

MULTICULTURALISM: A CASE STUDY OF BALOCHISTAN

Culture

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ABSTRACT

In terms of area Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan. Balochistan had been a cradle of world's leading civilizations. There are sufficient evidences from the pre-historic and historic period supports this argument. The area had remained a cross-road of civilization generally in South Asia and particularly in the sub-continent. As a result today Balochistan can take pride of its role of safeguarding the remnants of early cultures that had left their abiding marks and the circumstances which makes Balochistan rich in terms of archeology as well as ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. The paper will looks at the following main issues. Firstly, a brief about multiculturalism in the country with special reference to the province will be discussed. Much of the writings on Balochistan's history, culture and politics are marked by some kind of multicultural concern.

The central question replied in this paper will be that how a vast multi-ethnic province – in terms of religion, language, community, caste and tribe can retain its distinct identity in conditions of underdevelopment, mass poverty, illiteracy, extremism, and regional disparities.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnically, Balochistan is a plural society. The pluralist character of society in Balochistan draws upon the existence of different ethno-linguistic communities mainly, Baloch, Pashtun and Brahuis and partially Sindhi,

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Persian and Siraiki communities. All these have their distinct linguistic, historical, cultural identities. Within the larger ethno-regional communities the sub-regional groups have protected and projected their separate identities. The ancient inhabitant of the Central Balochistan known as Brahuis belonging ancient Dravidian stock have their separate language, culture and identity. Other groups have their own separate identity.

The ethnic composition of Balochistan reveals three main groups, with distinct languages and cultural backgrounds: the Baloch, the Brahui and the Pashtoon. It is difficult to document the origins and the movement of the population during the past centuries because the earlier period is wrapped in legends and mysteries. However, an attempt will be made to show the general trends about the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Balochistan. An effort will also be made to delineate the interaction of the three main components of the population of Balochistan. **(Jawed: 2008: 22)** The ethnic composition of this area was highlighted for the first time in the Census of 1931. This Census also shows how its ethnic composition has undergone changes during the different phases of history. During the pre-British period, movements in and out of Balochistan were mostly voluntary or activated by the usual 'push' and 'pull' factors indicated generally by the sociologists. **(Jawed: 2008: 23)**

CULTURE.

The anthropologists of the world have defined culture in different ways. Culture of a particular region consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, values, attributes, codes of honor, institutions, tools, works and arts, religion, law, ethics, rituals, fairs and festivals of a specific group of people. Culture is a collective means of achievement and of progress. As the light and heat are necessary for human life, likewise culture is the inner and outer development of the behavior of the individuals and nations.

In terms of both ethnicity and religion Pakistan is a plural society. In Pakistan the pluralist character of the society draws upon the existence of four major historical ethno-linguistic communities: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun and Baloch. A large number of Urdu-and Gujarati-speaking people migrated from India who came to Pakistan after partition and settled largely in the province of Sindh emerged as a distinct community more than a quarter of a century after the bulk of migration took place in the late 1940s and early 1950s. All communities living in the country have their own distinct geographical, historical and linguistic identities which have become an essential part of their political expression in an organisational, electoral or

agitational context. Within the larger ethno-regional communities, there are some sub regional groups have struggled to project their separate identities, such as the Siraiki-speaking community in southern Punjab and adjoining areas of Sindh, the Hindko-speaking people in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Brahui of Baluchistan, along with a sprinkling of smaller groups across the country. At the same time, religious pluralism is characterised by the presence of two major minority groups, Christians and Hindus, followed by Ahmadis, and several miniscule groups such as Parsis, Buddhists and Sikhs together accounting for 3.54 per cent of the population. 96.46 per cent of the population is Muslims. **(Waseem: 2003: 164)**

Culturally, Pakistan having diverse communities with particular cultural traditions, value systems, life styles, belief systems, languages, dialects and aspirations which determine the objectives of the policy. They aim at providing an environment beneficial to the growth and promotion of Pakistani culture as protected in the Constitution of the country.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN BALOCHISTAN.

Balochistan is a multi-cultural province that comprises of different sub-cultures. The province is a plural and multicultural society in terms of linguistic and ethnic. The pluralist character of the province besides on three main historical ethno-linguistic communities: Baloch, Pashtun and Brahui while the small ethnic groups are Hazaras in Quetta city, Sindhi and Siraiki speaking Jat or Jadjals in the plains of Kachhi, Naseerabad and Lasbela areas while Persian speaking Dehwars in Mastung and Kalat. A reasonable number of Urdu speakers, Panjabi and Hindko speakers also reside in Quetta city since long.

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Linguistically, Balochi is an Indi-Iranian language having three major dialects known as Western or Mekrani, Eastern or Sulaimani and in the Chagi, Kharan, and Panjgur district known as Rakhshani Balochi. Brahui a north Dravidian language bifurcate the Balochi language is spoken in the Central Balochistan from Quetta valley to Gizri Karachi. Pashto an Indo-

Aryan language is spoken in the northern areas of the province. Other minority languages are Hazargi a kind of Persian is spoken in the Quetta city by the Hazara community while Sindhi and Siraiki in the plain areas mostly adjoining areas to the Sindh province.

GLORIOUS PAST OF THE REGION.

The thickly populated Asia, having major proportion of population of the world, consisting variety of religions, human races and language families has played an important role in the history of the man and civilization. The rich Asian culture distinguishes Asia as a bouquet of civilizations in the world. The dominating Arab, Iranian, Mongolian, Central Asian, Chinese, Russian, Far East Asian, Arian, Turkic and Dravidian cultures are the main components of the Asian culture. Five main religions of the world i.e. Islam, Jewish, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are also in vogue in the different parts of the continent. With reference to archaeology, Asia has played a leading role in the glorious past of the world. Central Asian, Mesopotamian, Indus and Chinese civilizations have played a significance role in the history of man and civilization. While the land where Balochistan is situated had also been a cradle of world's leading Civilizations. Sufficient evidence from the pre-historic and historic period supports this argument. **(Sabir: 2005)**

The presence of human race in this region is traceable from the Paleolithic period. Many stone tools of the Paleolithic culture of the primitive human race have been discovered from *Sone* Valley of Punjab and different parts of Balochistan. There are thousands years old cave and rock shelters having paintings and engraving of the stone age man have also been found at *Suleman* range and other mountainous Balochistan region. These all facts indicate the progress and achievements of stone-age man towards civilization in Pakistan. **(Kellehear: 2001:23)**

In the course of time, these stone using agricultural communities were first time established in Balochistan at the site of Mehrgarh near Bolan by 7000 BC some 9000 years ago. This ancient settlement is familiar about cultivation and domestication of animals in South Asia; the results of excavations at the site of Mehrgarh, at the foot of the Bolan Pass, in Balochistan indicate that large settlements may have existed as early as the 7th millennium BC in these parts of the Asia. **(Rafique:1992:15)**

The Indus valley civilization is one of the ancient civilizations in South Asia, some 4500 years old. This is also known as the Harappan

civilization, named for the site of Harappa, one of its major ancient cities found in Punjab. The Mohenjo Daro an ancient city near Larkana along the west bank of famous Indus River, like other cities of the Indus civilization is a well managed and planned urban town. The script used in Indus valley remains still un-deciphered, the Indus civilization is known only from archaeological evidence. Its origins traditionally were viewed as the result of the diffusion of farming and technology from other advanced cultures in Mesopotamia and on the Iranian plateau to Balochistan and ultimately to the Indus Valley. (**Usman:1987:45**).

Most of the archaeologists are of the opinion that Indus Valley Civilization is related to Dravidians. In the South India, Malayalam, Telegue and Tamil languages are remnants of Dravidian, while Brahui: the old Dravidian language in Balochistan is belonged to this ancient language group is a living evidence of Dravidian existence in past in the region. (**Rafique:1992:14**)

After the Dravidians, Aryans came from Central Asia and occupied the Indus plains. They looted cities and occupied various towns. Aryans were militant, aggressive and physically strong. They were nomads and had their own traditions and folklore. They were part of great Aryan people some of whom went to Europe, some to Persia and some came to Sindh from where they migrated to India. Mostly they pushed Dravidian from the plains of Sindh and Punjab and continued to stay in mountains, seashore, desert and forests only. They left their influences and language in Sindh and other parts of the country.

ISLAMIC PERIOD.

Islam came in this part of the world as early as 40 AD when the Arabs captured Iran and entered in the Mekran the present day administrative zone of Balochistan province in Pakistan. Later on they established their principalities as *Daulat Mehdania Mekran* in Mekran and *Daulat Mutaghaliba Tooran* (in the present days Kalat zone of Balochistan). The second invasion of Arabs was made in 712 A.D. from the west in the command of Arab General Muhammad bin Qasim while during the 10th century A.D. from the north with the Turk Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznah

(known as Mahmud Ghaznavi). Later on, Mughals ruled over this part of Asia more than two hundred year. Islam replaced the early way of life in the region of worshipping idols and introduced new philosophy of faith in one God. (Mubarakpuri: 1987:255)

SOCIAL LIFE IN BALOCHISTAN.

In Balochistan, social life is very simple. Baloch people are much conscious about their social traditions and they feel pride in following those values and norms. Cultural norms and values, customs and traditions, in some extant reflect Islamic values as well. The traditional dresses are intended according to cover human body but men dresses are also designed and intended according to defensive point of view. The Baloch, Pashtun and Brahui people wear simple dresses according to the climatic conditions. In the plain areas of the Kachi, Naseerabad and Lasbela people wear *dohtee*, while in the mountainous areas people tie turban. Chaader wearing is a common practice among women.

The Baloch culture is the dominating and province is always known throughout the world due to rich and beautiful Baloch culture and ancient Balochi and Brahui languages. The Baloch and Brahui cultures have many commonalities; therefore, sometimes it is difficult for an outsider to differentiate between the both. Pashtun culture is also a rich and strong culture in the northern parts of the province. Besides three major cultures there are some other minority cultures as Jatuki, Dehwar and Hazara also existent in some parts of the province.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Baloch culture is rich, varied and deep-rooted. There are plenty of evidence and artifacts concerning the richness of Baloch culture throughout centuries. The cultural heritage of Baloch is very rich they had a very successful methodology in irrigation known as *Karezes* scattered throughout Balochistan as well as in cultivation and husbandry. Balochi poetry is one of the most beautiful poetry and one of the oldest in the region. In Baloch culture, poetry has always been combined with music. Balochi and Brahui music and folklore have been passed from generation to generation as a valuable art. Baloch handicraft is world-renowned. The Baloch are very hospitable, nice and friendly. They are generally intelligent, learned,

cultivated and socially accomplished. Culturally, they are rich and self-dependent. **(Baloch: 2002:09-11)**

The Pashtun culture is the second major component of Balochistani culture. They speak a language Pashto belongs from Indo Arian group. The ancient songs, religious traditions, and ancient goods are all preserved their culture contains various important elements of ancient Aryans civilization. Pashtunwali is the major code of life of the Pashtuns which confers on them certain rights and requires of them certain duties. They are bound to honor to respect it and abide by it. If someone found contempt of this code, he brings disgrace to himself and to his family members and he is also likely to be banished at ex-communicated. The main sections of this honorable code are bravery, hospitality, patriotism, love of independence, to protect neighbor, to cooperate with each other, The *Jirga* or Tribal Assembly is a very useful and ancient institution in Pashtun society. **(Panzai: 1999:78-79)**

After Russian invasion of Afghanistan a large number of Pashtun Refugees came to Balochistan they on the one hand brought many new cultural values and traditions which were not in practice among the Pashtuns living in Balochistan, some of them were easily accepted and are still in vogue in the Pashtun society.

The other important group of people is Brahui. They speak a language from Dravidian group. Being ancient inhabitants of the area the Brahui culture having its own individual identity is also a very ancient and rich culture. Besides their own identity many cultural values of these people are most common and similar to Balochi culture. Their day to day life and all cultural norms and values are same. The Brahui is the oldest language of the province. There are different opinions about origin of this language but most of the linguists consider it as a Dravidian language. The other important Dravidian languages are Tamil, Telegu, Malyalam, Kurukh and Malto etc in India. The folk literature of Brahui is also very rich. **(Sindhi: 2005:51)**

Culturally Brahuies are very similar to its closes neighbors Baloch, due to close cultural; historical; geo-political and economically relationship most of the Brahui in modern time consider themselves as Baloch. While generally following Islamic tenants, there are many variations in the life cycle rites and customs of Brahuies which differentiate them from their neighbors. **(Sabir: 2007:182)**

The Dehwars living in Mastung and Kalat are also ancient inhabitants of the region they claim themselves Tajik origin speak a language close to Persian known as Dewari. The Hazara community from Mongol origin mainly lives in Quetta city has their distinct culture and language known as Hazargi. The Lasis and jams in Lesbela district and people living close to the

Sindh boarder in Naseerabad and jaffarabad also speak Sindhi and Siraiki languages. Each of the small communities have their distinct cultures.

CONCLUSION:

In this context, in the story of man and civilization, Balochistan has an important role and unique status in the world in general and in S.Asia in particular. It has evidence of early age man, his gradual development and his struggle for existence. The antiquity of the cultural heritage of the province is oldest one. This area had remained a cross-road of civilizations between Central Asia, Mesopotamia and Indus region in Asia. Balochistan can take pride of its role of safeguarding the remnants of early cultures that had left their abiding marks and the circumstances which as per their wake have left Balochistan rich in ethnic, linguistic and cultural variety.

The study provides the nature of diversity among different ethnic groups in the provinces along with some insights into these differences. All ethnic groups showed similar cultural nature with some differences in the severity of their closeness. When we thoroughly study the social life in Balochistan we find it very simple. The people of Balochistan are very much conscious about their social traditions and feel pride of it. *Shalwar Qamis* is the popular dress among all tribes in Balochistan. In the rural areas people tie turban also. Different tribes have their own turban tying styles. A Keteran from Duki District can easily be distinguished from a Rind of Suni and Soran also a Bungulzai of Ispilinji is different from a Sunjarani of Chagi area. Wearing of chaader is a common practice among Baloch, Brahui and Pashtun women. The Baloch tribes mainly Mekrani people living at coastal line near Arabian Sea have their own customs and traditions, dances, and ceremonies. Fishing is their main occupation and source of livelihood.

People in Balochistan either they are Baloch or non Baloch even nowadays besides spending a luxurious life in the cities and towns; a reasonable number of them is still passing nomadic life in the different parts of the province which they have inherited from their ancestors.

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