livelihood dynamics. This intricate nexus forms the bedrock upon which the scaffolding of effective adaptation frameworks can be erected. The imperative lies not solely in deciphering isolated responses to climate shifts, but in unraveling these strategies within the context of a multifaceted livelihood canvas. By delving into this amalgamation of factors, a nuanced argument emerges underscoring the undeniable significance of holistic comprehension in shaping robust and contextually relevant adaptation strategies that can effectively bolster the resilience of resource-dependent communities in the face of climate change-induced challenges.

The intricate interplay of local communities' livelihoods and their resource dynamics reflects the delicate equilibrium between internal agency and external forces. Their susceptibility to a spectrum of impacts, from climatic extremes like floods and droughts to conflict, agricultural setbacks, and economic shocks, underscores the vulnerability inherent in their existence. Particularly poignant are the struggles of impoverished communities nestled in ecologically precarious landscapes steep hillsides, arid expanses, and flood-prone areas where climate extremes can potentially disrupt livelihoods irreparably, compounded by swift climatic fluctuations that stymie recovery efforts. In navigating these challenges, the essence of resilience emanates from the very core of these communities, manifesting through self-organization, social learning, and innovative adaptation. This convergence of adversities and ingenuity underscores the paramount role of local adaptive capacities, weaving a narrative of collective determination and strategic response that forms the bedrock for confronting and transcending the complexities of extreme climatic change (Neil, 2006).

The concept of food security has evolved over time, with prevailing perspectives often orbiting the paradigm introduced by the World Bank in 1986. Maxwell and Frankenberger distill the essence of food security, portraying it as the unwavering guarantee of unimpeded entry to ample and nourishing sustenance, essential for fostering a robust and wholesome life (Maxwell, 1996). The tenets of food security, as articulated by FAO in (2006), encapsulate a robust argument: a state of true sustenance is achieved when every individual enjoys unobstructed, perpetual, and comprehensive access to a sustenance that not only meets their nutritional needs but also aligns with their personal dietary preferences. This paradigm asserts that nourishment extends beyond mere sustenance it encompasses the empowerment of choice, enabling individuals to cultivate an active and thriving life. In essence, FAO's definition not only elucidates the essence of food security but also underscores its fundamental role in fostering holistic well-being and agency within societies.

Bokeloh, Weingärtner, & Rottenburg, (2009) elucidation of food security asserts that genuine "Food and Nutrition Security" is achieved when a balanced provision of suitable sustenance encompassing facets of quantity, quality, safety, and socio-cultural alignment permeates society, universally accessible and attainable. The inherent potency of this access, when effectively harnessed, extends beyond mere nourishment, shaping a foundation for both physical vitality and emotional well-being,

thus fostering a life that is not only healthy but also contented. This perspective resonates as a compelling argument, underlining the transformative role of food security in facilitating individual and collective flourishing (Bokeloh, Weingärtner, & Rottenburg, 2009).

In the pursuit of advancing the aforementioned notion, opportunities to bolster food security emerge across diverse strata, encompassing the realms of agriculture, household practices, market dynamics, agro-processing, retail sectors, as well as spanning cross-border, regional, and global domains. A concerted effort from governmental bodies, civil society entities, research institutions, and private enterprises becomes paramount in facilitating farmers' comprehension and adoption of technologies geared towards yield augmentation, farm system diversification, and curbing post-harvest losses. Concurrently, elevating average incomes becomes a conduit for heightened food procurement, with special emphasis placed on recognizing women as multifaceted contributors' producers, consumers, and guardians of family nutrition. Enhancing both institutions and infrastructure is pivotal, ensuring seamless transition of food from production nodes to points of purchase and consumption. Ultimately, the call to action extends to forging an equitable and sustainable global food ecosystem that encompasses the interplay of diverse stakeholders, working in synergy to fortify the collective fabric of food security (USAID, 2013).

In the discourse surrounding climate change, the spotlight is increasingly shifting towards the critical realm of food security. This pivotal concept signifies a state where universal access, spanning physical, social, and economic dimensions, is ensured, guaranteeing ample and safe nourishment that aligns with individual dietary preferences. However, it remains an unsettling reality that on a global scale, this pinnacle remains elusive, the international stage still grappling to meet this fundamental yardstick. Alarmingly, the impending ramifications of climate change cast an ominous shadow over this pursuit, exacerbating the challenges and rendering the attainment of such an essential equilibrium an even more arduous endeavor.

Existence of food is referred to as food security. A constant supply of food that is of high quality, is available in appropriate quantities, and tastes pleasant. The production of food, the amount of food in storage, and the volume of commerce all affect this aspect of food security. Production, processing, storage, allocation,

marketing strategies, and technology all contribute to the increased accessibility of food. The availability of food is influenced by a number of variables, including income, income inequality, actual food costs, gender, literacy, and employment status. First, there is a need to enhance these characteristics through improved governmental employment, education, and health policies (Munir, Kiani, & Baig, 2016).

Men and women are differently affected because of climatic changes, and because of gender disparities, women are more vulnerable. The gender effects of climate change are seldom ever discussed, and women are rarely mobilized to influence policy and behavior. Examines how women are involved in climate concerns and discovers that their involvement goes beyond professional obligations to include relationships with their societies. In the discourse presented by (Ballard, 2005), a profound assertion comes to the fore: the cultivation of agency stands as a cornerstone in the realm of sustainable development and purposeful action. At the heart of this assertion lies the notion that the journey towards agency, be it at the individual or collective level, is intricately interwoven with the act of reflection. Delving deeper, it becomes evident that reflection serves as a potent catalyst, nurturing the very essence of agency and fostering its growth. This symbiotic relationship between reflection and agency underscores their dynamic synergy, where introspection becomes the crucible in which agency is forged and fortified. Thus, Ballard's perspective invites us to recognize the transformative power of reflection, as it paves the path towards an empowered state of agency, pivotal not only for personal development but also for the broader landscape of sustainable progress and collective endeavor (Ballard, 2005).

The escalation of climatic fluctuations and disruptions serves as formidable obstacles for susceptible communities, culminating in a reduction of entitlements concerning their rights, access, and control over essential livelihood resources a decline that hampers their capacity to effectively confront and acclimate to the challenges posed by climatic pressures. This research delves into the intricate web woven between climate change-induced effects on food security and the agency of women within a modest rural enclave. Grounded in qualitative investigation, this study offers insights gleaned from community-level adaptations and responses, spotlighting the nexus between these crucial domains.

## 1.2 The Four Variables of Food Security Seen Through the Lens of Gender

**Availability:** Food production and food security for women are significantly impacted by inequalities in possession, accessibility, and control of assets used to support their livelihoods. Women who experience tenure uncertainty make less investments and run the risk of causing environmental damage. It diminishes women's income and the availability of food, impairs future production capacity, and promotes food insecurity.

**Stability:** Gender disparities manifest multifaceted implications for the resilience of food security. Within this intricate tapestry, the divergent vulnerabilities and susceptibilities experienced by men and women carve distinct pathways. Particularly poignant is the scenario where women and girls, caught in the throes of crisis, are compelled to make the arduous decision of curtailing their own nourishment, sacrificing their well-being for the sustenance of other family members. This act of selflessness, while emblematic of their strength, underscores a disconcerting reality—the weight of vulnerability disproportionately borne by women in times of adversity.

A deeper layer of complexity is unveiled through the lens of cultural norms. In instances of crop failures or natural calamities, prevailing norms create an environment wherein men are often afforded the flexibility to migrate in search of alternative work opportunities. This dynamic, while potentially alleviating the immediate economic strain, inadvertently exacerbates the challenges faced by women. Tasked with the dual role of caregiving and sustenance provision, women are left to navigate the intricate terrain of securing nourishment, not just for themselves, but also for their children.

**Utilization:** The significance of women's contributions to food security extends beyond their roles in food production and financial management. Their impact on food consumption is arguably of greater relevance, as their pivotal role in meal preparation is instrumental in shaping the diverse diets within their families. Through their skillful culinary endeavors, women play a central role in curating the nutritional tapestry that nourishes their households, thus exerting a profound influence on the well-being and sustenance of their loved ones. This intricate web of influence underscores the critical

role of women in sustaining the intricate balance between nutritional diversity and food security within their communities.

**Access:** Embedded within the fabric of cultural norms and power dynamics, the allocation of food within households is a complex interplay that determines access and distribution. While the availability of food might ostensibly be present, the prevailing reality reveals a nuanced disparity. Women, despite their pivotal role in nurturing and sustenance, often find themselves grappling with unequal access to adequate quantities of nourishment essential for maintaining optimal nutritional well-being. This discrepancy stands as a stark reminder of the systemic inequalities that can inadvertently perpetuate gender-based disparities in food security, warranting a deeper examination of these dynamics to foster more equitable and inclusive access to nutrition.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

This research endeavor embarks on an exploration of the intricate interplay between food security and women's agency, set within the dynamic backdrop of climate change. The microcosm of Maloch becomes the focal lens through which this ethnographic inquiry delves into the intimate spheres of women's domestic lives and their households. Meanwhile, Swat emerges as a crucible where traditional tribal existence undergoes a transformation under the influences of contemporary education and burgeoning tourism.

This comprehensive study navigates various critical dimensions, including the perceptions and experiences surrounding food insecurity and its imminent threats, the pivotal roles women assume and their agency or empowerment, the strategies deployed to ensure household-level food security, and the art of adapting to life's intricate rhythms amidst the unfurling impact of climate change. Central to this exploration is the profound illumination of women's role in the production of household economies—a role laden with challenges yet rife with resilience. The strategies employed for food storage, crucial in providing security to families, take center stage as the narrative unspools.

The research undertaking unfurls as an ethnographic odyssey, poised to capture a palpable snapshot of real-time challenges, dilemmas, and strains borne out of an



increasingly extreme environment and the capricious changes in climate. This endeavor is set to bridge an information gap, furnishing first-hand insights and academic responses to the burgeoning issue of food scarcity and the subsequent ripple effects experienced by families collectively. In sum, this research aspires to transcend theoretical discourse, standing poised to contribute a pragmatic, nuanced, and empirically grounded understanding to a growing concern that demands our scholarly attention.

#### **1.4 Research Question(s)**

- What are the major reasons of food insecurity; perceived by the women of Maloch?
- How does culturally and socially women agency and food security are interlinked?

#### **1.5 Research Objective**

- To highlight the Food (In-) security among women of Maloch by understanding the perceptions, threats, strategies and coping practices.
- To understand the climate change and vulnerabilities faced by households in Maloch
- To explore the expressions of women agency and empowerment in socio-cultural context of Maloch.
- To examines the relationship between women agency and food security

#### **1.6 Operationalization of Key Terms and Concepts**

##### **1.6.1 Food Security**

Food security surpasses the mere provision of sustenance; it embodies the comprehensive assurance that every individual enjoys unwavering access to nourishing sustenance, thereby fostering robust health and vitality. This access unfolds through diverse avenues—ranging from procuring provisions from markets to cultivating one's own nourishment or engaging in a hybrid approach. At its core lies the imperative of a

livelihood, necessitating income generation through employment or self-sustaining endeavors. However, complexities arise when circumstances impede livelihood pursuits, such as illness or advanced age, warranting the presence of a safety net to ensure uninterrupted access to food.

Varied strategies intricately link livelihoods with food security, with cultivation, foraging, and animal husbandry serving as customary avenues to secure sustenance and income alike. Elevating food security involves fortifying these livelihoods through interventions such as training, enhanced agricultural techniques, and improved access to resources and markets. These proactive endeavors shield communities from abrupt shocks be they precipitated by climate-induced fluctuations, economic downturns, or seasonal conflicts that could otherwise imperil their access to crucial food resources. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations frames food security across four pivotal dimensions food availability, access, stability, and utilization. Ultimately, food security is achieved when individuals, households, communities, and nations possess the means, both in terms of physical access and financial capacity, to procure ample, wholesome sustenance that fuels active and thriving lives, encompassing three square meals a day.

Against the backdrop of climate change, entwined with the dynamics of women's agency and food security, the village of Maloch emerges as a rich tapestry for exploration. Here, the intricate interplay between these essential dimensions comes alive, offering nuanced insights into how women's empowerment, resource access, and adaptive strategies converge to fortify food security in the face of environmental variability.

### **1.6.2 Food Insecurity**

In the intricate tapestry of food security, the specter of food insecurity casts a grim shadow, permeating the lives of individuals and communities. Food insecurity encapsulates the haunting uncertainty of not knowing if the next meal will be assured, a daily struggle that reverberates across time. For farmers, the specter takes on a different form—the anxiety of witnessing their harvest deplete, leaving them grappling with the looming specter of scarcity. At its most harrowing extreme, food insecurity culminates in the dire abyss of famine, a catastrophic culmination of deprivation.

Amidst this backdrop, the pivotal role of climate change and women's agency comes to the fore in the village of Maloch. Here, the delicate balance of food security intertwines with the capricious dance of climate shifts. Floods and droughts, exacerbated by the changing climate, expose farmers to the capricious whim of nature, decimating their sources of sustenance and livelihood in the blink of an eye. Conflict further compounds the conundrum, uprooting communities and diminishing the ranks of those who tend to the fields. Amidst these challenges, international trade dynamics cast a shadow—sometimes serving as a double-edged sword, amplifying livelihoods or cutting them short, as local farmers and entrepreneurs grapple with the tides of global commerce.

Embedded within this intricate web is the plight of those who toil the fields, often without land ownership, standing precariously on the precipice of losing their very source of sustenance. The fabric of food security further frays when governments fall short in nurturing local agriculture, perpetuating a cycle of dwindling yields and heightened dependency on imports. The disproportionate burden borne by the economically marginalized is laid bare when food prices soar, triggering the agonizing choice of fewer meals to stretch meager resources. A vicious cycle is thus forged—nutrition deficits weakening bodies, stifling upward mobility, and entrenching the clutches of poverty.

The discourse extends to encompass the echoes of Malthusian Population Theory, a poignant reminder that food insecurity's reach extends beyond mere hunger-induced mortality. The deprivation is felt acutely by those denied access to wholesome sustenance, a reality that starkly contrasts with the supermarket bounty enjoyed by many in the West. Herein lies the intersection of climate change, women's agency, and food security—a poignant exploration of how environmental fluctuations compound the trials faced by women who are pivotal nurturers, guardians of sustenance, and catalysts for resilience within the village of Maloch. As temperatures rise and new pests emerge, the fragile balance of food systems trembles, threatening the bedrock of sustenance. Against this backdrop, the challenges of small-scale farmers are further accentuated by the escalating costs of production and the juggernaut of corporate control that ensnares them.

In this intricate mosaic, the plight of women stands as a focal point—bearing witness to the complex interplay of climate-induced disruptions, gender dynamics, and food security. Their agency becomes a beacon of resilience, navigating the ever-evolving landscape of nourishment. Through their endeavors, tempered by tradition and shaped by innovation, they stand as guardians of food security, steering the community through the tempest of uncertainty, charting a course toward a more equitable and resilient future.

### **1.6.3 Women Empowerment**

Women's empowerment encompasses a socio-cultural and economic milieu where women are inherently endowed with the autonomy to shape significant facets of their lives, unburdened by coercion or apprehension. This environment entails a constellation of privileges, from unimpeded access to education and economic pursuits to the unassailable right to inheritance, emancipated from the shackles of discrimination. The synergy of 'women' and 'empowerment' kindles a transformational force, infusing individuals with authority and agency. Education serves as the lodestar of this transformative journey, arming each girl with the tools to dissent against oppression. The bedrock of decision-making prowess lies in education, literacy, and training, a triad that propels women toward enhanced agency.

At its core, women's empowerment is the power to unfurl one's wings unencumbered, harnessing the right to marry, determine family size, embrace gainful employment, and steward their financial resources. It transcends mere participation in decision-making; it's a symphony of gender parity, an orchestra of validation for their perspectives, and an ovation to their resilience. Amidst the reverberations of these transformative narratives, the village of Maloch emerges as a microcosm, where climate change, women's agency, and food security converge in a nexus of empowerment. Here, the winds of change sweep through, bolstering women's role as stalwarts of their families and catalysts for community resilience.

This empowerment ripples far beyond individual lives it's the cornerstone of national development, breathing life into the very sinews of a nation's progress. As women flourish, the entire edifice of society stands fortified, poised for collective advancement. Embracing women's agency doesn't merely entail their inclusion in

decision-making processes; it heralds an era of genuine gender equality, where their insights are celebrated, and their life choices are untrammelled by coercion.

In this intricate dance, climate change emerges as an intricate partner, casting its shadow on the path toward empowerment. The arduous journey of building sustainable livelihoods, underpinned by food security, intertwines with the dynamic of women's agency. The village of Maloch stands as a microcosm where the threads of these narratives are meticulously woven together. Here, women's empowerment is not a mere addendum to development; it's the very crucible from which progress springs forth. The resilience of women, their resourcefulness in the face of climate uncertainties, and their contributions to nourishing their families and communities create a tapestry of empowerment that is not only pivotal but transcendent a testament to the indomitable spirit of humanity.

#### **1.6.4 Women Agency**

In his seminal work "Development as Freedom," Amartya Sen underscores the intrinsic link between development and freedom, emphasizing that the fruition of development is inextricably intertwined with the accessibility of freedom across all strata of society. Within this societal tapestry, women, as vital constituents, occupy a pivotal role. Their agency and empowerment stand as paramount, entailing not only advocating for the well-being of women but also championing their autonomous agency (Sen, 2000). Women's agency encapsulates their capacity to independently formulate decisions and enact them. It embodies the essence of self-determination, enabling individuals to navigate their lives and accomplish desired outcomes, emancipated from fear, violence, and reprisal.

This sense of agency finds resonance in self-efficacy, where one's self-belief propels them to action. A woman's cognizance of her potential to steer her own course, her acumen to discern her position, and her prowess to effectuate change are the cornerstones of agency. However, it is important to recognize that agency is a nuanced construct, shaped by historical, environmental, and cultural contours unique to each society. As such, its manifestations vary, molded by the historical trajectory, environmental circumstances, and deeply ingrained cultural values of a particular context (Donald, Koolwal, Annan, Falb, & Goldstein, 2020).

While the intricacies of measuring agency are challenging, certain yardsticks, such as active participation in household decisions, control over material resources, unhindered mobility, education, and employment, serve as indicative markers (Donald, Koolwal, Annan, Falb, & Goldstein, 2020). However, agency's symbiotic relationship with empowerment renders their differentiation elusive.

Amidst this discourse, the village of Maloch emerges as a living canvas where the interplay of women's agency, food security, and climate change choreographs a narrative of empowerment. The rhythm of women's agency harmonizes with the melody of self-determination, resonating with the cadence of climate adaptations and resilience. The pursuit of food security becomes a melodic thread, weaving through women's ability to make decisions that reverberate across households and communities. In the realm of Maloch, the symphony of women's agency intertwines with the orchestration of environmental change, forging a tapestry of empowerment that is as intricate as it is transformative.

### **1.6.5 Climate Change**

Climate change signifies a substantial departure from the ordinary fluctuations in average weather conditions, giving rise to shifts towards warmer, wetter, or drier patterns that unfold over extended periods, often spanning several decades (Cameron & Scheel, 2001). Distinct from the innate variability of natural weather phenomena, climate change manifests as a profound and enduring trend that echoes the intricate tapestry of Earth's historical climatic shifts. However, prevailing scientific consensus now underscores a sobering reality the rapid disruption of our climate system, driven by human activities heavily reliant on fossil fuels such as coal and oil. The resultant consequence of these actions has culminated in the accumulation of greenhouse gases within the atmosphere, setting the stage for an impending perturbation in weather patterns and their foreseeable patterns. At the heart of this transformative process lies global warming, characterized by the gradual elevation of Earth's atmospheric temperature, wherein heightened solar heat becomes ensnared within our atmospheric layers. This rise is further compounded by the greenhouse effect, a mechanism wherein atmospheric gases entrapping solar heat amplify Earth's temperatures beyond their natural thresholds. Amplifying this intricate web of causality are other contributing elements, encompassing the combustion of fossil fuels, deforestation, floods, and the

progressive depletion of groundwater reserves (Andersson & Wallin, 2000). Within this intricate mosaic of climate change's multifaceted origins, the convergence of human-induced activities and the delicate equilibrium of Earth's climatic harmony assumes profound ramifications for both the present and the unfolding future.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study:**

This ethnographic study in Maloch Village serves to address multiple anthropological objectives, each of which intertwines with the others to present a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationships between climate change, women's agency, and food security. By engaging in participant observation and in-depth interviews, this study uncovers the multifaceted dimensions of food (in-) security within the context of Maloch Village. Through a nuanced examination of women's perspectives and experiences, it delves into the intricacies of how climate change poses threats to food availability and accessibility, while also illuminating the precautionary measures and coping strategies employed by women to navigate food insecurity challenges.

Drawing on an anthropological lens, this research investigates the vulnerabilities that households in Maloch encounter in the face of climate change. By examining the climatic shifts affecting the village's agricultural practices and food resources, the study offers insights into the complex interplay of environmental factors and their impacts on community vulnerability. Furthermore, this study delves into the expressions of women's agency and empowerment that emerge within the intricate socio-cultural fabric of Maloch Village. By closely examining their roles, decision-making capacities, and participation in communal initiatives, the research reveals the ways in which women assert their agency amidst the challenges posed by climate change and its implications for food security.

A central anthropological objective of this study is to scrutinize the interrelationship between women's agency and food security. Through an in-depth analysis of the ways in which women's agency influences their capacity to ensure household economic stability and access food resources, the research highlights the pivotal role that women play in safeguarding food security amid the uncertainties arising from climate change. The pursuit of these anthropological objectives yields

comprehensive insights into the intricate web of relationships between climate change, women's agency, and food security in Maloch Village. By unraveling women's coping practices, expressions of empowerment, and the vulnerabilities faced by households, this study contributes to a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in achieving food security amidst a changing climate. Additionally, the research imparts valuable lessons to policymakers and stakeholders, underscoring the necessity for gender-sensitive approaches in crafting climate change adaptation strategies that empower women and foster food security for the entire community. In conclusion, this ethnographic study enriches the anthropological understanding of climate change's impacts on rural communities, offering valuable insights into the agency and resilience of women in mitigating food insecurity challenges. Its implications extend to informing gender-inclusive policies and climate adaptation strategies, fostering community resilience, and promoting sustainable development practices in the face of climate uncertainties.

## **2 Literature Review**

Numerous studies have delved into the intricate interplay between climate change and food security, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges that reverberate at both national and international spheres. Researchers have meticulously examined the intricate web of connections that bind these critical domains, unraveling the far-reaching implications of climate fluctuations on the availability, accessibility, and adequacy of food resources. These investigations have traversed the gamut of global and regional contexts, unraveling the complex tapestry of factors that influence food security dynamics, from climatic variations and environmental stressors to socioeconomic disparities and policy imperatives. By meticulously dissecting the intricate threads that weave together climate change and food security, these studies offer invaluable insights into the critical nexus between human well-being, ecological resilience, and the imperative for sustainable, equitable nourishment in a rapidly evolving world.

### **2.1 Climate Change**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has unequivocally affirmed the reality of climate warming, leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity. This resounding declaration underscores the consensus among scientific experts that our



planet is undergoing a discernible and unrelenting increase in temperatures. The culmination of extensive research, data analysis, and comprehensive assessments, the IPCC's assertion resonates as a clarion call to acknowledge the irrefutable shifts occurring within our global climate system. This unequivocal stance serves as a rallying point for heightened awareness, urgent action, and collective responsibility in confronting the pressing challenges posed by climate change. As the IPCC meticulously synthesizes evidence from diverse sources, including observations, models, and historical trends, its declaration of "unequivocal" climate warming underscores the urgency of adopting adaptive and mitigative measures to safeguard the delicate balance of our environment and secure a sustainable future for generations to come (IPCC, 2007).

The undeniable influence of human activities in reshaping the atmosphere leaves little uncertainty about their pivotal role in driving climate change. The trajectory of rising global temperatures, unless effectively addressed, looms with the potential to unleash significant and even calamitous repercussions across our ecological, economic, and societal spheres. This impending wave of consequences carries heightened implications for marginalized populations around the world, whose very subsistence is intricately woven into the delicate fabric of natural resource equilibrium (Drolet, 2012).

Given the undeniable truth of climate change and its profound impact on physical and ecological systems over the past century, various societies, institutions, and individuals have undergone behavioral adjustments in recognition of past climatic fluctuations. Moreover, a significant number are currently preparing to proactively accommodate future shifts in extreme climatic conditions. These adaptive responses encompass a dual nature, encompassing both a reactive element rooted in past or ongoing occurrences, and an anticipatory facet informed by assessments of forthcoming scenarios (Adger, Nigel, & Ella, 2005).

It is important to recognize that adaptations can stem from a variety of factors beyond climate change, such as social or economic transformations. For instance, when a household opts to relocate from a high-risk flood zone to a safer region, this decision might be primarily influenced by demographic or economic considerations rather than solely by climate-related factors. This highlights the intricate nature of attributing

adaptations to climate change, underscoring the need for a comprehensive assessment of multiple drivers behind these adjustments (Adger, Nigel, & Ella, 2005)

The impetus driving significant life-altering choices can emanate from a spectrum of sources, encompassing climate-related factors as well as other social, economic, or political considerations. For instance, when a household makes the pivotal decision to relocate from a zone experiencing escalating flood vulnerability to a region with reduced risk, the underlying motivation might not be primarily rooted in climate change dynamics, but instead influenced by various demographic or economic determinants. This complexity underscores the challenge of straightforwardly attributing adaptations to climate change, necessitating a nuanced examination of multifaceted drivers that contribute to such transformative decisions (Adger, Nigel, & Ella, 2005).

In assessing the susceptibility of a community, the evaluation centers on gauging the community or household's capacity to not only foresee but effectively navigate, withstand, and rebound from the ramifications arising from both immediate and consequential effects of drastic weather occurrences and geological alterations, including phenomena like the elevation in sea levels. This analytical endeavor underscores the intrinsic interplay between anticipatory preparation and adaptive resilience, elucidating the intricate calculus that shapes a community's vulnerability quotient (Heberger, Cooley, Herrera, Petter, & Moore, 2009). The construct of vulnerability is intricately woven into the fabric of socio-economic strata, intricately entangled with variables such as class, religious affiliation, livelihood, racial background, ethnic identity, familial ties, gender dynamics, and the passage of time. This intricate web of interrelated factors converges to shape the vulnerability landscape, each thread contributing to the overall tapestry of susceptibility that individuals and groups may encounter within a given context (Drolet, 2012).

Drolet has eloquently established a concrete connection between food security and climate change, delineating it as a "burgeoning domain of inquiry within the realm of climate change." Food security, as articulated, encapsulates a state wherein individuals possess unwavering access both in physical and socio-economic dimensions to an ample, uncontaminated, and nourishing food supply, sufficiently satisfying their dietary requirements for a vigorous and thriving existence. On a global

scale, this comprehensive standard remains unmet, and the evolving trajectory of climate change further amplifies the intricacies inherent in attaining universal food security across various strata (Drolet, 2012).

Enarson provides insights into the intricate interplay between women's agency and food security, shedding light on the nexus between gender roles and societal responsibilities. He emphasizes that scholars in the realm of gender and disaster have diligently chronicled the impact of social identities on individuals' encounters with calamities, their susceptibilities, and their capabilities to navigate response and recovery. Notably, these studies have predominantly centered on the experiences of women, with a secondary focus on girls, acknowledging the imperative to elevate their distinctive needs, perspectives, and encounters. The dynamic of vulnerability and resilience is inherently shaped by gendered roles, evident in both men and women across diverse societies. Particularly within economically marginalized households, women bear the primary burden of domestic duties, a phenomenon deeply entrenched in cultural constructs of labor allocation (Enarson, 2009).

The construction of vulnerability in the face of disasters and climate fluctuations is undeniably a social process, and the erosion of collective action frequently engenders heightened susceptibility. This intricate dynamic is further influenced by prevailing gender norms, which significantly contribute to shaping eventual outcomes. An illustrative instance lies in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami, where gender disparities manifested women faced a higher risk of drowning compared to men due to factors like limited swimming ability and their instinctual efforts to safeguard their children. These gendered experiences are encapsulated within social norms, the conventions and behavioral patterns emblematic of specific social groups. These norms intricately mold diverse actions concerning climate change, amplifying the imperative to comprehend and address their role in shaping vulnerabilities and responses (Cutter & Elasha, 2012).

The existing body of research strongly indicates that gender plays a crucial role at the local level in shaping vulnerability to climate change and influencing differential mortality outcomes. This conclusion is supported by robust evidence and a high level of consensus within the literature. When examining the impact of climate change, it becomes evident that women and men often adopt distinct coping strategies and face varying constraints in their actions. These differences stem from socialized gender-

related factors, encompassing aspects such as social standing (class), marital status, educational attainment, wealth, caregiving roles, and even physical attributes like stature and endurance. For instance, women's mobility limitations, restricted access to resources, lack of authority, limited legal protection, and prevailing social isolation, prevalent in numerous regions globally, tend to amplify the risk of disasters and heighten overall vulnerability at the local level (Cutter & Elasha , 2012).

Local communities frequently encounter the consequences of hazardous incidents, a significant portion of which stem from extreme weather and climate occurrences. The emphasis on understanding these incidents from a local perspective is essential due to the variability of such events across different locations; not all areas have identical encounters with a specific triggering incident. Climate extremes possess the potential to jeopardize the human security of local inhabitants, as these risks can disrupt fundamental societal functions. Rural communities across various parts of the world are particularly vulnerable to hazards such as the flooding of low-lying coastal regions, water scarcity and drought, diminishing agricultural productivity and fishery resources, and the depletion of biological assets. This underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing these risks to ensure the resilience and well-being of local populations (Cutter & Elasha , 2012).

## **2.2 Food Security and Women Agency**

The situation in Pakistan, with its population of 147 million, is marked by a concerning issue of food insecurity. This predicament arises due to the populace facing challenges in obtaining sufficient access to nourishing food, which, in turn, contributes to a significant prevalence of malnourishment. Inadequate access to food implies that a substantial portion of the population struggles to secure regular and nutritious meals, leading to potential health and developmental issues. The high rate of malnourishment underscores the extent of the problem, indicating that a considerable number of individuals, particularly among vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women, are not receiving the essential nutrients required for their well-being. This dual challenge of inadequate food access and malnourishment highlights the urgent need for effective interventions and policies to address these pressing concerns and improve the overall food security and health outcomes for the population (Akbar & Muhammad, 2017).

In Pakistan, there is a noticeable seasonal variation in temperatures, particularly between winter and summer. Over the years, there has been a consistent trend of increasing temperatures, leading to a rapid rise in the average temperature of cities. This ongoing temperature increase has contributed to a challenging scenario for the country in terms of food security. This situation has worsened over the past few decades, with a significant proportion of the population, roughly one-third, categorized as poor. This poverty status highlights that a considerable portion of Pakistani citizens struggles to meet their basic needs, including access to sufficient and nutritious food. Notably, rural areas face a higher prevalence of poverty compared to urban areas, exacerbating the issue. Alarmingly, children under the age of five constitute a substantial portion of the population suffering from underweight and malnourishment, emphasizing the critical nature of the food security challenge and its implications for the well-being and development of the country's future generations (Munir, Kiani, & Baig, 2016).

In recent years, the agriculture sector in northern Pakistan has been affected by changes in cyclone frequency and shifting monsoon patterns attributed to rising temperatures. This has significant implications for the country, as it ranks among the nation's most vulnerable to climate change. These climate-related shifts are expected to have severe consequences, especially considering Pakistan's growing population and ongoing urbanization. Given the impact of climate change on agriculture and livelihoods, Pakistan is recognized as one of the countries significantly affected by these changes, highlighting its heightened sensitivity to climate-related challenges (Syed, Raza, Bhatti, & Eash, 2022).

The expression "all people at all times" encapsulates the imperative for just and uniform food allocation, simultaneously underscoring the significance of equitable treatment towards the elderly, thereby fostering a notion of "sustainability" within the realm of food production. The notion of "safe and nutritious food for a healthy life" signifies that food insecurity may emerge from insufficient nourishment, encompassing excessive caloric consumption, or from the ingestion of unsafe food lacking in detrimental components. In the realm of gender-informed repercussions and interactions with climatic and atmospheric variability, an array of compelling contentions has been articulated. A prevailing accord underscores the observation that women assume a notable share of subsistence agricultural activities within select less-developed regions, distinct from their participation in more progressed societies. To

exemplify, women play a substantial role, encompassing a significant portion of endeavors associated with small-scale subsistence farming, with a specific focus on tending to vegetable gardens (Tibesigwa, Visser, Hunter, Collinson, & Twine, 2015). Within the realm of household caretaking roles, women frequently opt for labor endeavors characterized by flexibility and compatibility with the extended temporal investments inherent in diverse domestic activities. Consequently, this proclivity manifests in their heightened engagement within agricultural pursuits. This intricate interplay underscores the notion that women find themselves disproportionately exposed to the vagaries of climate and weather unpredictability, a phenomenon with universal resonance but assuming heightened anthropological significance, particularly among those assuming the mantle of family leadership (Deaton & Dreze, 2002).

Embedded within the realm of climate change's perturbing effects on agricultural yield and sustenance security in developing societies, the imperative to ameliorate gender disparities in productivity and nourishment stands as a global mandate of profound anthropological resonance. This mandate is underscored by the prevailing structural vulnerabilities endured by women within this context. Amidst this intricate interplay, women emerge as a demographic distinctly susceptible to and finely attuned to the vicissitudes of climate-induced perturbations, a susceptibility that surpasses that of their male counterparts. Consequently, the intricate tapestry of climate change repercussions unfolds with an intriguing interplay, intricately woven with the threads of gender dynamics (Garcia & Wanner, 2017).

Within the intricate tapestry of human existence, a prevailing driver behind the emergence of food insecurity is the specter of poverty. This disruptive force casts its shadows over the delicate choreography of resource access and allocation. Amid this dance, the artistry of adept household strategies emerges as a critical instrument, orchestrating the harmonious symphony of food procurement and the delicate ballet of resource allocation. Yet, within the canvas of sustenance, brushstrokes of profound significance stroke the canvas – who shall partake of the nourishing harvest? What familial members shall be bestowed with the bounty? The tableau extends further, revealing the profound dynamics of food-related decisions and the intricate choreography of sustenance's distribution within the domestic realm.

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In the intricate social fabric of human societies, a distinct pattern emerges, revealing a gendered divide in economic sustenance. Within households led by women, who often assume the role of primary income providers, an imbalance in financial remuneration becomes evident. This phenomenon underscores a prevailing condition where women, despite their pivotal contributions, contend with diminished wages, limited avenues for professional advancement, and a scarcity of resources in comparison to their male counterparts. Furthermore, the phenomenon extends its reach to encompass the very structure of households guided by women. These households, entrusted to the capable hands of women, find themselves grappling with reduced access to critical financial services, such as lending opportunities, which can significantly shape the trajectory of their economic empowerment. Thus, within this anthropological context, a gendered income disparity unravels, depicting a complex narrative of economic disparities and restricted access that influences the lived experiences of women at the helm of households (Due & Gladwin, 1991).

Within the intricate realm of familial dynamics, a distinctive motif unveils the predilections of women who assume the mantle of household leadership. Rooted in their pivotal role as custodians of the domestic domain, these women gravitate toward vocations that seamlessly align with their domestic obligations. Anchored in nurturing kin, procuring essential household provisions, and choreographing diverse domestic functions, their occupational choices reverberate within this intricate web of responsibilities. This intricate interplay between domestic duties and vocational

preferences reveals a nuanced tapestry. The choices women make in terms of their employment intricately intertwine with their multifaceted roles within the household milieu. This narrative mirrors an anthropological reflection, where cultural norms and the intricate weave of gender roles intricately mold how women navigate their dual obligations within the household and the broader economic fabric (Buvinin & Gupta, 1997).

Cultural (gender based) norms are the root cause of the varied effects, sensitivity, vulnerability, practices, and coping mechanisms for climate change connected to food security. This refers to the actions, jobs, and duties that a society categorises as "man" or "woman," as well as the differing gendered opportunities for resources. In several remote areas, women typically grow the majority of the crops used for household consumption. They also typically handle livestock, gather food, feed for livestock, and fuelwood, manage domestic water supplies, store, process, and prepare food, and perform the majority of the labor-intensive post-harvest tasks.

Embedded within the societal framework, a predominant pattern emerges where households steered by women gravitate towards the utilization of communal assets, delving into realms of collective resources. This often manifests through shared agricultural endeavors on communal lands or the harnessing of nature's bounty. This intricate tapestry of resource utilization, interwoven with shared endeavours, assumes a pivotal role in shaping the sustenance pathways. Yet, amidst this intricate choreography, a latent peril lurks any erosion of these shared resources reverberates as a profound threat to the broader livelihood mosaic, casting its shadow over the delicate equilibrium. As custodians of these household realms, women who bear the mantle of familial leadership navigate multifaceted terrains. Within this context, they may find themselves tilling narrower expanses of land and wielding diminished labor resources, culminating in yield diminishment. Often, the fruits of these labors are channeled towards domestic sustenance, reinforcing a cyclical interplay between familial provisioning and shared communal resources, encapsulating the complex interplay between gender roles, resource utilization, and livelihood dynamics (Deaton & Dreze, 2002).

Embedded within the intricate sociocultural tapestry, the phenomenon of short-term male migration for economic pursuits orchestrates a nuanced narrative. This



migration, a transient exodus, sets in motion a recalibration of domestic authority dynamics, endowing the women who assume the roles of the "left-behind" with a newfound mantle of leadership and decision-making prowess. Simultaneously, the canvas of sustenance undergoes a captivating transformation as domestic plots evolve into flourishing gardens, nurturing sustenance amidst their verdant embrace. Within this paradigm, an interplay of gendered mobility unfolds, illuminating a distinctive pattern – women, enmeshed within the intricate fabric of familial roles, often unveil a lesser degree of mobility in contrast to their male counterparts. This asymmetry of mobility manifests through women's deep-rooted engagement in agricultural pursuits, their presence predominantly tethered to the fields that yield nourishment. As the rhythmic choreography of this sociocultural interplay unfurls, the transient male migration begets not solely a physical distance but also carves out arenas of empowerment and cultivation. In this narrative, the "left-behind" women wield an agency that reverberates within the domestic sphere, weaving a narrative of sustenance, leadership, and rooted growth (Reed, Andrzejewski, & White, 2010).

Embedded within the undulating contours of arid and semi-arid landscapes, households navigate a fragile equilibrium, entwined with the reverberations of climatic intricacies. These regions bear witness to a nuanced interplay, where climatic phenomena extend their influence beyond meteorological realms. This influence threads through the very fabric of existence, intricately woven into quests for sustenance and well-being. Here, vulnerability is heightened, and the climate's symphony resounds with distinct resonance, shaping not only material provisions but also a narrative of resilience, adaptation, and survival in the anthropological discourse (Simonds, Jamali, & Hufty, 2020).

Scholars advocate for an enhanced grasp of how individuals, notably within climate-fragile domains, engage with the intricate dynamics of climate change. Varied perceptions and responses to this phenomenon beckon elucidation, shaped by the interplay of local resources and capacities for adaptability. Across temporal dimensions, geographic landscapes, and cultural milieus, the tapestry of climate change cognizance and adaptive maneuvers unfurls, portraying a nuanced tableau of evolving insights and contextualized strategies in the anthropological realm (Swores, Vengosh, & Weinthal, 2011). Within the intricate fabric of agricultural households, the orchestration of knowledge, labor, capital, and seeds has undergone a pronounced shift

towards personalized domains. This evolution signifies a profound anthropological transformation, unveiling the interplay of intricate dynamics that shape the multifaceted tapestry of agricultural pursuits (CIFOR & CGIAR, 2015).

Studies that get to the conclusion that women are more susceptible than males typically compare families with female and male heads of household. While there is proof that households headed by women do, in fact, frequently experience bigger losses as a result of climatic shocks. Women frequently have different objectives for adaptability and taste. The emergence of new social positions may provide women more authority to obtain and manage resources. (CIFOR & CGIAR, 2015)

Insecure land tenure and societal barriers to accessing markets usually prevent women from creating new adaptation tactics, despite the active roles they regularly play in doing so. Women from the group that has historically held the prestigious positions in society encounter more obstacles when they diversify their sources of income than do women from lower positions. Seclusion and mobility constraints of upper status women have been documented in several countries. Social class has been recognised in multiple civilizations as a deciding element of women's seclusion, mobility, and independence (CIFOR & CGIAR, 2015).

In the expansive realm of sustenance and growth, women's pivotal role extends beyond the bounds of mere contribution, encompassing vital domains that intricately nurture food production and cultivation. Encompassing the guardianship of seeds, the art of crop domestication, and the custodianship of soil and water, their presence weaves a profound anthropological narrative that resonates with the essence of agricultural evolution. Yet, their influence transcends these boundaries, venturing into the heart of sustenance security. Embodied within the fabric of livestock husbandry, distribution networks, and the intricate symphony of utilization, women emerge as custodians of nourishment, orchestrating a harmonious dance that shapes not only sustenance but the very essence of communal vitality (Agarwal, 2018). Women are crucial to the supply of wholesome diets and the management of family food. They often play a more active role than males in poor nations when it comes to feeding children nutritious food (Yaya, Odusina, Uthman, & Bishwajit, 2020).

They frequently have various restrictions and possibilities to respond to climate change. The techniques that women and men can use are determined by cultural and

societal conventions, and the strategies used by one group may have an impact on the other. Most guys use migration as a tactic. Women's ability to adapt is, however, impacted by this technique since they are required to perform men's responsibilities. It also makes other populations, particularly children, more vulnerable. Due to the increased strain brought on by males leaving their homes, households that are undergoing migration often cease schooling their children, especially girls. Children frequently help with chores like herding animals, carrying water, gathering firewood, and other simple daily tasks (CIFOR & CGIAR, 2015).

Nurturing seedlings, cultivating seeds, post-harvest practices, tending to livestock, such as cow fattening and milking, engaging in goat farming, overseeing backyard poultry, pisciculture, practicing agriculture and horticulture, partaking in food processing, mastering crafts like cane and bamboo work, silk reeling, weaving, garment production, fishnet crafting, coir manufacturing, and other forms of handicraft creation constitute a mosaic of contributions orchestrated by rural women. These multifaceted engagements reverberate within the realm of sustenance generation and distribution. Amid this intricate choreography, women, particularly from marginalized households, interweave their agency into activities traditionally ascribed to men, such as agricultural labor, construction, and earthwork. In contexts of limited resources, women from impoverished households actively engage in economic endeavors, predominantly centered around their homestead, effectively shaping the familial support system (Parvin & Ahsan, 2013).

### **3 THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The research in question draws influence from cultural ecology, which forms the foundation of its theoretical framework. However, the study is also conceptually influenced by various other concepts and theories, including ecological anthropology, feminist anthropology, and intersectionality. This comprehensive theoretical framework is used to investigate the complex interplay between climate change, women's agency, and food security. By recognizing the crucial role of women's agency in climate change adaptation and food security, the framework highlights the importance of gender-responsive and contextually relevant strategies. The ultimate goal is to foster resilience and sustainability within communities facing the challenges of climate change.

Cultural ecology is a theoretical approach within anthropology that focuses on the relationship between human societies and their environments. Steward's work in cultural ecology emphasized the adaptive strategies and cultural patterns of different societies in response to their natural surroundings. (Steward, 2014) argued that human societies adapt to their environments in unique ways, and their culture is shaped by the ecological conditions historical context they encounter. He believed that the study of human cultures should involve understanding how they utilize and modify their environments to meet their needs. Steward's approach also emphasized the concept of "culture core," which refers to the key cultural practices and adaptations that are directly related to the environment (Steward, 2014).

Climate change poses a significant threat to global food security, impacting vulnerable populations, including women, who are vital contributors to agricultural and food systems. This theoretical and conceptual framework aims to explore the intricate connections between climate change, women's agency, and food security. It highlights the role of women as key actors in climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, their vulnerabilities, and their potential to drive positive change in food security. Climate change refers to long-term alterations in temperature, precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events caused by human activities, primarily greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change highlights its unique risks and opportunities for indigenous peoples worldwide. Climate change poses a threat to their cultural survival and human rights as it disrupts ecosystems and customary uses of vital resources. Relocations resulting from climate change can lead to the loss of intimate human-environment relationships and culturally significant elements. Despite contributing minimally to greenhouse gas emissions, indigenous communities bear a disproportionate burden of climate change consequences due to their close dependence on and relationship with the environment (Crate & Nuttal, 2009). Anthropologists emphasize the potential loss of traditional knowledge and worldviews as the environment undergoes drastic changes, impacting a people's sense of homeland and place. The passage stresses the need for inclusivity and involving indigenous communities in defining climate change risks, integrating traditional ecological knowledge into decision-making processes, and recognizing the significance of indigenous knowledge in addressing climate change challenges. These changes profoundly affect agricultural productivity, water availability, and the overall food production system. Food security, on the other hand,

encompasses the availability, access, and utilization of nutritious food to meet the dietary needs of individuals in a sustainable manner. Mintz (1987), expanded the concept of food security beyond mere food quantity to encompass social and cultural dimensions. In his work, such as "Sweetness and Power," he highlighted that food security involves not only having enough food but also access to diverse and culturally meaningful foods, social relationships, and the cultural significance of food (W.Mintz, 1987). Mintz emphasized that food choices are influenced by historical, cultural, and social contexts, and understanding these complexities is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of food security. His insights underscore the importance of considering the broader social and cultural factors when addressing food access, availability, and diversity, ultimately leading to more effective and inclusive food security strategies. Climate change exacerbates food insecurity through reduced crop yields, increased pests and diseases, and disruption of food supply chains.

In many societies, women play crucial roles in agricultural activities, from seed selection to post-harvest processing. They manage household food security, dietary diversity, and nutrition. However, women often face gender-specific challenges like limited access to land, credit, and technology, which undermine their potential contributions to food security. Understanding women's agency in the context of climate change becomes essential to design effective interventions. Women have developed adaptive strategies based on traditional knowledge and practices to cope with climate change impacts. Anthropologists such as Boserup highlighted the role of women as active agents in adapting to changing environmental conditions (Boserup, 2007). Boserup's theory of "Women's Role in Economic Development" posits that women intensify agricultural efforts when confronted with resource constraints and population pressure. As presented by Ester Boserup, women's pivotal role in subsistence agriculture drives them to adapt and innovate, diversifying crops, adopting new farming practices, and introducing small-scale irrigation systems. Their agency in ensuring household food security and meeting nutritional needs motivates these efforts. The theory emphasizes the need to recognize women as active agents in agricultural development and underscores the importance of gender-responsive policies to achieve sustainable food security and economic progress. Agrawal's work on "Gender and Green Governance" shows how women contribute to community-based resource management and conservation (Agrawal, Gender and Green Governance: The Political

Economy of Women's Presence Within an Beyond Community Forestry, 2010). She explores the intricate relationship between gender dynamics and environmental governance. Her research demonstrates that women often play crucial roles in natural resource management due to their deep connection with the environment and reliance on its resources for daily sustenance. Women's involvement in decision-making processes and participation in community-based initiatives lead to more sustainable and effective conservation practices. Agrawal's work emphasizes the importance of recognizing and empowering women as key agents in green governance (principles, practices, and processes), as their active engagement is vital for promoting environmental sustainability and resilience.

Empowering women is vital for achieving food security and climate resilience. Naila Kabeer's (2000) work on "Power to Choose" highlights the significance of agency in decision-making processes. Kabeer emphasizes how agency, the ability of individuals or groups to act on their own behalf, is essential for shaping people's lives and opportunities. The book highlights the gendered nature of agency, with women facing specific challenges due to patriarchal norms and gender roles. Kabeer (Kabeer, 2000) underscores that agency is multi-dimensional, encompassing economic, social, political, and psychological aspects. She views agency as a key element of empowerment, enabling individuals and communities to challenge oppressive structures and claim their rights. The book advocates for recognizing and supporting agency, especially for marginalized groups, to achieve sustainable and inclusive development and build a more equitable society. Empowering women through education, access to resources, and participation in decision-making fosters sustainable agricultural practices and improves food security outcomes.

Women's agency in the context of climate change and food security is a multifaceted and diverse phenomenon, as highlighted by Michelle Rosaldo's (1974) emphasis on acknowledging the variations in women's roles and contributions in different societies. While women play critical roles in climate adaptation and food production, their agency is shaped by socio-cultural norms, access to resources, and gender disparities. Empowering women as active agents of change through gender-responsive policies and programs is essential to promote sustainable food security and climate resilience. Recognizing the diversity of women's agency and addressing their specific needs will lead to more effective strategies in tackling the challenges posed by

climate change to food security. The intricate interplay between climate change, women's agency, and food security requires comprehensive and gender-responsive strategies. Anthropological concepts and research provide valuable insights into the active role's women can play in climate change adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable food production. To ensure food security for all and build climate resilience, it is essential to recognize and empower women as key agents of change in the face of climate challenges. Addressing the gender dimensions of climate change will lead to more effective and equitable policies and practices that benefit society as a whole.

## **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Anthropology as a discipline is built upon the foundation of cultural relativism, which acknowledges the value of diverse cultural perspectives. As a researcher, I approach the study with sensitivity, respect, and an open mind, recognizing that various communities may have distinct ways of conceptualizing and responding to climate change and food security concerns. The methodology will be guided by the belief that a holistic understanding of social life emerges from examining the interplay of various factors, including gender, culture, environment, and socio-economic conditions.

The methods which were used for the collection of data to conduct this study are as follow:

### **4.1 Ethnography**

This ethnographic study undertakes a profound exploration deeply rooted in anthropological praxis, delving into the intricate interplay between the global phenomenon of climate change, the dynamic agency of women, and the fundamental concern of food security within the agri-cum-business income community of Maloch Swat. By adopting a multifaceted approach encompassing various research tools and methodologies, the study seeks to unravel the nuanced complexities and interconnections that underlie these anthropological phenomena.

Drawing upon the quintessence of ethnographic methodology, anthropologists, ethnographers, and cognate social scientists engage in an intellectual endeavor aimed at attaining an intimate and holistic comprehension of how individuals negotiate and construct their lived realities in the context of the agri-cum-business income community. Departing from contrived laboratory environments, this study ardently

embraces the naturalistic milieu wherein social actors traverse their quotidian existence. Through astute observations, evocative photographs, and contextually grounded interviews, I deftly employ a range of tools to collect multifarious data pertaining to the material practices, linguistic nuances, and existential exigencies enmeshed within the rich tapestry of everyday life in Maloch Swat.

Epitomizing the emic vantage point, this research work ventures to unravel the intricate layers of culture and social dynamics, thereby engendering a profound comprehension of women's agency vis-à-vis the imperatives of food security. By scrutinizing the manifold dimensions intrinsic to this frame of research, including cultural norms, gender roles, socioeconomic factors, and power dynamics, this ethnographic undertaking seeks to elucidate the idiosyncratic intricacies underpinning women's endeavors within the Agri-cum-business income community of Maloch Swat.

Furthermore, the study remains acutely cognizant of the ceaseless flux precipitated by climate change and its interconnectedness with concurrent social transformations. With a sagacious lens, the researcher endeavors to discern the subtle metronome of change resonating through the temporal expanse of recent decades. By disentangling the complex amalgamation of ecological vicissitudes, such as changing weather patterns, resource availability, and agricultural practices, along with the evolving social dynamics, this ethnographic exploration aims to illuminate the manner in which these entwined forces shape and influence women's aptitude to foster food security.

In essence, this anthropological endeavor, guided by an ethnographic lens, embarks upon an intellectual odyssey unraveling the intricate tapestry that binds climate change, women's agency, and the fundamental concern of food security within the agri-cum-business income community of Maloch Swat. By integrating cultural insights with the lived experiences of women in this community, the study aspires to make a significant contribution to the broader discourse surrounding these anthropological phenomena. Through a nuanced and comprehensive analysis, this research seeks to enrich our understanding of the complex interplay among climate change, women's agency, and the imperative of food security, thereby shedding light on broader societal implications and fostering sustainable and equitable development.



## 4.2 Rapport Building and Observations

Developing rapport in a new community is indeed the primary challenge for an anthropologist. It demands patience and a deep respect for the local norms and values. In my case, I leveraged my native language skills and prior knowledge of the local culture to connect with the local people. During the initial days of my fieldwork, I made sure to introduce myself to everyone I met, explaining the purpose and focus of my research. I expressed my genuine interest in studying the culture, history, and economy of the area. Maintaining communication with some of the individuals I initially connected with proved to be invaluable. They not only provided valuable insights but also helped me in establishing further contacts within the community. This approach allowed me to gradually build trust and credibility among the locals, leading to more meaningful and fruitful interactions throughout my research. By being respectful, open-minded, and willing to learn from them, I was able to immerse myself in the community and gain a deeper understanding of their way of life.

Fazal Mabood who was the head of council/jirga and one of my key focal persons and his family especially his mother and sister helped me developing more contacts and building rapport. Due to the influential leader of the local council (Jirga) and a significant personality in the village, it became easier for me to connect with people. The advantage was that there were not many doubts or suspicions in people's hearts. However, at times, people had expectations that I could fulfill some services for them. Some people presumed that I might be associated with some organization, which made it difficult for me to build rapport with them. Additionally, some individuals were not willing to share their interviews and experiences. Their argument was that many people (representatives from organizations) come and go, ask questions, but they never do anything for us and never inquire again. It was quite challenging for me to convince and build rapport with such people. To build rapport, I utilized the practice of giving gifts. This is a cultural norm, and local people highly appreciate the gesture of bringing something when visiting someone.

Using gifts to build rapport is indeed a common cultural norm in many societies, and it can be an effective way to show respect and appreciation. By giving gifts, you demonstrate your willingness to participate in their cultural practices and traditions, which is highly appreciated by the local people.

Gift-giving is a gesture of goodwill and can help create a positive impression, especially when you are entering a new community as an anthropologist. It shows that you are considerate of their customs and willing to invest time and effort in building meaningful relationships. However, it's essential to be mindful of the type of gifts you offer. They should align with the cultural values and preferences of the community. Additionally, the intention behind the gift should be genuine, and it should not be seen as a way to manipulate or bribe people. In conclusion, using gift-giving as a means to build rapport can be a thoughtful approach, but it should be done with respect and cultural sensitivity. Combined with patience, understanding, and respect for local norms, it can contribute to successful integration into the community and a more fruitful anthropological research experience.

Modesty and simplicity hold special significance. Keeping this in mind, I draped a large veil according to the culture, ensuring that my entire body was covered. This gesture can help to build trust and acceptance within the community. It also indicates that you are sensitive to their cultural norms and are making an effort to integrate into their way of life. It is a powerful way to show cultural sensitivity and gain acceptance within the community you are studying. It fosters an environment of mutual respect and allows for more meaningful interactions and insights into the culture you are researching as an anthropologist.

In the village of Maloch, there is a cultural norm that when a female goes outside, she should not do so alone; she should always be accompanied by someone, even if it's a 10-year-old child. This norm posed a challenge for me during my fieldwork. I had two options: either wait for my key informant, Fazal Mabood, to accompany me when he goes out and then drop me off in the community since his house was quite far from the central village, or I would pay a young child who worked at his house to accompany me by giving them 50 rupees.

Sometimes, Fazal Mabood's sister would also join us, and she proved to be very helpful. She enjoyed going out, meeting people, and engaging in conversations. It was a pleasant experience for her, and she took great pleasure in assisting me during my research. By adhering to this cultural norm and ensuring I was not alone when going outside, I not only respected the local customs but also established a level of trust with the community members. It allowed me to move around comfortably, gain insights into

their way of life, and forge meaningful connections with the people in Maloch village. I found elderly people more enthusiastic about interviews and to share their experiences. When I approached people to request interviews or engage in informal discussions, they usually agreed willingly. This positive response had a snowball effect, leading me to meet more people through these initial contacts. But when the situation became challenging and risky when the Taliban entered the village. Staying there alone was not appropriate, and it was unsafe for me to conduct fieldwork independently. That's why I adjusted my approach and instead of staying there, I chose to commute daily. I would visit the village in the morning and return in the afternoon to ensure my safety.

After building rapport in the community, I found it easier to participate and engage with people in their various activities. As I spent time with the community members, they began to see me as someone genuinely interested in understanding their way of life and culture. They felt comfortable having me around and saw me as a friend rather than an outsider. This positive relationship created a sense of mutual respect and understanding, which made it easier for me to interact with them in a natural and un-intrusive manner. This deeper level of engagement enriched my research, as I could observe and experience their culture from within. It also facilitated more meaningful conversations and interviews, as people were willing to share their thoughts and experiences with me openly. It enabled me to immerse myself in the local culture, establish strong connections with the people, and gain valuable knowledge that might not have been accessible without their trust and collaboration.

### **4.3 Interviews and Discussions**

Interviews are a primary method in social research, involving direct person-to-person interactions. These conversations serve a specific research purpose, capturing deep insights, perspectives, and emotions from participants. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, offering a versatile approach to data collection. While valuable for nuanced understanding, interviews also come with limitations such as potential biases and time-intensive analysis.

In the process of conducting my research, I meticulously orchestrated around twenty structured individual interviews, employing a careful selection of participants

through purposive sampling. Additionally, I engaged in ten to twelve unstructured discussions, which unveiled a trove of valuable and dependable insights. These unstructured discussions served a dual purpose – not only did they contribute fresh perspectives, but they also played a pivotal role in verifying the data already amassed. The nature of my study, devoid of sensitive subjects like conflicts, sexuality, and drugs, allowed for a comprehensive and authentic exploration. Leveraging this advantage, I employed open-ended interviews to delve into the depths of my research area. Through these interactions, I unearthed a plethora of detailed insights that provided a deeper understanding of the subjects under scrutiny.

My interviews traversed a diverse array of topics, each revealing unique facets of the human experience. I delved into the mundane yet essential routine activities of individuals, casting light on their daily lives and habits. Furthermore, I probed into the allocation of time for various activities, uncovering patterns and trends that shed light on lifestyle priorities. The impact of climate change emerged as a crucial concern in my interviews, with participants sharing their experiences and perspectives on this pressing issue. Moreover, I delved into the intricate tapestry of women's perceptions about empowerment, unearthing their viewpoints and aspirations in the context of societal progress. The topic of food security allowed me to explore the intricate balance between sustenance and access, providing insights into the challenges faced by various communities. Socio-cultural and physical boundaries also came under scrutiny during these discussions, revealing the ways in which these constraints shape lives, perceptions, and opportunities. Through these explorations, a mosaic of interconnected themes emerged, highlighting the complex interplay of individual lives and the broader socio-cultural landscape. In summation, my research journey encompassed a skillful blend of structured interviews and unstructured discussions, underpinned by purposive sampling. This multifaceted approach, coupled with the absence of sensitive subjects, enabled me to harvest a tapestry of intricate insights that deepened my understanding of routine activities, time allocation, climate change impacts, women's empowerment, food security, and socio-cultural boundaries.

In my research endeavor, I embarked on a journey of insightful exploration by conducting interviews spanning diverse age groups. Aiming for a comprehensive understanding, I specifically sought out individuals from the elder demographic, as well as a spectrum of occupational backgrounds. This deliberate selection allowed me to

unearth the varying nuances and perspectives that different social and economic groups bring to the table, particularly concerning the critical themes of climate change, women's empowerment, and food storage.

Engaging with elders provided a unique vantage point, drawing from a wealth of life experiences and historical context. These conversations unveiled a tapestry of wisdom and insights, offering glimpses into how perceptions of climate change have evolved over time. By tapping into the reservoir of their memories, I uncovered valuable narratives that shed light on the shifts in environmental awareness and attitudes across generations. Simultaneously, my discussions with individuals from diverse occupations enriched the mosaic of perspectives. Each profession contributed a distinct lens through which climate change, women's empowerment, and food storage were viewed. Whether it was the pragmatic insights of laborers, the strategic perspectives of professionals, or the community-centered viewpoints of service workers, every occupation painted a vivid picture of how these crucial issues intersected with daily lives and responsibilities.

Through these interviews, a compelling narrative emerged. It became evident that different age groups and occupational backgrounds engendered distinct understandings, concerns, and priorities. Elders brought forth a wealth of historical insights, while varied professions illuminated the multifaceted dimensions of the challenges at hand. This diversity of perspectives enhanced the depth and richness of my research, enabling a more holistic grasp of the intricate relationship between society, economy, and the pressing issues of climate change, women's empowerment, and food storage. In conclusion, my interviews with individuals across various age groups and occupations served as a powerful lens through which I could unravel the intricate tapestry of attitudes and understandings towards climate change, women's empowerment, and food storage. This methodological approach amplified the scope of my research, providing a comprehensive and multi-dimensional view of how these crucial topics resonate across different social and economic strata.

#### **4.4 Interview Guideline**

Creating an interview guide is a valuable tool in interview research for several reasons. An interview guide is essentially a structured outline that lists the main topics

to be covered during the interview, along with the key questions to be answered under each topic. This process of creating a guide helps the researcher focus on the specific areas of interest and organize the flow of the interview, ensuring that the important topics are covered and that the conversation remains coherent and relevant to the research objectives.

I have adopted a commendable approach in my research methodology, wherein I meticulously devised a list of substantial and pertinent questions pertaining to my chosen topic. This proactive step ensures comprehensive coverage of the subject matter while maintaining a well-structured framework for my interviews. The method facilitated a precise assessment of the extent of information gathered and what aspects remain unexplored, thereby aiding in effective time management during the research process.

Moreover, my conscientious consideration of the respondents' engagement and the respectful treatment of their ethics and values is indicative of my responsible and ethical conduct as a researcher. This approach reflects a profound commitment to uphold the principles of ethical research, ensuring the respondents' comfort and cooperation throughout the interviews. By implementing this systematic and ethical approach to interview research, it is highly likely that I have gleaned invaluable insights relevant to my chosen topic. My meticulousness in designing the interview guide will undoubtedly serve as a valuable asset in my data analysis and contribute to the credibility and validity of my research findings.

Ethical considerations are also taken into account as sensitive topics can be handled with care, and participants can be assured of their privacy and consent. Furthermore, having a guide aids in time management during interviews, helping the researcher stay on track and cover all relevant topics within the allotted time. Finally, creating an interview guide requires a thorough understanding of the research objectives and the topic at hand, equipping the researcher with the necessary background knowledge to ask informed and relevant questions during the interview process. Overall, an interview guide plays a crucial role in interview research, providing structure and direction while allowing for meaningful and insightful conversations with participants.

## **4.5 Jottings and Field Notes**

As an anthropologist conducting fieldwork, I aimed to be actively engaged in the events and interactions I was studying. To document the data for my research, I relied on taking quick notes, known as jottings, and more detailed and formal records called fieldnotes. Jottings were particularly useful for capturing important information during conversations and observations, but doing so while conversing presented challenges, requiring me to make careful decisions about when and what to jot down.

To overcome these challenges, I employed various methods, such as writing on paper or using a digital recorder, especially when writing wasn't convenient, like when walking or in sensitive situations. People's reactions to my notepad varied; some were hesitant to speak, while others felt honored that their insights were valuable to my research. To adapt, I adjusted my approach based on individual preferences. In addition to jottings, I relied on my memory to recall details, a practice known as "headnotes" in anthropology. Fieldnotes, on the other hand, were more extensive and organized records of information and observations. I chose to write my fieldnotes at the end of each day or the start of the next. Although my fieldnotes were not as structured as initially expected, they were still neat and organized enough for later analysis. Through these strategies of jotting and writing fieldnotes, I effectively captured valuable information and insights from my interactions and observations during the fieldwork.

## **4.6 The Synergy of Probing and Sharing Experiences**

In anthropology, probing is a critical research technique used to gain deeper insights and a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices, beliefs, and behaviors of the community being studied. It is commonly employed during interviews, participant observations, and other data collection methods.

The main purpose of probing in anthropology is to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses and provide detailed information about their experiences, perspectives, and cultural practices. It helps the anthropologist go beyond surface-level answers and uncover the underlying meanings and motivations behind the behaviors and beliefs observed in the community. Anthropologists use various probing strategies to encourage participants to share more. I used the technique of asking open ended questions, requesting specific examples for seeking clarification on ambiguous

responses, or encouraging elaboration by saying things like "Tell me more about that", repeated the last sentences after the respondents and used follow up questions to explore related topics. Probing is especially valuable in ethnographic research, where the goal is to immerse oneself in the culture and gain a holistic understanding of the community. By using probing techniques, anthropologists can build rapport with the participants, create a more interactive and engaging interview or observation setting, and gather rich and detailed data that provides a deeper insight into the cultural context.

#### **4.7 Sampling**

In my research on climate change, women's agency, and food security, I had planned to target a sample size of 35-40 participants. However, due to the threats posed by the Taliban and the occurrence of flooding, I faced significant challenges in meeting my intended sample size. These external factors were beyond my control and impacted the feasibility of conducting research in certain regions. In such situations, prioritizing the safety and well-being of both researchers and potential participants was of utmost importance. As a result, I had to reassess my research design and consider alternative approaches to data gathering. Despite the difficulties, I remained committed to conducting the research ethically and responsibly and achieved 30 of the planned target sample. While not achieving the targeted sample size can be seen as a limitation, I acknowledge these challenges and their potential impact on the research exploration. I will be transparent in my research report about the reasons for the reduced sample size and the potential implications for the research findings. The insights and data collected from the participants I could engage with still hold value and can contribute to a broader understanding of the interconnected themes under investigation, within the regions I was able to access.

I choose to employ purposive sampling as a technique to selectively choose participants based on specific characteristics or attributes that are directly relevant to my research objectives. When investigating the interconnected themes of climate change, women's agency, and food security, I rely on purposive sampling to intentionally choose individuals who possess valuable insights and perspectives related to these critical topics.



To explore the anthropological insights surrounding climate change, women's agency, and food security, I use purposive sampling to identify and select participants who meet certain criteria. For example, I seek out women who have actively engaged in initiatives addressing climate change adaptation or mitigation within their communities. These women are likely to possess knowledge and experiences that can shed light on the effects of climate change on food security and the role of women's agency in addressing these challenges.

Additionally, I consider including individuals who have experienced the direct impacts of climate change on food security, such as farmers or indigenous communities heavily dependent on natural resources for sustenance. By purposively selecting participants with specific characteristics or attributes, I aim to gather in-depth information and capture diverse perspectives related to the interconnected themes under investigation.

The use of purposive sampling allows me to target individuals who can provide rich and relevant data, thereby enhancing the depth and quality of my research findings. However, I remain mindful of the potential limitations and subjectivity introduced by this sampling technique. My judgment and criteria for participant selection may introduce biases or overlook certain perspectives. Therefore, I carefully consider my research objectives, the population I wish to study, and the potential implications and limitations of using purposive sampling in my research design.

#### **4.8 Key Informants**

One of my key informants is a male affiliated with the village council and community assemblies, where a majority of villagers approach him with their concerns. He served as a bridge, enabling me to easily engage with the community members and gather information in alignment with my research objectives. The community members showed respect, and I encountered little difficulty in establishing rapport. Adhering to the cultural norms of the village, I was restricted from interacting with males to a certain extent, except for specific discussions involving household men, where my key informant maintained close associations. Within my group of key informants, he was the one who could furnish me with intricate insights pertaining to the village's cultural norms and values, in addition to a wide array of details relating to agricultural practices.

I had selected the community's elders from among the women. The purpose of choosing the elders was that their experiences are the true knowledge, which is the main asset of the study. Their perspectives on climate change, women's agency, and food storage hold immense value. They have witnessed a phase of change that no one else could understand or comprehend better than them. They have eloquently articulated their expressions and thoughts in verbatim folk sayings, adding a touch of beauty to their narratives.

#### **4.9 Ethical Consideration**

Ethnographic research, as an intimate exploration of human societies, demands a profound consideration of ethical issues before immersing oneself in the field. The intricate tapestry of diverse cultural norms and values that adorn each society necessitates anthropologists to respond reflexively and navigate their actions with utmost appropriateness within these cultural contexts. However, the complexity of ethnographic research extends beyond cultural understanding to embrace methodological concerns that arise from engaging with people, analyzing their lives, and articulating findings.

The ethical considerations encompass multifaceted aspects, including the paramount importance of obtaining informed consent from all participants, respecting their privacy and ensuring anonymity where required. To preserve the sanctity of cultural norms and uphold ethical principles, I did not use respondents' names even pseudonyms throughout the thesis, precisely as per the respondents' requests, thereby safeguarding their identities and protecting their cultural sensitivities.

A meticulous approach towards photography has been exercised, where no images have been captured without the explicit permission of the natives. Recognizing that unauthorized photography is an intrusion into personal and cultural spaces, I have consistently sought proper consent before capturing any visual representation, thereby ensuring a respectful and ethical portrayal of their lives. Moreover, my ethical commitments extend to the process of data handling and reporting. I maintain meticulous records to preserve the confidentiality of sensitive information, never disclosing the comments or remarks of one party to another, or to anyone within or outside the village. This steadfast adherence to ethical standards fosters an atmosphere

of trust and respect within the research community and emphasizes the paramount significance of preserving the integrity of the research process.

By unwaveringly upholding these ethical guidelines, I endeavor to ensure that my ethnographic research remains an embodiment of cultural sensitivity and ethical responsibility. The fruits of my endeavors yield not just a collection of data but a narrative that encapsulates the essence of the communities studied, underpinned by the values of respect, honesty, and empathy.

## 5. LOCALE PROFILE

### 5.1 History

Maloch (ملوچ) is a village that has historical significance due to its association with cotton cultivation and the presence of ancient Hindu artifacts. The word "Maaloch (ملوچ)" in Pashto means "cotton," indicating the importance of cotton harvesting in this area. The village is believed to have been inhabited by Hindu rulers in the past, and excavations have uncovered pottery and other artifacts from the Hindu era, including idols and a stupa. Within the social fabric of Maloch, the village is subdivided into distinct mohallahs, with Tasigram standing out as one of them. This mohallah derives its name from a Hindu Raja who exercised authority over it. The village is further distinguished by the presence of a well-preserved spring, centrally located and revered as a vital water source. Remarkably, even during periods of severe drought, the spring has consistently delivered fresh water to sustain the community. According to local lore, Saidu Baba, a revered Wali Allah known for his spiritual pursuits, played a significant role in the sustenance of the spring. It is believed that with a mere strike of his staff, the water continued to flow perennially, thereby etching his influence onto the landscape. The village's spring water is attributed with curative properties. It is believed that if the water contains any harmful substances, they are naturally filtered through rocks and imbued with the healing essence of various herbs along its course. As a result, the water is revered and consumed by the locals without any hesitation, their faith in its purity unwavering.

ملوچ نوم یو بنار دی  
خدای قلع تې تاو دی  
پکهوز سر ی شهن دریاب دی  
هو سل ی دروازی اویوکوسه ده

Metaphorically, the mention of a fort in the context of Maloch may allude to the encompassing mountains that surround the village, acting as a protective barrier against external forces. Additionally, a metaphorical representation of a pond within the community symbolizes the collection and utilization of the spring water for irrigation purposes.



**Figure 1 A renowned spring which was once considered a sacred one located in the center of the village Maloch**

Originally comprising approximately, a hundred homes, the village was colloquially known as "100 Doors," with an entrance that symbolized the communal gateway and pathway to its inner complexities.

## **5.2 Location and Accessibility**

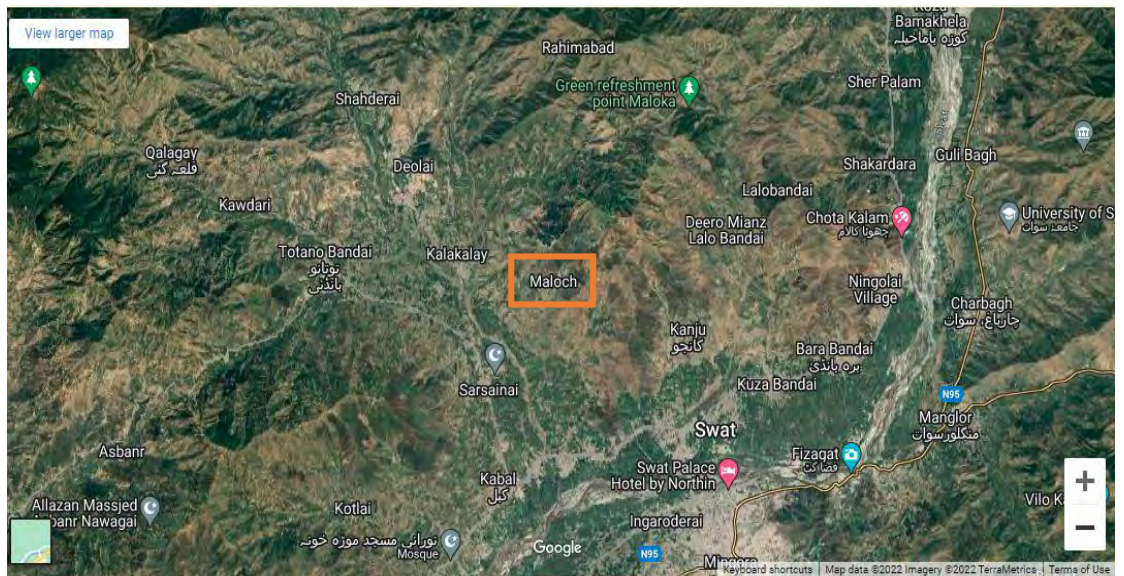
Maloch village is a picturesque settlement nestled in the scenic Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Its idyllic location in Tehsil Kabal offers a serene escape from the bustling cities, but it comes with its challenges of accessibility. Situated about 265 km south of Islamabad, reaching Maloch requires traversing through a journey that may take several hours, especially given the hilly terrain and winding roads.

The village stands at an elevation of 1072 feet above sea level, providing its residents with breathtaking views of the surrounding landscapes. However, the remoteness of Maloch also means that modern infrastructure and transportation options are limited. The nearest major city, Mingora, lies approximately 20 km to the south-east, while the district capital, Saidu Sharif, is also around the same distance away. River Swat flows about 8 km to the west of the village, adding to the natural beauty of the area.



**Figure 2 Exploring the heart of Maloch through this map screenshot, navigate the layers of community life with Google imagery, all while respecting terms, privacy, and providing valuable feedback**

**<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Maloch,+Swat,+Khyber+Pakhtunkhwa/@34.8430687,72.301351,306m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x38dc16698ed85e8f:0x23f2954dfe31e23a!8m2!3d34.843104!4d72.3010855>**



**Figure 3 Zooming in on the picturesque village of Maloch, featured prominently with distinctive orange lines**

**<http://www.maplandia.com/pakistan/n-w-f-p/swat/maloch/>**







**Figure 4** The entrance of Maloch Village, where the entrance unveils the warmth of community and the beauty of simplicity

Despite the accessibility constraints, those who make the journey to Maloch are rewarded with a glimpse into the region's rich cultural heritage and warm hospitality. The village's location amid the stunning landscapes of Swat makes it an appealing destination for nature enthusiasts and adventurous travelers seeking a unique experience off the beaten path. Nevertheless, for those seeking an authentic and immersive rural escape, Maloch presents an opportunity to connect with nature and explore the unspoiled beauty of the Swat district.



**Figure 5** The scenic main road of Maloch Village beckons, offering a scenic route through a tapestry of heritage and local life

### **5.3 Population**

Maloch village, with its tranquil setting and picturesque landscapes, is home to an estimated population of around 2000 residents. Within this community, there are approximately 900 eligible voters who actively participate in shaping the village's



future through the democratic process. The demographic makeup of Maloch reveals an interesting balance, with about 43.75% of the population being male and 66.25% being female, highlighting the significant presence of women in the village. This indicates a progressive trend towards gender equity and empowerment within the community.

The village comprises a total of 400 households, each fostering a sense of unity and togetherness. On average, these households consist of 5 family members, fostering a close-knit and supportive environment. The gender distribution within these households further reflects the value placed on both male and female members, with a ratio of 2:3 respectively. Maloch's population may be modest in size, but its unity and vibrant spirit make it a thriving community. Despite its remote location, the village's strong sense of community and active voter engagement demonstrate a commitment to progress and collective growth. As residents go about their daily lives, they are enveloped by the natural beauty of Swat and the warmth of its people, creating an environment that nurtures both individual aspirations and collective aspirations for the betterment of the entire village.

**Table 3. 1: Population of the Village Galoch**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number*</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	870	43.5%
Female	1230	66.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Approximate figure

## **5.4 Climate**

Maloch village enjoys a pleasant and agreeable climate, characterized by a brief and mild summer season. The warmest month, June, brings daytime temperatures reaching around 33°C, offering residents and visitors alike a comfortable and enjoyable summer experience. Even during the warmest days, the temperature remains moderate, ensuring that the weather remains bearable for outdoor activities. Conversely, January is the coldest month in Maloch, with average high temperatures of around 11°C and chilly low temperatures dipping to approximately -2°C. During this period, residents bundle up to stay cozy, and the picturesque landscape is often adorned with a frosty

touch, creating a charming winter ambiance. The winter season in Maloch lasts a significant duration, extending from November to March. This prolonged winter period is marked by occasional snowfall and refreshing rain showers, adding to the natural beauty of the surrounding area. The village is transformed into a winter wonderland during snowfall, providing breathtaking views and opportunities for snow-related activities.

Overall, Maloch's climate offers a well-balanced blend of seasonal changes, with mild summers and snowy winters. This diversity in weather enhances the village's appeal, attracting nature enthusiasts and those seeking a respite from extreme temperatures. Residents of Maloch are accustomed to adapting to the varying seasons, making the most of each weather pattern to embrace the unique charm and experiences they bring to their picturesque village.

## **5.5 Environment and Topography**

While Maloch village may be a microcosm, the environmental factors within its boundaries hold significance as they can impact the wider ecological system. The uneven topography, typical of a valley, combined with the generally temperate weather, creates favorable conditions for growing a variety of crops and grasses. Agriculture plays a vital role in the village's economy, with wheat and maize being the main crops cultivated on a large portion of the agricultural land. Fruit orchards are also a common sight, with peaches, pears, plums, apricot, walnuts, and olives being prominently grown. Potatoes, red onions, and garlic are among the other crops cultivated by the community, showcasing the diversity of their agricultural practices.

During fieldwork and exploration, fruit trees such as peaches, pears, walnuts, and olives were observed, contributing to the village's scenic charm. Interestingly, olive trees seem to dominate the plantations around the cemeteries, adding a touch of serenity to these sacred grounds. The village's natural water streams play a crucial role in sustaining the agricultural activities, as they are utilized to irrigate the farmlands. Additionally, a man-made canal traverses through the settlement, further supporting irrigation and water management.

Overall, Maloch village's agricultural practices, fruit orchards, and water resources create a harmonious ecological system that sustains the community and

contributes to the rural beauty of the area. Preserving and managing these environmental aspects is vital not only for the village's prosperity but also for the preservation of the broader ecological balance in the region.

## **5.6 Political and Jirga System of Village Maloch**

In the area surrounding Maloch village, the political structure is organized into village councils and neighborhood councils, each consisting of ten to fifteen members. These councils play a significant role in shaping the political life and activities within the village. One of the primary mechanisms of governance and conflict resolution in Maloch village is the jirga system. The jirga is a traditional assembly of respected elders who come together to settle disputes, make decisions, and uphold customary laws. The jirga holds immense influence in the social and political affairs of the village, and its decisions are often respected and followed by the community members.

Moreover, the politics of the Union Council also play a major role in shaping the village's governance. In this area, four villages, *namely Maloch, Totbanrai, Aligrama, and Hazara*, are collectively represented under one Union Council. The Union Council serves as a local government body responsible for making decisions that impact the welfare and development of all four villages. The members of the village councils, neighborhood councils, and the Union Council collectively work towards addressing the needs and concerns of the community. They play a crucial role in matters related to local development projects, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential services.

As the political life of Maloch revolves around these traditional and formal political structures, it showcases the significance of community engagement and cooperation in the governance of the village. Through the combined efforts of the councils and the influence of the jirga system, the people of Maloch actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring that the village's interests and welfare are well-represented and safeguarded.

## **5.7 Languages**

The people of Maloch village predominantly speak the Pukhtu language, which has its origins in the Afghan province of Bakhta. Pukhtu is widely understood and

spoken in and around the village. However, over time, the language has undergone some influence from other languages like Arabic and English, which is evident in the current vernacular expressions used by the community. Migration to Arab countries and educational exposure have contributed to the blending of Pukhtu with Arabic and English elements. Those who have lived or worked in Arab countries often incorporate Arabic words and phrases into their speech. Similarly, due to the influence of English through education and media, some English words and phrases are also integrated into the local language.

It's interesting to note that Maloch village is located in a hilly area where the majority of the people are Gujjars, and they have their own language called Gojri. When communicating with people outside their community, the Gujjars often switch to speaking Pukhtu as it serves as a common language of communication in the region. While some non-Pukhtu speakers in the village have become proficient in spoken Pukhtu, writing the Pukhtu script is challenging for them. Consequently, the practice of writing in Pukhtu script has gradually diminished, and it is being replaced by Arabic or Urdu scripts, which are more commonly used for written communication.

In terms of linguistic distribution, about 90% of the village's population are Pukhtu speakers, and the remaining 10% predominantly speak Gojri. This diversity of languages enriches the cultural fabric of the community, fostering a spirit of inclusivity and mutual understanding among the residents of Maloch village.

**Table 3. 2: Types of Languages**

Language	Percentage of Speakers
Pukhtu/Pashto	90%
Others (Gojri)	10%

Source: Field Work

## 5.8 Dress Code

In Maloch village, the traditional attire for both men and women is simple shalwar kameez. Males often wear hats, especially during the winter season when they don the iconic chatrali hats, also known as pakols, to keep themselves warm. In the

summer, elders typically wear caps as a sign of respect and decency, although younger individuals are less inclined to do so.

For women, shawls and head scarves, commonly known as *sadar*, are commonly used to stay warm during colder months. Embroidery on clothing is a common practice among women, adding a touch of elegance to their traditional attire. A large chadar, known as *paronay*, is frequently used as a veil. In addition to their traditional *shalwar kameez*, men often wear Peshawri chappal, a traditional footwear choice, and may also don waistcoats for special occasions or events. It is generally expected for people in the village to dress traditionally, and wearing new fashion styles might be viewed strangely. However, there is a gradual acceptance and adoption of new fashion trends as the villagers open up to modern influences.

In the past, males were not expected to wear decorated clothes, but this practice is gradually changing, and they are becoming more comfortable with incorporating embellishments into their traditional attire. In terms of color preferences, crimson is favored for women's clothing, while white is commonly seen in men's attire. When women leave their homes, they often wear a burqa (veil) or a large chadar (*paronay*) for modesty and cultural norms. However, this is not a requirement for older women. As time progresses, the people of Maloch are embracing a balance between tradition and modernity, as evident in their evolving fashion choices. The traditional *shalwar kameez* remains the staple attire, but with a growing openness to new styles and trends, the village's cultural landscape is continuously evolving while preserving its deep-rooted heritage.

## **5.9 Food Pattern**

The food pattern in Maloch village is characterized by simplicity and freshness. The availability of easily accessible and affordable food items makes it convenient for the villagers to maintain a healthy diet. Many residents grow their own vegetables in their fields, ensuring that the produce is fresh and nutritious. Among the commonly grown vegetables are ladyfinger, spinach, radish, pumpkins, pumpkins leaves (*Soki*), zucchini (*tori*), and arum (*arvi*). These vegetables not only satisfy the dietary needs of the villagers but are also traded with neighboring villages or nearby cities, showcasing the village's self-sufficiency in food production.

On special occasions and festivals, people arrange for chicken and meat dishes, which are considered delicacies. Rice is a staple food item during festivals, and two popular varieties are Swati rice and lentil rice (nask wriji). The local cuisine tends to avoid excessive use of spices or chilies, reflecting a preference for simpler and more natural flavors. For breakfast, tea is a common beverage, often accompanied by fried maize bread known as makkai ka paratha or jwaro dodai. During lunch and dinner, villagers use yeast flour to make bread.

Rice or vermicelli, known as maichay, is typically cooked once a week. Interestingly, the preparation of maichay requires permission from the head of the household, which is usually the mother, mother-in-law, or elder sister. This practice is likely due to the responsibility of managing household expenses, and it reflects a sense of respect and hierarchy within the family. Yogurt, buttermilk, and desi ghee are cherished favorites among the villagers, adding richness and flavor to their meals.

When serving meals, it is customary for food to be presented to men before women. However, the distribution of portions is overseen by the mother or the eldest woman in the household. She determines the quantity of desi ghee and other food items based on factors such as age, gender, and other roles within the family. The food culture of Maloch village not only reflects the availability of locally grown and fresh produce but also demonstrates the importance of family dynamics and tradition in meal preparation and serving. The simplicity and authenticity of their cuisine contribute to the unique charm of the village's cultural heritage.

## **5.10 Complexion of People**

In Maloch village, like in many other cultures, the term "complexion" refers to the natural color and appearance of a person's skin, particularly on the face. The majority of the population in the village is characterized by light-colored skin, and individuals often have black or brown eyes and black hair. Fair skin is highly admired and considered attractive by many people in the community. There is a cultural preference for fair-skinned individuals, and having a bride with fair complexion is particularly desired. This preference for fair skin is deeply ingrained in the societal norms and beauty standards of the village.

It is important to note that beauty standards and preferences can vary from culture to culture, and in Maloch, fair skin is highly valued. It is not uncommon for women in various cultures, including some rural communities, to use skin-whitening creams or *desi totkey* (traditional remedies) in an attempt to achieve a fairer or lighter complexion. In Maloch village, where fair skin is admired and desired, some women may resort to such practices as well. However, it is essential to promote inclusivity and embrace the diversity of skin colors and appearances as each individual's uniqueness contributes to the rich tapestry of human beauty.

## **5.11 Customs**

The village of Maloch observes all its rituals and traditions from an Islamic perspective, ensuring that they remain within the boundaries of Sharia Law. The community comes together to celebrate various joyful occasions, such as the birth of a baby. When a baby is born, especially if it's a male, the celebrations are enthusiastic and filled with excitement. As part of the initiation ceremony, the Azaan is recited in the newborn's ears. While it used to be performed by the local Mulla in the past, nowadays any male villager can carry out this important ritual.

In the past, the celebration of a male baby's birth involved firing, but this practice has now transitioned into expressing joy with increased fervor. There is a tradition of rewarding the first person to announce the happy news (فري). As part of the initiation rituals, a baby's head is cleanly shaved, and the barber receives a substantial payment from the father or grandfather for performing this ceremony. Weddings in Maloch are performed according to Sharia Law, with the Nikah taking place at the bride's house. The marriage celebrations are simple yet heartfelt. The bride receives a gold ring from the mother and close family members of the groom, and sweets are distributed in the neighborhood. The bride's parents then visit the groom at his home, bearing several gifts and presents, including unique gifts for the groom's mother. The Khanakay tradition involves a complex exchange of gifts between the families. Wedding invitations were traditionally conveyed through verbal messages, often by a woman known as Qasabgara, who also prepared milk-based sweet drinks and served them to guests for payment. Nowadays, improved communication through telephone and mobiles, along with printed invitation cards, has replaced this practice.

In times of death/loss, the community comes together to express grief and support the family of the deceased. The first three days of mourning are particularly challenging, and the neighborhood provides food for visitors during this period. Every Thursday night, a feast called Kherat is held, and almost all nearby neighbors are invited. On the 40th day, a larger Kherat is organized, inviting everyone, both from the village and beyond.

Religious occasions like the 10th of Muharram-ul-Haram and Khat-mul-Quran are also observed, where people repair the graves of their relatives and distribute peanuts in the community. During Khat-mul-Quran, gifts are given to the children who come to recite the Quran. These rituals and traditions reflect the strong religious and communal bonds of the village, where the community comes together to celebrate joys and support each other during difficult times, adhering to their Islamic beliefs and customs.

## **5.12 Feasts, Festivals and Rituals**

The social celebrations and festivities in Maloch village are deeply rooted in Islamic traditions and religious observances. While social gatherings and festivities are relatively rare, religious events hold significant importance in the community. Wedding days and other joyous occasions bring people together, and on Eid and *Shab-e-Qadar*, the villagers congregate at a neighbor's house to celebrate. Male members gather in the Hujra, where they engage in conversations and discussions, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie.

Tattooing patterns on women's hands using henna (*nakriza*) is a common practice, adding a traditional touch to celebrations and events. During the occasion of 12 Rabi-ul-Awal, some individuals may organize Milad programs in the village as a way to express their love for Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and commemorate his birth. Eid-ul-Fitar (*Warokay Akhtar*) and Eid-ul-Adha (*Loye/Ghat Akhtar*) are celebrated with pure Islamic sentiments. On Eid-ul-Fitar, people, especially children, offer Eid prayers at mosques in each mohalla (neighborhood), as there is no central Eid Gaah in the village. They visit relatives and exchange greetings and gifts, with children receiving Eidi (gifts of cash) from their elders.



On Eid-ul-Adha, the act of sacrificing animals is a religious duty performed to commemorate Hazrat Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to the Divine order. The meat from the sacrificed animals is distributed among the poor, relatives, and neighbors, following religious norms. In the past, during Muharram, children would gather at one house and prepare *Khotkanai*, a traditional rice dish mixed with dry fruits. Unique traditional meals called "*Gongri*" were also prepared on the day of Muharram and shared with the underprivileged, neighbors, and family members. This meal consisted of seven ingredients, with a historical significance linked to the event of Karbala.

In the past, women used to gather in cemeteries on the second day of Eid to celebrate and sing songs while playing an ancient musical instrument called a "*Tambal*." This provided them with an opportunity to leave the house and engage in communal festivities while adhering to the strict *purdah* (veil) customs. On the other hand, male members of the village would travel to nearby cities during large festivals where musical and dance ensembles were assembled, providing enhanced entertainment. These cultural practices and religious observances highlight the villagers' strong connections to their Islamic faith and traditions, fostering a sense of community and unity during various celebrations and events.

### **5.13 Norms, Values and Beliefs**

The villagers of Maloch exemplify a high level of class and moral values in their interactions with one another. They prioritize protecting each other's rights and actively encourage good behavior among themselves. Respect for elders is deeply ingrained in their culture, and they treat children with kindness and care. When elders speak, younger members patiently wait for their turn to respond and often lend a helping hand in their elders' tasks.

A notable aspect of their respectful demeanor is that they never address each other by name, choosing instead to use appropriate titles or terms of respect. Age distinctions are fluid, and regardless of their differences or past animosities, they maintain a sense of respect and courtesy towards one another. Hospitality is a prominent trait among the villagers, and they take great pride in providing warmth and generosity

to guests and visitors. Welcoming others into their homes and making them feel comfortable is a cherished practice in the community.

To resolve interpersonal disputes, the villagers turn to the jirga system, seeking guidance from a council of respected elders. This traditional method of conflict resolution helps maintain harmony within the community and ensures that disputes are settled amicably. Islam is the predominant religion in the village, and the majority of the villagers practice it according to the Sunni sect. Their faith plays a central role in shaping their values, traditions, and social interactions. The villagers' commitment to Tawheed-o-Rasalat, the belief in the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), guides their daily lives and fosters a sense of unity among them. Overall, the villagers of Maloch exemplify the virtues of respect, hospitality, and communal harmony, showcasing a strong bond rooted in their shared religious beliefs and cultural values. Their commitment to these principles contributes to a tightly-knit and harmonious community that embraces diversity and cherishes the well-being of each member.

#### **5.14 Traditional Food**

In Maloch village, the traditional dish of green rice, locally known as *Chukanr*, holds special cultural and regional importance. This unique dish is made using green pot-herbs like spinach and mustard greens, which are chopped and boiled together with Swati rice (*begamai wriji*). It is then served with desi ghee and milk, creating a delicious and nourishing meal. Green rice, or *Chukanr*, is a dish that has been passed down through generations in Maloch, and it has become an integral part of the local culinary heritage. It is a prime example of a food that is specific to the culture and region of Kyber Pukhtunkhwa, showcasing the local tastes and preferences of the villagers.

Fruits also play a significant role in Maloch's food culture, and two favorites are walnuts and mulberries. These fruits are highly esteemed, and when presented together with dry mulberries, they are considered a symbol of high hospitality. This gesture reflects the community's generosity and warmth towards special guests, showcasing their tradition of welcoming visitors with the best offerings from their region. In this way, the food choices and customs in Maloch reflect not only the local tastes and resources but also the values and customs of the community. These traditional foods

serve as a means of cultural expression, establishing and continuing social connections, and preserving the unique identity of Maloch village.

### **5.15 Economy**

The dependence on remittances sent by male family members working abroad and agriculture is a significant aspect of the villagers' livelihood in Maloch. While women may not be the primary breadwinners due to social role restrictions, they play a crucial role in managing and providing for the family's food needs. Women are responsible for producing and cooking food for their families, ensuring that every member is accounted for. The limited involvement of some villagers in business is due to the relatively small population of the village. Small merchants and shopkeepers have their own setups, but their businesses may not be well-established, likely due to the village's size and limited market demand. This casual approach to business ownership may also be influenced by the traditional and close-knit nature of the community.

A significant portion of the male population from the village works in foreign countries, particularly in Dubai and Saudi Arabia. Remittances sent back home by these male family members contribute significantly to the village's economy and the financial well-being of their families. This migration for work opportunities is a common phenomenon in many rural areas, as people seek better economic prospects in other regions. In summary, the livelihood dynamics in Maloch village are characterized by a reliance on remittances from male family members working abroad and the agricultural sector. Women play a crucial role in food production and management within the household, while some villagers engage in small-scale businesses to supplement their income. The migration of male family members to foreign countries in search of better opportunities is a common trend in the village, further impacting the local economy and family dynamics.

### **5.16 Occupations**

The trend of economic migration in Maloch village has led to a deficiency of professional individuals within the community. Many villagers, especially male family members, migrate to foreign countries like Dubai and Saudi Arabia in search of better economic opportunities. As a result, there is a shortage of skilled professionals and workers within the village, as many individuals pursue work opportunities abroad.

In terms of land ownership, it is a common practice for the ownership of the land to belong to the head of the household, typically a male family member. The tradition of giving land ownership to women is not popular in the village, which may contribute to gender disparities in land ownership and decision-making. However, there is a notable exception among the Gujjar families, who are settlers in the village. In these families, women are actively involved in helping their men in the fields. This involvement in agricultural activities reflects a more gender-inclusive approach within the Gujjar community. On the other hand, Pukhtun women in the village are not allowed to participate in agricultural activities or help their men in the fields. This restriction is a cultural norm that is specific to the Pukhtun community in the village.

Overall, the economic migration trend has created a lack of skilled professionals within the village, and land ownership is predominantly held by male family members. While some exceptions exist, such as the involvement of Gujjar women in agricultural activities, cultural norms limit the participation of Pukhtun women in these endeavors. Addressing these gender disparities and promoting more inclusive practices could lead to a more balanced and equitable community in Maloch village.

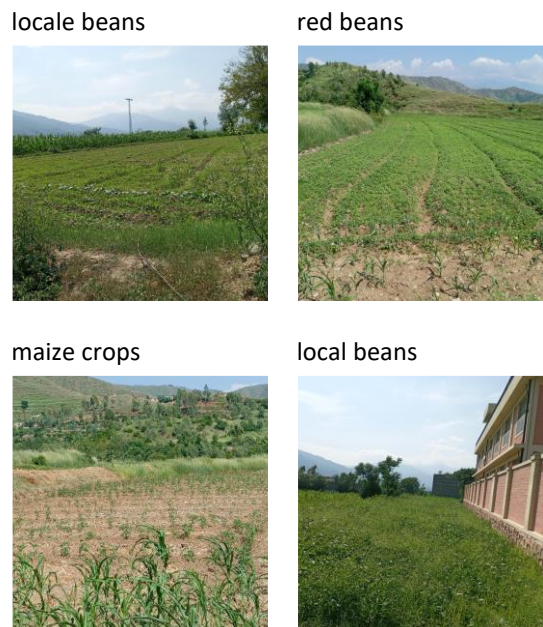
### **5.17 Agriculture**

Agriculture is indeed a prevalent and important occupation in Maloch village, and the hardworking nature of the people contributes to their success in the field. The villagers have embraced innovation and modern techniques, moving away from traditional methods to enhance their crop yields. Each landowner allocates a portion of their land for horticulture, where they cultivate a variety of vegetables such as onions, ladyfinger, radish, mustard, garlic, and tomatoes. These vegetables are primarily grown for domestic consumption, providing the villagers with fresh and nutritious produce for their daily meals. The remaining part of the land is dedicated to cash crops, with wheat and maize being the main crops cultivated for commercial purposes.

The villagers follow sustainable agricultural practices, utilizing natural fertilizers to nourish their crops. However, if they encounter weaker crop growth, they may resort to the use of chemical fertilizers to boost productivity. This balanced approach reflects their commitment to preserving the health of their soil and the environment while also ensuring adequate crop yields.

Wheat and maize are the primary crops grown in Maloch, with wheat being particularly renowned for its unique and unmatched flavor. To preserve the quality of their crops, the villagers take care to save their native wheat seeds, ensuring the continuity of the superior taste and characteristics of their wheat produce.

Additionally, Maloch village is well-known for its peach production. The local peaches are highly regarded for their exceptional taste and are a source of pride for the community. This fruit production contributes to the diversity of their agricultural output and offers economic opportunities for the villagers. Overall, the combination of hard work, innovation, and a focus on preserving traditional agricultural practices has enabled the people of Maloch to excel in their agricultural endeavors. Their commitment to sustainable agriculture and the preservation of native seeds showcases their dedication to maintaining a strong agricultural foundation for the village's prosperity.



**Figure 6 The agrarian landscape of Maloch Village: A visual representation of the meticulously cultivated local crops, providing insights into the region's agricultural dynamics, sustainability practices, and the resilient interplay between the community and its harvests**

## 5.18 Village Shops

The presence of a few shops in Maloch village plays a crucial role in meeting the basic needs of the residents. While these shops may not offer high-quality goods,

they still serve as convenient establishments where villagers can easily purchase essential items for their daily use. The availability of fruits, vegetables, cold drinks, and other daily consumption items in these shops is especially valuable for the villagers, as it saves them from having to travel long distances to larger towns or cities to obtain these necessities.

These shops play a vital role in the local economy by providing a means of livelihood for the shopkeepers and contributing to the circulation of goods and money within the village. Moreover, the existence of these shops fosters a sense of community, as they serve as gathering points where people can interact and socialize while purchasing their daily needs. While the shops may not offer a wide range of products, they still cater to the immediate requirements of the villagers, making their lives more convenient and manageable. The presence of such small local businesses also reflects the self-sufficiency and resourcefulness of the community in meeting its essential needs despite the village's remote location.

Overall, these shops serve as essential lifelines in Maloch village, providing access to basic necessities and contributing to the well-being of the community. Despite their limitations, the convenience they offer and the role they play in supporting the local economy make them valuable assets for the villagers.



**Figure 7 In the heart of Maloch, the central market is a lively tableau of local shops, each storefront telling a story of commerce, resilience, and the unique character of village life**



**Figure 8 Bringing warmth to Maloch: The local tandoor shop, a cozy haven for villagers seeking convenience and the aromatic delight of freshly baked essentials**



**Figure 9 Sustaining tradition: The heart of Maloch, where the chakki machine grinds history into every grain**

## **5.19 Cutting and Harvesting of Crops**

The villagers of Maloch have embraced technological advancements in agriculture, adopting contemporary and robotic methods for crop cutting and harvesting. This progressive approach has led to increased efficiency and productivity in their agricultural practices. However, even with the adoption of modern techniques, the community still upholds certain customs and traditions, such as performing Ashar, demonstrating their commitment to preserving their cultural heritage.

Modern agricultural practices involve using tractors to prepare and plow the land before planting the crops. This mechanized approach has replaced the traditional manual labor, making the process more streamlined and efficient. Wheat cultivation takes precedence over maize and vegetables, with larger-scale production contributing

to the staple food supply in the village. Interestingly, some agriculturalists in the community have shifted from crop farming to fruit tree planting due to the potential for higher financial returns. Growing peaches, apricots, and plums in significant quantities has proven to be a lucrative venture for them. This shift showcases the villagers' adaptability and willingness to explore new opportunities for economic growth while leveraging their knowledge of agricultural practices.

The timing of crop planting and harvesting follows a seasonal cycle. Maize is planted in May and June, while wheat crops are seeded in September and harvested in May. This adherence to the seasonal calendar reflects the traditional knowledge passed down through generations and is an essential aspect of their agricultural practices. Vegetable cultivation is deeply rooted in the village's history, serving as a long-standing tradition. The villagers' expertise in growing vegetables not only ensures a diverse diet but also contributes to the local economy through sales and trade within the community and nearby areas. In summary, the progressive approach of the villagers in adopting technologically improved agricultural methods has revolutionized their farming practices, leading to increased productivity and economic opportunities. Despite these advancements, the community remains connected to its cultural heritage by preserving customs and traditions, ensuring a balance between modernity and tradition in their way of life.

## **5.20 Dwelling Pattern**

The evolution of housing in Maloch village reflects the changing construction techniques and materials used over time. In the past, dwellings were made of mud, and roofs were constructed using wooden beams tied together with wood. However, in recent years, there has been a rapid transformation from mud cottages to pakka or cement-paved structures. Mud cottages are now rarely seen, as more and more homes are constructed using cement and metal, resulting in more durable and modern-looking buildings.

The shift in construction techniques has also led to changes in the size and design of homes. In the past, single-story homes were prevalent, but with the use of cement and metal, multi-story buildings are becoming more common. People construct their homes according to the size of their household, ensuring enough space for all



family members. The general design of homes across the community is relatively uniform. A typical home consists of a large courtyard, with a kitchen located in one corner and a veranda with adjacent rooms in a row. The kitchen holds particular significance as it serves as the communal hearth, bringing the family together during meals and providing a space for conversations and bonding. It acts as a focal point for family unity and social interaction.

Stables are constructed outside the main home or as separate structures, indicating the presence of livestock and agriculture in the village's way of life. The homes are well-maintained and tidy, and the courtyard often features a few small trees, providing shade and enhancing the aesthetics of the living space. The design of the homes in Maloch is also mindful of natural lighting. With the strategic placement of windows and open spaces, sunlight can permeate every corner of the building, illuminating the interior spaces throughout the day. This thoughtful design not only saves on energy but also creates a warm and inviting atmosphere within the homes.

Overall, the transition from mud cottages to modern cement-paved structures reflects the villagers' adaptability to changing construction techniques. The focus on family unity, the incorporation of communal spaces like the kitchen, and the consideration of natural lighting in the design of the homes showcase the community's commitment to maintaining their cultural values and embracing modernity at the same time.

## **5.20 Indoor Work**

The traditional division of labor in Maloch village places the responsibility of household tasks squarely on the shoulders of women. This gender-based role allocation is deeply ingrained in the social fabric, and any deviation from this norm, such as a male assisting with home chores, is met with ridicule and social humiliation. This cultural practice reinforces traditional gender roles and perpetuates gender disparities within the community. Girls in the village are brought up learning and assisting their mothers with household tasks, preparing them for their future roles as wives and daughters-in-law. However, when a daughter-in-law enters the household, she is often assigned the entire responsibility of managing the household. This shift in labor distribution can lead to tensions and hierarchical dynamics between the mother-in-law

and daughter-in-law, as the new daughter-in-law must adapt to the established household customs and routines.

In cases where there are multiple daughters-in-law in the household, the division of household tasks among them can also create tensions and competition. Each daughter-in-law may vie for recognition and favor from the family, which can lead to minor altercations and rivalries. This gendered distribution of labor not only reinforces traditional gender norms but also has the potential to create a strained atmosphere within the household. The unequal sharing of responsibilities can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration among women, especially those in subordinate positions.

To promote gender equality and foster a harmonious environment within the household, it is essential to challenge these traditional gender roles and encourage a more equitable sharing of responsibilities. Providing opportunities for men to participate in household tasks without facing social stigma and promoting open communication and understanding among family members can help break down these hierarchical dynamics and create a more inclusive and supportive family environment.

## **5.21 Outdoor Works**

In Maloch village, the responsibility for outside work primarily falls on men. They are tasked with bringing vegetables and other items for the household, as well as contributing to the household's revenue. Male household members frequently support each other in resolving household issues, displaying a sense of unity and cooperation within the family. The majority of men in the village engage in various forms of work to support their families. Many work abroad or for the government, while others run small businesses. This diversity in livelihoods reflects the villagers' resourcefulness and adaptability to economic opportunities both within and outside the village. It is worth noting that only a small minority of individuals hold professional positions, suggesting that access to formal education and career advancement opportunities may be limited in the village. Nevertheless, the community values hard work and acknowledges those who put in significant efforts to contribute to their household and community.

Farming is an important aspect of livelihood in Maloch, and even elderly individuals who may not have formal employment engage in farming to sustain themselves and their families. Children also actively participate in farming, supporting

their elderly family members in this endeavor. This practice reinforces the sense of intergenerational support and knowledge transfer within the community. Respect is given to those who work diligently and contribute to the household income, as they are considered pillars of the community. Conversely, individuals who do not actively contribute to the home's income may face ridicule or teasing from their peers. This societal expectation of contribution to the household income may influence individual behaviors and work ethics.

Overall, the village's reliance on men for outside work, the variety of livelihoods pursued, and the emphasis on hard work and contribution to the household income are characteristic features of the community's social and economic dynamics. Encouraging educational opportunities and diverse career options may further empower the villagers and promote a more inclusive and thriving community.

## **5.22 Family**

The transition from joint extended families to nuclear families in Maloch reflects a significant cultural shift that has been met with social disapproval. Traditionally, the joint extended family system, where multiple generations and relatives live together under one roof, was the norm. Large families were highly esteemed and considered respectable, as they represented a strong bond and cohesive unit. The decline of the joint extended family can be attributed to various factors, including modernization, urbanization, and changing social values. As individuals start building new homes and opt for nuclear families, the once prevalent family structure is weakening. This transition may be driven by factors such as the desire for more privacy, independence, and autonomy, which are typical characteristics of nuclear family setups.

The social disapproval of nuclear families suggests that the cultural values and norms of Maloch still strongly favor the joint extended family system. This resistance to change may stem from the belief that nuclear families are somehow selfish or less honorable than larger, multi-generational households. The perception that forming nuclear families is a "mean act" might be due to the belief that individuals who choose to live separately are breaking away from the traditional family bonds, potentially leaving their elderly parents or other relatives without proper support. It might also be seen as a departure from the cultural emphasis on family cohesion and unity.

As societies undergo transformations, it's not uncommon for conflicts to arise between traditional practices and more modern approaches. The shift towards nuclear families in Maloch represents an evolving cultural landscape, where new values and priorities are emerging alongside longstanding traditions. It's important to recognize that societal changes like these are complex and multi-faceted, and people's opinions may vary. Some might embrace the shift towards nuclear families as a natural progression, while others may view it as a challenge to the cherished values of the past. As the village adapts to these changes, there may be ongoing discussions and debates surrounding the preservation of cultural heritage and the acceptance of contemporary family structures.

### **5.23 Women Role and Status in House**

The society described deeply ingrained traditional gender roles and expectations for women. Women are confined to the domestic sphere and are not encouraged to engage in active politics or public settings outside of their homes and families. Instead, they are expected to focus on household duties, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. This kind of society places significant importance on a woman's ability to manage household chores with grace and propriety, and being skilled in cooking is particularly emphasized. Failure to meet these expectations can result in ridicule, social ostracization, and even physical abuse, which is an alarming and harmful aspect of such a culture.

Additionally, the responsibility of passing down these gender roles and household duties falls on the mothers who are expected to teach their daughters these tasks from an early age. Domestic labor is seen as an essential part of children's education, perpetuating these gender roles across generations. Within the household, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law have distinct roles and status. The mother-in-law holds a position of prestige and power, overseeing and scrutinizing various aspects of chores and social relationships within the house and community.

This kind of societal structure is reflective of a traditional and patriarchal system, where women are expected to fulfill specific roles within the family and are not encouraged to pursue individual aspirations or participate in decision-making outside of their domestic responsibilities. It can lead to limited opportunities for women's

personal growth, education, and professional development, which in turn perpetuates gender inequality and hinders progress towards a more equitable society.

It's essential to recognize that such gender roles and expectations are not universal, and many societies are moving towards more egalitarian values, where individuals are encouraged to pursue their interests and aspirations regardless of gender. Promoting gender equality and empowering women to participate in public life, including politics and various professions, can lead to more inclusive and diverse communities and promote overall societal development.

## **5.24 Irrigation System**

The presence of an ingenious irrigation system in Pakistan, particularly in the village of Maloch, has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the community's agriculture and livelihoods. The carefully thought-out irrigation system ensures that all farmers receive adequate water to cultivate their farms, which is crucial for agricultural productivity and sustainability. The fact that everyone works together to rebuild streams, when necessary, highlights the communal spirit and cooperation within the village. Such collective efforts are essential for maintaining and improving the irrigation system, ensuring that water reaches all the farmlands efficiently.

The man-made canal running along the edge of the town might not directly supply water to the community's crops, but it benefits nearby lands. This indicates that the irrigation system in the region extends beyond the village borders and contributes to the agricultural prosperity of the entire area. It's noteworthy that 10% of the village's crops are watered by the canal, while the majority, 90%, relies on tube wells and spring water. This indicates a diversified approach to irrigation, with the community using a combination of traditional methods like tube wells and natural sources like spring water, in addition to the man-made canal.

This diversified approach might be due to various factors, including the availability of water sources, the cost-effectiveness of different methods, and the specific needs of different crops. Additionally, the community's historical practices and knowledge of water management likely play a role in determining the choice of irrigation methods. Overall, the ingenious irrigation system in Maloch demonstrates the community's resourcefulness and adaptability in harnessing water for agricultural

purposes. It also exemplifies the importance of cooperation and collective action in maintaining and improving such critical infrastructure. However, it's essential to continually assess and adapt these practices to ensure sustainable water usage and agriculture for the future.



**Figure 10 Nature's bounty harnessed: In Maloch, a robust concrete reservoir stands tall, capturing rain and spring water, powering an advanced irrigation system that cultivates prosperity across the village**

## 5.25 Fuel

Wood is the primary fuel used by the locals, and it seems to be readily available due to the presence of trees and fields. However, the demand for wood as fuel has likely put pressure on the local forest resources, which may lead to deforestation and environmental concerns if not managed sustainably. It's interesting to note that while some wealthier individuals use both wood and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), the majority of the population relies solely on wood for their cooking and heating needs. LPG usage might be seen as a luxury for those who can afford it, while the majority have to depend on wood due to its affordability and accessibility.

The practice of bringing wood from neighboring settlements and preserving chopped trees for the winter suggests that the community plans ahead to ensure a steady supply of fuel during colder months when access to wood might be limited. The use of dung cakes (*Sota*) as fuel, along with wood, for cooking in larger quantities showcases

a resourceful approach to utilizing available organic materials efficiently. Pruning trees and using the pruned branches as firewood is a sustainable practice, as it allows the community to make the most of their local resources without completely cutting down trees for fuel.

The use of dung as a fuel source indicates that the community maximizes the utility of all available organic materials for their daily energy needs. It's worth noting that while the majority (70%) of the population uses wood as fuel, 30% have adopted LPG, which suggests that some households have started embracing modern energy sources. This shift could be due to factors like improved financial capabilities, increased accessibility to LPG, or awareness of the environmental impact of using wood as fuel. Overall, the community's heavy reliance on wood as fuel reflects their traditional lifestyle and limited access to modern energy options. As the population grows and environmental concerns become more pressing, sustainable management of wood resources and the promotion of cleaner and more efficient energy alternatives, like LPG, could be crucial for the community's well-being and the preservation of their natural environment.

## **5.26 Health Facilities**

The health services in the village are quite limited, with no government-run health services available. Instead, the community relies on a few veterinarians who provide care for both people and animals. Additionally, there used to be a health technician who traveled from the city to stay with a family in the village. This arrangement was initiated by a landlord and has continued ever since. Despite the lack of extensive healthcare facilities, the inhabitants generally lead healthy lives due to their naturally healthy habitat, access to fresh air, and nutritious food. It's possible that the village's rural environment and lifestyle contribute to the overall well-being of the residents.

For minor health issues, the community members seek medical attention at nearby facilities in the next village or at a local clinic. These facilities might be equipped to handle more common health problems and provide basic medical services. However, in more severe cases that require advanced medical care and specialized tools, patients are referred to the Civil Hospital or BHU (Basic Health Unit), whichever is more

convenient. These likely serve as regional or district-level healthcare facilities, where patients can receive more comprehensive medical treatment and access the necessary equipment and expertise.

While the overall health situation in the village appears to be reasonably good, the limited access to healthcare services and the need to travel to distant hospitals for severe cases might pose challenges for some residents. Improving healthcare infrastructure and services within the village or in closer proximity could potentially enhance the well-being and healthcare outcomes of the community members.

## **5.27 Education**

The presence of four schools in the community, with three constructed by the government and one being an English-medium school, is a positive sign for education accessibility in the village. It's worth noting that there are both primary and middle schools in the governmental setup, which allows students to continue their education beyond the primary level. However, there seems to be a gender disparity in the opportunities for higher education. While boys are allowed to pursue higher education and leave the village to do so, girls are often not given the same freedom and are restricted to their homes. This limitation placed on girls' education can significantly impact their future opportunities and potential for personal and professional growth.

The fact that girls hardly complete their matriculation indicates that they face obstacles in accessing and completing their education. This could be due to cultural norms, societal expectations, economic instability and traditional gender roles that prioritize domestic responsibilities over education for females. As a result of these limitations, the education level of females in the village is lower than that of males, contributing to a gender disparity in literacy rates. Overall, the village's literacy rate of 80% is relatively high, which is a positive aspect. However, it's crucial to address the gender disparity in education and promote equal opportunities for both boys and girls to pursue their educational aspirations. Encouraging and supporting girls' education is essential for empowering them and promoting gender equality in the community.

Efforts should be made to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education, challenge traditional gender norms, and involve the community in promoting gender equality in education. Providing a safe and supportive environment for girls to



continue their education and pursue higher studies will be crucial in elevating the overall educational attainment in the village and creating a more equitable society.

**Table 3. 3: Literacy Level of Village Maloch**

Literacy Level	Percentage
Male	95% of total male population
Female	50% of total female population



**Figure 11 Empowering Futures in Maloch: Government schools for boys and girls, where education transcends boundaries, nurturing the young minds of the village**

## 6 FOOD INSECURITY AMONG WOMEN OF MALOCH THREATS, PERCEPTIONS AND COPING STRATEGIES

### 6.1 Food Intake Difference on The Basis of Gender

Food intake differences based on gender are evident in many contemporary cultures, despite the noble goal of equality and the fundamental principles that govern societal activities. One of the defining characteristics of much of hegemonic masculinity is the underlying assumption that males are inherently superior to women, leading to the perpetuation of gender inequalities. Research has shown that men have the "option" to intentionally hold oppressive views against women, further reinforcing the unequal power dynamics (Jewkes, et al., 2015). Within households, this inequality is evident in the cuisine offered to male members and visitors, where they are provided with special and superior foods such as flatbread, yoghurt, and desi ghee. On the contrary, women, often referred to as "ladies," are left with less favorable options, like cornbread or leftover meals topped with onions and whey. The division of food quality based on gender reflects deeply ingrained gender roles, where men are considered the primary beneficiaries and women are relegated to subservient positions. The existence of gendered food disparities is further exemplified by a well-known Pashto folktale shared by a respondent,

*In the past, flatbread was regarded as the best food and was often served to male family members. Once, a sister cooked two loaves of bread—one thin loaf for her brother and a thick one for herself—because women were considered inferior and better foods were preferred to males. After catching her doing this one day, the brother replied,*

خول ځنډې پخې او لم لم پېچتې

*You cook and eat better yourself but keep me low-fed*

The above saying highlights the inequality that women faced in terms of food intake. These disparities in food provision and consumption within households contribute to perpetuating gender inequities and reinforce the notion of male superiority. Challenging these ingrained beliefs and practices is crucial to achieving genuine gender equality and promoting equality in contemporary cultures. Empowering individuals to make dietary choices based on their preferences and nutritional needs,

rather than conforming to traditional gender norms, is a step towards breaking free from the grip of hegemonic masculinity and fostering a more equitable society for all.

Additionally, gender disparities in hospitality practices within households. When the wife's family members visit, they are not given any particular consideration, suggesting that their presence is not valued as much as when the husband's family comes to visit. In contrast, when the husband's family visits, special provisions are made for them, ensuring that every food item is offered to prevent any issues with inflation or food shortages. This disparity in hospitality based on the relationship between sexes reinforces the idea that women are seen as less valuable than men (W.Boesen, 1980). Gender disparities in food intake and hospitality practices persist within contemporary cultures. It highlights how cultural norms and traditional gender roles continue to shape societal expectations, perpetuating the idea that women's roles revolve around serving and caring for men. To address these issues and promote genuine gender equality, it is crucial to challenge and redefine traditional gender norms, empowering individuals to make their own choices without being constrained by gender-based expectations.

The portrayal of a wife's role as being preoccupied with providing for and caring for her in-laws at the expense of her own well-being and the health of her unborn child further underscores the gendered expectations and responsibilities imposed on women. It indicates that women's primary focus is on catering to the needs and desires of the male family members, often at the cost of neglecting their own physical health and nutritional needs. It also shows gendered division of labor within households, where making bread and cooking are considered the primary responsibilities of women. This traditional gender role of women being responsible for food preparation perpetuates the notion that cooking is inherently tied to femininity, reinforcing gender norms that limit women's roles to domestic duties. According to one of the interviewees,

*As it is a tradition in our home that men of the house want meal early if it is for lunch or dinner. My mother in-law used to say that whenever I was in hurry and rush to cook meal, I used to cook mahi (عاب = black gram lentils) and in meanwhile made flatbread. Up till flatbread were ready mahi was also cooked. Is used to prepare meal in this way so that it cooked fast.*

The account of the interviewee provides valuable insights into the gender dynamics and expectations within their household. It highlights how traditional gender

roles dictate mealtime preferences and food preparation. The interviewee mentions that it is a tradition in their home for men of the house to have their meals served early for lunch or dinner. This practice suggests that men's needs and desires take precedence when it comes to meal timing. The interviewee's mention of how their mother-in-law encouraged quick meal preparation, such as cooking mahi (black gram lentils) while simultaneously making flatbread, further illustrates the pressure on women to cater to the male family members' expectations. This exemplifies the gendered division of labor, with women being expected to efficiently handle household chores, including cooking, to meet the desires of male family members.

Regardless of whether the decisions flagrantly disregard their wishes, they always follow the instructions of the male family members. In light of all these circumstances woman then says,

ن کوم خاوند خرابب هه ښه شى چنډ

بى اوڅکيې مټي وچه يې اسټېجن ښوړه

وادن کوم د ځان نه

*I don't want husband for it will ruin my life*

*If wedded I will always cry and remain unhappy*

*Therefore, I don't marry*

In the above mentioned saying a lady expresses her refusal to conform to the traditional expectations imposed on her as a woman. The subsequent narration by a woman, expressing her discontent with the unequal treatment and the impact of traditional gender norms on her well-being, reflects the frustration and dissatisfaction that can arise from such practices. These narrative underscores the impact of traditional gender norms and their influence on the well-being and agency of women. It also highlights the importance of recognizing and challenging such norms to foster a more equitable and empowering environment for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Raewyn Connell (Connell, 2005), is a notion that may be used as an analytical tool to pinpoint male attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the dominance of males over women and the perpetuation of gender inequity. *Men have a propensity of having the thing ought to be there without saying a word.* The provided narrative further illustrates the gendered expectations and

behaviors within the household, emphasizing the differential treatment of men and women in relation to food and mealtime preferences. suggests that men expect their needs and desires to be fulfilled without explicitly expressing them. On the other hand, women are subject to scolding and mistreatment if they fail to meet these expectations. This indicates the existence of implicit gender norms and expectations that place the burden on women to intuitively understand and fulfill the needs of male family members.

A woman would be scolded and treated poorly if she did not follow, men then says (پہ وخت دی تیار لی بس پہ وؤ it would have been good if you had cooked the meal on time) reflects the tendency of men to express their displeasure if meals are not served promptly, further highlighting the pressure on women to adhere to strict mealtime schedules to satisfy male family members. Fresh food is constantly in demand from men. *I fried the leftover dal and served it to the family in lieu of the newly made lunch because there was nothing else in the house that needed to be cooked.*

The constant demand for fresh food from men indicates the expectation that meals should be prepared using fresh ingredients, adding to the burden on women to continually provide freshly cooked meals. This can create additional stress and strain on women, who may feel compelled to prioritize the preferences of male family members over their own well-being and convenience. The act of frying leftover dal and serving it instead of a freshly prepared lunch reveals how women may find themselves improvising and making do with available resources to meet the demands of male family members. This practice again reinforces the unequal distribution of resources and the expectation that women should prioritize the needs of men, even if it means compromising on the quality or freshness of the meal. the narrative sheds light on the complex and nuanced ways in which traditional gender norms impact food preparation, mealtime preferences, and the treatment of women within the household. It highlights the importance of challenging these gendered expectations and striving for genuine gender equality, where all individuals' needs and preferences are respected and valued, regardless of their gender.

## 6.2 Food Insecurity, Threats and Coping Strategies

According to (Roos, Lahelma, Virtanen, Prattala, & Pietinen, 1998) the influence of gender, family status, and social position on women's eating habits. One striking observation from the research is the impact of family dynamics, particularly the relationship between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law. The study documents instances of cruelty, where the mother-in-law refuses to offer bread to the daughter-in-law, despite the latter taking care of the children and managing household chores. This behavior underscores the complex power dynamics within the household, where the mother-in-law holds significant social status and power over the daughter-in-law. The findings suggest that women often have less status and influence when they move into their husband's home. In contrast, the mother-in-law, as the elder lady in the household, gains greater social position and power. This power dynamic can lead to tensions and conflicts between women within the household, with the daughter-in-law experiencing fear and resentment towards the socially significant figure of the mother-in-law.

The research also highlights how gender norms, family structures, and social positions intertwine to shape women's eating habits and experiences within the household. The unequal distribution of power and influence can lead to disparities in food access and control, underscoring the need to address gender-based inequalities within family settings to ensure equitable treatment and well-being for all members. Understanding these dynamics is crucial in fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for women, where their dietary choices and needs are respected and valued.

The research conducted by (Bietsch, Lanasa, & Sonneveldt, 2021) sheds light on the concerning practice of pregnant women being relegated to the last position when it comes to mealtime and, in some cases, being forbidden from eating altogether due to the influence of their mother-in-law. This finding further emphasizes the deeply rooted gender disparities and power dynamics within the household, particularly impacting pregnant women's access to food and nutrition. The wife is portrayed as being responsible for various tasks, such as purging spring water, tending to animals, and performing all household duties. These responsibilities seem to be extensive and demanding, encompassing a wide range of tasks related to domestic and caregiving

responsibilities. Despite the wife's diligent efforts and contributions to the household, the unequal distribution of resources and privileges becomes evident when it comes to mealtime. The mother-in-law is depicted as favoring her son by setting the bowl of ghee in front of him, implying that he is served with special consideration and priority. In contrast, the daughter-in-law is left to enjoy the leftovers, indicating a clear disparity in treatment and access to resources between the two women. This portrayal highlights how traditional gender norms and power dynamics within the family can result in unequal treatment and distribution of resources, particularly when it comes to food and mealtime preferences. The wife's efforts and hard work may not be fully recognized or appreciated, and she may not receive equal access to desirable or special food items within the household. It's alleged that,

*Once upon a time, a khan lived in a village. His housewives' teeth were broken by him. Since she was famished due to not obtaining enough food, she was sneaking bread. His father-in-law brooks her teeth on this.*

The reference to the housewife being famished due to not receiving enough food sheds light on the issue of food insecurity and unequal access to resources within the household. The unequal distribution of food and nutrition can have severe consequences on the well-being and health of individuals, particularly vulnerable groups like women. The mention of the housewife sneaking bread suggests that she is forced to resort to secretive measures to meet her basic needs, further underscoring the lack of agency and autonomy she may have within her own home. This narrative serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need to address gender-based violence, food insecurity, and unequal power dynamics within families and societies. It calls for efforts to promote gender equality, empower women, and ensure that everyone's basic needs, including access to food and safety, are respected and upheld.

According to certain ideas that look at the relationship between culture and abuse, males are given greater power and prestige in some traditional context, attitudes, and behaviours than women are (Riger, 2004). The description of family interactions being predominantly ruled by men reflects the existence of patriarchal norms that perpetuate a culture of authority and domination within the household. In such settings, men often hold the decision-making power and have the final say in family matters, while women may have limited agency and influence over important decisions. The

notion that a lady may resort to selling wheat clandestinely to achieve her desires underscores the unequal access to resources and opportunities that women may face within such patriarchal structures. If a woman's wishes or needs are not fulfilled through conventional means, she may be forced to adopt secretive or unconventional methods to achieve her goals. This practice of selling wheat clandestinely can be seen as a form of resistance and a way for women to exert some control over their lives and pursue their desires in a society that may restrict their agency. It also highlights the economic constraints and limited opportunities that women may encounter, leading them to seek alternative means to fulfill their needs. The narrator who relayed her experience said,

*My older sister-in-law once told me that because no one was home, it would be a great chance to sell wheat and make a purchase for themselves. Such chances don't come up very often. I stooped to pick up the wheat with my head down and my feet up because there isn't much wheat. I struggled mightily to get down.*

The narrator's account offers a poignant glimpse into the challenges and opportunities faced by women in a society with limited access to resources and economic opportunities. The mention of the older sister-in-law advising the narrator to sell wheat highlights how women may find support and solidarity within their female family members, particularly in pursuing economic endeavors. The narrative also underscores the rarity of such opportunities for women to engage in income-generating activities independently. The infrequency of such chances suggests that women's economic agency may be constrained by societal norms or lack of access to resources, limiting their ability to participate in economic activities freely.

The vivid description of the narrator stooping to pick up wheat with her head down and her feet up evokes a sense of struggle and hardship that women may endure while striving to seize economic opportunities. The physical exertion and difficulty in the process symbolize the barriers and challenges faced by women in navigating economic activities within a patriarchal context. The narrator's experience sheds light on the resilience and determination displayed by women to improve their circumstances, even in the face of adversity. It highlights the importance of creating an enabling environment that supports women's economic empowerment, providing them with equal opportunities to participate in economic activities and decision-making processes.



This narrative serves as a call for greater gender equality and the recognition of women's economic contributions, emphasizing the need to dismantle barriers that impede their economic agency. By fostering an inclusive and empowering environment, societies can unlock the full potential of women as active participants in economic and social development.

In the intricate web of social dynamics, the marital and parenting status of a woman emerges as a significant factor intricately woven into her health and food behavior. This nexus unveils a nuanced interplay between the roles she assumes within the family structure and her dietary choices, reflecting not only her individual agency but also the broader socio-cultural influences that shape her well-being and nutritional practices. This anthropological exploration invites us to discern the multifaceted connections between marital and parenting status, shedding light on the intricate tapestry of factors that contribute to the intricate choreography of her dietary preferences and health outcomes (Roos, Lahelma, Virtanen, Prattala, & Pietinen, 1998). In accordance with insights provided by another respondent, a prevailing tradition dictates the allocation of nourishment within this cultural context. This tradition entails the consistent practice of offering the most substantial and nourishing meal to husbands and children. This culinary custom, however, extends beyond its gastronomic implications, delving into the intricate fabric of social dynamics and familial relationships that characterize the community. Prioritizing husbands and children in the distribution of sustenance is intertwined with an intricate interplay of cultural norms, roles, and obligations, shaping the daily experiences and interactions of individuals within the societal framework. This practice not only signifies a method of food provision but also serves as a symbolic manifestation of family bonds and the hierarchies that underlie them. She continued,

*Facing the challenges of being a heart patient and having undergone multiple major surgeries, including a significant back surgery, in addition to requiring dialysis every three months, I navigate a complex healthcare journey. The financial aspect adds another layer, with monthly medication expenses totaling around six to seven thousand. Despite these trials, my determination remains unwavering as I am entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing and guiding my four sons, fostering an environment of respect and dignity within society. In pursuit of this aspiration, I am dedicated to providing them with nourishing and satisfying meals according to their preferences*

*while also ensuring access to the finest education. In the midst of these considerations, I make a strategic decision to opt for a single daily medication regimen, a choice driven by the desire to optimize their upbringing and my role as their devoted caregiver.*

The chosen path extends beyond mere convenience, signifying a deliberate exercise of personal agency and a methodically weighed decision affirming my unwavering commitment to my sons' comprehensive well-being. This choice encompasses a calculated investment in their holistic welfare, a tangible manifestation of the extensive measures undertaken by a dedicated parent to forge a promising trajectory for their progeny. It epitomizes resilience and foresight, strategically woven into the complex fabric of familial responsibilities and future aspirations. At its core, this argument underscores the intricate interplay between health dynamics, economic considerations, and the realm of parenthood, highlighting the profound lengths individuals navigate to provision for their families while deftly navigating a labyrinth of decisions. It illuminates the inherent sacrifices and judicious selections that drive the pursuit of a dignified existence for loved ones, thereby underscoring parenthood's enduring narrative of devotion, selflessness, and unwavering affection.

Embedded within the intricate fabric of societal intricacies, women shoulder a multitude of tribulations, their potential to voice their predicaments stifled by prevailing circumstances that curtail their agency. Amidst this intricate backdrop, their suppressed ability to articulate their challenges exposes them to enduring a spectrum of adversities. Walker's observations illuminate a compelling narrative wherein these women navigate the precarious terrain of psychological maltreatment, compelled by the intricate interplay of financial constraints, profound seclusion, and the stark categorization as so-called battered women. This anthropological perspective underscores the nuanced convergence of sociocultural elements, individual agency, and structural limitations that jointly mold the trajectories of women's experiences within such contexts. (Walker, 1977). One of the interviewees cited a Pashto tappa,

وسمې په هی چانه رهگي

ظېه نځي زرگي کووېد جا شوم

*I have no control over anybody*

*Thus, I only harm myself and feel bad*

In essence, the Pashto tappa crafts an argument that resonates with universal truths of agency and accountability. It underscores the notion that while external circumstances may elude one's control, the power to influence personal outcomes through deliberate choices remains steadfast. Through its eloquent verses, the tappa encapsulates an argumentative discourse on the intricate interplay between agency, consequences, and self-awareness. One of the interlocutors shared her own poetry,

څوک چې څه بېلېه غږې چې په تا څه مې وېرې  
 څه د ننگامه وټه وایم چې حال مې څه مې وېرې  
 غلامتپوس کوي څه مانه چې فریوگې لې  
 د زړه د سره هې لېبېپ متنار مې وېرې  
 څه د ننگامه وټه وایم چې حال مې څه مې وېرې  
 څه دلله د درن متلی صبرس وال کوم  
 لکه فبرق مېپ منځکې زنگې مې وېرې  
 څه د ننگامه وټه وایم چې حال مې څه مې وېرې

*Anyone who inquiries about my health and situation*

*I tell lie and say I am good*

*People ask me why I turn pale day by day*

*I am going through severe pain in my heart*

*I only pretend that my life is good*

*I always pray for patience from heaven*

*But I always burning in fire*

*And I only pretend that my life goes well*

The only people who had access to wholesome meals were the husband, father-in-law, and mother-in-law. There was not enough food for the daughter-in-law. There was no specialized diet or prenatal care. In order to prevent tetanus, a fire was ignited in a room. After giving birth, the mother would frequently take hot halwa, which would cause the poor woman to become jaundiced. A tree named *Shanai* (شېنای) was used to heal patient by boiling its leaves. The presented narrative unveils a glaring asymmetry in the allocation of nutritional resources within a familial context, wherein exclusive access to wholesome sustenance was enjoyed solely by the male members, namely the husband, father-in-law, and mother-in-law. This disparity extended to the daughter-in-

law, resulting in her deprivation of adequate nourishment. Furthermore, the absence of tailored dietary regimens and prenatal care accentuates a deficiency in comprehensive maternal healthcare provisions.

The rudimentary practice of inducing fire ignition as a tetanus prophylactic underscores the dearth of sophisticated medical knowledge and resources. Subsequent to childbirth, the frequent consumption of hot halwa, ostensibly intended for postpartum recovery, paradoxically precipitated jaundice in the economically disadvantaged parturient. The utilization of the leaves of the Shanai tree, administered through a boiling process, serves as a testament to the utilization of indigenous botanical remedies for therapeutic purposes within a limited medical milieu. This historical vignette elucidates the multifaceted challenges and gender-specific disparities that pervaded matters of nutritional provisioning, maternal well-being, and healthcare accessibility.

The intricate interplay between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law dynamic has been a subject of scholarly inquiry across various research endeavors. This nexus has revealed a notable dimension within the domain of maternal healthcare access, wherein the role of the mother-in-law serves as a discernible gatekeeper, influencing and, at times, constraining women's entry to maternity health treatments. Within anthropological discourse, this phenomenon underscores the socio-cultural dynamics and power structures inherent in familial arrangements, where the mother-in-law's authority and decision-making capacity play a pivotal role in shaping the health-seeking behaviors and opportunities of the daughter-in-law. This contextual lens offers insights into the complexities of healthcare access within familial systems, exemplifying the intergenerational negotiation of agency and the intricate interplay of social roles and norms that can significantly impact women's reproductive health trajectories (Bietsch, Lanasa, & Sonneveldt, 2021).

A substantive correlation has emerged within the anthropological discourse, highlighting the intricate entanglement between women's maternal health practices and the discernible preferences wielded by the maternal figure-in-law. This phenomenon underscores a significant aspect of the socio-cultural milieu, wherein maternal health behaviors of women are intricately interwoven with the prevailing inclinations and choices exercised by the maternal matriarch. This correlation unveils the underlying power dynamics and intergenerational dynamics at play, elucidating the substantial

influence wielded by the mother-in-law figure over reproductive health practices and decisions. In the anthropological lens, this interplay accentuates the complex negotiation of agency, identity, and social roles, rendering evident the nuanced choreography of intergenerational relationships and their ramifications on maternal health trajectories.

*In our neighborhood, a young woman gave birth to a son. However, during that period, when a woman became pregnant, the daughter-in-law struggled to maintain proper nutrition. Due to her impoverished circumstances, she resorted to consuming Nask and Varkhade (سک ورخ ارے) curry discreetly while she was pregnant.*

The depicted narrative offers a window into the wider array of challenges that women encounter as they navigate their roles within both familial and communal contexts. This underscores the imperative significance of addressing entrenched systemic disparities, particularly in terms of bolstering food security and fostering a sense of equitable agency among women.

It is often overlooked that the woman brought into the household also had her own needs. After a day of laborious work, she might receive no more than half a loaf of bread. In the pursuit of meeting these necessities, women engaged in a range of activities including selling milk and eggs, sewing clothing, embroidering textiles, and operating spinning wheels. Notably, in the past, recycled clothing was ingeniously repurposed to create decorative caps. This involved layering fabrics, adhering them with glue (referred to as "لشوش"), and adorning them with intricate embroidery to enhance their aesthetic appeal. These crafted items were historically retailed by specialized vendors known as Jolagan, who were members of the handicraft professional caste. This intricate web of activities exemplifies the resourcefulness and industriousness of women in fulfilling both practical and aesthetic requirements, while also shedding light on the economic dynamics of a bygone era. Folk sayings from the field shared by interlocutors,

شوڪ چي پچاد با غي چي گلي شي  
نواس بنه ده چي سكر يپ مئره ونه

*Anyone who falls in love with someone for life*

*Then it is his duty to not let her deserted*

بە پخلا وئەلەي چەتە نەشم  
بە زەيتەي روم دا درلە درلە غەمەنە

*I can't express my sorrows with anyone*

*I only bear them in my heart*

تاوؤ مەيپە زەپلەر يەپە شەن دەو  
ئەگ مەن تەيپە غەلەش كۆمە

*I have pain in my heart destroying my face*

*Which I can't hide and harm myself more everyday*

These folk proverbs offer a profound glimpse into the intricate tapestry of complex emotions, interpersonal relationships, and the delicate art of navigating sentiments and challenges within a specific cultural setting. They provide a poignant lens through which we can discern the interplay of patriarchal norms, subjugation, dependency dynamics, and power hierarchies within the societal framework they originate from. The saying that resonates deeply with the struggle for agency and acknowledgment subtly underscores traditional relational dynamics, where men have often occupied authoritative roles. However, it hints at an evolving narrative where the duty to prevent abandonment emerges as a subtle assertion of power for individuals at risk of being marginalized.

Similarly, the expression portraying an inability to share sorrows highlights the culture of dependency within relationships. The silence that often-suppressed women's voices perpetuated their reliance on men for emotional support. These subtle power dynamics reflect a milieu marked by constrained emotional expression and intricate interdependence. Equally, the depiction of vulnerability within a patriarchal context unveils an individual ensnared within a power dynamic that exacerbates their pain. The inability to mask their suffering signifies a struggle against both external and internal forces, illustrating broader power imbalances inherent within the community. Collectively, these folk sayings transcend linguistic boundaries, encapsulating shared wisdom that resonates with the underlying themes of patriarchal structures, subjugation, dependency, and power dynamics. They beckon us to acknowledge the intricate nature of human relationships and the complex ways in which cultural norms and power structures shape the emotional landscape of individuals within their communities.

The underestimation of the contributions made by women within traditional domestic settings is a viewpoint that requires reevaluation. It is essential to recognize that women, despite enduring a demanding day's labor, were often only provided with a fraction of sustenance. However, delving deeper into this narrative reveals a complex interplay between survival strategies and cultural expressions. Women engaged in diverse economic activities such as selling milk and eggs, honing textile craftsmanship including sewing and embroidery, and even ingeniously repurposing discarded clothing into decorative caps. This resourcefulness exemplifies an astute management of available resources. The meticulous process of layering fabrics, combined with adhesive materials, and the addition of intricate embroidery work, not only had practical implications but also underscored their creative agency. The historical mention of Jolagan vendors further highlights the organized economic role that women played, emphasizing a mutually beneficial relationship between skilled production and commercial transactions. From an anthropological standpoint, this narrative weaves a tapestry of agency, resilience, and socio-economic stratification, emphasizing the pivotal yet often underestimated roles women historically assumed in shaping socio-cultural norms. This portrayal, viewed through the lens of women's empowerment, challenges prevailing perceptions and underscores the historical significance of women's roles in the realms of craftsmanship and trade.

Frequently, women found themselves contending with overwhelming pressures that compelled them to resort to desperate measures, such as pilfering grains or wheat, in order to secure a means of livelihood. This act was driven by the necessity to sell these goods, attend to their essential requirements, and ensure their personal well-being. In the course of an interview, one respondent shared a deeply personal account that underscored the pervasive nature of this struggle. An interviewee related her own experience in this,

*"I once attempted to steal grains (wheat) and asked my cousin to sell them on my behalf. He agreed to assist me but insisted on taking a portion for himself.*

*Eventually, he ended up taking half of the stolen grains."*

The interviewee's personal experience provides a poignant example of the challenges and complexities women faced when resorting to desperate measures for survival. This account underscores the difficult choices women were forced to make,

often involving acts considered illegal or unethical, due to their dire circumstances. The interviewee's willingness to take such risks highlights the extent of her desperation and the lengths she was willing to go to secure her livelihood and well-being. Furthermore, the cousin's response illustrates the dynamics of power and exploitation that could occur within familial or social relationships. Even in a time of need, the interviewee's cousin exploited the situation by taking advantage of her vulnerability and the value of the stolen goods. This personal narrative serves as a microcosm of broader systemic issues, shedding light on the complex interplay of economic pressures, societal norms, and individual agency. It provides a humanizing perspective on the larger social phenomenon described in the earlier passage, showcasing the real-life struggles and moral dilemmas faced by individuals in similar circumstances.

Another experience that a responder mentioned,

*Since my mother-in-law wasn't home, me and my sister in-law cooked roti using a mixture of wheat and maize flour. My sister-in-law used to work while sneakily eating a bit by putting her portion in chadar/Dupata. I had preserved my portion in the hope that I might eat in privacy after work. When my mother-in-law noticed bread in the jar, she gave it to my father-in-law.*

In this ethnographic vignette, an intriguing manifestation of family dynamics and interpersonal relationships unfolds within the domestic sphere. The narrative centers on the culinary practices of a specific familial unit, shedding light on the intricate interplay of cultural norms, individual agency, and social bonds. The absence of the maternal figure, the mother-in-law, emerges as a pivotal catalyst for the observed behaviors. Seizing this opportunity, the responder and their sister-in-law engage in an act of culinary ingenuity by concocting a novel amalgamation of wheat and maize flour to craft traditional roti. This creative adaptation reflects an adaptive response to an altered domestic context.

Of particular significance is the sister-in-law's discreet consumption of the prepared roti, facilitated by the ingenious use of her chadar or dupatta as a concealment mechanism. This concealment strategy underscores not only the exertion of individual agency but also the negotiation of societal norms, privacy, and self-indulgence within the confines of familial relationships. The collaborative culinary endeavor undertaken by the responder and their sister-in-law serves as an illustrative instance of cooperative labor within the family domain. The shared act of preparing sustenance underscores a



sense of unity and collective effort, emblematic of underlying kinship bonds and cooperative reciprocity.

The preservation of a portion of roti by the responder, ostensibly intended for later consumption, unveils an intricate negotiation of personal autonomy within the familial structure. This nuanced negotiation of privacy highlights the role of the family as a site of simultaneous individual expression and communal belonging. Observational acumen surfaces as a distinct feature of the mother-in-law's engagement. Despite her physical absence, her keen perception detects the presence of the bread within the jar, revealing a perceptive awareness of ongoing household activities and emphasizing the role of observation in familial governance.

The subsequent allocation of the discovered bread to the father-in-law introduces an element of benevolence and sharing. This gesture potentially symbolizes not only a familial concern for paternal nourishment but also the broader theme of intergenerational care and provisioning. Underpinning these multifaceted interactions is an undercurrent of humor and playfulness. This jovial ambiance serves as a mechanism to navigate familial intricacies, harmonizing potentially conflicting interests and fostering emotional bonds through shared secrets and mutual indulgence.

Culinary practices, as manifest in the fusion of wheat and maize flour, function as an embodiment of cultural traditions and gastronomic heritage. This deliberate amalgamation signifies a dynamic interplay between cultural continuity and adaptive innovation, encapsulating a culinary ethos that bridges tradition and contemporaneity. In summation, this ethnographic vignette encapsulates the intricate web of familial dynamics, accentuated by resourcefulness, cooperation, privacy negotiations, perceptual acumen, benevolence, humor, and cultural culinary amalgamation. By delving into the quotidian, it unveils a microcosm of human interactions, reflecting the broader anthropological tapestry of kinship, agency, and culture within the domestic realm.

يو مېنځناره خوري ووهېتله رېنگه خوري

چې کښېني نوبى ا دوه خوري

*You eat one bread during baking and one on the way*

*And eat two more once supper is served*

This poetic verse holds within its succinct lines a rich tapestry of cultural, social, and survival dynamics, particularly when viewed through the lens of women's agency, adaptive mechanisms in the face of food insecurity, and the intricate culinary relations that define social roles and hierarchy within households. At its core, the verse speaks to survival strategies that women may employ in the context of food insecurity. The act of consuming one bread during baking and another "on the way" highlights a resourceful approach to sustenance. It reflects a nuanced awareness of the need to seize nourishment opportunities even in the midst of busy daily routines. Here, women's agency comes to the forefront as they navigate the demands of their lives, ensuring sustenance amidst the challenges of limited resources.

This survival strategy is a testament to adaptive mechanisms. In an environment where food scarcity or insecurity may be prevalent, the verse portrays a pragmatic response – an embodiment of resilience and adaptability. Women, as central figures in the management of household sustenance, often take on the responsibility of creatively stretching available resources, illustrating their agency in finding solutions to sustain their families. Furthermore, the verse's shift in bread consumption patterns during supper points to a communal and social dimension. This culinary practice reflects the intricate social roles of women within the household, particularly as daughters-in-law. In many cultural contexts, daughters-in-law often play pivotal roles in meal preparation and distribution, navigating the hierarchy within the family structure. The act of consuming two breads during supper could signify their role in ensuring that everyone is adequately fed, underscoring their agency in maintaining familial bonds and harmony.

This practice also highlights the culinary relations that women forge within the household. Through the preparation and distribution of food, women establish and nurture social bonds, reinforcing their roles as caregivers and cultivators of familial connections. The verse underscores the ways in which culinary rituals become conduits for expressing care, solidarity, and a sense of belonging, allowing women to exercise agency within the complex web of social relationships. In the context of survival strategies and food insecurity, the verse reflects the nuanced negotiation of hierarchy within the household. The dynamics between a daughter-in-law and other family members, notably the mother-in-law, are layered with traditions, power dynamics, and expectations. The act of discreetly consuming bread "on the way" might subtly hint at

the delicate balance of agency and subservience that daughters-in-law often navigate, highlighting their ability to assert personal autonomy while adhering to social norms and hierarchies.

Ultimately, this poetic verse encapsulates a microcosm of women's agency, adaptive mechanisms, social roles, and survival strategies within the intricate interplay of culinary practices and family dynamics. It underscores the pivotal role of women as agents of sustenance, connection, and resilience, shedding light on their multifaceted contributions within the broader context of household and community life.

A narration from a respondent,

*When my mother-in-law wasn't around, I once cooked some corn kernels covertly. In the meanwhile, she arrived, and out of her fear, I put the grains to chickens.*

This anecdote unveils an anthropologically intriguing glimpse into the intricate web of human behavior, social dynamics, and cultural norms within the context of a familial setting. It encapsulates a narrative of culinary discretion, fear of authority, and the dynamic interplay between individual agency and societal expectations. The covert act of cooking corn kernels during the mother-in-law's absence serves as a microcosm of hidden agency, embodying an individual's endeavor to carve out a sphere of personal autonomy within a structured household environment. This act of culinary defiance, albeit modest, sheds light on the subtle way individuals negotiate boundaries and assert a degree of independence, even in mundane activities like food preparation.

The sudden return of the mother-in-law introduces an element of social surveillance and control. Her presence serves as a potent reminder of the prevailing norms and power dynamics within the family unit. The subsequent decision to redirect the cooked kernels to the chickens exemplifies a coping mechanism triggered by the immediate fear of potential repercussions. This act underscores the intricate balance between individual desires and the necessity to conform to established norms, often shaped by hierarchical structures and authority figures.

From an anthropological standpoint, this narrative provides insights into the nuances of domestic hierarchies, gender roles, and the negotiation of personal space within the familial realm. It reflects the tension between adhering to societal

expectations and seeking moments of personal expression, highlighting the intricate dance between agency and compliance that characterizes human interactions. Furthermore, the chickens unwittingly become symbolic participants in this culinary narrative, serving as recipients of an unintended offering. This subtle interaction draws attention to the often-overlooked role of non-human actors in shaping cultural practices and responses, shedding light on the interconnectedness of human and animal lives within a shared environment.

In sum, this seemingly straightforward anecdote reveals a microcosm of human behavior, illustrating the interplay of agency, fear, conformity, and societal norms within the confines of a familial context. It provides a lens through which to examine the complex web of human relationships, power dynamics, and the negotiation of individuality in the face of prevailing cultural expectations.

Despite the myriad challenges that may stand in her path, a woman's intrinsic strength empowers her to overcome obstacles and attain any goal she wholeheartedly commits to. Even when confronted with the harsh reality of abuse and finding herself in seemingly insurmountable circumstances, a woman's unwavering determination has propelled her to achieve significant milestones and advancements. The indomitable spirit that resides within women has proven time and again that adversity can be met with resilience, leading to remarkable strides in various spheres of life.

Embedded within the fabric of human societies, a recurrent motif emerges, highlighting the inherent potential of women to navigate adversity and manifest their aspirations. This potential is illuminated in contexts characterized by abuse and vulnerability, where women have exhibited remarkable advancement. A pertinent illustration emerges from the discourse provided by an interlocutor, who shares a compelling narrative from her neighborhood.

This narrative serves as a microcosmic representation of the broader socio-cultural phenomenon, shedding light on the tenacious spirit of women and their capacity to effectuate change. It encapsulates a trajectory of empowerment, resonating with the anthropological discourse on agency and gender dynamics. Within the confines of this neighborhood, the shared journey of women is emblematic of a collective endeavor to transcend traditional boundaries and recalibrate gender roles.

The narrative underscores the interplay between individual autonomy and societal constraints, reflecting the intricate negotiation of agency within established frameworks. It highlights the catalytic role of collective efforts, where women collectively collaborate to drive transformative progress. This collective agency, coupled with individual determination, amplifies the multifaceted nature of women's empowerment within this contextual paradigm. Furthermore, the interlocutor's shared narrative functions as a micro-ethnographic vignette, unveiling the resilience of women as they navigate complex power dynamics. It underscores the transformative potential of women's actions within their social milieu, serving as a catalyst for change. This phenomenon exemplifies the anthropological exploration of gendered agency and its ripple effects within a localized setting.

In summation, the interlocutor's narrative serves as a vivid tableau within the broader anthropological canvas, depicting the intricate interplay of women's agency, cultural dynamics, and societal evolution. It underscores the capacity of women to traverse a trajectory of empowerment, fusing the individual with the communal, and reinforcing the anthropological narrative of resilience and transformation within the realm of gendered experiences.

An interlocutor shared an interesting story of her neighborhood,

*Previously, a woman residing in our neighborhood had orchestrated a covert endeavor. The men of the household fell victim to a ruse, resulting in the surreptitious sale of their wheat. Consequently, the villagers, upon noticing a substantial quantity of bags being dispatched from their premises, alerted the male members of the household. A cautionary note was sounded, prompting them to exercise vigilance, lest their wife's actions spiraled beyond control. In response, the responsibility of overseeing the grain bins was assumed by the men, who diligently replenished and sealed them by hand. Simultaneously, within the confines of the second room, the women devised a discreet plan. Ingeniously, they engineered a concealed aperture from the rear of the cottage. This covertly established access point served as their conduit for procuring an ample supply of whole grains. This clandestinely harvested resource was then meticulously employed by the women, strategically channeling their actions to evade prying eyes and maintain an air of secrecy.*

This narrative provides an anthropologically significant insight into the dynamics of resource management, gender roles, and adaptive strategies within a localized context. The actions undertaken by the woman in the neighborhood underscore the multifaceted nature of agency and power dynamics, revealing an intricate interplay between gender, authority, and resource control. The manipulation of the men of the household through a deceptive scheme reflects a form of gendered subversion, where the woman leveraged her agency to orchestrate a discreet redistribution of resources. This act challenges conventional power dynamics by showcasing a strategic maneuver that defies the traditional norms governing resource allocation and male dominance.

The villagers' intervention and subsequent warning highlight the communal aspect of surveillance and control. It exemplifies the role of social networks in reinforcing prevailing gender norms and in monitoring the behavior of women who might challenge established boundaries. The notion of keeping the wife "under control" underscores the patriarchal structures that underpin such communities, where women's actions are subject to scrutiny and restraint. The shift of responsibility for grain monitoring from women to men speaks to the malleability of gender roles and the renegotiation of authority in response to challenges. This transition reflects a reconfiguration of power dynamics within the household, with men assuming a proactive role in safeguarding resources, potentially altering traditional expectations and responsibilities.

The women's ingenious creation of a hidden aperture reflects an adaptive mechanism, demonstrating their agency in resource acquisition. This strategy showcases the innovative ways in which women navigate restrictions to secure essential commodities, highlighting their capacity to subvert limitations imposed upon them and exercise agency in unconventional ways. Overall, this narrative serves as a microcosm of the complex interplay between gender, power, resource management, and adaptive strategies within a localized setting. It illuminates the subtle dynamics through which individuals navigate societal norms, challenge gendered expectations, and employ innovative approaches to address resource-related challenges within the confines of their social and cultural milieu.

Another woman recounted a different tale to this,

*Following the whey extraction process, the butter was skillfully separated and delicately placed over the mother-in-law. Furthermore, in the event of a skillfully prepared chaati, the daughter-in-law would strategically apply a layer of butter to the base. With precision, she would summon the mother-in-law to inspect and retrieve the butter from the surface. Upon the mother-in-law's acquisition of the designated butter, the daughter-in-law, in an artful maneuver, would discreetly remove the ultimate layer. This concealed act enabled her to subsequently employ the butter for her own purposes or discreetly engage in its sale.*

This practice offers an intriguing anthropological lens into the complex interplay of cultural norms, power dynamics, and resource management within the context of a familial setting. The act of straining butter over the mother-in-law and the strategic manipulation of the chaati preparation process reveal subtle forms of negotiation, agency, and resistance that are deeply intertwined with gender roles and social hierarchies. At its core, this practice reflects a symbolic expression of hierarchy and respect within the household. The act of placing butter over the mother-in-law signifies a form of deference and recognition, underscoring her role as a central figure within the family structure. It reinforces traditional gendered roles, highlighting the importance of the mother-in-law's position and her role in overseeing domestic affairs.

The daughter-in-law's calculated placement of butter within the chaati introduces an element of agency and strategic maneuvering. By inviting the mother-in-law's participation in butter retrieval, the daughter-in-law navigates the delicate balance between compliance and personal agency. This interaction becomes a performative act that subtly challenges the power dynamics, allowing the daughter-in-law to assert herself within the confines of established norms. The discreet removal of the final butter layer unveils a form of hidden agency and resource management. This act reflects a calculated effort to secure a portion of resources for personal use or potential economic gain. It showcases the daughter-in-law's adaptability and ability to navigate within the parameters of her role, while simultaneously carving out spaces for autonomy and economic empowerment.

In broader anthropological terms, this practice offers insights into how individuals negotiate and subvert cultural norms to exert agency and create space for themselves within structured social systems. It underscores the nuanced ways in which

gender, tradition, and resource allocation intersect to shape daily life and familial interactions. Ultimately, this practice embodies the intricate dance between tradition, agency, and empowerment within the intricate tapestry of familial and cultural dynamics. In response, the interlocutor shared a saying that goes as follows:

په جماعت کې یو سړی د نږدې لاندې  
څوک د یوې ټکۍ بڼې وپولن س ته څخه ځي ده

*Keep your belongings under your close watch*

*Lest someone should steal it for you may suffer due to it*

This proverb encapsulates a profound anthropological insight into the intricacies of communal dynamics and the delicate balance between individual agency and collective well-being. It underscores the essential role of vigilance in safeguarding personal belongings within a shared environment, highlighting the potential consequences of neglect. By urging individuals to keep their possessions under close watch, the proverb emphasizes the responsibility each member holds in preserving not only their own resources but also contributing to the overall stability of the community. This resonates with anthropological discussions on resource management, where the act of safeguarding belongings symbolizes a broader commitment to social cohesion and the reciprocity that underpins communal interactions. In this way, the proverb becomes a cultural artifact that unveils the underlying values, norms, and strategies that shape interactions within the community, shedding light on the intricate tapestry of human relationships and the harmonious coexistence of individual and collective interests.

The nexus of economic resources within the communal endeavor of a joint venture, exemplified by the household, serves as a pivotal locus for the nuanced interplay of conflict and rivalry between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. This complex dynamic underscores the intricate landscape of power struggles and contention, emblematic of broader anthropological discussions on intra-household relationships and resource allocation. The prevailing vulnerability of women to psychological abuse, particularly in the context of food insecurity, emerges as a salient point of concern. Notably, women devoid of economic resources appear to be more susceptible to such adversities, underlining the pivotal role that access to resources plays in shaping familial dynamics. This dichotomy underscores the multifaceted intersection of gender,



economic agency, and psychological well-being, offering a poignant illustration of the intricate web of challenges and protective factors that shape the experiences of women within these sociocultural contexts (Jewkes, Corboz, & Gibbs, 2019).

### 6.3 Evolution as Observed in Food Making

In the preceding epoch, the domestic realm functioned as the nucleus of production, encompassing an intricate tapestry of activities vital for sustenance. This included the cultivation of wheat and maize, alongside the stewardship of cattle such as cows and buffaloes, resulting in an array of unadulterated nourishment in the form of milk, curd, ghee, whey, and butter. These consumables were imbued with the essence of purity and authenticity. In the contemporary milieu, a transformative shift has materialized, marked by the scarcity of desi ghee. The modern landscape witnesses the ascendancy of mechanized processes and the infiltration of contaminants, granting access to an assortment of commodities albeit devoid of their inherent flavors. This paradigmatic transition begets a paradox, giving rise to inherent afflictions intertwined with the disruption of traditional dietary paradigms. A respondent shares a recollection from the past, recalling a time when they owned a cow,

*The milk obtained from the cow was characterized by its transparency and clarity. In the present, milk is procured through a milkman. Initially, this milk exhibited an appealing color and taste; however, over time, it underwent a change, curdling and necessitating the addition of various chemicals to induce thickening. The resultant flavor of the milk became distinctive. In earlier times, the community spirit was such that neighbors willingly shared milk with those in need. However, contemporary circumstances have shifted, with fewer individuals owning cows or buffaloes, and even if they do, the practice of sharing has waned. Our elders once said,*

This narrative encapsulates a series of anthropologically significant shifts in food production, consumption, and social dynamics within a specific community. The transition from owning a cow and directly obtaining transparent and clear milk to the modern practice of procuring milk from a milkman signifies changes in livelihood strategies and the commodification of food resources. The evolution of milk quality from its initial appealing characteristics to the need for chemical additives for thickening sheds light on the impact of modern production methods, potentially reflecting shifts in agricultural practices, technology, and health considerations.

The changing flavor and texture of milk highlight broader concerns related to food safety, quality, and consumer preferences. The shift from a communal practice of

sharing milk among neighbors in times of need to a more individualistic approach points to evolving social norms and changing community dynamics. The decreasing ownership of cows and buffaloes, as well as the decline in sharing, may signify shifts in the economic landscape, urbanization, or changes in the role of livestock within the community.

Overall, this narrative provides insight into the intricate interplay of cultural, economic, and technological factors that shape food systems and social relationships. It underscores how food practices and traditions are influenced by broader societal changes, reflecting the complex web of interactions that define human behavior and livelihoods within a given cultural context.

سون ڀيٽقا سرگي ڀاڳري

تا چي هي رڪروپ خولي

*Why would present people remember you for favor/good*

*If you have forgotten your own elders' favors to you*

The verses eloquently align with the preceding narrative, highlighting the interconnectedness of cultural values, social dynamics, and food practices. Just as the narrative revealed shifts in food production, consumption, and sharing practices within a community, the verses underscore the enduring importance of gratitude and reciprocity in shaping interpersonal relationships and community bonds. The transition from a communal practice of sharing milk among neighbors to a more individualistic approach mirrors the cautionary sentiment expressed in the verses – that forgetting the favors of elders may lead to a disconnect between present actions and the memory of them by future generations. Both the narrative and the verses offer insights into the complex interplay of traditions, values, and social change, underscoring the multidimensional nature of anthropological exploration.

In the past, a culture of communal resource sharing thrived, exemplified by the practice of offering surplus vegetables to neighbors. However, contemporary shifts have led to a decline in such practices, with individuals today refraining from sharing resources. This evolution reflects broader anthropological shifts in social norms and community dynamics. The act of sharing surplus resources not only fostered positive social relations but also indicated a communal entitlement, where neighbors were

considered rightful recipients. The current reluctance to engage in such practices underscores the interplay of factors shaping communal behaviors, from socioeconomic changes to evolving values, highlighting the intricate connections between culture, reciprocity, and societal transformations within changing cultural contexts.

The food items in question exhibit nominal attributes, encompassing peas, gram, rice, lentils, and dal mash, among others. Despite their semblance to traditional staples, disparities emerge in both their quality and flavor. Fruits and pulses have similarly undergone modifications, often attributed to machine- or technology-driven batch production, originating predominantly from sources in 'China'. An initial phase witnessed limited quantities characterized by commendable quality. Regrettably, a shift has occurred, marked by amplified quantities alongside compromised quality. This shift is a consequence of heightened mechanized production processes, resulting in a discernible escalation of gastrointestinal issues among a significant portion of the populace. This nuanced scenario encapsulates the intricate interplay between contemporary food systems, technological influences, and the resulting anthropological implications on health and nutrition.

The dietary composition encompasses a range of items including desi ghee, milk, butter, lassi, eggs, and curd. In times of scarcity, the consumption of these items transitioned from being a mandatory sustenance to a habitual source of satiety. A practice known as "Chotai" (چوتی) emerged as a pragmatic response among those unable to prepare meals, serving as a barter mechanism for trading homegrown grains for essential provisions from local stores. Intriguingly, this practice extended beyond commerce and was also observed within neighboring households. In instances of depleted resources such as red lentils (مسور دال) or handcrafted ghee, a nuanced adaptation occurred where alternate commodities such as wheat flour or other available ingredients were employed. Employing a measuring vessel called "kundai" (کونڈی) or "kaasa" (کاس) which served as a scale of measure at the time, households utilized milk or ghee as surrogate constituents. This practice exemplifies the intricate interplay between adaptive strategies, resource management, and communal dynamics, offering a captivating anthropological glimpse into the intricate culinary practices and social systems of the period.

This culinary practice underscores the dynamic interaction between cultural traditions, resource management, and communal resilience. The dietary composition, including staples like desi ghee, milk, lassi, eggs, and curd, reflects both nutritional preferences and cultural significance. The shift from obligatory consumption to habitual satisfaction highlights the adaptable nature of dietary behaviors. The "Chotai" practice illustrates a strategic response to economic constraints, demonstrating the practicality of barter mechanisms in times of scarcity. This practice extends beyond transactional exchanges, revealing the importance of community ties. The use of measuring vessels and substitutes like milk or ghee emphasizes resourcefulness in optimizing scarce resources. Overall, this culinary practice presents a concise argument for the interconnectedness of cultural norms, resource allocation, and communal cooperation in navigating challenges.

**Figure 12 A nuanced exploration of the local lunch and dinner routines, shedding light on the cultural significance, communal dynamics, and dietary patterns that shape the gastronomic identity within this vibrant village**



Traditionally, the breakfast regimen encompassed tea and corn bread, a practice that endures predominantly among children, occasionally complemented by parathas or store-bought cakes. Conversely, brunch, reserved for the female members of the household, revolved around repurposed bread from earlier meals, served alongside onions and lassi, a form of whey. Midday sustenance featured wheat bread interlaced with seasonal produce and black gram lentils ( ماش داال = mash daal). The institution of "afternoon tea," a modest variant, was once a ubiquitous fixture in affluent households, transcending gender boundaries. Such tea was also extended to visitors; however, contemporary hospitality norms have transitioned to the provision of freshly brewed,

premium-grade tea. Despite evolving, the cultural practice of afternoon tea perseveres as a distinctive custom within this socio-cultural framework.

This cultural dietary practice unveils the interplay of tradition and modernity, as well as gender dynamics, within a specific community. The enduring preference for children's breakfast of tea and corn bread, occasionally substituted with parathas and shop-bought cakes, underscores the resilience of established culinary choices. The gendered aspect of brunch, consumed exclusively by women and consisting of repurposed bread, onions, and lassi, highlights the role of food in reinforcing gender roles. The transition from a once-inclusive "afternoon tea" in affluent homes to a contemporary emphasis on elevated hospitality standards reflects evolving social norms and economic conditions. While customs evolve, the preservation of afternoon tea as a cultural marker signifies a steadfast adherence to certain traditions amid broader societal changes, providing a nuanced perspective on the intricate interplay of food, gender, tradition, and shifting norms.

**Figure 13 Morning Harmony in Maloch:** A snapshot of local life, where breakfast becomes a shared experience, bringing together bowls on the ground and the warmth of communal connections



The evening meal, termed "dinner," was characterized by the consumption of black gram lentil curry (پیتھی paiti), accompanied by seasonal vegetables, akin to the preceding midday repast. The incorporation of rice was a weekly occurrence, often complemented with desi ghee, milk, and curd. This practice emerged in response to the challenges posed by the village's water scarcity, rendering rice cultivation arduous and market purchases economically demanding. Swati rice, a staple, underwent preparation either by boiling or through integration with lentils, subsequently served alongside curd, milk, and a prevalent gravy variant. Distinct consumption patterns were observed, with men typically partaking in the essentials as served, while women exhibited variations, opting for consumption with or without gravy. This meal

structure encompasses multifaceted anthropological insights into culinary adaptations, gender-specific practices, and the intricate interplay of local environmental constraints and dietary customs.

This gastronomic regimen encapsulates a nexus of cultural, environmental, and gender dynamics within the community. The composition of the evening meal, characterized by the inclusion of "paiti" – a black gram lentil curry – and seasonal vegetables, mirrors a consistent culinary pattern observed during the midday meal. The periodic incorporation of rice, accompanied by "desi ghee," milk, and "curd," bears testament to a pragmatic adaptation to the challenges imposed by the village's water scarcity, ultimately influencing dietary choices and resource management. The preference for Swati rice, prepared either boiled or in conjunction with lentils, underscores a nuanced understanding of local staples and culinary practices. Notably, the divergent consumption habits between men and women within this meal framework spotlight gender-distinct roles and preferences, offering a window into the intricate interplay of cultural norms, dietary adaptations, and localized environmental factors. This gastronomic narrative unveils the multifaceted nature of human interactions, where sustenance, gender, tradition, and resource availability intersect to shape communal practices.

**Figure 14 Reinventing Flavors in Maloch: Leftover dinner takes a delicious turn as it becomes a delightful mix of food grains and rice, presenting a rustic indoor brunch that echoes the culinary ingenuity of the village**



This culinary practice within the elite households unveils a complex interplay of socio-economic stratification, gender roles, and dietary habits. The liberal use of

water to create a thin gravy from chana daal (چڻڻ) blended with potatoes, alongside the inclusion of maize and wheat bread, signifies a distinctive gastronomic preference among the privileged class. The contrasting allocation of wheat bread to male residents and guests, while female household members partake in cornbread, exemplifies gender-based disparities in food consumption within this milieu. The absence of meat from this culinary repertoire speaks to a unique dietary ethos. The account shared by a local villager serves as a poignant ethnographic snapshot, shedding light on how food practices are embedded within broader socio-cultural norms, illuminating the intersections of class, gender, and food preferences within a specific community.

*A shepherd's buffalo, located in the highlands, fell victim to a lightning strike, resulting in its demise. This incident prompted the entire community, including ourselves, to gather and salvage the meat. Consequently, the consumption of meat became an infrequent occurrence within the community.*

This incident of a lightning-struck buffalo and the subsequent communal response provides insight into the intersection of environmental forces, resource utilization, and cultural practices. The event underscores the impact of natural phenomena on local livelihoods, as the loss of the buffalo necessitated a collective effort to salvage its meat for sustenance. The rarity of meat consumption within the community suggests that such occurrences were not commonplace, possibly due to factors such as economic considerations, cultural norms, or availability. This narrative shed light on the intricate interplay between environmental dynamics, communal cooperation, and dietary habits, reflecting the adaptability and resourcefulness of the community in the face of unexpected events.

In the observed cultural context, meat consumption was influenced by specific occasions and communal dynamics. The preparation of meat was associated with the male members' city-bound commutes or significant celebrations like weddings or funerals. Notably, during Ramadan, collective efforts were directed towards acquiring and distributing an animal for consumption. This communal practice has experienced a shift, evidenced by the transformation from a gradual consumption of a kilogram of beef over several days to its immediate full consumption. Furthermore, the culinary practice of daily flatbread production was not the norm, manifesting occasionally during Ramadan. The culmination of the Eid observance was marked by the preparation

of rice, complemented by a serving of curd mixed with ghee. These culinary practices elucidate the intricate interplay of communal gatherings, religious observances, and dietary habits, reflecting adaptations to changing cultural dynamics and the evolving relationships between food, tradition, and community engagement. The culinary practices observed here reflect the interplay of social events and communal dynamics. Meat consumption is tied to significant occasions like city commutes, celebrations, and Ramadan. Shifts in consumption patterns, such as immediate meat consumption and occasional flatbread production, highlight adaptations within evolving traditions. The emphasis on communal meat distribution and the culminating Eid meal underscores the integration of food practices into social and religious contexts, shedding light on the dynamic nature of cultural rituals and dietary habits. An interlocutor said that,

*During Eidul Azha, an interlocutor shared that the children in their family would enthusiastically skewer each piece of meat, accompanied by a unique stipulation: the individual responsible for preparing the soup would be entitled to consume it. Initially, the sacrificial meat was meticulously preserved, serving as a valuable resource to be utilized during times of necessity.*

This recollection of Eidul Azha traditions underscores how evolving cultural practices reflect changes in food security dynamics. The past practice of meticulously storing sacrificial meat for future use indicated a strategy to address potential food insecurity, ensuring sustenance during challenging times. In contrast, the present shift towards immediate consumption signifies improved food security, where the need for meat preservation has diminished. The tradition's emphasis on equitable resource distribution and active participation highlights a contemporary awareness of food security as encompassing both availability and access. This narrative exemplifies the intricate interplay between cultural traditions and evolving notions of food security, reflecting adaptations to changing socio-economic contexts and a broader commitment to equitable resource utilization.

The evolution of food practices mirrors the broader shifts in society. In earlier times, sugar, a rarity in stores, saw limited use, while the more accessible jaggery often gave way to sugar due to its cost-effectiveness. Basic rice preparations, occasionally flavored with lentils, constituted the initial culinary norm. Of particular interest was the traditional winter dish "Chokanr (چکونر)", an amalgamation of rice and various greens.



However, a perceptible change has taken root in contemporary times. Despite culinary practices persisting, a sense of diminished satisfaction accompanies them, attributed to the compromised quality of ingredients. Notably, the erstwhile celebrated "paiti" stands out, its former delectable allure attributed to being fried in original homemade ghee alongside garlic.

This narrative underscores the intricate interplay between ingredient availability, taste preferences, and cultural culinary practices, inviting contemplation on the evolving nature of gastronomic traditions within the changing fabric of society. *According to one woman, a visitor hailing from Buner reportedly introduced a unique practice when visiting these areas – insisting on purchasing the tabey, the vessel in which the food was prepared, before partaking in the meal. In dishes such as paiti, green herb rice, and others, the tabey played a crucial role in enhancing the flavor profile. The method involved placing a heated, smooth stone within a wooden bowl, along with garlic paste and desi ghee, resulting in the browning of the garlic. Subsequently, the browned garlic and heated stone were incorporated into the prepared meal, contributing to the distinctive taste that characterizes these dishes.*

This anecdote reflects the interplay between culinary traditions, cultural exchanges, and innovative gastronomic practices. The visitor's insistence on purchasing the tabey, the vessel used for cooking, highlights the value attributed to the cooking process itself, elevating it to a level of significance equal to the consumption of the meal. This practice underscores the reverence for culinary craftsmanship and the belief that the vessel imparts a unique essence to the food. The utilization of a heated stone, garlic paste, and desi ghee as a means to enhance flavor demonstrates the creative ways in which communities' endeavor to elevate their culinary experiences. This narrative serves as a testament to the diversity of cooking techniques, the importance of cultural interactions in shaping culinary practices, and the significance of ritualistic elements within the act of preparing and sharing meals.

The impact of evolving food practices is discernible in the challenges faced by economically disadvantaged individuals. Transformations in food preferences have led to disparities in consumption patterns. Culinary items such as Biryani, Handi, and Kadahi, often relished by the affluent, present challenges for the less privileged due to their complexity and resource requirements. An insightful account from a villager

underscores this divide as they remark on their pragmatic adaptation ‘we utilize an omelet to fulfill our requirements for a substantial meal, unlike the breakfast enjoyed by affluent individuals accompanied by tea,’ as stated by a villager’. Utilizing an omelet not merely as a breakfast component but as a substantive meal. This adaptation underscores how the economically marginalized navigate dietary constraints to fulfill sustenance needs, exemplifying the intricate interplay of social stratification, culinary choices, and adaptive strategies within a given community. One of the participants shared a captivating narrative, adding a touch of intrigue by referencing a Pashto song that resonated with the story.

*In close proximity, there resides a wage laborer whose children harbored a deep desire for biryani. In response, the father recounted that the referenced song had garnered immense popularity during that era.*

دې ورځې دى اړى پينځه ش روپى واچم  
 څه دى پى واخلم كه اوچه چاى واخلم كه بهن يگوره  
 اوت پكهن يم تلبي اني غځي

*I earn 30 Rupees a day as wages,*

*Don't know how to manage essentials like bread, sugar, and milk with it,*

*And here you're asking for banquets and feasts*

This Pashto verse reflects the stark economic disparities and challenges faced by a wage laborer. The juxtaposition of earning a modest income and struggling to afford basic necessities like bread, sugar, and milk, highlights the financial constraints and hardships experienced by the speaker. The contrast between their limited means and the extravagant demands for banquets underscores the stark divide between economic realities and societal expectations. This verse offers a poignant commentary on the unequal distribution of resources and the aspirations that often clash with practical constraints within the context of socio-economic disparity.

Here is another folk saying related to this,

پكورك بندان ي شته له بولگه سړن درى غځي

*In the house, she lacks even a twig, yet she's creating a commotion*

This Pashto expression conveys a situation where someone is making unnecessary complaints or creating a fuss despite not having the necessary resources or

grounds to do so. It reflects a sense of incongruity between their actions and the actual circumstances, highlighting a disconnect between expectations and reality. The phrase underscores the significance of aligning reactions and behaviors with the context at hand, emphasizing the importance of practicality and reason.

It can also be related to the concept of food insecurity. It exemplifies a scenario where a person's complaints and fuss-making may stem from a lack of access to adequate food resources. Just as they lack the means to cook, their behavior might be a manifestation of the stress and anxiety arising from food insecurity. This highlights how food scarcity can lead to emotional and psychological reactions, potentially resulting in disproportionate responses or heightened sensitivity to the availability and quality of food. The phrase serves as a reminder of the complex relationship between material deprivation, emotional well-being, and social interactions within the context of food insecurity.

The transformation in dietary practices over time is emblematic of broader shifts within societal dynamics. While the past may have witnessed fewer material commodities, it was characterized by a sense of abundance in intangible qualities – prosperity, affection, and tranquility. The consumption of vegetables and crusty bread was once an act imbued with genuine fondness and ardor, fostering a connection between sustenance and emotion. The preparation of greens on a griddle, complemented by cornbread, reflected a harmonious interplay between culinary traditions and communal preferences, underpinned by a self-sufficient ethos that minimized reliance on store-bought produce.

The historical omission of red beans from culinary repertoires, while possibly indicative of economic constraints, held cultural implications that nuanced the interpretation of poverty within the household. The evolution from plain *gongri* (گونگری) to its contemporary rendition infused with chaat spices signifies both gastronomic adaptation and changing taste preferences, indicative of a dynamic culinary landscape. However, the evolving palate seems juxtaposed against a backdrop of growing societal discord, a paradox where modernity's strides are seemingly at odds with harmonious coexistence. This divergence, despite the bounties bestowed by divine benevolence, raises questions about the intrinsic values and social equilibrium that food

and nourishment, beyond the material realm, bring to human lives. One of the respondents said,

*During the tenure of Wali Swat (Miangul Abdul Wadud), it is said that people would comfortably sleep in open fields during summer nights without any sense of fear. The prevailing atmosphere was one of peace and order. However, the current situation has drastically changed, as leaving the safety of one's home could lead to dire consequences, either at the hands of the military or due to the threat posed by the Taliban. As a result of this heightened danger, individuals have been compelled to even utilize indoor toilets located within their bedrooms for their own safety and protection.*

This passage highlights the interplay between changing societal structures and resultant shifts in human behavior. During Wali Swat's governance, the prevailing peaceful environment allowed people to sleep outdoors without fear, indicating a societal structure conducive to safety and trust. However, the current situation, characterized by heightened danger from both military and Taliban influences, has reshaped behavior, compelling individuals to seek safety within their homes. This reflects how alterations in power dynamics and security conditions can prompt adjustments in everyday conduct, illustrating the intricate relationship between social context and human actions.

که زره ته ډیر نصیحت وکم  
نېڅخول وکیگی لیکل ه ښایي زړونه

*Despite my sincere efforts, I find it challenging*

*To erase the painful memories, you left etched in my heart*

The excerpt elucidates the persistent resonance of emotional traumas within the human experience and the intricate endeavor of surmounting injurious encounters, even in the presence of earnest exertions. This observation underscores the anthropological notion that certain socio-emotional stimuli can engender enduring imprints on individual affective realms, engendering impediments to progressive psychological restoration. The text encapsulates the intricate interplay between cognitive responses and socio-cultural factors, reflecting the complex dynamics involved in negotiating and recuperating from emotional wounds within diverse societal contexts.

In the historical context, women used to prepare traditional snacks like *kakori* and *ghunzakhi* to accompany tea, which was a cherished guest offering. Contrastingly, contemporary times witness the introduction of cakes and cookies as accompaniments.

Upon a visitor's arrival, the practice now entails promptly laying out an array of refreshments for immediate consumption, followed by the guest's departure. In earlier eras, the consumption of tea was less frequent and revered; it held a special significance, reserved primarily for convalescent patients or esteemed guests. Interestingly, there are accounts attributing the prohibition of tea possession during Wali Swat's rule to its caffeine content, deemed potentially addictive by the regime. Tea has evolved into a vital component of relaxation for women, countering the fatigue of a demanding day. Its rejuvenating properties are emphasized, and it is historically recognized as a remedy for women's headaches.

The passage adeptly weaves the narrative of changing cultural practices and societal norms with the evolving landscape of food preparation and consumption. The transition from women crafting traditional kakori and ghunzakhi to the contemporary inclination towards cakes and cookies underscores how culinary preferences have adapted to modern tastes and influences. This culinary shift mirrors broader societal changes, emphasizing the interconnectedness of culture and gastronomy. Furthermore, the altered tradition of immediately presenting refreshments upon a guest's arrival not only reflects changing etiquette but also mirrors the fast-paced nature of modern life, where convenience often takes precedence. The historical significance of tea, once reserved for special occasions and medicinal use, showcases how food items, like beverages, can carry cultural and historical weight. Its prohibition during Wali Swat's regime, based on caffeine content, delves into the intricate relationship between health concerns and dietary regulations, raising questions about the role of the state in shaping culinary habits. Finally, the transformation of tea from a ceremonial indulgence to a daily source of comfort and energy for women underscores how shifts in lifestyle and gender roles can impact dietary patterns, ultimately revealing the broader societal transformations at play. There is famous Pashto tappa shared by interlocutor,

چای دځی رات شې د چا زوتین هسب وږی

په سر مي دردنه قاشگی

کندو اووه په لټ وری جیپ گوته

د بنځی کاردي ناوښتې څه څه څو وږی

په سر مي دردنه قلاوږی

د وړو پلار چې کورته راشي نوقا هږي

په سر مي دردنه قلاوړی

*Habit of taking sweet tea does not go away*

*My headache does not go away*

*Kick the clay wheat store and hit rice with fingers*

*It is work related to women, men would not get a hint about it*

*My headache does not go away*

*Father of my children get angry when he gets home*

*My headache does not go away*

The shared Pashto tappa encapsulates a vivid depiction of daily life and emotions, highlighting the ritualistic consumption of sweet tea that persists despite the persistent headache. The act of kicking the clay wheat store and deftly handling rice grains, traditionally associated with women's work, remains enigmatic to men. The verses evoke a sense of gender-specific responsibilities and domestic dynamics, revealing the complexities within familial relationships. The repeated refrain of the unrelenting headache becomes a poignant metaphor for the persistent challenges and burdens carried, both in the literal and metaphorical sense. Through its verses, the tappa crafts a tapestry of ordinary yet layered moments, where the routine act of consuming tea becomes a poignant reflection of resilience amidst everyday struggles and unspoken complexities.

In historical epochs, the practice of producing pristine, untainted artisanal honey thrived within the cultural milieu. However, within the contemporary framework, although honey production has surged quantitatively, there is a discernible decline in its qualitative attributes. This dichotomy encapsulates a poignant anthropological observation, reflecting the interplay between traditional ecological knowledge and the evolving dynamics of modern honey production processes. The shift from a context where homemade honey epitomized unblemished purity to a current landscape marked by an abundance of output but compromised quality invites a probing analysis of the socio-cultural, economic, and ecological factors that converge to shape this transformation. The discordance between past and present honey production practices underscores the intricate nexus between customary practices, technological

advancements, and environmental stewardship, encapsulating the dynamic interplay of human agency and nature within the realm of food production.

*As recounted by a participant, my mother-in-law would often remark that in times past, our consumption of honey was notably abundant. A pair of diminutive vessels graced our abode, each brimming with untainted, homemade honey. One of these vessels catered to the culinary needs of our family, while the other remained in reserve, designated for somber occasions within our village—a testament to its purpose during times of bereavement. Tradition dictated that a modest quantity of honey would be gently placed in the mouth of the departed, and these vessels were specifically set aside for this solemn ritual. This practice underscored a prevailing belief among our people—a veneration of honey as the utmost sacred and unadulterated sustenance.*

The narrative underscores a cultural and symbolic significance attributed to honey within a specific community. In the past, the abundance of homemade honey was not only a culinary delight but also held deeper ritualistic implications. The presence of two pots of pure honey—one for regular consumption and the other reserved for solemn occasions like deaths—speaks to the reverence with which honey was regarded. The traditional practice of placing a small amount of honey in the mouth of the deceased person illustrates a belief in honey's purity and its role in rituals associated with transition and passage. The broader implication is the intertwining of food, ritual, and cultural beliefs, demonstrating how a simple substance like honey can hold profound meaning and play a vital role in commemorating important life events and beliefs within a community.

The culinary strategies employed by the economically disadvantaged segment reflect a microcosm of the broader dynamics of food security and insecurity. When confronted with scarcity, the amalgamation of available ingredients and the addition of water to extend the curry's quantity symbolize adaptive measures to address immediate hunger and secure a larger meal. This practice, encapsulated by the localized saying 'Zangani warta wakai = زنگنی ورته وکی' resonates as a response to food insecurity, showcasing the ingenuity of the marginalized in maximizing sustenance. The utilization of a flour-based paste, 'Zangani' further highlights the role of staple ingredients in augmenting meals during times of scarcity, underscoring the interconnectedness of food

availability and security. Moreover, the culinary approach's extension into mending clothes and shoes demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of coping mechanisms within resource-constrained contexts. This dynamic interplay between food-making practices, resource management, and material culture provides a vivid illustration of how communities navigate the complex terrain of food security, utilizing innovative strategies to mitigate insecurities and foster resilience in the face of adversity. In parallel to this context, a respondent shared a traditional folk tappa,

دلپی دے د بلشہا پ کمال درے زل عیغنی غواری

دا کار د ورونہ دے لہ خہ شلتہ خلہ می غواری

*It is king's bridge require repair thrice a year*

*It is a technical task only experts can complete it*

This tappa metaphorically alludes to the imperative of repairing the king's bridge, underscoring the significance of maintaining essential infrastructure. The thrice-yearly repair cycle implies a recurrent need for vigilance to ensure stability. The technical nature of this task, acknowledged through the assertion that only experts can accomplish it, speaks to the specialized knowledge required for effective repair. Analogously, just as the bridge's upkeep demands expertise, the culinary practices discussed earlier demonstrate a nuanced understanding of ingredients and techniques to navigate food scarcity and insecurity. This interplay between technical expertise, resource management, and the maintenance of vital elements underscores the resilience ingrained within communities, transcending domains and showcasing adaptive strategies amid challenges.

Within this socio-cultural context, a discernible pattern emerges wherein the affluent navigate established systems in a manner often overlooked, even when diverging from prescribed norms. This phenomenon significantly compounds challenges for the economically marginalized segments. Evidently, a formidable backdrop of socio-economic constraints characterizes the impoverished, engendering a complex and arduous milieu. The localized adage 'Dishes aren't piled high on a table' encapsulates a cultural idiom emblematic of the dichotomous reality between opulence and scarcity, denoting a collective understanding of socio-economic differentials. This multi-layered configuration encompasses a nexus of power



dynamics, social norms, and economic inequities, constituting a rich anthropological tapestry that delineates the nuanced interplay between socio-economic stratification and the quotidian practices of individuals within this milieu. Regarding to this one of the interviewees narrates,

*During my youth, the women of our community would gather together to collect cow dung. This communal effort culminated in the creation of flour halwa, a traditional sweet dish made with jaggery, which they would then enjoy as a treat. The prospect of a cow dung gathering excursion held a special allure, as it signaled the forthcoming delight of indulging in flour halwa. This recollection encapsulates the fusion of communal labor, culinary traditions, and the simple joys that permeated daily life in our region.*

The anecdote presented elucidates a compelling argument that underscores the intricate nexus between communal activities, gastronomic traditions, and cultural symbolism within a specific socio-cultural context. The collaborative endeavor of cow dung collection transcends its functional utility, assuming a deeper role as a catalyst for the preparation of flour halwa—a culinary artifact steeped in tradition and infused with the cultural essence of the community. The palpable sense of anticipation and excitement associated with cow dung gathering, stemming from the imminent consumption of flour halwa, epitomizes the convergence of material action and symbolic meaning. This narrative not only underscores the role of collective engagement in fostering social cohesion and shared experience but also highlights how culinary practices can serve as potent conduits for cultural transmission and communal bonding. Consequently, the account underscores the nuanced and profound interweaving of everyday practices, culinary craftsmanship, and communal identity, offering an insightful argument within the realm of anthropological inquiry.

*Kaddao*



*Tarokay*



*Kachmacho*



*Warkharey*



**Figure 15 Culinary Ecology in Maloch: Unpacking the analytical framework behind the utilization of local herbs as greens, showcasing the holistic approach that integrates flavor diversity, nutritional richness, and sustainable harvesting practices**



**Figure 16 Harvesting Heritage: An in-depth analysis of the culinary landscape in Maloch, where locally harvested beans emerge as a prism reflecting agricultural sustainability, mirroring the village's commitment to self-sufficiency intricate flavors, and the cultural essence of the village**

## **7. THREADS OF EMPOWERMENT: WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SECURITY**

### **7.1 Gendered Perspectives on Household Finances: Tradition, Transformation, and Socioeconomic Impact**

In certain sociocultural frameworks, a gendered division of labor and financial responsibility has historically prevailed, wherein the male assumes the role of the primary income provider for the household, while the female is entrusted with the stewardship of financial allocation and expenditure. This established pattern entails the husband conferring a designated sum of currency into his wife's possession, thereby vesting her with the authority to deliberate upon and determine the judicious employment of resources throughout the course of a month.

When confronted with requisitions for supplementary moneys, a recurring response manifests in the form of inquiries pertaining to the precise allocation and utilization of the financial endowment previously provided. *When you ask for more money if needed, they inquire, "How and where did you spend the money, I gave you?"* This recurrent dialogue reveals a certain disregard for the escalating nature of familial expenses concomitant with the maturation and expansion of the family unit. As offspring progress through developmental stages, their exigencies undergo a concomitant augmentation, signifying an amplified fiscal requirement.

These augmented financial obligations encompass a diverse spectrum of disbursements, such as educational fees, vehicular rentals, and allowances, in addition to the personal prerequisites of the female counterpart. The expenditure and allocation dynamics encompass multifarious aspects of familial sustenance and individual necessity, comprising the accretion of costs associated with scholastic pursuits, vehicular mobility, and personal discretionary spending.

The observed phenomena underscore a gendered dichotomy in financial provisioning and decision-making, wherein the male primarily engages in income generation while delegating the fiscal deliberations to the female. The consequences of this paradigm are exemplified through limited cognizance of the incremental exigencies

that accompany familial progression, a prevailing trend that underscores the need for an expanded comprehension of evolving financial responsibilities within the context of an evolving family structure.

Goodwin and his colleagues expound upon these roles within the framework of delineated physical resources, the domain historically attributed to men, and emotional and social resources, which conventionally fall within the realm ascribed to women. It is posited that traditional gender norms allocate men with the responsibility of provisioning sustenance and shelter, exemplars of physical resources, while women are entrusted with the deployment and administration of these tangible assets (Goodwin, Garrett, & Galal, 2005). A respondent recount,

*If I don't oversee my household, tend to my family, and attend societal matters, people don't even inquire when assistance is required. In this era of inflation, accomplishing these responsibilities has grown exceptionally demanding. Men remain oblivious to these intricacies and instead levy accusations of extravagance against us.*

The respondent's narrative reveals a cultural context where the proactive management of household, familial care, and community engagement by women is essential for recognition and support. This burden is exacerbated by contemporary economic challenges. The narrative highlights gendered perceptions, as men often fail to fully comprehend these intricate responsibilities and unjustly label women as extravagant. This examination delves into the intricate interplay of gender dynamics, economic constraints, and societal norms, providing insight into the complexities of recognition and misunderstanding within this context.

Males frequently exhibit a lack of discernment for established norms, resulting in an undervaluation of these societal constructs. Conversely, females find themselves compelled to align with prevailing social benchmarks. Contemporary women possess the agency to manage the financial resources bestowed upon them by males, a departure from the historical precedent where preceding generations of women were attuned to these fiscal considerations. Women, in the present day, recurrently engage in borrowing practices from diverse channels, subsequently effecting gradual restitution through allocation from daily sustenance funds. This analysis delves into gendered dynamics, financial behaviors, and the evolving sociocultural milieu. Another respondent recounted her experience, stating,

*I sell eggs to cover the school fees and pocket money for the kids. Previously, I used to prepare fried eggs for them, but the children would complain that their peers at the canteen were able to buy items since they had money.*

The account provided by the respondent offers an insightful glimpse into the intricate interplay of economic activities, familial dynamics, and peer influences within a specific socio-cultural context. The respondent's engagement in selling eggs to financially support her children's educational expenses and personal allowances underscores a nuanced adaptation to economic exigencies, where maternal agency is harnessed to ensure children's access to education and participation in social networks. The shift from providing homemade fried eggs to accommodating children's desires for canteen purchases signifies the negotiation of both economic and social aspects, reflecting the significance of peer interactions and their implications for children's perceptions of material resources. This narrative underscores the dynamic nature of familial decision-making, economic strategies, and the influence of peer relationships in shaping consumption patterns and childhood experiences.

Okra (بھنڈی), zucchini (بوری), mushrooms (خوری), and pumpkin leaves (چکی) were cultivated within the purview of the landowner. Excess produce beyond subsistence needs found avenues for commercial exchange when surplus quantities surpassed immediate requisites. In reference to this matter, it is noteworthy that domestically produced goods are predominantly marketed by households under the male leadership, as documented by (Khan, Yawar, & Akbar, 2020). However, a pertinent issue arises where the productive endeavors of women remain inadequately acknowledged, despite their potential to significantly contribute to their own economic emancipation. This situation underscores a systemic oversight that not only perpetuates gender disparities but also hinders the broader societal progress that could stem from recognizing and empowering women's productive roles. It is imperative to critically address this paradox and foster an environment where women's productive contributions are duly recognized, valued, and leveraged to advance both individual economic agency and overall societal development.

The historical utilization of a grain measurement instrument, referred to as "wogay" (وگہی), is a testament to the intrinsic value attributed to precise quantification. This artifact, aligning with contemporary kilogram standards, signifies an enduring

cultural reverence for accurate measurement methodologies. In this historical context, women played a central role in culinary craftsmanship, producing lassi (پئی ش ایل) and vermicelli within domestic confines (پئی چیب کورکی بنی غو غولی). In contrast, the male domain encompassed the arduous task of procuring vegetables from labor-intensive fields of toil. Paradoxically, this gendered division of labor intersects with the woman's overarching responsibility to cater to the holistic needs of the household, spanning husband, offspring, and mother-in-law. This somber reality persists even as personal aspirations remain unattended, requiring wives to dutifully prioritize the welfare of the extended family unit.

A striking illustration of this dedication emerges when circumstances dictate an absence of vegetable procurement options. In such instances, it is the wife who orchestrates resourceful solutions, ensuring sustenance from existing domestic provisions. Notably, the culinary landscape features exclusive delicacies such as tomato-based gravy, lassi-based gravy, and potato gravy—predominantly relished by women (wives)—thus accentuating the nuanced tapestry of gendered consumption patterns and the inherent challenges therein. This exploration illuminates the intricate interplay of tradition, gender roles, and resource management, inviting critical inquiry into the sustainability and equity of such divisions within the contemporary societal context.

During the summer months, an intriguing practice comes to the fore—women establish miniature gardens within their abodes, cultivating an assortment of crops including tori, mustard, spinach, pumpkins, samchal (سمچل) (a type of leafy greens employed in culinary preparations), and awrey (اورے). In addition, the tradition encompasses the cultivation of shutal (شوتل) greens, intended as sustenance for livestock, along with a diverse array of lentil cultivars, once staples of daily preparation. The realm of pumpkin exhibits multifaceted variations, some of which yield edible greens while others do not, as evidenced by *Khar Kadu* (خرکدو), *Khog Kadu* (خورکدو), and *Gharangi* (غریگی) varieties. The meticulous artistry involved in crafting vermicelli further underscores women's roles, as they knead a robust dough, anoint matkas and hands with desi ghee, and then ensconce the matka with the dough, emblematic of the laborious yet skillful culinary heritage. Yet, beneath this cultural tapestry lies an inherent gendered obligation, women are intricately bound to the provision of sustenance for the entire household. The societal construct dictates that a

woman's duty encompasses the culinary realm, even when confronted with dearth in the pantry. This reality invokes a poignant debate, prompting us to scrutinize the persistence of such entrenched gender roles within the contemporary framework and question the equity and agency available to women in matters of nourishment and autonomy.

The strategic utilization of ghee as a condiment atop curd, aimed at moderating ghee consumption, reflects an astute awareness of resource conservation strategies. Ghee's elevated value is exemplified by its association with monetary transactions, as it was bartered alongside milk and curd to secure financial means for familial sustenance. The multifaceted role of women surfaces prominently, encompassing holistic management encompassing family welfare, culinary preferences, and dietary provision. Responsibilities extend further to encompass procurement of provisions and tableware, tasks often undertaken by women. A gendered division emerges, with men tasked with procuring sustenance while women retain the prerogative to determine its allocation. The scenario often entails reliance on domestically cultivated produce like *chalwayi*, *warkharey*, tomato, and mint chutney during periods of scarcity, emphasizing a self-sustaining approach. In exigent circumstances, rice becomes the preferred fare for accommodating unexpected guests.

The narrative underscores the myriad considerations encountered by women, encompassing culinary expectations and household resource management, revealing the intricate tapestry of familial dynamics. Notably, water scarcity compounds the challenges faced by women in Maloch, obliging them to carry water from local wells, a practice further emblematic of the intricate confluence between gender roles and environmental exigencies. Thus, the multifaceted responsibilities borne by women not only navigate the intricacies of sustenance but also entail a pervasive engagement with broader socio-environmental contexts, inviting an insightful analysis of gender roles and resource dynamics. An interlocutor said that,

*I had to travel a considerable distance to a remote spring to gather water, given my responsibility for provisioning both sustenance and water for the household. On one occasion, my younger daughter had to forego attending school in order to manage the household in my absence while I undertook the water collection task, as no other person was available for this essential chore. On a prior instance, my*

*daughter had attended school while I adhered to my routine of fetching water from the spring. Tragically, upon my return, I discovered my four-month-old baby in a distressing state, lying face down and struggling to breathe. This dire situation necessitated an immediate trip to the hospital to save his life, which proved to be an arduous and challenging endeavor. Consequently, I was compelled to make the difficult decision of discontinuing my daughter's education, illustrating the profound impact of these responsibilities on the dynamics of our lives.*

The narrative provides a compelling context to discuss women's decision-making power, agency, and empowerment within the framework of their roles as caregivers and providers. The woman's active engagement in sourcing water for her household and ensuring the well-being of her family highlights her agency in meeting crucial needs. The decision to discontinue her daughter's education, though challenging, underscores her autonomy in making choices that prioritize immediate family welfare. This signifies a form of empowerment as she exercises control over her family's circumstances, even if it involves trade-offs. Moreover, her ability to respond effectively to a critical situation involving her baby's health showcases her capacity to take decisive actions in times of crisis. Despite the burdens and limitations imposed by societal roles, the narrative subtly portrays instances where the woman exercises decision-making authority and demonstrates her empowerment in navigating complex challenges. This underscores the multifaceted nature of empowerment, encompassing not only assertive actions but also adaptive decision-making in the face of adversity.

A striking gender dynamic emerges within this context, revealing a paradigm where a woman's authority, though inherently potent, is subject to a delicate balance. Even a slight diminution in her sway is met with disdain and reprimand from men, thus underscoring an ingrained power hierarchy. The comprehensive scope of a woman's responsibilities extends to encompass the entire household ecosystem: nurturing offspring, tending to the needs of her husband's parents, siblings, and sisters, and bearing the onus of sustenance provision for all. It is noteworthy that men often assert authority over child-rearing protocols, audaciously accusing women of insufficiently imparting manners to mischievous children. This perspective implies a vested patriarchal interest in dictating maternal conduct. Additionally, men allege maternal apathy towards children's well-being, particularly in cases of minor injuries, thereby diminishing the profound emotional and physical dedication women invest. In



response, the woman's retort alludes to her acute awareness of her emotional state, subtly advocating for recognition of her individual sentiments within this intricate familial dynamic. This discourse illuminates the subtle yet pervasive negotiation of power, agency, and accountability within the household structure, evoking pertinent debates surrounding gender roles, control mechanisms, and women's autonomy. A lady who was giving an interview said, "While observing all this, a woman then says..."

ن کوم خاوند خراببہ می شوی چوند  
بی او عجیب توی و ب هی ناستی بنی و ل ه  
وا دهن کوم د خاونه

*I avoid having a husband, as it would disrupt my life.*

*Come, let's enjoy this free and unburdened existence.*

*I neither desire the companionship of a man,*

*Nor the emotional troubles that come with it.*

*Thus, I choose not to marry.*

This narrative delves into the complex interplay between individual agency, cultural norms, and personal aspirations within the broader societal fabric. The speaker's conscious decision to abstain from marriage reflects a thoughtful recognition of potential disruptions and emotional challenges associated with conjugal unions, resonating with a collective awareness of the multifaceted nature of such relationships. This choice serves as a microcosm of a larger societal discourse where the pursuit of personal well-being and autonomy takes precedence over conventional expectations. The narrative sheds light on the intricate negotiation between individual desires and societal constructs, offering insights into the nuanced dynamics that shape matrimonial decisions and underscoring the significance of personal empowerment within a specific cultural context.

The prevailing societal attitude towards women's voices is underscored by a disheartening reality where even well-considered and wise decisions made by women are tainted with stigmatization and lack of respect. This pervasive gender bias is epitomized by the derogatory adage 'khazi ta gora aw khabari ta yi gora' (بن خیت گوره)

(او ضریت هیگوره), which diminishes the value of a woman's perspective. Such mockery reflects a deeply entrenched prejudice that not only perpetuates the silencing of women's voices but also belittles their intellectual contributions. The pervasive usage of this saying underscores a larger societal construct that systematically undermines women's agency and diminishes their potential for rational decision-making. This socio-cultural phenomenon demands critical examination and highlights the imperative for transformative change in dismantling gender-based biases, ensuring that women's voices are not only heard but also accorded the respect and consideration they inherently deserve. A respondent aptly elucidated Pashto proverbs that eloquently encapsulate a woman's emotional landscape within this context.

ښی و فکرکین بېمان یم

پبختن اهن یم ههش منکری خورم

*Within the realm of intellect and contemplation, I am akin to Luqman,*

*Yet, when it comes to fate, I am unfortunate, consistently partaking of bitter morsels.*

This poignant expression can be related to women's perception in a societal context where their intellectual abilities and insights may be overlooked or underestimated due to prevailing gender biases. Just as the speaker asserts their unmatched sanity akin to Luqman, women too possess intellectual capacities that may equal or surpass those of their male counterparts. Yet, the subsequent line about misfortune influencing fate reflects the societal barriers and challenges that women often face. Despite their intellectual potential, women's opportunities and outcomes can be hindered by systemic inequalities and discrimination. This serves as a reminder that recognizing and valuing women's intellectual contributions is essential, and addressing societal barriers is crucial to ensuring their full participation and empowerment.

که افلاطون غون دي بویاری یم

چېبختی یم خوار یم شوکوی ناخلی سلا مهنه

*Possessing intellect akin to Plato's brilliance,*

*Yet, if luck is not on your side, even a thousand years pass unnoticed.*

This verse reflects the intellectual capabilities of women within a societal context where gender biases and systemic inequalities often hinder the recognition and appreciation of their intellect. Just as the verse emphasizes that having intellect like Plato's is overlooked due to unfavorable circumstances, women's intellectual contributions and abilities may also be undervalued or unnoticed due to societal barriers. Despite possessing remarkable intellectual capacities, women may find their potential stifled by unequal opportunities and biases. This verse serves as a reminder of the importance of creating an inclusive and equitable environment that recognizes and empowers women's intellectual capabilities, allowing them to flourish and contribute meaningfully regardless of external factors.

Through the histories of cultural evolution, the established paradigm witnessed a distinct distribution of roles, with the male members historically shouldering the dual responsibilities of financial provisioning and the management of domestic expenditures. A transformative juncture was marked by the ascendancy of the mother-in-law, a key orchestrator whose pursuit of status and esteem in the familial matrix guided her commanding influence. Her domain transcended the boundaries of nourishment to encompass the intricate realm of fiscal affairs. However, an epochal shift has unfurled, unfurling a tapestry of metamorphosis, where women, most notably wives, have ascended to positions of ascendancy. Endowed with empowerment and endowed with the agency to navigate decisions, women now occupy the vanguard of household governance.

This narrative reverberates with an unwavering proclamation—a woman's resolve, once ignited, emerges as a compelling kinetic force propelling her towards the embodiment of aspirations. The essence of this empowerment transcends confines, unveiling an undeniable verity: a woman's determination, when harnessed, surmounts even the most mundane of tasks. Echoing the voice of the woman, the refrain resounds—her determination knows no boundaries, for she wields the jurisdiction to harness latent potential and sculpt her own destiny. This paradigmatic transformation attests to an unequivocal shift in gender dynamics, where the locus of power and agency is unambiguously claimed by women, who now chart their own trajectories towards self-realization and autonomous agency.

*A man's wife displayed a thrifty nature, but circumstances led to the necessity of selling their property. Someone suggested that the man consider marrying someone else, as the first wife's behavior might improve over time. However, similar outcomes had been witnessed in the past. Eventually, the man had to part with all his possessions. Upon the fourth marriage, the newlywed advised the other three that if they desired to maintain their previous level of enjoyment, they must heed her guidance. The other three concurred and pledged to follow suit. Subsequently, she approached her husband and presented a condition: if he provided her with four spinning wheels, she would assist in reclaiming their sold land. The wife procured four spinning wheels and, through the concerted efforts of these women who gathered cotton, spun it into thread, and packaged it into small bags called 'ponrai' (پونری), the sold land was repurchased within a year. The earnings from their proficient spinning played a pivotal role. Previously, the wife had diligently saved the proceeds in a 'matka.' The land eventually gained renown as 'ponari patey' (پونری پټی), a testament to the women's industrious endeavors.*

This narrative serves as a vivid testament to the unity and agency demonstrated by women, showcasing their resourcefulness and adept utilization of available resources. Through collective action and skillful management, these women harnessed their spinning prowess to not only reclaim sold land but also generate substantial profits. The shared determination and strategic coordination among the women underscore their collective agency, transforming adversity into opportunity. This account highlights the capacity of women to navigate economic challenges, illustrating their ability to pool skills, knowledge, and efforts for a common goal. The renaming of the land reflects a symbolic consolidation of their achievements, encapsulating the transformative potential when women exercise their agency and collaborate in the pursuit of economic empowerment. In an anthropological context, this narrative offers insights into how gender dynamics, communal cooperation, and resourceful utilization converge to reshape socio-economic landscapes, illuminating the dynamics of women's empowerment within a specific cultural framework. In relation to this, the narrator shared a well-known Pashto saying, which goes as follows:

چې ښځې یو ځای کېږي نو کور کېږي

چې ځای کېږي نو کور کېږي

*When a woman desires, it occurs;*

*When God wills, it transpires*

This Pashto saying resonates with the concept of women's agency, emphasizing their role as active participants in shaping their lives. It acknowledges that when a woman sets her mind on something, her determination and actions can lead to its realization. This recognition of a woman's capacity to influence outcomes aligns with the idea of agency, wherein women exercise their power and autonomy to make choices and pursue their goals. The saying also implies a parallel between a woman's intentions and divine will, suggesting a sense of empowerment and influence over both earthly and spiritual realms. Thus, the saying reflects the multifaceted nature of women's agency, encompassing personal aspirations, determination, and a recognition of their potential to effect change in their lives and the broader world.

An interlocutor underscored the nuanced observation that women exhibit a remarkable aptitude for strategic thinking and adaptability, allowing them to effectively navigate a wide spectrum of endeavors with adeptness and determination. This acknowledgment resonates with discussions on gender dynamics and the intricate interplay between cultural, social, and individual factors that shape the agency and roles of women within diverse societies.

*In our neighborhood, there resided a butcher with two wives. After slaughtering an animal, the butcher would bring the meat home and entrust his wives with the task of mincing it. As part of their routine, the women would discreetly set aside a portion of the minced meat and toss it into our house. Subsequently, they would vend minced onions and tomatoes, utilizing the earnings to acquire necessary provisions for their own use.*

This narrative serves as a compelling illustration of women's agency and strategic management within the realm of economic activities. The wives of the local butcher exhibited astute resourcefulness by ingeniously reserving a portion of minced meat, a practice that exemplifies their keen understanding of economic dynamics and the art of symbiotic relationships. Their adeptness in discreetly sharing this resource hints at a well-calculated strategy to establish and nurture community ties. The subsequent entrepreneurial endeavor of selling minced onions and tomatoes showcases their shrewd economic acumen, as they capitalized on available resources to generate

income. This deliberate economic maneuvering is a testament to their proactive role in contributing to household sustenance and, concurrently, enhancing their economic independence. Such innovative approaches underscore the multifaceted dimensions of women's agency, ranging from astute resource allocation to skillful economic management, and ultimately contribute to reshaping traditional gender dynamics within the framework of household and community well-being.

The paradigm shift in household dynamics is an outcome of protracted male absences, as men increasingly pursue employment opportunities in distant urban centers or abroad. This consequential void has propelled a significant transformation whereby women have assumed the mantle of financial stewardship and decision-making within their domestic spheres. Historically, it was the male prerogative to oversee women's sustenance, attire, and matrimonial alliances. However, this conventional role allocation has undergone a substantial reconfiguration. The act of a woman venturing to the marketplace, once met with disapproval, has evolved against the backdrop of modernization, facilitated by enhanced transportation, ubiquitous television penetration, and the pervasive influence of social media. As these technological advancements breach traditional confines, they inadvertently empower women, empowering them to take charge of domains previously governed by men. This trajectory reflects a contemporary societal transition wherein the reins of authority and influence have demonstrably shifted from male hands to female stewardship. The dictum "times have changed" finds a palpable resonance in this context, as the profound transformation underscores the impact of societal evolution on gender roles and the ascendancy of women within the broader socio-economic narrative.

پيشو د چان هونگي سوپين ه  
سري د چان هونگي ديش خينه

*A cat is afraid of a dog*

*A man is afraid of his lady*

These verses encapsulate a symbolic reflection on gendered power dynamics within the broader context of human relationships. The comparison drawn between a man's apprehension in the presence of his lady and a cat's fear of a dog serves as a metaphorical exploration of power and agency. This metaphor highlights the intricate

interplay of societal norms, gender roles, and emotional dynamics that shape human interactions. The verses allude to the multifaceted nature of women's influence, suggesting that women's power may transcend traditional physical measures and manifest through social, emotional, and psychological dimensions. This perspective underscores the significance of examining power dynamics beyond overt manifestations, recognizing the intricate ways in which women assert agency and shape interpersonal dynamics within diverse cultural and social contexts.

The historical landscape reveals a notable transition in the distribution of power dynamics, particularly as it pertains to gender roles and women's spheres of influence. In a bygone era marked by domestic seclusion, men assumed preeminent authority, relegating women primarily to domestic domains. However, this historical context also unveils a nuanced narrative wherein women exhibited resourcefulness by engaging in various economic activities, including the trade of eggs, milk, and embroidery, as well as husbandry practices such as poultry-keeping. These endeavors served a dual purpose, addressing both personal financial requirements and the provisioning for their offspring. In the contemporary milieu, a transformative paradigm emerges, underscored by the emancipation of women from the confines of domesticity. The transition is emblematic of a tectonic shift in power dynamics, where women have emerged as key stakeholders in the workforce, thereby wielding significant agency and self-determination.

**Figure 17 Homegrown elegance: Pumpkin leaves, strategically cultivated, elevate the dining table with a touch of green sophistication. A culinary journey from garden to plate**



The perceptible advancement in women's quality of life bears testimony to this metamorphosis. Previously prevalent disparities, exemplified by instances of domestic

violence and socio-economic deprivation, have markedly receded. Women, erstwhile engaged in arduous agricultural chores and menial tasks, now occupy an elevated status characterized by self-actualization, empowerment, and autonomy. This transformative trajectory reverberates throughout social fabric, as women assume active roles in contributing to their own subsistence and navigating spheres of influence within familial and communal structures. This evolution is emblematic of a profound anthropological narrative, elucidating the dialectical relationship between changing socio-cultural paradigms and the expansion of women's agency and capacities.

**Figure 18** With an analytical touch, the woman meticulously plucks an array of vegetables and greens from her cultivated expanse. This intentional harvest not only symbolizes her agrarian prowess but also illuminates a conscientious journey from field to table, where every ingredient echoes the rhythms of a purposeful, self-sustained lifestyle



## **7.2 Fiscal Management and Food Preservation: Gendered Expertise within Household Contexts**

In the context of traditional gender roles, men historically assume the role of economic providers, responsible for sustaining the family unit through labor, commerce, or agriculture, covering essentials such as sustenance and clothing. Women's adeptness in financial management and proficiency in food preservation are acknowledged. Yet, contemporary anthropological observations underscore diverse roles, with women pursuing professional careers and men taking on domestic and nurturing duties. The concept of exclusive male provision contrasts with evolving family dynamics. Ultimately, roles are optimally defined through communication, as societies challenge entrenched norms, permitting individuals to tailor roles to their unique contexts and aspirations.



## 7.2.1 Evolution of Food Storage: From Artistic Tradition to Modern Convenience

The practice of food storage, once common and intrinsic to various cultures, was meticulously crafted to cater to essential needs. In times past, individuals adeptly utilized items such as pulses, maize, rice, and wheat, strategically storing them in earthen pits known as "گندو" to ensure sustenance during leaner periods. It is important to underscore that these storage practices were not merely functional but imbued with artistic flair, evident in the carvings and adornments on clay pits, often executed by women. The architectural ingenuity involved in constructing long walls using a mixture of clay, water, manure, and dung speaks to the resourcefulness of these societies.

The meticulous process extended to the details, as a central scooped-out hole in the clay pit was plugged with a meticulously shaped clay cone ("مورئ") to ensure an airtight seal. This method was particularly effective for storing crops such as wheat, maize, rice, and mustard. Distinct approaches were taken for pulses, which found their place in wooden boxes or clay pots ("گتوی", "چابتی"). Moreover, the preservation of jaggery ("گوره" or "gurr") and rice in "تقروئ" containers reflects an intricate understanding of food storage that catered to various types of produce.

In this context, roles were clearly delineated as men ground wheat flour in mills, while women took on the crucial responsibility of preserving it for sustenance. Notably, the utilization of dung for creating cakes, stacked in a distinctive circular pile known as "گلوٹھ" showcases a profound connection between resourcefulness and practicality.

**Figure 19 A glimpse into historical food storage methods: Robust storage boxes and pots from the past, meticulously designed to preserve and protect essential food grains and items. Each container tells a story of strategic preservation, reflecting an era where durability and functionality were paramount in sustaining household**



However, the landscape has transformed over time. Contemporary practices have shifted from these meticulously designed storage methods to modern solutions such as copper barrels and bags for grain storage. While the transition signifies technological advancements and convenience, it is crucial to ponder whether this shift has resulted in a disconnect from the intricacies and resourcefulness that once characterized food preservation. The argument can be made that the move towards more modern storage solutions might have implications for the connection between individuals and their sustenance, potentially contributing to a loss of the deep-rooted knowledge and practices that once sustained communities.

**Figure 20** A snapshot of agricultural finesse: Dry grain spills onto a slanting sieve, showcasing a swift substance-removing process. This short, dynamic shot encapsulates the precision involved in elevating the crop's purity, reflecting the strategic orchestration of farming practices



**Figure 21** Modern grain storage takes on a touch of heritage with the copper barrel. A harmonious blend of tradition and contemporary functionality, this elegant solution embraces the antimicrobial benefits of copper for stylish and sustainable food storage



In reevaluating these practices, it becomes apparent that the historical methods of food storage were more than utilitarian—they were cultural, artistic, and adaptive. They reflected a harmonious blend of functionality and aesthetics, innovation and tradition. As society advances, it is worth considering the value of preserving elements

of these time-honored practices, not merely for their functional benefits, but for the preservation of cultural wisdom and the profound relationship between individuals, sustenance, and the environment.

### **7.2.2 Adapting to Change: Women's Wisdom in Food Preservation Practices**

The concept of progress, often intertwined with the avoidance of loss or change, is exemplified through the strategies deployed to counteract the deterioration of prepared meals, fruits, and vegetables over extended periods. The quintessential attributes of flavor, color, and aroma fade as bacterial growth takes hold, necessitating the preservation of food to mitigate spoilage. This practice, prevalent across cultures for centuries, has woven itself into the fabric of societies, and in the context of Maloch, has given rise to a repertoire of preservation techniques. Traditionally entrusted to women, this responsibility aligns with their role as providers for the family, forging a symbiotic relationship between their duties and food preservation.

Historically, individuals cultivating personal gardens were adept at preserving crops like tomatoes, onions, and okra. However, contemporary realities have seen the emergence of a paradigm where access to fresh produce is no longer constrained by seasonality. The advent of commercial distribution has transformed the landscape, allowing individuals to procure vegetables at their convenience. In earlier times, seasonal abundance necessitated strategic measures—surplus vegetables were sliced and sun-dried, their essence captured for consumption during winter months. One intriguing practice involved preserving garlic: crafting a salt-infused paste that retained not only the taste but also the aroma and color of the original, safeguarding it for year-long use.

As societies progressed, the evolution of preservation practices became entwined with technological advancement. The ubiquity of refrigerators in contemporary households has revolutionized the preservation landscape, offering a convenient and efficient means to elongate the shelf life of edibles. This transition, while undoubtedly a sign of modernization and convenience, beckons reflection on the broader implications.

The analysis of this evolution prompts contemplation on the convergence of tradition, technology, and efficiency. The transition from labor-intensive techniques to

modern conveniences underscores not only the march of progress but also the reevaluation of cultural practices in response to changing contexts. It prompts consideration of how preservation practices, which once embodied a blend of necessity and artistry, adapt to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving world. It also invites scrutiny of whether such transitions come at the expense of a deeper connection to food, its origins, and the historical wisdom encapsulated within traditional preservation methods.

In essence, the transformation from labor-intensive preservation to contemporary refrigeration is a microcosm of the broader sociocultural shifts—balancing convenience and efficiency against the preservation of cultural heritage and connection to nature. The analytical examination reveals the multifaceted nature of progress and prompts contemplation on how societal evolution intertwines with the preservation of identity and traditional knowledge. Here is a famous Pashto folk saying shared by a respondent,

ابى مياغونى شوي شوي تود جى تېر غواري

*My mother seems out of her senses, longing for fresh tomatoes in the winter season*

The statement encapsulates the surprise stemming from her desire for out-of-season produce, resonating with the historical practice of scarcity storing. It reflects the historical norm of preserving surplus during abundance to counter scarcity. The disbelief arises as the request goes against the scarcity-driven preservation logic, highlighting the seasonal availability of produce and its historical preservation context. This succinctly illustrates how the ebb and flow of food availability, coupled with past preservation practices, continues to shape our perceptions of what is customary and rational in our relationship with food.

In an era, devoid of electricity, the absence of such a modern convenience was mitigated by the temperate climate that softened the edges of what might have otherwise been a harsh reality. During this period, a symbiotic relationship with nature and resourcefulness prevailed, as evidenced by the traditional practices that safeguarded essential food items. Garlic, lentils, and pea porridge were strategically stored atop wooden boxes ("ډټ"), a practice both practical and attuned to the environment. To fend off the menace of pea weevils ("گنډر"), ingenious methods involving mustard oil or dew

water were adopted to preserve lentils and peas, a testament to the intricate dance between necessity and adaptation. The preservation ethos extended to the realm of dairy, as women harnessed their knowledge of microclimates to safeguard milk. Craftily embedding milk pots within holes and enveloping them with cooling water was a demonstration of both practical acumen and a keen ecological awareness, affirming their pivotal role in harmonizing human needs with natural conditions. The practice of grain preservation was no less intricate, with clay pits serving as havens against stored grain pests ("لپکے"), while strategic sun exposure provided an added layer of protection.

Significantly, even the preservation of meat was entrusted to the domain of women, often during festive occasions like Eid. With deft hands, they transformed meat into delicate slices, adroitly seasoning and safely storing them away from feline reach. This duality of culinary mastery and pragmatic conservation is emblematic of the intricate interplay between cultural tradition and resource management, all orchestrated by the astuteness of women.

The analytical perspective on these practices underscores the profound symbiosis between gender roles, preservation techniques, and the environment. By exploring these practices, we unveil a narrative where women were not only the stewards of home but also the custodians of knowledge that harmonized with the rhythms of the natural world. In an age where technology and convenience dominate, these historical practices offer a compelling argument for revisiting the wisdom of our forebearers, who adeptly balanced resourcefulness, preservation, and sustainability within the confines of their responsibilities. As we forge forward, the lessons gleaned from women's traditional roles beckon us to reevaluate our relationship with resources, ecology, and the timeless wisdom that grounds us in a more holistic approach to living.

In the realm of the most vulnerable families, a striking practice emerges, where meals are hurriedly boiled while still retaining an illusion of edibility. However, beneath this deceptive veneer lies a hazardous reality. The consumption of such prematurely prepared food brings forth a slew of ailments, some gravely severe—nausea, headaches, vomiting, and gastrointestinal distress—illustrating the perils of culinary haste. Amidst these challenges, a window into the past unveils a contrasting landscape of resourcefulness, echoing against the backdrop of modern food uncertainties.

The annals of history reveal ingenious methods—sun-drying cumin, coriander, black pepper, and fennel—as safeguards against spoilage, underlining an innate comprehension of preservation. Yet, as we traverse into the contemporary, the reliability of store-bought products stands enshrouded in doubt, casting a shadow on the trustworthiness of our nourishment. The past becomes a tableau etched with tenacity and adaptability, as individuals grappled with multifaceted adversities while unwaveringly pressing on.

At the heart of these practices lies an oft-overlooked force—women, the orchestrators of preservation, the sentinels of sustenance. In the face of daunting challenges, they orchestrated the intricate ballet of maintaining food's integrity and shielding grains from the specter of vermin. Their domain encompassed not just the domestic, but also the strategic, as they stood as custodians against scarcity, their contributions woven into the very tapestry of survival.

Yet, amidst the backdrop of resilience and responsibility lies a stark dichotomy—a pervasive gender bias that sowed blame and mockery. Even in the midst of unrelenting toil, the faintest hint of imperfection became the fodder for critique from men. This disconcerting reality underscores a deep-seated societal ill, a reflection of an imbalance that has not been fully uprooted even by the march of time.

As we dissect this narrative, a poignant paradox emerges—women, the architects of preservation, simultaneously bear the brunt of denigration. The analytical lens refracts a multidimensional spectrum, where historical practices epitomize resourcefulness, adaptability, and gender dynamics. The argument gains fervor as we inquire whether the evolution of society has truly eradicated historical gender prejudices or merely draped them in contemporary attire.

The resilience of individuals from the past beckons us with an admonition—progress encompasses not only technological advancement but societal enlightenment. This narrative of preservation weaves within its folds the undercurrents of gender bias, urging us to reevaluate our perceptions and acknowledge the capabilities and managerial skills inherent in women. The historical practices stand as a testament, showcasing not only their ability to manage resources and navigate challenges but also underscoring the imperative of recognizing every individual's potential, regardless of gender. A woman narrates that,

*My mother used to say that successful women are recognized for their approach to work, not the sheer quantity of tasks they undertake, but rather for the manner in which they execute them.*

اقا بابل مین خ گوره دلب دی ره خهر سریندی  
لاسیپین ه رکگلیق لافئ غاری سوچی سریندی  
نغه بودی گوری خپل هیخت ه نا غارس اتی

*An unskilled hand, with yeast overthrown,*

*In dough, a frenzy of rising sown.*

*Neglected utensils, tarnished and worn,*

*Proudly untouched, in filth they're borne.*

*She feasts with fervor, gluttony's delight,*

*Her own well-being lost in the night.*

*A tale of excess, neglect, and pride,*

*In verses woven, this truth abides*

This poetic composition delves into a socio-cultural context, offering insights into women's roles and behavioral intricacies. Through the allegory of yeast in dough-making, it conveys nuances of competency, reflecting societal expectations tied to domestic aptitude. Neglected utensils symbolize a disregard for cleanliness and maintenance, potentially mirroring broader norms that women might navigate. The motif of overeating serves as a metaphor for excessiveness and restraint, offering insights into cultural perspectives on indulgence and self-discipline, and possibly touching on the societal judgments that women might face. Together, these elements provide a sociocultural lens to examine women's roles, domestic responsibilities, hygienic values, and behavioral patterns intrinsic to the given cultural backdrop

## **8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONTEMPORARY VULNERABILITIES**

### **8.1 Adaptation, Ecology, and Culture: Investigating Agricultural Dynamics and Unforeseen Outcomes in Maloch Village**

Agriculture serves as the predominant economic foundation for the vast populace of Maloch, with individual land holdings dedicated to cultivation. Traditional agricultural practices were intrinsically linked to rainwater for irrigation until recent times, exposing agrarian communities to the vulnerability posed by erratic precipitation patterns. The historical paucity of rainfall during harvest seasons engendered susceptibility within crops, creating a dynamic where climatic variability significantly impacted agricultural outcomes. Contemporary climatic shifts, emblematic of broader climate change trends, have engendered a transformation in precipitation patterns, subsequently influencing the growth patterns of crops such as the Paneri (بزغلی) plants, elucidating the nuanced intersection of climate and agrarian dynamics. However, the evolution of agricultural practices is not immune to ongoing challenges. Persisting challenges in the form of water scarcity and escalating disease pressures continue to impose limitations on agricultural viability, even in cases where crops manifest resilience.

In the contemporary context, the commercial market has introduced conveniences, yet the prevalent dependence on prepared flour as a substitute for traditional wheat grains epitomizes the contemporary paradigm shift in dietary practices. This transformation underscores the metamorphosis in sustenance strategies within the context of an evolving socio-ecological milieu. In light of these multifaceted transformations, the endurance of agriculture as a pivotal economic pursuit is marked by intricate challenges, necessitating a profound reconsideration of adaptive strategies within the framework of a changing world. This reveals the intricate interplay between climatic factors, agricultural traditions, dietary shifts, and economic viability, thereby contextualizing the adaptive pathways necessitated by these changes.



In the historical context of rustic dwellings, the deluge of intense rainfall bore witness to a unique phenomenon—the roof's capacity to funnel water into internal spaces, emblematic of the climatic dynamics of the time. The severity of rainfall was such that these roofs often succumbed to the weight of water, triggering structural collapse and, in some instances, resulting in fatalities. The convergence of ecological and architectural factors shaped a reality where heavy rainfall posed both tangible threats and architectural vulnerabilities. Yet, within this climatic challenge emerged intriguing socio-cultural responses. Indigenous knowledge systems yielded practices aimed at mitigating the impact of heavy rainfall.

Folk beliefs and practices intertwined with the climatic rhythms of rainfall, revealing a dynamic wherein human agency sought to influence atmospheric patterns. Respondents' shared narratives provide a window into the past, illuminating the belief that human action held the power to influence the intensity and duration of rainfall—an intriguing confluence of cultural beliefs and environmental interaction. This interplay between climatic events, architectural design, and cultural responses underscores the anthropological significance of understanding how societies navigate climatic extremes. The coalescence of meteorological forces, architectural design, and cultural practices unveils a narrative where nature's force met human ingenuity, resulting in a landscape of vulnerability and resilience. The convergence of climatic factors and socio-cultural practices invites a nuanced exploration of how historical contexts shape perceptions of the environment and drive adaptations, resonating with broader discussions on human-environment interaction within the anthropological discourse.

*In accordance with prevailing belief, the call to prayer, known as the azan, was chanted at the corners of the mosque with the intention of ceasing rainfall. This practice was rooted in the conviction that the recitation of the azan held the power to bring about a cessation in the rain. The responsibility of performing this ritual fell upon the maulvi, the religious scholar or cleric associated with the mosque. By invoking the azan, it was believed that a metaphysical influence could be exerted upon the atmospheric conditions, leading to the desired outcome of halting the rain.*

Every culture encompasses a tapestry of traditions, rituals, and beliefs that emerge from its historical and cultural background. The village of Maloch, within its specific cultural context, is no exception, as it harbors distinctive practices that reflect its unique heritage. The practice of

reciting the azan at the mosque's corners to halt rain is a poignant example of such specific cultural tradition. This ritual illustrates how the fusion of religious beliefs, cultural practices, and environmental interactions takes shape within a particular community. The choice of the maulvi, the religious figurehead, to perform this role further underscores the central role that spiritual leaders play in orchestrating such rituals. This ritual reflects the broader anthropological exploration of how cultural norms and religious observances intertwine with the rhythms of the environment, ultimately contributing to the intricate mosaic that shapes the identity and worldview of the Maloch village.

*The second method involved the use of lice. People would place lice in ashes, then encase them alive within a cloth before burying them in the ash. Subsequently, the wrapped package would be positioned in the shade (known as "بلی" in the local context). The underlying belief behind this practice was that when lice were subjected to rain while in this state, they would beseech Allah to halt the rainfall. This ritualistic procedure is referred to as "spago pakey. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that this method is no longer employed in contemporary times.*

This practice unveils a distinctive facet of cultural cognition and its interplay with environmental influences within the localized social milieu. The deployment of lice as symbolic mediators to influence rainfall underscores a nuanced perspective on the natural world, wherein even inconspicuous entities are assigned roles within a larger cosmic order. The ritual sequence involving encasing live lice in ashes, their envelopment within cloth, and subsequent interment in a shaded space resonates as a performative representation of agency attributed to these creatures. This action reflects a fusion of local wisdom, faith-based convictions, and ecological consciousness, operating as a conduit through which individuals sought to navigate environmental uncertainties. Such practices shed light on the interface between human cognition and the environment, offering insights into the intricate way's societies employ ritualistic actions to engage with and potentially impact natural processes, thereby underscoring the contextual embeddedness of these practices and their role in shaping the complex tapestry of human-environment relationships.

*Another method involved taking advantage of the sun's appearance after heavy rain. Puddles (ڈنڈوقے) that accumulated in households due to rainwater would be utilized by filling them with coals and pulses. The youngest child of the household would often be called upon to*

*facilitate this practice. This process, known as "sunburn" or "sunpointing" (nwar daghal), was a traditional approach. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that this method is no longer employed in contemporary times.*

This practice of utilizing sun-exposed puddles for coals and pulses after heavy rain in households reflects a historical cultural adaptation rooted in the local environment. The engagement of the youngest child in this process underscores the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and responsibilities within the family unit. The practice, referred to as "sunburn" or "sunpointing" (nwar daghal), not only served practical purposes but also held symbolic significance as a means of harmonizing human actions with natural elements. However, its discontinuation in contemporary times signifies the evolving dynamics of cultural practices, possibly influenced by shifts in technology, lifestyle, or changing perceptions of efficacy. This change highlights the mutable nature of traditions and the fluidity of their relevance over time, showcasing the nuanced interaction between culture, environment, and societal evolution.

In an earlier time, the prevailing ethos exuded a sense of abundance and communal harmony. Celebratory occasions were underscored by the ceremonial sacrifice of animals, their succulent offerings cooked in clay pots (چائتی) accompanied by a collaborative effort of women engaging in bread preparation. These festive revelries were intricately woven into the fabric of seasons, aligning with the ripe yields and copious food stocks characteristic of the summer (جولائی) harvests. Such times of abundance beckoned communal jubilation, where shared joys transcended individual boundaries. The custom of sourcing beds and bedding from the neighborhood to accommodate visiting guests is a testament to a collective spirit that was deeply rooted in reciprocal support. This practice embodies an interconnectedness that extended beyond immediate kin, reflecting a seamless collaboration that defined community relationships.

The seasonal aspect was equally pronounced, as the arid summer (جولائی) months spared little room for rain. The prevalent mud-based dwellings of that era, while emblematic of resource adaptation, also posed challenges when it came to sheltering visitors amidst adverse weather conditions. This archaeological glimpse into the past illuminates a cultural landscape where rituals, resource sharing, and environmental circumstances converged to shape social dynamics. It is a reminder that beyond the practicality of material provisions, the sustenance of community bonds and interdependence was paramount. The unraveling of these practices against the backdrop of

cultural heritage and environmental conditions underscores the profound synthesis between tradition and adaptation, showcasing the resilience and social consciousness that shaped the rhythm of life in those times.

The testimonial of one respondent resonates with the transformative impact of changing rainfall patterns on essential aspects of life. The historical context of bountiful rains resulting in elevated water levels stands juxtaposed to the present reality of water scarcity, rendering even the basic necessity of drinking water a formidable challenge. This subtle yet profound shift in climatic conditions has rippled through various dimensions of existence, notably in the domain of agriculture. The respondent's account illuminates the intricate relationship between water availability and agricultural practices. The absence of sufficient water has disrupted the traditional cultivation of vegetables at home, revealing the inherent interplay between natural resources and subsistence activities.

The act of cultivating vegetables, which once harmonized with both necessity and leisure, has now become an intricate negotiation between dwindling water resources and the fundamental human impulse to cultivate and create. The respondent's practice of consuming homegrown vegetables when unexpected guests arrive at the door underscores the strategic utilization of resources in a context of scarcity. This practice underscores the intersection of social norms, resource management, and the delicate balance of hospitality, where the home garden becomes a reservoir of sustenance and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the respondent's reflection on cost-saving through home vegetable cultivation underscores the economic dimensions of this practice. In a landscape marred by inflation, the act of growing one's vegetables serves as a countermeasure, embodying self-sufficiency and frugality against the backdrop of economic challenges. In a broader anthropological context, this narrative unveils the intricate layers of human adaptation and resilience in the face of environmental change. It highlights the interconnectedness of various facets of life—environment, sustenance, economy, and social bonds—demonstrating the dynamic and reciprocal nature of the human-environment relationship. As climatic shifts continue to shape human experiences, this account serves as a poignant reminder of the evolving interplay between tradition, necessity, and resourcefulness within the context of an ever-changing world.

The intricate interplay between agricultural endeavors and their contextual milieu unfolds a narrative that delves into the synergy of labor, nature, and societal dynamics. The challenging topography, necessitating extended efforts to cultivate the land using manual ploughs, epitomizes the tenacity required for subsistence farming. Rainfall, the lifeblood of crops, paradoxically held the potential to disrupt "*ashar*," a communal practice of reciprocal assistance crucial for arduous tasks like harvesting and threshing. This symbiotic dance between rain's life-giving role and its potential to perturb livelihoods underscores the fragility of agricultural rhythms within the realm of communal interdependence.

The meticulous process of drying grains and orchestrating "*ashar*" further accentuates the confluence of environmental and social variables. Timely execution was paramount, as delays could unravel the carefully choreographed agricultural cycle, spotlighting the interconnectedness between weather, tradition, and coordinated labor. The advent of modernity, accompanied by an array of agricultural technologies, has metamorphosed this paradigm. Laborious manual efforts have been supplanted by mechanization, altering the dynamics from collective cooperation to individual proficiency. This transformation signifies not just a shift in technique, but a seismic reconfiguration of societal roles and responsibilities.

Insulating livestock from winter's chill through dung insulation reveals a profound grasp of the ecosystem and its materials. This practice serves as an epitome of the exploration into the fusion of local knowledge, materials, and needs, shaping practices that adeptly adapt to environmental challenges. Contextually, this narrative unveils a complex tapestry where human agency contends with nature's caprices. The discourse revolves around the dialectics of tradition and technology, communal solidarity and individual prowess. It elucidates the evolving socio-ecological dynamics and serves as a lens through which one can scrutinize how communities navigate environmental exigencies, technological evolution, and the shifting landscape of collaboration. Ultimately, it highlights how agricultural practices reflect not just subsistence strategies, but profound sociocultural shifts harmonizing with the rhythms of the natural world. An interlocutor shared incident,

*A notable incident occurred within the neighborhood involving a stable. The incident involved sealing the stable's hole and igniting a lamp. Unfortunately, the dung within the stable*

*caught fire, leading to the rapid engulfment of the entire structure in flames. The family impacted by this incident possessed three buffaloes, a cow, and a bull.*

The recounted incident serves as a vivid testament to the intricate interplay between cultural practices, environmental conditions, and unintended outcomes. Within the context of the community, where traditional methods often harmonize with the rhythms of daily life, this event reveals the potential pitfalls of such practices when not fully understood or managed. The act of sealing a stable hole and igniting a lamp, seemingly routine actions, took an unforeseen turn as the ignited dung led to a devastating blaze that engulfed the entire stable. This incident encapsulates the complex interrelation of local knowledge intertwined with environmental factors, showcasing how even well-established customs can intersect with ecological vulnerabilities. It prompts us to contemplate the broader implications of such events, delving into the complexities of human-environment interaction and the importance of cultural awareness in preventing unintended consequences.

## **8.2 Adaptive Practices in the Face of Climatic Variability: A Local Perspective**

The repercussions of climate change have manifested as formidable challenges in the examined locality, notably affecting water and electricity accessibility. The declining trend in rainfall has instigated a pronounced decrease in water levels. This shift has had a cascading impact on local water resources, leading to the depletion of wells and exacerbating the water scarcity issue. Additionally, the persistence of load shedding, or scheduled power outages, has further impeded access to water through tube wells. The recurrent occurrence of drinking water shortages underscores the stark reality of compromised water security within the community. The ramifications of elevated temperatures, a hallmark of climate change, have extended to the domain of sustenance.

The intensified heat has engendered a significant alteration in the temporal dynamics of food preservation. Previously, the practice of safely storing cooked food for two to three days has been disrupted. The sweltering daytime temperatures now facilitate the spoilage of precooked meals by nightfall, accentuating the constraints posed by the altered climate. This alteration in food spoilage patterns underscores the changing relationship between environment, sustenance, and

resource management. The contextual implications of these changes resonate particularly within the realm of gendered roles and responsibilities.

Women, traditionally tasked with culinary duties, now grapple with a shifting paradigm. The acceleration of food spoilage necessitates a rapid adaptation in meal preparation strategies, as meals cooked during the day no longer retain their quality overnight. This challenge highlights the intricate web of cultural practices, climatic shifts, and economic factors that underpin food provisioning within the community. The compounding influence of high inflation further magnifies the complexity of this predicament, where economic constraints intersect with environmental pressures.

Delving into historical adaptations provides a lens through which to comprehend the dynamic nature of climate and culture. The practice of utilizing hand fans to alleviate heat stress, for instance, echoes a long-standing tradition of coping mechanisms in response to extreme temperatures. Women's historical practice of resting on moist mats during daytime hours, often without shirts and draped in wet *chadars*, speaks to an intricate knowledge of local environmental conditions and their strategic utilization for comfort. This historical insight highlights the continuity of human agency in adapting to environmental challenges, underscoring the resilience embedded within cultural practices. In conclusion, the repercussions of climate change have spurred a series of complex challenges within the examined community.

These challenges intersect with various facets of daily life, from water access and electricity to sustenance and gender roles. The altered dynamics of food preservation and preparation, aggravated by economic factors, spotlight the evolving relationship between environmental changes and cultural practices. Through the lens of historical adaptations, we gain insights into the nuanced ways in which communities navigate climatic shifts, crafting pragmatic responses that reflect an interplay of tradition, necessity, and adaptation. This interplay showcases the intricate mosaic of human-environment interaction, ultimately highlighting the intricate tapestry that connects climate, culture, and community. According to one of the respondents,

*The pervasive inflation has surged to distressing heights, leaving the underprivileged in a state of despondency regarding their prospects for survival. While we may presently avail*

*ourselves of the abundant blessings bestowed by Allah, a profound sense of mental tranquility remains elusive.*

The escalating inflationary pressures have surged to a point of acute distress, resulting in a palpable sense of hopelessness among the marginalized segments of society. This economic upheaval has precipitated a paradigm where the prospects of sustenance and basic survival are increasingly tenuous. While the present moment might offer the utilization of Allah's blessings in material terms, a deeper inquiry into the human experience reveals a stark dissonance. The prevailing economic turmoil has cast a shadow over the psychological well-being of individuals, underscoring a poignant reality wherein mental equilibrium remains an elusive aspiration. This confluence of economic realities and psychological states within the examined context unveils an intricate nexus where socio-economic factors intersect with existential perceptions. The lived experiences of individuals stand as a testament to the multifaceted dimensions of human adaptation in response to the interplay between economic adversity and psychological resilience.

پخوا ہب کلی کلہ غم وو  
وسمی سہری ش وکون دیپ کی کوومہ

*Amidst the shadows, grief resides in every fold,  
In the heart's expanse, pandemic tales are told*

The provided poetic verse employs metaphoric language to vividly convey the prevalence of grief within the folds of life's challenges. This imagery reflects a broader artistic function as a mirror of human experiences. The subsequent line expands on this by intertwining personal and communal narratives. The concept of "fold by fold" symbolizes layers of adversity, illustrating how communities come together to face challenges collectively. Analytically, the verse reveals the interplay of individual and communal resilience, showcasing how artistic expressions encapsulate shared struggles. By combining metaphor and imagery, the verse offers a deeper understanding of the community's socio-emotional landscape. This microcosm of their journey parallels the broader socio-economic reality, where mounting inflation heightens distress among marginalized segments. As individuals navigate economic turmoil, the theme of shared struggle and unity resonates in the collective response to challenges, demonstrating the profound relationship between artistic expression, cultural identity, and societal adaptation.



The intricate dynamics of climate change have engendered palpable transformations in the observed meteorological patterns, notably exacerbated in the aftermath of flooding incidents. The local discourse attributes the amplified oscillations in temperature – both in terms of heat and cold – to a phenomenon characterized as a "rift in the sky." This conception posits that the climatic fluctuations are intrinsically intertwined with a perceived breach in the celestial fabric. An illuminating narrative shared by a respondent elucidates the conceptual bridge between climatic perturbations and this "sky rift," crystallizing the community's outlook. Intriguingly, the attribution of flooding scenarios to a ruptured sky introduces an indigenous cosmological dimension that demands further exploration within the discourse of ecological and cultural dynamics.

Concurrently, the climatic shifts have not only impacted meteorological conditions but have also given rise to a cascade of health-related challenges. The winter season heralds a surge in afflictions, encompassing fevers and influenza, which juxtaposes the prevalent vulnerability to cholera outbreaks during warmer intervals, characterized by fever and cough symptoms. Crucially, these epidemics coincide with the critical stage of wheat harvest, where the sheaves are exposed. The intersection of climatic vagaries and health susceptibilities forms a crucial arena of inquiry, accentuating the ramifications of climate change beyond its immediate meteorological domain. The synchronization of these health crises with agrarian activities underscores the intricate interplay between environmental shifts, livelihood patterns, and community resilience.

Furthermore, the escalating temperature profiles have precipitated a significant challenge in maintaining the quality and longevity of food provisions. The notable deterioration of food supplies resonates as a tangible consequence of the mounting heat, consequently manifesting in elevated costs across commodities. This economic implication underscores the intricate interconnectedness of climatic variations with socio-economic systems, thereby catalyzing a domino effect that resonates across multiple spheres of human existence.

In sum, this triangulated nexus of climatic perturbations, health vulnerabilities, and economic repercussions forms a compelling locus for scholarly inquiry. The local conceptions of celestial disruptions and their correlation with environmental shifts offer an intriguing avenue for the exploration of indigenous ecological knowledge within the broader discourse of climate change studies. Moreover, the complex intertwining of health crises and agrarian activities provides a canvas for understanding how climatic dynamics directly mediate human well-being and

subsistence strategies. Finally, the cascading economic implications underscore the profound interconnectedness of climatic patterns with socio-economic viability. Thus, this multifaceted interplay calls for a comprehensive academic investigation that elucidates the nuances of climate change's impact on diverse dimensions of human existence.

Amidst the pervasive grip of inflation, the task of orchestrating efficient and cohesive initiatives assumes an arduous character, particularly for individuals who are acutely sensitive to the financial strains imposed by the escalating cost of living. The prevailing economic turbulence, exacerbated by inflationary pressures, casts a shadow over the realm of organization and planning. A significant challenge emerges from the imperative to replace goods susceptible to deterioration under the harsh embrace of scorching temperatures. This dual-edged predicament not only perpetuates a cycle of financial strain but also engenders a palpable atmosphere of uncertainty and vulnerability. The necessity to repeatedly procure items prone to degradation underscores the cyclical constraints entailed by the convergence of economic and environmental factors. As an interlocutor aptly voiced, the incessant need for replacement and the concomitant financial burden underscore the intricate nexus between inflation, climatic conditions, and the pragmatic feasibility of mobilization efforts. In this discourse, the symphony of economic constraints and climatic exigencies resounds, amplifying the challenges of organizing within an intricate web of interwoven dynamics.

Within the context of the examined community, a customary practice comes to the fore, characterized by the strategic application of layered clay mud (گولے) onto both the floors and walls of residences, specifically in anticipation of the imminent summer season. This practice denotes a deliberate effort to enhance aesthetic tidiness and hygiene within domestic spaces, thereby emphasizing the importance accorded to the upkeep of one's living environment. The augmentation through additional layers of mud is complemented by the deployment of handcrafted mats, which serve both functional and ornamental purposes. These mats, while providing a comfortable surface for repose, also serve as cultural artifacts, enhancing the visual and sensory experience of the dwelling. This tradition stands as a testament to the community's astute understanding of the ecological rhythms, ingeniously adapting to the exigencies of the scorching summer climate.

Entwined with this architectural adaptation is an entomological narrative that speaks to the historical presence of pests. While the absence of mosquitoes is notable, the persistence of other pests underscores the intricate ecological fabric of the community's surroundings. A nuanced response to this ecological challenge is manifest in the deliberate choice of individuals, particularly men, to congregate near water bodies. This choice is predicated on the belief that the sound of water acts as a deterrent to insect intrusion. This observation not only speaks to the community's keen ecological awareness but also reveals how local knowledge is integrated into daily practices, resulting in a harmonious coexistence with the environment.

Moreover, gender emerges as a salient factor in the discourse. Distinct vulnerabilities to pest-related issues become evident across genders, a distinction rooted in deeply ingrained socio-cultural norms. This divergence is mirrored in spatial dynamics, where access to resources and spaces is differentially granted to men and women due to societal expectations and gender roles. This observation unveils a complex interplay between gender dynamics, spatial hierarchies, and cultural norms, highlighting the intricate intersectionality that shapes the experiences of different genders within the community.

In essence, this multi-dimensional analysis underscores the intricate interplay between architecture, ecology, gender, and culture. It paints a vivid picture of a community that, in response to environmental challenges, crafts adaptive solutions that are both functional and culturally significant. Moreover, it elucidates the dynamics of coexistence with nature, where practices are informed by ecological observations and an understanding of local ecosystems. At the same time, it prompts us to critically engage with the gendered dimensions that manifest in spatial access and experiences, inviting a broader conversation on equity and inclusivity within the context of cultural practices. Thus, this comprehensive exploration casts light on the nexus of architecture, environment, culture, and gender, reflecting the multifaceted layers that constitute the complex tapestry of the researched locale.

### **8.3 Climate Impacts and Cultural Narratives: A Holistic View of Societal Evolution**

The observed shifts within the community are emblematic of a multifaceted transformation shaped by evolving demographics and the dynamic interplay between environmental change and socio-economic realities. A notable surge in population has ushered in a series of changes, further

compounded by the intricate nuances of a shifting environment. Previously, a more stable economic landscape was juxtaposed against a backdrop of limited inflation, allowing for a relatively higher purchasing power among residents. However, this equilibrium has been disrupted by the current scenario of heightened inflation, coupled with a decline in income levels. The once predominant agricultural practices of cultivating wheat and maize have given way to a singular focus on peaches, signifying a strategic adaptation to the changing ecological and market dynamics.

The narrative of rising inflation takes center stage, particularly in the context of the past eight years, during which its impact has intensified. While this escalation poses challenges, it is noteworthy that the resulting economic ripple effect has touched various strata of society. This observation underscores the intricate connections between economic trajectories and their influence on the community's well-being. However, the broader societal framework is fraught with complexities, as government actions and priorities seem to deviate from the interests of the populace.

This sentiment reflects a prevailing dissonance, where governmental decisions might not necessarily align with the welfare of the nation and its citizens. The notion of personal interests taking precedence underscores a broader discourse on governance and accountability. The observed shift in economic and agricultural patterns, accompanied by the undercurrent of government actions, underscores a symphony of change that reverberates through various dimensions of community life. This multi-layered narrative of transformation invites a deeper exploration into the nexus of population growth, environmental shifts, economic realities, and governance structures, resonating with broader discussions on the intersection of societal evolution and governance dynamics. Here are a few expressions that respondents have shared,

تا چپہ شہکے دل دوی سرہ س ازباز کو  
دل تکیں رخیاز کو

*In Shimla's embrace, a pact was made so bold,*

*Yet onion prices soared, a story told*

The provided poetic verse encapsulates a layered commentary on the relationship between governmental decisions and economic consequences. The reference to a pact made in Shimla with

Indira, presumably representing a significant political agreement, serves as a metaphorical representation of decisions made by those in power. The subsequent mention of onion prices witnessing a surge resonates as an allegorical reflection of inflationary pressures. This juxtaposition of political maneuvering and economic impact alludes to the multifaceted nature of governance and policy-making.

The verse underscores the notion that decisions taken at the governmental level, even those aimed at diplomatic accomplishments or public welfare, can have unintended repercussions on the economic front. The rise in onion prices, a symbol of basic commodities, mirrors the broader implications of inflation that directly affect the common populace. This dynamic illuminates how policy choices can have far-reaching effects on the day-to-day lives of citizens.

Furthermore, the verse speaks to the often intricate and indirect relationships between political decisions and economic realities. It suggests that while political agreements may be celebrated for their immediate outcomes, they should also be critically examined for potential repercussions that might not be immediately apparent. This resonates with the broader discourse on the need for comprehensive and forward-thinking policymaking that takes into account not only short-term gains but also long-term consequences. In conclusion, the verse functions as a succinct yet thought-provoking commentary on the interconnectedness of political decisions and economic dynamics. It underscores the importance of a holistic and analytical approach to governance, urging policymakers to consider the potential ripple effects of their actions on the economic well-being of the populace.

ټو کټ مټارنگ ن ور ئیپ پا وشوه

د شرم ل وگوبټپه نا درئ ولگی دونه

*A loaf of bread that used to cost half now comes at a full price,*

*The value of a mere bite has dwindled to a quarter's size.*

*A sip of yogurt, once affordable, a currency called Nadarai ashore (It was Afghan currency of the time) it bore,*

*Now it demands a hefty sum, as inflation's waves wash*

The verses provided offer a poignant portrayal of the transformative impact of inflation on the economic landscape and its reverberations throughout the fabric of daily existence. The

metaphorical depiction of bread and bite prices being reduced to a half and a quarter, respectively, serves as a powerful allegory for the escalating inflationary pressures. This imagery encapsulates the tangible erosion of purchasing power and the increasing strain on affordability. The subsequent reference to the cost of a sip of yogurt equating to a Nadarai, a historical currency unit, encapsulates the depth of economic upheaval. By juxtaposing the erstwhile modest expense of a yogurt sip with its contemporary value in terms of a substantial currency unit, the verses underscore the dramatic depreciation of the local currency.

These verses effectively illustrate the intricate interplay between economic dynamics, cultural norms, and everyday experiences. By focusing on seemingly mundane activities such as consuming bread and yogurt, the verses amplify the macroeconomic implications that have seeped into the minutiae of daily life. This serves as a microcosmic representation of the broader socio-economic shifts, demonstrating how inflation penetrates into the very fibers of ordinary transactions and personal routines.

In essence, these verses encapsulate the multi-dimensional impact of inflation on the accessibility and value of essential commodities. They prompt us to delve beyond mere economic statistics and delve into the visceral realities faced by individuals within the community. By intertwining economic data with cultural practices, the verses mirror the complex nexus between economic fluctuations and their far-reaching implications. This elucidation contributes to a deeper comprehension of the profound ways in which inflation shapes individual experiences and the societal milieu.

In retrospect, a less densely populated demographic was accompanied by a relative moderation in price levels. The pharmacopeia of the era encompassed a spectrum of botanical resources, including fennel, celery, *kwarey*, *khwaga zila*, *halam*, *arera*, *banfsha*, *buti*, *fenugreek*, and *sakha waja*, all harnessed for their therapeutic potential. Evident in historical practices, the infusion of these plants through boiling emerged as a traditional remedy for various ailments such as cough, fever, stomach discomfort, and constipation, a practice that continues to persist in certain circles. Furthermore, for wound management, the deployment of natural agents like Gul Bada and *Khwar Ghwag* is noteworthy.

This era also witnessed a socio-political phase marked by an overarching sense of security, as exemplified during the reign of the Crown Prince, where criminality seemed a distant concept to the collective consciousness. Under the governance of Wali Swat, the enactment of stringent regulations prohibiting deforestation, spearheaded by Miangul Jahanzeb, merits attention. An illustrative manifestation of this directive was the imposition of a 500-rupee levy for every felled tree – a substantial sum, equating to 5 lakh rupees in contemporary valuation. This measure underscored the conservationist ethos of the time, resonating with contemporary environmental concerns. Against this backdrop of evolving sociopolitical dynamics, the transformation of the landscape unfolded as mountains receded, erstwhile seasonal streams waned, and human habitation progressively asserted its presence. This dynamic interplay between environmental alteration, cultural practices, and governance policies collectively mirrors the complex tapestry of historical dynamics that continue to shape the examined locale. A respondent expressed the following perspective: *"Our elders imparted to us a belief that as the approach of the Hereafter becomes more imminent, there will be a trend of people migrating to mountainous regions. The art of navigating these mountains will be cultivated by individuals engaged in shepherding, known as 'بلیپرکی' and 'بانٹیچی' as*

شپائی بپھو ککری اس افی لپوتہ شی راخی

*O people, gather! The Day of Judgment has been summoned by Israfil*

O believers, what has Allah Almighty said in the Qur'an? Did you forget, I didn't forget that.

The statement not only conveys the spiritual urgency of assembling in preparation for the Day of Judgment but also reflects a broader metaphorical implication. This call hints at a transformative shift where shepherds, typically associated with humble livelihoods, will witness a newfound affluence and prominence. It is foreseen that these shepherds will rise to a position of influence and opulence, akin to the heights of ancient pharaohs. This elevation in status is predicted to extend to their living conditions as well, with their dwellings transforming into grand abodes. Such developments are projected to be indicative of the impending signs of the Day of Judgment, as mentioned in Islamic eschatology.

This narrative aligns remarkably with the traditional wisdom passed down through generations, which predicts that as the approach of the Hereafter becomes more imminent, there

will be a trend of people migrating to mountainous regions. These mountainous landscapes will not only provide refuge but also foster the cultivation of wealth and elevated social standing for those engaged in shepherding. Just as believers are urged to gather in anticipation of the Day of Judgment, these prophecies suggest a collective movement towards spiritual awakening, material prosperity, and the fulfillment of divine signs. In essence, these intertwined narratives reflect the intricate interplay between spiritual foresight, societal dynamics, and the ecological milieu, revealing how faith, adaptation, and transformation intersect within a holistic worldview.

The complex issue of climate change is propelled by a multitude of factors, and among them, emissions from transportation and industrial sources play a substantial role. This anthropogenic influence intersects with the consequences of rapid population expansion, exerting immense pressure on water resources. The tangible impact of this intricate interplay is exemplified in the poignant recollection shared by a female participant. She vividly described how a once-pristine canal, traversing the vicinity of her residence, evolved from a cherished water source into a lamentable symbol of environmental deterioration. The canal, once a conduit for domestic chores like dishwashing and laundry, transformed into a repository for discarded plastic and disposable diapers, rendering it unsuitable for its original purposes. This transformation reflects the unrelenting march of pollution and its insidious infiltration into daily life. At its core, this narrative not only mirrors the plight of one community but also serves as a microcosm of global ecological challenges. It offers a visceral portrayal of how environmental degradation disrupts the symbiotic relationship between human settlements and their surroundings. Thus, this account beckons for robust environmental policies and conscientious practices to mitigate the devastating consequences of human actions on the delicate fabric of our ecosystem.

Within the anthropological framework, the escalating contours of climate change unveil an intricate tapestry of interactions between human agency, environmental dynamics, and cultural adaptations. This discourse weaves together a narrative that encompasses both historical shifts and contemporary implications, shedding light on the intricate choreography between ecological equilibrium and human interventions. Anchoring this discourse is the steady ascent in annual temperatures, emblematic of the metamorphosing climatic patterns that significantly impact the region's socio-ecological fabric. The historical tapestry of snowfall, once a ubiquitous phenomenon, has now yielded to an extended hiatus, a transformation attributed to the proliferating



human footprint within highland territories. The symbiotic interplay between demographic expansion and ecological alterations stands as a testimony to the intricate interdependencies governing climate change's manifestations within the human experience.

Central to this discourse is the perceptible undercurrent of population growth, which serves as a lynchpin to the narrative's manifold layers. This pivot is underscored by a poignant historical account of traversing snow-covered rooftops during intense snowfall, illuminating the dynamic relationship between meteorological patterns and adaptive human behaviors. The strategic utilization of water resources also reflects this synergy, with communities historically sourcing water from distant locales due to its scarcity. The innovative engagement with melting snow as a resource exemplifies the resilience rooted in communities' responses to climatic exigencies, revealing how local knowledge informs adaptation strategies. The vanishing presence of indigenous fauna, including *zarka*, *taro*, and *billawroo*, *gashora*, *skhaka*, *spairsarey*, *sheen gharey*, *kirkirey*, *trey*, *khrarey*, and *shoshar* (local birds) resonates as an anthropological lament of ecological shifts. The transformative undercurrents within hunting practices mirror the evolving human-nature interface, tracing a trajectory from utilitarian sustenance to a leisure-oriented approach. This trajectory underscores the ever-evolving dynamics that bind cultural practices, environmental shifts, and societal norms. Similarly, the receding avian presence encapsulates the intricate interplay between ecological disruption and the dwindling aural and visual tapestry of the natural environment, emblematic of the profound interdependencies that define human-environment relationships.

In summation, this study unfolds a narrative that bridges the temporal continuum, offering insights into the reciprocal relationship between humans, nature, and climate change. As population dynamics intersect with ecological rhythms, this discourse underscores the need for holistic approaches that transcend disciplinary boundaries. It beckons for collaborative endeavors that harmonize cultural heritage, ecological stewardship, and scientific understanding, engendering a nuanced understanding of climate change that enriches our appreciation of the entangled human-environment nexus.

The advent of prolonged droughts has wielded significant ramifications for the agricultural sector, subsequently leading to a notable decline in both income generation and milk production. This multifaceted impact can be traced back to the intricate interplay between drought-induced

agricultural challenges and the resultant ecological and climatic changes. The progressive reduction in vegetation, attributed to heightened plant mortality, has ushered in a concerning shift in local microclimates, characterized by an escalation in ambient temperatures.

Central to this ecological transformation is the diminishing role of dew, a climatic factor that holds crucial implications for plant health and vitality. Dew, a natural phenomenon that plays a pivotal role in providing essential moisture to plants, emerges as a critical mediator of the delicate equilibrium between vegetation and climatic conditions. Its absence marks a tipping point in the physiological well-being of plants, leading to their gradual desiccation and subsequent demise. The symbiotic relationship between dew and vegetation accentuates the intricate interconnectedness that characterizes ecological systems. The evaporation of dew serves as a poignant indicator of the intensified stressors exerted by altered climatic patterns on botanical life, thereby underscoring the vulnerability of ecosystems to climatic variability. Within this context, the dwindling presence of the Chalwayi (چلوای) stands as a poignant testament to the intricate dynamics that underscore the interplay of climate, ecology, and biodiversity. The decline of the Chalwayi symbolizes a broader narrative of ecological transformations, where shifts in climatic conditions precipitate a ripple effect that reverberates across species and habitats.

This case study encapsulates the intricate interdependencies and vulnerabilities that typify ecosystems in the face of climate-induced change. In summation, the entwined phenomena of drought, vegetation mortality, and dew loss constitute a complex web of interrelated factors that shape the evolving ecological dynamics. The erosion of dew's presence accentuates the intricate balancing act between climatic parameters and plant vitality. The diminished Chalwayi serves as a microcosm of broader ecological shifts, compelling us to unravel the intricate storylines embedded within the ecological fabric. This discourse prompts reflection on the broader implications of climatic variability for ecological stability, underscoring the need for comprehensive strategies to address the multifaceted challenges arising from changing climatic conditions.

The Swat operation emerges as a pivotal factor in the discourse of climate change, exerting a profound influence on the intricate ecological and sociocultural dynamics of the region. The operation's aftermath has engendered multifaceted repercussions, with soil degradation standing as a conspicuous consequence of the deployment of munitions. This degradation bears direct

implications for the agrarian landscape, as the soil, a foundational resource for agricultural sustenance, undergoes a transformation that has cascading effects across multiple domains. The nexus between soil degradation and its subsequent impact on agriculture forms a central theme within this narrative. The disruptions introduced by the operation have compromised the structural integrity of the soil, leading to a decline in its capacity to support vegetation and crops. While contemporary agricultural technologies have facilitated increased food production, a glaring paradox emerges as the quality of the produce fails to mirror its historical standards.

The intricate interplay between soil health, agricultural practices, and technological interventions becomes evident in this paradox, offering a lens through which the complex interdependence of natural and human-driven processes can be explored. Moreover, the repercussions extend to the temporal rhythm of harvests, as early yields bear the brunt of the operation's effects. This temporal distortion serves as a tangible marker of the operation's impact on the agricultural calendar, with reverberations that echo across livelihood strategies and food security considerations. The linkages between environmental changes, livelihoods, and health outcomes acquire significance within this context. The emergence of various health issues, including skin problems, emerges as a poignant embodiment of the complex interplay between environmental disruption and human well-being.

These health implications unveil the intricate ways in which ecological shifts intersect with human bodies, mediating vulnerabilities and challenges that resonate beyond the environmental realm. In essence, the Swat operation emerges as a catalyst that unravels the intricate tapestry of climate change within the local ecosystem and sociocultural milieu. The degradation of soil, as emblematic of environmental disturbances, reverberates across the agricultural landscape, while the ensuing shifts in produce quality and harvest timings testify to the multifaceted interactions between nature, technology, and human agency. The ripple effect extends to health considerations, underscoring the delicate balance between environmental integrity and the well-being of communities. This discourse underscores the need for a holistic anthropological inquiry that unravels the dynamic intersections between geopolitical events, ecological transformations, and human responses, ultimately enriching our comprehension of the entwined forces that shape contemporary landscapes.

## CONCLUSIONS

The data presents a series of interconnected narratives delve into the intricate interplay of gender roles, societal norms, ecological changes, and cultural adaptations. The discussions on gender-based disparities in food intake reveal a stark contrast between equality ideals and persistent inequalities. These inequalities, stemming from ingrained masculine beliefs, lead to uneven food provisions that reinforce deep-seated gender roles. This unequal treatment extends beyond food, influencing hospitality norms where women's value is tied to their relation to men. These narratives collectively emphasize the need to challenge and change these norms to foster genuine gender equality and respect for all individuals, regardless of gender.

This unequal treatment introduces a significant burden on women, compelling them to prioritize catering to male preferences, often to the detriment of their own well-being. The implicit communication and disproportionate responsibility they shoulder serve as reflections of an entrenched patriarchal power dynamic. The relentless expectation to provide fresh food and satisfy male preferences disregards the considerable challenges that women navigate in juggling their personal health and overall well-being. These practices not only highlight the urgency of confronting traditional gender norms but also emphasize the importance of fostering open dialogues and empowering individuals to make choices that prioritize their own wellness. By doing so, a genuine shift toward gender equality can be fostered, and a framework of respect and dignity for all can be established.

The intricate interplay of gender dynamics, family hierarchies, and broader social forces becomes readily apparent in the analysis of women's dietary patterns, especially within the context of family settings. The intricate relationships between daughter-in-laws and mother-in-laws reveal power dynamics that underscore existing hierarchical structures within households. Often, mother-in-laws hold positions of elevated authority, leading to complexities and tensions among women as well as the reinforcement of traditional gender norms. These observations emphasize the critical necessity of addressing gender-based disparities within familial frameworks, with a particular focus on achieving equitable distribution of resources and access to nourishment. By addressing these issues, a more balanced and just environment can be cultivated within families, ultimately contributing to a more equitable society at large.

Viewed through an anthropological lens, the narratives vividly unveil the intricate gendered power dynamics deeply rooted within households. This perspective also draws attention to the noticeable gap in tailored strategies for maternal healthcare, reflecting the systemic oversight of women's specific needs. Particularly notable is the influential role assumed by the mother-in-law as a gatekeeper in matters of maternal healthcare, serving as a poignant illustration of the intricate interplay between individual agency and prevailing social hierarchies. Furthermore, the historical domain of culinary practices and resource management, traditionally entrusted to women, becomes a testament to their enduring resilience and adaptive prowess. This comprehensive exploration serves as a catalyst for probing the shifting dynamics of tradition, resource allocation, and gender parity, eliciting vital discussions about the evolving landscape of gender equity and societal progression.

Evident is a profound and transformative seismic shift in the landscape of gender roles and agency, where traditional divisions of labor have given way to a paradigm where women rise to positions of influence previously held by men. This profound evolution, however, unfolds against the backdrop of persisting challenges, as the newfound agency of women continues to be constrained by deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. The intricate interplay between evolving gender roles and the intricate tapestry of socio-environmental contexts, notably in the context of water scarcity, lays bare the pressing necessity to confront and dismantle the pervasive gender biases that unjustly marginalize and undermine the invaluable contributions of women. This exploration illuminates the urgent need for a critical reexamination of prevailing attitudes and an active effort to create an environment that paves the way for unbridled gender equity, empowerment, and authentic societal progress.

Preservation practices, within the context of shifting societal landscapes, offer a glimpse into the intricate interplay between human innovation, gender dynamics, and the natural world, encapsulating a microcosm of broader explorations within the realm of anthropology. The agricultural practices observed in Maloch vividly illustrate the delicate balance between tradition and adaptation, shaped by the march of technological progress and the evolving fabric of societal interactions. These practices serve as a living testament to the dynamic nature of culture and human creativity as they respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing global landscape.

Analyzing the complex interplay among climate change, economic constraints, and cultural adaptations unveils the imperative for comprehensive research endeavors aimed at comprehending the multifaceted spectrum of human responses to these multifarious challenges. The narrative elucidating the aftermath of the Swat operation serves as a potent analytical tool, facilitating the elucidation of the multifaceted intricacies inherent in climate change dynamics. This narrative, in turn, accentuates the indispensability of adopting an anthropologically-informed investigative approach, one characterized by meticulous examination of the amalgamation of geopolitical phenomena, ecological mutability, and the intricate array of societal responses. This concerted convergence serves as an illuminative aperture through which the stratified dynamics that mold our contemporary milieu gain elucidation.

In summation, the interwoven narratives proffered within the discourse coalesce intricate threads encompassing gender dynamics, societal transitions, ecological ramifications, and human volition. The expedition through these thematic avenues not only unveils the intricate choreography of tradition and transformation but also lays bare the nuanced stratifications of power, the tenacity of resilience, and the imperative for parity in gender roles. As discerned from the narratives, the gender-based disparities in food intake underscore the disjunction between egalitarian ideals and the enduring chasm of inequities. The perpetuation of such disparities, rooted in deeply entrenched masculine beliefs, further perpetuates the systemic imbalance. The unequal apportionment of food resources, favoring men with superior provisions while relegating women to fewer desirable options, illuminates the underpinnings of prevailing gender norms. Moreover, this differential treatment permeates hospitality norms, rendering women's value contingent upon their relationship with men.

Within familial settings, the dynamics between female in-laws unveil power differentials that underscore broader hierarchical structures. This hierarchy is particularly pronounced within the household fabric, where traditional gender norms are both reinforced and negotiated. The examination of maternal healthcare strategies highlights the role of influential female figures, albeit confined by their roles as gatekeepers. This complex interaction elucidates the intricate web of agency and social hierarchies that shape healthcare decisions. Furthermore, these narratives reveal women's adaptive agency amidst contextual challenges. Their historical role in resource management and culinary practices speaks to the profound resilience and adaptability. The

juxtaposition of historical practices with contemporary complexities raises pertinent inquiries regarding the sustainability of these roles in the present epoch.

In consideration of the seismic shift in gender roles, it becomes evident that women's ascension to influential positions marks a transformative epoch. However, these advancements remain entwined with the lingering constraints of prevailing patriarchal norms. The intersection of these gender roles with socio-environmental contexts unearths the need for concerted efforts to eradicate systemic biases that stifle women's contributions. The preservation practices and agricultural strategies examined within evolving societal frameworks illuminate the delicate balance between heritage and progress. The narrative of the Swat operation serves as a prism through which the intricate dynamics of climate change become magnified, illustrating the necessity for a comprehensive anthropological lens that dissects the interplay of geopolitical events, ecological transformations, and societal responses. In essence, the cumulative exploration of these narratives underscores the indispensable value of an anthropological vantage point. Such a perspective not only unravels the multifaceted intricacies shaping the human experience but also underscores the pertinence of equitable agency, resilience, and progressive societal dynamics.

## CHALLENGES

The challenges I encountered during my fieldwork were rooted in the intricate interplay between a community constituency and my role as an NGO representative. Conducting surveys aimed at targeted assistance provision, I faced the formidable task of persuading the community. Notably, their expectations of receiving specific aid forms, referred to as "wazifa," reflect a complex blend of socio-cultural, economic, and historical factors. These expectations are often influenced by past aid experiences, local traditions, and prevailing narratives. The term "wazifa" itself underscores the cultural context tied to economic and financial support, meeting practical needs and emotional well-being. External factors like socio-political climate and media portrayals also contribute to these expectations. Addressing these intricate expectations necessitates a nuanced understanding of the community's context and influences, facilitating the alignment of strategies with community needs and fostering productive dialogue to align expectations with NGO capabilities.

After successfully establishing a foundation of trust and rapport within the community, an unforeseen challenge arose with the entry of the Taliban into the village. This development disrupted the smooth flow of fieldwork, restricting my ability to move freely and access various community locations essential for comprehensive data collection and meaningful interactions. The intrusion of the Taliban also introduced complexities related to maintaining the trust that had been carefully cultivated with community members. Balancing this trust while ensuring the safety and well-being of both myself and the community became a delicate task. This uncertainty led me to contemplate the extent to which individuals would be willing to share research-related information openly, given the potential consequences they might face for engaging in research activities that could be perceived as sensitive or contradictory to the ideologies of the intrusive group. As a result, I was challenged to navigate this intricate situation by adopting strategic approaches that upheld ethical research principles and ensured the security of all involved parties.

Subsequent to the emergence of the Taliban, a discernible diminution in my physical presence within the field ensued. Preceding this development, I had established a regularized schedule encompassing daily commutation to the designated research site, spanning from 9 AM to 4 PM. The perturbation caused by an inundation event rendered the customary transit routes non-traversable, thereby engendering impediments to my field access. This logistical encumbrance



precipitated significant challenges to the unimpeded execution of my fieldwork endeavors. In response, a strategic recalibration was necessitated, leading to the adoption of telephonic modalities for conducting a subset of interviews. This adaptive maneuver served to circumvent the exigencies posed by both the Taliban's ascendancy and the flood-induced road closures, thereby ensuring the fulfillment of my research imperatives within the prescribed parameters.

The factors delineated above likely contributed to the inadvertent omission of certain aspects within the research, potentially introducing biases during data collection and analysis. To address these limitations comprehensively, a more thorough investigation is warranted. This involves delving deeper into the constraints imposed by restricted field presence due to the emergence of the Taliban and subsequent disruptions caused by flooding. Such an in-depth exploration would illuminate specific elements that may have been overlooked due to logistical challenges and assess potential methodological biases introduced by altered data collection methods like telephonic interviews. Moreover, a holistic approach necessitates scrutinizing the research design's responsiveness to contextual intricacies engendered by these challenges. Realigning research objectives and methodologies in light of these constraints can provide a more nuanced understanding of their potential implications on research outcomes. Acknowledging these limitations and their possible biases, alongside meticulous scrutiny, empowers researchers to present a more accurate representation of the phenomena under investigation, thereby fortifying the integrity and reliability of the conclusions drawn.

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