



## The Role of Literary and Social Movements in Redefining the Identity of Saraiki Region

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### ABSTRACT

The southern part of Punjab is considered underdeveloped and exploited in all livelihood opportunities due to the dominant role of Upper Punjab in the politics of the country. This region is also called the Saraikiregion. It is because of the domineering role of Upper Punjab, the Saraiki region in Punjab is mostly ignored one and the people of this area have scarce chances to retain and maintain their political, linguistic and cultural identity. As a result of this historic injustice, several literary and social movements emerged which mobilized the people for the cause of redefining the Saraiki identity. The present article will try to address how the literary and social movements have been successful in redefining the identity of Saraiki region and the results will be traced out in the light of the above mentioned movements and areas.

**KEYWORDS:** Saraiki, Upper Punjab, Lower Punjab, Literary and Social Movements, Identity

### INTRODUCTION

Punjab is a multi-linguistic province and the southern part of it is called the Saraikiregion. The people of this area mostly speak Saraiki language as their first and mother language. The Saraiki region has no constitutional boundary drawn and not even mentioned by any Civil and Military Governments in past and present since the creation of Pakistan as an independent state. But, the Saraiki intellectuals and nationalists claimed four divisions e. g Multan, Sargodha, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan including two districts Jhang and Dera Ismael Khan as the Saraiki region (Rahman, 2003: 178). Ahsan Wahga, a prominent scholar of the Saraiki language argues that most Saraiki areas have been merged into Punjab and some small areas were annexed into other three provinces (Sind, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtun Khawa) through the administrative division (Wahga, 1990:24-25). He quotes that Saraiki speaking districts in Punjab are Multan, MuzaffarGarh, Vehari, Khanewal, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Jhang, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Leiah, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Rahimyar Khan, while in Sind province, Sukkur, Jaccobabad, Tharparkar and Shikarpur and in Balochistan, Naseerabad, Lasbela and Loralai. In Khyber Pakhtun Khawa province, Dera Ismael Khan, Bannu and Kohat are the Saraiki speaking areas. These are the districts in which Saraiki has deep roots with the four great civilized centers i.e Taxila, Mohen jodaro, Harrapa and Hakara respectively. Three main cultural centers of the area are Multan and Bahawalpur had been independent states in history, while third center was Dera Jat which remained an independent area throughout the centuries. Multan gained the status of province in the Mughal dynasty in 1526 A.D (Dasti, 1998:53-184). It enjoyed the status of independent province till the Sikh rule. In 1849, British forces captured Multan after the fierce battle of eight months and subsequently turned it into an administrative divisional head quarter of the Punjab province (Dani, 1983:164). The Bahawalpur state was founded by Ameer Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi in 1727. The Bahawalpur state from 1727 till 1955 for 228 years also remained an independent state. It was made the part of One – Unit by the central government in 1955. Later with the breakup of the One-Unit, it was made the division of Punjab in1969 (Javed, 2004:15). Before the amalgamation of One –Unit, the state had its own assembly, court of justice, legislation department, ministries, besides the regular forces it had its national guard and enjoyed security reserves (Kanju, 2004:1). With the annexation of Bahawalpur as a state in Punjab, the people of the Saraiki region start losing their linguistic, cultural and political identity. In reaction, several literary and social groups were formed by the people for redefining the identity of Saraiki region. The present paper will address literary movement first, and then social movements will also be discussed.

#### 1. Saraiki Literary Movement

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Saraiki is the ancient language of the Indus Valley Civilization. It has its own culture and literature and history. Literature manifests the identity of the specific nations and differentiates one nation from the other. Folk literature has significant importance in the Saraiki literary movement. Basically, folk literature reveals the history of human insights, regional identity and brings forth the source of expression openly. M.A. Rasoolpuri writes that the oppressed nations have always written their history in their folk literature which reflects the undue usurpation, encroachment and other crucial circumstances created by the ruling class in the past in the Saraiki region (Rasoolpuri, 2009:91). The continuous violence of the invaders in the Saraiki region can be seen in tears shed in the Saraiki folk literature especially in Wars and Proverbs. In the Saraiki folk literature feelings, expressions, thoughts of the people and identity of the region are protected. The Saraiki folk literature is rich in poetry and prose. In poetry, Marsia, Kafi, Dohra, Moran, Tahr, Gaman, Bagro, Sammi, Baghi, Bodi, Pahakey, Tappa, Charkha, Dhola, Mahia, Tora, Kalyan, Loly, Challo, Belan, Jholto, Rolo, Modi, Gebech are the significant genres of poetry of folk literature (Nasir, 2007:122-149). Folk songs form a very impressive part of Saraiki poetry and very popular in Pakistan. The Saraiki folk singers like Pathannen Khan, Attaullah Esa Khelvi, Mansoor Malangi, Abida Parveen, Surraya Multanikar and many others have introduced the folk songs in all over the world (Wahga, 1990:128). The great wealth of Saraiki folk literature is in its folk tales and folk stories. The folk tales in which "Sasi Punnu", "Hir Ranjha", "Sammi Rawal" etc and in folk stories, "Budhri Mai da Phulla", "Ganju Lela", "Tirhakil" and many others which are very famous in the Saraiki region. Folk literature is a symbol of Saraiki cultural and national identity. But, unfortunately, no comprehensive research work has been done on this great part of the Saraiki literature.

The field of Saraiki poetry is rich and has good stock in Saraiki literature. Nasrullah khan Nasir divides Saraiki poetry in four periods historically.

- (i) Religious period 1107-1689
- (ii) Mystical poetry period 1689-1857
- (iii) Khawaja Fareed's period 1857-1947
- (iv) Pakistani period 1947-1988.

From 1988 to onward calls it the modern period of Saraiki poetry (Nasir, 2007:479-784). Revolutionary patriotism, nationalism and resistance are the main themes of modern Saraiki poetry. For example, Ashiq Buzdar's collection "Usan- Kedi- Takht- Lahore- De", Safeer Leshari's collection "Usan- Khairat- Ni- Mangde", Hameed Ulfat Mulghani's collection "Sik Sojhal", Nasrullah khan Nasir's collection "Ajrak", Rifat Abbas's collection, "Jhomri- Jhum- Turey" and AshuLal Fakir's collection, "Cheru- Hath- Na- Murli", are very famous in the Saraiki region.

The titles above mentioned not only present political, cultural, but also the socio- economic, urban and rural disparities between the Saraiki and Punjabi identities which were created in the colonial and post- colonial eras as well as by the policies of civil and military governments that have strongly obliged Punjabis while the Saraiki people were pushed back (Langah, 2012:93). The Saraiki resistance poetry has central importance at this time. The regional consciousness and resistance against the violent behaviour of the landlords and deprivation created by the ruling class are the significant aspects. These themes created political consciousness among the people. Tahir Taunsvi explains the following aspects which are the basic and main themes of the modern Saraiki poets. Following are the themes:

1. Linguistic aspect that Saraiki is a separate language.
2. Economic aspect that all the resources of the region should be spent for the development of the Saraiki region.
3. The land of Dhandi state and Cholistan should be allotted to the local people.
4. The problem of Abadkar's [settlers] settlement in the Saraiki region
5. Exploitation by bureaucracies
6. Protest against violence in the vast perspective of Pakistan. (Taunsvi, 1995:23)

Love was the major theme of Saraiki poetry. But, the current Saraiki poetry is teemed with individual freedom, patriotism and political consciousness written in the form of Poem, Ghazal, Dohra and Kafi.

Prose has also played a prominent role in the Saraiki literature. The writers are giving vent of through the various literary genres e.g. Short Story, Novel, Drama, Travelogues and Light essays. In short stories, Hassan Raza Gardez's collection, "Sarak Afasaney" [Saraiki short stories], Amir fahim's (1978) collection "Jagdi- ukh- da - khawab", Ahsan Wahga's (1980) collection, "Thall- karen- darya", Musarrat Kulanchvi's (1976) collection, "Uchi-dharti- jhika-asman", Batool Rehmani's(1994) collection, "Sanjh". In the field of Novel, Zafar Lashari's (1971) collections, "Nazo and Pahaj", Muhammad Ismael Ahmadani's (1983) collections, "Cholyan and Amar Kahani", Jamshed Kulanchvi's collection, "Jhokan – the sin- abad – wal", Muhammad Aslam Ansari's (2004) collection, "Beri- ich- darya". In drama writings, Kreem Bakhsh's play , "Roshan Zameer", Kasim Jalal's "Hanjun de heery", Hafiz khan's collection, "Kuch- dian- marian" and Mama Jamal khan", while little stock is available in the field of Saraiki travelogues. Sajjad Haider Pervaiz's (1986) travelogue titled, "Venden Vagden", Hamid Ulfat Malghani's

(1998) collection, "Pandhi- Puchan- Vaten- Takan", Abdul Basit Bhutti's (1992) collection, "Kookde- Pandh- Kurlandey- Pandhi", Azam Saeedi's (1989) travelogue titled, "Rohi- lir- Katiran". Some stock is too available in the field of light essay. Aslam Metla's (1991) collection, "Wasaib- Rang", Rana Sardar Ahmad Saeed's collection, "Tul- Wasaib" and Iqbal Hassan Bhuplas's collection, "Balo", are the most famous in the Saraiki region. The above contents are record of Saraiki thought because literature as historical and literary evolution of Saraiki is presented through centuries. Their main feature is Saraiki concept. A panoramic picture of Saraiki renaissance, an evolution of Saraiki thought is depicted and revived through the above stated works.

After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, the emergence of strong Saraiki literary and social movements have set new trends within the contemporary Saraiki literature. The intellectuals have also created significant ways of resisting the political subjugation of their language and culture (Langah, 2012:101). The intellectuals take interest consciously for the development of Saraiki language and literature. Akhtar wheed Ansari, an intellectual introduced a booklet named, 'Multani Zuban-Da- Qaeda', consisted of 16 pages and this book was published in April, 1953. In this way, "Saraiki" was introduced as Multani from the teaching point of view for first time in 1955 . After this, the word Saraiki was used by the scholars continuously (Mughal,2002:66-70). In the decade of 1960, the consciousness about the Saraiki language developed among the intellectuals and scholars. They were facing a serious problem about the script and special sounds of the Saraiki language. The intellectuals met time and again in order to resolve it. In the fifth meeting which was held at the residence of Maolana Noor Ahmad Khan Fareedi in 1979, the members of this 'Saraiki Haroof Committee' Shafi Muhammad from Sind province, Dad Muhammad Khadim Birohi from Balochistan province, Seth Ubaidur Rehman (the convenier of this meeting) Mehr Abdul Haq, Umer Kamal Khan, Dilshad Kulanchvi, Mumtaz Haider Dahr, Ahsan Wahga, NazirLaghari, Amir Fahim, Sajjad Haider Pervaiz participated. In this meeting, the committee finalized five special sounds ( ) (Pervaiz, 2009:34). During this time, intellectuals appropriated the word 'Saraiki'. Before 1960, the Saraiki language was given a number of local names after the name of cities, such as Multani, Muzaffargarhi, Bahawalpuri, Uchi, Derewali, Thalochri, Lahnda etc. ( Mughal,2002:84). It was the step taken by the Saraiki intelligentsia for the construction of identity on the base of language and the efforts were made to standardize the alphabet and script of the Saraiki language. Number of books, for example, "Saraiki, Zuban-o- Adab" written by Dilshad kulanchvi, "Multani Zuban- aur- Uska- Urdu – Se- ta' aluk" a Ph.D. research work done by Mehr Abdul Haq.(Published) "Saraiki Zuban" written by Bashir Ahmad ZamiBahawalpuri and AhsanWahga'sPh.D. work titled, 'Saraiki language its Growth and Development (Published). Some dictionaries were published by the scholars named, 'Lughat-e – Saraiki' by Bashir ahmad Zami Bahawlpuri, "Saraiki Samal" by Jamshed kamtar Rasoolpuri, "Pehli –Wadi- Saraiki – Lughat" by Muhammad Sa'dullah Khan Khitran etc. Some of the publishing institutions established by the intellectuals are, "Bazm-e- Sakafat" formed by Riaz Anwar, "Saraiki Adbi Majlis Bahawalpur" was established by Brigadier Nzir Ali Shah, "Multan Saraiki Academy" formed by A. K Baloch , "Saraiki Adbi Board Multan" established by Mehr Abdul Haq and "Jhoke publishers khan pur" (Now working in Multan) established by Muneer Dhareejia. The institutions succeeded in publishing the large number of books in Saraiki. Hameed Ulfat Mulghani writes that a series started by Academy of Letters Islamabad from 1990 to 2008 for making the list of books which were published in local languages, in this short period of 18 years, the Saraiki remained on the top with the figures 2269 books, in the competition of other local languages in Pakistan (Malghani, 2013:12) .The publishing literature deals with history and culture of Saraiki language and identity of the Saraiki region. Like many other literary gatherings, Saraikiliterary associations are called 'Sangats' in Saraiki language. Some of them are the following: Saraiki Adbi Sangat Multan, Saraiki Adbi Sangat Rhimyar Khan, Pakistan Saraiki Anjuman and many others which are the symbol of the region. The Saraiki associations hold their meetings weekly and discuss issues related to the Saraiki language, culture and identity of the region. The associations also publish magazines which are weekly and monthly for instance "Sunjan", "Jeevan Jog", "Sojhal Sawail", "Sanjh" And "Sojhla" etc. The materials printed in the magazines lead the people towards Saraiki national question and identity of the Saraiki literature. The Saraiki institutions and associations are financially weak and have no patronage of the government. The books and magazines published by the institutions and associations are only source of national inspiration. Hussain Ahmad Khan explains that the Saraikiliterary activities play an effective role in developing the idea of Saraiki national identity. But, the Saraiki associations could not survive for long period due to financial problems (Khan, 2004:94). The people who have interest in the associations participate in the political gatherings and festivals in the form of caravans. The festivals also held in the Saraiki region, named "Fareed Aman Mela", Literary and cultural festival "Mehray Wala", "Sanwal Sobh Mela", "Mela Chanan Pir" and "Mela Pir Sarwar Sakhi" are very popular in the region. The festivals are the plat-form where people exchange their views openly and create political awareness about the cultural and national identity among the people in the region. The politicians belonging to this region, for example, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Makhdoom Javed Hashmi, Sardar Abdul Kayum Khan Jatoi, Jamshed Ahmad Khan Dasti and many others are also invited in the festivals. In their addresses, they lay emphases on the issue of

Saraiki national identity and the separate Saraiki province. The political movements always create impact on literature. The social, linguistic, cultural, economic and political deprivations of the region influence the people and there comes political consciousness about the rights and national identity. These true factors gave rise to a political movement for the new and fifth province as Saraiki.

### **Social Movements**

The social movements started in 1970 with the issue of restoration of Bahawalpur as Bahawalpur had been an independent state under the supervision of Nawabs for many centuries. In 1947, the ruler of Bahawalpur state who was the close friend of Quaid-E-Azams Muhammad Ali Jinnah agreed to join Pakistan without any demand. In 1955, it was made the part of West Pakistan according to the One- Unit scheme introduced by the central government. In 1969, One – unit was abolished by the Governor General Muhammad Yahya Khan. The Bahawalpur State/Province was annexed in Punjab (Rahman, 2003:182). In this result, people of the area were much disappointed because they totally lost their linguistic, cultural and political identity (Javed, 2004:16-17). Kanju expresses that after the creation of One- unit, the Saraiki area and people literally became the conquered area and we can say that they were once again colonized, all the official documents of the Bahawalpur state were shifted to Lahore (Kanju, 2004:1-2). The amalgamation of Bahawalpur state in Punjab, was the rise of ethnic politics in Punjab and the Saraiki nationalism (PildatOrg, 2011:10). When it was made an administrative unit of Punjab, the people showed resentment against this partial historical decision which soon turned into a Movement of Restoration of Bahawalpur State. Several groups formed by the deprived people for example, Bahawalpur “Mutahida Mahaz”(Bahawalpur United Front), “Anjuman-e-tahafuz-e-hakook-e-Bahawalpur”, “Tehreek-e-tahafuz-e-hakook-e-Bahawalpur” etc. Mutahidamahaz was most effective group; the members of this Mahaz were MianNazimUd Din Haider, Sardar Muhammad Khan, Chaudhary Farzand Ali and Tahera Masood (Khan, 2004:106). These groups held processions, protests and meetings against this decision of government. The people of the region filed the case in the court time and again to seek justice but all in vain. The people of Bahawalpur launched protests headed by Chaudhry Farzand Ali, Seth Ubaid Ur Rehman, and Sardar Muhammad Khan, police opened fire on the protesters, two persons were killed and many wounded (Javed, 2004:139). As a result, people communicated through their poll in the election of 1970. The PPP being left- wing party won 81 seats out of 138 in the national assembly and 113 out of 181 in the provincial assembly. In Bahawalpur it did not win many seats and most of the seats went to the candidates of Mutahida Mahaz which was in the favor of the restoration of Bahawalpur province (Rahman, 2003:182). But, after the success in general election, the elected members of Mahaz did not pursue the demand of the restoration of Bahawalpur forcefully. Their point of view was that Pakistan had lost its western wing (Bangladesh) and it was not a suitable environment because Pakistan is passing through the critical situation, so it was not possible to fulfill the demand of people for the separate province. So the next time Mahaz lost its popularity and effectiveness (Javed, 2004:140-141).

In 1972, the Movement of Restoration of Bahawalpur started losing its early vigor and strength and it created disappointment among the people. In 1973, Riaz Hashmi established a political organization named “Saraiki Subs Mahaz” in Bahawalpur (Hashmi, 1972:10). During the period of 1973-1975, there are no more worth mentioning literary, cultural and political activities. The Bahawalpur movement as a province turned into the Saraiki province movement after the failure of Bahawalpur province movement. In 1975, all Pakistan Saraiki literary conference was held by the intellectuals between 14 to 16 March, 1975. In this conference Seth Ubaid Ur Rehman explores logical outcome of failure of Bahawalpur province movement and he argued that the Saraiki movement started due to the movement of Bahawalpur, which was aimed at creating a Saraiki province.(Khan,U.1975:15-16) The conference gave political awareness and consciousness of collective identity to the people of the region and a resolution was passed in the favor of separate Saraiki province. Consequently, number of political and cultural groups floated on the surface. The political groups for example, “Pakistan Saraiki Party”, “Saraiki Qaumi Movement”, “Saraikistan Qaumi Movement”, “Saraiki National Party”, “Saraiki Qaumi Itehad” and “Saraiki Suba Movement” (it is only a registered party with election commission of Pakistan since August 2002) etc. (Pildat Org, 2011:10) These are the prominent parties but particularly “Pakistan Saraiki Party which was established Taj Muhammad Langah (late) is the actual representative and active party for the cause of Saraiki province. At this time, Nukhba Taj Langah (Writer of Poetry as Resistance) is the president of Pakistan Saraiki Party. There is a long list of grievances, demands, aims and objectives pointed out in the manifestoes by the leaders of the parties. Some of them are as follows:

1. All the federating units including Saraikistan should be autonomous and sovereign as referred to in the terms and spirits of the 1940 resolution.
2. Newly formed federation units should be represented in federal judiciary on equal basis.
3. Primary education should be in mother tongues in the whole country.
4. The Saraiki region has large area but the funds given are very low hence, there is acute poverty.

5. The main occupation of the Saraiki region is agriculture but due to the shortage of water, land of Saraiki region is going barren.

6. Land commission should be formed and all the illegal allotment after the creation of Pakistan should be canceled.

7. The people of Saraiki area should be given more employment quota in the different departments of federal and provincial governments.

In the late 1990, the political groups of the oppressed nations of Pakistan formed an alliance called PONM (Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement). These parties emphasized for the demand of a separate province for the people of Saraiki region (Roofi & Alqama, 2013:158). The ethno nationalist organizations are the product of exploitation and deprivations.

The cultural organization “Lok Sanjh” (Saraiki People’s Co-operative Society) was established on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1985 in Rajanpur at Bangla Korai. (Elan Bangla Korai, 185:6) Its first president was elected Fida Hussain Gadi. The objectives of the Lok Sanjh were:

1. To promote the cause of Saraiki language and culture.

2. To create consciousness of rights and promote social education among the Saraiki people.

3. To make the Saraiki area powerful unit of the federation of Pakistan (Charter Lok Sanjh, 1989:7)

The Lok Sanjh has some affiliated organizations like Shagird Sanjh (Saraiki Student Federation), Traimit Sanjh (Saraiki Women Association), Saraiki Lok Tamasha (Saraiki Street Theatre), Sindhu Bachao Tarla (Front for the conservation of Indus), HaliSanjh (Farmer Association) Sath (public Jury). The Lok Sanjh is a pure cultural organization but in nature is political one. All of them work towards making people conscious about the identity and highlight the problems of the Saraiki region.

Media is another progressive group including print media (Newspaper and Magazines), Electronic media (Radio, Television, Films, Dramas) Social media (Face book, Skype, Mobile Text, E-mails, Press Releases, Dissident Websites). The media groups provide literature through writings, visual documentaries and messages for the development of language and culture and make the people conscious about their linguistic, cultural, economic, political and other basic rights.

## Conclusion

In this article we have discussed the activities of literary and social groups which have contributed in redefining the identity of the Saraiki region. It can be said that the movements have performed their roles successfully in redefining the identity of Saraiki region. Now the Saraiki nation is considered the fifth big nation in the country. Due to these movements Saraiki language and literature are being developed. The literary movement proved and asserted logically that Saraiki is a separate language not a dialect of Punjabi and introduced the word ‘Saraiki’ which is the symbol of unity among the Saraiki people. Radio and T.V. stations are established and Saraiki departments are also opened in Bahawalpur and Multan universities and these departments are playing role in highlighting the identity of the Saraiki people through research conducted in Saraiki culture and literature. Hence, literary and cultural activities have increased manifold in the region. In 2012, 35 lecturers in the discipline of Saraiki were appointed through the Punjab Public Service Commission and are engaged in creating the sense of Saraiki identity. In 2014, a Saraiki festival was held in Multan Arts Council in which “Saraiki Ajrak” a symbol of Saraiki was introduced. In this festival, the honorable D.C.O Multan Saleem Gondal gave the title to the people of Saraiki region, Resham –Dilan-E-Multan in the same pattern as Zinda- Dilan-E- Lahore. Today, leaders of all the political parties have submitted resolutions for the establishment of Saraiki province and both the assemblies have passed the resolutions in favor of Saraiki province.. The slogan of Saraiki province is basically the voice of Saraiki national identity.

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