

Impact Analysis of Rural to Urban Migration on Hujra System of Pashtun Society

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Abstract

Throughout human history, the human being has remained socially intact, in different world societies through different social systems. Its link is got in the Holy Qur'an from Surah Al-Hujrat (Hujrat mean informal meeting and gathering places), where Prophet of Islam Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him was receiving his guests and visitors. The Pashtun society, religiously and culturally enriched does have had the tradition and practice of Hujra system. Hence, it is experienced that with the passage of time, it is declining, for which a number of factors are considered as responsible, while the local migration i.e. from rural to urban area can be one among them. Therefore, the major objective of the study has been the analysis of the effects of rural to urban migration on the Hujra system of Pashtun Society. The district Karak of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was selected as study region due to the reason of religious homogeneity, rural nature of the area, conventional culture and having single ethnicity i.e. Pashtun tribe of one caste i.e. Khattak. The data was collected through interview schedule from a sample comprising of 100 respondents. Only those male respondents were selected for the study that were of above 35 years age and were of married status. The results of the study has shown that though the hujra system prevails within the study region of Pashtun society, but its values have changed; a significant link was found between the independent variable of rural to urban migration with the changes in the Hujra system as the dependent variable.

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Introduction

With the change in the structure and living system of people, the modern expansions and the changes in living styles have been increased. The change is constantly occurring in the world. The industrialization, urbanization, modernization and globalization; the diffusion effect is bringing changes in the rural communities. Due to high rate of rural to urban migration, social structure of Pashtun Society is highly affected. A significant number of changes have occurred in the every institution of the society. With the passage of time, the traditional Hujra System has also accepted changes.

The Pashtuns are more than sixty tribes; some are settled and some are nomadic. Round about 11 million in Pakistan and 6 million in Afghanistan, they form the dominant ethnic group (historically known as Afghans and now typically as Pashtuns). Pathans are Muslims and speak Pashtu language. They are also known as Pakhtuns, Pushtuns, Pathans and Pakhtoons titled with a general suffix as 'Khan', although many Pashtuns prefer to write a reference to their immediate clan, group, or tribe as well.

In Pashtun society, the hujra is a traditional place where visitors/guests are received by the host, the hospitality is made therein, they are entertained; hujra has a lot of religious, social and recreational functions to play. Hujra is the oldest social institution of the Pashtun society. It is a place of rest and recreation for the whole village. It is in most of cases the ownership of the family who can afford it and is enjoyed by the whole of the village. It serves for the accommodation of different ceremonies. The male members of the village who work outside all the day regularly attend hujra and feel like a larger family. In hujra, apart from close relatives other people from neighborhood are also welcomed. Older people spend time through chatting and taking tea, while younger members of the hujra use to listen to the experiences of the older members and the younger ones serve the elders. Jirgas; the resolution for communal issues; issues are put on the table, brainstormed and a consensus is developed before the issue can be put to the wider community, are also conducted at hujra. The hujras also play the religious socialization's role.

Literature Review

A meeting point, meeting place, or assembly point is a geographically defined place where people meet. Such a meeting point is often a landmark which has become popular and is a convenient place for both tourists and citizens to meet. Examples of meeting points include public areas and facilities such as squares, statues, parks, amusement parks, railway stations, airports, etc. or officially designated and signed points in such public facilities. Especially when called an *assembly point*, a meeting point is a designated (safe) place where people can gather. In sociology, a meeting point is a place where a group of people meet on a regular basis, for example a group of regulars or people with a special interest or background.¹

A Mehmaan Khana, is a drawing room where guests are entertained in many houses in North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Alternative names that are used include Hujra and Baithak. The term *hujra* is especially prevalent in the predominantly Pashtun areas of Pakistan. Pashtun *hujras* are used mainly to entertain male guests in a household, although sometimes community *hujras* are also maintained by tribal units. In individual houses, the size and trappings of a *hujra* are sometimes indicative of family status.²

Hujra is a community club situated in each village, each Khail (sub village, street) and sometimes owned by a well off family but shared by the whole community. Other than a place to accommodate collective ceremonies, male members of the community who hang out and associate like a larger family regularly attend hujra(s). Members of a Hujra are mostly close relatives but other people from neighborhood are also welcomed. A guest house for male guests, Hujra also serves as a place to initiate Jirgas. Issues are put on the table, brainstormed and a consensus is developed before the issue can be put to the wider community.³

The term *mehmān khānā* is direct derivation from Persian and means 'guest house or room'. In Iran and adjoining areas, the term can refer to hotels.⁴ The term (also spelled *memonkhona* in Latin script) is also used to describe a guest room in other parts of Central Asia. The term *baithak* literally means sitting room in Hindustani and Bengali. *Hujra* is derived from Arabic and means *room* or *cell*. In non-Pashtun Muslim households or North India and Pakistan, the term *hujra* can also refer to a dedicated prayer room, in Bangladesh, *hujra* usually refers to the sitting room of Imam in a Mosque.⁵

The 'classical' term for room, *hujra*, is rare and denotes a separate building consisting, it seems, of one room.⁶ The *hujra* for most Pathan men was a gathering place for guests and friends where they could enjoy meals, conversations.⁷ Visiting relatives, officials, friends, and strangers break their journeys and are entertained in the *hujras*.⁸

A community club of sorts, found in almost every village and *mohallah*, the *hujra* is an integral part of Pakhtun culture. Usually shared by the whole community, it may sometimes be a space owned by a person of means, normally an open area stretching up to 1,200 square yards. Most *hujras* have a clearly marked boundary but no door, signalling that everyone is welcome. Popularly known as a *hujra* or *daira* in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, it has been given various names throughout Afghanistan as well, ranging from *kotta* in Kabul, a *sarachah* in Khost, *jammah* in Dera Ismail Khan, *chawk* in Lakki Marwat and *chowk*, *baitak*, *darman* in Karak. The *hujra* is an institution where men learn about life. Everything, from sensitive subjects such as sexuality, emotional and psychological problems to bigger issues such as succeeding in life, is discussed openly by the men who come from all ages and backgrounds. However, with the spread of popular technology and the rampant use of cell phones and computers, the *hujras* are gradually losing their usual crowd. While the older generation still congregates in these spaces.⁹

Economic instability, worsening law and order situation and urbanization are major reasons behind the decline in 'Hujra' culture in the Pashtun society. The Hujra has resulted in different problems like moral training of young generation, resolution of local issues amicably and encouraging literary and other healthy activities in the society. The cultural norms, political and socio-economic discussions were held in Hujra in the past, which was source of enlightenment for whole population.

*"It was considered to be a sign of respect where elders could share their experiences, however, with the deteriorating law and order situation; Hujra culture witnessed a sharp decline in last few decades. It played a vital role in the past to resolve disputes and to educate people. It could play a more proactive role to bring stability and peace by brining collective thinking in the society."*¹⁰

There are many characteristics of Pakhtun culture and a *hujra* is one of them. From the western mountainous terrains of Pakistan to the heart of Afghanistan to anywhere in the world where Pakhtuns

live, there exists the *hujra*. Exclusively for the male population, a *hujra* plays host to various aspects of the social life of Pakhtun society – from resolving community disputes to wedding ceremonies. A typical *hujra* is owned and run by a tribe. The more affluent members of the tribe contribute more funds in setting up and maintaining a *hujra*. A man can enter a *hujra* at any time of the day, month or year and be sure of getting safety, food and shelter. No questions are asked from the guest until he is taken care of and served the best food. It is only after he has been adequately fed that the members ask him how they can help him and assure him that he can stay as long as he wishes. The Pakhtuns have a system of democratic decisions and the *hujra* serves as a state council for the tribe. Whenever there is a dispute, the *masharan* (council of elders) convene a meeting of the *jirga* members. All and sundry are invited to attend the proceedings of the council. It serves as a school of academic as well as practical knowledge. Since different members of the tribe have different occupations and life experiences, they share these with the rest and thus, the body of knowledge is transferred from generation to generation. A *hujra* was not just a social gathering. As the conversation flowed, it gave all its members exposure to people, politics, current happenings and global affairs. It is said that no matter how much formal education people received, if they were not regular participants at a *hujra*, they would not hone their social skills.¹¹

In Pushto-speaking areas the term *hujra* (Arabic: room, cell) refers to a separate room(s) or house maintained for male guests. The *hujra* provides a site for hospitality, which is one of the main tenets of the Pashtun tribal code (*Pashtunwali*). It is used in villages for daily gatherings and special occasions such as marriages and circumcisions. The *hujra* also serves as public space for meetings between senior members of several villages, clans, or tribes, and for meetings of village elders for decision making on issues of tribal law, both social and criminal.¹²

Research Methodology

The nature of the study is descriptive; it states the prevailing condition of the effects of rural to urban migration on the *hujra* system of Pashtun society.

Hypotheses of the Research Study

For this research study, the hypothesis was developed on the basis of, general community's view and the researcher's perception. The hypothesis is stated as follows:-

Research Hypothesis: "The people who migrate from rural to urban areas do cause significant change in hujra system of their area of origin (in rural area)".

Alternate Hypothesis: "The people who migrate from rural to urban areas do cause insignificant change in hujra system of their area of origin (in rural area)".

Sampling and Sampling Procedure

Universe of the Study

This study has been conducted in the District Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. This area was selected because of its suitability to the research problem; a significant portion of its population has migrated from rural to urban area due to different reasons i.e. education, employment, business, enmity, lack of agricultural resources, lack of industrial resources, un-favorable development and socialization opportunities etc. It was suitable to study the social changes caused by rural to urban area's migrants in their indigenous locality.

Number of Samples

A total number of 100 respondents were selected for the subject research from the study region. One respondent was selected from each household selected for the study.

Type and Characteristics of Sample

Only those male respondents were selected for the study that were of above 35 years age and were of married status. It was done so because this age group has been considered to be comparatively mature and having sound judgments regarding social change process occurring in the community. The respondents were the indigenous people of the said area and at least one of their close relative has left the rural area/household for living in the urban area. These migrated members occasionally visit, stay for few days and have interaction with their household of origin in the rural locality of the study area. Only male respondents of indigenous locality were selected because of the cultural taboo/restriction to access female respondents. Hence, this study focused on the factor of social change i.e. "when a rural inhabitant migrates to urban

area (the regional/national migration occurs), and then that individual lives in the urban area while being attached to his rural origin (his joint/extended family) and then he visits his area of origin, he resides there for a few days, he keeps communication intact, he shares, communicates and transfers his newly learnt experiences within the urban area, which has been comparatively developed then that of his rural area of origin, which effects his community's social structure including the hujra system. This is a significant social phenomenon which in this research has been endeavored to explore.

Sampling Methodology

The samples were selected through purposive sampling method of non probability sampling technique. Only those samples were selected as respondents who's close relative/family member have been shifted to urban area from at least one year; it was done because this time period has been assumed to be sufficient for having impact of differentials i.e. between rural and urban area, and have started affecting their (migrants mind), the process of change initiated by them and the effort they have started to bring changes in their area of origin. They are the close observant of the change in attitude of the migrants with their origin.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study has been to find out changes in the social structure of district Karak caused by the rural to urban migration of the residents/population of the district. In this study, the researcher attempted to find out changes occurred in the Hujra system of Pashtun society within the study region.

The Context of the Study

Talcott Parsons considers that social change is not something which disturbs the social balance of the society, but a position of the balance is changed and a new balance is formed. He argued that changes come from two sources; either it is because of the contact with the other societies or it may be resulted from actions within the society (Rao, 2006). In this study the social change in social structure has been studied while linking it to the factors from outside the society i.e. the rural to urban migrant learns new things (which were previously alien to their society) from within the urban social structure and then bring these ideas to their society, and in this way causes changes in the indigenous social structure.

Data Collection and Analysis

Secondary Data Collection

For the purpose of secondary data/information gathering, the relevant literature has been cited and included in the body of research.

Primary Data Collection

For primary data collection, the face to face interviews of the respondents were conducted. For this purpose, based on objectives and hypotheses of the study, an Interview Schedule was developed. For ethical considerations, before conducting actual data collection, the respondents were taken into confidence regarding nature and type of research, their confidentiality was also ensured.

Data Analysis

The collected data has been classified, tabulated and described in text form; and for the purpose of analysis, the statistical averages were used.

Limitation of the Research

The researcher has studied the effects of rural to urban migration on the hujra system of Pashtun society, while there can a number of other factors which may cause the said effects. Hence, it was because of the reason of the limited scope of this study.

Data Analysis

The variable-1 in data Table-1 shows that 35% of the respondents were from the age-group of 35-45 years of age, 40% were from the age-group of 46-50 years of age and 35% of the respondents were from the age of 56 years and above.

The Variable-2 of data Table-1 shows that 17% of the respondents were from agriculture sector, 8% were working on daily wages, 34% were government servants, 16% were having their own business, 3% were having private service and 22% were retired servicemen.

The variable-1 in data Table-2 shows that all of the 100 (100%) respondents disagreed with that they have hujra/bethak (guests place) for the whole village.

The variable-2 in data Table-2 shows that all of the 100 (100%) respondents agreed that they have their own small hujra at home and all of 100 (100%) respondents agreed upon that their family members migrated from rural to urban area have insisted to have their own smaller hujra (bethak) at home.

The variable-3 in data Table-2 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, no respondent's hujra/bethak (guests place) was constructed through stones and mud, 18 (18%) of the respondents said that their hujra/bethak (guests place) was constructed using bricks and mud, 35 (35%) of the respondents said that their hujra/bethak (guests place) was constructed while using bricks and cement and 45 (45%) of the respondents said that their hujra was constructed using all the mentioned three types of material.

The variable-4 in data Table-2 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 38 (38%) of the respondents told that they have spared one room for hujra/bethak (guests place), 43 (43%) told that they have spared 2 rooms for the hujra/bethak (guests place) and 19 (19%) of the respondents told that they have spared 3 and more than 3 rooms for the purpose of hujra/bethak (guests place).

The variable-1 in data Table-3 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 1 (1%) told that he attended 2-5 guests daily in the past, 32 (32%) told that they attended 6-10 guests daily in the past, 15 (15%) told that they attended 11-20 guests daily in the past, 52 (52%) told that they were frequently visited by guests and no respondent was such who has not attended any guests. In response to question that what is the number of guests respondents attend now a day, out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 1 (1%) told that he attend no guest, 65 (65%) told that they attend 2-3 guests daily, 33 (33%) told that they attend 4-6 guests daily, no respondent receive 7-10 guests daily and 1 (1%) of the respondent told that he attends more than 10 guests daily.

The variable-2 in data Table-3 regarding when guest(s) come to meet respondents shows that out of 100 (100%) respondents, 52 (52%) told that they welcome the guest, 48 (48%) told that it depends upon the situation, no respondent agreed that they try to get rid of the guest and no respondent agreed that they try to hide when they receive guest. The data also shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 99 (99%) of the respondents agreed that the family members migrated from rural to urban area are discouraging one unit Hujra for the whole village and only 1 (1%) respondent disagreed. Data in the Table also shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 77 (77%) of the respondents agreed that their family members migrated from rural to urban area are discouraging frequent receiving of guests at personal Bethak, while 23 (23%) of the respondents are not being discouraged.

The variable-3 in data Table-3 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 40 (40%) said that changing old values were caused by the lack of manpower i.e. nobody was there to provide services for the hujra and 35 (35%) said that changing old values were caused by the shortage of time, 25 (25%) said that changing old values of hujra were caused by the shortage of money, and all of the 100 (100%) respondents said that changing old values are caused by the adaptation process that is from the family members migrated from rural to urban areas.

The variable-4 in data Table-3 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 68 (68%) of the respondents told that their females are always ready to prepare meal/food items for the guests and 32 (32%) of the respondents said that their females sometimes refuse and are sometimes ready to prepare meal/food items for guests, hence no respondent told that their females never prepare food/meal for guests.

The variable-1 in data Table-4 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 15 (15%) of the respondents opted that the reason for change in social and recreational values of hujra is due to adopting of the modern ideas/behavior from electronic media, 27 (27%) of the respondents opted that it is due to the educational improvement and 58 (58%) opted that it is because of the adopting of the professional behavior learnt from the family members migrated from rural to urban area.

The variable-2 in data Table-4 shows that all of the 100 (100%) respondents agreed that late sitting in the hujra is diminishing and all of 100 (100%) respondents agreed upon that the family members migrated from rural to urban area are causing for diminishing of the late sitting in hujra.

The variable-3 in data Table-4 shows that out of total 100 (100%) respondents, 32 (32%) of the respondents agreed that the local/personal conflicts are discussed/solved at hujra and 68 (68%) of the respondents disagreed. Out of total 100 (100%) of the respondents, 99 (99%) of the respondents said that due to disfavor of family members migrated from rural to urban area the local/personal conflicts are not discussed at hujra, and 1 (1%) of the respondent disagreed with it.

The variable-4 in data Table-4 shows that all of 100 (100%) respondents said that the hujra system is diminishing, which leads to the decrease in social ties and all of the 100 (100%) respondents agreed upon that the family members migrated from rural to urban areas are causing for diminishing of the hujra system that leads to decrease in social ties.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The social change is linked to the social occurrences. The social structures are the social set ups which regulate the lives of the people, and the people affect the social structure. There are a number of factors which affect the social structure in a society; some among them are internal while some among them are external. Hence, the interaction of these factors is necessary with each other, because this interaction causes change process.

The current study was conducted to analyze the occurrence of social change process in the structure and function of the hujra social institution. These migrated members are in a process of interaction with their rural area of origin; they transform their exposure, learning, experiences of living in urban setup to their rural locality.

The findings have given significant result in favor of research hypothesis: The people who migrate from rural to urban areas do cause significant change in hujra system of their area of origin (in rural area). While the Alternate Hypothesis: The people who migrate from rural to urban areas do not cause significant change in hujra system of their area of origin (in rural area), have been refuted.

Due to its Islamic roots, the hujra system is inherited in Islamic Republic of Pakistan and particularly in Pashtun society and culture. It plays a vital role in the society. Therefore, it important that the traditional/combined hujra for the whole village should be restored. Hence for the restoration of traditional Pashtun culture, at least one room hujra/bethak (guests place) should be reserved.

Primary Data Tables

Table 1

Variable-1: Age-groups of respondents	36-45 years (respondents %)	46-55 years (respondents %)			56 and above years (respondents %)		Total 100 (100%)
	(35%)	(40%)			(25%)		
Variable-2: Professions of the Respondents	Agriculture	Daily wages	Government service	Own business	Private service	Retired serviceman	100 (100)
	17 (17%)	8 (8%)	34 (34%)	16 (16%)	3 (3%)	22 (22)	

Table-2

Variable-1: The existence of hujra/bethak (guests place) for the whole village	Yes			No		
	00 (00)	100 (100)	100 (100%)	No		
	100 (100%)	00 (00)	100 (100%)	00 (00%)		
Total	100 (100%)			100 (100%)		
Variable-3: Type of material used for the construction of hujra/bethak (guests place)	Stones and mud	Bricks and mud	Bricks and cement	Combination of all three type material	Total	
	00 (00%)	18 (18%)	35 (35%)	45 (45%)	100 (100%)	
Variable-4: Number of rooms spared for hujra	1	2	3 and more	Total		
	38 (38%)	43 (43%)	19 (43%)	100 (100%)		

Table-3

Variable-1: Approximate number of guests attended at home in the past and now a day	Number of guests attended in past					Number of guests attended now a day				
	2-5	6-10	11-20	Frequently visited by guests	Attend no guest	None	2-3	4-6	7-10	More than 10
	1 (1%)	32 (32%)	15 (15%)	52 (52%)	0	1 (1%)	65 (65%)	33 (33%)	0	1 (1%)
Total	100 (100%)					100 (100%)				
Variable-2: Reaction by host/respondent when a guest comes						Agreed	Disagreed	Percentage	Total	
Welcome the guest						52	00	52%	100	
Situational						48	00	48%		
Try to get rid of the guest						0	00	00		
Try to hide						0	00	0%		
Family members migrated from rural to urban area discouraging one unit hujra for whole village						99	1	100%	100	
Family members migrated from rural to urban area discouraging frequent receiving of guests at personal bethak						77	23	100%	100	
Variable-3: Reason behind changing old values of hujra and migration link to variables	Reason behind the changing old values					Family members migrated from rural to urban area are causing the change in old values of hujra				
	Lack of manpower		Shortage of time	Lack of money		Yes			No	
	40 (40%)		35 (35%)	25 (25%)		100 (100%)			00	
	Total					100 (100%)				
Variable-4: Reaction of females regarding preparing food items						Positive	Some times refuses	Negative	Total	
						68 (68 %)	32 (32%)	00 (00)	100 (100%)	

Table-4

Variable-1: Reasons of change in social and recreational values	Adopting modern ideas from electronic media	Educational improvement	Adopting professional behaviors learnt from the family members migrated from rural to urban areas		Total
	15 (15%)	27 (27%)	58 (58%)		100 (100%)
Variable-2: Diminishing of late sitting at hujra and family members migrated	Practice of late sitting at hujra diminishing		Family members migrated from rural to urban area are causing diminishing late sitting at hujra		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	100 (100%)	00	100 (100%)	00	
Total	100 (100%)		100 (100%)		
Variable-3: The personal conflicts discussing/solving in hujra and family members migrated from rural to urban area relation	Personal conflicts are discussed/solved at hujra		Family members migrated from rural to urban area are against the discussing of personal conflicts at hujra		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
	32 (32%)	68 (68%)	99 (99%)	1 (1%)	
Total	100 (100%)		100 (100%)		
Variable-4: Whether diminishing hujra system is decreasing social ties and family members migrated from rural to urban areas relation	The diminishing hujra system leads to decrease of social ties		Family members migrated from rural to urban area are causing diminishing of hujra system which leads to decrease in social ties		
	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
	100 (100%)	00	100 (100%)	00	
Total	100 (100%)		100 (100%)		

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