

A GLANCE AT SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES OF JOGI COMMUNITY



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The term nomad comes from the Greek word *nemo* that means pasture. In its present usage in anthropological literature, nomadic refers to a characteristic trait associated with a number of ecologically adaptive systems, in which continuing residential mobility is necessary for the subsistence of the group, resulting in lack of a permanent abode (Encyclopedia of Anthropology, edited by David E. Hunter). Snake charming is a one such very old profession of the South Asian origin. Locally, a snake charmer is called Jogi throughout the South Asian region, particularly in India and Pakistan (Hunter, 2011). The research was conducted based on qualitative method. Interview method was used for data collection in this research. The data was further analyzed as per objective of the research to finalize finding and recommendation for implementation. The Sample size comprised of 15 individuals was chosen through

purposive sampling techniques.

This research presents an ethnographic account of a snake charmers' compound settled in village Nurpur, District Kasur, Punjab. Snake charmers, in Pakistan, fall within the category of sedentarized community. Snake charming is a centuries old profession. Its economic worth, social functionality and utility have reduced to a considerable degree due to a number of factors. The new generation of snake charmers is not interested in learning and adopting it as a career. Majority of youngsters from the snake charmers' compound approached for this research, have adopted alternate economic activities and sources of income generation. Yet, the senior generations are pursuing it and value it a lot. The rituals of peculiar jogi traits and rites are also still performed in the socialization processes of jogi children.

Main sources of income of the jogis include snake charming, ethno medicine practice, begging among older jogis (both men and women) whereas the younger generation of jogis is involved in preparing and selling decoration material for smaller vehicles as well as decorating bridegroom cars. These young boys usually rush towards urban centers in pursuit of earning and set their stall on some busy roadside.

Jogi women also have an out of home earning role, which consists of selling bangles, jewelries, p'randaas and chhajj. It takes a day for two girls to make a chhajj and a day for one girl to make a p'randa. A chhajj is sold for 200 to 300 rupees whereas a p'randa is sold for almost 100 rupees. A jogi woman earns about 300 to 400 rupees a day on average. Women also collect

rags, clothes, flour and wheat in charity or as sale items.

Snakes are used by the snake charmers for entertaining people. Jogis perform different feats with snakes, make them dance with the music they play on beene and let them strangling around their necks fearlessly, as they control the snake's behavior. For this purpose, Jogis go to the nearby villages with material packed in a big piece of cloth called gathhri for their exhibitions and ethno-medicine practice. On the other hand, owing to better economic conditions and higher literacy rates, their profession has almost died out in big towns and cities. In villages and rural areas, people largely rely on allopathic method of medical treatment owing to the absence of public health facilities. Snake charmers have indigenous knowledge of the herbs they collect and prepare medicine from these herbs for sale purposes, which is one of the main income sources.



It is interesting to note that 331 (82.75%) individuals out of a total population of 400 are involved in income generation and play one or the other economic role. Only the minor have no active economic role, all the rest are earners in one way or the

other. Out of these 331 individuals, 204 (61.6%) are males and the remaining 127 (38.4%) are females. Out of these 331 economically active individuals, only 10 are beggars, who are all old aged people. Out of these 10 beggars 6 are women and the remaining 4 are men. Primary, traditional and the ancestral major economic activity of a snake charmer are to hold on street entertainment shows. These shows are locally called tamasha meaning exhibition.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Snake charming is an old profession and jogis have a distinct culture of accompanying snakes at home, using them as sources of income, living in communion with fellow jogis, and having peculiar cultural features regarding social organization. Changes in their culture can be observed, but certain cultural traits still intact. They reflect the continuity of their social organization. However, younger generation of jogis is not interested in learning and practicing snake charming as a profession. They say that there are more

lucrative alternates and snake charming is risky. Also, they argue that it has become outdated and no one is interested in showmanship of a jogi. New profession adopted by the jogi youth in this compound is decoration piece making for small vehicles.

Old generation jogis are still practicing snake charming and are struggling for the preservation of their ancestral profession. Generations of snake charmers have served for centuries as entertainers and ethno medical practitioners. They are part of our history and an essential constituent of our cultural diversity. The demand of the All Pakistan Snake Charmers' Council for construction of sanctuaries and research centers for the preservation of this culture is lawful and a legal obligation of the state by virtue of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.