

SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE IN THE HUNZA VALLEY : A STUDY OF GHULKIN

Part 2

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Abstract

This study presents a holistic picture of the development and change from the people's perspective in the mountain society of Hunza valley by taking the village of Ghulkin as a case study and the AKRSP's intervention year in the rural settlement [1983] as a reference point. Development and changes are seen against different indicators within the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental realms. Many facets of this study could be generalized on the development and change in the regional contexts.

The previous issue presented a detailed account about the oral history, etymological interpretations of Ghulkin and the status of social organizations before and after AKRSP's intervention year. This issue further elaborates the status of different socio-economic indicators and summarises the case study.

3.7 Agricultural practices, livestock and food

Before 1983, Ghulkin community had a subsistence economy depending almost entirely on livestock and agriculture¹. The main crops cultivated were faba beans (*baqla*) and barley. The climatic condition was cold for the wheat cultivation: it was therefore given less importance. Among the fruits, there existed primarily apricots while few dwellers would grow pears. There was no tradition of growing various kinds of vegetables, except for growing some potatoes, which they were on limited scale for the households' consumption, and not for commercial purpose.

In order to produce more and better quality of crops, the people would make more focus on manure production (human or animal wastes). Domesticated animals (ruminants and non-ruminants) included cattle, sheep, goats, hens, horses, and donkeys. Some peoples petted cat but no dog. The livestock contributed significantly to the wealth generation such as dairy products, meat besides meeting the peoples' needs on special occasions like the rite of passage. From the hairs of the livestock, the people made the traditional caps, woolen clothes, rugs and the like.

The oxen were utilized for plowing purpose with some exception for plowing with horses. Cows, young oxen, donkeys were tied and threshed the crops for hours and hours, sometimes taking the entire day. The threshed pile was winnowed to separate the grains from the chaff which was subject to an adequate breeze.

After 1983, AKRSP with focusing on social organization and savings, also introduced different varieties of seed-potatoes, plants (both of fruits and timbers) and so on. Above all AKRSP built the community's capacities in a variety of fields including agriculture, horticulture, sericulture, preserving and drying fruits, forestry and

¹ Besides agro-pastoral activities, some peoples of the village were also engaged with services/employment (e.g., the military & teaching) and very few in businesses.

plantation, livestock, wildlife, internal lending (V/WO banking), bookkeeping, leadership, community participation, enterprise initiatives, tourism, and the like.

Consequently, the subsistence economic mode of the people diversified—not confined only in agriculture or livestock. The community has ended up the crops of faba-beans, and somehow peas, too. The previous limited number of potatoes' production for the community's subsistence has transformed into highly productive and market-based item that has been contributing significantly to the people's economy and addressed



Fig 1: An historical picture (1963) of Ghulkin village depicting the traditional dependency of people on livestock.

the devastating poverty. People produce variety of vegetables mostly for their domestic consumption. Less-productive fruit plants (including apple trees) have been replaced by more-productive varieties of fruits trees like apricot, apples, cherry, and almond trees. No cows, young oxen and donkeys are used for threshing rather tractor machines have replaced them in threshing and plowing².

All households now not have enough dairy products because of either reduced number of livestock or they gave up rearing sheep and goat or even cattle. A latest survey (September 2009) shows that out of 153 households, 83 households (54.3%) in Ghulkin have totally abandoned rearing sheep and goats; while 70 households (46.7%) are still engaged with: more people who have even one or two goats or sheep in number and very few have retained maximum 45 or 50. Today, instead of rearing more traditional cows, many people prefer rearing one or two hybrid heifers(s) and replacing the previous category of breeds that were less productive in milk. Previously, there were more experts in the community who made traditional hats, woolen cloths, rugs and so on; but at present these activities have significantly decreased in some thematic areas. Local long shoes and leather overcoats (*krest*) et cetera ended.

² There are some households who still use oxen for plowing the arduous terraces that are inaccessible for tractors.

3.8 Food insecurity and internal credit system or lending in kinds

The poverty among the masses of the principality was grave, and the food consumption among the people varied seasonally from house to house. The previously key indicators of wealth were the landholdings, livestock, agricultural produces, trees/plants and forests in addition with mental capacity. There were three tiers in the society such as upper tier, *zharzhon* or *usham* (fictive/foster relatives of the Mirs); middle tier, *darqan(ey)*, and lower, *borwar* (laborers). But these social tiers would not necessarily reflect the state of wealth or poverty. Even instances are found that among households of the upper social tier, peoples reportedly confronted food security. Through raising more livestock, more manures were produced, which contributed to more and better agricultural produces. Through mental and physical capacity, and hard-work in agro-pastoral adventures, people produced more yields of grains. But majority of the population could not do so. The agro-activities were also susceptible to the natural factors (weather condition), especially during the summer. For instance, if there was more rain or the weather was cold or otherwise, it would also negatively effect the crops. The food security in the spring season for the community was really a tough period to reach in summer till ripping of the crops. The autumn and half of summer (for those who had fruit trees) were really the rejoiced seasons (having food availability).

3.8.1 Internal lending system: a social protection mechanism against food insecurity

Keeping in view the above cited bitter socioeconomic circumstances, the community of the region had an internal lending or credit system of grains. This traditional credit system in kinds was called *tol*, meaning weigh and give grains to the needy-persons during the spring season. *Tol* was both at house to house level (within or out of kin groups); and community to house level; and even among the community to community (inter-village) level in the region. The community of Ghulkin had a grand store in the premise of the present *jamatkhana*. The borrower would lend 1 *ghilbel* (= 13.7 kg) grains (*žaw*); and would return the amount of grains in addition with one *jułi* [=1.7 kg] in autumn as interest after harvesting of the crops. Getting the interest was however dependent on an individual's will. A borrower could exempt (either within the kin groups or between a well-off and a poor) the interest or leave the credit as a philanthropic assistance.

The AKRSP-led internal credit system in cash in the V/WOs evolved from the traditional lending system in kind.

"Following the set V/WO banking rules, we provide the members loans, when s/he meets the lending criteria, without any bias of kinship relationships or otherwise. After granting and issuing the credit, three reminders are sent to the borrowers: one, three months before the recovery, one in the beginning, and one in the middle of the recovery period. The borrowers thus enable themselves to successfully return their lending. Thank God we haven't had any recovery problems", add the VO and WO presidents. *"In the beginning, there was a bad precedence, but the borrowers were from outside the village. Nonetheless, "We got the recovery,"* explains VO's manager.

Mainly because of the V/WO banking system, the savings increased exponentially. Presently³, the V/WOs

³ Such effective rural community banking system led Dr. Isharat Hussein, Governor State Bank of Pakistan,, to visit the V/WO Ghulkin in order to approve microfinance banks. After examining the system, he asserted his satisfaction and called for the establishment of the Microfinance Banks.

Table-1: Saving Statement of V/WOs Ghulkin for 2009

V/WOs	Total Savings (Audited)					
	1983/1984	1988	1991	1996	2006	2008
	*	**	**			
VO	4764	40,604	---	3,259,490	9,323,542	11,392,154
WO	1516	---	170,746	1,793,541	3,329,238	4,224,347
Total	6280			5053031	12652780	15,616,501

Source: V/WOs Ghulkin, September 2009.

*VO was formed in 1983; and WO in 1984. **VO banking started in 1988 and WO banking in 1991.

Ghulkin have obtained a saving of more than 15.6 million rupees. The table hereunder illustrates how the V/WO members increased their saving, especially after the internal credit system. The total savings of the VO was 4764 in 1983 which is increased to 11,393,154 whereas of the WO in 1984 was 1516 which increased to 4,224,347. The VO banking started in 1988 when the total saving was 40,604 and the WO banking in 1991 when the total saving was 170,746.

Table-2: Members in the V/WOs in different years from the beginning.

V/WOs	Total number of members in different years (1983-2009)					
	1983/1984	1988	1991	1996	2006	2009
VO	80	83	--	131	183	192
WO	81	--	100	145	215	228
Total	161			276	398	420

Source: V/WOs, Ghulkin, September 2009

The internal credits are granted to the members for business and enterprise; addressing health and educational issues; meeting agricultural needs such as purchasing seed potatoes, chemical fertilizers; buying the livestock, developing land, meeting marriage requirements and so on. The following table (hereunder) shows the increase of membership in the V/WOs since their inception.

In 1983/4, out of 83 households in Ghulkin, almost each household got membership in the V/WOs. Initially, for four years, the momentum remained slow in membership, but after introducing the V/WO banking, the speed increased. Today, among 153 households (in September 2009)⁴, more than one person from each household are members in the V/WOs. By bringing the savings of the V/WOs in circulation within the members through internal lending since the inception of VO in 1988 and WO in 1991, the collective saving of the V/WOs till 2008 has risen marvelously.

3.9 Food consumption and clothing of the peoples

Because of the dire poverty in the so-called kingdoms of Hunza and Nager, the subjects could hardly make their ends meet. In Gojal (including Ghulkin), the subjects' food for three times could include soup of low

⁴ Eight families, living outside the village in Gilgit, Islamabad and Karachi, have their lands but not houses in the village.

quality (e.g., dried-apricot) in breakfast; dried-breads with water or sometimes with buttermilk (if someone had) for lunch; in supper, some would subsist on mulberries and apricot during summer; and few fortunate would have some vegetables: e.g., carrots, turnips, pumpkins. In winter (those who worked efficiently from spring to summer), would get appropriate produces and very few dried-vegetables—besides cooking modest pieces of meat, animals slaughtered in winter for food called *gušti* (gushti) by some well-off people. In spring, people would begin clandestinely lending grains for food from the better-off. Apart from the routinely poor food menu, the people had variety of special dishes served during marriage ceremonies, death rites, festivities and guests' visits to one's home, which included *bat*, *molida*, *ghuelmindi*, *semn*, *gral*, *chamuerki*, *shuelbuet*, *chilpindok* (a speciality of *Shingshalik*) et cetera. The local beverages and liquefied items comprised on milk, *chmos* (apricot juice), *pistov* (made out of apples), buttermilk, *dughov* (made up of buttermilk), tea made out of *čumuru*, *bozlanj*, yogurt, *qanda*, and a variety of soups⁵ from kernels, bones, apricots and so on. Tea was reportedly introduced in the 1940s but consumed with the then elites. Rice could also be seen diffused in the village in the 1950s; but consumed as a special dishes by those who could afford it.

Not all peoples of the valley (including Ghulkin) had appropriate clothing. They had woolen clothing (hardly two pairs) with a few exceptions of non-woolen-cloths brought by the Chinese traders in the caravans. Further, some local businessmen brought consumers items on the horses from Gilgit.

People had locally made long-shoes called *šušək* (*shueshk*) and *sandal*, that would torn sooner when one would walk to a longer place; but *not* necessarily all community had these shoes⁶. There were a few skilled persons who could make it for their families and kinspersons⁷. The company-made short and long shoes were introduced in the region in the 1960s and 70s. Besides, men had woolen caps, and women had initially plain but later crafted caps (old women still wear). In 1960, the people of the region walked barefooted for minimum 50 km and maximum 300 km from Gojal to Altit (Central Hunza) and back due to poverty but filled with the affection of their Imam (Aga Khan-IV) to see him.

Today, the Ghulkin community could be termed self-sufficient in managing foods for themselves, especially by producing and selling potatoes, both table-potatoes and seeds. The previous expensive time, *tea*⁸, has

⁵ The beverages or liquefied items and soups were not necessarily available with majority of the peoples; even the then well-off persons would also use them conservatively. The herbal products were mostly used for healing purpose.

⁶ In Central Hunza (Kanjut) and Shinaki, the situation was even further aggravated. There was no sandal or *šušək* instead there was tawching, That is why these traditional shoes were an attraction for them. A famous Burushaski proverb indicates it vividly: "Guic [Quits] e deli, sandal isheer", means "Don't hit a Wakhi, [rather] snatch his sandal (the long-shoes)."

⁷ Muhammad Aslam, a religious scholar of this village, narrates an interesting story that when he along with his friends/classmates used to go to school in the neighboring village of Gulmit in the 1960s, they had no shoes or if someone had the shoes, that were torn and again became barefooted. They therefore would walk barefooted for 8 km daily, even on the snow during winter. When they found the dried soil under roofed-places on the way, they would put their feet in the soil, which soothed them from the severe coldness.

⁸ Tea has ingrained/engrafted itself in the peoples' custom so strongly that if a person visits a house, not only in Ghulkin rather in the region, the host would offer tea. If the visitor doesn't drink tea and s/he is, for instance, offered a cup of milk, but the host(s) won't value the milk. Instead would say: "Sorry we did not make tea for you" despite the fact that tea has its negative effects on the human health.

become commoners main item of breakfast with oven-cooked wheat breads or otherwise. In meals (lunch & supper), all people eat variety of vegetables, pulses, rice, meats, and better quality of soups are cooked and drank besides other beverages available in the bazaars. The traditional dishes of festivities and rituals are present, but not cooked frequently. Among the beverages, *pistov*, teas of *bozlanj* and other herbal liquefied items are not in use.

Opposed to the local-made woolen clothes (trousers and shirts), today we see a revolution among the local communities in the village (and the valley) who make company-made clothes of polyester, cotton, felt, silk, velvet and soon imported from China. People had only one pair of clothes, especially among the conjugal partners; and when a husband got a new clothes, his wife would put on his used one. Now, we can observe that an individual has at least six to ten pairs of clothes in different variety and fashions for different social events in a year.

Previously, parents would make hardly two pairs of clothes for the bride but at present minimum 15 otherwise 20 pairs are made for her; and the bride goes shopping herself. In the previous period, it was hard to get burial cloths for the corpse, but these days they are found at their doorsteps in their villages. Today, men and women put on variety of shoes and change them quarterly. The children cannot see the previous in-house-made leathered *sandal* or *šuššk*, or the company-made rubber-type of shoes, rather they put on the company-made leather, canvas and other good quality shoes brought in the village from China and down country.

3.10 From the exploitation to nature's conservation

When heavy snow would fall and roaring wind would blow⁹ in winter, the human-hunters would adventure in hunting the ibexes and Marco Polo sheep for the purpose of alternative taste of food. These hunters were termed *palwon* or *paliwun* (i.e., champion).

The predators such as snow-leopard and wolves would then enter in the villages and hunt the peoples' livestock. For this reason, peoples of the twin-villages of Ghulkin and Gulmit would collectively pursue and hunt the strong predators to save their livestock. This collective predators' hunting campaign was known as *Šapt Škor* (*shapt shkor*: i.e., wolf hunting) or *Pes Škor* (snow-leopard hunting). Such food-battles between the *paliwuns* and predators (snow-leopard & wolves) continued: human eating wildlife food and wildlife eating the livestock.

Besides, the people were also enthusiastically hunted fishes, ducks, geese, partridge, and different kinds of sparrow etcetera. In summer, a brutal night-game was played called *basa* (hunting sparrows) where people, especially youth, would hunt the birds with their sticks and stones; and a group may hunt at least one or two hundred birds.

There was no kerosene, no electricity, no gas or otherwise; and the people of Ghulkin, like other villages, had their full dependence on natural forest that survived not only round the settlement, but down to the Hunza

⁹In the entire Hunza, Lower Gojal is prominent/notorious for its strong and awesome wind because its eight glaciers starting from the famous *Batur e yaz* [Batura glacier] and ending to the Brundu Bar glacier in Shishkat.



River. With the passage of time, the natural forests receded because of heavy exploitation; and the natural plants such as juniper, birches, willow etcetera were they were depleted after construction of the road-links, more particularly after the opening of the KKH. After the AKRSP's awareness raising campaign, people's mind-sets significantly changed; and they became champions of conserving the nature after Khyber and Avgarch communities.

3.10.1 Formation of the Nature's Conservation Committee

The Nature's Conservation Committee (NCC), founded in 1992 to conserve the nature for development, functions under its legal and umbrella organization named Ghulkin Educational, Social Welfare and Nature's Conservation Association (GESWANCA). NCC initiated the first challenging task by protecting the seasonally migrated Siberian birds/ducks coming to Borith Lake, 4 km away from the settlement. Hunters from Ghulkin, other surrounding villages and alien peoples, would come to lake for hunting. This situation disturbed the natural and cultural environments. In order to safeguard their cultural environment, the people materialized the AKRSP's ideas of conserving the nature.

For this venture, NCC members faced strong reactions from the hunters, within and around the village, even some high government officials like the Chief Secretary, but they were determined and continued their journey.

The Borith lake is preserved, which is a host for ducks, geese and other birds¹⁰. The surrounding mountains

¹⁰ A senior chemistry lecturer of the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School (AKHSS) has his technical reservation. He is of the opinion that the birds (ducks/geese) which travel a long distance and come to the lake, they loose their strength (weight) because of the saltywater. When those birds leave in couples of days, they die on the way, or some hunters, too, could hunt them.

of the conservancy flourish ibexes, blue-sheep, snow-leopards and other wildlife. The social environment has become secured. Furthermore, campaigns against pollution have also helped in combating for and maintaining a healthy environment. The environmental conservation efforts and the promotion of sustainable human development is thus in progress.

3.11 Political institutions: governance and social control

In the former Hunza's principality, Ghulkin like other villages, was run politically, administratively and judicially under the *arbob* (village headman); and his position known as *arbobiy* or *arobi*. In addressing and resolving the societal conflicts and disputes, there was a traditional mechanism of 'holding *astam*' [i.e., council]. The *arbob* in consultation with some judicious elders¹¹ of different descent groups used to mediate, reconcile, penalize and resolve the issues and conflicts in the village¹². For the official tasks, the *arbob* would gather the community through his *chorbaw* (information-communicator) and would assign them the tasks such as forced-laboring, *ashar/rajaki* or otherwise.

The chieftdom of Hunza was abolished in 1974 Zulifqar Ali Bhutto and the old political system transformed into the modern governance structure. This phenomenon led to a political bifurcation among the community even within households. The conservatives (adhered to the former rulers and their like-minded party) came under the umbrella of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML). But those who were poor, suppressed, and right-based joined Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP). The absolute roles and responsibilities of the *arbob* ceased and the term *arbob* was named as *lumbardar*.

After transformation of the political system, candidates of the PML for the District Council and Northern Areas' Council (now as Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly) have been winning in majority from this village. At the grassroots level, Ghulkin has a councilor who represents the village in the Union Council (UC). Previously, there remained selection for the UC, but for the first time, an election in 2004. Interestingly, contestants of UC were from the same party, the PML; but, in the local context, two different descent groups. To what extent, the local election between the same affiliated party effects the upcoming election in November 2009 is a question. Some respondents envision and hope for an educated and honest person for the UC. Whosoever, but one thing is important to note that how the 689 voters of Ghulkin (330 female and 359 male)¹³ prove themselves in honestly using their votes to choose their representatives at union, district and legislative assembly levels will be a big question mark.

3.12 Construction of the road-infrastructures

Before construction of roads in Gojal, people either travelled on foot, or rode animals like horses, donkeys or yaks for transportation from one place to another on the footpaths, tracks and trails in the arduous terrains. For the first time in the history of Hunza, the small narrow jeep road was constructed for up to Baltit/Karima-

¹¹ The judicious elders were called *astamgar*.

¹² If there dispute was of strong nature or the disputant(s) were not satisfied with the decisions made in the council of the headman then it was left for or referred to the Mir's court who would come to Gulmt during winter time or would go up to Bobo Ghundi to pay his respect and on the way he would settle the dispute.

¹³ The Government of Pakistan recently conducted an official survey of voters in September 2009 for the upcoming election in November that shows 330 female and 359 male voters in Ghulkin.

bad in 1958 and then extended up to Passu (Lower Gojal) in 1962. In 1963, the community constructed the Ghulkin jeep-road¹⁴. Afterwards, the asphalted KKH linked the community of Gojal in 1970 for the first time in its history and the people's hardships in long travels reduced and days of travel turned into hours. The community constructed link-road of Ghulkin in 1963 was improved and expanded in 1982 by the government; and currently being expanded and asphalted up to the main settlement since 2007.

Within the village, non-asphalted (coarse) link-roads were constructed around the main settlement; and the sub-villages have also been connected to the main settlement, besides linking the neighboring villages of Gulmit and Ghulkin at the top below the Kamris glacier. The small and medium size vehicles, especially tractors for plowing and threshing, could drive easily on these link-roads.

3.13 The state of telecommunication and other electronic media

We can trace telephonic communication back in the British-Indian period. Apart from Baltit and Gulmit, Misgar had a call center in 1912. Likewise telephones were in Murkhun, Passu, Husaini etcetera, run under the *arbobs*. A telephone facility was given in Ghulkin in the 1970s, but that was taken back after the State's abolition. Then in the first half of 1980, a public call center was reopened; and in first half of 2000, the government provided the digitized telephone sets to the people; presently having more than 70 landline-telephone users. Besides, there are presently innumerable mobile sets with people in the village using the Telenor's and/or Zong's SIMS. Within a house, 2 or 3 mobile-sets could be find. What are the pros and cons of these mobile-sets is a different but valid question.

The first radio set entered in this rural society in the 1960s. Some say, late Ali Shafa introduced the first radio in the village; and some advocate Amir Dil of Kirmin (Chipursan), an emigrant of Ghulkin brought it. Today, in an average, every household seems to have the radio set with them, though the TV channels are preferred upon radio, when there is no electricity. The TV set and dish antenna was firstly introduced in the village in 1992 by Qurban Hussain. Today, at least 50% of the houses have the TV sets.

3.14 Business and trade initiatives

Historically, some individual level small businesses might have been in practices, especially taking into accounts the caravans coming from China to Hunza and going back.

A formal enterprise at collective or group level was initiated in the 1950s in Ghulkin when the community formed a society and opened a shop in the village. This shop fulfilled some basic requirements of the people. The items were brought from Gilgit on horses. The villagers seen the currency at this period and the transactions they made was in kinds. In the second half of 1960, late Quran and Habib Shah of Ghulkin opened shops in the village. Probably in 1971, Habib Shah also bought the first ever jeep. He was then followed, after KKH's construction, by late Muhamamd Baig and group in venturing in the transport business. Thus, peoples mind was given a direction towards the transport business.

¹⁴ Some respondents narrate that the community constructed the first link road to Ghulkin in 1966 when Mir Jamal Khan, the last ruler of Hunza, was coming to inaugurate the present Jamatkhana of Ghulkin and he came to Ghulkin by jeep and before there was no road.



Fig 3: The owner-cum artisans of Silk Route Pvt Ltd displaying handicrafts.

In 1980, a group of ten members took an initiative for a cooperative society and opened a shop in Ghulkin. Not a single year had elapsed, a soldiers' group (in the army and Northern Light Infantry) also formed a society in 1981 with the name of Al-Karim Ghazi Multipurpose Society. The denial of civilian membership in the Ghazi society led to the formation of Awami (i.e., civilian) Multipurpose Society.

The Ghulkin community who had once just a couple of existing shops and transactions done mostly in kinds—have now dozens of enterprises, not confined only within their village, but have out also. Apart from seasonal business of the entire community in selling the potatoes and fruits, there are at present in total 28 shops of general stores, garments, cosmetics, electronics (8 in Ghulkin, 4 in Gulmit, 10 in Sost, 3 in Aliabad, 3 in Gilgit); 1 sawing mill, 2 handicraft centers; VWO banking (all of them in Ghulkin); 5 hotels and restaurants (2 in Ghulkin; 3 in Gilgit); 6 marble shops (2 in Sost, 2 in Tashkurghan & Kashghar, 2 in Karachi); 1 buckthorn processing unit in Ghulkin; and 3 women vocational enterprises, run by groups of women in the village.

Besides, some of the community members have also invested in buying the land-pieces and houses, especially in Gilgit city. The following table illustrates the number of houses and property owners out of Ghulkin. At present, we can see that there are 13 householders and 20 landowners in Gilgit; 6 landowners in Sost; 1 householder in Islamabad; and 13 householders in Karachi.

The status purchased houses, stated above, in Gilgit and Karachi varies. Some of them the owners have given on rent; and in some, the owners (especially those employees) reside themselves and liberated themselves in paying the rents.

Besides, the people of the village are also actively engaged in transport businesses. As mentioned earlier, there were two initiators in transport business in the 1970s, but after 1983 we can see that the community has 45 vehicles (2 jeeps, 7 cars, 8 vans, 7 suzukis, 5 tractors, 2 trucks, 15 motor-bikes).

3.15 Women Vocational Center (WVC)

The women vocational center was established in 1992 in order to enhance women’s skills in low-income households and other unskilled women in Ghulkin. Since its inception, the WVC has been providing training courses on weaving, knitting, stitching and cooking. This has enabled women to produce market-based products besides performing their domestic obligations. Currently, there are three vocational centers of women groups who have do their business independently.

3.16 Interventions of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the village

In 1950s, the Aga Khan Education Board (AKEB) intervened and opened its primary school in the village. The Aga Khan Volunteers Corp for Ghulkin was formed. In 1981, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) had its development intervention hat experimented on the soil of the village for crops production. In 1983, the AKRSP intervened in the village for the first time and formed the village organization (VO) and women organization (WO) in 1984, which started contributing enormously to uplift the people’s quality of life. In 1984, the youth of Ghulkin founded the Prince Ali S. Khan Boy Scouts headed and Girl Guides by Niyat Ullah Baig and late Jameeda respectively registered with the Ismaili Council for Gulmit. In the 1990s, the long abbrevi-



Fig 4 : An artisan weaving fabric at Ghulkin Fabric Center

ated GESWANCA (Ghulkin Educational, Social Welfare and Nature's Conservation Association) with its broad development mandate of this tiny village emerged to stand as a legal umbrella and entity, and an intermediary for the already initiated committees in the fields of education, social welfare and nature's conservation. CIDA through AKRSP funded a pipe project of clean drinking water and the VO successfully completed it. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); Ministry of Women, Islamabad; and Karakoram Area Development Organization (KADO) partnered with GESWANCA and very effectively worked in the fields of nature's conservation, women vocational centers and capacity building. In the field of performing arts, Wakhi Tajik Cultural Association (WTCA) organized two programs in Ghulkin and the community wholeheartedly hosted them. A conservation project on an old mosque (*Durbin e Masjid*) was accomplished in collaboration with the Aga Khan Cultural Service, Pakistan (AKCSP), and restoration of the old house of Busing, apical ancestor of the Busing clan is in the pipeline.

In 2000s, GESWANCA successfully completed construction of the school building of Nasir-e Khusraw Model Academy in partnership with Global Environmental Fund (GEF) and UNDP, and technical support by the Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, Pakistan (AKPBSP). In 2008, a network of pipes was spread in collaboration with WASEP to all houses of the village and clean drinking water reached for the first time in its history to the households in their washrooms¹⁵.

3.17 The language and its concerned position

The old Wakhi Pamiri language in Hunza valley has a unique characteristic, which distinguishes it from the Wakhi languages of other regions in the districts of Ghizer and Chitral in Pakistan; Wakhans of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and Xinjiang of China. Besides difference in pronunciation, the distinctive characteristics could be found in the infinitive's forms, usage of transitive and intransitive verbs, nominative and possessive pronouns



Fig 5: The community based Nasir- Khusraw Model Academy

¹⁵ For the first time, a pipe project was given to the community in 1981 and clean drinking water was not available to the peoples in their houses, rather at certain points in the neighborhoods. The 1992 pipe project was also of the same nature .

and so on.

Before the British occupation of Hunza and Nagar, the Wakhi language was influenced by Farsi and Arabic languages, in addition with Burushaski. From 1891-1947, we can observe that along with Arabic and Farsi, some Urdu and few English words also entered in the Wakhi of Hunza. From 1947 onward, Urdu then English language gradually held their strong grips in the local languages. The local languages including Wakhi thus began retaining the previously influenced vocabularies, on the one hand; and on the other, absorbing the words of British colonial languages. In the 1980s and 1990s, the entire Hunza strongly switched over to the English medium language as a medium of education in the schools. In Hunza valley, 1990s and 2000s also witness the media invasion (a facet of globalization) on the local cultures and languages. Variety of TV channels through dish antennas, cable networks, internet and so on are on rise. The cellular phones, these days, have their own drastic and long term effects on peoples' minds, then definitely on the local languages, especially through text messages either in English or in Urdu. In such circumstances of global languages' strong influence, on the languages like Wakhi or Burushaski, Shina or other mountain and rural languages in the region are having hue and cry that are at the brink of endangerment, if necessary steps were not taken.

Some tangible examples are found in the context of Wakhi language of Hunza. The respective Wakhi speakers in Ghulkin and the region have given up many indigenous words that the language, being a vehicle, possessed and carried along for centuries. Even the indigenous kinship terms for parents, grandparents, children, siblings, uncles and aunties et cetera (that traveled for millennia) have been given up ¹⁶ not only by the youngsters, but even by those Wakhi speakers who claim as educated and are in their 30 plus or 50 plus of age. This is abasing phenomenon and a serious concern, not only for the Wakhi speakers, rather for other languages spoken in the entire region.

3.18 Festivities and Sports

In the Wakhi society, festivities start from *Kitdit* ¹⁷, cleaning the dust and smokes of the traditional houses' ceilings. *Kitdit* is celebrated in the first week of February to mark moving towards the spring, getting-off and saying goodbye to the harsh winter. The houses were though timely cleaned but the ceilings would be cleaned annually especially for this festivity; and a collective gathering would take place in the *jamatkhanas*. The special dish for this festivity was *Khista* (leavened bread) of *faba-bean* (and in some instances of wheat), while butter and oil on the top. Some people may cook *shulbut*, a savor food having meat in it. Womenfolk would carry foods and visit their patri-locals, immediate families and neighbors.

In the first week of March, the plowing festivity, *Taym* (roughly pronounced *taghm*), would be celebrated. The special dish of this festivity is *semn* ¹⁸ prepared in both pudding form and in a chapatti. The sports activities

¹⁶ If a non-Wakhi person is once in a Wakhi society, s/he can better observed, realize and get adequate insights that what the youngsters or middle age people are talking about in their dialy life. There is a number of Wakhi youngsters and the middle age-group, who would continuously speak in Urdu (and some in English). More particularly, one can observe this phenomenon clearly in the meetings of the Wakhi people, especially those claimants of Wakhi language preservation, would speak in Urdu instead of their mother tongue.

¹⁷ *Kitdit* (native English speakers could pronounce it as "Kit-thit") seems contraction of "Kut e dit", means smoke of the ceiling."

¹⁸ *Semn* is made out of wheat or barley after its fermentation. Overall, *semn* involves one to two weeks or more depending also on the season/weather condition.

for male group remained polo on horses and on-foot; while the female group would have "put-din", tossing the ball (of cricket's size) or strike it against the ground, besides *yupk fəzda*, splashing water on the passersby whosoever encountered or crossed them, particularly the men. Womenfolk would pay courtesy visits to their kinspersons in their houses and carry along the food. Presently, the pivotal role of both the oxen and horses were replaced by the tractors: horses wined up and is for oxen. During the plowing festivity, the ceremony is celebrated symbolically. There is no more polo activity on horses. After two decades long break, the WTCA revived the polo on horse and on-foot. The youths played on-foot polo, but was banned after the ball was hit on a gentleman's eye in 1994. The fun of splashing water, rather apricot juice (*chmos*) of the Wakhi women on each others, especially on any male passerby exists in the village.

The first summer festivity would begin with *Wingas Tuy*, literally as "marrying the sparrow." When the barley grains would start growing, the sparrows attack and destroy the crops. The festivity was therefore innovated and celebrated that prevented attacks of sparrow on the crops. The special dish for festivity was *bat*, a kind of savor food. The religious clergies, without any academic exploration, ended this festivity.

When the barley is ripen, the harvesting festivity, *Činir* (roughly pronounced as *chinir*) comes up. The special dish in *Chinir* used to be *bat*, *semn* and *shəlbət*, addition of meat with *bat*. As customary, the womenfolk would carry foods to the houses of their dears and nears. The sports activities remained polo, and girls would enjoy having seesaws (*qardang*). *Chinir* is celebrated today also, but there is no sports' activities like polo.

In autumn (end of September) the pastoral peoples would come back from the pastures with the flocks of livestock. Some villagers peoples would go 2 to 5 km away of the village to receive them. The village's pastoral people would bring some special cooked foods from the pasture-houses like *jige, kədek e ptok*, and *qurut*. The villagers who gave their sheep and goats to the respective persons would now formally visit the houses of people in transhumance. The pastoral and settled foods are exchanged. Another festivity of the autumn is *Худойи* (*Khudoyi*), *thanksgiving*, which shows celebration of summer ending and the people and livestock's safe arrival in the villages.

Besides the old traditional festivities, the religious rites are also celebrated not only at Ghulkin but rather amongst all Ismaili communities. These ceremonies include anniversaries of His Highness, Shah Karim al-Husseini, Aga Khan-IV, on the days of his accession to the throne of spiritual leadership on July 11, his birthday on December 13, his first ever visit to Hunza on October 23, in addition with the revered days of Eid-e Ramzan and Eid-e Qurban.

3.19 Creativities and Entertainment

Music, poetry, dance and singing are those expressions which have their own significance in the Wakhi culture and society. Like other villages, Ghulkin is also functional in cultural activities. The young and elders alike do participate in the grand programs within and out of their village, and express their artistic skills. Music and dance are the integral part of marriages and festivities; but comparatively, poetry and singing were not encouraged before 1983. After formation of the Boy Scouts in Ghulkin, the scouts (and volunteers), carried out such activities gradually. The poetry, poetical contests, music, singing, dance and dramas intensified and got exposure to the broader audiences in the grand festivals and programs (at regional, national and inter-

national scales) after formation of the WTCA in 1991, which frequently campaigned, patronized, fostered and stimulated the community in these specific fields. At present, the artistes of Ghulkin are really champions in the performing arts.

There are 15 poets (three are well recognized), 25 singers (20 male and 5 female), 10 traditional music experts in addition with dozens of music players of the Scottish band and 3 artists. Besides, there are also dozens of devotional female singers too and the history goes back in 1983. Although, in there is a good progress in the above fields, but there is a dearth of folksingers in the village along with music expert in *ghizhek*.

3.20 The state of voluntarism

Kiryar, voluntary corporate laboring (a facet of social organization), *Khudoyi* (Thanksgiving or to get intentions fulfilled), *swob-e yark* (philanthropy/volunteering to get God's reward), and *nomus-e yark* (philanthropy for fame)¹⁹ remained an integral part of the agro-pastoral community of the region from the old days. The scope of *kiryar*, *Khudoyi*, *swob-eyark* and *nomus-e yark* can be within or out of the families or descent groups, and within and out of the village. The nature of these works comprised on agrarian and pastoral; constructing buildings, bridges or footpaths on the arduous terrains (*piryen*); ceremonial and ritualistic; giving foods and or clothing to needy or otherwise, and so on. Today, *kiryar* within their descent groups has been replaced by the paid-laborers from out of the village and region.

Other voluntary offerings still exists among the community, besides *kiryar*. Today, the nature of work has somehow changed from the previous period. The current mode of voluntary services is more through formal organizations like VWOs, GESWANCA and their committees, religious institutions like the Ismali Councils and its subsidiary organizations or committees, Ismaili *Tarqia* and Religious Education Board's and its committees, cultural and youth's forums, and so on.

We need to recognize that today's witnessed societal change in Ghulkin or in the valley could not come so rapidly and effectively, if the respective communities were not mentally prepared and mobilized through the community leaders (being opinion makers) and social activists (being motivators) who volunteered their precious time, resources and energies to carry out the development projects through their local civil society organizations. Here lies a secrecy behind effective and rapid development and change.

4. Summary and Conclusion

Today's society of Ghulkin is not that society which existed prior to the AKRSP's intervention year, but rather has evolved itself and/or transformed in many respects. Economically, the community does not depend solely on the agro-pastoral mode of life, but men and women have diversified their livelihood strategies in also doing businesses (within and out of the village); and engaged in employments in public and private sectors, and civil society organizations. The community has abandoned cultivation of faba-bean (millennia old crop) and is adopting cultivation and production of a large scale potatoes used for in-house consumption, and more particularly for commercial purpose. Out of 153 households, 83 households (52.3%) have

¹⁹ There is a Wakhi saying: *yawep nung werešt, yawepšung werešt*. The gist would follow as: "if someone does something extraordinary in immaterial form, his/her name and fame would remain alive; and if someone does something in material form, again his/her name and fame would be alive". Means, s/he will be remembered ever.

totally abandoned rearing sheep and goats; and 100% of the population has no horse and donkey. There is less dependence on manures (feces) and more dependence on chemical fertilizers bought from the market. Opposed to the previously excessive exploitation of the natural resources such as hunting the wildlife (ibexes, blue-sheep, birds, predators like snow-leopards and wolves), or intensified deforestation of the natural forests, today the community organization, called GESWANCA, aggressively works for the nature's conservation and environment.

In contrast to previous ignorance for education, the people now advocate for quality education and prefer female education. There was no master's degree holder from the village before 1983; and currently, there are 54 masters' degree holders (40 male and 14 females) with dozens more pursuing their higher degrees. Previously, there were two primary schools in the village; but presently, there are two middle schools in addition with one government primary school and one community-based AKESP school for secondary level. The schools are equipped with some computers but no adequate computer instructors/teachers. Besides, all students (numbering 287) in the village also do get their religious education in the three religious centers that have 8 religious guides and more than a dozen volunteers who offer their services to educate the students/juniors religious education. Out of the village, there are 249 students pursue their education in different institutions (schools, colleges and universities). There is a first-aid-post in the village since 1984 that deals patients with initial health issues; and for serious issues, patients are taken either to the not-equipped hospital in Gunit, otherwise to the hospitals in Aliabad and Gilgit, or Islamabad and Karachi (Aga Khan University Hospital).

Opposed to the previously extended/joint family system, the nuclear families are increasing (currently 47.8%). Children's roles as a labor-force have decreased and/or transformed from agro-pastoral and other laboring work to educational activities and pursuance. Decision on mate-selection (conjugal partnership) has significantly changed from the arranged marriage to marriage of consent, understanding and love; and age limit of minimum 18 years is pre-requisite for the wedlock as opposed to the previous marriages which took place even before 18 or before reaching their teenage. Polygyny is no more in practice today, as we could find examples in the previous period. Levirate and sororate marriages depend on the situation, however. Women's roles have changed to a significant level from the confined in-house activities to organizational employments and voluntary services. In the previous agro-pastoral society, the parents produced more children. At present, the parents are motivated for less children and they do practice the family planning techniques and tools.

The old internal lending or microcredit system in kinds (called *tol*) transformed into the modern internal lending in cash, introduced by the AKRSP in the V/WOs 1988 has its significant effects in improving the quality of life of the village community in the fields of education, health, enterprise development, land-development, marriages, and so on; although, some negative issues could also be prospected, if in case non-payments came up.

No more travel on horses or donkeys could be dreamt of. The main link-road to Ghulkin constructed in the 1960s, improved in 1980s is currently being widened and asphalted. The coarse link-roads around the main settlement and sub-villages have been constructed. More than 50% of the households have the land-

line telephone system in addition with, an average, almost 100% households having mobile-sets. Almost 50% of the households have the computers.

Each household is currently having clean-drinking/tap water in their houses as opposed to the previous situation where the people consumed muddy water of the glacier (before 1981) for cooking and drinking. All households, like other villages in the region, have electricity (since 1987) and having variety of electrical appliances, as opposed to the previous situation where there was no or no adequate light system.

Previously, there was the old toilet system in the traditional Wakhi house. In 1976, when the first toilet was introduced, the community did not accept this change because of human manure production from the human excrements. But at present, 100% of the households have replaced the previously traditional manure-based disease-oriented toilets in addition with removal of the pens or cattle-houses.

No more traditional long shoes called *şušk* or *səndal*, or a traditional outfit like *krest* (a overcoat made out of goats' or sheep's skin), or in-house made woolen clothes can be seen that the people wore previously. Instead the company-made outfits of polyester, woolen, felt, velvet, and cotton et cetera are bought from the bazaar. The traditional robe called *bet* and the traditional caps are seen that the people put on especially during the winter. The youths, both male and female, seem indifferent in this regard. There is no more subsisting foods at meal because the community has diversified their modes of income; and significantly improved their nutrition at homes. The community still retains the traditional Wakhi dishes, but comparatively not cooked very often for the guests as those dishes had their special social significance. These days, for instance, if the high-ranked traditional dishes like *molida*, *yulminid* or *bat* are offered to the guests instead of meat and rice (and no milk-tea in the aftermath), the guests or hosts may not elevate the food status: and no mention if there are vegetables, rice or pulse. So holds true to beverages like fruit juices (e.g., *chmos*), milk, soup, yogurt, or buttermilk versus milk-tea: .milk-tea would be preferred upon the harmless traditional beverages.

Unlike the previous period, poetry, singing and dramas are encouraged. Music and dance had their awesome prominence before, especially during the weddings. Both music and dance; and they still retain their significance although, some melody changed. The folksongs and folkdance is not highly prominent. Today, we can find more than a dozen artistes each in the fields of poetry, singing, dance, music and dramas at Ghulkin. The traditional voluntary modes—except for the corporate laboring (a facet of social organization)—still exist in addition with organizational voluntarism.

The local languages of Gilgit-Baltistan including Wakhi, as vehicles of cultures and traditions, are witnessed losing their important vocabularies²⁰ and encountering robust challenges for its survival. On the one hand, globalization (besides its positive realities) has negatively affected the languages of small population; and on the other, the discouraging behaviors of the respective community members, especially apparently educated peoples (especially between 25-60 years old) towards their languages and not preserving the fundamental vocabularies of their ancient languages like the Wakhi Pamri.

²⁰ Besides losing vocabularies, many youngsters are observed talking all time mostly in Urdu and then in English.

In conclusion, being a continuous process, societal change that occurs when effective come in the human mindsets and the community effectively volunteer themselves. The gloomy past of the society in socio-economic and politico-cultural terms has gone. The society is being developed impressively in a short span of time, but gloomy times could come again, if adequate and considerate measures were not taken ahead to address same or different kinds challenges in an organized and united manner. Majority of the community has abandoned their livestock (sheep & goats) and full focus on the children's education. More than a dozen degree-holders are coming annually out of their education institutions and would face unemployment in the job markets. Those students, unable to continue their education after their matriculation or even under-matriculation or otherwise, are already in the unemployment bazaar, and engaged with variety of business activities or otherwise within and out of the village. With the growing population and nuclear families (47.8%), the land distributions among the siblings are reducing. Hanging on their academic certificates or degrees, they may not aspire to continue their agro-pastoral mode of life. They would also come across issues in mate-selection (getting the desired conjugal partners), which would further aggravate the frustrations of the youths.

Some may opt for exogamy (marriages not only out of the clan or village, rather out of their language-groups, out of their religious affinity or out of their nationality for their survival and social prestige. Implicated social issues could emerge, if positive adjustment could not come. What the respective social institutions, community leaders and organizations could do to address such future challenges would be a big question mark.



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