

## The Role of Cultural Groups for the Development of Saraiki Nationalist Movement

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### ABSTRACT

Culture is the identity of specific nations. Every society has a culture of its own. It differs from society to society. Culture of every society is unique by itself. Thus people in different societies all over the world have different cultures. The people's social lives have been made possible because of culture. This word 'Culture' can be used in a broad sense and sometimes in a limited sense. In a limited sense it means a "national culture" That is, to refer to the culture of a nation. A nation consists of a number of groups and sub-groups. In the other words each such group has a culture of its own. Cultures of such groups are known as "sub culture". The uniqueness of the Pakistani culture lies in the diversity of such cultures. The people living in the Saraiki region (Southern Part of Punjab) in Pakistan have their own culture. Saraiki is a rich cultural area in Pakistan. The cultural groups of the area work for the separate identity in that particular area. In this paper, the researchers have discussed the culture, theories and the role of Saraiki cultural groups for the development of Saraiki nationalist movement. It has been revealed that the role of the culture in the Saraiki National Movement has been a key role one.

**KEYWORDS:** SARAIKI, CULTURE, NATIONAL MOVEMENT, DEVELOPMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Culture is a complex issue and cultural studies also have long term agenda, and in the long term understanding of our Culture makes us what we are requires all the skills we can master. The word culture comes from the Latin root 'Colere' (to inhabit to cultivate or to honor). In general it refers to human activity; different definitions of culture reflect different theories for understanding of human activity. Edward B. Taylor's definition is frequently served up as the example of the classical conception culture or civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense before the civilized persons knew the basic elements of culture e.g. knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by human beings as members of society.<sup>1</sup> but the culture is the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group and that encompasses in addition to art and culture life styles, way of living together value system tradition and beliefs. According to the Encyclopedia of Sociology,

"Culture is primary in guiding all patterns of behavior, including who interacts with whom and should therefore, be given priority in theories about the organization of society".<sup>2</sup>

One of the most important aspects of culture is that it gives order to the world in which its participants live. Colors, action, kinship and familial relationships are all a part of culture. A society is composed of people who have a distinctive culture - a way of life characterized not only by norms, customs, habits, beliefs and language but also by material artifacts. Everything that people learn is culture. Culture consists of both material and non-material components.<sup>4</sup>

A.L Kroeber and Cloyd Kluckhohn sought to build such a general definition of culture. According to them, culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups including their embodiments in artifacts the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e historically, derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values, culture systems may on the one hand, be considered as products of action on the other as condoning elements of further action.<sup>5</sup>

C.N. Shankar Rao defined that culture is very broad term that includes in itself all our walks of life, our modes of behavior our philosophies and ethics our morals and manners our customs and traditions, our religious, political economics and other types of activities. Culture includes all that man has acquired in his individual and social life.<sup>6</sup>

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These working in the political theory have mostly remained more trusting in their use of the term, offering perhaps a quick definition of culture or ethno cultural groups. Philips writes that all the compelling issues begin from that point onwards. Societies ought to do in response to ethno cultural claims that should be the case is neither surprising nor particular blame worthy. For, political theorist deal in normative questions of justice, equality and autonomy and in a period dominate of by the discourse of the human rights, it has been particularly preoccupied by what right if any can be claimed by the minority groups.<sup>7</sup> But, the political theorists think about the inequality and power. But, this means culture across the horizon, already attached to distinctions between majority and minority and already linked with territorial or legal claims.

Kymlika is barley writing a paragraph on multicultural citizenship before remarking that minorities and majorities increasing clash over such issue as language rights, regional autonomy, political representation, education curriculum, land claims, immigration and naturalization policy even national symbols, identity, such as the choice of national anthem and public holiday.<sup>8</sup> The cultural groups in Pakistan also are facing all the above issues mentioned by the kyplikca. The cultural groups of the Saraiki region are also working for their basic human rights and achievements for the separate identity province through their cultural activities. The ethno cultural groups can play the pivotal role to strengthen the movement. There are working numbers of cultural groups for the development of Saraiki nationalist movement. The groups are given as follows:

1. **Loak Sanjh**
  - a. Shagird Sanjh (Saraiki Students Federation)
  - b. Traimit Sanjh (Women Association)
  - c. Saraiki Loak Tamasha ( Saraiki street theatre)
  - d. Hindu Bachao Tarla (Front for the conservation of Indus)
  - e. Hali Sanjh (The former Association)
  - f. Sath (Public Jury)
2. **Media**
  - a. Radio Stations
  - b. T.V Stations
  - c. Saraiki Films and Dramas
  - d. Newspapers
3. **Fairs and Festivals**
  - a. Mehray wala Mela (Fair)
  - b. Fareed Aman Mela
  - c. Sanwal Sobh Mela
  - d. Jhoke Mela
  - e. Others
4. **NGO's**
  - a. Herrik development centre Action Aid Kot Addu
  - b. Minority Rights commission
  - c. Women Rights Association
  - d. Adnan Shahid Foundation
  - e. Red Cross Association
  - f. Sangtani Organization

These groups are active for the promotion of Saraiki culture and literature and are also working for the development of Saraiki Nationalist Movement through political literature, visual documentaries and cultural activities. Tariq Rehman states that Saraiki movement has been cultural in its major manifestations as we have seen. It has continued its political aims directly and through the literary work and cultural activities.<sup>9</sup>

The presence of any nationality, and having consciousness of any nationality, are two different processes. When any nationalist gets national consciousness, the nation passes through the difficult situations. The movement of the reinstatement of Bahawalpur State, is in fact, and was the first proclamation of the Saraiki National Consciousness. Historically, the Saraiki is a rich cultured land. The people speak Saraiki language in this area. The Saraikis are the fifth big nation in Pakistan. The people of this land want to read and write their traditional thoughts. They want look for their heritage. In this perspective, the people of the Saraiki region formed an organization 'Lok Sanjh' (The organization of people's co-operative society) in 1985 at Bangla korai.<sup>10</sup> This cultural organization is considered to be the second name of Saraiki Movement. It is not a political party to usurp power. But, it has nationalist ideas. Sabir Chishti says 'Lok Sanjh' played a vital role in the Saraiki region like "Shanty Nakeetam, Sindi Adbi Sangat, and Taraiki Pasan Tehreek. Politically, Lok Sanjh is the network of other local organizations.<sup>11</sup> Lok Sanjh is an anti-feudal organization and is working for the end of the exploitation, but is not the front organization of any political party. Hussain Ahmad argues that Lok Sanjh has also been allied with other

leftist organizations and who participated in the progressive writers conference, which recognized Saraiki as one of the local languages of Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> This cultural organization was emerged as a big literary and cultural movement in the Saraiki region. It provides a plat-form to local people for getting their national, cultural, political, and economical rights. There are some of the demands of the Lok Sanjh organization:

1. Saraiki should be acknowledged as a nationality.
2. Official documents should be written in Saraiki
3. Saraiki Language and literature should be introduced at primary education
4. The education facilities and the job opportunities for the people of Saraiki region.

Source: *(The Demands have borrowed from Hussain Ahmaed Khan book , Re-thinking of Punjab)*

Lok Sanjh has branches in towns and cities of Lahore and Islamabad Including D.I.Khan. It has some affiliated organizations. Shagird Sanjh (Saraiki Students Federation) was established in 1971. Mazhar Arif was its first president and with its collaboration, Lok Sanjh was established in 1986. It was established for the identity of Saraiki Students and reinvigorates the movement. But they cannot make themselves strong at college's level politically. The students of the federation pass their time in other activities.

Hussain A. argues that during the election campaign, a single student of the Saraiki student federation did not work for any candidate of the Saraiki political parties.<sup>13</sup> The main reason was that the Saraiki Students Federation has no political background and has not created political awareness among the students. Hussain Ahmad further writes that the students unions of the other political parties like that of Muslim Students Federation of Pakistan, Muslim League ( N) and Pakistan People's Party Students Federation of Pakistan enjoy forcefully more respect as compared to the Saraiki Students Union of the Saraiki Political Parties.<sup>14</sup>

The Traimit Sanjh (The Saraiki women association) is an affiliated organization of Lok Sanjh. The women of the Saraiki area are very hard working and are the major feed producers and handy crafts makers, but are denied the rights to own or inherit land and proper wages. The majority is dependent on their male relatives for accesses to land or housing and has to work as bounded labor. Women including young girls are facing a lot of problems and issues related to them are education, health, economy, unemployment, the aggression of male during action and sexual harassment. Dhareeja writes that women of the Saraiki region have their own problems like early marriages, exchange of marriages, home violence and killing of honour.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the women of the Saraiki area remain busy from house job to agrarian activities. But, they have no proprietary rights of land. Most of the community is landless and homeless. In this perspective, it was needed to set up an organization for the political, economic and social rights of the women. Traimit Sanjh is the combination of women's unity. The members of the Traimit Sanjh hold regular meetings and actively participated in meetings, workshops, demonstrations, seminars, conferences and cultural activities. All the process of decision making at the plat-form of the Traimit Sanjh is totally democratic and is through the involvement of the community. According to the report of Hirrak development Centre, the strategic objectives of the women rights are given as follows:

1. To build the capacity of the women for accessing to their resources
2. To organize women for their land rights
3. To improve the skills about the strategic planning and sharing information with community.
4. To strengthen women economically
5. To aware the women about the importance of the culture and mother language (Saraiki) etc.<sup>16</sup>

No doubt, women of our society are facing countless problems. But, now, women are very conscious, and are doing struggling hard to get their rights. In Pakistan, women are being exploited in every filed of life. The movement for the rights is leading the women towards the Saraiki nationalist movement. This is because, the Saraiki movement is the movement of the basic human rights of the Saraiki people. The Saraiki Lok Tamasha (Saraiki Street Theatre) is source to show the unique features of the Saraiki culture. The theatre has its importance all over the world. It is the ancient proclamation of collective human feelings. Theatre, dance, music, were the wonderful proclamations of human refreshment in the ancient civilizations of Greece, Egypt, Persia, Maya and India. The people of all the civilizations perform the theatre according to their culture.

Similarly, the tradition of the Saraiki theatre is very ancient and strong. The Saraiki area had been a great market for theatre throughout the centuries. The theatres Bali Jatti, Shams Katar and ustad Gaman were the main centers of the people's entertainment. The people of the Saraiki region have the religious temperament and are connected with the religious traditions. Similarly, the Hindus had their own religious traditions. They established some theatres named, Ram Lela, Bin Bas, and conquest of Lank etc.

Theatre programs were performed in the Saraiki language. According to Dilshad kalanchvi, "Ram Lela" was the first religious theatre and the first play "Shakuntla" which was written by Kali Das, was also performed in the Saraiki area.<sup>17</sup> These theatres have played an important role for the development of Saraiki cultural identity. With the collaboration of Lok Sanjh, the Saraiki street theatre performed its first play in

Multan in 1987 and has branches in the different areas of the Saraiki region. Darshan explains that theatre is an effective medium of mass education using it as a tool for mobilization of the means of behavioral change, communication, and an effective source of knowledge and social change.<sup>18</sup> The Saraiki Lok Tamasha team used to perform issue based theatre like that of home violence, early marriage, exchange marriage, livelihood, basic rights of indigenous and revival of their rights were performed and discussed.

These theatre show programmed performed the social evils which are caused by the feudal lords and also exhibit their non-ethical attitude. The theatres are the mirror holder of the culture and civilization of any nation. The people also come to know about their prosperity in the past and the causes of their recent deprivation from their resources.

Sindhu Bachao Tarla (Front for the conservation of Indus) is a new affiliated organization of Lok Sanjh. The organization is the voice of the indigenous people of the Indus River. In Pakistan Kehal, Moros, Kohlis, Bhiles and Muhanas of Cholistan are the examples of the indigenous. The Indigenous people are the holders of the unique language, knowledge system, beliefs and possess valuable knowledge of the practices for the sustainable management of the natural resources. The movement of the Sindhu Bachao Tarla was started in 2005. The reason was that the houses of the indigenous people were ruined bulldozed which made them shelter-less and displaced. All this was done for the emergency rehabilitation and modernization of the affectees of Taunsa Barrage. This movement has thousands of members from Chashma Barrage to Ghazi Ghat. The people of the riverine community are part of this movement. It is basically the movement of excluded deprived and marginalized community. Its manifesto is given as follows:

1. To struggle for the resettlement of the indigenous people displaced due to the mega project on the Indus River
2. To struggle against the Mega project on the Indus river
3. To struggle to maintain the natural echo system of the Indus
4. To struggle for saving the Indus river from sewerage and industrial pollution.
5. To struggle for starting transportation through boats in Indus river. etc.<sup>19</sup>

First achievement of the indigenous rights was made to aware them of their rights through cultural activities. The indigenous people have been empowered due to the cultural activities at the plat form of the organization. The people become aware of their requirements through seminars. Visual documentaries and other cultural activities now has become the main stream of the political movement. After the successful movement of the Sindhu Bachao Tarla, the members of the Lok Sanjh felt that there are separate problems of the farmers which they faced. So, they established the farmers' association which means the organization of the people who plough with oxen in the field. The object of the Hali sanjh is to work only for the formers and to solve their problems. Hali sanjh presented some right based documentaries through multimedia to make the people aware of their basic rights.

There are some successful stories of the Hali Sanjh (Farmers Association) which is one of them, Somera Fareed describes that, we are two sisters and three brothers. So we were facing the problem of railway crossing closed for many years and because of this problem we were unable to carry our crop to the market. We were unable to carry our sugarcane to sugar mill, rice crop to the market, wheat to the market; we were unable to go to school. About 2000 of the people were facing these problems. Therefore, all the affected people, who are the members of the Hali Sanjh, gathered to discuss and solve the mentioned problem. All the villagers from concerning villages with the consent of Hali Sanjh decided to make demonstration on this issue. The Hali Sanjh accompanying the villagers at Kot Adu, (Kot Adu is a city of Punjab in Pakistan) against the irrigation department, held dialogue with the officials Then railway gate opened<sup>20</sup> The Saraiki area consists of canals irrigated land. Mostly, the people are agrarians. But, they are living in poverty. They cannot get sufficient profit because of the environmental problems, caused by the multi-national companies to earn maximum profit and exploiting people.

Sath (The Public Jury) is also a new affiliated organization. History shows that it has been the tradition of t rulers to patronize by using the tool of religion and civilization against the real stake holders for the monopolization of their resources. They did the same against the riverine community. They are living on the banks of the river Indus, and are considered to be marginalized community. Their lands are allotted to the military and civil bureaucracy. In 2008 a documentary on the livelihood of the indigenous community was produced to aware the indigenous community about the basic human rights and the mechanism of the state institutions. Sath is the movement of the riverine community. These organizations making the people politically strong through the cultural activities and provide them confidant to achieve their rights. These organizations are the strong and important part of the Saraiki nationalist movement.

In the cultural features of these nations, the electronic and print media have performed its job in the establishment of language, politics and culture. Like other languages, the Saraiki language and literature is not free from the positive and negative effects of the electronic and print media. Among its positive aspects one aspect is that, with the help of the electronic media, films and dramas began to be telecasted. In Saraiki area, the Radio station was set up in Multan in 1970 and was set up in Bahawalpur in 1975. With the

establishment of these stations, the feelings of the deprived people ended. Television station is also setup in 2008 in the Era of General Pervaiz Musharaf. It has not succeeded to promote the Saraiki culture, language, and literature to the expectations for which it was setup.

The same is the case with the private channels. Mazhar Arif a political intellectual says that the electronic media of the Saraiki region is working on commercial base and not playing an important role for the development of Saraiki, language and culture. They are doing some screening<sup>21</sup>. The reason behind this failure is that their heads are non Saraiki speaking and their basic purpose is financial gains, and not the promotion of the Saraiki language, literature and culture. There is a possibility of conspiracy and negative propaganda against the Saraiki language, literature and culture at high level. Aslam Aziz Durani argues that the role of the electronic media has notable to play positive and solid role for the protection of Saraiki culture. But, the Saraiki electronic media did not present any one programme which clicks the audiences. The anchor persons are weak and they have no command on their subjects and are inexperienced<sup>22</sup>. According to Shamim Arif Qureshi, out of the electronic media, the Rohi Tv exceeded in the purity of Saraiki scripts and diction and telecasted out class documentaries, Dialogues under Sabir Chishti's supervision which models other Saraiki Tvs.<sup>23</sup> Before the competition of the electronic media, the contribution of the print media is remarkable. In the Saraiki region, the print media took its start in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The newspapers Nawaa-e-waqt (1965) Daily Khabrain (1997), Daily Jang (1997), Daily Ausaf (2002) Daily Express (2002), The Saraiki newspaper "Jhoke" (1990) the "Saraiki Dunyan" from Islamabad publish the literary edition weekly. But, Daily khabrain appropriates a page for the Saraiki literature and culture named "Saraiki Adab" first time the people of the Saraiki area for the promotion of the Saraiki language, literature, and culture and also appreciated the heads of the newspaper. The people of the region expressed joy because of these publications. The new thoughts and ideas came into being in the minds of the Saraiki writers and political intellectuals. Political literature written by the intellectuals against the feudal lords and in favour of the Saraiki Nationalist Movement also published. These editions play an important role in the growth of Saraiki nationalist movement.

Some Saraiki films are being directed but according to Hussain Ahmed Khan, the first Saraiki feature film was directed by Innayat Hussain Bhatti named "Dhiyan Niman Yan" in the decades of 1960. The first annual Saraiki award was given to him by the Saraiki academy Multan in 1970.<sup>24</sup> The subject of the film was exchange marriage. Recently, the Saraiki films namely, "Rohi Di Rani", Bochan, Kamli, Khotay Sikay, Mundri, Sami Rawal and others on the issues of the social evils that are found in the Saraiki region. The movies, mostly, directed against the ill behavior and oppressive customs of the land lords. The visual presentations have deep impact on the human psychology and are too much accommodating to build keen interest to the audience and the wake- fullness about their dispensable rights.

The fairs are a part of Saraiki civilization and to promote unity among the living people, the celebration of obligations on the mystic shrines is the revival memory of the mystics; the festivals have become the part of society, and culture with the substantial end of rejoicing. At present, including the demand for social changes for example, the element of literature entered in the form of poetry. Similarly, the theatre came for rejoicing and played a vital role for the development of culture. After the literary and cultural activities, the element of the politics came into being. Now, in the fairs Political issues about the Saraiki Nationalist Movement are also discussed.

The movement is the product of those fairs and cultural groups. The writers, the nationalists and the politicians are parts of the festivals. These classes introduce the objectives of the Saraiki Nationalist Movement on the platform of festivals. The writers, journalists, political intellectuals and politicians join these fairs and express their political views about the basic human rights, social, cultural and economic rights and about the exploitation and deprivation of the Saraiki region. Fairs are considered the stage of collective identity. Tariq Rehman writes that, the fairs are a symbol of distinctive cultural identity of the Saraiki region and helped to create a sense of identity.<sup>25</sup> The politicians belonging to the area are also invited in the cultural programmes to point out the different issues related to the area. Their statements provide the strong political awareness to the deprived Saraiki people. All these activities separate the Punjab politically. In the past, the politicians of the different political parties were ignored to take part in the debate about the Saraiki national question in the assemblies. But, at this time, the competitions among the political parties have increased especially in the Saraiki area. Now they are raising this issue in the assemblies to maintain their position and vote bank. So, the leader of this area are taking a part regularly in the mystic festivals and talk on the division of Punjab and right for the Saraiki people.

In the Saraiki area, different NGO's are working for the betterment of health, education and for human rights. The NGO's have absorbed a lot of educated young men. A number of leaders from the Saraiki nationalist movement are parts of these NGO's. So, they produce literature consists on political issues of the region. The NGO's are working better in the development sector as compared to the Government institutions. NGO's spend their energy for the development of culture. Logically, some NGO's want to

keep the Saraiki nationalist movement limited only to the cultural activities. But, some organizations are trying to create political literature for the growth of Saraiki nationalist movement.

### CONCLUSION

According to the discussion, culture is a unique phenomenon for any nation and refers to the ways of life including language, art and scientific thoughts, spirituality, social activity, interaction and convention. The cultural activities provide the basic tools of defensive policy. Cultural groups provide political environment to the local people and are play an important role for the empowerment of any movement. The Saraiki cultural groups providing a political environment are the basic need of the Saraiki nationalist movement. Pakistan came into being in 1947, and 67 years have been passed. But, the political, linguistic, and cultural issues still remain. The process of the constructions of identity bases on the cultural characteristics, which are considered as the much more important in history

Cultures are the sources of identity. Like other nationalist movements, Saraiki nationalist movement is also the product of exploitation deprivation and the reaction of economics injustice. The two main cultural centers of the Saraiki area Multan and Bahawalpur had been independent states for centuries. After the annexation in Punjab, the cultural heritage was looted and was largely shifted to the Punjab. From 67 years, people of this area are engaged with different movements for the achievement of political, cultural and linguistic identity. But, their rights are denied by the state and the powerful ruling clique. Like other ethno nationalist movements in Pakistan the Saraiki movement took its start linguistically and in the name of cultural revival. The culture groups create political awareness for the achievement of basic social, political, economic, linguistic and Cultural rights. Cultural activities draw people towards the issues of the Saraiki movement. The movement took its start linguistically and culturally. At this time the land questions takes its place at the place.

The Saraiki movement is the movement for the political rights. But, the clutch of the feudal is strong in the region and the movement is strong at the cultural and literary level but weak at the level of politics. All the ethno nationalist movements in Pakistan are also the products of exploitation. If the superior classes stop their exploitation, all the ethno nationalist movements will end naturally and logically. The struggle for the regional autonomy in the Saraiki speaking areas of the southern Punjab is initially an administrative demand for greater autonomy and economic rights for the region. Later it will assume the status of a political movements around the separatist identity.

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