

## Patterns and cultural traditions of marriage among *Khanabadosh* of Mardan

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### Abstract

The purpose of the paper is descriptive analysis of the patterns and cultural traditions related to marriage of *khanabadosh*<sup>1</sup> community located in District Mardan of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Data for this qualitative micro-focused research was collected through participant observation, key informants, in-depth interviews, and group discussions. A socio-economic survey of the total 90 households was conducted and found that majority of these inhabitants were having nuclear family system. It was noted that *Khanabadosh* of the reported area are going through a transitional period of spatial mobility towards permanent settlement and few of them have been settled as permanent residents in the area. Therefore, based on residence patterns, they were bifurcated into permanently settled and spatially mobile population. Majority of them were monogamous and prefer early marriages. Elopement is quite common among them. Those who are permanently settled, practice endogamous and exogamous marriages within themselves and with the host community respectively while those who are mobile are strictly endogamous. In monetary sense marriages are classified into marriage by bride-wealth (*tak*) and marriage by women exchange (*badal*). Permanently settled population prefers bride-wealth while spatially mobile practices exchange marriages. Divorce is commonly observed among them.

**Keywords:** *Khanabadosh*, Monogamous, Elopement, Endogamous, Exogamous, Betrothal, Bridewealth, Exchange marriage, Divorce

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### Introduction

*Khanabadosh* is a small community of dark-skinned Hindko-speaking people, residing on the fringes of Hathian Bazzar in Changaryano Daag, located in union council Hathian of District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Internationally, they are known as Gypsies (Okely 1998, p. 1; Roberston 2014, p. 1). In Pakistan, they are called *jogiwal*, *pukiwas*, *khanabadosh* (Berland 1982, p. 194), and *Changaryan* (Utmanzai, 2014; Ali 2019, p. 1). In the area under study, they introduce themselves as *khanabadosh* but the local people call them *changaryan*. However, in this research the term *khanabadosh* is used, as they identify themselves

<sup>i</sup> The people who move from one area to another (Angelillo 2013, p. 81; Ali 2019, p. 1).

with this term. They are comprised of six *aqvam* (singular *qoum*<sup>ii</sup>) i.e. Mughal, Mussali, Sameeji, Shahkhel, Awan, and Kutana. By religion, they are Muslims i.e. 60% Shias and 40% Sunnis. Among them, Mughal, Mussali, Sameeji, and Shahkhel are Shias while Awan and Kutana are Sunnis. They are going through a transitional period of spatial mobility towards permanent settlement because 17 out of 90 households have settled down permanently while 73 households are spatially mobile who used to move from one area to another due to numerous reasons such as socio-economic, seasonal conditions, delinquency, illiteracy, and issue of the national identity cards (Ali 2019, pp. 22-23). Therefore based on residence patterns, they are bifurcated into permanently settled and spatially mobile *khanabadosh*. The permanently settled are numbered 119 individuals including 25 males, 28 females, and 66 children. They used to live in permanent houses of their own in various streets with the settled population. The spatially mobile are numbered 384 individuals including 98 males, 92 females, and 194 children. They used to dwell in temporarily constructed 27 *chapars* (singular *chapar*<sup>iii</sup>) and 46 tents on the land of the railway department and personal plots of the local people by paying a rent of eleven hundred rupees to the leaseholder and owners of land respectively. Closer relatives particularly siblings used to live in adjacent *chapars* and tents which form a *dhera* (camp).



**Picture-1:** Structure of *khanabadosh*'s tent



**Picture-2:** *Khanabadosh*'s camp on the land of local people

<sup>ii</sup> The word *qoum* is derived from Arabic language which means a group of people or those relatives who are the descendants of common ancestor (Ali 2019 p. 7)

<sup>iii</sup> Modified form of a tent, termed by the *khanabadosh* as *chapar* (Ali 2019, p. 4)



**Picture-3:** *Khanabadosh's chapars* on the land of Railway department



**Picture-4:** House of one among the permanently settled *khanabadosh* in a street with the local people

### Literature review

Literature reveals that there are enough gypsies in every country of the world. They have adopted distinctive marriage patterns and cultural traditions which distinguish them from others in the mainstream society (Robertson 2014, p. 11). Voicu & Popescu (2000, pp.8-10) identified that in Europe the gypsies have adopted a strange marriage system that easily draws the attention of local people in the larger society. They prefer early marriages and marital age is usually ranged from fourteen to sixteen years. They practice endogamy and arrange marriages by bride-price. The parents keep marriageable children with themselves and used to search for a suitable spouse for them in their community. A wife is bound to serve her husband and his extended family members. After first pregnancy, a female enters into womanhood. Marriage and divorce are sanctioned through rituals and official documentation is usually avoided. Martin and Gamella (2005, pp. 47) identified that “the marriage system of Spanish gypsies is a key factor in their permanence as a distinct group, and in differentiating them from the dominant majority”. They practice early marriages and the virginity of the bride must be proved in a public ceremony. They are endogamous and vastly encourage patrilineal cousin marriages (Martin & Gamella 2005, p. 47-49).

In South Asia, the gypsies practice weird marriage customs and cultural traditions that retain their distinctive identity in the larger society. Robertson (2014, pp. 211-286) posits that the Kalbelia gypsies of India are clan exogamous and typically marry at a young age where the girl’s family make the first approach through a mediator with the boy’s family. If the boy’s family agrees, the boy starts bride-service for a year or sometimes longer. During his bride-service, the boy has to shepherd his expected in-laws' sheep and goats or to prepare food and to do any work the girl’s family demand. If the girl’s family is satisfied with the boy during this period, the girl’s family called for the boy’s family to negotiate bride-wealth. In case they are failed to develop a consensus among them, their relationship is

nullified. If a consensus is developed among them, they are used to finalize a date for the betrothal ceremony which associates the boy and girl as future's husband and wife. After paying bride-wealth, usually a year or two after betrothal, they arrange their children's marriage. The girl's family arrange dowry for her which the Kalbelia community considered as the girl's pre-mortem share in her natal estate. Elopements are not very common but it happens in case when the boy has completed bride-service and both boy and girl like each other to marry but the girl's parents reject him as son-in-law. Although a man may have more than one wife but generally polygyny is not taken as prestigious among the community. On the death of any of the spouse, both men and women have an option for remarriage (Robertson 2014, pp. 211-286).

In Pakistan, the gypsies or *khanabadosh* practice distinctive marriage patterns and cultural traditions (Ali 2019, p. 69). Berland (1982, p. 190-192) suggests that the Qalandar *khanabadosh* of Punjab, Pakistan are endogamous and prefer intra-*qoum* marriages. Among them, marriage usually takes place between couples in their teenage. Monogamous marriages are more prestigious among them than polygynous marriages. They prefer to marry with relatives from the father line and marriage between first paternal cousins is ideally followed. Shah (2015, pp. 12-13) identified among the *khanabadosh* of Lahore, Pakistan that marriage negotiations are undertaken with keen interest by the family head. They opt to marry in their own families and preference is given to first cousins particularly maternal cousins. Love marriages are frequent among them. Elopement is morally discouraged but common among them. Divorce is infrequent among them because they are aware that a second marriage could be unaffordable for them. They do have illegal relations with other females in the family and out of the family. Those men and women who have lost their spouse usually get remarry among them.

The population under study practice distinctive patterns and cultural traditions related to marriage which distinguishes them from the dominant local majority population. Traditionally, they practice marriage by bride-wealth and woman exchange. All decisions related to the marriage of a son or daughter is made by the male head of the family. Majority of them are monogamous and there is no large span between puberty and marriage. The permanently settled *khanabadosh* practice endogamous and exogamous marriages within the *khanabadosh* and with the host community while all the spatially mobile *khanabadosh* are strictly endogamous and prefer marriages within the *khanabadosh* community only. Love marriages are commonly practiced among them as they are exposed to one another. Elopement and divorce frequently occur among them. The distinctive patterns and cultural traditions associated with marriage will be discussed in detail in the discussion and analysis part of the paper.

### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative research for which data was collected through qualitative research methods including participant observation, key informants, in-depth interviews, and focused group discussions. The purpose of using different methods

for data collection was to cross check the information to ensure the reliability of data. In this micro-focused study all the ninety households of *khanabadosh* were studied. For rapport building with the study participants, we organized two broad-based community meetings i.e. one each for males and females. In these meetings, they were familiarized with the purpose of the study and extended relationships to maximum numbers of informants. Hence, they were actively involved throughout the study. Because of socio-cultural desirability, a local female research facilitator was hired and trained for gathering information from the females of the community. Hence, this enabled us properly to explore marriage patterns and associated traditions of the target population.

### **Discussion and analysis**

Marriage is a universal social institution, but the processes and practices vary across cultures (Kottak 2011, p. 262). The paper aims to empirically examine the patterns and cultural traditions related to marriage among the *khanabadosh* that distinguishes them in the larger community of dominant settled population. Empirical data suggests that marriage for them has both religious and social importance. From religious point of view it is through the marriage contract (*Nikah*) that a man and a woman are declared as husband and wife. After *Nikah* sexual relation between husband and wife becomes legal, socially approved and thereafter the children produced are considered as legitimate. Socially, marriage is not a matter between two individuals but the relationship is established between families of bride and bridegroom. They prefer early marriages and there is no longer span of time between puberty and marriage. Early marriages enable them to produce large numbers of children, to keep them safe from extra marital relations, to make them responsible by involving them in decision making, to have a separate household and to have a spouse specifically for biological, psychological, economic comfort and protection. Data collected during the socio-economic survey reveal that 89% of females are married at the age of 14-15 years while 79% of males are married at the age of 16-17 years. Majority of them are monogamous particularly those who are spatially mobile. The main reasons behind monogamy include economic, socio-cultural, and shortage of females. Polygyny is not considered prestigious among them but a man may have more than one wife subject to the condition of consent from the first wife and his economic position. A second marriage is culturally allowed in case, if a first wife does not bear children or is seriously ill.

Marriage by elopement is common particularly among spatially mobile population. This tradition is passed down to them from their ancestors. The main reason behind marriage by elopement is scarcity of females as well as the economic worth of females who play effective role in earning livelihood. It was found in the community under study that 39% of the permanently settled and 61% of the spatially mobile got married by elopement. Further, it was identified that some of the married women did remarry through elopement. In such cases the women left with no option except to return to the previous husband or get divorce.

The practices related to marriage of *khanabadosh* across Pakistan are not uniform as Berland (1982, p. 194) suggests that the Qalandar *khanabadosh* of Punjab, Pakistan are strictly endogamous and prefer to marry within the community. However, in the area under study, 71% of the permanently settled are endogamous but 29% of them are exogamous and they practice marriages within the *khanabadosh* as well as with the dominant host community. Since, permanently settled *khanabadosh* practice both endogamy and exogamy hence they are not only integrated to their own community but gradually getting integrated to the dominant host community as well. Conversely, all of the spatially mobile are strictly endogamous and hence are socially integrated only to their own community.

There are different reasons for endogamy among mobile *khanabadosh* including personal reluctance and conservation of social identity, bride wealth, marriage by woman exchange, facilitation during mobility, avoidance by the host community and preference for getting marriage with cousins. Personal reluctance and conservation of identity is linked with their perception of being considered as socio-economically of low status by the dominant local population, hence, they know their limits to live in the social framework of their own. Bride-wealth is purely an economic factor which leads to endogamy as the near relatives demand less amount of bride- wealth. Easy marriage is through exchange of women e.g. to get marry through exchange of sisters which normally occur between near relatives. According to them exchange marriages enhance their families' prestige and strength. Since, they practice physical mobility from one place to another round the year hence the need for support, facilitation and assistance during mobility force them for endogamy. The dominant host community because of its better socio-economic position and settled life style avoid to get marry with mobile *khanabadosh* due to theirs' mobile life style, females' involvement in outdoor economic activities which seduce them to have extra-marital relations for which they are severely criticized and negatively connoted by the host community. Preference for getting marriage to parallel and cross cousin is also a reason for endogamy. Marriage between cousins is preferred for social protection since in either case involvement of husband or wife in prostitution, elopement or extramarital relations will not be exposed to others to keep dignity of the *khanabadosh* community.

Referring to the processes of marriage, there are two parties to initiate a marriage. One party is the boy and his kin relatives while the second party is the girl and her kin relatives particularly the parents and siblings. They prefer those girls who are young, physically fit and produce more children, good enough to care for the husband's parents and relatives, beautiful and sincere with husband and earn more money. Similarly, the boy is selected based on gentleness, physical fitness, better care for his wife and her relatives, avoid gambling and do not use drugs, is not quarrelsome, and work for earning money. The boy's family makes the first contact by themselves or through a mediator with the girl's family and puts forward the offer for their children's marriage. In case of acceptance, the boy's parents purchase some sweets and visit the girl's house/*dhera*, accompanied by two or three

elders from the neighbours or *dhera* as eye witnesses. During this time, both parties thoroughly discuss the terms and conditions and if culminated in a mutual consensus, the elders then pray for the cordial relationships between both the parties. This ceremony of betrothal changes the status of both boy and girl as prospective husband and wife.

Two types of marriages are studied i.e. marriage by bride-wealth (*tak*) and marriage by women exchange (*badal*). Bride-wealth is comprised of cash or in kind particularly gold which is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family. The amount of bride-wealth is finalized by the marriage parties in the betrothal ceremony in the presence of few elders (*masharan*). There is a saying among the *khanabadosh* that "they do not forgive bride-wealth rather get it in every situation, what so ever the amount is". Few cases were identified that the permanently settled *khanabadosh* got little bride-wealth from the close relatives but they made a condition that their daughters after marriage will not work for earning money because females' participation in outdoor earning is not appreciated by the society at large. However, the condition was not followed in true spirit and the married women were permitted for participation in outdoor earning activities for reasons that their husbands were poor and *khanabadosh* girls were trained in outdoor economic activities and felt boredom at home.



**Picture-5:** A female *khanabadosh*, having a load of bed-sheets and cloths on her head and ready to go and sell it in the nearby locality

Since, amount of bride wealth is associated with the status of girl, hence, it is commonly observed that the girl's father usually demands more amount of bride-wealth to enhance her status. In this situation, the elders from boy's side play a significant role in minimizing the amount of bride-wealth. Therefore, every elder asks for forgiving some part of bride-wealth in his regard. Keeping in view the request of the graybeard men the amount of bride-wealth is mostly minimized in case of marriage between cousins down to one lac or one lac and fifty thousand rupees. However, for other than cousins it is only decreased down to three lacs or three lacs and fifty thousand rupees. After marriage, both parties actively participate in each other's sorrows and joys. Bride-wealth is not merely a transaction of money or other material things but it enfolds both the families in a durable relationship of

*gham khadi* (participation in each other's sorrows and joys). Bride's frequent visits to her father's house/*dhera* build strong bond between the two families. Goody (1973, p. 52) asserted that the bride-wealth is commonly found where women make a major contribution to the economy. Berland (1982, pp. 128-132) investigated two reasons for marriage by bride-wealth among the Kanjar *khanabadosh* of Punjab, Pakistan. One of them is a woman's economic contribution and second is the scarcity of females.

On the one side the females are lesser in number than males while on the other side the prettiest girls are sent to brothels where they fail to keep in touch with their families, and therefore are unavailable to Kanjar community as brides. Marriages by bride-wealth in the community under study are common due to several reasons. The first reason is the economic contribution of females, since females are mainly responsible to fulfill the economic needs of the households by selling bed-sheets, cloths, cosmetic items in the rural areas and do begging. The second reason for bride-wealth is scarcity of females. So, a male pay bride-wealth to get married to a female with the prospects that after marriage the bride will earn and soon amount will be recovered from wife's savings. The third reason for bride-wealth is that it enhances the social status of woman in the husband's family. One of the senior informants posited during a group discussion that they get bride-wealth in every situation because things given in free are not always valued. Hence, the bride-wealth enhances the social status of a woman in her husband's family. The fourth reason for getting bride-wealth is dowry i.e. to purchase certain necessary goods of the domestic use to help the girl start her marital life. They suggest dowry is the girl's share in her natal family's property. The fifth reason for bride-wealth is compensation to the bride's family for the loss they suffer on her departure in respect of her economic contribution, taking care of parents, and children caring. The last reason for bride-wealth among *khanabadosh* is poverty. Majority of them are poor therefore for the fulfillment of some basic needs and particularly for arranging a son's marriage, parents utilize daughter's bride-wealth, as there is a saying among them that he who has a sister has a chance to get marry. The payment of bride-wealth is a tense process that leads to various disputes and conflicting situations between the marriage parties. It is usually paid to the bride's family in installments. Betrothal is the initial ceremony involving payment of some part of bride wealth which is mandatory because this ceremony brings two families closer, hence, in case of nonpayment the newly established relationship is not considered as socially approved. In most cases fifty to seventy percent part of the bride-wealth is paid to the girl's family before marriage. However, the remaining part of the bride-wealth is paid after *nikah* from the bride's savings. Most of the *khanabadosh* usually earn and spend daily but for an urgent need, they save money which is called *kash*<sup>iv</sup>. So from *kash*, they not only pay the remaining part of bride-wealth but

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<sup>iv</sup> A group of some females/males usually close relatives and friends unite under the leadership of a well reputed female/male. They mutually put a specified amount of cash with the group leader, usually on monthly bases, which they called *kash*. According to the rules, the first *kash* is usually paid to the group leader. After that, at the end of the month, they make a draw by writing the names of all the



they also return the borrowed money or material things back to his owner. Since, majority of them borrow money or material things like gold for paying bride-wealth and expenditures of wedding particularly *Walima*<sup>v</sup>.

Bride-wealth is a main reason of conflict among the *khanabadosh*. The girl's family tries to increase bride-wealth while the groom's family struggle for its decrease. It was found in majority of such cases that the bride's family creates troublesome situations and exerts pressure on the groom's family when the date of wedding becomes closer to increase bride-wealth. For this, the girl's family visit the boy's house/*dhera* accompanied by a group of few elders to resolve the conflicting situation. During negotiation the girl's family can either be successful or not. In case of failure, the girl's family returns the part of bride wealth already received and announces that the relationship is broken. During this stage, the girl's family usually does so when they realize that the amount of bride-wealth for the girl is low or when they find another person who can pay more amount of bride-wealth to the girl's family. It is noteworthy to mention that in most of such cases, the groom's family accepts to increase the amount of bride wealth because women for them are more important due to their earning position. Similarly, to decrease bride-wealth, the boy's family makes a troublesome situation and visits the girl's house/*dhera* along with few elders either to decrease bride-wealth or break the relationship. If the girl's family does not agree to decrease bride-wealth, the boy's family either pays the already decided bride-wealth or end up relationship and forgive bride-wealth which is already paid. During this stage, they often do so when they discover the girl is seriously ill or ugly. It was found that in a few of such cases the girl's family forgives some part of bride-wealth. *Khanabadosh* of the area under study avoid resolving marriage disputes through formal legal system rather they resolve them informally through *jirga*<sup>vi</sup>. They don't approach formal court due to the fear that they might be charged for illegal business of selling the girls in the shape of bride-wealth which is legally prohibited.

The second type of marriage among *khanabadosh* is exchange marriage (*badal*). Zaman (2012, p. 1) suggests that "the reciprocity of spouse selection, in which one family arranges the marriage of a pair of son and daughter with a pair of son and daughter from the second family, is prevailing for centuries around the globe". It was observed that for marriage, the community under study traditionally exchange daughter, sister, or close relative with others' daughter, sister, or relative in exchange marriages. To give a proposal the boy's parents or a mediator usually visit to the girl's house/*dhera* and asks for the girl's hands. In response the girl's parents normally demand for exchange which is accepted if a suitable girl is available otherwise the parties then negotiate to determine the amount of bride wealth. In case of exchange the second party visits the first one to observe socio-

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members on small pieces of paper and put into a small box. A child is therefore called on to get one of them out from the box in front of all the members, and the *kash* amount is paid to the name withdrawn.

<sup>v</sup> On the marriage of someone, Muslims serve food to the guests which is known as *Walima*.

<sup>vi</sup> A council of elders among the *Pakhtuns* that use to settle a dispute among the disputant parties (Zadran 1977, p. 208).

economic conditions of the family as well as to see the girl carefully to their satisfaction to avoid any mistake because after marriage the wife according to them is not like a goat to be sold in the market again, since relationship between husband and wife is durable and divorce is shameful. After the return of second party to home, the findings are discussed with other members and the first party is then informed by mobile phone or through a mediator about the decision that whether exchange is acceptable or not. In case of acceptance the first party is asked for further talks through the elders.

Exchange marriages are common and there are different reasons for it including social, economic, and cultural. One of them is to strengthen relationships and unity among closer relatives. Majority of them prefer paternal and maternal cousins in exchange marriages as there is a saying among them “relatives know each other well that’s why they support and do care for one another”. Majority of them are poor and hardly subsist their basic needs. It was found that getting marriage is an expensive business among them because a large amount of money is mandatory to expend. Since, they celebrate several ceremonies and each ceremony demands the exchange of various gifts. Therefore, to avoid more expenses, they prefer exchange marriages because they are less expensive involving few ceremonies with little amount of gifts to exchange. There is a saying among them that those who have a sister (girl), has a chance to get marry, hence, exchange marriage system confirms chances for unmarried adults to get marry in their lifetime. Elopement is very common particularly among spatially mobile *khanabadosh*. Because those who fail to get married for any reason, usually flee a girl which is known as *nas jana* (marriage by elopement). Elopement leads to various conflicts because it affects the honor of a woman’s family in the community. Such disputes are resolved informally through *jirga* within a month either by *tak* or with the exchange of a girl by the boy’s family or sometimes both. In such matters, the main reason for taking money is poverty while for taking woman in exchange is to balance the situation.

The system of exchange marriages is on decline since, most of the informants posited during key informants and in-depth interviews that the system of exchange marriage is very stringent. It is based on the principles of equal treatment with each of the exchanged girls particularly in conflicting situations, as there is a saying among them that “you hurt our daughter, we will hurt yours”. In this system, if one of the girls is unhappy, it often leads to several conflicts between the husband and wife that extend to their families as well. One pair of brothers and sisters usually allies against the other. If one of them beats his wife, she usually shares the situation with her brother by drawing his attention to beat his wife too. So, a troubling situation not only starts between them, but it also extends to their families as well. It often leads to social boycott in the form of avoiding participation in each other’s sorrows and joy. In some of the cases, the unhappy girl goes to her father’s house and starts to reside there. In this situation, usually after beating, the girl of the second party also goes to her father’s house and starts to reside there. Hence, the conflicting situation among them continues for a long time. Such cases are

informally resolved by the elders through *jirga* but sooner or later, it leads to the end of the relationships either through divorce or elopement. Due to the difficulties in the practice of exchange marriages the system is on decline.

Wedding ceremony takes place after betrothal. Since, between betrothal and wedding the parents arrange dowry for their daughter in the form of cash or other material things to transfer to groom's family. Dowry enhances the status of bride in her husband's family that usually worth of Rupees fifty to sixty thousand. Likewise, the boy's family to arrange for wedding borrows or save money to fulfill the entire expenses including *walima*. They usually lend money or gold from their closer relatives and friends. Date is fixed for a wedding ceremony in advance which is known as *neta*. *Neta* is usually fixed on Friday due to the religious sacredness of the day. Before *neta* the days are celebrated by arranging music programs at night, known as *melas*. The bride's family also celebrates by arranging music programs at night in which the closer relatives participate. Every late night, the closer relatives, friends, and neighbors usually light candles in a tray by fixing it with henna and go to the groom's home/tent with singing and dancing and the ceremony is categorized as *shammi*. They take tea, sing songs and dance well to participate in wedding ceremony. They often share the wedding date in advance of a week with closer relatives, neighbors, and friends. However, a day before the wedding, some females and males (closer relatives of the groom) light candles in different pots by fixing them in henna and go to the bride's home/tent, usually in the evening. Moreover, they also bring the bride's clothes and other necessary goods like shoes and makeup sets. The groom's sister or other closer relatives put henna on the bride's hands and feet, which they called *mehndi*<sup>vii</sup> ceremony. This ceremony is usually followed by drum. They sing songs, eagerly danced, and then returned to the house/camp for necessary arrangements for the wedding ceremony.

On the day of a wedding the females are adjusted inside the groom's house/*dhera* and the male guests are either seated inside in nearby *hujra*<sup>viii</sup> of a local *khan*<sup>ix</sup> or in open ground near the *dhera*. For bringing the *doli* (bride), the procession of the groom's relatives and friends go to her house/*dhera* which is known as *janaj* (bride procession). As the bride procession reaches the bride's house/*dhera*, traditionally the bride's sister or closer relative stands in the gate and allows the female guests after receiving some money from the groom's mother or sister that is usually ranged from five hundred to one thousand Rupees.

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<sup>vii</sup> *Mehndi* is an Urdu word that is used for henna

<sup>viii</sup> A guesthouse for the male guests in Pakhtun communities.

<sup>ix</sup> *Khan* is a title for a person in the area under study who is a landlord, wealthy and influential.



**Picture-6:** On marriage among the spatially mobile *khanabadosh*, rice (*walima*) is serving to the guests in an open ground near the *dhera* to catch sunlight in winter

After taking tea, the groom is raised and waved in a cot (*charpoy*) by a group of closer relatives and friends which is known as *palang* ceremony. The relatives and closer friends usually make fun of the groom by throwing rotten eggs and tomatoes or scratch his wedding clothes. After that, one of the brothers or sometimes father brings the bride to a decorated car and hand it over to the groom's family members which is known as departure (*rukhsati*). Hence, the *jang* with *doli* returns to the groom's house/*dhera*. It was observed that when the groom's party is finally ready to depart, the fathers of the bride and groom offer each other formal farewell, and the bride's family accompany the groom's party to the end of the village/*dhera*. On the arrival back, the *doli* is carried to the groom's room/*chapar*/tent. After that, the groom's family used to entertain the guests with food comprised of rice or sometimes rice with meat which is known as *walima*.

*Nnikah* (wedlock) is the most important ritual in the entire marriage ceremonies because it legalizes the marital relations between a husband and wife. For this purpose, they arrange a separate safe place like a *hujra* or tent and invite a religious leader to offer *nikah* on the same day of the wedding almost late in the evening. The groom's father usually invites near relatives, friends, and neighbors to the *nikah* ceremony as witnesses. In this ceremony, the groom physically sit in person while the bride do not physically present but she nominates one of her closer relatives like maternal or paternal uncle as her marriage father to talk on her behalf. They acknowledge *mahar* as the right of wife including jewelry. The religious scholar in the presence of witnesses asks for the approval of marriage contract in return for negotiated amount of *mahar*. After acceptance, the religious scholar recites few verses from the Holy Quran and declares the validity of *nikah* and prays to initiate happy marital life. The participants of the ceremony congratulate both the

parties and eat sweets on this occasion of happiness. After that, they pray for the bright future of the couple and the unity of their families.

*Nikah* breaks if a husband and wife decide not to live together anymore and that they no longer want to be married to each other which is known as *talaq* (divorce). Divorce is quite common among the *khanabadosh* particularly among the spatially mobile. There are several reasons behind this such as barrenness, extramarital relations, socio-cultural, economic, and most importantly elopement. It was commonly observed that if a woman, who is unhappy with her marriage for either reason, goes to her parents. Both the families try to persuade the couple to reconcile but if they failed they ask the *jirga* to proceed with divorce. According to the rules of *jirga*, the husband pays *mahar* to the wife and forgives the *tak*, if it is originated by the husband. Similarly, the wife usually returns *mahar* to the divorced husband, if it is originated by the wife. Moreover, on her remarriage, some part of the total amount of *tak* is paid to the divorced husband.



**Picture-7:** On marriage by *badal* among the spatially mobile *khanabadosh*, a transgender is dancing to entertain the audience



**Picture-8:** On marriage among the permanently settled *khanabadosh*, the close relatives and friends of groom are performing dances to please audience by exhibiting their emotions and happiness

## Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper was to delineate the patterns and cultural traditions related to marriage among the *khanabadosh* of Mardan, dKhyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A general conclusion is drawn based on empirical data that the marriage system of the community is cultural adjustment within the dominant larger community due to several social, economic and cultural reasons. Majority of them are monogamous and prefer early marriages to continue their generation, avoid extramarital relations, establish economic cooperation within the family members and procreate more children to have more working hands for earning a livelihood. Elopement is traditionally common among them. They practice marriage by bride-wealth and exchange marriages. The permanently settled one practice endogamous and exogamous marriages and prefer to marry by bride-wealth within and with the

dominant host community. It is therefore concluded that the permanently settled *khanabadosh* are not only integrated among them but are also slowly getting amalgamated with the host community. Conversely, all of the spatially mobile *khanabadosh* are strictly endogamous and arrange marriages within them, hence, they are only integrated with the *khanabadosh* community and does not getting merge with the dominant host community.

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