



An Ethnographic Studies of the Bakarwal Community of Bhimber, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan

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Abstract

The tribal traits of the Bakarwals make them unique. They live in many provinces of the Indian subcontinent. This study will explain their origin and cultural history. The Bakarwals claim that they were Gujjars living in Gujarat and Rajasthan. They were expelled out from their own lands because of accepting Islam. Several historians quote that they are Gujjars but their nomadic style of living, names them as Bakarwals. This study will explore the relations of the Gujjars with other tribes. The Indian Historians, after the DNA analysis of both the clans, prove the Bakarwals and the Rajpoots from the same origin and race. The following study will investigate whether the Gujjars and the Bakarwals have the same cultural history or not. This study will throw light on the Bakawals of the District Bhimber who do not live there permanently but have been visiting the district seasonally for many years. They like to stay at several specific lands of the District Bhimber, AJ&K. There are also many Bakarwal families in the Indian Occupied Kashmir and they spend their lives in the mountains of Jammu and Kashmir. However, they also move towards the plain areas during the winter season. During migration they use their own horses to go from one place to another.

Keywords: Bakarwal, Pastoralism, Bhimber, Kashmir, Cultural History, Shepherds

Introduction

The term Bakarwal is taken from the Gujari word Bakra (Urdu/Gujari: he-goat) means as goat or sheep, and Wal means one who takes care of sheep and goats. Among Gujjars who keeps goats and sheep are known as Bakarwals. The Gujjars and Bakarwals share the same history, culture, language, sub-caste and racial identities. Both were belonged to same race that's why they are alike in DNA or genetics. Moreover, they are also linked with the Rajpoots. It is a claim of historians that entire tribes who willingly convert as Rajpoot, they must link with the Gujjars. Several tribes in the Jammu and Kashmir, those have been keeping goats and sheep since the eighteenth century; among them, Bakarwals are special. They keep goats and sheep and their life style is nomadic that's why they are known as a Bakarwal (Parshad, 1992: 4). The Bakarwals have been still keeping some old cultural and historical norms for many centuries. They claim that they are linked with Gujjars and natives of Gujarat and Rajasthan. But the historians claim that Gujjars are civilized and settlers than Bakarwals (Ahmad, 2023: 1-8). It is considered that they are belonged to the Aryan or Indo-Aryan group or stock. Some historian claimed that Gujjars and Jatts came in the Indian subcontinent during a same era and from the same area and

route. It is considered that they also possess same in culture, history and origin. Both claim that their ancestors are belonged to the Hazrat Noah (A.S) (Rahi, 2023: 8). The Gujjars were ever having dominated status, and several historians claim that the mostly Gujjars were Brahmans and Kshatriyas (Majumdar, 1981: 612-613). During GurjarsPartihara's period the Rajasthan and the Gujarat were called Gujarata or Gujara Desh. These Gujjars or Gurjar Partihars arrived from Gurjistan in the 1st and 2nd century. It was a famous country which was included over the maximum area of the Russia and the Central Asia (Puri, 1957: 1-2). The Bakarwals of Bhimber (who often visit in the District Bhimber once in a season) are also claimed that they are Gujjars and their origin was from the Indian Gujarat. They come in Bhimber during every winter season from the Deosaiin Gilgit-Baltistan (Rana, 2022: 1-8). The seasonal migration of Bakrwals is very eminent in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K). During this migration they pass through many areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and AJ&K and they spend two to three months in traveling. They follow their old beliefs and traditions. During the migration, they travel with their families, horses, goats, sheep and other necessity goods. In winter, they stay in Bhimber. Religiously, they are followers of the Islam, however, not they are not fundamentalists. They claimed that they participated in the Pak-India war of 1947 against the Dogra Hari Singh. (Rana, 2021: 1-5).

Literature Review and Research Methodology

Historically, the study goes back to the ancient periods and origin of the Bakarwals of the Bhimber. Although much has been written about Bakarwals but there is great potential of to probe and produce some healthy academic work focusing the Bakarwals in Bhimber. In this context some of the literature has been given below:

The Tarikh-e-Gujran is a book which presented a detail about importance of study of people's culture and history. The author explained about the land of Gurjistan which was found in the former USSR. It was the motherland of Gujjars. He explained seven authentic reasons to clear it that the Gujjar is not a small tribe as usual people think. In this book, he narrated in a full detail that Gujjars have a large number of sub-castes. He also points outs their braveries (Sialkoti, 2005). Mr. Khan explains in his book title as Shahan-e-Gujran: Gujjars-From Plains to Himalayas-series-II political empowerment of Gujjars in different eras and discussed their Gotras. His studies provide a detailed analysis of a broader motive in Pakistan that is critical in the historical and cultural attempts to fulfill the history of people. He thoroughly investigates (Khan, 2002). Chouhan's book The Short History of Gurjars analyzes the political and historical role of the Gujjars. It concluded that relatively they are the forefathers of the Rajpoots and they had been brought significant improvements in the political developments (Chouhan, 1996). The Gujjars: A book on History and Culture of Gujjar Tribe is a remarkable work of Mr. Rahi. In his studies he explores the life styleofBakarwals. He claims that they are nomads, however, the Gujjars are well settled. He estimates that Gujjars population is more than 41 percent and Bakarwals are only 5 percentin Rajouri. He also focuses about the Jammu and Kashmir but he did not discuss Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan (Rahi, 2016). In this research paper primarily, the secondary data is used to comprehend the socio-cultural history of the Bakarwals, primary data of personal communication is also used for the studies. The primary author has visited Bakarwals of Bhimber to conduct interviews related to cultural change and development among them. Basically, this is qualitative research to provide in-depth historical and cultural analysis of the Bakarwals.

The Origin of the Bakarwals and Seasonal settlements in Bhimber

The word Bakarwal is pronounced in three ways such as Bakarwal, Bakkarwal and Bakrawala. As nomads, they were used to travel over a maximum part of land starting from Pir Panjal

Mountain to the Hindukush and the Himalayas of Ladakh which is located in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. They are keepers of goats and sheep at a large scale and seasonally migrate from one place to another with their herds and flocks. They can be seen in all over Kashmir between India and Pakistan, northeast of the Afghanistan (Sandeep, 2016: 3-5). Historians could not give an idea about the Bakarwals that when and how they became the nomads? The British has mentioned them as a nomadic tribe in the records. Among Gujjars, those who have goats and sheep are called Bakarwals. The Gujjars and Bakarwals share the same history, culture, language, sub-castes and racial identity. Anthropological and genetic studies held on Bakarwals resulted that they are not having different identities (Daily excelsior, Jammu. 2015: 1-4). There are several theories about the origin of the Gujjar-Bakarwals. Several historians claim that they are Indo-Aryans. W. A. Forhes presents his idea that Gujjars and Jatts arrived in the Indian subcontinent from the same route. There is also a close connection between Gujjars and Rajpoots. Mr. W. Corrk explained that the ethnicity of the tribe gives slight information about their origin and history. The cultural history of Gujjars is connected to the history of the India. (Dar, 2017: 1-8). There are different theories regarding to the origin of Bakarwals; it is claimed that originally, they are from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Georgia, Chechnya and Central Asian countries. The Bakarwals of Bhimber claimed that they migrated from Indian Occupied Kashmir where they were living in Rajouri before the partition of 1947. They claimed to be the masters of all the pastures which were situated in the high mountains. They also claimed that they participated in the freedom movement of the Jammu and Kashmir which was fought against the Dogra Raj from 1947 to 1948. Their relatives who were living in the Mansehra, Dir, Chitral and other tribal areas of the Pakistan and Afghanistan, also arrived for help of the Muslims. Still today, they recalled their motherland of Kashmir (Ahmed, 2022: 1-4). There are many streams and rivers those are flown in the Jammu and Kashmir. Those green fields, hilly areas and lush green pastures give shelter to Bakarwals so that they take care of their goats and sheep. After Pak-India war of 1948 they were migrated from the Kashmir and settled in the Kangri near the Balakot. Later on, they left that place due to some reasons: the life was very difficult in those areas and their needs to live a balanced life could not be fulfilled. They said that place was not a living place and it was without of pastures which are considered basic necessity of the Bakarwals that's why they left that place (Tishna, 2006: 509-510). The Bakarwal tribe is divided into two distinct sections: the Kunhari and the Illahiwali. Alike to the Kunhari Bakarwals, who are claimed to be from the Kunhar valley¹ of Pakistan, the Illahiwali Bakarwals are associated with Illahiwal region (Khatana, 1992: 112).

Migration and Route

Bakarwals migrate back to Bhimber from the Deosaidue to harsh winter. They pass through many places of the Azad Kashmir and finally they reach in the form of several groups in Bhimber. They stay at the various spots of the District Bhimber named as Samahni, Maghlora, Barsali and Dewa Watala. They spend two and half months in traveling from the Deosai to the Bhimber (Ahmad, 2022: 1-5). They spent winter in the Bhimber, because it is a difficult task to face snow and its extreme coldness. During this migration, they are passing through Bara Pani, Sherkulli, Chillum, Chishma, Gorikot, Ramunpur, Shounter Top, (covered with snow and sometimes they lost some members or animals while crossing it) Kale, Sharda, Dousut, Main Road Khanci, Noseri, Punjkot, Lamrian, Hattain, Ganga Choti, SudhanGali, Bagh, Toli Peer, Ali Sajal, Hajira, Tata Pani, Dara Sher Khan, BhonColoni, Samrot, Serhota, Khoi Rata, Dheergoti Gali, Chirhoi, Ore, Peer Juju, JandiChontra, Kalish, Poona Mor, Mughlora, Dewa and Peer

¹Kunhar is the main reiver of the Kaghan Valley in KP, Pakistan.

Jamal. Some nomads have settled in Sakrana and some are settled in Peer Jamal. These are famous places which they used to visit once in a year (Ahmed, 2021: 1-5).

Cycle of the Migration

Some members along with horses and tents, pitch their tents before the karwan (Urdu: a Group of people) is reached at stay-point. Front-line members are always responsible for food of their entire group. They pay rent of the pastures of the Dewa, Mughlora, and Samahni. Their goats are considered main source of their income, they sell goats for their needs. If somebody dies among the Bakarwals, they bury in the graveyard of the region they pass through. They spend two and half months in travelling, they stay in Bhimber from December to April. Their journey for the Deosai starts in April, they spend more than two months again in travelling. Their travelling months are April and May. They reach at their destination in June. They spend June to October in the Deosaipasture (Ayaz, 2021: 1-5).

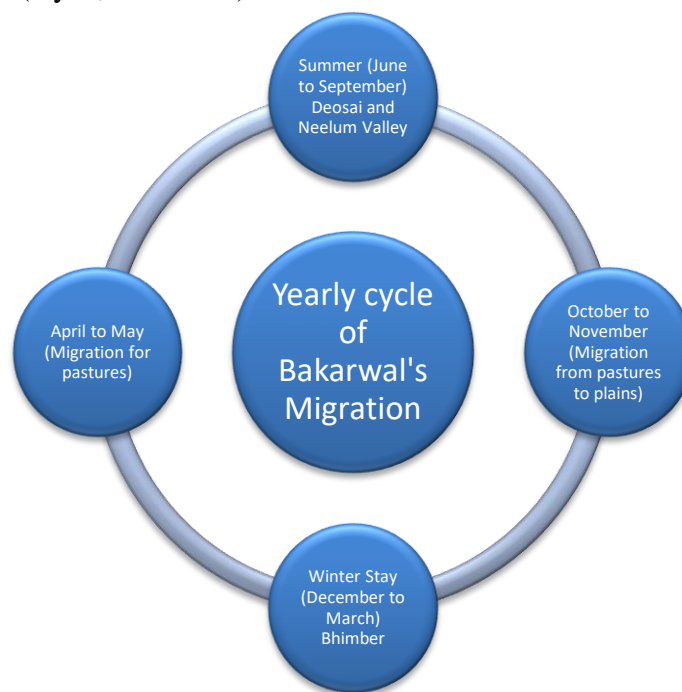


Fig: Migration Cycle of Bakarwals (Source: Dr. Muhammad Kashif Ali)

Identity and Identity Crises of Bakarwals

The Bakarwals of AJ&K (Pakistan) are in a big trouble because they don't have their national identity cards. For the national identity card, it is necessary to have some land whereas they are nomads. They are without of any land in the Pakistan and AJ&K. Due to this issue they don't have right to cast a vote. Pakistan is facing many issues in which terrorism is the most of all. It is also a difficult task for them to move from one place to another by bus or train. In 1991 in the Jammu and Kashmir of the India, the Bakarwals were first recognized as an Indian Scheduled Tribe. As of 2001, the Bakarwal were included as a Scheduled Tribe under the Indian Government's General Reservation Program of positive discrimination (Dar, 2023: 1-4). The Gujjars are mentioned in the Afghan National Anthem as one of the main tribes of Afghanistan. It is cleared that the Gujjars have a special status in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Rahi, 2006-2021). Though the Gujjars don't like to intermarriage with Bakarwals but they take care of them when they roam in Bhimber. They always show the gesture of sympathy towards them. The Bakarwals also acknowledge that the Gujjars constantly take care for them (Rana, 2022: 1-4).

The Bakarwals do not construct houses to live permanently, they live in tents which is prepared with the cloths, wooden poles and rope. Now and often, they used local grass and woods to prepare it. They took their clothes and household articles from one place to another by loading on horses. Mostly, it is seen that each family keeps about 100 sheep, 400 goats, 8 horses 4 dogs and more than 3 hens. The Bakarwals usually do not keep buffaloes and cows (Rana, 2022: 1-4).

Bakarwal Economy

Basically, the Bakarwal are nomads they don't have their own houses and lands. They don't depend on property and lands. Since now, they don't like to build a house. They claimed to be the masters of pastures. In the past, they were the rulers of the Gujarat and other areas of the Indian subcontinent. Al-Biruni also endorsed in his book *Katab-ul-Hind* the kings of Gujarat. It is also a claim that they are ancestors of the Rajpoots (Ahmad, 2013: 6). Bakarwals sell goats and sheep to fulfill their needs. They claim that they also provide goods and other things to the Pakistan Army, on the high altitude where nobody can reach. The Bakarwals are also provided some amusements to the visitors on the top of hilly areas. They keep horses with themselves which provide to the visitors to ride over them and visit the difficult areas. In this way, visitors enjoy the trip of the mountains. By riding on their horses, they move from one place to another in hilly areas. In this way, they earn livelihood for their families. The primary author has also seen the particular panorama in the mountains at several places (Rana, 2022: 1-4). Their society is organized into the gotra/kabila (Urdu: clan), the dada-potre (Urdu/Gujari: lineage), and the dera (Urdu: household): the three major kinship groups. The tribe keeps a track of their numbers and refers to their grazing and kafila groups in terms of dera. Usually, a dera is founded when an individual establishes an independent household, which often occurs after marriage. Consequently, each son constructs his own dera after marriage. Each dera has its own hearth and property, which contains a tent for the annual migration as well as sheep, goats, dogs, mules, and horses. They follow partiality where if a dera is made up of nuclear families, the husband is always the head. He owns the property and represents it in both its internal and external relationships. In addition, the members of a dera are assigned jobs based on their gender and age. Women and girls are responsible for home responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, caring for children, gathering wood, etc., whereas adult males stick equipment, maintain tents and ropes, and lean to and herd animals. Regarding the dera organization, its economic role is its primary function. It is the primary unit of consumption and production. This economic activity depends on the availability of grazing pastures in order to be viable. No pastures are allocated to individual families (deras) or their leaders in the region. These family groups are known as dada-potre, and both the community and the forest department and tax authorities have recognized their customary rights to pastures and migratory routes. Dada-potre refers to a group of patrilineal related kinsmen who share a common ancestor (Dar and Das, 2023: 63-76). The Bakarwal women stay in tents, do the domestic work, they know how to cook foods and how to stitch the clothes and caps. The women wear specific cap which makes it easy to recognize them. They stitch these caps with their own hands. During migration, if they need money, they will sell their goats and sheep. Sometimes, they are trying to purchase their handmade things such as sweaters and caps. They are also keeping hens with themselves. Their dogs are very famous in all over the Indian subcontinent because of their strong and hairy body. The Bakarwali dogs are bold. These dogs look after the goats and sheep vigilantly. The Bakarwals consider that their dogs can fight with leopards and wolves secure the herds. They also sell dogs to fulfill their needs. The Bakarwals are considered a poor community but they are well-known; how to earn livelihood and how to live a balanced life in society. They are becoming prosperous and developed with the passage of time (Rana, 2022: 1-4).

It is always criticized that Bakarwals of Northern Areas of Pakistan are involved to sell the herbs and other precious stones. The Bakarwals of Bhimber who start their journey from Deosai don't accept this allegation because they claim that they have been living a hard life for a long period which denotes they do not engage in the alleged business. They also, allegedly, sell the timber in the local market. Dr. Nafees addressed the allegation: As the nomadic people of the Azad Kashmir & Pakistan they managed their business by themselves; if there is less grass in a pasture land they will leave it and go to another. Their Sardars claim that they have some law and orders to stay at a land. So, they don't stay more than ten families in a land. They claim that the forest department has check posts everywhere to monitor them (Faraz, 2020: 1-8).

The Winter Life of the Bakarwals

The Bakarwals are sticky to their faith but their outlook is secular. They are homeless and landless wondering in openly and independently. Other people live as social but they live around four-footed in all their life. They do not have any house but only a tent and that tent is also made of several old pieces of cloths. Inside the tent there is family, tired and weighed down by life's chores. It is considered that children of Bakarwals are not lying naked and crying such as the Changers². Bakarwals have kept some handmade woolen clothes (Balgir, 2003: 275-285). Overall, the population of Jammu and Kashmir overcrowded by the Gujjars. They are divided as settled, half-settled and homeless Gujjars. The settled are those who are living at one place in village, town and city. They are staying in villages and work as farmers. They are doing agriculture in the plain fields. Half settled are those who live in villages and adopt agriculture as a profession but for six months of summer they leave for Peer Panjal. Half settled spend a half year in the pastures and forests. From 17th and 18th centuries these people are living in the laps of hills and valleys and on the banks of rivers and streams (Parshad, 1992: 4). The Bakarwals winter life style in the District Bhimber is a quite unique. They do different activities and celebrate various functions. During their celebrations they don't invite locals of the area. Their three main activities are famous in all over the AJ&K. Their celebrations and sorrow gatherings having unique status among all the tribes of the Pakistan.

Child Birth ceremonies of Bakarwals

There is another celebration which is more familiar in the Bakarwals, at the time of child birth, they are celebrated and invited all the group members at a feast, they get together to enjoy this event properly. Their members come and congratulate the family of new born child. On the birth of a child, they are again sung a song in Gujar language. Their folksongs are always famous in the entire subcontinent. Particularly, their bait (Urdu/Gujari: a sad song and a special song which is sung in the remembrance of Allah Almighty and his beloved messenger the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)). They sing during the newly birth of a child. Overall, they enjoy with fully amusements at the birth of a new child. More often their children are born during the roaming time. They are lucky people because more of them are born in pure nature of the Deosai plains, Smahni, Magholora and Dewa (Ahmad, 2022: 1-4).

Marriage ceremonies of the Bakarwals

During the winter the Bakarwals stays in Bhimber at different places such as Samahni, Magholora, Barsali, Dewa and Watala. They do different activities during their stay. In winter marriage ceremonies are held in Bakarwal community. They prefer simplicity in their marriage

²It is also a nomadic tribe who is seen in all over the Subcontinent and they claim that they are a sub-caste of the Rajpoots. The life of Changer is full of mysterious. They are not found only in Pakistan but also in the Afghanistan and India.

ceremonies and their customs are not different from other castes and tribes. As they follow same customs such as Tail, Mail (Urdu: 1st and 2nd day of marriage ceremony). During their marriage ceremonies, they invite their relatives in the house of groom and bride. They participate in the marriage ceremonies with food items because it is a custom among them to offer food to the family of marriage. They often offered mutton to the guests. They arrange these functions in a big ground wherein they could do horse riding, they spend all the nights in singing songs they don't rely on music. Some weddings are arranged and taken place at the time of migration especially whenever they are moving to one place to another. They are also celebrated Ghoroli (Urdu/ Gujarati: a vase) when young girls of Bakarwals bring a water for the groom's bath on the special occasion. Later on, brides and grooms are brought at a same place for Nikah. Their Khalifa (Urdu/Gujarati: a religious person) has a register of Nikah and he registered the Nikah³, because they are the Sunni-Muslims and they follow it. Their customs and traditions are ancient. They don't rely on jewelry and other ornaments. In short, they celebrate their marriage ceremonies with simplicity. They invited all the members of their group and cooked mutton for them. They offered mutton to all the relatives who are participated in marriage ceremonies. They don't like to take money as a Nindra (Urdu/Gujarati: money of marriage food), instead of it, they will like to give goats and sheep to brides (Ahmed, 2022: 1-2).

Folklores and Folksongs of the Bakarwals

Folklores are very famous among the Bakarwals, at the nights, they gather at a place and talk to each other about the subject which is considered important, according to their point of view. During these type gatherings their elders tell them folklores and stories which are mostly belong to their ancestors who were kings as they claim, but now they are without of lands and even without of their houses. They claim that the Rajpoots are their descendent, associated with the word put or poot (Gujarati: son). Their folk songs are very famous especially their bait associated to recall Allah Almighty and the last messenger of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) (Ayaz, 2021: 1-8).

Death memorials of the Bakarwals

Death and life are the universal truth, it is impossible to deny it. When a member from the Bakarwals community dies, they give bath and bury it. They gather in a field to say the funeral prayer of the dead person. In the funeral gathering, a large number of locals also participate. Eventually, the Bakarwals bury the dead body in the nearby graveyard of the Muslims (Rana, 2022: 1-8).

Socio-Político Hierarchy of the Bakarwals

The Bakarwals is a male dominated community of Jammu and Kashmir. They give respect and honor to turban (Gujarati: headgear). For the turban, they use black, white and red colors. It is seemed that they want to show their special status to the society. This turban separates them from other member of the society. They took care of turban and be ready to offer any type of sacrifice for its safeguard. The Muqadam (Urdu/Gujarati: a chief/leader) must wear a special turban. They select a person as a chief who is well-known of the community. Eventually, selected person can take various decisions in ongoing matters (Rana, 2022: 1-8). Among Bakarwals, two persons are more respectful and honorable; Khalifa and Muqadam. Both wear turban, are considered sardar (Urdu/Gujarati: chief/leader). Their sons are also known as sardars. The turban is considered a distinctive sign among the tribe. Both Muqadam and Khalifa wear costly dress as the distinction. The community select a person as a chief by the consensus like a loose democracy one the merit

³The *nikah* is the Islamic marriage ceremony, in which the Muslims couple is signed an agreement. In this regard, the couple accepts the authority of Allah Almighty, in the presence of an Imam and two witnesses.

of virtue; honest, bravery and decision-making power. The ability of reading and writing is addition quality for the chief. There should no complaints against him to the police. He is responsible for conflict settlements among the community. Though the Bakarwals are peaceful people but they are ready to fight against the people who try to capture their grazing lands (Ayaz, 2021: 1-8). During the selection of their Muqaddam, they held a meeting, all community members are gathered at a place, this assembly is called jirga. The attendees give their vote for their best nominee for chief. If Jirga fails to select the leader, they accept the final decision by the Khalifa who is the most respectable among them (Ahmad, 2022: 1-4).

To maintain the peace is the prime duty of Muqaddamin the community. If a person is mischievous among them, Muqaddam has authority to take a decision against him. His role is significance when the karwan (Gujaru/Urdu: procession) is on the seasonal migration. Although the Bakarwal is male dominated community but at some occasions their female can also take decisions especially wedding ceremonies (Ahmad, 2022: 1-2).

Food and Dress of the Bakarwals

Bakarwals eat mainly same food as well as other tribe of the AJ&K and Pakistan however maize they like too much. The wheat is other major cereal and they make chapaties (Urdu: a flat bread made from maize or wheat flour). They also used a word for chapati of Gujarati which is known as turo. They use butter and ghee (Urdu: purified butter) in major quantity. They also eat mutton and chicken. Due to seasonal migration, they don't do farming at large scale therefore, they buy all goods such as wheat, maize, rice and pulses from various bazaars. It is common thing among them to keep dry bread along with during the seasonal migrations and use milk of goats. On the religious festivals they cook mutton and rice (Nadeem, 2022:1-4).

Dress of the Bakarwals is quite different than the other tribes of the district. Mostly, males among them, wear black clothes. They used silky and thick clothes because it is helpful for the winter and during the migration. They also put on turban over their head. Mostly, they use black and white colors in their tarbans. Among them, the Sardars put on a turban which is longer and higher compare to others. Their dress is qameez (Urdu: long shirt) and suthan (Urdu/Gujari: rouser). Old persons wear tehband (Urdu: a baggy unstitched trouser). The women wear silky dresses with bright colors red, black, blue and green. The Bakarwal women wear caps full of embroidery. They preps recaps and sweaters in the tents and sometimes they sell in the bazaar to fulfill their urgent needs. The Bakarwal women are also fond of jewelry which is often made of silver. They wear necklace and ring-bell. The women wear long chain which is in Gujarilanguage called Ghani (Sadiq, 2022: 1-2).

Language and Religion of the Bakarwals of the Bhimber

Bakarwals of the Bhimber speak Gujarati language which has resembled with Dakni, Rajasthani and Gujarati. They can understand Urdu, Punjabi and Hindko as well. In Urdu and Gujarati alphabets are same. The Gujarati is considered an ancient language of the Indian subcontinent. During the Era of Mughal Emperor Akbar, Gujarati speakers were in larger number compare to other languages. Dr. Jameel Jalbi believes that Gujarati was the main source of Urdu. Wali Dakni was first poet of Urdu and his mother tongue was Gujarati. In Indian Occupied Kashmir, Gujjars and Bakarwals also speak Gujarati. Bakarwals of the Bhimber speak Gujarati very well. The religion of Bakarwal is Islam, they follow the Sunni school of thought. They give respect and honor to shrine of the spiritual mentors called pirs (Ahmad, 2022: 1-2). There are religious Qari (Urdu/Gujari: a person who teaches them Holy Quran) and teachers along them. They celebrate all Muslim festivals with full of devotion, and they also invite the tribe fellows during the festivals. They cook mutton and offertory participants of the festivals. They celebrat Shub-e-

Maraj⁴ and Shub-e-Barat⁵ like all Muslims of the world. They also celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha with full of respect, it does not matter, where they are on meadows or at travelling. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, they get up early in the morning, take a bath which is quite a difficult task if they are in high pastures and after eating something they go to the nearby mosque to say Eid Prayers (Rana, 2022: 1-5). Mostly, they are illiterate but now, Government of Pakistan is trying to educate them. The Government of Pakistan is providing them mobile schools where their kids are educated by general and religious teachers. The Bakarwals are simple and gentle as a tribe, and they respect their religious teachers most. The Sunni-sect is very famous due to giving special respect to the pirs (Urdu/Gujari: spirituals persons in the Sunni school of thought) and Bakarwal follow them. Most of them follow Hazrat Baji Sahib of Rian Shareef. The shrine of Baji Sahib is located in the Tata Pani and he himself was from the Bakarwals community (Ahmad, 2022: 1-4).

Conclusion

To sum up, the Bakarwal of Bhimber are a thoroughly woven fabric of history, culture, and tradition that spans millennia. Their history is characterized by adaptability and perseverance to the varied and frequently difficult environments they have travelled throughout, and their roots can be found in the ancient nomadic tribes. The cultural practices of the Bakarwal, which are firmly anchored in their pastoral way of life, show a close bond with nature and a distinctive social structure that places a high importance on kinship and community. Their colorful customs, which range from their unique attire and music to their periodic migrations, demonstrate not only their historical legacy but also their capacity to maintain their identity in the face of progress. The Bakarwal community is a perfect example of how to successfully combine traditional practices with modern ideas, striking a careful balance between honoring the past and looking to the future. Gaining an understanding of the Bakarwal of Bhimber offers a window into a dynamic and ageless way of life that offers important insights into the region's larger cultural tapestry. Their narrative serves as a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit and the rich cultural diversity that permeates our globe.

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⁴ It is held on 27th of Rajab among the Muslims, it was night when the Holy Prophet visited to the heavens.

⁵ It is observed on the night of 15th Shaban among the Muslims of the South Asia and South East Asia, they collectively gather and ask to Allah Almighty for forgiveness

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