DEVELOPMENT AND MARGINALIZATION: GENDER, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND STATE-MAKING IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN, PAKISTAN

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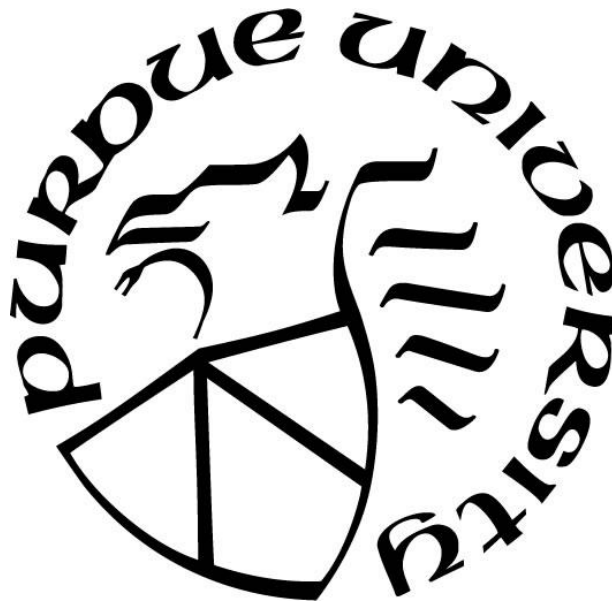
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To my parents who have always believed in me
And
The people of GB whose resilience, generosity, and kindness are unprecedented

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJK   Azad Jammu Kashmir

AKDN   Aga Khan Development Network

AKRSP   Aga Khan Rural Support Program

AKES   Aga Khan Education Services

AKCSP   Aga Khan Culture Support Program

CPEC   China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

GB   Gilgit-Baltistan

GBLA   Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly

KKH   Karakoram Highway

LSO   Local Support Organization

NGO   Non-government organization

NHA   National Highway Authority

WO   Women's Organization

VO   Village Organization

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the forms of marginalization and exclusion, particularly of women, produced by state-fostered large-scale projects and nation-state building processes in Gilgit-Baltistan, located in the northern frontier region of Pakistan. In a context where state-led development projects and policies are primarily motivated by nationalism and territorial integration, the strategic interests of the state undermine the promised people-centric objectives of economic development and exacerbate gendered inequalities in economic development that lead to the exclusion of women. My ethnographic research, involving participant observations, semi-structured interviews, group discussions, and my personal encounters during fieldwork, explores the underrepresented local counter-narratives of development that are mostly overshadowed by the hegemonic nationalist narrative. By focusing on women's narratives, my research examines the real barriers and constraints shaping their everyday lived experiences. This dissertation engages with the theoretical frameworks of state-making, critical development, and feminist approaches to studying women's empowerment and economic development. The chapters in this dissertation center on three main topics: First, this dissertation analyzes women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan as disciplined development subjects forged by the development discourse and practice prevalent in the Global South since the last quarter of the 20th century. Second, this dissertation explains the differential subjectivities and variations in women's experiences and engagement with development as an outcome of the nation-state building processes carried out by both ideological and infrastructural apparatuses: the institutionalization of Islam and Muslimness to construct a uniform national identity, on the one hand, and the Karakoram Highway and the military-state's strategic intervention to integrate Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan's national territory, on the other. By laying out the politico-historical context in the postcolonial era, this dissertation situates women in the larger geopolitical realities and argues that social differentiation among women is a consequence of hegemonic state interventions. Third, this dissertation is a work of anthropology at home that draws from my personal experiences and encounters during fieldwork in my home region. It engages with questions about the positionalities of the researcher as sites of challenge and opportunity in the field and larger disciplinary practices.

CHAPTER 1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Story

This dissertation tells the story of women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan whose lives are tied to aspirations of development held by the state, local religious leaders, and patriarchal assumptions by men in the region. My focus is to situate women in the wider political and development context of the region, wherein the state-led development, such as the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH), itself is an instrument of the nation-state making processes to consolidate the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. The story of women is often told by NGOs through a narrative that glorifies them as modern, development, and entrepreneurial subjects. That narrative, however, isolates women from the larger sociocultural, political, ideological structures, and gender systems in which the inequalities are rooted and reproduced.

To understand women's experiences in their own words, I conducted an ethnographic fieldwork in the three districts of Gilgit-Baltistan; Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar. The districts in Gilgit-Baltistan, historically, have been discrete valleys with distinct ethnolinguistic and sectarian groups and often governed by their autonomous rulers. During the administrative restructuring process of the state-making in the post-independence period of Pakistan, these valleys became districts. I chose to include three districts to include a diverse group of participants for the research. The women I interviewed during my fieldwork belonged to the Shia, Sunni, and Ismaili sects of Muslims. They spoke Burushaski, Shina, Wakhi, and Urdu. The interviews with the women showed that their experiences of engagement with development and entrepreneurship is embedded in the sociocultural, economic, and sectarian contexts. Therefore, I have mainly focused on women's narratives of their encounters with markets and analyzed them in the broader context of state-making, patriarchy, and the politics of identity associated with communal identities based in religious identities.

My ethnographic fieldwork involved participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, and attending group meetings of Women's Organizations (WOs) and Local Support Organizations (LSOs). The analysis of the qualitative data and transcripts of the interviews showed that women's experiences vary across socioeconomic, rural-urban, and sectarian divides. Such an intersectional approach is significant to understand the variations in women's experiences

and to theorize the discrepancies among women as structural issues, and not just experiential. Through the analysis of women's narratives and the scholarly theorizations of state-making processes in the region, I argue that development is not just a techno-economic project but also a political one, which is essentially directed at the territorial integration of the disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan and to produce the citizens as state subjects. The underlying motivations of development projects have resulted in disempowering women by perpetuating the sectarian and socioeconomic divides. The questions of local and traditional identity raised in response to the nation-state making have generated and fueled the sectarian hostility that has entrenched patriarchal sovereignty and produced women as repositories of communal identity and honor. Thus, women do not only view themselves as individual selves, but also as part of a collective identity that needs to be protected and upheld. The narratives of women showed how women navigate, negotiate, contest, and reproduce the sociocultural and development regimes.

1.2   Background

I conducted ethnographic research in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, for my doctoral project for eight months between May and December of 2018. Gilgit-Baltistan, my home region, is in the northernmost part of Pakistan. Although Gilgit-Baltistan has had a province-like status and structure since the partition of Pakistan and India, it is not a constitutional province: it is part of the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which is claimed by both India and Pakistan (Dad, 2016). Because of the disputed status of Gilgit-Baltistan, the state of Pakistan has taken measures to integrate the area into the national territory, particularly since the 1970s (Haines, 2012). State-led development projects such as the Karakoram Highway (KKH) constitute one of the measures that are primarily aimed at the territorial integration of Gilgit-Baltistan (N. Ali, 2014).

My research argues that gender issues are largely overlooked by scholars while analyzing the impact of large-scale projects. This dissertation aims to fill the gap by analyzing the forms of marginalization and exclusion, particularly of women, produced by state-fostered large-scale infrastructure projects and policies in Gilgit-Baltistan, the northern frontier region of Pakistan. To understand the gendered impact of the nation-state making strategies, I sought to study development processes by focusing on women's engagement in economic development. Grounded within critical approaches to state-making development that challenge the uneven economic and social development resulting from reliance on large-scale infrastructure plans without attention to

Figure 1. Map of Pakistan (Source: Benz 2016)

social consequences (Akhter, 2015; N. Ali, 2019; Haines, 2012), this project examines the gender gaps and asymmetries in power relations embedded within local, national, and global structural systems.

My research explores how transnational infrastructure development projects between Pakistan and China — a network of roads, railways, and telecommunications — are changing the socioeconomic and political space in Gilgit-Baltistan. Specifically, I analyze how socioeconomic transformations have reproduced the effects of existing structural challenges for women since the 1980s. Since then, NGO-led projects have mainly worked toward rural economic transformation to bring about the commercialization of agriculture and the development of marketable agriculture (Khan, 2010). Since the 1990s, NGOs in the Global South have focused on promoting individual entrepreneurship through the extension of credit to low-income women (Alvarez, 2014). NGOs in Gilgit-Baltistan have also shifted their focus to the development of social and individual

enterprises. Though access to resources may have improved (for some) as a result of these transformations, there have been no significant changes in women's control over resources, which continues to reside with men. This disjunction is deeply rooted in sociocultural perceptions and practices around gender that emphasize the traditional role of women within the domestic sphere. My research argues that the state's top-down nation-state building processes in the postcolonial era have introduced, entrenched, and reproduced different forms of patriarchies that disempower women. Moreover, the state-produced patriarchies are circulated by development agencies.

One of the most impactful catalysts of social and economic change in the recent history of this region has been the construction of the KKH between China and Pakistan, which passes through the middle of Gilgit-Baltistan. When this all-weather, paved highway was completed in the late 1970s, this remote mountainous region that was previously accessible only through narrow pony trails, became connected to the rest of the country for the first through transport infrastructure. The KKH was also a significant foreign policy tool through which Pakistan extended its northward ties with China and Central Asia when the state was searching for a national identity to demarcate from the Indian identity (Haines, 2012).

The construction of the KKH and the development projects that followed, through NGOs, have transformed the socioeconomic life of the region: most significantly, through a shift from traditional agropastoral subsistence economy into a cash crop and tourism based economy that requires the commodification of resources and services. These transformations have transformed the traditional gender roles and relationships which I will explain in this dissertation. My ethnographic accounts show that the young and educated people are moving away from farming as their main livelihood and now prefer employment in governmental and non-governmental organizations or pursue entrepreneurial activities. The rapid introduction of modern education, technology, infrastructure, exposure to market forces and exogenous values, and the nation-state building processes have disrupted the traditional governance and socioeconomic system (S. Abbas & Dad, 2017; Dad, 2010).

Nevertheless, the implications of socioeconomic changes require nuanced and detailed analysis. The role of NGOs in targeting women as their primary recipients by providing them credit and training has remained essential and much-debated (Feldman, 1997). Since the 1980s, women in the Gilgit-Baltistan region have begun to venture into new social and economic arenas, and their roles are evolving as a result of the initiatives taken by the Aga Khan Rural Support Program

(AKRSP) (A. Ali, Bano, & Dziegielewski, 2016). AKRSP introduced a community-driven approach of development and established Village Organizations in the region to begin a grassroots development (Khan, 2010). Khan (2010) explains that the primary purpose of the AKRSP was to establish the grassroots organizations in the villages to motivate the communities to cooperate with the AKRSP, establish VOs/WOs, and recruit activists who would disseminate the information to the wider community. As Khan (2010, p. 197) has described, "AKRSP's niche was to harness the potential of the people and to help in unleashing it." The significant contribution of the AKRSP was that it has established a community-based foundational institutional infrastructure required for grassroots development; generating what NGOs refer to as the social capital. Women's Organizations (WOs) were among the Village Organizations (VOs) formed by the AKRSP to ensure women's access to resources and to provide them opportunities and skills that would enable them to take on more active roles in their own lives. For the first time the communities were organized as VOs/WOs, and they held meetings and generated savings. The VOs organized and monitored by the AKRSP had successfully integrated the communities into development initiatives that primarily focused on enabling the farming communities to go beyond subsistence farming and generate income (Khan, 2010). VOs and WOs continue to remain the primary avenues of community mobilization and organization and the mode of contact with the communities when NGOs initiate development projects. Thus, it was AKRSP to initiate a bottom-up approach development model in Gilgit-Baltistan which was later adopted and replicated in other provinces by the government of Pakistan (Fazlur, 2007).

The construction of the KKH and the development initiatives carried out by the AKRSP and other partner institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have had immense impact on women's lives (A. Ali et al., 2016). The access to education, health, and the possibility to participate in income generating activities contributed to expand their socioeconomic role. Women began to move to different cities to pursue education and employment opportunities. Women in Gilgit-Baltistan are now working in different public and private sectors. Many people during the interviews accredited the AKDN for its contributions and development initiatives to bring a visible socioeconomic change on a large-scale in Gilgit-Baltistan.

That said, my ethnographic accounts showed that women's participation in and access to these resources is affected by their class, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and the geographic location, so there are socioeconomic disparities that need an in-depth and a critical analysis. By examining

how relationships of power embedded in economic development programs and policies shape women's individual and collective experiences, my ethnographic research provides intricate insight into the women of Gilgit-Baltistan. My ethnography illuminates the underlying structural causes of gender inequality in the current local and global social, political, and economic orders.

1.3   Research Objectives

My research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- First, my research analyzes the transformations in the physical, socioeconomic and political spaces in Gilgit-Baltistan resulting from large-scale infrastructure projects, particularly the KKH, carried out in the region since the 1970s. The region has witnessed visible socio-political changes since that decade, which I will illustrate using both secondary resources and my ethnographic data. In doing so, I situate contemporary issues of power and politics in Gilgit-Baltistan within the broader political specificities of the postcolonial context of Pakistan.

- Secondly, my research studies the social consequences of infrastructural developments and NGO interventions in women's lives: specifically, the socioeconomic impact of the KKH and NGO interventions on the women of Gilgit-Baltistan. The impact has not been homogeneous; therefore, by focusing on Ismaili women, my research explores the differential impact on women across subregions and sectarian groups in Gilgit-Baltistan. My research addresses the question: How do the different categories of social identity that women hold affect their differential access to and involvement in socioeconomic spaces and entrepreneurial opportunities?

- Third, my research examines how the nation-state–making processes of Pakistan, which are legitimized through the development narrative, have reinforced inequities between sub-regions, genders, religious groups, and ethnic groups. Nation-state–making processes deploy ideological, infrastructural, and administrative apparatuses to produce a uniform national identity and belonging. These nation-building processes produce internal imbalances and hierarchies of belonging, which is evident through sectarianized politics in Gilgit-Baltistan.

- Fourth, my research, with its focus on my home region, considers the methodological and ethical concerns about conducting anthropology at home.

In the following sections, I will provide the geopolitical background, and an overview of the sociocultural, religious, and linguistic diversity of the region. The sociopolitical context of the region is important to understand the diverse experiences and complex subjectivities of women. I draw from the scholarly works of Nosheen Ali, Chad Haines, and Hermann Kreutzmann to provide an analysis of the geopolitical context of the region, as they have done extensive academic research in the region. My ethnographic work is particularly focused on gender and development, gendered development, and entrepreneurialism, to offer a critical discourse around NGOs' emphasis on women's entrepreneurship as a strategy to address gender inequality in the region.

1.4   Gilgit-Baltistan: The Land and the People

Gilgit-Baltistan is a very sparsely populated high-mountain area, with an estimated population of 1.301 million over an area of 72,496 square kilometers (P&D, 2013). Administratively, the region is divided into fourteen districts, depicted in Figure 2: Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Ghizer, Astore, Ghanche, Shigar, Diamar, Skardu, and Kharmang. Geologically, it is spread over three high mountain systems: the Himalayas, Karakorum, and Hindukush (Sökefeld, 2014).

Settlements are concentrated in the main river valleys and the side-valleys, and most of the region is uninhabitable because of the harsh terrain and weather. The population is spread across 700 villages (N. Ali, 2019). Agriculture combined with animal husbandry has been the main mode of livelihood traditionally. For the subsistence agriculture, slopes are terraced for cultivation and extensive networks of irrigation channels are constructed and maintained. Over the past several decades, the arable area was extended with the help of development agencies, especially the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), but the scarcity of water in late winter and spring because of reduced outflow from the glaciers remains a limiting factor. In the past, agriculture combined with animal husbandry were the major sources of livelihood. However, the construction of the KKH, shown in Figure 3, and subsequent construction of link roads in the region have diversified the sources of livelihood and have significantly transformed the socioeconomic life of the region.

The local population of the region follows four denominations of Islam: 41% Shia, 32% Sunni, 17% Ismaili, and 10% Noorbakhshi (Feyyaz, 2011). This means that the majority of the population in Gilgit-Baltistan is non-Sunni—a fact of great concern to the Sunni-dominated state

of Pakistan. In addition to the sectarian diversity, Kreutzman (2005) identifies at least 25 ethnolinguistic divisions, making the region highly diverse in terms of religious denominations, ethnic, linguistic, and sub-regional identities.

Figure 2. Districts in Gilgit-Baltistan (Source: Kazmi 2019)
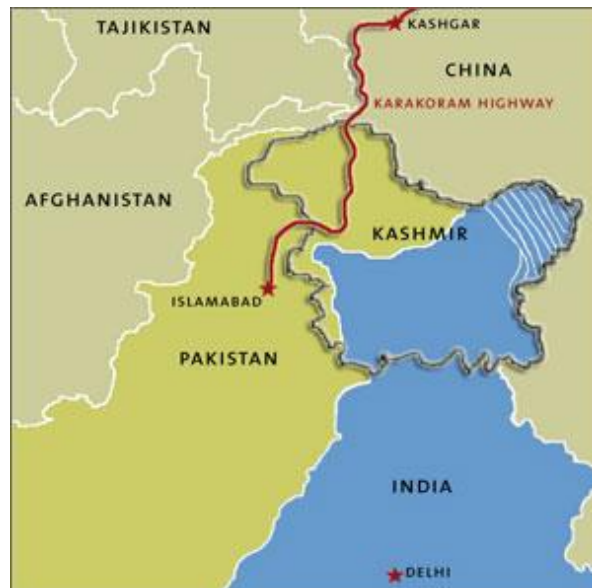
Figure 3. Karakoram Highway (Source: Yale Global Online 2004)

As Nosheen Ali has pointed out in her work, *Delusional States: Feeling Rule and Development in Pakistan's Northern Pakistan* (2019), Gilgit-Baltistan is the only Shia-dominated political unit in the Sunni-dominated state of Pakistan. More specifically, she notes the irony that "at the heart of the territory of Kashmir—which Pakistan claims on the basis of its 'Muslim identity'—lies the region of Gilgit-Baltistan which contradicts this identity by being home to a different kind of Muslims than that endorsed by Pakistani nationalism" (N. Ali, 2019, pp. 1-2). So, in addition to its disputed status, having a majority Shia population makes the region a suspect area and a security zone in the national imagery of Pakistan.

The "different kind of Muslim" identity refers to the region's Shia, Ismaili and Noorbakhshi inhabitants, whom the dominant Sunni ideology delegitimizes, producing them as minorities and suspects (N. Ali, 2008). In fact, according to the state ideology and constitution, Islam or Muslimness is defined within the confines of Sunni Islam: as Ali puts it, "the idealized and authorized Pakistani citizen is assumed to be the Sunni Muslim, while other ways of being Muslim are silenced" (N. Ali, 2008, p. 4). This exclusionary state ideology denies legitimation and meaningful citizenship to the non-Sunni populations of the country. As an ideological project, the state produces a network of institutional mechanisms to regulate the effects of state structure (Abrams, 1988; Mitchell, 1991). In the case of Pakistan, the state produces a systemic differentiation among citizens, by rendering Shia and other Muslim and non-Muslim minorities illegitimate. This systemic differentiation has produced hierarchies of belonging among citizens based on their religious identity.

It is necessary to theorize the nation-state–making processes of Pakistan, particularly in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, to analyze the sociopolitical dynamics that characterize the recent history of the region since 1947. It is also important to analyze the development processes that have occurred in the region since the construction of the highway in the 1970s. In other words, the economic development and transportation infrastructure projects led by the government and NGOs are also significant ingredients in the processes that led to the construction of the state in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Like most of the countries, the state of Pakistan incorporated gender and development agenda as part of its nation-state building as a modern state as a result of the institutional push by the UN agencies and the World Bank since the 1970s. Gender and development are at the center of development practice worldwide since the 1970s because of the global feminists' advocacy for

a focus on women's social and economic empowerment (Alvarez, 2014). As development projects are instruments to make women legible by ensuring their inclusion in the development programs and to produce them as modern subjects. That is, women in the workforce are instrumental for the state to produce its image as modern and progressive (Kandiyoti, 1991). At the same time, the state of Pakistan predicated its political project of state-making on religion to establish a uniform national identity (Alavi, 1989), that has perpetrated sectarian divides. Therefore, diverse processes of nation-building—driven by "modern" ideologies of development, on one hand, and conservative religious ideology, on the other—have produced a spectrum of contested ideologies about women's position in society (Jafar, 2005; Kandiyoti, 1991; Weiss, 1993). Many feminists have pointed it out that gender and development programs designed and funded by international development organizations located in the Global North tend to overlook these situated disparities in different nation-states in the Global South (Alvarez, 2014; Harcourt, 2016; Icaza & Vázquez, 2016). The assumed homogeneity in the state's development policy overlooks the diversity of women—based on class, sub-regional, and sectarian identities—that renders women as a homogenized and apolitical entity which results in exacerbating the inequality among women. My ethnographic accounts showed that women's engagement in NGO-led activism and economic development projects is not uniform across the socioeconomic and sectarian lines in the region.

I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in three different districts, including Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar, shown in Figure 2. I chose these districts to be able to interact with men and women of the three sects, including Shia, Sunni, and Ismaili. Noorbakhshi are mainly settled in the Skardu district, which was not included in my fieldsites because of its geographic remoteness from the other three districts. So, I have focused on three sectarian groups in my research. These ethnic and religious affiliations are significant while examining gender patterns and women's inclusion in development projects. My ethnographic engagement provided me an opportunity to pursue cross-demographic interactions, in order to document local narratives about diverse women's perceptions of development interventions and the impact of development projects on socioeconomic life over the past few decades. In the subsequent chapters, I offer ethnographic details about Ismaili women entrepreneurs and the heterogeneities among women in Gilgit-Baltistan with respect to their ethnoreligious identities. Ismaili women emerged as the primary targets and recipients of economic development programs, including the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), the leading NGO offering the socioeconomic empowerment of women in

Gilgit-Baltistan (A. Ali et al., 2016). These women's empowerment programs were received well in Ismaili communities such that Ismaili women are now hyper-visible both as beneficiaries and as development personnel in various NGOs in the region.

1.5   State-making in Gilgit-Baltistan

When discussing the development history and discourse in the particular context of Gilgit-Baltistan, the nation-state-making measures taken by Pakistan in the post-independence period are vital, in terms of how they shaped the sociopolitical and economic matrix of the region (Dad, 2016). British India was partitioned into two independent countries, Pakistan and India, in 1947. The partition, which resulted in massive population displacement, was followed by brutal violence and bloodshed that has shaped the national imaginations of both the countries in a way that continues to feed on othering, hostility, war, and aggressive hyper-nationalism (H. Abbas, 2004; Jalal, 2013). As Hamza Abbas (2004) writes about the massacre that followed the partition of the two states:

> The partition was accompanied by a merciless communal slaughter of Muslims by Hindus and Sikhs and vice versa—17 million people were shunted across the frontiers of the two states created by partition to reach their designated homelands—millions vanished. For the Muslim migrants, the road to Pakistan was covered in blood and ashes (H. Abbas, 2004, p. 16).

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has remained disputed between Pakistan and India since 1947. Gilgit-Baltistan, which is part of the disputed Kashmir region, came under the administrative control of Pakistan along with the area of Kashmir known as Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) in Pakistan. The Urdu word *Azad* in the name Azad Jammu Kashmir means free or freed, while the part of Kashmir under India's administrative control is referred to as *Maqbooza* Kashmir in Pakistan, which means occupied. The naming of the region itself is embedded in the process of constructing a national imagination to solidify and legitimize the national territorial integration of the region. Today, Jammu and Kashmir, including Gilgit-Baltistan, is the world's most militarized region (N. Ali, 2019).

The conflictive Kashmir issue is at the heart of Pakistani and Indian nationalism and an essential reason behind the militarization (H. Abbas, 2004). Within a year of independence, in 1948, the dispute over Kashmir led to the first war between Pakistan and India. The war was brought to an end by a United Nations–sponsored ceasefire. Following the ceasefire, a series of

UN Security Council Resolutions called for a plebiscite to allow the people of Kashmir to decide whether to choose either for Pakistan or India. Abbas writes:

> Both the countries signified and accepted the proposal of plebiscite, which was decided to be held on January 5, 1949, but it was never realized. By that time, two-thirds of Kashmir was under the control of India and the rest was with Pakistan (H. Abbas, 2004, p. 17).

I will state at the outset that Kashmir is not a uniform, single, homogenized territory as it is presented in the nationalist images of Pakistan and India. Not only is it diverse in terms of sociocultural, ethnolinguistic, and religious identities, but also administratively: the state of Jammu and Kashmir was split into several administrative units after the partition in 1947.

The region of Gilgit-Baltistan, known as Gilgit Agency or Gilgit *Wazarat* during the colonial period, was one of the political and administrative units that came under the control of Pakistan along with Azad Kashmir. Although Gilgit-Baltistan has a province-like status in Pakistan, its political status has remained undetermined and intertwined with the disputed Kashmir since 1947 (Ali 2019). This means the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not constitutional citizens and do not have voting rights in national elections. As a result of this entanglement with the larger issue of disputed Kashmir, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan feel betrayed by the state of Pakistan (N. Ali, 2019). The strong sense of disenfranchisement among the inhabitants has grown out of the unsatisfied desire to be fully incorporated into the state of Pakistan (Dad, 2016). Dad (2016) also points out that unlike the Indian Kashmir, the political struggle in Gilgit-Baltistan is not about undoing the state but rather contesting its bureaucratic-military control, and demanding incorporation as the equal citizens of Pakistan with constitutional rights.

My ethnographic work analyzes the development practice and narrative as part of the nation-state–building carried out in the post-independence period of Pakistan, particularly since the 1970s. Until the 1970s, Gilgit-Baltistan was a cluster of princely kingdoms ruled by the local rulers who held titles of *Raja*, *Mir* or *Tham* (S. Abbas & Dad, 2017). In 1972, the government of Pakistan brought the region of Gilgit-Baltistan under the direct control of the federal government as a separate administrative unit under the name of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, abolishing the traditional governing structure of the region (Kreutzmann, 2008). Given the disputed status of the region, it is now militarized and regulated as a "suspected security zone" (N. Ali, 2019). In addition to militarization and administrative restructuring, the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) was another infrastructural tool and state tactic to solidify its claim over the territory

(Haines, 2012). The various nation-state–making processes disempowered the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and shifted the power to the center: the federal government, bureaucracy, and military.

1.6 Conducting Research at Home

My research project is anthropology at home. My positionality as a female native of Gilgit-Baltistan is an important analytical category in my research. Doing anthropological fieldwork at home emphasizes the relational aspects between the researcher and participants, allowing us to revisit ethical and epistemological concerns about ethnographic fieldwork and writings, and "to rethink relationality as a form of knowledge itself" (Docot, 2017, p. 323). In my case, relationality encompasses personal, social, familial, and communal relationships and the affective dimension of my belonging to a region. My own sectarian and ethnolinguistic identity has affected my data collection process and also the framing of my research, which I will analyze in this dissertation.

Relationality also includes my ideological association with development—the central analytical theme of my project—as an Ismaili Muslim. By ideological association I mean that my upbringing and education were heavily focused on the Ismaili *Tariqah* (interpretation), which primarily focuses on modern education, women's empowerment, and socioeconomic empowerment of communities. Specifically, I am referring to the collective social and ideological position of Ismaili that was shaped by the Aga Khan Development Network's (AKDN) focus on the socioeconomic well-being of the community. Though AKDN is an international development organization headquartered in France, for the Ismaili it was rooted in their religious ethos because the organization was an initiative from their *Imam* (religious leader), the Aga Khan IV. Aga Khan is the spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims and as part of his responsibilities as *Imam*, he has established a global network of institutions to address the socioeconomic challenges of the regions where Ismaili live (IIS, 2018). Ismaili follow Aga Khan's guidance in their spiritual and worldly matters which has been centered around directing the community to participate in educational and socioeconomic activities as a way for poverty alleviation, improvement in socioeconomic conditions, and to improve the quality of life. Therefore, for Ismaili, their spiritual and material pursuits overlap, which gives them the religious legitimacy to participate in development initiatives. In particular, the questions of should women participate or whether the cultural concepts of modesty would be compromised because of their participation in public life, were not concerning issues for Ismaili because of the endorsement by the *Imam*. For other sectarian

communities in Gilgit-Baltistan, it was just another Western aid organization, without any religious or symbolic significance for them. The fear of losing their religious and cultural values, identity, and ways of life, caused concerns among the Shia and Sunni communities.

My focus on the Ismaili religious outlook contributes to a greater understanding of the diversity of viewpoints in Islam. Usually, Islam is portrayed by conservative Muslim clerics in contradiction with modernity and progress, and the case of the Ismaili deconstructs this essentialist view. The discussion of how different Muslim ideologies view modernity is beyond the premise of my dissertation; however, I would like to clarify that my focus in my dissertation is to analyze why different sectarian groups in Gilgit-Baltistan responded differently to development discourse and practice. Such an intersecting analysis shows the political nature of development. For the Ismaili, religion was the source of modernity and development, and the process of modernization originated from their religious interpretation of their *Imam* who emphasized to pursue a balance in spiritual and material aspects of life. This leads to the question of the religious legitimacy which is an important aspect of how different Muslims themselves define what counts as religious or non-religious (Asad, 2009). I argue that by looking at the situated meanings, the totalitarian and essentialized views about Islam and Muslims can be avoided.

Furthermore, in my analysis of the intersections of religious viewpoints and development in Gilgit-Baltistan, I will not go into the theological explanations of the origins of different sectarian ideologies; instead, my goal is to make clear that like all religions Islam is not fixed or homogenous. I also refrain from using an "exegetical" approach, referring to the theological analysis of the role of women, while studying contemporary issues around women in Gilgit-Baltistan. Like Jafar (2005) and Kandiyoti (1991), I believe that an exegetical approach essentializes Islam as a fixed and static reality that "presupposes that there is an uncontested, universal understanding and implementation of Islam and that it affects all Muslim women, all over the world, similarly" (Jafar, 2005, p. 36). A narrow focus on "Islam and women" also ignores the historical and contemporary links between Islam and other social institutions that account for the variation in women's experiences. In particular, I argue that the link between women's experiences and modern nation-states in the postcolonial period is a more relevant subject of analysis for understanding women's lives. My goal is to situate the women of Gilgit-Baltistan in the politico-historical context of power, identity, state-making and the political project of national integration in postcolonial Pakistan.

My positionality as an Ismaili Muslim is important for framing my research because being an Ismaili, I had easier access to the Ismaili community's social and organizational networks including WOs/VOs and LSOs. The foundational communal collectives included Women's Organizations (WO) and Village Organizations (VO) that were important grassroots organizations to mobilize and organize the local communities to participate in the community-driven organizations. I found out during my research that many WOs were not functional in some villages and it was an important part of analysis that the active functioning of WOs depend on the location, the availability of monetary resources, and the sectarian percepts of communities.

Another aspect of my positionality is that I was born and raised in Gilgit, the capital of Gilgit-Baltistan, and lived there until I left for Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, to attend Quaid-i-Azam University in 2008 for my master's in anthropology. I belong to an Ismaili Muslim family, originally from Hunza (one of the districts of Gilgit-Baltistan with an Ismaili-majority population), and my grandfather moved to Gilgit and settled there in the late 70s when the accessibility became possible with the construction of the KKH. My native language is Burushaski, the language of the Burusho in Central Hunza. I can also understand and speak basic conversational Shina because I grew up in Gilgit. In schools we learned Urdu, the national language, and English, which is the official language of Pakistan in addition to Urdu. Knowing the languages and having an existing personal network was helpful for my fieldwork in several ways which I have analyzed in the next chapter.

Reflecting on my positionality as a local female researcher is important to frame my research because my personal encounters and experiences during fieldwork have illustrated the behavioral and structural challenges for women when navigating public spaces in Gilgit-Baltistan. In addition to the structural challenges, my subjective experiences during fieldwork showed that women's experiences, including privileges and difficulties, vary with respect to their socioeconomic, educational, and sectarian percepts. Though I assumed that being an "insider" (a local, female researcher) would make it easier to navigate the field, but this was not always true. I was a young, unmarried, privileged-looking woman traveling around the region to interview men and woman— not a common sight. My fieldwork experience was a mix of diverse encounters, situations, and feelings. My lived experience as a local, female researcher is not simply experiential but is part of sociocultural, and structural issues that women face in the region. My own embodied knowledge offers a window into the multitude of challenges women faced that originate in the larger

sociocultural and geopolitical landscape of the region. I have analyzed my personal experiences during fieldwork as anthropology at home.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

My research project examines the development practices in Gilgit-Baltistan as part of the state-making strategies of Pakistan. Within this context, my ethnographic research specifically focuses on women and gendered development in the region. This landscape of international development cannot be understood without attending to the transnational politics of development, capital, and state-making.

As I elaborate in the sections that follow, my arguments draw upon the theoretical frameworks of nation-state–building in postcolonial societies, and especially on works by Nosheen Ali (2019) and Chad Haines (2012). Their research provides theorizations of the geopolitical context and sectarianized politics in Gilgit-Baltistan. My research examines women's lives in the context of the sociopolitical transformations in the region, so to extend conversations, I draw on feminist critiques of gender and development (Harcourt, 2016; Karim, 2011; Verschuur, Guerin, & Guetat-Bernard, 2014), gendered development (Kar, 2018; Rankin, 2010; Sen, 2018), authority and representation in ethnography, particularly by "Third World" and Women of Color feminists (Abu-Lughod, 1998; 2002; Desai, 2009; Jafar, 2005; Jalal, 1991; Kandiyoti, 1991; Mohanty, 1984). I also borrow from scholarship that advocates for the decolonization of anthropological disciplinary practices and knowledge production (Buck, 2020; Harrison, 2011b; Smith, 2012). My fieldwork in my home region, finally, draws from the practice of reflexivity as part of knowledge production (Alcalde, 2007; D'Alisera, 2004).

1.7.1 Development as a Nation-State Project

Development is an instrument in the nation-state project of reproducing state ideology as a homogenized nation and a territory (Bhan, 2014). In the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, the construction of the KKH to connect the region with Islamabad was a strategic state-making tactic. The construction of this road was not entirely based on a techno-economic project, so it must be situated within the context of the integration of the region into the national territory of Pakistan (Haines, 2004). To analyze state-making processes in Gilgit-Baltistan, I draw on various

interrelated frameworks, including the concept of the effect of the state by Timothy Mitchell (1989), state-making in postcolonial societies by Hamza Alavi (1972, 1989), development and rule by Nosheen Ali (2019), and state-making and territorial integration by Chad Haines (2012).

Timothy Mitchell (1989), in his essay "The Effect of the State," argues that the state and society are not two opposed objects, spaces, or forces, but rather are closely intertwined. Mitchell argues that the state should be understood as a discursive effect, which means that modern nation-states are grounded in an ideological discourse to establish a uniform nationalism. For the Pakistani state, that discursive effect would be the powerful statute of the military that became a powerful organ of the state in the postcolonial Pakistan (Siddiqa, 2013). By arguing that the state should be read as a discursive effect, Mitchell provides a less essentialist approach to understanding social and political realities. He further argues that the distinction drawn between state and society is the effect produced by the state. Mitchell suggests that we need a better historical sense of how recently the modern distinction between state and society has come about which tells how the modern nation-states operate through both constructed ideology and institutional structure to build a national narrative. In modern nation-states, the effect of the state as a separate entity is the powerful effect of a set of a discursive political strategy that make certain functions and personnel stand apart. The effect of the state as a separate entity also serves the purpose of depoliticizing certain coercive strategies. In the context of the state of Pakistan, the military is an entity which is in fact a powerful organ of the state, but it has developed and maintained a narrative that produces an image of itself as neutral, apolitical, and the protectors of the homeland.

This theorization of the effect of the state is relevant to theorize the Pakistani state. The idea of effect of the state allows us to understand the structuring of statecraft in Pakistan in the postcolonial period, as well as, more specifically, the superstructures and nation-state building processes that have shaped power and politics in Gilgit-Baltistan. The nexus of the bureaucracy and military, the dismantling of traditional governing structures, the construction of infrastructure, and NGOs—all are state apparatuses and methods of regulation and statecraft.

Philip Abrams (1988) points to a similar conception of the modern state. He contests the conceptualizations of the state that separate it from society and conceive it as a structure distinct from the social structures in which it operates. For Abrams, the state is the most powerful agent of legitimation which through the institutionalization of power regulates domination and subjection. Abrams also argues for an understanding of the state as a historical construct, such that it is both a

state-system and a state-idea. In other words, a state is both an ideological project and a set of political exercises in the legitimation of power. Abrams argues, in short, that the state is more than just an apparatus of national governments.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2001) builds on the concept of the "effect of the state" and identifies different forms of state effects as sites or domains of power. These include what he calls an "identification effect", or the homogenizing national identity produced by the state to realign atomized subjectivities along collective lines; a "legibility effect", referring to the theoretical and empirical tools used to classify and regulate collectivities; and a "spatialization effect", or the production of boundaries and jurisdiction. Trouillot suggests that an ethnography of the state can capture these state effects and the subjects they produce. Finally, he identifies NGOs as state-like institutions that produce state effects by disciplining the mind and bodies of citizens as "modern" subjects.

The three interrelated theorizations of the state I have provided above are relevant to understand the nation-state making strategies of the state of Pakistan in the postcolonial period. The concept of the effects of the state is relevant to theorize how and why some of the ideological and institutional structures in Pakistan evolved as the dominant defining ingredients in crafting a national imagination in the post-independence period of Pakistan. The ideological structures in the state-making refer to the strategic use of Islam and Muslim-ness by the state to build a unified and harmonious nation out of the geographically dispersed, culturally and linguistically diverse sub-nationals in the postcolonial Pakistan. The use of Islam in nation-state building produces an effect of an imagined community to unite the diverse sub-national groups inhabiting the newly established state of Pakistan. In addition to the ideological structuring, the institutional structures of state-making involved the military and the bureaucratic structures to regulate the state space and the subjects.

In the context of Pakistan, the institutionalization of broad bureaucratic and military autonomy in the post-independence period empowered the national elite. Hamza Alavi (1972, 1989) has analyzed the state structure of Pakistan as a bureaucratic-military oligarchy that gave power to a single ethnic group, the Punjabi, through their disproportionate representation in the bureaucracy and military. This has perpetuated ethnic cleavages and conflicts that made it impossible for the state to unite the people into a single national community. Alavi (1989) argues that in the post-partition period Pakistan struggled in search of an identity as a state and a nation,

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because the peoples of Pakistan are not undifferentiated masses. To produce an imagined community, Pakistan redefined its national identity using a religious ethnic criterion—namely, "Muslim" (Alavi, 1989). Pakistan was not created, as is ideologically represented by some interests in Pakistan today, as an "Islamic" state (Alavi, 1987); rather, the creation of a unified national identity founded on Islam and Muslim-ness was a nation-state–making strategy adopted in the postcolonial period, especially during the military dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq during 1977–1988.

In addition to redefining nationhood using a single religious identity, the state of Pakistan also relied on large-scale physical infrastructure to produce a unified national space. Majed Akhter (2015) has analyzed how and why river infrastructures like large dams were driven by the politics of postcolonial state and nation formation. It is important to understand the role played by infrastructure development projects in postcolonial India and Pakistan in the processes of nation building. Since their separation into independent countries in 1947, India and Pakistan have been rigorously involved in nation-building using a nationalist discourse (Bhan, 2014). Infrastructure development is not just a techno-economic project, but rather is part of production of state space and hegemonic nationalism: that is, producing the state space as homogenized, integrated, and internally undifferentiated (Akhter 2015). In my research, I analyze the role of transportation infrastructure, especially the role of the KKH in the territorial integration of disputed Gilgit-Baltistan. The militarization of the region and the leading role of the military in maintaining security, surveillance, regulation, and even in the planning and execution of the transnational China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) illustrate the dominant role of the army in the politics, governance, and economy of Pakistan. The inefficiency of the democratic government structure, the imagined and real threat from India, and the transnational politics such as the involvement of Pakistan in the Cold War and in the US-led "war on terror" in Afghanistan, are some of the contributing factors for the military to retain its political legitimacy and dominance (Siddiqa, 2017).

Chad Haines (2007, 2012) has studied the role of the KKH in Pakistan's nation-state–making in its northern borderland, Gilgit-Baltistan. As Haines argues (2012), highways and roads have a strategic importance in nation-state formation and hold major geopolitical significance. Furthermore, he writes, "infrastructure feeds both the developmental as well as national aspirations of the postcolonial nation-states" (Haines, 2007, p. 54), making infrastructure development a

prominent process of modern nation-state building. Haines (2012) views the construction of the KKH both as a development project and a nationalist one.

The construction of the KKH in the 1970s was part of a larger transformation of state policies and institutions in northern Pakistan. Following the construction of the highway and the facilitation of access to the area, other state agents and institutions followed—in particular, the bureaucratic governing structure and the national political parties that replaced the local and traditional governance and political structures. Following on the heels of the state was the nation. The KKH drew the people of Gilgit-Baltistan deeper into the national imagination of Pakistan. Therefore, the construction of the KKH was not only a techno-economic project but had an underlying political motivation to integrate the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, because "state and national integration, in other words, are not distinct processes" (Haines, 2012, p. 8).

Haines (2012) argues that the KKH has a political, economic, and symbolic significance in the national imagination and integration of Pakistan. The construction of the KKH transformed the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan into a "geo-body", which, according to Haines, is not a mere space or territory, but rather a fundamental component of national identity, and an arena of power. The construction of a territory as a "geo-body" also naturalizes the construction of the national territory as a single space, furthering the rhetoric of national elites who tend to discursively erase regional differences by portraying the national space as singular. Haines points out that just like every nation-state in the world, Pakistan comprises diverse sociocultural communities with distinct histories, religious affiliations, and ethnic identities. The attempts of the Pakistani state to produce a homogenous and unified national identity using infrastructure and a Muslim identity is often contested and disrupted by regionalism (Akhter, 2015; Haines, 2012).

Nosheen Ali (2019) shifts the focus from the narrative of how regionalism constantly threatens the imagined order of nation-state. Instead, her ethnographic study in Gilgit-Baltistan provides a glimpse of the lived practices through which the state-citizen relation is made, felt, and reworked. The state, using the emotional logic of love and protection of the motherland, inhabits its subjects emotionally. She argues that the political economy of feeling is also linked with the history of military employment of men in Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, the rule of the Pakistani state is desired by the people for two reasons: the "political economy of feeling," or the feelings of love, loyalty, and patriotism for the Pakistani nation-state; and the "political economy of defense," or the cultural-economic politics of militarization in Pakistan. The political economy of feeling and

the political economy of defense has produced the citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan as loyal subjects. Thus, unlike in the Indian-Kashmir, the politics of identity and self-determination in Gilgit-Baltistan is not about undoing the state but it has been driven by the desire of the people to be integrated into the state-space as a constitutional province with their due constitutional and political rights.

The feelings of patriotism, love, and loyalty are fundamental forces to produce an emotional structure that has sustained military authoritarianism in the region. At the same time, national intelligence agencies, through monitoring and intimidation, constantly render the people of this Shia-majority region as permanent suspects and threats, within the Sunni-dominated state. Nosheen Ali analyzes the production of suspicion itself as part of the emotional structure constructed by the military-intelligence state to rule and regulate state subjects. Additionally, the use of sectarian discourses and practices is also part of the governing structure, producing a "divide and conquer" effect (N. Ali, 2010, 2019). Hence, as Nosheen Ali has eloquently described, sectarian conflicts are used to justify the presence of the military-state in the region because Gilgit-Baltistan is imagined as a sectarian space where conflicts "erupt" unless prevented by a "neutral" military-state. Ali (2012) describes the paradoxical situation created by the state thusly:

> It embodies forms of emotional regulation that are paradoxical yet not contradictory: loyalty to an employment-giving military integrates people into the nation and accomplishes rule by creating consent, while suspicion services state power by emotionally disintegrating the region and hindering the possibilities of regional political solidarity and resistance (N. Ali, 2019, p. 10).

The effect of the military-state as a neutral, apolitical, and a conflict resolving entity is evident in the gratitude and love expressed by people toward the military. Such that the military is highly revered by the citizens in Pakistan, including Gilgit-Baltistan, because the military-state has successfully produced a state effect that produces the military's image as protectors and defenders of the motherland, which depoliticizes and disengages the military from the systematic coercion that occurs through the discourses and practices of the political economy of feeling, the political economy of defense, and the ideological obsession with India. Along with the feelings of loyalty and patriotism, fear of the military and intelligence agencies prevent the citizens from contesting the military authoritarianism in the country. My interviews with political activists and academics showed that people are aware of the role of the military and state in the continued political unrest

and marginalization of the region. Yet even then, most of their anger and disdain is directed at the non-local bureaucratic officers who lead various key government offices.

This anger and disdain toward the central government came up very often during my interviews with the local political activists and academics. In one of the incidents during my fieldwork, the Assistant Commissioner of a district visited a hospital and during his visit an employee complained to him about the lack of medical facilities in the hospital. The Assistant Commissioner was appalled by the complaint and he exploded, "The people of Gilgit-Baltistan don't pay taxes to the government, yet the government provides them a budget. You should be grateful to the government." His comments caused anger and anxieties among the locals who organized a protest after this incident. A local political activist remarked, "When we demand our political rights, they [the government] say it is a disputed region. If our region is disputed, then why do they ask us to pay taxes?" The Assistant Commissioner released an official apology statement eventually, but the anger and frustration among the locals lingered. Many local activists, students, academics, and other educated people raise their voice on social media to express their frustrations with the state-appointed non-local government officers. One local activist wrote, "they [the bureaucratic officers] think they own us and our land. They act like colonial officers and they exercise absolute power. They think we are stupid and don't know our rights."

The locals use incidents like this strategically to organize protests and express their frustration with the state. These incidents can be understood as points of contest and resistance that allow the citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan to politically mobilize and organize outside the dominant spaces of national state structure. Social media is also emerging as a space where the locals raise their political voice.

The Political Economy of Hope, Prosperity and Symbolism

When I was developing my research proposal while I was in the United States in 2017, the political discourse in Pakistan was buzzing around China's One Belt One Road initiative, "a project envisioned to connect 65 countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe which constitute an overall population of 3 billion, and around 38% of global GDP" (Zia, Baig, & Rashid, 2017). The governments of Pakistan and China were embarking on the mega-projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is expected to transform Pakistan into an investment hotspot. According to the report compiled from the proceedings of the "CPEC: Prospects and Opportunities

for Gilgit-Baltistan Conference", held at Karakoram International University in Gilgit in 2017, the CPEC mega-projects, including energy projects, the expansion of optical fiber networks, infrastructure development such as road construction, and the development of Gwadar port and city, held enormous potential for Pakistan. The report also pointed out the anticipated long-term impact of the CPEC to improve agriculture, education, tourism, financing, and employment in Pakistan.

Throughout 2017 and after, Pakistan's state-led media continually reported on the CPEC as a harbinger for the socioeconomic prosperity of the country. The state stressed the affective dimension of the projects by referring to the economic initiatives as the manifestation of centuries-old trust and friendship between Pakistan and China (Mir, 2016; Niazi, 2019). Indeed, phrases like "*Pak-Cheen dosti*" [Pak-China friendship], are commonly used in the mainstream media to legitimate development interventions and accentuate the affective dimension of the economic relationship between the countries (Safdar, 2019). As Haines has pointed out, the state of Pakistan also emphasizes the re-imagination of the ancient Silk Route through the KKH to reinvigorate the centuries-old political and trade relationships between Central Asia and China (Haines, 2012). The KKH and now the CPEC are carved out of the political, economic, and symbolic interests of the state, a project in which the assertion of bureaucratic and military control over Gilgit-Baltistan was central.

In addition to the national media, I also observed signs and slogans painted along the KKH that establish a narrative that the CPEC is way toward socioeconomic prosperity for the region and the country. The murals, graffiti, and slogans written on the walls and boulders along the KKH are in Urdu, English, and a few were in Chinese, as are shown in Figures 4 and 5. It is also relevant to bring home that these slogans were mostly in Urdu, which was adopted as the national language of Pakistan after the independence—another tool of nation-state making as it was the language of the national elites and bureaucrats that diminished the role of the local languages in the political discourse and governance (S. Abbas & Dad, 2017). These murals embody how the national language, Urdu, and the foreign languages, particularly English, as the language of modern education have gradually replaced the local languages of the region (Dad, 2020). The adoption of Urdu as the national language by the state of Pakistan was also part of the political project of building a unified nation and to integrate and regulate the state subjects. During an interview with a local political activist, he expressed the similar concerns. He explained, "The dominance of Urdu

as the language of education and the political discourse has generated a gap between the old and the young generation and also between the traditional political discourse, which was embedded in the local languages, the customary laws, and the governing structures, and the postcolonial political discourse, which has been mainly driven by the national politico-economic interests and the concerns with the integration, centralization, and the nation building."

Figure 4. A state sponsored sign and slogan along the KKH that says, "Long Live Pak-China Friendship"

Figure 5. A small tunnel on the KKH with a slogan from the National Highway Authority (NHA) that says, "Building highways for a richer Pakistan"

Figure 6. A welcome sign in Urdu that says, "*Pak-Cheen dosti zindabad*" (Long-live Pak-China friendship)

Figure 7. Another tunnel on the KKH with a slogan from the NHA that says, "Developing roads to a greater future"

I also observed that the most dominant current political discourse in Gilgit-Baltistan centers around the bilateral projects between Pakistan and China under the umbrella of the CPEC. Not only the national media but also my observations during the fieldwork showed that the CPEC was a significant national political and economic project. When I was traveling along the KKH, I noticed that the huge boulders and walls along the way were painted with phrases like *Pak-Cheen dosti zindabad* (Long live Pak-China friendship), *Shahrah-e-resham* (Silk Route), *Pak-Army zindabad* (Long live Pak-Army), and *Tehreek-e-CPEC* (CPEC movement). When I asked the local people about how they perceive these upcoming projects, their responses were mixed. The people whose livelihoods were associated with the tourism industry were hopeful, because the renovation and extension of the KKH as part of the CPEC has resulted in huge influx of the tourists. Some showed concerns that the increasing amount of traffic will be harmful for the environment and the natural resources in the region. Some academics and political activists who were actively involved in the discourse talked about the various aspects of the politico-economic concerns about the CPEC, which I have discussed below.

Aziz Ali Dad, a local political analyst and activist, is one of the prominent voices in Gilgit-Baltistan. In the newspaper article "From the Great Game to the Game-Changer" (Dad, 2017), he argues that Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway for the CPEC because it provides the entry point to China. Dad refers to the CPEC as a game-changer for Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan in particular, "as it will change the economic, social and cultural outlook of the local communities." In his article, he referred to the CPEC as China's version of capitalism and raised concerns about the marginalization of Gilgit-Baltistan. Some of the perils identified by Dad (2017) were language barriers, environmental concerns, the marginalization of local residents due to the growth of big businesses and land purchases by non-locals. Another concern he raised was the lack of information and understanding regarding Chinese economic expansion, since China strictly controls the access to information. His article reveals the ambiguity of what CPEC entails and how the inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan understands its scope.

This same ambiguity is evident in the interviews I conducted with women in Gilgit-Baltistan as part of my fieldwork. During one such interview, a woman entrepreneur, like many others, expressed her lack of understanding of the mega-projects. As she said, "I don't know much about the CPEC projects and how they would benefit us [women]. You should talk to men. They know more, because they are involved more." Another woman said wryly, "We get the dust and smoke

of trucks," referring to the air pollution caused by the heavy traffic on the KKH since the road has been reconstructed and reopened for trade and tourism. Even the educated women working in various development organizations expressed the same ambiguity regarding the CPEC projects. One of the women officers who was working in a government organization said during our interview, "We are not involved in any capacity, so we don't know much about it [CPEC]."

Saranjam Beyg is a local academic from Gilgit-Baltistan who is the director of the CPEC Research Center in the local University, Karakoram International University, Gilgit. He has raised similar concerns in one of his newspaper articles, "Indirect Benefits," reaffirming that region will receive the smallest share of benefits from the highway. He writes: "Harnessing CPEC's indirect benefits remains the only way ahead for the Gilgit-Baltistan government and its people to gain advantage from it" (Beyg, 2016). The most concerning aspect he highlights is the inefficiency and inadequacy of the local government of Gilgit-Baltistan—which is in fact regulated by the federal government, bureaucrats, and the military. Indeed, as Aziz Ali Dad pointed out in another article, "Boundaries and Identities: The Case of Gilgit-Baltistan," the abolition of the traditional governance structure by the state of Pakistan between 1974–1978 as part of national consolidation has had created a power vacuum in Gilgit-Baltistan, "which is gradually filled by sectarian forces, nationalist movements, ethnic movements and regional associations" (Dad, 2016, p. 2). The absolute power of the central federal government in Gilgit-Baltistan has raised serious concerns about indigenous rights over the land and resources (S. Abbas & Dad, 2017). The indirect benefits refer to the prospects of economic opportunities the tourism industry will generate, which will benefit the hoteliers, restaurant owners, transport businesses, employees, workers, vendors, and other small business owners whose livelihood mainly depends on tourism.

The previous research and scholarship that I have discussed here make important contributions to the theorization of nation-state building processes in the postcolonial societies like Pakistan. However, earlier research does not explore the question of how certain state-making strategies and images affect different groups of people differently. In particular, the understandings of the gendered impact of state-making development requires a detailed analysis and theorization using the theoretical frameworks of critical development and feminist theory.

1.8   Gender and Development

The previous research done in the region does not take into account gender related issues associated with development and state-making. Although Haines (2012) briefly touches upon the issue of gender and space by arguing that the road has reproduced gender segregation by creating separate spaces for women which he terms as the "genderization" of the space, but his description gives a generalized and totalitarian image of patriarchy. I draw from feminists' discourses that illustrate women's nuanced ways of negotiating, contesting, and sometime reproducing patriarchy (Desai, 2009; Jalal, 1991; Kandiyoti, 1988; Sen, 2017, 2018). As previously mentioned, women became part of the political discourse through state-making processes and the discourses and practices of international development and NGOs, successfully producing women as development subjects and "modern" subjects. This dissertation studies the social consequences of these political processes on women particularly through their involvement in development through women's empowerment and entrepreneurial programs.

Additionally, research has shown that the development process itself is powerfully gendered, which has had implications both for women and for development policymaking (Harcourt, 2016). Harcourt (2016) also argues that though much of international development focuses on the inclusion of women in economic and social programs, the development discourse has failed to examine the more deep-seated social, economic, and political gender biases rooted in the societal structure. It is therefore important to evaluate gender and development discourse in the context of gender, power, nationality, transnational politics, and differences.

One of the biggest theoretical and methodological contributions of feminist critiques of gender and development is that they revisit the history of development and development processes using gender as an analytical category. Verschuur et al. (2014), for instance, argue that using gender as a tool of analysis provides context for analyzing power issues and understanding the historic, social, and cultural construction of differences and inequalities.

This lens allows us to see that gender issues have increasingly become an integral part of development policies and programs since the first United Nations Decade of Development in 1961–1971, and especially after the proclamation of International Women's Year and the UN Women's Decade in 1975 (Alvarez, 2014). Since then, the women's movement has become a global focus within international development discourse and practice.

A gender and development framework brings our attention to the ways in which women's issues have been contextualized within development discourse over the past several decades. Icaza and Vázquez (2016) trace these shifts in the conception of gender in development discourse and practice. According to them, the discussion of gender equality in development practice begins with the early Women in Development (WID) approach that advocated for gender equity by altering development practice to direct economic resources to women. The WID model paid particular attention to improving the economic efficiency of women by integrating them into the economy. This framework puts forward gender analysis as an approach for development planning and programs by focusing on the gendered division of labor, with a primary emphasis on the economic contribution of women through their production roles in the community. One of the feminist critiques on WID was that it did not acknowledge women's reproductive labor, traditional roles as family caregivers, and contribution in subsistence farming as having an economic value (Alvarez, 2014; Icaza & Vázquez, 2016).

During the 1980s the discourse shifted from WID to Gender and Development (GAD), which began to pay attention to the structural imbalances and asymmetry of power between genders (Icaza & Vázquez, 2016). Icaza and Vázquez explain that the GAD brings gender broadly, and not only women, into the analysis of development and its concurrent power relationship between masculinities and femininities:

> What GAD feminists would promote was a reconceptualization of development from the perspective of gender relations, introducing the understanding of gender as non-natural nor fixed. From this perspective, gender was considered a social construction, which means that a human being becomes a "woman" or "man" through processes of socialization at home and school, through state practices and policies, in the market and through the mediation of discourses (Icaza & Vázquez, 2016, p. 64).

Conventionally, development policy is mainly guided by an efficiency approach, which entails that women become efficient economic actors by contributing to the formal economy. The efficiency approach differentiates between women's wage labor and the unpaid labor women do as an extension of their domestic role inside the house and also in farming. During the past several decades feminists and other scholars have critiqued the efficiency approach and the growth-oriented model of development, and diversified previous gender analyses to study different forms of inequalities between genders (Mukhopadhyay, 2016). The critical analysis of development as a discourse has opened ground to analyze the concept and practice of development in terms of its

historical conception, its relation to power and authority, and its consequences for different groups of people (Mukhopadhyay, 2016). A contextual understanding of gender and power relationships and the intersectionality of gender asymmetries with structural inequalities at the local level will help reposition gender in development policy and practice.

My research also engages with feminist critiques of development that analyze gender as a historical and political construct, and trace shifts in the conception of and approach to gender and development over time (Alvarez, 2009; Dolan & Gordon, 2019; Verschuur et al., 2014). Neoliberal development and neoliberal ideology have received significant criticism from anthropologists and feminists interested in gender and development. The development model promoting microfinance and entrepreneurialism with the aim to empower women is based on the ideology of neoliberalism (Alvarez, 2014). Neoliberal ideology also promotes NGOs as state-like institutions, because "neoliberalism rests on the idea that human interest is best served through the withdrawal of the state from welfarist policies" (Karim, 2011, p. xiii). As neoliberalism advocated for the withdrawal of the state from the economic and social life of citizens, NGOs emerged as the state-like institutions that work for the socioeconomic development of rural populations. Neoliberal development rooted in neoliberal ideology emphasizes the promotion of individual entrepreneurship, marketized citizenship, and market-led growth. The logic of neoliberal development also held that:

> If a large sector of the population is unable to participate in the economy through poverty and social deprivation, their potential is denied and the economy as a whole suffers (Alvarez, 2014, p. 216).

Guided by neoliberal ideology, since the 1980s, development programs began to incorporate women as effective market participants. The most common initiatives included microfinance NGOs, which have increased in popularity since that time, which work to extend micro-loans to the poor, especially women, to allow them to start income-generating activities out of their home (Karim, 2011). As Karim (2011) explains, the microfinance model promoted the idea of entrepreneurship over investment in the public sector.

Many postcolonial feminists have challenged the generalizing and totalizing political representation of women in the global South as poor, homogenized, powerless subjects (Desai, 2009; Mahmood, 2011; Patil, 2013). Abu-Lughod (2002) also calls for a reframing of this lens to study Muslim women, arguing that there is a need to develop a serious appreciation of differences

among women in the world. I also borrow from Desai (2009) and Sen (2018), who have developed a nuanced lens for studying women in the global South who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities.

Our current understanding of the nuances of the gendered impact of infrastructure development within this region is limited. My ethnographic examinations of the situation in Gilgit-Baltistan showed that little attention has been paid to the gendered division of economic and political spaces. To better understand the effects of development projects on women's roles, the interrelations between physical, socioeconomic, and political spaces must be analyzed. This analysis will bring attention to the power and gender dynamics across different social categories of women.

In my ethnographic work on women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan, I have focused on women's narratives and experiences with sociocultural and other structural obstacles to their engagement in sociopolitical life. Some of the women entrepreneurs were recommended to me by the NGO personnel I contacted in the initial phase of my research, and many of those women were presented as "success stories" of their programs. It was interesting to notice that only a handful of successful women entrepreneurs were presented as success stories by these development organizations. Although these successful entrepreneurs were important in my study, I also connected with other women entrepreneurs by driving around and visiting different villages.

1.8.1   Anthropology at Home

My ethnographic work in my home region brings into the conversation another theoretical question: the ethics and politics of research in anthropology. There has been considerable discussion and heated debate about the political underpinnings of anthropology (Harrison, 2011a). My chapter builds on the personal narratives about navigating the field provided by Richa Kumar (2016), Nosheen Ali (2019), Dada Docot (2017), and Berry et al. (2017), that analyze the political nature of fieldwork and knowledge production in anthropology. Their works also focus on the issues of gender, race, and the positionality of researchers, as well as how the diverse subject positions of researchers impact the process of fieldwork and data collection.

Richa Kumar (2016) talks about her experience of navigating social respectability in India by hiring a male research assistant. Nosheen Ali (2019), similarly, talks about her experiences

during her fieldwork in Gilgit-Baltistan. She describes how people perceived her presence as a young, unmarried, non-local woman in the region, and how the locals of this disputed region interpreted the intentions of her fieldwork. Being Pakistani herself, she had anticipated that she would be perceived as an "insider;" but to her surprise, her subject position as a privileged woman from a major Pakistani city who is studying in the US rendered her as an "outsider" in the eyes of her interlocutors. Ali also writes about several instances when her interlocutors addressed her as "you Pakistanis" when expressing their anger toward the state and its strategy regarding the political status of Gilgit-Baltistan. Ali's experiences problematize the normative conceptions of outsider/insider and native/non-native in anthropology. My own encounters and experiences provided me a similar opportunity to rethink these perceived binaries. The binaries: home/field, native/non-native, and insider/outsider are subjective conceptions, not fixed categories. Not only the internal processes of social redifferentiation and othering become visible when one does fieldwork at home, anthropology at home also provides a unique opportunity to reexamine these processes and categories.

The framework of anthropology at home also aligns with the broader argument of my dissertation: that is, that women' experiences vary across the lines of gender, race, class, nationality and internal systematic differentiation in nation-states. This is equally true for researchers, because field experiences are also gendered, racialized, and classed. The idea of the researcher as an authoritative person is not always the case for non-white and non-Western researchers. Writing and reading about one's field experiences within scholarly mainstays like dissertation manuscripts and published articles will allow us to broaden and enrich our discussions about anthropology and fieldwork practice, particularly during the preparatory phase of fieldwork. Harrison (2011a) also argues "that 'native' perspectives on both First and Third World societies must become an integral part of anthropology if it is to be decolonized" (Harrison, 2011a, p. 88). According to Harrison, "native" perspectives provide valuable alternative visions and understandings about disciplinary concepts and practices. These alternative ways of understanding will also help transform anthropology classrooms into inclusive spaces that move away from conventional conceptions of researchers as white Euro-American and the field as a foreign place away from home.

1.9   Research Design and Methodology

I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork from May to December of 2018. During my fieldwork, I collected data through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and informal talks and discussions with the members of Women's Organizations (WO) in different villages. Before the fieldwork, I also conducted a one-month pilot study in 2017. During the pilot study in 2017, my interest had been drawn toward the women shopkeepers along roadsides and in markets. Various NGOs have been working in the region since the 1980s and women's empowerment has been a significant part of the NGO interventions. The increase in the number of women-led shops, markets, and businesses showed that the recent focus of the NGOs has shifted toward promoting women's entrepreneurship. During my conversations with both male and female NGO managers, I learned that now most of the NGOs focus on the development of individual and social enterprises. The NGOs provide trainings and funds to groups of women so that they initiate income generating activities. The emergence of women as entrepreneurs, in my view, deserves both acknowledgement and critical analysis: specifically, of development practice and the persistent gender inequities embedded within it.

I also observed that there is little critical discourse around the model of women's entrepreneurship as a strategy to address gendered economic inequalities. Until now, the tale of economic development and female empowerment in Gilgit-Baltistan has mostly been told through the narratives and reports of development agencies, where women appear as numbers and as beneficiaries of development programs. When viewed through an ethnographic approach, women's lived experiences prove far more nuanced and heterogenous. The nuances of women's lived experiences showed that women are a non-homogenous group and that their experiences vary between locations and along class and sectarian lines. My research is based on women's narratives of their everyday life and my own observations and encounters with women in different social settings, which I describe in the subsequent chapters.

The image of women as entrepreneurs promoted by development discourse is problematic because it does not take into account the range of entrepreneurial activities and the labor that women do. During my fieldwork, I observed that all women engage in income-generating activities through agriculture, fruit-processing, or traditional handicrafts. In addition to being involved in generating income, women were the primary caretakers for their families. Young girls and women pursue education and the educated women have professional jobs as teachers, doctors, nurses, lady

health workers, and in various public and private sectors. Many women with financial resources and a supportive family have opened shops in markets and along roadsides. My ethnographic study shares women's narratives about their experiences and ways of navigating the obstacles in the socially and religiously conservative society of Gilgit-Baltistan, showing that entrepreneurship programs, which are top-down and designed in male-dominated and masculinist structures, are disconnected from women's everyday experiences.

1.9.1 Ethnographic Fieldwork

Ethnography is "a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice" (Forsey, 2010, p. 567). Ethnography as a research method was very important for my research because I was interested in a critical analysis of the development discourse and practice that promote women's entrepreneurship. I was interested to understand how women themselves understand and engage with different development programs. I was also interested to observe how the various NGO interventions, the road, and modern discourses of empowerment and development play out in the everyday life of women. My ethnographic observations and encounters also allowed me to understand how the various processes of development including the NGO-led interventions and the nation-state building infrastructures such as the KKH are intricately linked with defining the lived experiences of women. The observations of the lived experiences of women included their everyday routine, their engagements with the road, their entrepreneurial activities, and their gendered experiences as women. I have analyzed the interlinks between women, road, and the development processes.

As I have mentioned earlier, I focused on three different districts of Gilgit-Baltistan including Gilgit, Nagar, and Hunza. My aim to focus on three districts was to engage with women from different sectarian and ethnolinguistic groups. Also, to understand the regional variations in the diversity in the development experiences of women, my fieldwork in three districts was needed to analyze how the highway has affected the sub-regions differentially. These three districts, Hunza, Nagar, and Gilgit, represent the ethnic and religious diversity of the region. Hunza is Ismaili dominant, Nagar is Shia dominant, and Gilgit is diverse where Shia, Sunni, and Ismaili communities are settled. All these three sub-regions have witnessed spatial and socioeconomic changes since the construction of road in the 1970s. Yet each of the sub-regions experienced these changes differently, as each has its own pace of progress shaped by its ethnic and religious

ideology. My multi-sited fieldwork examined these differential impacts, analyzing how ethnic identity and religious affiliations and ideologies intersect with the gendered impacts of development projects.

During my fieldwork, I met women from different religious and ethnic identities. I visited female-only markets in the urban areas of Gilgit, where women ran the shops. I spent hours in the market to observe the activity and talking to women shopkeepers. Many women were glad to be able to support their family financially. The women-only market provides a socializing space and a liberating experience for women in the inner city. In the commercial on the outskirts of Gilgit, such as in the areas of Danyore and Sultanabad where Ismaili were settled, women run their individual shops within the main bazaar and along the roadsides. In the Nagar district which was a Shia majority district and was not commercialized except for a few shops and tourist spots along the KKH, women were mostly engaged in agricultural activities and traditional handicrafts, such as weaving and sewing. In the villages I visited in Nagar, women mostly work within or close to their homes. I also visited two shawl-making centers in Nagar, established by NGOs, where women were trained as skilled laborers to weave traditional woolen shawls. As a young woman who was showing me around the vocational center told me, "This began as a project. Initially the NGO (in Nagar) funded us. They [the NGO] built this center and provided us all this machinery." She pointed to the spinning and weaving machines crammed in the vocational center comprised of three rooms with little space left to work and move around the machines. She continued: "But now they [the NGO] have stopped funding us. Now we must turn into a self-sustainable enterprise making profit by selling our shawls, which is not easy."

Women were concerned because the NGO had stopped funding the center, and now, they had to generate income by selling their products. This case shows a flaw in the development through entrepreneurship model of NGOs, because the expectation of the NGO from women to turn their shawl center into a self-sustainable profit-generating enterprise was detached from the sociocultural and economic reality in which the women lived. The village in the Nagar district where the shawl center was situated was far from the main commercial areas around the KKH, and women did not have access to the market. Also, given the conservative social environment in the district, women were not involved in marketing and selling shawls themselves, instead, they would sell them through middlemen, or their male relatives would sell the shawls and handicrafts out of their shops. A woman also pointed out that when they used to get funding from the NGO, they

would get paid monthly, but now when the NGO had stopped funding, many women became demotivated and they stopped working in the shawl center. This is an example that showed that NGOs were disassociated with the various socio-cultural contexts in which women live.

I also interviewed women in different parts of Hunza, including in the commercial areas near the highway and in villages that were off the highway. In the areas of Aliabad and Karimabad, the main commercial areas in Hunza, there were several women running businesses in the bazaar. Hunza is known for its moderate religious milieu and great acceptance for women's mobility and social engagement. In Hunza, Ismaili women entrepreneurs have actively pushed the traditional boundaries and have cultivated ways to engage in the hitherto male-dominated sociopolitical and market spaces. Nevertheless, there was heterogeneity among women in Hunza with respect to their class, education, socioeconomic status, and most importantly, geographic location. Many women in the lower Hunza valley, where there were no tourist destinations and commercial activity, expressed that NGOs have ignored their areas. Similarly, many remote villages in Hunza, Gilgit, and Nagar that are far from the KKH and are only accessible via a dirt roads lack infrastructural and institutional resources for women to pursue lucrative business opportunities. By conducting fieldwork across these varied areas, my research captured women's diverse experiences across the three districts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

1.9.2   Participant Observation

To understand the gender relations and gendered patterns of involvement in development projects in different sub-regions, participant observation in different social settings was essential. Regular visits to markets and monthly meetings held by Village Organizations (VOs), Women's Organizations (WO), and Local Support Organizations (LSOs), allowed me to establish relations of trust with participants.

Coming from the area, it was easy for me to navigate different social settings. I attended various cultural and religious events, followed NGO teams to different villages and observed the meetings and training programs, drove around villages and had many informal conversations with women, and interacted with academics at the local university where I was invited to attend seminars. This latter experience allowed me to explore educated participants' views about development and particularly about the CPEC projects because I was also interested to hear what locals felt about the China-Pakistan mega-projects.

The conversations I had during participant observations revealed that people feel excluded from national development plans, arguing that the CPEC development plan has no clear investment plans or direct benefits outlined in the documents. During my fieldwork, I examined the range of opportunities and resources available to local men and women, women's participation in income-generating activities, the challenges they face in doing so, and how that varies across sub-regions. Participant observation allowed me to follow and understand the everyday life of my interlocutors.

My participation also included assisting my relatives in daily household chores during family gatherings. Being an Ismaili Muslim, I could go to *Jamatkhana* (Ismaili's place of worship) and participate in rituals, religious events, and ceremonies. All kinds of social settings provided immense opportunity for "engaged listening" (Forsey, 2010). During my observations and participation, I was attentive to who was there and who was not, who spoke and who was silent, who had authority and control. These everyday interactions provided many details about gender patterns and their making and remaking in the everyday life. My experiences demonstrated the extent to which observation is a key tool for adding invaluable richness to qualitative data and analysis.

1.9.3   Informal and Semi-Structured Interviews

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted both unstructured and semi-structured interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviewing is an important research tool in qualitative research. Bernard (2011) argues that different types of interviews produce different types of data, and during fieldwork researchers might need to go through a continuum of interviews. For instance, during the first phase of fieldwork while the researcher is trying to settle in and establish rapport, informal interviewing is useful: it helps the researcher connect with people in the community and discover new topics of interest. Informal interviewing results in the production of a vast amount of data generated form informal conversations, interactions, and observations, and the researcher ends up writing a lot of field notes.

Semi-structured interviewing is mostly done when the researcher has just one chance of interviewing a participant. It is based on an interview guide, or a list of ordered interviewing instructions, and the researcher goes through that list, including probing questions. This type of interview comes in handy when the researcher wants to use their time efficiently.

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I interviewed men and women who were local experts and have contextual knowledge and understanding about development projects in the region. My interviewees included different stakeholders such as women entrepreneurs, government officials, NGO representatives, activists, local university faculty associated with the CPEC Research Center, and community members of Village Organizations (VOs), Women's Organizations (WOs), and/or Local Support Organizations (LSOs). The main participants of my research were women entrepreneurs. Table 1 below shows the number of different women entrepreneurs I interviewed. The table also shows the type of businesses they were engaged with and the town or village they were located in.

Ethnographic research methods allow to capture the overlooked aspects in the development practice. Through my ethnographic interactions, I was able to find several women who were engaged in business activities in public spaces in different villages and towns. Initially, I reached out to women through NGOs, and realized that the NGOs directed me to only a handful of women. A long-term ethnographic fieldwork was very helpful to walk around and drive around the villages and find out women's shops. I collected my data by conducting semi-structured interviews with women entrepreneurs. Informal conversations with women while they were engaged in their everyday life routine were also insightful sources to understand women's lived life. By illuminating women's stories and narratives, my work provides an anthropological understanding of how women perceive and engage in entrepreneurial activities. I describe and analyze women's social world to center the discussion around how women's lives have changed since the construction of the transport infrastructure and the interventions carried out for women's empowerment.

Table 1 shows different businesses women were pursuing. The table shows that most of the women I interviewed were engaged in the entrepreneurial activities that overlap with their traditional gender roles as women. Some of the most common business areas women pursue included cooking, farming and fruit-processing related, honeybee farming, handicrafts making, which were income generating activities that women used to do as part of their domestic and family-care giving responsibilities. The microfinance model and wage-labor model of development have redefined and extended women's traditional informal economic participation in the form of entrepreneurial ventures to integrate them into the formal economy. Many anthropologists who have worked on gendered development (Karim, 2011, 2014; Sen, 2017, 2018)

Table 1. List of women entrepreneurs I interviewed who are running business in public spaces, along roadsides, and in markets and streets.

No.	No. of women entrepreneurs	Type of business	Town/Village	District
1	10	Ladies' shop [shops that sell women's garments and cosmetics are called ladies' shop colloquially]	Khomar Jutial Aliabad	Gilgit Gilgit (Central) Hunza
2	10	Handicrafts shop [caps, wallets, decorative items with traditional embroidery]	Nasirabad Hussainabad	(Lower) Hunza (Lower) Hunza
3	8	Beauty salon	Jutial Sultanabad Aliabad	Gilgit Gilgit (Central) Hunza
4	8	Honeybee farming	Danyore	Gilgit
5	6	Restaurants	Jutial Karimabad Altit	Gilgit (Central) Hunza (Central) Hunza
6	6	Early Childhood Development Center	Gilgit town	Gilgit
7	5	Food/snacks shop	Jutial Karimabad Altit Aliabad	Gilgit (Central) Hunza (Central) Hunza (Central) Hunza
8	5	Grocery shop	Jutial Sultanabad Aliabad Rahimabad Chipurson Hussainabad	Gilgit Gilgit (Central) Hunza (Lower) Hunza (Upper) Hunza (Lower) Hunza
9	5	Tailoring	Khomar Jutial Sultanabad	Gilgit Gilgit Gilgit
10	2	Dry fruit processing and packing units [These are the units owned and managed by women. In terms of workforce, there were several women working as labors in numerous units]	Altit Danyore	(Central) Hunza Gilgit
11	2	Gems and Jewelry	Jutial Karimabad	Gilgit (Central) Hunza
12	2	Woolen shawl weaving center	Pissan Chalt	Nagar Nagar
13	2	Photo studio	Aliabad Sonikot	Hunza Gilgit
14	1	Floriculture – flower farming	Rahimabad	Gilgit
15	1	Nut oil extraction	Aliabad	Hunza

Table 1 continued

16	1	Pharmacy	Nasirabad	Hunza
17	1	Agriculture related items/equipment shop	Sultanabad	Gilgit
18	1	Carpet weaving center	Passu	(Upper) Hunza
19	1	Online tourism business	Khomar	Gilgit
20	1	Women's hostel	Jutial	Gilgit

Table 2. List of organizations I have visited

No	Name of organization	Town/Village	District
1	Local Support Organizations (LSOs)	Danyore Jutal Rahimabad Aliabad Chipurson Hopar	Gilgit Gilgit Gilgit (Central) Hunza (Upper) Hunza Nagar
2	Women Organizations (WOs)	Gilgit town Sultanabad Aliabad Nasirabad Chipurson	Gilgit Gilgit (Central) Hunza (Lower) Hunza (Upper) Hunza
3	Government organizations: • Planning and Development (P&D) • Women Development • Assistant Commissioners' offices	Gilgit town Nagar	Gilgit Nagar
4	NGOs	Gilgit town Jutial Rahimabad Aliabad	Gilgit Gilgit Gilgit Hunza
5	Karakoram International University	Gilgit town	Gilgit

and my own interviews with women have shown that women view the development interventions and programs as opportunities to expand their socioeconomic role beyond the domestic sphere.

Women's narratives in the subsequent chapters will provide a detailed critical discourse on women's engagement in development.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews with women entrepreneurs, I also had interactions with women in various group settings and meetings. Table 2 shows the list of the organizations I visited and participated in their meetings. I visited various NGOs that were working on giving entrepreneurial trainings to women. I also attended and participated in various meetings between NGOs, WOs, and LSOs. Figure 8 shows a meeting between an NGO and an LSO where the members of the LSO are giving a presentation on their annual activities to the NGO. The young woman standing in the photo was the vice-president of the LSO and she was an Ismaili who was actively involved in the community organizations. She was the only woman in the management body of the LSO. The photo also shows that there were several women in the audience who were members of the WOs. I have analyzed the organizational structure of the community organizations in the coming chapters. Here, I would emphasize on the observations I made about the underrepresentation of women in the governing bodies and in leadership roles in various public-private institutions. The decision-making bodies in the LSOs, NGOs, and the government institutions in Gilgit-Baltistan were mainly male dominated. The participation of women in the leadership roles was also sectarianized. By which I mean that Ismaili women were predominantly involved when it comes to the public participation and visibility in the public. The NGO-LSO meeting shown in the photo was conducted in a village with both Ismaili and Shia population, but the women from the audience who were participating actively during the discussion were Ismaili. The Shia women in this meeting and in other group meetings that I attended were quiet during the meetings where there were men present.

The differences among women's nature of participation in the public, sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious, is linked with the sectarian identities and the larger sectarian ideologies around women's participation in public life. Therefore, women's experiences are not isolated from the contemporary and historical socio-political and religious ideologies. An ethnographic study allowed me to see the intersections among socio-political, religious, and ideological structures that primarily define and regulate gender roles and expectations. I have analyzed the intersections among development and state-making to theorize the variation in women's experiences,

Figure 8. A Local Support Organization (LSO) briefing an NGO team about their activities

Figure 9. An expo organized by the local government to promote women entrepreneurs

Figure 10. Women entrepreneurs displaying their products in an expo in Gilgit town

Figure 11. A woman entrepreneur displaying handicrafts in an expo in Gilgit town

contested views about women's empowerment, and inter- and intra-communal unevenness pertaining to women's engagement in development programs.

Figures 10 and 11 show Ismaili women entrepreneurs who were displaying their products in an expo arranged by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan. This expo was part of the women's entrepreneurship promotion projects that dominated the women's empowerment narrative in the region. It means that entrepreneurship is viewed as a strategy and tool to address gendered economic inequalities. The purpose of such events was to provide a marketing opportunity for women where they can sell their products. The expo was arranged in the City Park which is located near the main bazaar in Gilgit. I spent my entire day visiting different stalls and having informal conversations with women entrepreneurs in the expo. There were around ten stalls in the expo. The visitors included both men and women and most of the women visitors and entrepreneurs were Ismaili, because I knew them from our previous interviews with them. I have lived in Gilgit town and I knew that the City Park, where this expo was arranged, is mainly surrounded by Shia and Sunni settlements, but the women participants were mostly Ismaili. One of the women entrepreneurs said, "I have traveled from Hunza to participate in this expo." I visited all the stalls and asked them what they think about these events. One woman entrepreneur commented during our conversation, "Events like these are important because people get to know about our products, and especially it is a great chance to network with the government officials. So that they invite us to their future initiatives."

Just like this expo, ethnographic interactions provide an opportunity to observe micro-processes and micro-interactions and understand the gender – and culture-based subjectivities (Abu-Lughod, 1993). To avoid generalizations of women's experiences, I will focus on women's narratives and their individual experiences as entrepreneurs and development subjects that they have shared during the interviews. My particular attention to the internal differentiation among women is the center of my analysis that contests the conventional use of women as a homogenized category in the discourse of development.

1.10 Data Analysis

During the ethnographic fieldwork between May and December in 2018, I focused on the three districts; Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar. The main participants of research were women entrepreneurs who were recipients of the development projects and were pursuing entrepreneurial

activities. Table 1 shows all the women entrepreneurs I interviewed, and their locations, and types of businesses they pursue. Many of these women entrepreneurs were members of the WOs and they have had received trainings and funding from NGOs and microfinance institutions. Entrepreneurialism was my focus of analysis, because the recent focus of NGOs had been to provide funds and training to women so that they pursue self-sustainable entrepreneurial activities. As I have described earlier, most of the women in Gilgit-Baltistan have been engaged in informal home-based income generating activities, but I included women for the semi-structured interviews who were pursuing businesses in public spaces including roadsides, markets, and streets, that are outside the traditional space of home.

In all, I conducted 78 semi-structured interviews with the women. I conducted most of the interviews in Burushaski because most of the women I interviewed were Ismaili women from Central Hunza whose native language was Burushaski. Some of the educated women would switch between Burushaski, Urdu, and English during the interviews, which is a common practice. Although the native language in the Lower Hunza (also known as Shinaki) is Shina, women could speak both Shina and Burushaski, and women in the Upper Hunza (also known as Gojal) spoke Wakhi as it is the native language of Gojali people in the Upper Hunza. I conducted my interviews in Urdu with women who spoke Shina and Wakhi. The native language in Nagar is Burushaski which is a slightly different dialectic. Most of the women could also speak Urdu, because being the national language and the language of education, it has become the lingua franca of the region. Sometimes, the Shina-speaking women in Gilgit would switch between Shina and Urdu. Although my knowledge of Shina was limited, all the interviewees were fluent in Urdu. When Shina-speaking women occasionally switched between Shina and Urdu, I could usually understand them but sometimes I asked for clarification in Urdu. My interviews with academics and political activists were also bilingual or trilingual sometimes as it is a common practice for the educated people to switch between Urdu, English, Burushaski/Shina in a single conversation. Therefore, I transliterated my interviews when transcribing with the aim to preserve the spoken text and the contextual meaning of the conversations. I translated the interviews or the snippets from the interviews into English while using them in the dissertation.

Figure 12 shows the response patterns that emerged while analyzing women's interviews. All the women entrepreneurs responded to the semi-structured interview questions: When and how did they start their business? How did they arrange their finances? Did they receive trainings from

NGOs, WOs, or LSOs? What were their challenges and issues while pursuing their business activities? I audio recorded their interviews with their consent, and I transcribed the interviews. I have used the transcriptions of the interviews and the descriptions of events and encounters from the fieldnotes in the subsequent chapters as part of my analysis.
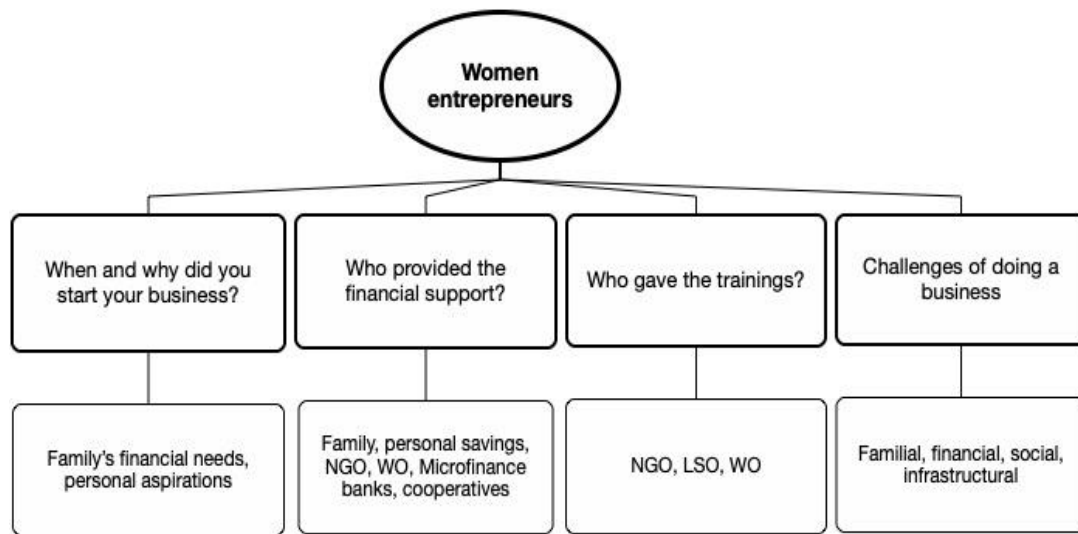
Figure 12. Nodes from the interview responses of women entrepreneurs

As shown in the Figure 12, the interviews with women entrepreneurs were in a semi-structured format. The semi-structured interviews with women entrepreneurs collected women's narratives of their journey as entrepreneurs. Women's narratives cover different aspects of their life; their roles and responsibilities as family caregivers, their additional financial responsibilities, their engagement with the development apparatus including WOs, LSOs, microfinance institutions, and NGOs, and the multitude of challenges they face in their everyday life.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews with women entrepreneurs, I collected qualitative data through participant observation in the daily activities and organized meetings, events, and social gatherings arranged by NGOs or LSOs. Table 2 shows the organizations I visited that are directly or indirectly related to the development practice in Gilgit-Baltistan. These organizations include the community organizations such as WOs and LSOs, some of the NGOs working in the region, and the local university which is part of the process of constructing the development discourse and practice. In addition to the NGO-LSO meetings, the seminars in the university were part of the micro-spaces where the development practice and discourse unfolds. I

wrote down about my observations and informal conversations during the group meetings in my fieldnotes. In these group settings I also met political activists and academics who talked about their own critical analysis of state-making.

My fieldnotes provided the contexts and the unspoken micro- and macro-processes and practices that are necessary to understand and capture the qualities of "life as lived" (Abu-Lughod, 1993). I do recognize that it is impossible to capture the life as lived and ethnography has the tendency to homogenize and present people as static, bounded, and timeless entities. By providing narratives of women's individual experiences and analyzing them in the context of the theorizations of the socio-political perspective, my goal is to provide a non-homogenized description. In my descriptions, I view women as agents in the on-going processes of making and unmaking of culture.

I have analyzed the responses from my participant observations and informal interviews in various group settings under two main analytical themes; development through NGO interventions and development though state-making instruments such as the KKH. Figure 13 shows my analysis and expansion of the two analytical themes into sub-themes that I draw from my observations and the relevant scholarship on the critical analysis of NGOs, development, gendered development, and nation-state making in the postcolonial Pakistan.
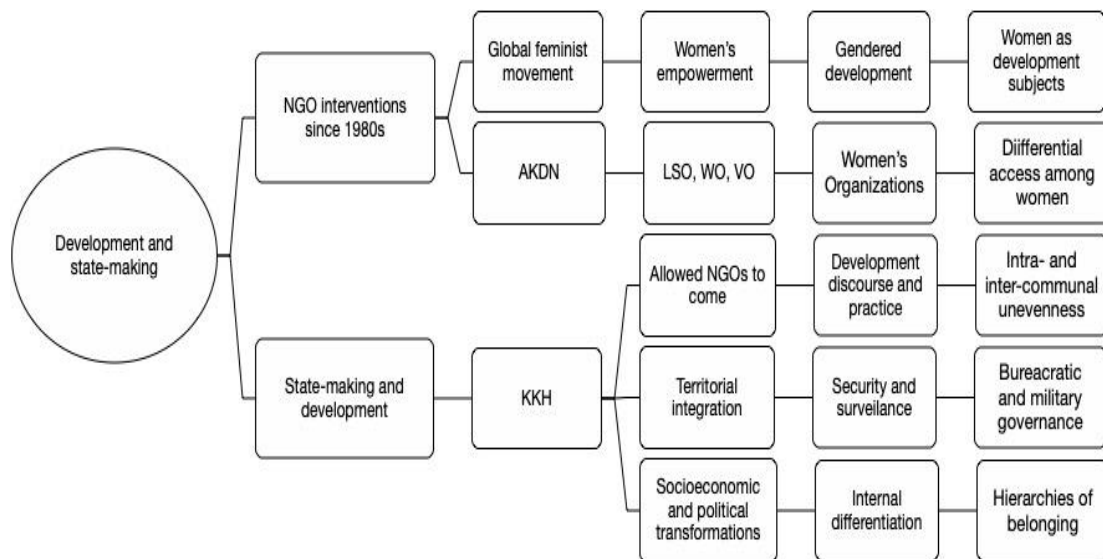
Figure 13. Analytical nodes of development and state-making

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I have organized the analysis into three chapters. The next section will provide an overview of the analytical points in each chapter.

1.11 Organization of the Chapters

My dissertation focuses on three different topics: first, entrepreneurship, gender, and development; second, development as the infrastructure of nation-state making; and third, doing fieldwork in one's home. Each of these topics is explained in the three chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 discusses the nuances and challenges of doing ethnographic fieldwork in one's own society. This chapter draws on the frameworks of self-reflexivity, autoethnography, and anthropology of the hometown (Docot, 2017). Fieldwork at home also highlights the relational aspects between the researcher and interlocutors, and the methodological challenges that arise from the personal, kin-based, and fictive relationships, as well as the social hierarchies and identities, the researcher is part of. In this chapter, I discuss how doing ethnography as a native of one's area of study could be rewarding and challenging. Since in ethnography the researcher is the central instrument and data-gathering tool who use their senses, thoughts, and feelings, this chapter argues that a critical reflexivity of one's positionality and the power relations with the participants should be a significant aspect of the ethnographic analysis. The chapter mainly draws from my own experiences in my home region during the fieldwork. I argue that fieldwork and anthropological practices themselves are gendered, classed, and racialized.

Chapter 3 is about women entrepreneurs that provides an in-depth analysis of how women in Gilgit-Baltistan became part of the development process that began in the 1980s following the construction of the KKH. The emergence of women as development subjects and their inclusion in development programs is part of the legibility effect produced by the nation-state building processes of Pakistan in its northern borderland. This chapter recognizes that while the inclusion of women in formal and informal economic systems brought about a multitude of opportunities and challenges for different groups of women, it is also important to situate women's lives in the strategic processes of national territorial integration. This chapter discusses women as development and entrepreneurial subjects and how their subject positions are forged by both traditionalism and development discourses about women's empowerment.

Chapter 3 also analyzes entrepreneurialism and entrepreneurship programs as part of the strategies used by development organizations to promote economic development and women's

empowerment. One of the most important frameworks for studying women and development is the critical approach to the anthropology of development (Escobar, 1995; Vavrus, 2003) and the postcolonial frameworks to look at women in the Global South (Mohanty 1984; Desai 2009, 2007). Like Sen (2018), I use an intersectional framework to analyze how women's economic potential intersects with their other subject positions, including sectarian identity, class, and rural-urban location. This chapter draws on interviews I conducted with several Ismaili women who are emerging as entrepreneurs and who are often seen by NGOs to be better performers of development than others, for development is a performance contingent to the expected social and economic benefit for communities (Flachs, 2018). The entrepreneurial practice of women is also embedded in the sociocultural contexts they live in (Sen, 2018).

The role of NGOs has remained essential in Gilgit-Baltistan to create opportunities for women through socioeconomic programs, vocational training, and other social services. During the last few decades since the 1980s, women began to venture into new social and economic arenas and their roles are evolving (A. Ali et al., 2016). The formation of village level institutions such as Village Organizations (VOs), Women's Organizations (WOs), Local Support Organizations (LSOs) have provided the women with opportunities and skills to take more active roles in crafting their lives and livelihood. But the accessibility of women to these resources is influenced by their class, ethnicity, religious orientation, and the social structure. There is a lack of more nuanced approaches that recognize Pakistani women as active and diverse agents without neglecting the societal structures that limit their agency (Grünenfelder, 2012). This chapter aims to provide more detailed representations of women of Gilgit-Baltistan by examining their individual experiences in diverse social power relationships.

Chapter 4 extends the discussion into the larger framework of nation-state building in Gilgit-Baltistan. The multiple forces affecting women's lives in Gilgit-Baltistan are deeply interconnected with the strategies adopted by the state to build a unified national identity and territory in the postcolonial period, especially since the 1970s. The state-making strategies I discuss in the chapter include the construction of roads and the military-intelligence-state triad that render the region as a security zone. This hegemonic governmentality has fueled internal sectarian divides and conflicts that have produced a hostile and masculinist environment where women are reduced to symbols of community identity and honor. The chapter also analyzes the differential

impact of the road on women with different class, rural-urban, and sectarian identities. It analyzes how women negotiate, resist, and adapt under these socioeconomic circumstances.

Gender provides a fruitful lens for analyzing the actions of the nation-state and its development measures. Chapter 3 offers an analysis of development as apolitical project which is embedded within state-making processes. Haines (2012) has argued that roads are always central to the design of the modern nation-state, and the development era in Gilgit-Baltistan in fact began with the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) in the 1970s, connecting the region to the rest of the country. The highway has a significant role in manifesting the nation-state-making processes of the state, and it allowed many development projects to follow in the region. This chapter analyzes sectarianized politics and its impact on women's experiences. My study provides an analysis of the present sociopolitical situation in the context of sectarian politics, state disenfranchisement, the political economy of feeling, and development as an instrument of nation-state–making.

Overall, my ethnographic research in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, studies the development discourse embedded in the nation-state building processes and the implementation process of development projects. To understand ongoing inequities in this region, my focus was on the asymmetrical relationships of power and the factors that reinforce this asymmetry: that is, on the political and structural causes of poverty. My research argues that development policy overlooks the interrelationship of the state apparatus with structures of power in not only national and local settings, but also, most importantly, in everyday practices. A nuanced approach attentive to the everyday negotiations and manipulations of power at the local level will help create effective implementation strategies that mitigate these inequities.

Another significant focus of my research is revisiting the history of development and development processes, using gender as an analytical category. Though there are many dimensions of development goals, gender equality has been one of the primary targets of development policy. A gender and development approach provides a helpful framework for examining the persistent gender inequities within development discourse. A better understanding of the intersectionality of culture, economics, governance, and power will provide a more detailed picture of the inequities embedded within society.

My ethnographic work in Gilgit-Baltistan focused on the emerging trend of women-run businesses in the region. Women's entrepreneurship and empowerment are globally emphasized

by development partners as part of their mission to address gender inequities, empower women, and reduce gender poverty. My work explored different entrepreneurial activities carried out by women as work and these activities shape their everyday life, subjectivities, and most importantly, the challenges they face.

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century the infrastructure development, educational programs, health initiatives, local businesses, employment opportunities in public and private sectors, have contributed toward an overall improvement in quality of life, health, literacy rate, income opportunities as compared to the circumstances before these interventions (Khan, 2010). However, there is a need to study and acknowledge regional variations and the embedded forms of marginality across gender and ethnic groups in Gilgit-Baltistan. My research provides a nuanced understanding of the individual and social experiences of women navigating the global-local nexus and the political economy of the region.

CHAPTER 2. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: REFLEXIVITY AND BEING A WOMAN RESEARCHER AT HOME

2.1 Abstract

This chapter is based on autoethnographic and reflexive ethnographic accounts from the fieldwork I conducted in three districts in my home province, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. I call this work anthropology at home to emphasize the epistemological and ethical quandaries and concerns that are specific to doing research in one's place of origin. This chapter thus questions the core concepts and methodologies of the discipline of anthropology, providing a perspective on and critique of native anthropology, the practices of ethnographic fieldwork, and the textual interpretations in ethnography. Fieldwork at home when seen as an epistemological issue foregrounds the relational aspects between the researcher and the interlocutors, and the methodological challenges that arise from the personal, kinship, and fictive relationships, and the social hierarchies and identities the researcher is part of. There are special issues that arise while conducting research in and writing about one's own society, which essentially originate from my personal, emotional, and communal associations and relationships with the participants of my research in my home region. Anthropology at home blurs the boundaries between "insider" and "outsider," but at the same time the power asymmetries based on class and educational status are reproduced. Other times, anthropology at home renders the researcher powerless by placing them in the sociocultural hierarchies based on age, gender, marital status, and the expected performance of gender and religious identity. My reflections on my role as a local and a researcher offers various perspectives that contribute for re-assessing the disciplinary praxis and the theorizing of ethnographic representation and authority.

2.2 Introduction

The autoethnographic narratives in this chapter come from my everyday interactions and participant observations during the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted for my dissertation project in Gilgit-Baltistan, my home province, located in the northernmost part of Pakistan. I was born and raised in Gilgit town, which is the capital of the region. As someone who is a native of Gilgit, pursuing a Ph.D. in anthropology in the United States, and doing ethnographic fieldwork in my

native region, there were several instances that made me question my own positionality and ethical responsibility, as well as the issue of representation. Positionality means that "the ethnographer is situated in one or more identity positions in social-structural hierarchies," and reflexivity means "asking who originates, shares or bears interests in the terms of the research question" (Lichterman, 2015). To be mindful of one's positionality and the practice of reflexivity has been advocated by feminist research to remind researchers to be attentive and critical of their social position in terms of gender, race, class, nationality, and educational status, that define the power relations between researchers and participants (Alcalde, 2007; Haraway, 1988; Lichterman, 2015). Positionality and reflexivity also offer a critical lens to engage with one's identity and role as a researcher and a native, and the potential dilemmas, rewards, and difficulties emerge while doing anthropology at home (Alcalde, 2007; D'Alisera, 2004; Peirano, 1998). This chapter focuses on my autoethnographic narratives that raise questions regarding ethnographic traditions and conceptions of field, data, self, other, otherness, power, representation, and authority in anthropology. The experiences that I write about in this chapter might not necessarily offer solutions to "fix" ethnographic practices; nevertheless, my goal is to situate issues discussed here within the broader ideological and epistemological frameworks of the discipline rather than considering them as mere personal dilemmas.

2.3   Decolonizing Anthropology

The discussion about decolonizing anthropological research, theory, and practice began in 1980s to reverse some of the anthropology's colonial past (Buck, 2020). Decolonized anthropology offers critical perspectives in anthropology as colonial discourse and suggests approaches to anthropologists to "engage themselves politically with the peoples and communities that host ethnographic investigations" (Harrison, 2011b, p. 8). The advocates of decolonized anthropology emphasize to view the participants as equals and experts on their knowledge systems, and therefore, work toward collaboration with the communities they study. Engaged anthropology and collaborative research are two of the many ways to practice decolonial approaches in research. Buck writes:

> All these approaches, decolonized, engaged, collaborative, assume that people who are being exploited or who are members of societies that have been colonized have something to say that people in all parts of the world need to hear and learn from.

Anthropological knowledge is more valid as a result, and consequently it will be of greater use to people fighting oppression (p. 2).

Similarly, Harrison (2011b) argues that a decolonized anthropology is directed toward the empowerment of its studied populations. Harrison offers perspectives on various ways that include establishing concrete collaboration and shifting the center of authority and legitimacy to the participants, that anthropologists must adopt to work toward demystifying hegemonic ideologies and co-producing forms of knowledge to empower and amplify the voices of communities.

In this chapter I use reflexivity as an approach offered by the frameworks of anthropology at home and engaged anthropology as a way of decolonizing anthropological practice and knowledge production. My interest in studying specific aspects of anthropology at home is inspired by the "anthropology of the hometown" (Docot, 2017), which problematizes the conventional traditions of knowledge production in anthropology on the grounds of relational ethics. Using relationality with her participants in the hometown as a central analytical lens, Docot suggests that being attentive to communities' concerns about self-presentation in ethnographic writings should be the priority.

Secondly, I use engaged anthropology as a way of decolonizing anthropological research and writings that primarily focus on empowering and amplifying the voices of the communities anthropologists work with. According to Buck (2020, p. 5) "engaged anthropology rejects the notion that anthropology is valid only if it is far from home. Instead, they may practice anthropology 'in their own backyard.'" As Buck advocates, one aspect of engaged anthropology is to encourage anthropologists to work in their own communities, and secondly, to work with the communities as a colleague. Buck writes:

Doing engaged anthropology means involving yourself in people's problems and in their efforts to understand and fight the underlying causes of those problems. This means participation as a colleague, not as an expert (p. 22).

Gruenbaum (1994, 2001, 2020) in her extensive work on female genital mutilation (FGM) in Sudan advocates for a similar approach where the researcher through a long-term ethnographic research work establishes collaborative relations with the community and works toward a gradual change. Her works offer a detailed analysis of FGM and the cultural and religious context in a way that is respectful, sensitive, and prioritizes the communities' voices and their concerns of identity and representation. In her critical discourse on WHO's recommendations of deinfibulation, Gruenbaum (2020) advocates for an engaged approach and offers insightful perspectives on the

sociopolitical context of deinfibulation to counter the hegemonic, uninformed, and totalitarian ideologies about the communities. She writes:

> Engaging with the affected community as a group is preferable, since it is group support for change that is most crucial to decisions about behavior that is heavily norm-driven and has community consequences, in terms of marriageability of daughters or family honor or personal reputation.

Her research illustrates through her long-term ethnographic engagement, participation, and collaboration, that people consider making big changes when they have both a supportive medical environment and supportive community-driven movement. An engaged research, thus, takes seriously the views and knowledge of the people as the legitimate source of knowledge that complement the anthropological analysis of the given social issue.

Applied anthropology which advocates to work as practitioners is another form of engaged anthropology. Nolan (2002, 2004, 2008), an applied anthropologist and a practitioner, argues that anthropologists are well-suited to work as practitioners in development industry for so many reasons. He writes:

> We are locally centered, focused on local ways of seeing and describing the world. We are inductive in our methods and our thinking, good at building a picture of reality from the ground up. We are very good at eliciting local data, making sense of it, and using it, rather than relying on theoretical constructs from outside (Nolan, 2008, p. 167).

Applied anthropology equips the researchers to explore and find the solution to a problem with the community. He writes:

> Anthropology becomes both more visible and more integral to problem solving. Anthropology has a distinctive contribution to make here: we are good at what Wendell Berry calls "solving for pattern"—situating a solution within its overall context in such a way that change does not ignore or disregard the larger connections (Nolan, 2004, p. 32).

Both Gruenbaum and Nolan provide essential analytical and practical tools to engage with the communities, and advocate for an engagement that centers on amplifying the voices of participants of the research. Likewise, many anthropologists view engaged anthropology as a potential solution to make academia relevant to the world (Ulysse, 2013).

My chapter draws from the scholarship of engaged anthropology and applied anthropology that offer ways to decolonize anthropology; some of which include collaboration, engagement, understanding the local context, work as a colleague, and to prioritize communities' concerns of

identity and self-presentation. My ethnographic accounts of women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan amplify women's narratives of their experiences and encounters with development and entrepreneurialism. Women's narratives illustrated that one of their central concerns was the sociocultural barriers, social attitudes, and patriarchal assumptions of men regarding women's gender role and participation in socioeconomic activities. Through an intersectional approach, I argued that women's experiences are subjected to their socioeconomic, geographic, and sectarian contexts. Using an intersectional approach to examine women's lives was a way of decolonizing the ways of looking at women in Gilgit-Baltistan, which has, conventionally, been apolitical, generalized, totalitarian, and disengaged from their lived experiences. My research amplifies women's voices and their experiences of navigating the entrepreneurial pursuits.

My long-term ethnographic research in Gilgit-Baltistan showed that "entrepreneur" is a word promoted by NGOs' women's entrepreneurship training and funding programs to encourage women to integrate women into the formal economy. In contrast, the interviews with women showed that many of them pursue the income generating activities as part of their role as housewives and often do not refer to themselves as entrepreneurs. Women prefer to pursue the entrepreneurial activities that are manageable for them and according to their educational, institutional, financial capacity and accessibility in their life. I will provide an example of two women, Nazia and Afsana, who ran a small shop in a street in a village in Gilgit. It was a small shop with wooden shelves fixed around the walls and the things they sold out of their shop included salt, tea, soaps, match boxes, shampoo, and sanitary pads. During an interview, Nazia told me that she owns the shop and that the house, orchard, and the farming land adjacent to the shop belong to her family. Culturally, the land is owned by men, so her sense of ownership of the shop was not necessarily in the legal terms. Afsana told me that she is Nazia's business partner and that they both make *arzoq* (a traditional bread) to sell it out of the shop. Afsana continued:

> We have received several business trainings from the AKRSP and other NGOs that work to empower us. They taught us basic business skills like record-keeping of finances. They gave us trainings in fruit processing, vegetable farming, and honeybee harvesting. But we decided to make *arzoq* and sell them out of her [Nazia's] shop. Making *arzoq* is manageable with the other household responsibilities and many women here do that [make *arzoq* to sell]. They [other women] usually give them to male shopkeepers near the road who sell for them out of their shops. We sell 10-15 *arzoq* every day from our own shop and we have been doing this for a year now. We have savings in the WO. We will save more money and invest in some other business, like honeybee harvesting. Many women in our

WO are doing honeybee harvesting, because it is profitable. There are [male] contractors that buy honey from women. The LSO also give trainings in vegetable farming, but it is not profitable because no one comes to buy vegetables from us. We cannot sell them in the market because the market is far from us. Most of the vegetables go to waste and so does our hard work. We wake up at 4am so that we can make *azroq* before our family wakes up and our other responsibilities begin.

The narrative of Nazia and Afsana shows how women make decisions about what to pursue as an entrepreneurial venture and how do they manage to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations along with their other familial responsibilities. I have analyzed women's narratives and experiences of their engagement in development and entrepreneurialism in the next chapter. In this chapter, I provide reflections of my own encounters and experiences of fieldwork and my performance of identity, which too is a narrative of a local woman—mine.

2.4   Anthropology at home

I conducted my fieldwork in three different districts within Gilgit-Baltistan: Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar. My encounters and experiences in each of these different districts provides an insight into the internal sociocultural and politico-religious diversity and complexity of Gilgit-Baltistan. In this way, my analysis helps in "deconstructing sameness and understanding differences" (Harrison, 2011b, p. 4) within and without the various ethnolinguistic communities in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The ethical dilemmas of doing research in one's own home are complex. First, based on the contextual parameters and as a local woman, I could to go to any place, social setting, or event I planned to observe, including the *Jamatkhana* (Ismaili Muslims' place of worship), women's markets, religious and cultural events and gatherings, Women's Organization (WO) meetings, neighborhoods, and villages. Second, to avoid unnecessary suspicions in a region that is under high security and surveillance by the military and intelligence agency due to Gilgit-Baltistan's disputed status, I relied on my identity as a local as an adequate and legitimate justification of my presence as a researcher asking questions in different social settings. I thus avoided any confiscation of my research materials by intelligence agency personnel, which my research assistant told me had occurred several times even for locals, particularly male researchers. It was possible that my positionality as a local woman might have spared me from being a "suspect."

Nosheen Ali talks about how her presence was perceived and suspected by the locals of Gilgit-Baltistan. She describes how many of her interlocutors suspected her that she was funded by India and she had to defend herself on multiple occasions to dispel the spying accusations from various people during the fieldwork. She is a Pakistani, but in the region which has been denied its constitutional political status by the state of Pakistan, her being someone from Karachi rendered her positionality to be that of an "outsider." Ali wrote that, when she tried to convince one of her interlocutors that she had genuine research interests in the region, the interviewer exploded, "I would like to believe you. But I have never met a Pakistani who has genuinely showed concern for Gilgit-Baltistan. You come here to rule us, or for tourism and NGO work. No one talks about rights" (N. Ali, 2019, p. 18). Ali's experiences reveal how the interlocutors define the researchers' identity as an "insider" or an "outsider"—it is based on their own prior experiences with people from outside the region, and in this case, the regional identity is more salient than national citizenship.

I did not have any such encounter, because my positionality as a local woman favored me during my research. However, sometimes when I had to drive by myself and I noticed a vehicle with green license plate, which indicates government owned vehicles, driving right behind my car for a long time, I would panic. As Ali (2019) has noted, based on her field experiences, that the feelings of anxieties and fear are predominant characteristics of the social and political context of conflict zones like Gilgit-Baltistan that are engulfed with spies, surveillance, and sectarianized politics. In contrast, in my personal observations and experiences, state-surveillance through the intelligence agency was invisible to me in everyday life. As a local woman, I had the freedom of mobility and I did not have to encounter any intelligence agency personnel. I did not need any special permission or Non-Objection Certificate (NOC) that non-local and foreign researchers require. I was welcomed wherever I went and both men and women extended their support and appreciation. Mostly people would take pride when they got to know that I, a local young woman, was pursuing education from the US and I was there to do research in my own region. *"Hamari khawateen bohot agey gayi han"* ["Our women have exceled so much in life," in Urdu] was a complimentary phrase commonly uttered by people whom I met for interviews or in group meetings and gatherings. My interviews with a few local male activists and scholars, however, revealed that the state-surveillance becomes visible when someone is critical of the state and

military in their writings. One of the scholars/researchers I interviewed shared his experiences of surveillance by the intelligence agency. He explained:

> I do research and I write on social media. Sometimes, I write scholarly critique on the state, politicians, bureaucracy, and inefficiency of the government organizations. They [the intelligence agencies] send *unpadh* [Urdu word meaning uneducated/illiterate (said with an undertone of sarcasm and frustration)] agents who go through my notes. What do they [agents] know about what I write? They [agents] are mostly illiterate or semi-literate. They just want to annoy us and discourage us from being critical of the state.

I started my research project with an interest in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a transnational telecommunication and transport infrastructure development project. But during my pilot study in 2017, I realized that the CPEC is an extremely politicized and divisive discourse in the region and the country. Many people during our conversations referred to CPEC as a "sensitive" issue because it is was a national discourse fostered by the state to bolster national political and economic interests. The most common response I received from men and women was, *"GB k liye tou is ma kuch bhe nahi hai"* ["There is nothing for GB in it (CPEC)," in Urdu]. During my initial exploratory interviews with government officials, a male government officer commented, "There are so many misleading opinions about CPEC in Gilgit-Baltistan. You should meet the right people to know about it [CPEC]." He mentioned a few names and I took note of them. It became clearer after more interactions, conversations, and observations that the "right" people he recommended were either government officials or locally influential people who had a pro-CPEC stance, and their views were aligned with the national discourse. Seeing this visible divisiveness and the prospective security and surveillance issues, I decided to focus on gender and development instead, and view the CPEC as a project in the chain of the state-led and NGO-led development projects and discourses in the region that have impacted women's lives in various ways.

Another ethical dilemma of doing research in one's own community is that the concern of the community with their self-presentation immensely affects the framing of the analysis. My focus were women entrepreneurs and women's collectives. The members of Women's Organizations (WOs) were used to having visitors from various NGOs and projects working in the region. They appeared comfortable having me around in their meetings and gatherings. While this trust, these personal connections, and social networking provided me easier access during fieldwork, it came with profound responsibility. Many women entrepreneurs were Ismaili and the

AKDN is the foundational development organization in Gilgit-Baltistan initiated by the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili. In addition to initiate grassroots development institutions, AKDN has played a central role for Ismaili to establish their identity as a peaceful, progressive, and development-oriented community. Ismaili community, being a Muslim minority in the region and the country, have fostered partnerships and institutional collaborations with the government and other communities through AKDN's activities and programs. AKDN is not only a development organization, but also an institutionalized way to manifest their identity and their fundamental beliefs that constitute, among many, peace, prosperity, education, women's empowerment, and sociocultural and economic wellbeing of the society. Therefore, one must realize that the critique on AKDN would be perceived by Ismaili as their "negative" representation. As an Ismaili and as a local, I knew that working with my own community is laden with profound responsibility. Moreover, the realizations and theorizations of such deeply interconnected religious and communal identities was a significant aspect of my research project.

Fieldwork at home may seem less arduous and more friendly and collaborative in nature than other forms of ethnographic fieldwork. Nevertheless, it is challenging in its own way. To begin with, ethnographic research is extractive by design because anthropological interventions are premised on gathering data through cultivating social relationships with the participants. Ethnographic research depends on personal relationships and attachments, and Stacy (1988) argues that the personal relationship anthropologists cultivate during research place the participants in a more exploited position than in quantitative research. Many women were glad that I was writing about them, but they were unaware of my textual interpretations, which leaves me—the researcher—with the authority to interpret and write about the interlocutors. Even if I made my writings available to them, most of them would not have been able to read it due to the language barriers. Therefore, despite the intentions of the ethnography or feminist values that a researcher hopes to espouse, including care, respect, reciprocity, mutuality, and collaboration (Stacey, 1988), the relationship between the researcher and the researched remains unequal.

Fieldwork, furthermore, is inherently political and the research relationship between the researcher and the researched is hierarchical and potentially exploitative (Ellis, 2007). This raises questions like: Is it even possible to do "ethical" research? How can one proceed to conduct "ethical" research? What do decolonizing methods in research look like? These were some of the questions that guided my fieldwork and writing.

2.5   Anthropology, Fieldwork and Reflexivity

To trace the theoretical thread of decolonized anthropology, I went through some of the relevant literature that explore, analyze, and contest the theoretical, epistemological, ethical, and political ways of anthropological research and knowledge production (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Appadurai, 1988; Gordon, 2011; Harrison, 2011a, 2011b; Said, 1979). My goal in this section is to bring in some of the theoretical and conceptual debates that emerged in the discipline as part of the discussion to critique the colonial conceptions and practices and to advocate for a decolonized and anti-racist anthropology. One of the colonial conceptions that received much criticism was the inherent dichotomy between the western Self and the "exotic other" in the anthropological thought and writings (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Said, 1979). Closely related to the dichotomy of self/other is the conception of "the field" as separate from "home" (Buck, 2020; D'Alisera, 2004). Conventionally, there has been an inherent spatial and ideological separation between "the field" and "home" in anthropology given "the inherent affinity between anthropology and exoticism" (Peirano, 1998, p. 106). The field and practice of anthropology also typically relies on the binary difference between "we," the ethnographers, and "they," the subjects of our research.

The binary of native/non-native has also received much criticism from many anthropologists. Appadurai (1988) traces the genealogy of hierarchy in anthropological thought while tracing the historical construction of the concept of "native" by anthropologists and colonial administrators. He writes: "Natives, thus, are creatures of the anthropological imagination" (Appadurai, 1988, p. 39). He argues that the constructed binaries and systems of difference are about power and hierarchy, and are products of the relationship between anthropology, colonialism, and racism in the construction of the Western Self against the non-Western Other. Similarly, Narayan (1993) argues against the fixity of "native" and "non-native." She argues that the polarization between "native" and "real" anthropologists goes back to the colonial settings in which the discipline was forged to serve the colonial project. She writes that the binaries emphasize a dichotomy between outsider/insider or observe/observed. She argues, instead, we should view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications.

Like many Black, Indigenous and People of Color scholars, Navarro et al. (2013) bring our attention to the challenges faced by scholars of color, particularly women of color, in academia, where scholars of color are assumed to speak from the position of "native." The inherent dichotomies between the native and non-native in the discipline of anthropology pose challenges

for scholars of color as binaries seemingly blur in terms of their relatedness with the Other along the lines of race, gender, and class. Navarro et al (2013) and Kirin Narayan (1993) have extended the discussion on the colonial binaries and they view the binaries as instruments of power.

Another aspect of decolonizing practice has been to question the notion of objectivity and advocate that all forms of knowledges are subjective, partial, and situated (Haraway, 1988). Feminists and scholars of color have questioned and critiqued the epistemology, objectivity, representation, and binaries of knowledge production (self/other, subject/object, native/non-native) that have circulated and perpetuated in the writing and practices of anthropology and related fields (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Geerts & Van der Tuin, 2013; Stacey, 1988). Ethnographic fieldwork and textual representation in ethnographic writing raise questions of ethics, power, and hierarchies. Fieldwork is usually viewed as a uniform, gender-neutral, physical space and a place foreign to the researcher and far from home. This binary difference between the researcher and the participants also essentialize and romanticize the foreignness of the researcher in the field, which was, conventionally, assumed as an essential requisite for the 'objective' analysis of the issue under study. However, a decolonized theorization and critique of objectivity has challenged these binaries and dichotomies.

Many anthropologists who have done fieldwork at home have written about the dilemmas of navigating the field as both researcher and as private individual (Alcalde, 2007; D'Alisera, 2004; Docot, 2017; Lichterman, 2015; Narayan, 1993). To address this tension, they have suggested to do ethnographic reflexivity to be aware of one's positionality and the power asymmetries based on one's race, class, gender, nationality, and other categories of social identity. England (1993) suggests that it is important to be more open and honest about research and the limitations and partial nature of that research. Therefore, we need to locate ourselves in our work and to reflect on how our location influences the questions we ask, how we conduct our research, and how we write the ethnographic texts.

The scholarly discussion that I have provided here are relevant for an analytical discussion of my positionality and for a guided self-reflexivity of my ethnographic moments and encounters during fieldwork in my home region that I have discussed in the following sections.

2.6   Autoethnographic Narratives

2.6.1   Being A Local Woman Researcher

It was challenging to navigate my fieldsite, which is also my home region, as a young woman researcher given the sociocultural context of the region. Initially, I had planned to travel around the region on my own and recruit research assistants later if needed. I soon realized that I would indeed need a research assistant, preferably a man, so that it would not look unusual when I traveled around the region to visit people and offices. I realized that this male research assistant would be able to serve as my shield while navigating highly male-dominated spaces: in effect, I needed a male researcher to "legitimize" my mobility. In a society like Gilgit-Baltistan, entrenched patriarchy limits women's forms of socialization and defines access to the places that women can inhabit—and I realized, this extends to the field of research. Richa Kumar (2016) also talks also about similar experiences of negotiating social respectability after hiring a male research assistant during her research in India.

Finding a male research assistant was a difficult task. Usually young women in the region travel around with men who are related to them. I did not have any male family members who had the time to accompany me every day for my fieldwork. I talked to my primary contact, a faculty member at the local university who then introduced me to one of his students who could be a potential assistant. The student told me that he could not be my full-time research assistant because he was a student and also had a part-time job in an NGO. He promised that he would connect me when he finds someone who could work as my research assistant.

While waiting for research assistant, I visited and interviewed women shopkeepers in nearby areas in Gilgit where I was staying. However, I still needed someone who could drive me to other areas in Hunza and Nagar. Driving itself was challenging not only because of the terrain, but also because of the overwhelming number of stares and comments from male drivers. Though local women drive, mostly to and from work or to pick up and drop off their children at school, many women have told me that they still feel uncomfortable on the road. The frustrations expressed by women resonated with my own experiences of driving in Gilgit. Once a male driver yelled at me, "If you cannot drive 'properly,' you should stay at home."

One day when I was visiting some faculty members in the local university, I came across a friend—a fellow anthropologist—whom I knew from Quaid-i-Azam University, where I did my

master's degree. When I told him about my dissertation project, he offered to come with me on weekends when he was not working. Finally, one day, I got a call from the student who had promised to help find a research assistant. We scheduled a meeting with the young man who would soon become my research assistant. The meeting was successful, and finally I had a research assistant. Naveed, my new research assistant, had just graduated from a university in Islamabad, liked to travel, and was interested in working with me until he found a job. It later turned out that he was also socially well connected and was comfortable enough to accompany an unfamiliar young woman doing fieldwork.

I had an existing social network to kick start my research fieldwork as I had an opportunity to network with some NGOs, LSOs, and some local academics during the pilot study in 2017. During my fieldwork in 2018, I had visited women entrepreneurs in the nearby places in Gilgit where I could drive by myself. I needed a research assistant to drive me to Nagar and Hunza because it was a long drive from my place in Gilgit. Now, I had found a research assistant, I could travel to Hunza and Nagar frequently. During my interviews, most of the women would ask me how I was related to my research assistant. Initially, I tried explaining that he was my research assistant, but this seemed difficult for the women to comprehend. My research assistant suggested that I say that he was my cousin to avoid these questions and inconveniences. These women's questions, nevertheless, were linked to expectations and public perceptions about gender. As a local woman, I was part of the social structure, and I was expected to behave in a certain way. This brings me to the gendered aspects of my research. In order to fit in, I decided to wear long kurtas with long sleeves and started to cover my head with *dupatta* (long scarf) whenever I was visiting the bazaar or an NGO's office, or attending a social gathering. This form of gendered dressing up added to my comfort while it also fit into the mold that people expected from women. However, as Ali (2019) argues, fitting into local culture as a researcher is more complicated than adopting local dress. It requires "gender performance" (Butler, 1988) to conform to the expected gender identity, but my role as a researcher and ethnographer often surpassed the expected femininity and gender identity because of my interactions with males and my presence in certain social and organizational spaces where it is uncommon for young women to show up as researchers.

Moreover, I gathered from women's responses that they were familiar with research because they talked about students from the local university who had visited them with questionnaires. One woman pushed back, when she did not see a questionnaire with me, "Where

is your questionnaire? How do you do your research?" When I told them that I was interested in hanging out and having conversations with them, many women commented jovially, *"mi unpadh zamindar baan"* [Burushaski] or "*hum unpadh zamindar hein* ["we are uneducated farmers" in Urdu]. We don't have any useful information to give you." They would suggest the names of the educated women they knew whom they thought I should interview instead. Their comments showed their perception of which knowledge is important, revealing the hierarchies that are produced by a modern education and capitalist notions of economic value that privileges "masculine activities" over "feminine activities." However, upon letting them know that their knowledge and experience are equally as important, they would let me with stay with them for as long as I wanted.

Another woman, while speaking with me, advised, "next time you should come with a list of questions." This was one of the moments when the ethnographic style of research produced an image of a researcher as naïve and passive person. An important and concerning gendered aspect of being a local female researcher was that interlocutors, who were often older than me, saw me as a young and naïve, and gave comments such as above that tended to be patronizing. Such attitudes were upsetting but also rare. It is also important to emphasize that I mostly received a welcoming and kind response for my research from most of my interlocutors. As Berry and colleagues have pointed out:

> Therefore, the intimacy created through rapport is one of our greatest achievements just as it is, paradoxically, one of our deepest vulnerabilities as women (Berry et al., 2017).

2.6.2 Othering by My Interlocutors

Ethnographic fieldwork at home has the benefit of allowing one to draw upon one's personal and professional network. But this does not necessarily eliminate power hierarchies because "power manifests in relationships between people and within institutions" (Kumar, 2016, p. 8). When theorizing patriarchy, scholars mostly consider power relations between men and women, and there is a lack of understanding about power hierarchies among women and how women actively and strategically reproduce and maintain them (Kandiyoti, 1988). My encounters with several educated, middle-class women brought my attention to this aspect of structural patriarchy. In addition to women entrepreneurs, I also interviewed educated women working in government and non-government organizations. As an anthropologist interested in studying

gender and development, women working in government and NGO management in Gilgit-Baltistan were important research participants for my work, especially because I had hoped to analyze their experiences with and views on institutional cultures of gender power relations. To my astonishment, many of the women working in these organizations in Gilgit whom I approached refused to participate in my research. One woman said to me, angrily, "You are young. You should talk to us humbly." When I heard this, I recognized that her reference to my age and my way of approaching her was rooted in the bureaucratic culture of Pakistani governmental organizations, which, inherited from British colonizers, is based on a normalized systemic demeaning of people based on gender, class, and organizational hierarchy. This was one of those situations when my age and gender placed me in a disadvantaged position.

This was a moment in my fieldwork when I, as an anthropologist, had to unravel both the social relationships I was navigating and the larger structures and processes within which those social hierarchies are embedded. The possibility of encountering resistance and a lack of support and empathy from urban, educated, middle-class working women in Gilgit had been the last thing on my mind during the pre-fieldwork preparatory phase of my research. These "mishaps," however, provided an interesting analytical turn for thinking about how power, politics, and hierarchies unfold in the field for women researchers during fieldwork. Women are usually viewed as victims of patriarchal politics and very rarely are they seen and analyzed as active agents of reinforcing those same discriminatory practices deliberately or inadvertently. Nonetheless, such very heart-breaking, disappointing, and discouraging moments provided me an insight to the power relations among women, which is usually not taken into consideration while studying women, and women are perceived as homogenized and apolitical.

On another occasion, when I went to interview the head of a government agency, a male, non-local[1] bureaucrat, he referred to me as an American despite knowing that I was from Gilgit-Baltistan. I was interested in learning more about the CPEC which, as I have mentioned above, was a buzzword in local politics during my fieldwork. He interpreted my question as a critique of CPEC, and he responded angrily, "I know that Americans are against CPEC. I don't know what they have told you." Despite knowing that I was from Gilgit-Baltistan, he othered me as an

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[1] Gilgit-Baltistan has a bureaucratic-military organizational structure. Given the disputed status of the region, it is administered by bureaucratic officers who are mostly non-locals, meaning they are not from Gilgit-Baltistan, and are appointed by the federal government of Pakistan.

American and as anti-CPEC. On reflection, I could see how his comment about my being "American" and "anti-CPEC" and anger may have been informed by the political context in 2018 when I was doing fieldwork. During this time, Pakistan-US political relations went through a rough patch because the Trump administration had cut the military budget of Pakistan (Sullivan, 2018), and because of the US-Indian strategic interests around critiquing Chinese economic expansionism in the form of One Belt One Road initiative (Mourdoukoutas, 2019). This was one of several instances when my positionality as a woman and my interlocutors' perception of my positionality based on my multiple identities surfaced.

How did my interlocutors position me or ascribe my identities? An important aspect of doing fieldwork at home is negotiating the identities the community assigns to one who is a part of them. My identity as a woman positioned me within the gendered hierarchy, which defined my social limits, social expectations, and terms of engagement with different community members along the lines of gender, class, age, and ethnicity.

My education and family status privileged me as a middle-class woman who had access and resources to do her research. Additionally, my family's support for my project legitimated my mobility outside home. Likewise, many ethnographic accounts of women have illustrated that women primarily rely on family's support to derive legitimation of their mobility in public spaces. Additionally, my sectarian identity as an Ismaili Muslim allowed me to have easy access to the Ismaili social, religious, and organizational networks. Ethnolinguistically, I am from Hunza and I am a native speaker of Burushaski. All of these identities privileged me in many ways, because most of women entrepreneurs whom I was interested in interviewing were Ismaili and Burushaski speakers. But at the same, these very social and identity categories embed me in local cultural and sectarian politics. Like the Ismaili entrepreneurs I interviewed, I also faced challenges while navigating the extremely sectarianized space of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Many women pointed this out during our interviews that conservative groups often criticize Ismaili for emulating "western" ideals and for "giving" their women "too much" freedom. The visibility and presence of Ismaili women in public spaces are often misconstrued, and issues around their bodies, sexuality, and clothing often lead to controversial sectarian debates and clashes in the region. Ismaili young women participate in business, sports, singing, and sometimes dancing, which has become a constant cause of dispute among different sectarian groups within the region. The "sectarian imaginary"—a normalized mode of seeing and interacting with the

sectarian other through suspicion and resentment" (N. Ali, 2010, p. 739)—has produced Ismaili women's bodies as highly politicized and sexualized sites of contestation. Given this sociocultural environment, I was under continuous pressure to watch my behavior, clothing, and interaction with males.

2.7   Studying Home

When I was in my hometown for my fieldwork, my mother commented, "Your kurta is short. You should buy longer kurtas to wear while you are here. Otherwise, people would gossip about you." She began to tell me stories about how elderly women speak ill of the young girls who wear short kurtas and do not care about their *dupatta*. My mother has lived in Islamabad for a long time and is not critical of my or other young women's comportment; nevertheless, when she is in our home region, it appears that she feels the pressure to conform to local expectations. She also told me that she overheard some women gossiping about a young woman visiting from a city, who was wearing a short kurta to the place of worship, which was inappropriate and infuriating in their view. My mother was concerned that other women might gossip about my clothing or be suspicious of my modesty and morality.

In addition to the state-surveillance, there was inter- and intra- communal surveillance to protect the communal identity. It was not just my mother who would remind me repeatedly to dress modestly, but other elderly women who would also advise me not to leave my head bare. Traditionally, elderly women hold respect and authority to discipline younger women in the community. I will provide an example of one such incident: Once I was attending an NGO-LSO meeting. It was a gathering of men and women in a village near Gilgit, which was a social event arranged by an NGO where development personnel, including some members of the senior management of the NGO, came to meet the members of Women's Organization (WO) and Village Organization (VO). I was sitting with the women participants and listening to the presentations when an elderly woman sitting behind me whispered in my ear, "Cover your head with your dupatta. Men are not nice 'here.'" As a local woman, I recognized her advice as a normalized mode of disciplining young women to respect cultural gender norms and expectations.

For women, especially the young and unmarried, it is important to be viewed as morally respectful by society, and dressing modestly is a key criterion on how women are judged. Modest ways of dressing also legitimize women's mobility and participation in many socioeconomic

activities. In addition to securing access to education and employment based on their respectfulness and modesty, these characteristics are also essential for young women to secure "good" marriage proposals. Understanding the different modes that women cope based on their particular context, I argue that it is important to be careful in centering modesty in appearances as the sole basis for theorizing gender oppression and subordination. As Mahmood (2005) has so eloquently demonstrated, "Agency is not only invested in subverting the norm, but also in upholding it." Women exercise their agency by upholding cultural and religious values of modesty and humility (Mahmood, 2011). In my experiences and observation, conformity to prescribed values of modesty and performance of gender identity also work as pragmatic choices among women. Such a performance of gender and religious identity are ways to legitimate their mobility and freedom to participate in economic and educational activities. Many women, especially Shia and Sunni women, emphasized that modest dressing for women is significant part of manifesting their religious identities. However, during my interviews with young Ismaili women, many of them expressed their frustration with the gendered expectations to manifest modesty and piety through a particular way of dressing.

Narayan (1993) has captured other dilemmas that native anthropologists encounter while observing and analyzing the social norms in their own society:

> In some ways, the study of one's own society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known. The reframing essentially involves locating vivid particulars within larger cultural patterns, sociological relations, and historical shifts (Narayan, 1993, p. 678).

I have gone through the same inverse process while analyzing my data. I want to return to the elderly woman's comment, which was, "Men are not nice 'here,'" and I want to bring attention to her emphasis on "here" in the context of the "sectarian imaginary" (N. Ali, 2010) of the region. Sectarian imaginary according to Ali (2010) refers to how different sectarian groups imagine, feel, and relate to each other. As I have mentioned earlier, I was attending an NGO-LSO meeting in a village. The meeting was in a village on the outskirts of Gilgit, which was a Shia-majority area with a smaller Ismaili population, and there were both Shia and Ismaili men and women in the gathering. The elderly woman, an Ismaili, considered herself a custodian of Ismaili communal identity and honor because of her age, and considered it necessary and her responsibility to remind

me of my personal ethical responsibility around how I carry myself as a member of a shared identity group—Ismaili. Within this context, I read her use of "here" as referring to the presence of non-Ismaili men and women and my responsibility to protect and uphold a "good" image of Ismaili community by looking modest. These forms of everyday sectarianism, expressing sectarian imaginary, are common in the everyday life and they entrench and reproduce sectarian politics and perceptions in the region.

As a result of such a sectarianized identity politics, women as the repositories of honor and identity become politicized in a patriarchal war of cultural authenticity. Since I have been away from my home region for several years, I assumed that my positionality as a researcher would not bound me in these constructed identity categories, but I realized that I cannot detach myself from the identities I was part of. Because the locals see me as a young Ismaili woman, I had to operate within those sociocultural and ideological parameters, and I became aware that I had a significant responsibility ascribed to me to maintain the honor of my community.

One day during my fieldwork, I woke up to witness yet another episode of the wars of cultural authenticity in Gilgit—not a violent physical scuffle but rather a palpable feeling of ambient tension, rage, and contempt. The frequent uprisings, fierce debates, and clashes over the threat that westernization and most importantly "westernized" parts of the region pose to local culture and norms have become ubiquitous in local politics, where Ismailis are painted as emulating "western" ideals. That morning, I read about this latest clash one morning on Facebook, and gathered from the outrageous posts and comments that this was one of the toxic verbal conflicts being exchanged by local social media users commenting on "controversies" involving local women. In this case, several Ismaili young women had been called out [by non-Ismaili men] as "*bey-haya*" (dishonorable) because they had danced publicly, which according to the conservative ideals was unacceptable and was not a part of the tradition of Gilgit-Baltistan.

I gathered from the Facebook posts that these women had appeared on the morning show of a national TV channel featuring Gilgit-Baltistan. Indeed, many TV crews had arrived in Gilgit-Baltistan to feature its culture, food, dance, and music on their shows since the rebranding of Gilgit-Baltistan as an accessible scenic landscape and tourist destination in the past few years. However, these shows tend to border on exoticizing Gilgit-Baltistan which then cause debates such as the one on Facebook.

In this case, the host of the morning show had invited some young local men and women to her show to perform a traditional group dance, a performance in which the young women also participated. It should be noted that, culturally, it is considered immodest for women to dance in public gatherings. The common practice is that only men dance in public social gatherings and weddings, and women dance privately and in their family circles. The video that became viral on Facebook was, however, a clip recorded by a person in the crowd using their cellphone. The most outrageous comments on Facebook included condemnations of the show as misappropriation of culture. In addition, the young women who participated in the performance were shamed because the cultural practices dictate that women should not dance in public. Locals in Gilgit-Baltistan, especially young non-Ismaili men, called the performance a shameful and defamatory act that had appropriated their culture. Many of the furious comments argued that women do not dance publically in Gilgit-Baltistan's culture. One of the comments from a non-Ismaili young man was, "if 'some' [referring to Ismaili] people are fine with 'their' women dancing, then they should not call it the culture of Gilgit-Baltistan. They can call it Hunza's culture because this [public dancing of women] is not a representation of the culture of Gilgit-Baltistan," is an example of the othering of Hunza and the Ismaili community. This also illustrates the internal sectarian tensions and the internal differentiation among different sectarian groups. Moreover, these sectarian differences have been fueled by state-making processes that have produced hierarchies of belonging to the state among different sects.

Many local educated, progressive, and feminist women and men responded to support the young women and to critique the hateful and anti-women comments and sentiments. The supporters pointed out that, as I discussed earlier in this dissertation, Gilgit-Baltistan does not have one monolithic, standardized culture; rather, within it are multiple cultures and traditions, each of which has different values and practices. As one of these Facebook posts puts it: "Gilgit-Baltistan may be a single unit politically, but not culturally." As I have mentioned before, there have been multiple sectarian and ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting different valleys in Gilgit-Baltistan for centuries, which have now become districts due to the administrative restructuring of the region as part of the state-making process and governance. The distinct ethno-linguistic identity lines and markers became discrete and legitimized with the administrative and political ordering of the valleys into separate districts by the state.

Is this exchange of rage and hatred confined to social media or does it have real-world impact in everyday life? After reading about the Facebook exchange, when I met up later that day with my research assistant, he told me that it had become the talk of the town. Even worse, the young women in the video were so embarrassed that one of them attempted suicide.

Powerful and fundamentalist religious clerics called out the morning show, saying it insulted their culture and religion, giving the issue a sectarian bent. Indeed, fundamentalist clerics have played a crucial role in sustaining sectarian resentments, practices of othering, and upholding a gender ideology that produces women as the repositories of family honor. The patronization of fundamentalist clerics by the state for its own strategic reasons since the Cold War sustains this structural violence against women (Jafar, 2005).

Episodes like these with sectarian underpinnings are frequent in Gilgit-Baltistan, and have been since the intensification of sectarianized politics in Gilgit-Baltistan in the 1980s. This intensified sectarianism links with an incident in 1988, when an organized Sunni mob attacked and killed Shias, that led to the increase in Shia-Sunni conflicts in the region (Aase, 1999). Nosheen Ali (2008) has written about these Shia-Sunni conflicts and the role of Pakistani state-making in inciting such sectarian violence. In 2005, there was a dispute over school textbooks that depicted Sunni religious practices as the only legitimate form of religion, after which Sunnis killed the most senior religious Shia leader in retaliation (N. Ali, 2008). The conflict became so violent that the army had to intervene and the whole region was placed under curfew for two months. I was a high school student in Gilgit when this happened, and I vividly remember how horrifying it was. There was so much bloodshed, and so many conflicts and curfews, have happened in Gilgit-Baltistan since 1988. Recently, the state has found a different instrument with which to regulate the region—the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—that requires peace and harmony in the region.

Historically, Ismailis, being a Muslim minority, have managed to stay out of the sectarian conflicts. In recent decades, however, they have become part of the conflict due to "sensitive" issues such as Ismaili women's participation in non-conventional activities like dance, sports, and business in public spaces. The conflicts over these minor issues are part of everyday forms of sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan.

As a result of the hegemonic vigilantism by dominant religious forces, anxieties are high among the Ismaili community. Each time such "controversial" episodes involving Ismaili women

occur, Ismaili religious leaders and older men and women lecture young women to behave and dress "appropriately." As one elderly Ismaili man commented, "our young women are 'misusing' their freedom. Their 'acts' defame the whole Ismaili community. They should realize that we live in a conservative society and they should behave accordingly. They should be careful about observing *purdah*[2]. They [women] walk around in markets and other [non-Ismaili] men see them as having 'bad intentions.'" He also added that "our women elope with other [non-Ismaili] men," referring to a few recent instances of inter-sect marriages. Within Gilgit-Baltistan's strictly endogamous sects, marrying someone outside one's own sect, particularly for women, is viewed with suspicion.

Conducting fieldwork at home is uniquely challenging and involves risks and challenges that are impossible to anticipate: the researcher is embedded in local power structures and has to navigate existing hierarchies based on gender and sectarian identity. Indeed, I consider being an outsider in the field a privilege because one has the freedom to disengage with local cultural politics. Also, "home" is not a homogenous place, so the nativity of "native" anthropologists is situational. Additionally, one cannot demarcate "field" from "home" as it is a constant battle to clearly demarcate activities that one does as a researcher from those one does as a member of the community or a family. It is also laden with ethical responsibility to distinguish between what is "data" and what is not. Anthropology at home intensifies dilemmas around relational ethics.

Anthropology at home allowed me to use ethnographic reflexivity to reflect on my own positionality as a young Ismaili woman and how does my positionality determine how I collect my data, who do I meet, and how do I interpret and analyze the findings. My performance of the communal identity to navigate the field allowed me to realize the significance of politics of identity among the sectarian groups and why is it important for a community to uphold its identity. Ismaili assert their identity and derive their legitimacy using their modernized discourse of Islam, whereas other communities adhere to their own religious interpretations, discourses, and outlooks to determine their legitimacy and authenticity, which is also primarily determined by their fear and concerns of losing identity and the communal integrity. The role of the state, the KKH, transnational politico-economic interventions; the US-led Cold War and the "war on terror" in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's military involvement in the Cold War and the "war on terror", has been immense in shaping the local politics in the region and the country (H. Abbas, 2004). My

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[2] A loose term for the institutionalized seclusion of women (Jalal, 1991, p. 81).

focus on individual experiences of women in the next chapters contribute to diversify the discussion around women in Gilgit-Baltistan and to contextualize the fears and concerns of identity and integrity as outcomes of the state-making and the transnational politics shaped by the US imperialism. Such an analysis would contribute to avoid essentialized views and provide specific contexts in which women's lives are embedded.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used self-reflexivity as a mode of analysis and representation drawing from my experiences during fieldwork at home. My analytical framework is grounded in scholarship that deconstructs conventional anthropological conceptions and binaries, including field/home and self/other (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Harrison, 2011b), as well as issues of authority and representation (Davids & Willemse, 2014; Mahmood, 2011; Stacey, 1988). Biographic narrative as a mode of analysis focuses on the intersubjective process of knowledge production and the situatedness of the analysis (Davids & Willemse, 2014). These self-critical approaches also place emphasis on one's identity and positionality as the researcher. It is only by acknowledging and learning about the political implications of one's race, gender, and class that one can begin the long process of changing personal manifestations of these inequalities (D'Amico-Samuels, 1997).

Anthropology at home provides an opportunity to assess fieldwork in one's own community as a method and to deconstruct the ideological underpinnings of field/home and self/other. My reflections in this chapter have shown how one's identity and positionality are fluid, and depending on the situation, one's positionality either rewards them or creates difficulties. I have given examples of several instances when my positionality as a local woman favored me and there were situations when the same identity categories rendered me powerless.

My chapter also focused on the importance of reflexivity while analyzing data and producing knowledge from the research. The reflective practice advocated by feminists and engaged anthropology suggest adhering to the principles of care, empathy, respect, and community's concerns of self-presentation when presenting research in textual interpretations.

CHAPTER 3.   WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES: "SUBJECTION" OR "EMANCIPATION?" ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF GENDERED ENTREPRENEURIALISM IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN, PAKISTAN

3.1   Abstract

As a result of the growing global economy and a development model with entrepreneurialism at its heart, women in the remote and high-mountain societies in the northern Pakistan began to venture outside traditional and gendered economies by embarking on new forms of income-generating activities. This ethnographic study of women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan provides a critical analysis of women's entrepreneurship which is promoted as a key strategy by development organizations to address gender inequities. The ethnographic accounts of women's diverse experiences as entrepreneurs featured in this chapter view the neoliberal development model and the global capitalist market as an opportunity for women in these high-mountain communities that allow them to push against socio-cultural pressures. Within these environments, women strive to become economic actors and make space for themselves in conventionally male-dominated economic trades such as business and entrepreneurship. Additionally, my research views women as complex subjectivities embedded within the socio-economic and religio-political dimensions that clash with the views and stigmas around women's empowerment in Pakistan. This research contributes to the ongoing scholarly and policy-related understandings of Pakistani women as active agents despite their various socio-cultural and economic constraints in a culturally and religiously conservative society where women face particular challenges.

3.2   Introduction

Traditionally, women in Gilgit-Baltistan have been the primary contributors in subsistence agriculture and cattle farming in addition to their primary role as mothers and family caregivers. Before the interventions of NGOs in 1980s, women would provide the major portion of labor in farming and the household chores as part of their role as housewives. During the 1980s, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) initiated the project of organizing and training men and women as part of its community-driven development approach. As part of the poverty alleviation project, the AKRSP provided trainings to both men and women in farming, fruit processing, cattle

farming, honeybee farming, handicrafts making, and many related activities, to increase their produce, accessibility to market and credit, and eventually their per capita incomes (Khan, 2010). Women empowerment through enhancing their labor participation in home-based income generating activities was a significant component of the AKRSP projects. The activities that women used to do previously as part of their responsibilities as housewives transformed into income generating activities for women. Many women during the interviews expressed that they appreciate being able to engage in income generating activities. An Ismaili woman expressed during an interview:

> Thanks to *maula* (referring to the *Imam*—the Aga Khan), we can earn for ourselves and for our family. We [women] don't have to depend on our men for every small personal need. We [women] earn our own money that we spend wherever we want. We also make savings out of our own money.

This sentiment of appreciation and enthusiasm resonated in every interview with women. As Karim (2014) has pointed out there are different levels of empowerment, and participation in labor force is a step toward empowerment and a way for women to expand their socioeconomic engagement beyond their household. My interviews with women, like the above example, provided a similar evidence that women feel a sense of empowerment and independence when they are able to earn by themselves. Similarly, Bano and Waqar (2020) have noted that participation in labor force is a key arena to gauge women's participation in the formal economy, but only 25% of women in Pakistan participate in labor force. Bano and Waqar have identified sociocultural barriers and structural discrepancies like minimum quotas for women in the high tiers of decision-making bodies. During my interviews with women entrepreneurs, many women expressed that participation in income generating activities provides them opportunities to engage in the social life; getting trainings, networking with women outside homes, and getting information and awareness through participating in activities and programs arranged by NGOs through the platforms of Women's Organizations (WOs) or Local Support Organizations (LSOs). In addition to view entrepreneurialism as an opportunity for women to expand their socioeconomic participation, my analysis engages in a critical discourse around gendered entrepreneurialism to bring forth the overlooked and missing links in the conception and practice of gendered development.

During my pilot study in 2017 and the ethnographic fieldwork in 2018, I gathered from my interviews and observations that the women's empowerment discourse and practice has evolved

over the years. The women's empowerment project initiated by the AKRSP to enable women to engage in income generating activities has evolved, and now the focus has shifted to enable women to become entrepreneurs and assume leadership positions. During an interview with a country manager of an NGO that works to promote entrepreneurship, he explained how entrepreneurship would enhance women's economic and social empowerment. He explained:

> I know that the interventions of NGOs have improved women's access to financial resources, but their control and ownership of financial resources is still minimal. Our project through its emphasis on women's entrepreneurship aims to enhance women's ownership of the financial resources. Women's entrepreneurship initiatives would lead to income generation, the income would lead to financial independence, which would lead to their more involvement in decision making, and independent decision making would lead to women's empowerment.

He further added that:

> The primary goal of our project is to cultivate an enabling environment for women where they can pursue entrepreneurship opportunities and see themselves succeed. We know that there are sociocultural barriers. We don't just provide funds. We will select some women's businesses or businesses that provide employment to women, from the applications we receive. Our incubation and acceleration services will provide them creative financial solutions, business trainings, monitoring and feedback, and enable them to establish market connections. One of our challenges is that we don't receive many grant applications from women entrepreneurs.

This interview provides an important insight into how NGOs perceive entrepreneurship, and that NGOs perceive that the entrepreneurial activities would lead to empowerment of women through their prospective financial independence and decision-making power driven by their leading role in entrepreneurial pursuits. I analyze this as an approach that focuses on empowering individual women who would be change agents and work toward changing the social attitudes and conventional gender systems and assumptions. In addition, this approach also aims to expand business enterprises that could potentially create employment opportunities for women.

In addition to this project, there were other NGOs that have projects to promote women's entrepreneurship through providing funds or training or both. In this chapter, I have analyzed women's entrepreneurship as a strategy to empower women and address gendered inequalities. My analysis of the interviews with NGO personnel and women entrepreneurs provides a critical discourse around entrepreneurialism, women as development and entrepreneurial subjects, and the interlinks of women's experiences with the larger political context of the region that has been subjected to the processes of national integration and nation-state making. My interviews with

women showed that women's experiences are linked to larger structures of power—patriarchal notions, capitalist market, religious ideology, nationalism, sub-nationalism, state-making—that define and redefine the gender systems. This chapter illustrates that a gendered development and entrepreneurialism with its primary focus on providing women entrepreneurial training and funding overlooks the larger structural barriers that disempower women.

3.3   Gendered Entrepreneurialism

"Women have opened shops by the road and also in markets in so many places now," my father told me as we drove along the women's shops in Sultanabad, a village near Gilgit town. In a socially conservative society like Pakistan, women shopkeepers along roadsides and in public spaces such as markets is a sight any Pakistani would be surprised at. Sultanabad is an Ismaili majority village in Gilgit and most of the women running their individual shops along roadsides there and in other places in Gilgit were Ismaili. There were several women-led shops and restaurants mainly in the main bazaar of Aliabad and Karimabad in the Hunza district, which is an Ismaili majority district. In Gilgit, I visited three women-only markets where I have had the opportunity to interview Shia and Sunni women business owners. In Nagar, I visited three vocational centers; two shawl centers and one tailoring center, which were initiated by NGOs to provide training and employment opportunities to women. I interviewed the women workers of the three centers. My interaction with women in three different districts illustrated that women's pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities is driven by different aspirations, which are mainly associated with the availability of financial resources, their class, education, family structure, and location; rural/urban, whether they are near a road, market, or a commercial area, and if there are other women-led shops or markets around them. Therefore, I draw from individual accounts of women's experiences of their engagement with development and entrepreneurialism and I have analyzed the narratives in the context of the larger sociocultural factors that constitute their experiences.

Women's entrepreneurship is a buzzword in the local discourse of development and it comes up very frequently when talking to the government and non-government personnel working in women empowerment projects. The relevant government institutions and NGOs present an image of women as entrepreneurs as a remedy to gendered economic inequalities. The government and NGOs see the increasing visibility of women's shops as an indicator of the success of

empowerment programs for women. It is a success indeed, for women who are pursuing non-conventional income generating activities in a socially and religiously conservative society. However, it requires an in-depth examination, beyond just the binaries of "success" and "failure," which is measured in economic terms. Pursuing entrepreneurial activities is an everyday struggle for women and their lived experiences are determined by the larger institutional and ideological discrepancies.

To illustrate some of the sociocultural barriers, I would present the story of Neelum who is an Ismaili woman. She belongs to a village in upper Hunza and currently runs a hostel in a town in Gilgit. She told me that she was the oldest of her siblings and her father has been suffering from health issues since she was a kid. Like most of the people in Hunza, her family owned a house and land for small-scale farming. As soon as she finished high school, she started looking for a job. She said, "I could not pursue higher education because of the financial constraints." She got the job of a hostel warden in a girls' hostel in Hunza. After a few years she moved to Gilgit town to work as a hostel warden, because the new job paid better than the previous. After five years of experience as a hostel warden, she decided to run her own hostel for young women. During her five-year experience on that job, she realized that some young women from Hunza and other districts of Gilgit-Baltistan move to Gilgit for their education and employment, needing hostels. She also realized that most of the women's hostels in Gilgit were owned by men, so she decided to pursue owning and running a hostel as a business opportunity. Neelum added:

> I remember the day vividly when I rented a house in Danyore, a town in Gilgit, to open a women's hostel. It was November 28, 2014. I had only 40 thousand rupees in my savings in *Tanzeem* (WO), and the owner of the house asked for 36 thousand as two-months advanced rent. I agreed and I signed the lease, and that's how I started my own hostel. I did not have much money left and I bought groceries and other required stuff on credit. I had worked as a hostel warden for five years, so I knew how the business works. In the beginning only two girls came to live in my hostel, my sister and cousin.

> But then more women came in. A group of fifteen young female nurses moved in for three months and I got enough money in hand to pay off the credit. The business went on, but I wanted to expand it on a bigger scale and to rent a bigger house for more tenants. I moved my hostel to Jutial, a town near Gilgit town, after a year, where I rented a bigger house with more rooms. That time I got a loan from a society to pay the advance deposits and payments of the house. I had to pay off the loan in a year and a half, but I could not pay all the installments because with a bigger hostel the expenses increased, and my business was hardly on a break-even point. I got a second loan from another society to pay off the previous loan. Meanwhile,

as the income became steadier, I began to pay my loan installments regularly. Over time, I realized that young professional women look for better rooms and services and students prefer a less expensive living. That made me realize that there are several hostels for female students, but there are not many for young females doing jobs in Gilgit who usually look for a better living place.

That led me to move to this house a few months ago [pointing to the three-story building visible from the window of her office-like room]. I took another loan to meet the expenditure. The top floor is for the college students and the other two floors are reserved for female professionals. The tenants are happy with the services and that makes me feel accomplished. Most of the rooms are filled by now and I earn enough to meet my expenses and pay my loan installments. I have helped my brother, younger sister and sister-in-law financially to establish their own small businesses in my village. My brother runs a hotel and my sister and sister-in-law run a women's clothing shop out of their home. I send them stock from here and they sell it. Now, I want to spend more money on improving living conditions of the hostel. I want to open a fitness center and an internet café in a shop outside the hostel, and I am thinking to keep it open for other women in the neighborhood, because there are no such facilities available for women. But to be honest, finance is not the major issue for me, there are so many banks and societies to provide finance. I can always arrange finances, but there are so many social and cultural issues and barriers when it comes to running a women's hostel. That's what exhausts me and makes things harder.

Neelum was narrating her story with a sense of pride and enthusiasm, and then she took a heavy breath. Her triumphant smile was gone, and her face was now showing signs of frustration and tiredness. She added:

To run a women's hostel is a huge responsibility. Our society is very conservative and the people around us keep an eye on me and the young women in the hostel. They suspect our morality because people have negative assumptions about young women living in hostels. I sometimes get complaints from neighbors and other people about women's clothing. Sometimes random men show up and inquire about the hostel. It makes me angry that they [men] feel so entitled to suspect my morality and question my business activities. That's why I have placed strict regulations in my hostel, especially regarding clothing and mobile phone hours, and there are strict curfew hours. I must maintain a good reputation of myself and the hostel, so that parents send their daughters to my hostel without worrying about their safety and security. It is draining and intimidating to be accountable for so many young women living in the hostel.

Neelum's experience as an entrepreneur shows that business, for women, is not just an economic activity, but it is embedded in the larger sociocultural contexts. Her experiences, knowledge about different financial resources, and the courage, ability, and efficiency to manage her business, indicate that the development institutions have successfully nurtured individual

aspirations to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives. As Neelum affirms that there are several institutions to provide financial institutions. Neelum's narrative also indicates that communal surveillance, patriarchal assumptions of men, and conservative sociocultural notions about women are essentially the main causes of anxiety for women. Many women like Neelum have indicated that the development institutions are not addressing or mediating the sociocultural issues directly.

As Carla Freeman (2014, p. 1) argues, "entrepreneurialism is becoming not simply a mechanism of self-employment—a vehicle for income generation, an economic matter of business, that is, entrepreneurship in a narrow sense—but a subtler, generalized way of being and way of feeling in the world." Freeman's observations are also relevant when studying the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan. The discourse and practice of entrepreneurialism has produced new modes of labor and affect, new social relations, and new ways of being. At the same time, the entrepreneurial activities have entrenched and reproduced patriarchal sovereignty in several ways, as pointed out by many women entrepreneurs.

3.4   The Road to Development and Empowerment

The development and empowerment processes in Gilgit-Baltistan began with the construction of the KKH. The construction of the road was followed by several government and NGO-led development programs with a particular focus on economic development and women's empowerment. The women of Gilgit-Baltistan became part of the development discourse – as the primary targets and recipients of the development projects. My ethnographic work in this region fills in a gap about the consequences of these women-centered development projects and their experiences in the public world of entrepreneurship (Kar, 2018; C. Schuster, 2020).

The construction of women as development subjects in Gilgit-Baltistan that began in the 1980s needs a critical analysis using a feminist intersectional framework – that "seeks to foreground the social dynamics and relations that constitute subjects, displacing the emphasis on the subjects (and categories) themselves as the starting point of inquiry" (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 796). I use an intersectional approach in my analysis of significant variations in women's experiences in Gilgit-Baltistan because the intersectional approach does not prioritize one facet or category of social difference: it allows to "view the intersection of categories or social differences in an additive way, as mutually constitutive" (Yuval-Davis, 2016, p. 369). Yuval-Davis writes:

What is clear is that when we carry the intersectional approach, we cannot homogenize the ways any political project or claimings affect people who are differentially located within the same boundaries of belonging" (Yuval-Davis 2016: p. 369).

Figure 14. An Ismaili woman entrepreneur in Central Hunza

Figure 15. An Ismaili woman entrepreneur in Lower Hunza

On a similar note, my research project also takes into account the socio-economic, rural-urban, and sectarian differences among women in Gilgit-Baltistan, because all these social categories of belonging determine women's extent of engagement in development projects. In addition, these social categories or differences also determine women's envisioning and becoming through entrepreneurship, which according to Freeman (2106) is different from given position or status achieved or established through economic means. Women's envisioning and becoming processes through economic activities in Gilgit-Baltistan are intricately linked with their sectarian and communal concerns of honor, identity, and respectability which will appear in the accounts of women I have included in this chapter and the subsequent ones. Like Neelum's experiences, many other women have pointed out that the society places more emphasis on women's modesty. The criteria of women's modesty vary across different sectarian and regional groups and even families. Therefore, there are contested notions about women's empowerment and participation.

Nevertheless, the accounts of women reveal that the NGO's narratives of women's entrepreneurship and economic development are detached from social realities. The assumptions that a woman entrepreneur will become free, autonomous, rational, often articulated by NGOs overlook the sociocultural realities (Huang, 2017). A senior manager of an NGO explained that entrepreneurship is a significant step toward women's empowerment. He explained:

> We are focusing on economic empowerment of women through encouraging women to pursue entrepreneurship. We are promoting entrepreneurship as an affirmative action. We are providing trainings and working toward cultivating a culture where young and educated women will pursue entrepreneurship as a career. We will provide trainings, enhance their accessibility to investment funds, and assist them in making the market linkages to expand their marketing. These are some of the aspects we have identified, and we will work on what has been missing in the past projects of entrepreneurship.

The theory behind women's entrepreneurship as a way to address gendered economic inequalities is very promising and convincing. I have had met several women like Neelum who have benefitted from the opportunities provided by these NGOs. The sociocultural issues raised by the women show that such a conception of women entrepreneurship is homogenizing, and it depoliticizes and dehistoricizes women's complex intersectional socio-religious and economic subjectivities. Like Sen (2018), I also view women's entrepreneurial practice as deeply embedded in the socio-cultural context in which they live in. Therefore, imagining women as development subjects places them in an on-going historical and political project of remaking women which is

driven and shaped by multiple forces such as the dominant ideological formulations of modernity, developmentalism, nation-state making, and traditionalism (Abu-Lughod, 1998; 2002). Looking at women as both entrepreneurs and development subjects provides an understanding of entrepreneurial projects in Gilgit-Baltistan within "systemic and diachronic processes of gender and development" (Verschuur et al., 2014), that aspire to "reinvent" women.

I focus specifically on Ismaili Muslim women as entrepreneurs because of their historical and current active involvement in development programs and their hyper-visibility in the socio-economic and political spheres of this region. Ismaili are one of the many denominations of Islam who are locally known to be progressive and socially liberal. Their participation and visibility in public life is much more obvious, especially in entrepreneurship, compared to the women from Shia and Sunni communities in the region. I view Ismaili Muslim women as agentic subjects who are redefining their selfhood by pursuing an "entrepreneurial self" (Freeman, 2014). However, for them entrepreneurship is not just a space for self-making and redefining selfhood, but it is a site of contest and renegotiation with tradition, collective identity, and modern socioeconomic expectations. Additionally, the narratives of women entrepreneurs contest the image of women entrepreneurs as centered on individuals rather than communities (Dolan & Gordon, 2019).

To illustrate this through women's experiences, I will present another example: Fatima is a young unmarried Ismaili woman from a village in Gilgit. She was doing her masters from the local university and at the same time she had been actively involved in the activities of WOs and LSOs. She and her friend were pursuing floriculture as a business initiative. Fatima explained during an interview:

> We had trainings of floriculture from the agriculture department of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. Many agriculture experts from both government and non-government development organizations have come to give us trainings on vegetables and flower farming. They also provided us with good-quality seeds. Last year, when they gave us training, some flower seeds, and a small fund, my friend and I took the lead for our WO to pursue the flower farming project. We have dedicated a portion our land to farm flowers. Since it was a WO project, I made a timetable for the women in a way that allowed WO members to take turns to work in the flower farm. Women worked in pairs to water the farm, take out weeds, and harvest flowers. These WO members were those women who wanted to be involved in the project to learn and to generate income from floriculture.
>
> Floriculture is very rare in Gilgit-Baltistan, so we saw it as an opportunity to pursue it as an entrepreneurial initiative that could provide income generating activities for many women. Initially, my friend and I rented a shop in a market in Jutial, a town

in Gilgit, where we could sell the flowers and floral decorations for weddings and events out of the shop. But it did not work out for so many reasons and one of the reasons was that the commute from our village to the town was very long. The public transport system is inadequate and is not gender friendly. A van passes through our village for only a few times a day. Also, the van is usually filled with men and we feel uncomfortable. My mother worries about our reputation. My mother says, "*log kia kahenge*" [Urdu], *"sisey besan saiy-e-man"* [Burushaski] (what will people say?—A phrase commonly used to express concern about society's assumptions about one's acts). She [mother] was worried because our shop was the only women's shop in the market. Another reason we stopped going to the shop was that a man started the same business in the adjacent shop. He was a big competitor and we realized that he gets more business because he was a man and he had more market linkages than us. So, now we just farm flowers and sell out of home. We get orders for official events, especially from the government officials who know us from the trainings. Whenever they have an official event or get visitors, they approach us for flower arrangements and decorations. My long-term goal is to provide floral decorations for weddings, because that is a bigger market. But that requires more financial and human resources, professional experience, and networking with people.

Fatima's experiences pointed out many aspects that are symptomatic of the larger sociocultural and structural discrepancies that limit women. Some of the issues pointed out by Fatima included the transport infrastructure, social attitudes, gendered expectations of families, communal surveillance, and the limitations imposed and exacerbated by gender system. I met Fatima in an LSO meeting where she was the only woman presenter among three people who were leading the discussions. Later, when I got a chance to talk to her, she told me about her business initiative and invited me to her home to show me the flower farms. We decided on a day and time. She told me to arrive at a point on the KKH near her village where she would meet me and take me to her place. I drove to the said point with my research assistant and waited. After a few minutes she and her friend came, and she told me that they have just returned from the university. Fatima and her friend sat in my car and we drove down a dirt road following her directions. It was a downhill winding dirt road and it took us about 10 minutes to get to her place. Fatima told me that they walk up and down the same dirt road every day to go to the LSO office, or to catch the university bus or the public transport van from the KKH. "If you miss the van or the bus then there is no other way to go to places. We walk every day that's why we both are underweight." Fatima said amusingly. Fatima also shared that it is their passion and motivation that they work hard so much to pursue their interests. "Our family is also supportive. Many young women do not participate because of these infrastructural and social issues. Not every young woman will go

through this ordeal [referring to her physical and emotional labor], and not every young woman will have their family's support. Many young women, whose parents can afford, move to cities to pursue education." She said thoughtfully.

The experiences of women entrepreneurs are very diverse and the binaries of "subjection" or "emancipation" to describe the effect of the development programs are inadequate. The social reality is in fact a complex interplay of diverse experiences and subject positions of women. Women's engagement in entrepreneurial activities indeed offers a space for women to resist the constraints of their social, culture, and religious milieus, but despite these, women continue to face challenges while engaging in these activities. New forms of social engagements and encounters of women as a result of the development initiatives include learning about micro-loans, participating in entrepreneurial trainings led by NGOs, and organizing village-based Women Organizations (WOs). Arguably, while these new activities generate new hierarchies and subjectivities.

3.5 "Subjection" or "Emancipation"?

During the last few decades, gender and development have become keywords deployed in global development. Women's economic and political empowerment through facilitating their access to capital by means of microcredit programs has become a powerful discourse (Keating, Rasmussen, & Rishi, 2015). Keating et al. (2015) draw our attention to the feminist scholarship that has critically analyzed microcredit as a set of processes that bring more subjects into the structure of capitalism and place them in exploitative economic systems. Keating et al. (2015) also underscore the gendered nature of global development as manifested in the microcredit ideology and processes. Existing literature also analyzes the ways the NGO governs rural populations, particularly women, as development subjects seeking to ameliorate suffering through microfinance and entrepreneurialism (Karim, 2011, 2014; Rankin, 2010; C. E. Schuster, 2014). The critical conversation around whether woman's empowerment projects have made all women entrepreneurs, or they have become part of the labor force in Gilgit-Baltistan is missing. NGOs bring money and projects which provide opportunities for rural populations to generate income, so NGOs are the essential agents of generating financial means and the narratives of the recipients. Many women who I interviewed appreciated the interventions of NGOs while also raising their concerns about the amount of hard work, multiple responsibilities, and general social and behavioral issues in the society.

Many scholars including Eisenstein (2005), Fraser (2009), and Rankin (2010) have pointed out that the microcredit model is dressed in feminist clothing to substantiate the claims that access of women to capital is a panacea for poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. The feminist scholarship critiques the gendered development approach as being consistent with the deleterious impacts of neoliberal capitalist strategies that undermine social support systems and are thus counterproductive to well-being. Meanwhile, global capitalism mobilizes feminists arguments about the need for women's autonomy and economic independence (Hartsock, 2006). By deploying feminist discourse, gendered development and entrepreneurialism incorporate women into the market economy with the aim to "further women's agency and their political, economic, and cultural empowerment" (Desai, 2007, p. 798). Thus, within the women's economic development and empowerment discourse, women are advanced as key actors who seek, manipulate, and negotiate with the offerings of global capital.

The academic critique on neoliberal development that I draw from are mostly in the context of India and Bangladesh and there is very little critical discourse in the context of Pakistan. To establish a relevance of the above theoretical conversations with the development practice in Gilgit-Baltistan, I will provide an ethnographic encounter from my fieldwork. One of the emerging enterprises that I visited was a dairy business run by a couple, Razia and Akbar. I had an interview with the couple, and they showed me around their small setup. They had installed a small plant with the machinery and hired women to make yogurt, butter, and lassi. They also had a packaging unit where women packed and labeled the products. During the interview, Akbar, the husband, explained, "We started this dairy business three years ago and now we have 350 women registered with our enterprise who are in different villages in Gilgit and they sell milk to our enterprise. With the financial and technical support of different NGOs, we have established milk collection centers in different villages. Those 350 women drop off milk in the nearest designated point or center, which is mostly in a shop and the shopkeeper, usually a male, gets commission." Razia, the wife added:

> Our goal is to provide income opportunities to women. We buy milk from women and we pay the money to women. We have recently won a grant from an NGO and with that money we have established a bigger production plant and we have ordered bigger machinery. With the bigger plant, we can give employment to more women.

Some of the women entrepreneurs I interviewed told me that they sell milk to this dairy enterprise. Many women affirmed that there are milk drop off centers near their neighborhood. A

few women who live farther from the centers complained that they have to walk several miles every day to drop off the milk.

When I visited the enterprise to have an interview with Razia and Akbar, the owners of the dairy business, I came across with a man at the entrance who was unloading the milk containers from the truck. He greeted me and when I told him that I was there to interview the business owners and the women workers, he sneered and remarked:

> We [men] have become unemployed since women have started to work as labor force. Women work for a very small amount of wage, so companies prefer to hire them. Because they don't negotiate and agree to work for whatever wage they are offered. Now, it has become difficult to find work for better wage.

His comment may reflect jealousy or his disapproval of women working as wage labors, but it did point to many aspects such as the minimum wage and the transformation in gender relations, that should be part of the mainstream discourse. This encounter was one of the two encounters during my fieldwork that explicitly brought the attention to a significant critical aspect of development that has received much attention in the critical discourse around development by many feminists including Karim (2014), Eisenstein (2005), Fraser (2009), and Rankin (2010), but it is missing in the local discourse around development in Gilgit-Baltistan. With the emergence of cottage-industries and medium enterprises in Gilgit-Baltistan, such as the dairy business owned by a couple I have mentioned above, women have been working as wage-labors. My visits to a few enterprises that employ women as wage-labors and brief interactions with them showed that these women belonged to very poor families. While it is seen as an opportunity by NGOs, government, and women themselves, there is a little discourse around issues like wages, additional labor, transport facilities, women's health, safety, security, and many related issues. As noted by Karim (2014, p. 155), development work on women's empowerment is top-down that does not account how the social change actually manifests in society.

The second example is a women-led workshop in Hunza initiated by the Aga Khan Cultural Services, Pakistan (AKCSP), and was now on its way to become an independent women-led enterprise. The workshop was established to provide trainings to women in masonry and carpentry and to provide them employment. This workshop has had received much attention from NGOs, visitors, official visitors and tourists, because masonry and carpentry were male occupations traditionally, and now with this initiative women could work as wage labors in the workshop. The workshop was located by the road in a village in Hunza. It was part of the other tourist points, a

historic fort and an old settlement, restored and preserved by the AKCSP for tourism which has provided income generating opportunities for the locals.

When I visited the workshop during the fieldwork, I noticed that the surrounding fence of the workshop was different from how it looked in my previous visit about five years ago. Earlier, it was a low wooden fence with an entrance by the road and the activity inside the workshop was visible to the passerby, and now the workshop was completely covered by wooden walls with small entrance from the alley. I had taken an appointment from Saania, the female manager of the workshop, so I went inside to meet her in her office. During our interview, Saania told me about the organizational history and the different projects they have done so far. She told me that she had been working with the workshop for 15 years now. Saania explained:

> There are around 70 women workers working in the workshop. The women working in the workshop belong to very poor families and in most cases, they are the only breadwinners of their families. This workshop was an initiative of the AKCSP, funded from a Norwegian grant, but the grant ended in 2016, and now the workshop is trying to become a self-sustained, independent business entity. Currently, we are at the break-even point and that we are in a no-gain-no-loss situation. We hope that the workshop will be a successful business model eventually.

My conversations with the women showed that poor women with no other financial support in their family found this workshop as an opportunity to make a livelihood. One female worker commented, "We do this out of necessity, and we are proud that we don't beg for money; we work hard to earn for ourselves and for our families the right way." This sentiment of pride was echoed by other women working in the workshop. The women, however, expressed their frustration with the social attitude from the conservative people in the society who the women think judge them and disapprove of their work as masons and carpenters, particularly the fact that they work in a workshop by the road and that women are exposed to the male gaze of the outsiders. "They [society] don't understand that we are doing this out of necessity and poverty. They [society] question our modesty and morality and try to discourage us." Another woman commented frustratingly.

Women's frustration was making sense to me, because when I entered the workshop and told the women that I was a researcher, I felt that they hesitated and expressed discomfort. When I told Saania about women's reaction, she explained, "Actually, we get so many visitors every day and students from the local university and other universities come frequently with their

questionnaires to have interviews with the women. They [workers] are exhausted and annoyed. They feel humiliated sometime." I instantly clarified that I was not there for interviews and I wanted to hang out in the workshop without asking questions. The manager and the workers were relieved to hear that. I hung around in the workshop and after a while, the workers began to talk to me in between their work and some of them vent their anger and frustration. One woman said, "Some students ask inappropriate questions. Like they ask, 'why do you do this?' That [the question] is very judgmental. This is our way of earning; this is our livelihood. What else can we do to earn for our family? We would have done some other job had we been educated." The woman remarked annoyingly. The women's responses revealed many aspects and outcomes of the development process and that how the processes of development and empowerment create opportunities and challenges for women. Moreover, despite my intention to not to bother them with my questions, I realized how my own presence and gaze has, potentially, reproduced the socioeconomic hierarchies that the women were frustrated about.

These encounters in my ethnography brought up many overlooked, complicated, and messy aspects in the development discourse and practice that were not part of the mainstream conversations in the development industry in Gilgit-Baltistan. NGOs present women recipients' images as successful and empowered women and the visitors, donors, tourists, researchers, and the locals, through their gaze, render them as "objects." This is an illustration of how development and empowerment processes disempower women, reinforce patriarchal sovereignties, and reproduce power hierarchies.

The history of socio-economic activism of women in Gilgit-Baltistan is primarily grounded within the long-term developmentalist vision to empower women by making them economic actors. To understand the contemporary complexities around women's entrepreneurship, it is first significant to investigate the emergence of women as economic actors through the discourse of developmentalism within the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Secondly, the intersecting subjectivities of women are constructed by a complex interplay of socio-political and economic orders reproduced in the everyday relations. Therefore, my ethnographic accounts focus on women's narratives that depict how their development experiences intersect with their class, sociocultural and sectarian identities. My work draws on the analysis provided by Bear et al. (2015) which traces the diversity of agents including human and non-human relations such as resources and infrastructure that actively generate capitalism and circulate different forms of social inequality.

3.6   Development Context of Gilgit-Baltistan

As I have mentioned earlier, the construction of the highway in Gilgit-Baltistan to connect it with Islamabad and China led to an inflow of ideological and institutional forces that impacted development discourse and practice. The Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) is only one of several international and non-government organizations that arrived in Gilgit-Baltistan, eventually becoming pioneers in implementing rural development projects in the poverty-stricken region (A. Ali et al., 2016). The projects of economic development and women's empowerment started in the districts with Ismaili communities and later expanded to other districts depending on the acceptability of people toward development ideology and practice.

The local population of the region follows four denominations of Islam including Shia, Sunni, Ismaili and Noorbakshi (Feyyaz, 2011). The diversity of the local inhabitants is important to consider when analyzing the lived experiences of women are considered. The gendered, classed and sectarianized experiences and encounters of women must be accounted for to understand the complex hybrid of economic and non-economic relations that impact their decisions and efforts, in entrepreneurship included. Such an analysis will also deconstruct the homogenized, depoliticized, and dehistoricized conception of women.

I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in three districts: Hunza, Nagar, and Gilgit to examine women's experiences with respect to their sectarian, rural-urban, and class perspectives. Hunza has an Ismaili dominant population; Nagar is a Shia dominant region; while Gilgit is diverse where populations of Ismaili, Shia, and Sunni communities live in different villages and towns. Gilgit town has diverse population settlements like pockets or *muhallah* (neighborhoods) of discrete sectarian communities. My ability to speak Burushaski, Shina, and Urdu enabled me to engage with women from different communities. The common perception among people, as reflected during interviews, is that Hunza is socially liberal whereas Nagar and Gilgit are relatively conservative in terms of women's mobility and participation in public life. This perception was also supported by my ethnographic experiences and observations, as most of the women entrepreneurs who are running businesses in public spaces are Ismaili located in Hunza and in villages and areas in Gilgit with dominant Ismaili population. However, further examination of women's experiences revealed other aspects of their social life including class and rural-urban differences, and other forms of dispossessions introduced and entrenched by development processes.

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The AKRSP initiated a community-driven development model in these districts. To mobilize and organize the communities, AKRSP formed community-based organizations, locally known as *Tanzeem*. Shoaib Sultan (2010), the first General Manager of the AKRSP in Gilgit-Baltistan, writes that "AKRSP is aiming to help subsistence farmers rise above the level of mere subsistence and become commercial farmers" (p. 208). Shoaib Sultan also writes that the AKRSP began its project of poverty alleviation with a basic goal to train the farmers, who owned small landholdings, and work on their capacity building to increase their income. He writes, "AKRSP is fostering Village Organizations to develop into small scale entrepreneurs and thereby, ensure social justice and equitable distribution of the fruits of development" (p. 208).

In order to meet that goal, the AKRSP fostered the community organizations. These included Village Organizations (VOs) and Women Organizations (WOs). The literal translation of the Urdu word *Tanzeem* is "organization", and it became the popular colloquial term among men and women when referring to VOs and WOs. Sometimes they specify it by saying *Khawateen Tanzeem* (Women's Organizations), but mostly use the word *Tanzeem* in their conversations. Therefore, following my research participants, I use *Tanzeem* to refer to WOs in this chapter.

Tanzeem was a foundational stepping stone in organizing collectives of women in Gilgit-Baltistan. *Tanzeem* was introduced into villages and towns in most of the districts in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, only Ismaili communities mostly retained it. These organizations provided opportunities and spaces for women to take on active roles in socio-economic life. *Tanzeem* emerged as the primary site of intervention for AKRSP and other development organizations for reaching out to women and offering them opportunities to attend workshops and trainings for skills development, inter-loaning, record-keeping – all aiming to instill an entrepreneurial spirit among women. These women's collectives in the form of *Tanzeem* were meant to provide spaces for economic and political autonomy.

During an interview with a female Regional Program Manager (RPM) of the AKRSP, Gilgit, who works closely with LSOs and WOs, explained to me that the purpose of the community organizations was and still is to mobilize and organize the communities of Gilgit-Baltistan through grassroots development. The community organizations have been restructured by the AKRSP over time to institutionalize them as structures and mediums of local governance, participatory development, and democratic participation (AKRSP, 2015). The manager explained:

Organizing people through community organizations, WOs and VOs, and initiate a community-driven, grassroots development model was the central aim of the AKRSP. Over the time, these community organizations have expanded to become institutions of regulation and mediation between NGOs, government, and the communities. The AKRSP established LSOs at the union council (county) level in each district umbrella institutions of local governance to oversee the activities of the WOs and VOs and to work on building partnerships with the development organizations and the government institutions.

Figure 16 shows the current structure of the community organizations which I have organized based on the information and descriptions of the structures given by the manager and the LSO officials I interviewed. The manager explained that each LSO in every union council has a governing body comprised of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, office secretary, and social mobilizers, to maintain and regulate the logistics and functions of the institution. Khan (2010) describes that before the intervention of the AKRSP, there was very minimal development infrastructure provided by the government and the process was top-down. So, it was for the first time that people were organized to initiate a bottom-up and people-driven process of development. AKRSP established WOs/VOs in villages and recruited managers who were responsible to recruit other men and women as members and generate savings. Khan writes that the AKRSP's development model relied heavily on social capital building, activism, and volunteerism of the people.
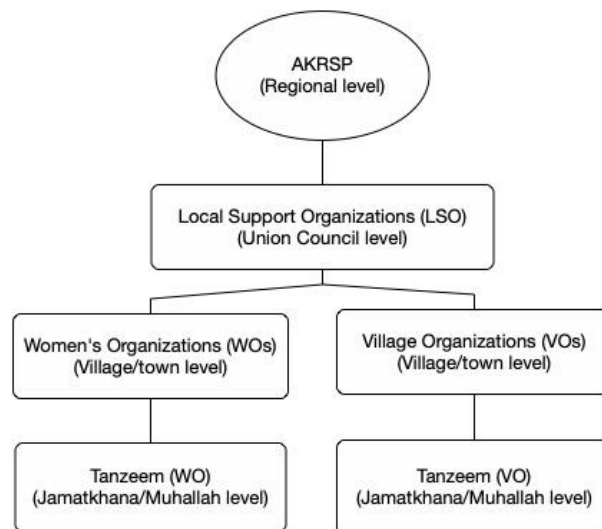

Figure 16. The institutional hierarchy of the community organizations[3]

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[3] *Jamatkhana* is Ismaili's worship place. *Muhallah* [Urdu]/ *Mahla* [Burushaki] means neighborhood.

I was interested to explore how the restructuring of the community organizations have affected the accessibility and participation of women. The manager told me that they highly encourage women to take positions in the governing bodies of the LSO. When I visited an LSO in Gilgit, the male chairperson told me during an interview that they have women in their organization, but they do not come to the meetings. He complained, "We add women to our governing bodies, but they do not show up for the meetings. They never come." He said frustratingly. The female social mobilizer of the LSO was there. She told me that he position of social mobilizer is a paid position because she had to work there full-time, but other positions in the LSO are voluntary and women have to take out time from their everyday schedules of work as family-caregivers and farmers. I observed that the office of the LSO I visited was in a commercial place adjacent to the road and was far from the residential settlements. During my meetings with WOs, women explained that the LSO offices are far, and they had to walk there. The accessibility to the LSO offices as an issue for women came up during several interviews. Ismaili women said, they can attend WO meetings because they hold their meetings in the nearest *Jamatkhana*, but LSO offices are far. Fatima, whose story I have provided above, expressed the same sentiment that it is easier for her to attend WO meetings in *Jamatkhana*, but she and her friend has to walk to the LSO office. She was the vice-chairperson of the LSO in her union council. The LSO office was located by the KKH in her village, but she had to walk there. She was a young, unmarried, and enthusiastic woman and she said she could manage to attend the LSO meetings regularly, but many married women, especially with young kids, reported that they had too many responsibilities at home and often could not manage their time.

Therefore, *Tanzeem* had played a significant role in providing women an accessible space to organize. *Tanzeem* also became significant avenues and spaces for women to socialize, collect weekly or monthly savings, hold meetings, and exercise leadership skills, especially among the Ismaili women in Hunza and Gilgit. Ismaili women meet weekly in *Jamatkhana*. *Jamatkhana* is a place for Ismaili where social events such as *Tanzeem* meetings are also held. Unlike the common practice among other Shia and Sunni Muslims in Gilgit-Baltistan where women do not attend public worship in mosques, Ismaili men and women both participate in prayers and socio-religious gatherings in *Jamatkhana*. An Ismaili woman who was a member of a local *Tanzeem* reflected on the importance of *Tanzeem* in her social and economic life during an interview:

> We gather every Sunday or Friday in *Jamatkhana* for our *Tanzeem* meeting. We give our weekly savings to the secretary, and she keeps records for us in her register. It does not matter if we save only 50 or 100 rupees ($0.63) weekly, what matters is we make savings, and we can take out loans whenever we need money for our children's school fees or for any other monetary need in the family.

The availability of a physical space outside of the home in the form of *Jamatkhana* has allowed Ismaili women to sustain *Tanzeem.* Also, the reinforcement by the religious value has made it culturally and ethically appropriate for Ismaili women to navigate beyond the private sphere of the house and enter the formal economic market. On the other hand, *Tanzeem* did not grow as much among Shia and Sunni communities. Conservative religious ideologies imposing strict control over women's mobility and participation in public life, especially entrepreneurial activities in public, are primary constraining factors for women from other communities.

Shia women usually meet at someone's house for their WO meetings. The Shia majority villages that I visited had WOs, but the women told me that their WOs were not as active as they are among Ismaili women. I attended a meeting a of a WO in a Shia village. One commented during a group interview:

> There are women in our village who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities inside or near home. Our sociocultural environment is strict, so there are no women's shops outside in main market area by the road.

Similarly, Shia women in Nagar told me that they mostly pursue entrepreneurial activities out of their home. I visited two shawl making centers, a vocational center, and a few tailoring shops run by women. Most of the villages in Nagar were far from the KKH and there were no commercial areas in villages, so women did not have access to the market. One woman in the vocational center commented:

> We also want to get trainings and pursue entrepreneurial trainings like women in Hunza do. There are no markets in our village. We go to Aliabad [Hunza] to buy the stuff we need for tailoring. Now, with time, our men's attitudes are changing. They [men] are not as strict as they used to be in the past. We want that NGOs come to our villages to give us trainings.

Another woman shared the same sentiment that NGOs should focus more on their villages. She told me about another vocational center that an NGO constructed a few months ago. She explained:

There is another vocational center in the village that an NGO has established a few months ago. They [NGO] have completed the construction and installed sewing machines. They [NGO] said that they will hire a local woman as a trainer who would give training to other women. It has been months, but nothing has happened. They have delayed it. Some people say, they [NGO] were planning to invite the Assistant Commissioner of Nagar for a formal inauguration. I don't know why they have been delaying it.

The issues and challenges raised by many women during the interviews and meetings are some of the most common barriers for women and almost all women expressed concerns about their workload and commute. Many of these issues such as women's traditional gender roles, additional modern roles, transport issues, conservative notions, are tied to the social attitudes and the structural discrepancies, but I realized that these issues are not being addressed directly. Karim (2014) writes:

Empowerment results from institutional changes in laws that protect women's rights, and through social changes in attitudes toward women, which is a significantly longer-term process. Yet in development practice, organizations often implement the goal of empowerment from top-down perspectives without paying sufficient attention to how social change actually manifests in the society (p. 155).

NGOs measure their success in numbers; the number of WOs, the number of women members registered in WOs, the amount of savings in the WOs. There remains no in-depth mechanism that gauges the impact of these development projects on women's lives, their everyday struggles because of their engagement with development initiatives, and their relations within the community. The focus of NGOs is to increase the number of women in the community organizations and in development programs to produce them as market agents.

In addition to the larger sociocultural barriers, the intersectional lens also brings the attention to the disparities among women across class, rural-urban, and sectarian divides. The examples of the Shia women draw a contrast between Shia and Ismaili women in terms of women's accessibility to the resources and a supportive sociocultural environment. My ethnographic accounts also show disparities among Ismaili women based. During a meeting of different WOs in the Hunza district, one woman complained:

We do not receive any programs, trainings, or funding. We are always ignored. Only a few women [referring to one of the "successful" WOs] get selected for everything. They receive funding and trainings. They have also received a nut oil extraction machine from the NGO. We do not have any such facility, nor we have funds to buy anything like that.

As I have mentioned earlier, most of the population of Hunza is Ismaili. The woman who spoke was from a village in the Lower Hunza[4] which does not receive many development projects. The villages in the Lower Hunza are mostly off the highway which make the region inaccessible to tourists. The commercial activity is also almost non-existent. Other women from Lower Hunza expressed their frustrations during my interviews with them. Their WOs have also been inactive because NGOs do not visit them, even if the land in their region is fertile and known for the variety of fruit crops. The Central Hunza remains as the commercial hub and the center of development projects in Hunza district while other areas awaiting developments in transport and road infrastructures are marginalized and left without alternative choices. The women in Central Hunza have easier access to the market and the transport facilities. So, there are several women's shops and women's markets in the main towns in Central Hunza.

Figure 17. A training of women on leadership arranged by the LSO in a village in Hunza

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[4] Hunza is administratively divided into three parts: Lower Hunza with a dominant Shina-speaking population, Central Hunza with a dominant Burushaski-speaking population, and Upper Hunza with a dominant Wakhi-speaking population. In terms of the sect, the majority of the population of Hunza is Ismaili.

Figure 18. A group of women writing down qualities of a good leader as part of the training exercise

The differences in women's development experiences illustrates an irony in the development discourse. First, NGOs formed VOs/WOs/LSOs to initiate a community-driven approach and expected that the community-based organizations would transform into self-sustainable development institutions among communities. But the example above shows that interventions of NGOs have perpetuated a dependency of communities and WOs/VOs/LSOs on NGOs. As the woman pointed out above that their WO did not receive much attention from NGOs in the forms of funds or trainings, so their WO became inactive. Second, the woman's complain and the responses of women in Nagar mentioned above show the deprivation of WOs in the internally remote areas that are further from the road and the main bazaar. These examples indicate that development processes reinforce the existing inequality between women based on their socio-economic status and the remoteness of their location from roads and markets.

To illustrate the varied experiences of women, I will provide another example. Many women in remote areas indicated that they were dependent on men for transport and market accessibility. A woman who sold milk and *arzoq* (traditional homemade bread) narrate her experience. She said in an interview, "Every morning I request my husband to take the milk and *arzoq* on his motorbike to the shopkeeper by the road [who then sells her produce at his shop]. Sometimes when he [husband] feels lazy or is in hurry, he refuses to take my stuff," she said laughing. She continued, "So, I have to walk all the way to the shop after I send my children to

school. I wake up at 5 in the morning to prepare *arzoq* and then I milk the cows. I prepare breakfast for everyone, wake up the children and prepare them for school. I walk my youngest daughter to and from school, because she is very young to go by herself and she has a different schedule than the older ones." She also added: "I need to purchase flour frequently to make *arzoq*. I carry the 10kg flour bag on my back all the way from the shop to my house. It is embarrassing to carry the heavy bag on my back and walk in a bending position, so I usually bring it in the late evening so that no one could see me," she ended in a jovial tone. These experiences of women highlight the invisible forms of inequalities that are exacerbated by the very processes of development that are detached from women's specific contexts.

I also realized that women provide the major portion of the everyday labor in farming and household chores. What is missing in the development discourse is the acknowledgement that women – whether they were Ismaili, Shia, or Sunni – were already historically key economic agents. Women provided the important labor in the family farming, livestock management, and household economy. These contributions to the domestic economy include their reproductive and caregiving labor. However, the development model of NGOs adopted a language of labor energy expenditure based on the "neoliberal ideals of competition, efficiency, and entrepreneurship" (Karim, 2011, p. xiii). An NGO manager explained during an interview that their project on entrepreneurship emphasize to produce very competitive and viable women entrepreneurs whose businesses have the potential to attract investors and can generate employment opportunities for other women. He explained:

> Our entrepreneurship promotion model is different from the conventional ways of NGOs that provided micro-loans to women to initiate small income generating activities. We will, instead, focus on those emerging small or medium businesses that are either owned by women or have the potential to generate employment opportunities for women. That's how we incorporate the gender lens. We connect entrepreneurs to investors, so we cannot force the investors to invest in women's businesses. They [investors] look for lucrative businesses, so we either head women entrepreneurs whose businesses are likely to make money, or we select those businesses which are owned by men but could provide employment to women.

Such a model of entrepreneurship resonates with the neoliberal ideals of entrepreneurialism that focuses to unleash women's entrepreneurial potential through enhancing their access to the market and monetary investments (Sen, 2017). Sen (2017) also notes that the focus on the values of efficiency and competition by NGOs legitimize the capitalist and masculinist conceptions of

productive labor and economic value and undermine women's ways of engagement and participation in development and entrepreneurship. The language of women's empowerment and development deployed by NGOs privileges one form of labor over the other, in the process of reinforcing hierarchies and distinctions between women. The neoliberal ideals of competition, efficiency, and entrepreneurship promoted through the women's empowerment programs forged the idea of an individual self as opposed to the traditional relational selves of women. The idea of the woman entrepreneur who makes rational choices ignores the social realities that women's lives could also be embedded in familial and social obligations (Karim, 2011).

Such an idea of entrepreneurship has perpetuated discrepancies among women. The acceptance of NGO-introduced notions of women's economic and social empowerment among Ismaili communities is the reason for the participation of Ismaili women in the development programs in large numbers. The Ismaili ethos endorses women's participation and their visibility in social and economic spaces. The Shia and Sunni communities, however, opposed the development programs in the beginning, fearing that women's engagement with development programs would threaten their traditional and religious values and identities. My long-term fieldwork provided me opportunities to interact with Shia and Sunni women who do engage with entrepreneurial activities in their own ways, which are driven by their specific sociocultural and economic circumstances and religious values of modesty. But the number of Shia and Sunni women pursuing business activities in markets is fewer than Ismaili

During my ethnographic work, I interviewed many Shia and Sunni women who were engaged in entrepreneurial activities that they perceived as important in sustaining their family's economic life. Most of them also emphasized: "Women can do anything including business while keeping their values of *purdah* (veil or long scarf to cover the body) and *haya* (honor)." Women's social and economic empowerment and entrepreneurship projects have constructed internal social differentiation among women. The differentiation among women in terms of their different ideologies and different ways of engagement with development and entrepreneurship, originated from their class and sectarian perspectives, have generated "gendered entrepreneurialism and subversive entrepreneurialism" (Sen, 2017). In the later sections, I have provided women's narratives that amplify the hidden and subversive dimensions of women's practices and engagement with development and entrepreneurialism.

3.7   Between Development and Tradition

In the summer of 2017 during my fieldwork for the pilot study, I noticed several women-run shops by the roadsides during my fieldwork. Women as shopkeepers in markets and along the KKH is an image that is relatively new in Gilgit-Baltistan which in my observations has emerged in the last ten years. While growing up, I saw many women stitching clothes and selling groceries, handicrafts, eggs, garments, and many other things out of their homes or out of small shops adjacent to their homes. Many women still generate income out of their homes. NGOs have introduced the term "entrepreneur" as part of their programs to encourage women to become part of the formal economy. I observed during my fieldwork that women-run shops were mostly present in the towns and villages with Ismaili communities in Gilgit and Hunza. In the conservative parts of the region such as Gilgit town, some women-only markets that are confined and enclosed in walls which are are run by women and are only for women. Women from different communities who prefer to run shops in a restricted women-only space favor such markets. Many women running their shops in the women-only markets expressed that women-only markets are important because they provide spaces for women who are only allowed to go to women's spaces. I visited the women-only markets several times and spent hours interacting with different women shopkeepers. The market was adjacent to a main bazaar in a town in Gilgit. Once inside the market, one finds themselves in a different world—a world separated by a wall from the outside male-dominant bazaar. Women shopkeepers and buyers were busy buying and selling. They walk around with comfort, hang out, and engage in conversations.

One of the women-only markets near Gilgit town was owned by a Shia woman. I interviewed her to know about her experiences as an entrepreneur. She was an elderly, educated Shia woman who belonged to an upper-middle-class family. She said, their family is originally from Nagar and they have been living in the town for many years. She said during an interview:

> I inherited this land and I decided to establish a market for women. There are many conservative families who do not want their women to go to markets. Markets like these are very essential to provide opportunities for women who want to run a business but in a women's space. Also, there are many women who are not allowed to shop in other markets. So, a market like this allows these women to have the freedom to socialize outside home. There are 60 shops in this market. We also have a backyard where we arrange *mehendi* (henna) and food stalls during Eid (a cultural festivity) days.

Her aspiration for entrepreneurship is inspired by economic gains and as well as her aim to create a socio-economic space for women for sharing experiences that are shared and particularly empowering for the participants (Sen, 2017). The market was a massive three-story rectangular building, enclosed within walls. I visited the market just a few days before Eid and the market was crowded with women and children. The backyard was a well-tended garden where some women were hanging out and having *chai*. This is an example of women creating and pursuing their own ways of engagement with development and entrepreneurialism.

In a conservative, male-dominant, and masculinist social environment, sometimes women prefer to have segregated work environment so that they would be free from harassment and their morality would not be suspected (Jafar, 2005). It is one of the ways women find to participate in economic activities and reproduce gendered entrepreneurialism. Haines (2012) views the creating of separate spaces for women because of commercialization and urbanization as the "genderization." He views it as a prevalent strategy of reinforcing patriarchal power. However, feminists view these modes of adjustments as ways of women to negotiate and navigate the economic and cultural exigencies (Sen, 2017).

For a more nuanced and context-specific analysis, these modes of renegotiations can be theorized using the idea of the patriarchal bargain by Kandiyoti (1988), which reveals inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangement between the genders. It also allows us to account and analyze women's strategies in dealing with different forms of patriarchy. According to Kandiyoti, "these patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts" (Kandiyoti 1988: p. 275). She also argues that patriarchal bargains are active and passive forms of resistance of women. The concept of the patriarchal bargain provides a much more nuanced lens to understand women's experiences and their intersecting subjectivities in different communities in Gilgit-Baltistan. These sectarian based differences have led to more visible disparities among women, which is problematic because the dominant gender ideology delegitimizes other forms or ways of being for women.

Another related aspect which is undermined while analyzing women's experiences in Gilgit-Baltistan is that it is not only the modern values and notions of development and empowerment that have created differences among communities, but also by the communities' distinct cultural arrangements and differences. The development processes have rendered these

differences visible and have placed these differences in an antagonistic relation. The sociopolitical transformations have resulted in the heightened sectarian politics in Gilgit-Baltistan which has affected women's lives profoundly.

For Ismailis, development, education, and women empowerment could be folded into their interpretation of faith. It is common for Ismaili women in Hunza and Gilgit to be visible in public spaces and take on non-traditional jobs as compared to other Muslim communities in Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, the projects on women's social and economic empowerment were more well-received in the districts where there are Ismailis such as Hunza, Gilgit, and Ghizer. As an Ismaili Muslim raised in Pakistan, I am very familiar with the Ismaili ethos and how it can be supportive of women's education and economic activities. The interventions of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) for over three decades have contributed to cultivating a sociocultural environment that supports women looking to pursue entrepreneurship and employment.

Although it is not uncommon for women in Gilgit-Baltistan to engage in simple and informal income-generating activities through family farming, fruit-processing, livestock, the image of women emerging as entrepreneurs offers a contrasting, almost heroic image promoted and celebrated by the state, non-state organizations, and international organizations. However, the differential impact of the development programs has generated unevenness and sectarianized politics. It has placed women in a complicated relationship with both traditionalism and developmentalism. The sectarianized politics and gender ideologies need to be understood in the broader nation-state-making of Pakistan (N. Ali, 2008), especially the Zia's military regime during 1977-1988 that introduced discriminatory laws against women and empowered religious fundamentalists (Jafar, 2005).

The current sectarian fissures and contesting gender ideologies are rooted in the state-ideology that reinforced the idea that women belong to "*chadar"* (a very long veil which covers most of the body) and the "*chardivari"* (the four walls of the house). Although many new laws and policies to protect women's rights have been introduced by the proceeding governments after Zia's dictatorship, the conservative and regressive mindset, hostile sectarian divides, and vigilantism by powerful extremist religious clerics has deeply rooted in the sociocultural fabric. Some of the much-debated aspects that affect women's experiences are contesting views about women's modesty that constitute, among many, their clothing, participation in public life, and

interaction with men. Below, I have provided ethnographic accounts of another two Ismaili women who are actively pursuing entrepreneurial activities.

Shahina is a well-known Ismaili entrepreneur in Hunza. She is a young, unmarried woman who is the provider of her family. During our interview, she expressed to me her experiences as a business-woman in Hunza:

> I am the first woman to open and run a restaurant here in Altit, Hunza. There are several women who run their businesses, but with the help of their husbands. Most of the time they cook at home and their husbands or male relatives sell it for them. But I am the first woman to run this café all by myself. Not only do I look after the kitchen and other services, I also interact with the customers. I serve them food, I talk to them, and I manage most of the affairs in my café. My sister and brother help me with the day-to-day matters, but I own and manage this business by myself.

Shahina spoke about her experience as one of the pioneering business-women in Hunza, which is one of the districts of Gilgit-Baltistan with a dominant Ismaili population. Shahina's vibrant energy is affective. She may or may not be the first woman to start her business in a public space, but she accurately portrays the neoliberal values of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness. Shahina first entered the culinary business about 12 years ago. She was employed as a cook in a hotel, first in Hunza and then in Islamabad. She participated in many culinary training opportunities arranged by the Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan (AKCSP) during these years. She said the customers liked her food, so she decided to open her own restaurant in Hunza. She told me with pride, "me and my family had some savings in *Tanzeem*. I had saved money from my salary. I had about PKR. 1 million ($13,983) in my savings. My family also helped me. This year I have received a business grant of PKR. 2 million ($27,878) from an NGO. I am the first woman to win PKR. 2 million." When asked about the challenges she has faced, she replied, "there are stigmas around women's freedom and free mobility, but I mostly ignore judgmental remarks from the society, and I keep on doing my business. I have to go to places to run errands and to buy stuff so I walk or use public transport. I am not hesitant to go to places by myself. I have plans to open another restaurant in Duikar (a tourist site in Hunza), and I also want to train young girls to be waitresses in my restaurants. Why should I hire guys? I will prefer to give employment opportunities to young women in my restaurants if they want." She also added, "women should learn to ignore the judgmental and discouraging attitudes of the people if they want to succeed as entrepreneurs. If women are shy and worry about people's opinions, they cannot succeed. Many people say negative things about me, but I don't care because my family supports me."

Shahina's case is one example of women I met whose experiences shows a contrast between how NGOs perceive entrepreneurship and how it unfolds at the ground level. NGO-promoted entrepreneurialism "enshrine[s] the individual as the key agent of his or her own betterment" (Kar, 2018, p. 307), but Shahina and many other women during interviews expressed that they are pursuing their entrepreneurial activities successfully because their families support them. However, Shahina's performativity as a strong and motivated entrepreneur provides an insight into the effects of NGO-based activism, gendered development and entrepreneurialism that have disciplined women to perform that development works. During our interviews, Shahina and other women told me that NGOs often bring guests and visitors, who are mostly from the donor agencies, to show them the women's enterprises.

Shahina's narrative signifies a common predicament experienced by women in the region. Women are primarily dependent on their family and kin networks. Pursuing entrepreneurial activities in public spaces is impossible without the support of the immediate family members. Nonetheless, despite the NGO-led activism for decades, markets remain primarily associated with men and masculinity (Kar, 2018). The prime focus of the development projects on the training and lending to women has ignored the larger structural and ideological issues that limit women in the first place. The gendered approach of the development discourse exposed women to structural violence and new forms of hierarchies and challenges without providing an overarching mechanism to address the causes of gender inequalities (Karim, 2014; Keating et al., 2015).

3.8 Women Navigating Men's Trades

Ishaat is another young Ismaili woman who runs a tourism-related online business with her fiancé in Gilgit. Her case study adds the element of education that has enabled young women like her to seek business opportunities and expand their socio-economic network. She finished her undergraduate degree in physics, but she was not interested in pursuing a teaching job, which is traditionally considered a suitable and appropriate job for women. She was more invested in freelancing and business. When she was young, her father passed away and her family started to host tourists as paying guests at their home in Gulmit, Hunza, as a source of income. Gulmit is a village in Upper Hunza known for its mighty mountains and the wilderness that attract tourists. Like the state of the Lower Hunza, the villages in Upper Hunza suffer from marginalization and

lack of development infrastructure. People who are more financially stable than others move to the urban areas in Hunza, Gilgit, or other big cities in Pakistan for employment and education.

Ishaat told me, "that's how my family generated income – by renting out a room in our small traditional house. I saw my family and many people in my village looking for small entrepreneurial opportunities to earn a steady income. When I grew up, I wanted to continue this entrepreneurial interest. During my undergraduate studies in Gilgit city, I got to know about the Airbnb from the internet. My fiancé was also interested in starting a business initiative. So, he developed a website for the tourists and as well for the people who want to offer lodging in their homes or hotels. Our office is located in Gilgit." She explained the purpose of the website in detail:

> We have made an online marketplace for both tourists and the hosts. Members can use the service to arrange or offer lodging, homestays, tourism experiences, and events. With the recent growth in the local tourism industry we found this unique opportunity to venture into the tourism and hospitality industry. We have launched this website in the beginning of this year [2018]. During the last six months, I have registered 72 homes from Hunza valley as our pilot project. The total revenue generated through this website was PKR. 4 million ($25,579) during the last 6 months. Our pilot project was successful, so we expanded our business to cover more regions within Gilgit-Baltistan also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (a province in Pakistan). We are also planning to include the tourist sites in Kashmir [Pakistan-administered Kashmir] in the future.

Ishaat is enthusiastic about her business plans and she is one of the very few young educated women I met during my fieldwork who want to pursue business as a career. She was excited to tell me that her company has just won a grant of PKR. 2 million ($27,878) and she is hopeful for the future of their enterprise. Ishaat talked more about her responsibilities and challenges:

> I manage the marketing side while my fiancé looks at the technical side of the business. My responsibilities include customer services and looking for more potential lodging sites such as hotels and rest houses. In the beginning, we had some difficulties arranging money for our start-up because it was all virtual and the banks refused to give us loans for our business, which was a novel idea for them. However, we were able to get a loan from *Tanzeem*.

Ishaat talked about social challenges for young women like her in the society and pointed out that there is a lack of support and opportunities. She pointed out that arranging finances for the business is not her biggest worry. She explained:

> There are many banks that give loans to women. The barriers that exhaust me the most are the social ones. There are social limitations. The social and organizational

spaces are dauntingly male-dominant. The type of job I do is new for the people here. When a customer calls and I pick up the phone, they instantly ask me if they can talk to a guy. When I say I can help them with their questions, I can feel their hesitance and lack of trust in me… and it's not only about the customers, but also the family and the society around us … they don't believe that a woman can do this [business]… there is a lack of trust and encouragement. Women have so much talent but there are fewer opportunities for them. The banks and other relevant organizations should support women. There are misconceptions about women who pursue non-traditional careers, and they [men] misconstrue it [socializing/working with men] and assume something else [inappropriate].

Ishaat also mentioned that some random men who she is certain were non-Ismaili broke the office signboard outside their previous office and wrote outrageous comments on it. Ishaat's reference to the vandalizing non-Ismaili men pointed out the ideological chasm between the Ismaili community and the other Shia and Sunni communities in terms of gender norms, values, and women's place and position in the society. The unaddressed conflicting views about women's participation in public spaces and the continued and uncontested gendered entrepreneurialism exposes women to patriarchal violence. The entrepreneurial self of Ismaili woman is inextricably linked with persistent familial, social and community expectations.

"This is actually our new office set-up. My family lives upstairs on the second floor," she said while showing her spacious office space with professional furnishing and decoration. Ishaat like Shahina exhibited strength and determination, and what is also common in both of their cases is the support and acceptance from their families in both financial sense and approval of their entrepreneurial interests. The support and involvement of her family provides Ishaat with the needed security as she faces risks while pursuing her entrepreneurial interests.

Development ideology has incorporated women from the peripheries by introducing them to the potentials that could be gained when navigating financial networks and credit systems. The case above shows that women—as seen in the narrative of Ishaat—that navigate these new offered options still within traditionally existing socio-economic order. There is little examination of how women produce themselves and participate in the financial market (Kar, 2013).

Development programs in Gilgit-Baltistan do not account for women's lived experiences. Their gendered approach in development and the sole focus on women to engage them in economic activities has proved to perpetuate differences and antagonisms. Development processes have also weakened social solidarity among different communities by imparting and heightening different perspectives about women's position.

3.9 Conflicting Subjectivities

In the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Ismaili women were at the forefront as the recipients of the development initiatives in the form of social activism, entrepreneurial training and microfinance. The global emphasis on women's empowerment and gender equality from 1970 through the 1990s led to the emergence of NGOs, UN donor agencies, and charitable organizations as partners to the states to implement the development policy worldwide, including the global South (Karim, 2014). Women's socio-economic status became the central tools and symbols of modernity and progress of nations. Traditionally, women were the symbol of culture, tradition and the communal identity (Abu-Lughod, 1998). However, "the shift in international development from donor-driven moralities of help and social welfare to a market-driven ethics of self-help and economic growth" (Huang, 2020, p. 128) led NGOs to reframe development by centering on entrepreneurialism.

The shift in the language of development and the emphasis on social-enterprise and financial inclusion of women was expected to produce women entrepreneurs who would lift their communities from poverty. Gendered entrepreneurialism constructed women as "ambiguous figures" – which, according to Julia Huang captures the dilemma "when their activities present new opportunities but also cast them in an unfavorable light within their communities" (Huang, 2017, p. 606). Ismaili women in Gilgit-Baltistan are seen as ambiguous figures, and that view places a moral burden on them to be entrepreneurs but also to comply with the traditional norms, values and responsibilities determined by the family and community.

In the political history of Pakistan, the state, especially during the military dictator General Zia ul-Haq's regime in the 1980s, took strict legal measures to "return" Pakistan to Islam and tradition (Jafar, 2005). This reversion not only threatened the position of women in the society, but also the diversity of interpretations and multivocality within Islam, and the cultural specificities that have shaped religious practices. The heightened religious fundamentalism since then and the modern visions about women's empowerment induced by modern education, media, and NGOs, has produced contesting views about women's roles, positions, and social expectations. The "Islamization" project has also affected the socio-political climate of Gilgit-Baltistan leading to intense and hostile sectarian divides in the region. The sectarianized politics of the region has produced women as sectarianized bodies (N. Ali, 2019).

The socio-political matrix of Gilgit-Baltistan is extremely sectarian. Outside, on the wall of a women-only market, which was dominated by non-Ismaili women, in Gilgit, there was a graffiti in Urdu saying, "*bey parda aurat shaitan ki agent hoti hai*" [A woman without *hijab* is an agent of Satan]. When I asked if the graffiti on the wall outside the market appears outrageous to them, one of the women in the market who was a Shia Muslim said: "No, it doesn't. It is important to keep women in control, and the graffiti reminds them of their ethical norms." On the other hand, many Ismaili women who have seen that graffiti found it outrageous and repressive. The diverse views about women's mobility and *hijab* or the concept of *purdah* is attributed to their sectarian and ethnic orientations. The differences in the conception and practice of *purdah* is not an issue in itself but it becomes a powerful political tool when used by the sectarian forces for their political interests.

During my fieldwork, I have observed that women in Hunza are visible in the public spaces and even in Gilgit, the women who are dominantly visible in the market are Ismaili women. When I was walking through the bazaar in Hunza, I saw women and young girls walking without any fear or hesitation. There were several shops and restaurants run by women who freely interacted with their customers. The majority of the population in Hunza is Ismailis, so the women said they feel the sense of community, security, and respectability in Hunza. In contrast, Gilgit is diverse and conservative which also makes also women's mobility is comparatively confined. Most of the women I interviewed said they go to Gilgit City for their business errands and they expressed their frustration, "we feel uncomfortable because men stare at us."

The graffiti on the wall in Gilgit signifies conservatives' ideals that favor cultural authenticity, traditionalism, and cultural nationalism. On the one hand, the traditional image of women as repositories of honor and culture places them in the private sphere of the home and emphasizes their traditional roles of mothering and caregiving. On the other hand, the development projects that promote entrepreneurialism attempt to forge a new sense of selfhood. Thus, the entrepreneurial self of women today can be described as an on-going project that involves a process in which women negotiate and contest complex socio-economic and political structures.

3.10 Conclusion

My ethnographic analysis of Ismaili women entrepreneurs, their diverse experiences, and a wide range of challenges and opportunities provide us nuanced details about women in Gilgit-

Baltistan. My interviews with women entrepreneurs dispel the notions about rural women in Pakistan as static and submissive subjects. Not only do these accounts debunk a widely presumed homogenized image of women in Pakistan generally and in Gilgit-Baltistan particularly, they also draw a detailed picture of divergent and convergent points of concern for women in the region. The ethnographic accounts of the women entrepreneurs whom I interviewed during my fieldwork demonstrate the heterogeneities and socio-economic disparities in women's lived experiences, which are attributed to different social categories such as religious sect, ethnicity, class, and sub-regional identities.

The featured women's diverse experiences as entrepreneurs in this chapter analyzed the ethos and practices of developmentalism and entrepreneurialism that Ismaili women see as an opportunity for uplifting themselves. However, the entrepreneurial pursuits of women are deeply intertwined with the traditional structures and gender norms that are regulated by religion, family and the community.

This chapter gives insight into the experiences of women entrepreneurs that diverge and converge with respect to the socio-economic and religio-political complexities in which they are embedded, and with the conflicting views and stigmas around women's empowerment in Pakistan. This research contributes to the on-going dialogue that contributes to the understanding of Pakistani women as active agents despite their various socio-cultural and economic constraints in a culturally and religiously conservative society where women face particular challenges. It is important to understand the experiences of women within the local and national socio-cultural and political history to contextualize the challenges faced by women. By studying women and gender power relations and intersectionality with socio-economic and political structural asymmetries, my study contributes to better understandings of women's everyday realities.

This chapter analyzed women as entrepreneurial subjects who have embodied the competitive aspects of neoliberal subjects. The next chapter will analyze the politico-historical context of Gilgit-Baltistan in the larger political picture of Pakistan in the postcolonial era. The partition of British India into two independent countries and the subsequent processes of national integration in Pakistan have produced Gilgit-Baltistan as a liminal geo-body. The political and territorial liminality of the region, albeit strategically sustained by the state, has introduced, entrenched, and reproduced a hyper-aggressive politics of identity and power. The next chapter will elucidate the links between the nation-state building project, state sovereignty, and the

contemporary sectarianized politics in Gilgit-Baltistan that produce an image of women as detached from local power and politics. The stories of women are in fact windows to the gendered impact of infrastructures of state-making, which is enacted through women's encounters with and around the KKH.

CHAPTER 4.   WOMEN, ROADS, AND DEVELOPMENT: DISPUTED TERRITORY AND STATE-MAKING IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN, PAKISTAN

4.1   Abstract

My aim in writing about women, roads, and development in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, is to discuss about women in relation to the sociopolitical and infrastructural changes in the area. A macro-analysis of how state-led, transnational infrastructure development projects between Pakistan and China—a network of roads, telecommunications, and trade—shows that the socioeconomic and political space has changed rapidly in Gilgit-Baltistan. Large-scale infrastructure development is a vital instrument of the state's integrative policy in the context of its hostile relationship with India and the competing economic interests of China. In the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, along Pakistan's disputed northern frontier, political events since the 1970s have led the state to adopt a rigorous integrative policy toward the region. The processes of nation-state building have established rule in Gilgit-Baltistan through a state-structure comprised of military-bureaucracy-state and the transnational projects of rule such as the road. These seemingly unlinked processes intersect in many ways to produce women as state subjects. This chapter examines how women's lives have been shaped by the road and development initiatives in Gilgit-Baltistan.

4.2   Introduction

When I was a teaching assistant for the undergraduate course *Gender across Cultures*, the professor assigned the book, *Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village*, by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, written in 1965. This dated ethnography and another article on the state of *Hijra*, or transsexual/transgender individuals, in Pakistan were meant to introduce students to the issues of gender, sexuality, and power among Muslim women. In a response paper to these assigned readings, one of our students wrote: "Women are treated as mules in Pakistan. They are not allowed to go out in the streets." This is one of many examples I could point to of the static, homogenized, generalized, and totalizing assumptions rooted in the political category of "Muslim women" that is being used uncritically in the US academia until today.

Using "Muslim women" as an analytic and political category is absurd and problematic: it homogenizes the experiences of women by assuming uniformity based on a monolithic Muslimness. As scholars such as Jafar (2005), Kandiyoti (1991), Mernissi (1988) have shown, the analytic categories of "Muslim women" and "women in Islam" are essentialist, ahistorical, and lacking in class perspectives. In addition, these categories dehistoricize and depoliticize women by ignoring the geographic, political, and socioeconomic specificities that have shaped women's lives in a variety of contexts (Jafar, 2005). These include, most importantly, the emergence of nation-states in postcolonial societies, which have come to shape the sociopolitical space and life of citizens (Alavi, 1972), and particularly of women (Kandiyoti, 1991). Women's experiences need to be viewed within the larger context of political project of nation-states.

In this chapter, I have analyzed development as part of the state-making process and women's lived experiences as a constitutive outcome of the interplay of the state's economic, political, and symbolic interests. Women's everyday engagement with entrepreneurial and development activities may seem delinked with the larger geopolitics of the region, but their differential experiences are outcomes of the sociopolitical and infrastructural changes since the construction of the KKH and the interventions of NGOs.

Many elderly Ismaili women I met during my fieldwork expressed their gratitude for Aga Khan, their *Imam*, for his development initiatives that the women thought have had significantly changed women's lives in the region. One Ismaili elderly woman in Hunza explained during an interview:

> There was extreme poverty in old times in Hunza when there was no road and no other sources of income. Every family had their own small landholdings where they would do subsistence farming. Young girls had to take care of the cattle, and as kids, we used to herd our sheep, goats, and cows to mountains every day for grazing. Men and women used to work together in their small farms because their livelihood entirely depended on it. Women were responsible to store and use the produce in a way that it should last until the next farming season, because farming was impossible to do in extreme winters. Women who used to manage the scarce food resources responsibly, avoiding hunger and famine, were considered the most skilled and sophisticated, and everyone in the village would praise them. But now because of *Maula's* (Aga Khan) benevolence, women are pursuing education and all kinds of socioeconomic opportunities like men do. This is like a miracle.

Many women, especially elderly women, expressed the same sentiments and spoke about how the socioeconomic possibilities have evolved during the last four decades since the road was constructed. Younger women, however, expressed their concerns about socioeconomic disparities

and the lack of institutional and infrastructural resources that confine them. Therefore, women's voices are at the center of my analysis in this chapter. Specifically, my focus is on socioeconomic understanding differences that have been generated by the KKH. I have provided ethnographic accounts and my own encounters to illustrate women's diverse experiences in their socioeconomic contexts. My ethnography accounts in this chapter demonstrate the diversity of women's experiences: Some ethnographic moments show women who are actively involved in development and entrepreneurial activities, and are encountering new forms of hierarchies and issues, while others are completely marginalized from development processes. Some encounters show how the road and the consequent urbanization has reduced women's mobility and reinforced their dependency on men. I argue that women's varied experiences in Gilgit-Baltistan originate from their specific socioeconomic, politico-religious circumstances in a particular space and time.

I also argue that women's varied experiences are the outcomes of the nation-state making activities including the KKH, CPEC, political and administrative restructuring of the region, and the consequent transformations in the local concerns of identity, autonomy, and self-determination. At first glance, the experiences of women seem disconnected from the state and state structures. But in effect, the lived experiences of women originate from political projects of modern nation-states. Kandiyoti (1991) analyzes the links between experiences of women in Muslim societies with the state and its ideology:

> Significant variations in the condition of women in Muslim societies derive from, among other things, the different political projects of modern nation-states. The ways in which women are represented in political discourse, the degree of formal emancipation they have achieved, their forms of participation in economic life and the nature of the social movements through which they express their demands are closely linked to state-building processes (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 10).

Similarly, the experiences of women with economic development programs in Gilgit-Baltistan are gendered, classed, and sectarianized. Therefore, it is important to understand the interrelationship between state, religion, and politics in postcolonial Pakistan.

Figure 19. Wooden trays with apricots left to get dry in the sun in a village by the KKH

Figure 20. A group of women picking apricots in Hunza

4.3 Making a Frontier: Shifting Political Arrangements and the Identity of Gilgit-Baltistan

Below, I provide an overview of state-making processes in the colonial and postcolonial periods in Gilgit-Baltistan to contextualize the current political situation in the region.

4.3.1 Before 1947

It is critical to understand the political history of Gilgit-Baltistan before diving into contemporary questions about women's experiences and development in Gilgit-Baltistan amid the nation-state making and the processes of territorial integration in the region. The process of territorialization includes the political and territorial integration of a territory into a national space (Haines, 2012). Historically and geographically, Gilgit-Baltistan is part of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region, over which both Pakistan and India demand their exclusive territorial claim. The case of Gilgit-Baltistan, however, defies the Kashmir as a fixed territory or community: the people of Gilgit-Baltistan do not identify themselves as Kashmiri and their political advocacy revolves around contesting the national goal of and strategy around subsuming their identity to Kashmir (Dad, 2016; Kreutzmann, 2015). Since 1947, the political struggle within Gilgit-Baltistan has centered on demanding full incorporation into the state as a constitutional province with political rights and representation in the National Assembly (N. Ali, 2019).

Historically, Gilgit-Baltistan was a cluster of isolated princely kingdoms ruled by local Muslim rulers whose titles were *Raja*, *Mir*, or *Tham* (S. Abbas & Dad, 2017). There are many Urdu books and accounts by local scholars that tell the local narrative of their fight for independence from the rule of the then Hindu *Maharaja* (the title of the Hindu Dogra ruler) of Jammu and Kashmir. Some of the books recommended by one of my key informants, a local scholar, include *Gilgit Scouts*[5] by Mirzada Shah Khan, *Shamsheer se Zanjeer Tak* (From Sword to Slavery) by Mirza Hassan Khan, and *Gilgit ka Inquilab* (The Gilgit Rebellion) by Usman Ali Khan. These writings reflect a deep concern of the locals of Gilgit-Baltistan—a local narrative that tells about their sacrifice, fight, and the desire to free themselves from the Hindu rule of the Jammu and Kashmir to become part of the newly established state of Pakistan in 1947, and now their unfulfilled desire to integrate as a constitutional province of Pakistan.

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[5] Gilgit Scouts are a paramilitary force established by the British after they integrated the area into British India. Gilgit scouts played a major role in organizing the Gilgit rebellion in 1947 to fight against the army of the Maharaja (ruler) of Jammu and Kashmir (Dad, 2016).

These local historical narratives describe the political mobilization, fight for independence, and their heroic rebellion in 1947 against the Hindu rule to assert the autonomy of Gilgit-Baltistan. I will briefly describe the local historical narratives written about the colonial and postcolonial political regimes in the region: During the colonial regime (1858–1947), British India established the Gilgit Agency in 1889 by integrating the princely states that now constitute Gilgit-Baltistan under one administrative unit. The establishment of Gilgit Agency under a British officer known as Political Agent in 1889 aimed to consolidate and control the northern frontier of the British Empire (Dad, 2016). Geographically, the region was administered as Gilgit *Wazarat* (district) within the state of Jammu and Kashmir, under a governor appointed by the Maharaja (Kreutzmann, 2008). Thus, the Gilgit Agency was under the suzerainty[6] of the Maharaja[7] of Jammu and Kashmir, but administratively under the direct rule of British Imperial government via a British Political Agent stationed in Gilgit who reported to the British Resident in Srinagar (Kreutzmann, 2008). Thus, there was a diarchic rule—that is, "shared ruled between the Imperial Government and the state of Jammu and Kashmir" (Haines, 2012, p. 29). As I have mentioned above, Gilgit Agency constituted several autonomous local polities or princely states that were governed by the local Muslim rulers for centuries. The local princely states, particularly the states of Hunza and Nagar, had tributary and trade relations China, Central Asia and Russia for centuries which was a matter of concern for the Imperial Government, and thus, they deployed various mechanisms to consolidate and surveil the northern frontier (Haines, 2012).

The Imperial Government terminated the diarchy system in 1935 and brought the Gilgit Agency under its bureaucratic control through a lease with the Maharaja (Haines, 2012). According to the terms of this lease, Gilgit Agency came under the direct control of the British government for 60 years. This strategic administrative and territorial rearrangement and boundary creation by the British Empire was part of the consolidation of the frontier region with the goal of surveilling the transnational linkages of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and the princely states of the Gilgit Agency with Russia, Afghanistan, and China (Kreutzmann, 2008), which was

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[6] Suzerainty refers to the tributary relations between the princely states of Gilgit Wazarat, particularly the states of Hunza and Nagar, and the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir.

[7] The state of Jammu and Kashmir was created as a by-product of the Anglo-Sikh wars in the 1840s. The British annexed and created the modern Jammu and Kashmir in 1846 as the "mountain-gates" of South Asia. In 1846, Sir Henry Hardinge, Governor-General of India, and Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Sikh ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, signed the Treaty of Amritsar. This treaty granted the Sikh Maharaja, Gulab Singh, the rule of the state. The Maharaja created the Sikh rule, which would later become the Hindu Dogra dynasty (Dogra Raj), also known as the Dogra Darbar (see Haines 2012).

part of the British-Russian Great Game: a series of political events and efforts by the British and Russian empires to consolidate their control over Central Asia during the nineteenth century (Hopkirk, 1992). The central instruments of state-making deployed by the British included colonial mapping, cartography, boundary-making, and construction of new routes and colonial roads for the military. British India marks the creation of the modern territorial states which is predicated on drawing boundaries and structuring of administrative and infrastructural structures (Haines, 2012). These various state apparatuses were employed to control movement and travel to and from the Gilgit Agency.

On August 1, 1947, the British, in their rush to leave India, terminated the lease and turned the entire Gilgit Agency over to the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir (Haines, 2012). This abrupt decision created perplexity, concerns and fear of domination and oppression by the Hindu rule of Jammu and Kashmir among the Muslim rulers in Gilgit Agency. The state of Jammu and Kashmir was a Muslim-majority region with a Hindu ruler. The Hindu Maharaja of the state acceded to India amid partition, while Gilgit Agency revolted against the decision of the Maharaja and extended its accession to Pakistan. The Gilgit Scouts, a paramilitary force established by the British decades as part of state-making, formed a "Revolutionary Council" and fought against the army of the Maharaja in Gilgit. As a result of the Independence Movement of Gilgit (*Jang-e-Azadi Gilgit*), the Gilgit Scouts, with external support, ousted the Dogra Rule in Gilgit Agency and declared independence on November 1, 1947. After 16 days, the newly established government of Pakistan sent a Political Agent on November 16, 1947 to formalize the accession of the area to Pakistan (Dad, 2016). The rebellion of the Gilgit Agency against the Dogra Rule of Jammu and Kashmir and accession to Pakistan represented the political agency of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The rebellion is also linked to "the affective power of a Muslim community promised in the form of Pakistan in 1947" (N. Ali, 2019, p. 5), because the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims was grounded in the hope of getting equal political and citizenship rights for Muslims.

There are conflicting accounts written and told regarding who led the rebellion in Gilgit. The local accounts written by local Muslim officers in the Gilgit Scouts, known as the war-heroes of the Independence movement of Gilgit, including Group Captain Mohammad Shah Khan and Mirza Hassan Khan, claim to be the leaders of the independence movement. Since local accounts such as *Gilgit Scouts* by Mirzada Shah Khan and *Shamsheer se Zanjeer Tak* (From Swords to Slavery) by Mirza Hassan Khan were written decades after the independence, there are

contradictory accounts as to who did what. In the memoir, *Gilgit Rebellion: The Major who Mutinied over the Partition of India,* which is based on the personal diary of Major William Brown (1922–1984), the British acting commander of the Gilgit Scouts at the time of partition in 1947, Brown claims that he led the independence movement of Gilgit (Bangash, 2010). My goal is to argue that Gilgit Agency had its own distinct local political structures during the colonial time and there were narratives preserved and told through written and oral accounts to ascertain their political agency and autonomous traditional governing structures during the colonial and postcoital time. Moreover, these politico-historic narratives confirm the presence of a local political movement in Gilgit Agency and their struggle for self-autonomy during partition.

In Brown's memoir, published posthumously in 2014, he writes that he witnessed the formal handover on August 1, 1947, when the British flag was lowered and that of Jammu and Kashmir was raised in its place. Brown writes that the decisions and events around the transfer of power from the British to the Dogra Rule were abrupt and did not involve consultation with the people of the Gilgit Agency. He writes that the Gilgit Scouts and the rulers of the local princely states were uncertain about their status and status under Hindu rule amid this transition and they were dissatisfied with the decision to hand over the Gilgit Agency, which had a 99% Muslim population, to a Hindu ruler.

According to the memoir, the Gilgit Scouts under his command revolted against the army and the Governor of the Maharaja in response to the Maharaja's decision of accession to India on October 27, 1947. Following the rebellion, the Gilgit Scouts and the states of the Gilgit Agency announced their accession to Pakistan on November 1. Bhangash (2010), in his article "Three Forgotten Accessions: Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar," writes that the government of Pakistan did not take an interest in the accession of the Gilgit Agency immediately after the revolt. The state eventually sent a Pakistani Political Agent on November 16, 1947—two weeks after the revolt and the accession of the Gilgit Agency.

The events that occurred between August 1, 1947, when the British canceled the lease and handed over the Gilgit Agency to the Dogra Ruler, and November 16, 1947, when the Pakistani Political Agent was sent to the Gilgit Agency following the revolt in Gilgit, led to the hitherto unresolved Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan and are fiercely debated. Bhangash (2010), Brown (2014), and the accounts of the revolt and accession of the Gilgit Agency to Pakistan written by the local scholars, emphasize the role played by the Gilgit Scouts and the local

princely states in fighting for their right to self-determination and self-autonomy. In contrast, the larger nationalist rhetoric and the territorial claims of both Pakistan and India present a hegemonic unified imagery of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which in reality is heterogeneous in terms of religion, ethnolinguistic identities, and political structures. The local history and identity politics of Gilgit-Baltistan has built on the othering of Kashmir: that is, detachment from the identity and politics of Kashmir. Instead, the region advocates for its own constitutional recognition as a Pakistani province (Dad, 2016; Kreutzmann, 2015). But the nationalist narrative built over the decades since partition enforce a homogenized image to bolster the state's claim over the larger territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, Kashmir is central to Pakistani nationalism and has invoked a rationale to sustain the bureaucratic-military control in the region.

Aziz Ali Dad, a local scholar in Gilgit-Baltistan, analyzes the local histories and identities of Gilgit-Baltistan in his article "Boundaries and Identities: The Case of Gilgit-Baltistan." He argues: "this bifurcation between sub-regional and linguistic identity and the collective identity of the region gives birth to a highly localized discourse of identity as well as a narrative of unified identity of Gilgit-Baltistan against the 'Other'—Kashmir" (Dad, 2016, p. 4). Dad (2016) also argues that even the identities within Gilgit-Baltistan are not fixed but rather fragmented and reoriented over time as a result of disintegration and political marginalization from the state's mainstream institutions. Within this context, new identities have been formed as a result of religious, sectarian, ethnic, and nationalist influences since the partition (S. Abbas & Dad, 2017).

4.3.2 After 1947

As a result of the boundaries drawn between Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir (Pakistan-administered Kashmir), and Indian-administered Kashmir since 1947, each territorial unit has created distinct identities (Kreutzmann, 2015). The "line of control," or the border between Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Indian-administered Kashmir, has had completely restricted movement across the border. The first Kashmir war between Pakistan and India broke out soon after independence in 1947. The United Nations intervened and negotiated a ceasefire between the two countries. The UN proposed holding an internationally supervised plebiscite to determine the territorial status of Kashmir, but India refused to allow it to happen (H. Abbas, 2004; Kreutzmann, 2015). Pakistan and India had several wars over the issue of Kashmir including wars in 1965, 1971, and Kargil war in 1999. Consequently, both the countries have been spending their limited

resources feeding aggressive hyper-nationalism and building up their armed forces (H. Abbas, 2004).

During the post-independence period, the government of Pakistan adopted the same strategy of the Imperial Government and allowed the local autonomous polities of Gilgit-Baltistan to keep their independent principalities (Dad, 2016). However, a series of political events between 1960 to 1970 led the state to adopt an integrative policy toward its northern frontier: first, the Sino-Indian War of 1962, when China took over the Aksai Chin region, which India claims is part of the union territory of Ladakh;[8] second, the second Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 over Kashmir; third, another Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, which resulted in the secession of East Pakistan and its establishment as an independent country, Bangladesh. Owing to these political events, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, abolished the self-autonomy of the local principalities between 1972 and 1978 and introduced a new administrative arrangement, which

Figure 21. Administrative and territorial units of Jammu and Kashmir after 1947 (Source: oneindia)

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[8] The state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into several administrative and territorial units: Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir (Pakistan-administered Kashmir), Indian-administered Kashmir (which includes Jammu and Kashmir), Ladakh, and Aksai Chin.

brought the area under the direct control of the federal government of Pakistan (Kreutzmann, 2015). The government replaced the traditional rulers (*Mir*, *Raja*, *Tham*) with non-local bureaucrats. The areas of the Gilgit Agency were amalgamated to form the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) of Pakistan, commonly known as the Northern Areas. This region was later renamed as Gilgit-Baltistan in 2009 (Dad, 2016).

The name Gilgit-Baltistan was introduced in 2009 to differentiate the spatial entity of Gilgit-Baltistan from the northern tribal areas of Pakistan. The renaming and rearrangement were part of the Pakistani state's integrative policy toward the territorial integration of its northern frontier regions amidst its ever-existing hostility with India over the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. The renaming was not followed by the political and constitutional rights, instead, the political power continued to stay with the federal government (Kreutzmann, 2015). The unfulfilled political desire of Gilgit-Baltistan to be a formal province of Pakistan has had met with various alternative political arrangements since 1947. The most recent political restructuring was the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order in 2009, which gave the region a province-like governance structure with a Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) and GB Council. Nevertheless, power still resides with the military, the federal government, and the non-local bureaucracy (Dad, 2016).

4.4 The Karakorum Highway in the National Imagery of Pakistan

During the post-1970s period, the state of Pakistan adopted certain measures to solidify its territorial claim over Gilgit-Baltistan. In addition to the restructuring and renaming I have mentioned above, the state of Pakistan with their newfound ally, China, agreed upon transborder trade including the construction of the KKH, passing through Gilgit-Baltistan and linking China with Pakistan (Haines, 2012). The construction of the road has politico-economic and symbolic significance in the national imagery of Pakistan. The road was a central instrument in Pakistani statecraft to project temporal and spatial unity and national-territorial integrity.

Modern statecraft relies on simplification, standardization and the homogenization of the space and people. Scott (1988) argues that state-led infrastructure development projects are also part of state-making, which seeks to administratively create order over nature and society by homogenizing people and space. Processes of homogeneity and simplification of place and people

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are very significant political strategies of nation and state making that create a sense of unified nationhood, and these processes are very relevant within the context of postcolonial South Asia.

In the post-partition period, Pakistan struggled in search of an identity as a state and a nation distinct from India (Alavi, 1972). The nationhood of Pakistan centered around creating a "homeland" for an imagined uniform Muslim community (Alavi, 1989). Creating Pakistani nationhood and national unification has been challenging because the peoples of Pakistan are not homogenous. Rather, the provincial, ethnolinguistic, sectarian identities, and the sub-regional politico-economic interests along the lines of socioeconomic classes, all have fostered fragmented identities.

Infrastructure development projects such as roads grounded within nationalism and nation-state–building have been used as state apparatuses in both postcolonial India and Pakistan. Since their separation into independent countries in 1947, India and Pakistan have been rigorously involved in nation-building using a nationalist discourse (Bhan, 2014; Bhan & Trisal, 2017). Infrastructure development, therefore, is part of the production of state-space and hegemonic nationalism as homogenized, integrated, and internally undifferentiated (Akhter 2015).

Haines (2012) argues that highways and roads have strategic importance in nation-state formation and hold a geopolitical significance: "Infrastructure feeds both the developmental as well national aspirations of post-colonial nation-state" (Haines 2007: 54). In the national imagery of Pakistan, the road—that is, the KKH—is represented as a reimagination of the ancient Silk Route, as part of the processes of state formation, identity formation, and the legitimization of the newly founded state, a process grounded in the othering of India. The KKH also established strategic transnational linkages with China, Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, and the Gulf countries.

The construction of the KKH was also part of the imagining and creation of Gilgit-Baltistan as a "geo-body" (Haines, 2012): the phenomenon of grounding the national identity in a space and a territory. The state of Pakistan founded and grounded its nationhood in religion, Islam and Muslimness, to create a unifying nationalism and belongingness among the otherwise diverse ethnolinguistic, sectarian, and sub-national groups inhabiting the geographic space that became Pakistan in 1947 (Alavi 1972). The reality of the different forms of Islam and expressions of Muslimness, however, has undone the monolithic image of religion constituted and advanced by the state ideology and nation-state building mechanism. Some of the nation-state building mechanism involved the institutionalization and standardization of Islam, a particular form of

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Sunni Islam, through laws that are discriminatory toward different traditions of Muslims and non-Muslim minorities, thus, producing hierarchies of belonging among citizens.

4.5   Socioeconomic Disparities Among Women

The preceding section has provided a brief account of shifts in the political arrangements of Gilgit-Baltistan in the colonial and postcolonial time. I view the construction of the KKH and the NGO-led programs as essential agents of socioeconomic and political changes which led to a major shift in the lives of women of Gilgit-Baltistan in the most recent history of the region. In the previous chapter, I have provided the accounts of women entrepreneurs to diversify the conversation around the impact of state-led and NGO-led development initiatives on women's lives. The accounts of women have illustrated that women have become development and entrepreneurial subjects which manifests in many ways; their knowledge and skills have improved, they pursue various institutional and financial resources, and they organize and raise their voice to amplify their concerns about structural issues. The ethnographic accounts of women also showed that there are discrepancies among women that originate from their socioeconomic, rural/urban, and sectarian affiliations.

To analyze the experiences of women in the context of KKH and state-making, I will provide more ethnographic accounts of women. I interviewed Laraib who was running her own consultancy firm that gives entrepreneurial trainings to women. She was an Ismaili woman in Central Hunza, a mother of four daughters, an educated woman who had previously worked in the AKRSP and other NGOs on women's empowerment programs. After several years of experience in the development sector, she decided to use her expertise as an entrepreneurial venture and started her own consultancy firm to give trainings and produce training materials and manuals. Laraib explained during our interview:

> I have started my own organization, Women's Excellence and Empowerment Initiative, in 2014, and my focus is to give entrepreneurial trainings to women. I arrange trainings for both men and women, but in many conservative areas like Nagar, Astore, and Gilgit, I have to conduct separate trainings for women. So far, I have given trainings to 2000 women. Many NGOs like AKRSP hire my consultancy firm's services to conduct trainings in different areas. AKRSP is currently focusing on the very remote regions in Gilgit-Baltistan that have been marginalized in the past. So, they hire my firm to give trainings in some areas. I refuse to go to very far places though, because mobility is an issue in the

mountainous region. I conduct trainings and I draft reports on it for them [AKRSP]. In addition to trainings, I also provide mentorship services for women entrepreneurs.

Many women in Hunza are actively pursuing different entrepreneurial ventures and the number has increased in the last five years. There are around 600 women-led small businesses in Hunza according to my records. Now, women are entering into markets, getting finances from banks, and the CPEC is creating more business opportunities, so I fear that these formal economic mechanisms will increase women's exploitation if we do not proactively think and do something about it on an organizational level that could amplify and address women's collective voices and inform the relevant government institutions to form policies and laws to ensure women's rights. So, through the platform of my own organization, I am working toward forming women's business alliances to organize and educate them and to work as collectives.

My goal is to create space for women in larger decision-making bodies through my organization, because individual endeavors do not make a larger impact, but a collective organizational effort does. Like there is no woman member in the Gilgit Chamber of Commerce, so I am working to make a Women's Chamber of Commerce in Hunza. The Chamber of Commerce plays a vital role in promoting entrepreneurship and creating national and international collaborations. The issue is the existing organizations are male-dominant. The Gilgit Chamber of Commerce added me and another woman from the AKRSP as members, but they did not invite us for any meetings. I strongly believe that there is need for a collective organizational advocacy for women.

There are several challenges for women that men overlook. For example, there are no proper public transport facilities for women, so mobility is one of the biggest issues. Women want a safe and an enabling environment and they need access to financial and institutional resources.

Laraib's job experience, skills, knowledge, previous networking, access to financial and institutional resources, privilege her in many ways. Her example also shows that the interventions of AKRSP and NGOs have played a significant role in providing employment opportunities and space to nurture their leadership skills. Laraib is working to establish a women's collective in the form of business alliances of women to organize women entrepreneurs and to demand social, policy-level, and infrastructural changes that are fundamental to empower women and to extend opportunities to maximum number of women. She expressed her concern that the intense and haphazard commercialization and urbanization emerging as a result of the road and the CPEC will marginalize and exploit women if they do not make collective efforts.

While Laraib's initiatives are admirable, many other women expressed that they could not expand their business despite working hard to do so. I visited a women's enterprise in Lower

Hunza which was a handicraft making and display center. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, Lower Hunza is marginalized in terms of access to markets and commercial areas. The handicraft center was located by the KKH. The center was headed by Jabeen, a local Ismaili woman in her middle age and she told me during our interview that she has four kids and her husband runs a shop. She told me that she had studied up to 10th grade before she got married, so she can handle the finance and record keeping of the center. When I visited the center, Jabeen and three other young women were working. Jabeen explained:

> This handicrafts center was established about ten years ago by an NGO in Hunza. This center was one of the several other handicrafts centers the NGO established in different villages in Hunza. The NGO gave us trainings in the beginning and gave us some funds to buy materials like fabric and colorful threads to make wallets, purses, bracelets, belts, mobile cases, with traditional cross-stitch embroidery. They gave us embroidery designs and patterns. I have been giving trainings to young women. But we do not receive any funds or trainings anymore. It has been ten years now. They [NGO] should give us more advanced trainings. Moreover, not many people come to buy our products from us. Even though the center is by the road, there is no commercial area around the market and there are no tourist points nearby. It is necessary that other businesses establish around the center so that tourists come to visit this area. Many educated women now use internet [referring to the Facebook] to sell their products, but I am not very educated to be able to use it. These young women are all trainees and are from very poor families. They could not pursue education because of the financial constraints, so they come here to learn some skills. But there are not many opportunities in the center.

Jabeen's example illustrates socioeconomic and regional disparities in the region. It also demonstrates NGOs' inability to create sustainable models of development that consider the various aspects of a society and take initiatives that have lasting impacts. Jabeen's narratives also points out how the accessibility of women to resources and information is affected by their access to education and modern technology.

To extend the conversation, I will provide another example of inter- and intra-community disparities: I went to attend an LSO-NGO meeting in a remote village in Nagar. As I have mentioned before, Nagar is a Shia majority district. Most of the villages that I visited were farther from the KKH. There were just a few tailoring shops here and there and like most women in Gilgit-Baltistan, women in Nagar contribute in farming, fruit-processing, and other farming and household related activities. The region is, however, socially and religiously conservative so there were not many women running businesses in public. The meeting was specially arranged for Shoaib Sultan, the first General Manager (GM) of AKRSP in 1980s, who established WOs/VOs

in Nagar, Hunza, and other districts in Gilgit-Baltistan during his tenure as a GM in 1980s. He was on a visit to different parts of Gilgit-Baltistan. This meeting was in a village in Nagar where women from different villages of Nagar were also present as the participants of the meeting. The male moderator of the meeting who was the chairperson of the LSO gave a presentation on the on-going activities of the LSO. He explained:

> We have established WOs for women and there are two shawl centers in Nagar that have given trainings to 60 women. We give other entrepreneurship trainings to women. We are working to establish collaboration with the AKRSP and other NGOs to initiate more projects for youth and women.

When the moderator ended his presentation, Shoaib Sultan pointed out that women have not spoken yet. He addressed women and asked them to speak about their views and experiences. I noticed that women hesitated, and no one spoke, but Shoaib Sultan insisted that women should speak. After a few minutes of silence, a woman spoke. She said:

> We have a very small WO in our village and there are only 11 women members. We have 70 thousand rupees as our savings. We do not have many entrepreneurial or educational opportunities in our village. We have educated women in our village and we need trainings so that young women pursue entrepreneurial activities.

Seeing her, another woman gathered confidence and spoke up:
> We too have a very small WO in our village. There are only 26 women members and we have only 11 thousand rupees in our WO. There are no schools for women in the village and no other income generating opportunities. One of our main issues is that there is no proper sewerage system in the village and the sewerage water runs to our fields that has destroyed the land.

Another woman stood up and expressed her concerns:
> I have done B.A. and I am a school teacher in my village. We have a school in my village. We have 20 women members in our WO, and we have around 80 thousand savings. We need IT and English language trainings for the young educated women in our village. Young educated women want to pursue different educational and entrepreneurial activities, but we do not have resources and opportunities in our villages.

This example illustrates socioeconomic, regional, and sectarian based differences among women which shows that the road and the development processes have impacted different regions and people differently. Women's mobility and access to education and other resources is determined by the larger patriarchal, religious ideology, and power structures. NGOs cannot initiate the process of social change on their own until they understand the sociopolitical context and establish a collaborative effort to negotiate with the power structures in the society.

Similarly, in the Shia and Sunni majority settlements in Gilgit, there were very few women running their business in markets. I visited two women-only markets in Gilgit town; one in a Sunni area and the other in a Shia majority settlement. The markets were walled and enclosed with an entrance and only women could go inside. When I visited the markets, most of the shops were closed. There was only one beauty salon open in the market in the Sunni area. There was a young woman who told me that she works at the salon and the owner of the salon was not there that day. The young woman told me that other shops in the market mostly remain closed. She explained:

> Many women tried to run their shops here in this market, but they could not succeed. Mostly because not many customers come here. Women prefer to go to other markets because there is more variety of clothes and other things in other markets in the town. Those women who want to go to women-only markets, prefer to go to the other one [she was referring to the three-story women-only market I have mentioned in the previous chapter], because there are more shops selling better stuff there, and businesses are more successful there.

The situation was similar in the other women-only market located in a Shia settlement in Gilgit tow. There were only two shops opened when I visited. One was a tailoring shop and the second one had kitchen utensils and bathroom accessories. The woman who had a tailoring shop told me that she has been running that shop for three years now. She was a married woman with three kids. She continued:

> I started to work here because I needed to assist my husband financially. We do not have a WO here, so my husband helped me financially to set up the shop. I come here almost every day because I get clothes to stitch. Other women come and go because they have responsibilities at home as they have to cook, clean, and take care of their kids and family. They live nearby, so they come when there are customers. When customers come and other shopkeepers are not here, we call and inform them. Our area is very conservative so not many women pursue business like this. We have not received any business training. I am not even aware of NGOs or projects that provide trainings or funds to women entrepreneurs.

The other woman in the market was also there during the interviewe and she chimed in to tell me about her experiences which were similar. These ethnographic accounts showed that women are situated in and respond to various economic, political, and cultural processes in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Many of my most interesting encounters with women on the road occurred when I was driving, and upon noticing a woman driver, women walking by the road would wave to ask me for a ride. Many villages that are far from main markets and urban centers and are not served by public

transportation. I gave ride to several women to and from work, markets, or the university. They spoke about themselves and many of the them told me that they work as wage-labors. Through these encounters, I came to learn about a few newly established factories or workshops that employ women as laborers. I dropped off a woman in one such factory in Danyore, a town in Gilgit, where she works packaging frozen meat for grocery stores. She told me that she had been working in the company for six months now.

Another time I visited a bottled water plant that employed 10 women for filling and packaging, as well as male workers for handling large bottles, loading, unloading, and delivering the product to markets. During an interview with the male owner of the facility, he told me that he is glad to provide employment to poor women. After the interview, the owner showed me around the plant and I also met women workers.

These ethnographic accounts and observations show that entrepreneurship is a very generalized term used by NGOs to refer to different income generating activities that women pursue. Not all women development subjects become entrepreneurs. The generalized usage of the term entrepreneurship homogenizes women's different ways of engagement with development and the economy. Therefore, the conversation needs to be diversified to include and address various issues that women have pointed out. The experiential challenges of women originate from structural barriers that need to be addressed through a communal and institutional approach.

4.6   Sectarianized Politics in Gilgit-Baltistan

The differences among women along the sectarian lines is not just incidental but it is an illustration of how different sectarian responded to the processes of sociopolitical transformations followed by the construction of the KKH. The construction of the KKH as a significant part of nation-state–making has affected the internal sociopolitical atmosphere of Gilgit-Baltistan, in large part heightening internal conflicts and the marginalization of different groups. The "connectivity" created by the road facilitated a huge influx of people from other parts of Pakistan, mainly Sunni, which led to an increase in sectarianism (Dad, 2016). This sectarianism is not entirely theological but rather is connected with national politics and nation-state–building more broadly (Aase, 1999). As I have mentioned earlier, Gilgit-Baltistan is a Shia majority region, so as part of the territorial integration, the state encouraged Sunni people to settle in Gilgit-Baltistan. This raised suspicions and concerns of identity and land ownership rights among Shia. Therefore, the conservative

ideology and refusal to commercialization and development projects was a strategic response of Shia to prevent external incursions. There are still not many commercial areas in Nagar except for a very few places that are located by the KKH. It also restricted women as it was illustrated in ethnographic accounts in the preceding section.

The politics of sectarianism is intricately links with the regulatory processes of state-making (N. Ali, 2010). The grounding of Pakistani nationhood in Islam—implicitly defined as Sunni Islam—has suppressed other Muslim identities in the country. Nosheen Ali (2008) argues that it is this fear of different kinds of Muslims that has driven Pakistan to establish authoritarian control in Gilgit-Baltistan, a Shia-dominated political unit in Sunni-dominated Pakistan. The political project of state-making has used different mechanisms including the KKH, the abolition of independent princely states, and other structural changes as tools of surveillance and modes of regulation of state subjects. The state ideology based on the dominant Sunni ideology of Islam delegitimizes other sects within Islam and as well as the minoritarian religious groups such as Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus. The monolithic conception of Islam by the state renders these other sects and religions as minorities.

These various state-making mechanisms have affected women's lives. The conservative religious ideology restricts many Sunni and Shia women to participate in socioeconomic and political spaces. The differences in religious ideology have fostered diverse competing opinions and viewpoints about how to be a "good" and "pious" Muslim woman. There are conceptions of modesty in every culture and that too vary along the sectarian lines. Ismaili women being the most prominent and visible in market spaces receive criticism for not following the conventions of modesty defined by "true" Islam.

Ismaili women in an informal discussion raised similar concerns with me after a community gathering in a village near Gilgit town. The village had a mixed population of both Ismaili and Shia. On that day that I visited the village, there was a WO meeting. The meeting was headed by the secretary of the LSO, who was a young Ismaili woman. The meeting was in a vocational center in the village and the participants included both Shia and Ismaili women. Rabia, the secretary, welcomed the women participants and explained the timeline of an upcoming project for women. She divided women into groups and designated some participants as the leaders of their respective groups. She then answered some questions asked by women at the end of her speech. One of the participants commented, "Our group will meet in *Imam Bargah* (religious place of Shia). It is close

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to where we live, and we can observe our values of *satar* (modest dressing/honor) there." I did not realize until later that Rabia and her friends were appalled at that comment. When the training ended and everyone left, Rabia and some female LSO members stayed behind. Rabia commented, "They [Shia women] always bring up *satar* issues as if we [Ismaili] don't care about our modest dressing. We also care about our honor and modesty."

Rabia and many other Ismaili women have expressed their frustrations over how their way of dressing and presence in public spaces is seen as immodest by other communities. These are different forms of sectarian imaginaries displayed in the everyday life in Gilgit-Baltistan.

4.7   Women and the State of Pakistan

Women's role and position in Pakistan has been shaped by historical and contemporary political and power dynamics. Pakistani feminists have been trying to establish a discourse which is not only confined to the exegetical explanations for the role of women, but also takes into account an examination of women's diverse lived experiences under different socio-cultural, politico-economic, and geographic circumstances (Jafar, 2005). Women's experiences are widely different across Pakistan. Educated and elite Muslim women have played an important role during Pakistan movement and after the partition in organizing women's movements during the post-independence period (Weiss, 1993). Fatima Jinnah, the sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (the founder of Pakistan), and Begam Rana Liaqat Ali Khan, the First Lady of Pakistan from 1947–1951, are two of the leading figures during the Pakistan Movement, the independence movement of Pakistan. In the past few decades the feminist movement has expanded and now several middle-class women across the country participate. In Gilgit-Baltistan, Ismaili women are leading the feminist movement and women's empowerment projects and programs.

Like Jafar (2005), I argue that the political and ideological project of the state is relevant when examining the contemporary lived experiences of women, including, in this case, the effects of nation-state-building through the KKH on the women of Gilgit-Baltistan. Previous scholars have paid little attention to how women's lives have changed because of the supposed "connection" and "openness" brought by this road.

The political events that unfolded during the post-1970s period espoused social and political changes in the country that has had implications for women country-wide. One of these political transitions is the military's growing influence in political matters. During the 1980s, the military

dictator General Zia-ul-Haq seized power and toppled the democratically elected government of the Prime Minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Zia imposed martial law in 1977. He promised to hold democratic elections that never materialized, which means that he remained the President of Pakistan for 11 years (H. Abbas, 2004). Being a conservative, clerical-minded person, Zia took strict legal measures to "return" Pakistan to "true" Islamic tradition in the name of his "Islamization" project (H. Abbas, 2004; Jafar, 2005). In order to fulfill this project, Zia gave political power and legitimacy to the religiously conservative political parties who had been kept under control until then (H. Abbas, 2004; Jafar, 2005). This "reversion" not only threatened the position of women in Pakistani society, but also the diversity of interpretations and multivocality within Islam, and the cultural specificities that shape religious practices. The heightened religious fundamentalism since then, on one side, and the modern vision of women's empowerment promoted through NGO-led programs, on the other, has produced contesting views about women's roles, positions, and social expectations in the society (Jafar, 2005).

The military regime, its role in training *jihadi* in the Cold War, and the global political mobilization of Islam since the 1980s gave way to the growing political influence of fundamentalists in Pakistan (H. Abbas, 2004). Like Jafar (2005) and Abbas (2004), many participants of my research also pointed out that these conservative notions about women's mobility have been introduced and entrenched in the society since Zia's military regime. A male local scholar commented during an interview, "The veil [the black Saudi Arab style veil] is not our culture. Our modest dressing is *shalwar* [loose trouser], *kameez* [kurta] and *dupatta* [long scarf]. The veil was imposed in our society during Zia's rule and it became part of our culture recently, since the increasing political and economic influence of Saudi Arabia." What my interlocutor was referring to is the competing ideologies that were introduced by the state as part of its nation-building process. Kandiyoti (1991) has analyzed the link between the Islamization projects of Muslim countries like Pakistan and the funds and development-aid given by oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia. According to her, the aid from wealthier Muslim countries strengthened religious education and the pro-religious parties advocating stricter control women. Many scholars have analyzed the paradox in the political projects of development: they argue that the government on one hand, supported the US-funded attempts at empowering women also funds Islamic organizations condemning them on the other (H. Abbas, 2004; Jalal, 1991; Kandiyoti, 1991). Thus as a result of the combined effect of diverse political, economic, and symbolic interests

embedded in nation-state building processes, the relationship between women and the state in Pakistan has been paradoxical (Jalal, 1991).

Afshan Jafar (2005) analyzes how the state of Pakistan, particularly since the 1980s, has constructed women as political tools in the search for cultural authenticity and nationhood in the post-independence period. The political project of "Islamization" began with introducing laws that pushed women to their "tradition" to return to practice "true Islam. My ethnographic work, similarly, examines how the development discourse embedded in nation-state–making represents women as tools and symbols of socioeconomic transformation, progress, and modernity, as subjects of national identity formation and the political project of nation-state–making.

In the recent history of Gilgit-Baltistan, women have become beneficiaries of development projects led by both national and international development organizations. Women's lives are interlinked with nation-state–making and development discourse in the politically disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan. My ethnographic study of women entrepreneurs expands the conversation around the life of women in high-mountain societies by positioning them in the past and contemporary socioeconomic and political context of the region and the state of Pakistan. My ethnographic accounts view the women of Gilgit-Baltistan as historical and political subjects in the post-independence and post-colonial contexts of Pakistan, a state in search of an identity and legitimacy fraught with the hostility with India and the internal crisis of competing sub-national identities and politics.

The ethnographic study of women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan advances the conversation around women's lives. The on-the-ground realities of women's everyday lives are overshadowed by hegemonic debates about national identity and cultural authenticity pushing women in a direction determined by the state and state-making development.

I have analyzed infrastructure development such as roads—specifically the Karakorum Highway—as a political project to analyze how it has affected local identities, especially those of women, in Gilgit-Baltistan. The subsequent parts of the chapter explore the paradoxes in the discourse and political projects of development and empowerment. The road continues to reposition women in relation to changing socioeconomic and political transformations and with the transnational linkages made possible by the road, development, and the global economy.

4.8   Women, Roads, and Development

On November 1, 2018, during my fieldwork in Gilgit-Baltistan, I had planned to visit another women-owned business in Gilgit. November 1 is a local holiday in Gilgit-Baltistan because it is the region's Independence Day that marks the liberation of Gilgit-Baltistan from the Dogra Raj in 1947. Although Pakistan became a separate state on August 14, 1947, following the partition of British India, in the regional political history and the local narratives of the independence of Gilgit-Baltistan, November 1 is significantly important. There was an official ceremony in Gilgit to commemorate the day at the *Yadgar-e-Shuhada*, the monument of the martyrs of the Independence Movement, an annual exclusive event attended only by the Governor, Chief Minister, other bureaucratic, government, and high military officials of Gilgit-Baltistan, and invited guests.

When I woke up and looked out my window, the high mountains surrounding the valley were hidden under thick clouds. It was a very cold day with a significant chance of rain. I got ready, ate my breakfast, and left for my fieldwork. I greeted women working in their fields as I passed by them on my way to my neighbor's beautiful orchard where I had parked my car. One of the neighboring women, as usual, was busy picking heads of cauliflower and putting them in large white bags for her husband to sell to vegetable dealers for restaurants. She was a young woman, a mother of three children. During our previous conversation, she had told me that for the past few years they have been planting cauliflower and bell peppers because of the increasing demand in restaurants. As I passed by her, I said: "*Ya Ali Madad!"* (a usual local way of greeting), and she smiled and replied, "*Maula Ali Madad!*" (a usual local way to reply) and kept working. While she picked cauliflower and swiftly filled the bags, her husband waited near his Suzuki passenger van by the road. Nearby, another woman was shepherding her cows and goats to the fields for their usual outside time. Other women were busy covering the recently harvested stacks of corn as the rain had just started. The kids, happy to have a holiday, were chasing each other in the street. One of the women yelled from the barn roof at the children playing in the street: "Don't go near the road!"

By the road, she was referring to the highway passing through the middle of the village, which is a big concern for women. Many women who have to walk around the road to run their errands complained that it has limited their mobility and freedom because of the huge influx of non-local tourists and traffic. It has also increased the risk of accidents for children and the elderly.

I greeted the woman who was on the barn roof and I continued walking. Meanwhile, I came across a woman from my neighborhood who was returning from the nearby shops. She complained as we stopped to chat:

> they [China] have widened the road for huge loaded trucks. When they [China] were renovating the road, it was a mess here. The whole area was covered with thick dust last year. Now, the road is renovated, traffic passes by so fast and it is scary. I am scared for the kids. There is more traffic now. Tourists are still coming [it was November and tourists usually visit in summer], and there is even more traffic during the tourist season. It feels awkward to walk and work around the road now. But we have to go up and down the road to go to our fields or take our herd to the orchard.

Continuing her comments, she pointed to the woman who was busy stacking and covering corn on the roof of her barn. "Last year, [that women's] six-year-old son was hit by a car. He died! Right there!" She pointed to the road I was about to cross.

I was horrified. I also noticed that no signs were posted about the speed limit that warn drivers to slow down as they pass through the village or near the school.

Because of the holiday I had just one meeting on my schedule that day. I had received a message from my interviewee the previous night confirming her availability for the day. My interviewee was an Ismaili woman entrepreneur from Canada visiting Gilgit for a business trip. She wanted to establish business relationships and contracts with local female artisans and women-led businesses working in jewelry making. By then it was raining harder, and I drove to her hotel as planned. When I got there, she greeted me cheerfully. She ordered *chai* and biscuits and we began to talk about her visit while having *chai* in the cold weather.

> Zareena: "I had my flight to Islamabad today, but it was canceled because of the rain. Now, I have no idea when my next flight will be."
>
> Her assistant (a local person): "You should not travel by road because traveling on the KKH during rain is unsafe and dangerous and the landslides block the highway sometimes for days."
>
> Me: [nodding] "Yes! Don't travel by road. So, what were your plans?"
>
> Zareena: "I deal with gems and jewelry and I have a jewelry brand in Canada. I work with female artisans in Pakistan. I was contacted by this NGO in Gilgit, which is working to promote women's entrepreneurship here. Together we have identified several women-led enterprises working in gems and jewelry making. In this pilot project, I have given the women money, jewelry designs, and jewelry orders, so

that they make jewelry based on the designs I have provided. I want to see the quality of their products, and also to find out their needs in terms of training or capacity building, but based on the quality of their work I have seen, I think these women need advanced training in jewelry design and jewelry making to compete on the international market. They are still working on my jewelry order. Can we go there now?"

She was referring to a nearby business, one of the women-led enterprises she was working with.

Me: "They may be closed. It is a local holiday."

Zareena: "I had called them in the morning and asked them to go to work today. They are actually working on the jewelry order, so they are open. They have delayed it already. I told them that I was going to leave and I want to bring the jewelry to Canada."

I was familiar with the business as I had been there a few weeks ago to interview the women running it. This business was a women-led and women-only enterprise started by three young Ismaili women, Shaista, Kiran, and Iffat, in 2015. I had met Shaista and Kiran when I visited them for an interview. They had set up their offices and production facility on the first floor of a two-story building that they shared with an NGO. During an interview, the women narrated their journey that led them to venture into the gem and jewelry business. All three women are educated and were employees of an NGO that provided entrepreneurial training to women in gem-cutting and jewelry design. Shaista has an MBA and Kiran a masters in Economics. They had worked in the NGO for a long time. In our earlier interview Shaista had explained:

> We had experience and knowledge of the business from working in the same field for several years. So, we decided to start our own business. The NGO supported us with the initial investment, but now we are a self-sustainable social enterprise.

They showed me their production facility afterwards. There were five young women working in their production facility, cutting and polishing stones. Shaista told me that "all five of the young women are from remote areas in Hunza and we have hired them to train them. We also pay them a monthly stipend. Once they complete their training, we will increase their salary." Shaista and Kiran seemed like very confident, experienced, and efficient entrepreneurs who had ventured into a non-traditional business for women, as gems and jewelry is typically a male profession in the region. They also wanted to provide employment opportunities to more women as their business grew.

Today, I was going back to their business with Zareena. I agreed to drive her there. When we arrived, we found the three women and their trainees working. The power was out because of the rain and wind. They were gathered around a chargeable electric lamp in a poorly lit, cold room, and they were working with tiny and delicate gemstones, beads, metals, and jewelry-making tools. There was a baby, probably only a few months old, sleeping in a cart on one side of the room—Shaista's baby. In our last interview, both Shaista and Kiran talked about how they manage their business along with their family responsibilities. They also expressed that pursuing a business requires more time and hard work than a job. But they seemed very motivated and optimistic.

While they were all busy talking about their work and jewelry, I waited, observing. I wondered about these women who owned a business and who were told to work on a local holiday, the Independence Day of Gilgit-Baltistan, by a potential international business partner. In my head, I compared these women with the image of them that I had formed from our interview a few weeks ago, when they appeared to be empowered and independent women entrepreneurs. Today, they appeared as part of the female labor produced by development and global capitalism. Indeed, most of their sales had to be precisely to this sort of buyer—someone who had access to the global markets that these local women depended on for their success.

The above ethnographic vignette shows several women who are interacting with the road and engaging in development in different ways. The housewife who was picking cauliflower for her husband to sell in the market, women working in fields by the road, women walking around the road to run their everyday errands, women who run a gems and jewelry enterprise, and the young women workers in the enterprise, all women have their own experiences and encounters. In fact, the effects of globalization—in terms of the mobility of capital, people, discourses, and organizations (Moghadam, 2007)—followed into the region by development processes have offered new constraints as well as new opportunities. Contemporary perspectives on women's engagement with development and female empowerment strategies show that women are redefining their cultural landscapes through employment, business, and education. When women are viewed through the lens of their relationship with nationalism and nation-state–building, they appear to be in a complex relationship, in contrast to a simplified, generalized, and homogenized image presented through the NGO narrative. Therefore, the broad terms like empowerment, development, and entrepreneurship, do not reflect the ways women engage with these processes.

4.9   Paradoxes of Roads, Development, and Empowerment

Roads play a significant role in the creation of the modern nation-state. The KKH was a significant political project through which postcolonial Pakistan established itself as a modern nation-state. The KKH is a tool for territorial integration, a symbol of national identity, and an enactment of development, modernity, and interconnectivity. As a political and modernist project, the highway has produced exclusionary effects, which are enacted along the road in daily life. The differentiation among women and their marginalization is rooted in the discursive effect of state-making.

I argue that the massive influx of tourists and traffic that the KKH has brought to the region has a differential impact on women and that women's interactions with this highway reveal differentiation among women. In Gilgit-Baltistan, both in my own experience and from the accounts of life experiences of my interviewees, the movement of women is highly regulated, enforced by the notions of shame and honor associated with the male gaze. But the road has added a new dimension to that. Historically, within the micro-spaces of villages, women were free to move, since the village was their home and those they were likely to encounter were kin and neighbors who knew them personally and respected them; now, since roads have connected the villages, public spaces have been transformed into somewhat more public, masculine spaces, where one might encounter strangers, triggering more concern with maintaing modesty and honor. This transformation of space deconstructs the assumption of gender-neutral infrastructure. The previous ethnographic vignette provides a glimpse of a day in the life of some of the women navigating the road and showed how the road has made the differences among women visible and readable. More specifically, the road has differentiated women's situated experiences along the lines of rural-urban, class, education, and religious sect. Women's interaction with the road and development are determined by the markers of their class, sect, education. The vignette highlights the socioeconomic, environmental, and spatial ways in which the road affects women's lived experiences.

Since the 1980s, women have become the direct beneficiaries of the development and opportunities brought by the road in the form of modern education, job opportunities, NGOs, and microfinance and entrepreneurship programs for women. While the road promised to increase mobility, connectivity, and income-generating opportunities for the people living in Gilgit-

Baltistan's harsh climatic and geographic conditions, the locals did not know that the same road would play a "divide and rule" game for the state as part of its state-making project.

When the road made it possible for the state and NGOs to enter the region and initiate social welfare programs and infrastructure development, women became the primary beneficiaries of the development process. Women transformed into primary recipients of development programs because of the programs and initiatives of the AKDN and many other NGOs, and as we have seen from my examples of many women whose accounts I have provided in this chapter, that the road did not impact all women equally. The socioeconomic differentiation and inequalities have been reinforced by the road and development, but that aspect has not much attention from the NGOs and the relevant government organizations. As it reflected through many ethnographic accounts, the road has intensified sectarian divides, making evident the diverse subject positions of women along sectarian and sub-cultural lines.

The "openness" and "connectivity" of the road have direct effects on the lived experiences of women. As a result of greater accessibility, many people with business interests from different parts of Pakistan have come and settled in the region. This influx of outsiders has raised concerns among the locals, particularly Shias and Ismailis, for economic, sectarian and identitarian reasons. In addition to politico-economic concerns, the notions of modesty and honor of women is a concern that has affected both men and women. The concern of modesty being violated by the outsiders has reinforced patriarchal sovereignties and has disempowered women by robbing them of their agency and reducing them to objects that need to be protected. The settlers, mainly Sunni Pathans, who started businesses, hotels, restaurants, and markets in Gilgit, Hunza, and many other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, became competitors for local Ismailis and Shias.

Another concern was that the small valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan where women's free mobility was common and accepted historically, became compromised because of the "outsiders" or the settlers. It has now become a question of honor and collective identity to "secure" women from "others." Women, being the bearers of the communities' collective identity and honor, began to carry the burden of "keeping the cultural identity intact."

This demographic change because of the Sunni settlers gradually also took a sectarian turn in addition to politico-economic competitive interests. Shias, including Ismailis and Noorbakhshi, make up the majority of the population of the region. But when the road allowed Sunni populations from outside Gilgit-Baltistan to settle there and own land and businesses in the region, it was

considered a threat to the identity of Shia majority. The resulting politico-economic insecurities have fostered the sentiments of hate and hostility among the sectarian groups. During my interviews, many participants talked about inter-sect marriages in their families as a practice in the past. But now due to the sectarian hostilities, it has become a very rare practice and now it is mostly frowned upon. Thus, the heightened sectarian differences have weakened and replaced the traditional ways of social solidarity and harmony.

The road has fostered and reinforced differences and unevenness among women. As the ethnographic accounts showed, Ismaili Muslim women have adapted to the socioeconomic changes brought about by the development process. Many Ismaili women, after pursuing education, have joined NGOs as social mobilizers, trainers, and many of them are now in various tiers of management in government and non-government organizations.

Large infrastructure projects such as the initial construction of the KKH and now the reconstruction and expansion of the KKH and other connective roads as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are reshaping women's engagement with changing economic structures. As described by a woman in the ethnographic vignette above, the heavy traffic flow has increased since the Chinese government has widened and reconstructed the highway as part of their Belt and Road Initiative. This has increased the traffic of huge cargo trucks passing through the valleys. The flow of tourists into the region add to the traffic on the KKH. Women living in villages around the road have many concerning issues. The commercialization of the land has led to an increase in the construction of markets near roads, which makes the space even more male-dominated, in effect reducing female-spaces. The increased number of markets near and around the roads by men means the appearance of more gendered spaces which then narrow down socioeconomic spaces for women and leads to seclusion of women.

The prospective changes in the economic structure and physical space, and increasing corporatization anticipated through the CPEC, women can become further marginalized, because the increased commercialization creates urban spaces and urban spaces tend to be male-dominant in patriarchal societies like Gilgit-Baltistan. As Laraib has pointed out in the interview above the large-scale infrastructure projects like the CPEC could result in marginalization and exploitation of women if the relevant institutions did not take institutional and policy-level measures to ensure women's meaningful participation in decision making, planning, and implementation of the development projects.

4.10 Conclusion

The impact of the nation-state building processes carried out by the state of Pakistan in the postcolonial period has impacted the communities in Gilgit-Baltistan in a gendered way, but both local and international scholars have tended to overlook the gendered impact of state-making, national development programs, and policies. Entrenched patriarchy in the region tends to construct women as apolitical and ahistorical and render them irrelevant to power politics. However, women's mobility around the road, their differential engagement in development, their visibility, hypervisibility, or invisibility in different spaces, and "genderization" of spaces provide analytic moments to capture the gendered, classed, and sectarianized nature of women's involvement in development.

My ethnographic accounts have highlighted the paradoxes of development and empowerment embedded within dominant narratives of nationalism, in relationship to infrastructure development and the KKH. My ethnographic accounts have pointed out the paradoxes embedded within dominant narratives of nationalism, infrastructure, and development that are strategically fused in Pakistan's nation-state making development and integrative policy toward Gilgit-Baltistan. My ethnographic research around the KKH examines how the road itself brings together different ideas, ideologies, and identities, places them in hierarchies, and pushes women to the periphery.

In my ethnographic study of women entrepreneurs, I have studied the gendered impacts of development programs and activities and the development of transportation infrastructure. My study also examines women in the context of regional and transnational politics since the construction of the KKH. With the construction of the highway, several transnational political elements found their way into the region, fueling the sectarian divide in the region. These heightened sectarian politics have concerning implications for women, whom development processes have transformed into disciplined development and state subjects. On the one hand, women's bodies, their mobility, and their engagement with the road and development processes deconstruct the assumption that state-making infrastructure is gender-neutral. On the other, they provide an expansive analytical kaleidoscope to gauge the impact of the highway and the subsequent development processes in the region. Women's visibility and invisibility in public spaces is intricately linked with the identity politics of the region.

CHAPTER 5.   CONCLUSION

My dissertation, *Development and Marginalization: Gender, Infrastructure, and State-making in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan*, provides an ethnographic study of women's entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan. My ethnographic research filled a gap in the discourse around gendered development and entrepreneurialism in the region. My research showed that a critical discourse around gendered development was missing, because the local development discourse has been dominated by NGOs' narratives about women which glorify women as "modern" and transformed economic actors. I argue that such narratives of NGOs are disengaged from women's lived experiences and delink women's lives from the broader geopolitical, sociocultural, and religious structures that define the social reality in the region. I have illustrated through my ethnographic evidences that the development processes have provided opportunities to women on one hand, and have disempowered them by perpetuating structural barriers, patriarchal sovereignties, and producing new forms of power relations and dispossessions, on the other.

First, my research has contributed to the discussion of anthropology at home as a way to decolonize anthropology. I have analyzed my own experiences and encounters in Gilgit-Baltistan to demonstrate that ethnographers often navigate complex socio-political environments. My experiences of negotiating gender, class, sectarian and communal role expectations is a means of uncovering salient political and ideological processes that condition the lived experiences of the studied population as well as those of the fieldworker herself. By analyzing my research agenda and goals, fieldwork techniques and problems, the local setting, and the larger context of Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistani state-making, my account of anthropology at home illuminates how multiple identities based on race, gender, class, and nationality can be heightened by ethnographic experience. By using this approach, my work contributes to the transformation of the anthropology at home as a tool for decolonizing and democratizing anthropology's practices of research and knowledge production.

Second, as an academic from the "Third World" studying in the "First World," my research has contributed to the ongoing dialogue and scholarship that broadens and enriches the analytical lens and discussion about women in the Global South. My primary goal is to expand the conversation around women in Pakistan based on their different subject positions and identities. By engaging with various theoretical frameworks, including critical development, intersectional

analysis, development as discourse, postcolonial and "Third World" feminism, and the issue of authority and representation in ethnography, I have highlighted the linkages at the heart of global gender justice.

Third, my research offers critical perspectives to gendered development and entrepreneurialism. I argue that business is indeed a liberator of Pakistani women from their constraining social, cultural, and religious milieu, while also acknowledging the challenges women continue to face in engaging in the entrepreneurial activities. The ethnographic accounts of women entrepreneurs and their contemporary lived experiences illustrate that women are not passive, apolitical, and homogenized. Women's experiences vary across socioeconomic, class, and sectarian lines, and that women are active agents in the processes that contribute to negotiate, contest, and reproduce the social hierarchies.

Fourth, my research contributes to the existing scholarship that analyze the impact of NGOs and the neoliberal development on women in rural and remote parts of the Global South. I have demonstrated women's varied aspirations to pursue entrepreneurial activities that are determined by their socioeconomic and religious subjectivities. Women entrepreneurs whose accounts I have documented displayed their development performance as entrepreneurial and neoliberal subjects, while at the same time tending to rely on their family, home, kin, and community networks to gain support and legitimacy. For them, their traditional self and entrepreneurial self are not mutually exclusive. Women's encounters with patriarchal assumptions illustrated that development processes have entrenched patriarchal sovereignty. The development process itself is deeply embedded in the national and transnational projects of rule, sovereignty, and legitimacy.

Fifth, I argue that women in Gilgit-Baltistan emerged as development actors and subjects when development discourse entered the region in the 1980s. NGO-led development in Gilgit-Baltistan was part of the larger trend of NGOs emerging as state-partners to improve the socioeconomic conditions of poor communities in the Global South and around the world, with NGOs providing small loans for microenterprises and entrepreneurial trainings in poor communities, particularly for women, and promoting a view of the market as a potential ally of the poor. I have provided accounts of several women who were engaged in entrepreneurial activities, whether with a goal of growing as professionals and forging an identity, generating

income for their family, or establishing social enterprises that create employment opportunities for other women.

Sixth, my research has contributed to deconstruct the homogenized image of Muslim women in Pakistan generally and in Gilgit-Baltistan particularly. Instead of focusing on essentialized exegetical debates about women and womanhood, I have analyzed women's experiences as mainly determined by the politics of identity among different sectarian groups and women's performance of communal identities based on religious identities to manifest their communal solidarity.

Seventh, another critical perspective that my research offers is to view development discourse and practice as a political project carried out by modern nation-states in the postcolonial era. I have analyzed that the construction of the KKH and the on-going CPEC projects are part of the nation-state building processes of Pakistan in the disputed region of Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, many sociopolitical divides and hostilities that have fostered antagonisms among sectarian groups, which perpetuate the social attitudes that disempower women, are not just the unanticipated outcomes of development but are instruments of state-making.

Eighth, my research has built on the practices of engaged anthropology that suggests establishing concrete collaboration with communities. As an anthropologist and ethnographer, I have had the opportunity to observe communities in Gilgit-Baltistan closely and see development practices unfold on the ground. I was able to observe the heterogeneities and nuances of different inequities across social categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, and religion. This requires a clear understanding of the nature of inequities, where they exist, and how they are changing. People and communities are not homogeneous, and neither are differences and inequalities. My research, informed by anthropological and feminist critiques of development, provided me with analytical tools for understanding and analyzing the nuances of equity issues at the communal level and observing the gap between policy and practice—with the goal of eventually identifying and addressing these issues.

Lastly, my research offers a critique of the practices of NGOs. My ethnographic accounts have illustrated that the current development discourse and practice perpetuate inequality. I have argued that the development processes reproduce inequality because NGOs do not take into account the social reality of people. I argue that equitable progress can be achieved only if we understand the complexities behind the inequities at the communal level that are reproduced in

everyday interactions. Misunderstanding the social realities on the ground carries the risk of further perpetuating disparities and asymmetries. To avoid this risk, the implementation of development policies and programs at the local level requires a detailed understanding of the context.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on my ethnographic research with women entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan, I offer the following recommendations to academics, NGOs, and development practitioners working in Gilgit-Baltistan:

1. There should be more in-depth research on gender, gendered development, and contextual understanding of how development unfolds at the local level in the region which can guide the future development practice and theory.

2. There is need to make connections across practice-based analysis that come both from non-academic development practitioners and academic theories of gender and development.

3. The current disengagement of development theory and practice from the local context can be theorized at two levels. First, the academic theory of gender and development should be accessible and able to speak to the practitioners of development in the development industry. Second, development programs should be aware of the sociocultural and political context and draw from the existing practices and experiences of women.

4. My ethnographic accounts illustrated visible disconnect between the middle-class, educated, and urban development planners and the experiences of the women in rural and remote regions who are the intended beneficiaries of the development programs. NGOs must learn as much from the lived experiences of women as the women have to learn from NGOs, a process that requires in-depth research to understand locally grounded realities.

5. Academic research, indeed, has the potential to explore and critically analyze the gendered process of development, by focusing on and elevating the narratives of women. Women's stories and experiences are important counter narratives that provide enriching and instrumental details on how development works on the ground and how people experience development projects in their everyday life. Focusing on women's narratives also, crucially, reframes women as agents in the process of development knowledge production who can play a central role in constructing alternatives to current development practice. To build a

more inclusive development model, there is need to understand the different forms of differences and marginalities in the first place.

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