

## Saraiki Movement in Pakistan (1971-77)

Muhammad Farooq<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Muhammad Farooq<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan

Received: January 1, 2017

Accepted: March 4, 2017

### ABSTRACT

Pakistan is a multi-national country and the demand for the creation of new federating units is not new in this state. The movement for the establishment of separate Saraiki unit has the history of a couple of decades. Initially, it started in 1960 for the preservation of the Saraiki linguistic and cultural identity. The movement gained further momentum in the decade of 70s during the democratic government of PPP. It was the time that proved to be the turning point for the political consciousness of the Saraikis through different literary and cultural activities. The movement which was linguistic and cultural in character, turned into a political movement. So, the decade of 70s has much importance in the history and the development of Saraiki movement and the study will recover the time period of 1971-77. In this paper, the researcher shall also discuss that how much the consciousness of Saraiki identity developed among the folks through the Saraiki movement.

**KEYWORDS:** Background, Pakistan's Constitution, Saraiki Literary Conference, Political Consciousness, Saraiki Movement

### INTRODUCTION

During the 60s such a change took place in the political scenario of the world that the stronghold of the traditional privileged powerful classes and regions seemed endangered. The way, the slogan of equity and socialism got popularity on the global scale, it had in Pakistan too. The situation was well perceived, in Pakistan by the ANP (Awami National Party) and the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) that got established in 1967 under the chairmanship of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB). Of the two parties, the former could not benefit much due to its indulgence in ideological civil war which ZAB posed as a challenge to the then powerful classes of Pakistan, with his charismatic personality and the then popular slogan of the masses. PPP brought about a wave of political uprising in the areas where Saraiki was spoken by a vast majority of the village folks. Hence, in the election of 1970, the traditional political big guns were swept away to be replaced by a new enlightened leadership. Whereas, in Pakhtoon Khwa (then NWFP) and Balochistan, ethnic democratic forces emerged under the leadership of NAP (National Awami Party). At this movement, it becomes must to acknowledge that both these parties gave birth to a range of political workers and scholars in the Saraiki area that is working on the political front of the Saraiki movement.

However, the general elections of 1970 hold a unique place in the political history of Pakistan. It was for the first time that the general election was being held after the creation of the country, it had to be fair and free for all the political parties each defending its own stake. The Mujib's Awami League and PPP emerged as the leading parties in the eastern and western wings of the country respectively.

The winds were in favour of the ship of the movement for the restoration of the Bahawalpur State as a Province. And, the political front ; Bahawalpur Mutahidda Mahaz, (Bahawalpur united front) was leading the movement. As a result, the mahaz came to be the dark horse with winning a substancial number of seats in the election of 1970. (Javed, 2004: 168). Near 80% votes were polled in favour of the mahaz. Seven lakh fourteen thousand votes received by the supporters of the Bahawalpur province movement , out of total ten lac casted votes. (Javed, 2011). Bahawalpur was the only region where ZAB's charisma didn't work. PPP govt. having a firm hold over Punjab under ZAB, employed sharp political ploys and gradually extended its sway over Bahawalpur by making political deals and aligning the powerful figures in the area with the PPP. Within a few years, the Bahawalpur Suba Mahaz ended in smoke. (Rais, 2013: Online documents).

After the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the movement for the restoration of Bahawalpur state got waned. The leadership of the Bahawalpur province movement decided to call off the demand temporarily in the national interest. T. Rahman (2003:2) writes that 'after the creation of Bangladesh, Saraiki identity emerged as the fifth nationality'. However, it does not mean that Saraikis were not there as they are the aborigines of the area. At the same time, Saraiki movement started her journey with Multan as the centre of Saraiki activities. The Saraiki activist and lawyer

<sup>a</sup>Corresponding Author: Muhammad Farooq, Departmet of Pakistan Studies Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. Presently at Punjab Higher Education Department, Government Postgraduate College Layyah, Pakistan.  
+923336156775 Email: farooqscholar786@gmail.com

Riaz Hashmi (1972: 10) from Bahawalpur established the first Saraiki political organization Saraiki Suba Mahaz (Saraiki province front) and also chalked out the map of the Saraiki unit which was published on the back cover of his book "Brief for Bahawalpur province". Shackle (1977) opines that the Saraiki identity evolved, side by side in its twin centers of Bahawalpur and Multan. The number of literary and cultural associations appeared in 1960s and early 1970s, but the Saraiki movement remained cultural in character by large. The work of the Saraiki associations was to highlight the distinct linguistic and cultural identity of the area. However, the movement remained indifferent from any cohesive political mobilization. Still, some individuals raised their voices in favor of a separate Saraiki unit.

The Bahawalpur Movement took Saraiki just for a local language. Its affairs were conducted in Urdu. It was, however, supported by the Saraiki nationalist in general eg; the Saraiki- Adabi- Majlis (Saraiki literary society). (Rehman, 2003: 183). However, it was the first significant attempt at politicizing the issue of economic and cultural development in the Saraiki area. Riaz Hashmi (1972: 25) made it quite clear that this demand was connected with the provinces that were designed on linguistic lines, and that it 'seeks to secure economic and political justice for rarefied linguistic groups. The figure for economic and other realities presented by Hashmi (1072: 101) and other supporters of this movement later provided the rationale for the Saraiki movement as a whole.

During the early days, PPP govt. introduced shrewd policies with a view to contain all separatist activities in the country. First she crushed the Baloch national movement by military action, and enacted a law imposing seven years rigorous imprisonment if any one demanded a status of state for the provinces. Partly due to this, but mainly due to the badly organized Saraiki movement, it could not flourish, and kept delimited to literary and cultural activities. (Khan, 2004: 90). But, some literary figures seriously felt that the literary and cultural organizations lacked co-ordination. In order to overcome this, efforts were intensified to form close collaboration among Saraiki literary organizations which came together in the form of the Adbi Sangat (literary society). The Sangat aimed at projecting the antiquity of the language and the rich cultural heritage of the area, making out its separate political identity in the past.

The constitution of Pakistan was designed in 1973. I. A. Rehman (2012: online documents) is a writer and activist and the director of the human rights commission of Pakistan Secretariat. He holds that the constitution doesn't refer to the carving out of the new units, and cinctures voicing the views of the people of tribal area before the identity and status of that area is recognised. He goes on saying that in order to create a new unit or alter the geographical boundaries of a unit, an amendment in the constitution has to be made in order to identify the authority that could make the required change and define the process to be followed. Moreover, the condition of ascertaining the views of the people, likely to be affected by any such a change, has been explicitly defined in the constitution in relation to tribal areas and in other situations.

However, the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in Pakistan's constitution during the last PPP govt. has much importance with reference to the call for the new units. It has entangled the creation of the Saraiki unit. By giving vast powers to the parliament, prime minister, judiciary and much increased provincial autonomy under the constitution, this amendment has posed limits to the presidential powers, amending some of the laws introduced by ex- president Pervaiz Musharraf. This amendment invests the parliament and the prime minister with great powers, removing limits on PMs swaying for more than two terms. It gives greater independence to the judiciary, whereby the president or the PM will have no direct role in judicial appointment, and there will be federal and provincial balance of power through the creation of federal- provincial forums (Online version of Pakistan's constitution, 2012). But, the positive impact of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment for the Saraikis is that; it was for the first time that this issue was discussed on all the political forums even in the national and provincial assemblies of Pakistan. Thus, the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment has in a way, acknowledged the fact that Saraiki is not a dialect or an accent of Punjabi, Sindhi or any other language spoken in Pakistan. In fact, it is an independent language, representing a historical identity and culture, which clearly requires an independent provincial status along the pattern of other provinces of Pakistan. Furthermore, there is also a considerable level of awareness that Pakistan is a multi-lingual, multicultural and multi ethnic state.

As we have seen, the govt. of ZAB secured the rights of the people, local organizations, ethnicities and tongues through the constitution of Pakistan. But the ruling stratum showed no regard to the constitution and continued their exploitative tactics, making lawlessness a valid law kept the country in a dire condition. This lawlessness got so sustained that it seemed hoping against hope to fall back upon the constitution of Pakistan. Even when it was formally alive, it was not easy to take help from it. In this context, Allama Rahmatullah Tariq (2014: 326) writes that

"Perhaps this is the account of 1974 that one day Begum Ashraf Abbasi playing as a speaker went into her chamber after the end of the assembly session, a delegate of the Sindhi students met her and complained that Khan Abdul Ali Khan (Vice Chancellor Peoples University) is not allowing them admission as per their quota. When according to the constitution he could not deprive the regional students. Begum Abbasi replied:

“So far the documentary right could be acknowledged and if the practical demand is made right now then you must foster grave apprehension for your leader (Bhutto).”

Listening this, the students realize the graveness of the problem and went away.

After some days when I asked its explanation from a late administrator of Jamat-i-Islami, he imbibed me in the back drop of some factors.

“Bhutto got the troops un-conditionally freed from the Indian detainment and it was a great marvel but when these defeated troops reached their border, they got so dejected that tears rolled through their eyes which were the military’s high morale. And, Pakistan Television filmised them in this deplorable condition, which was felt seriously by the army.”

Secondly:

“Considering that these defeated soldiers must have gone a thorough brain washing. Hence, they could not become a part of the regular administrative army, the civil government allowed them their due pay but denied them any sensitive post which resulted in the stoppage of their grades and promotions. This blot of distrust was another blow to their ego and they took it for their double abomination and disgrace.”

Thirdly:

“Some generals of the military regime were dismissed and not retired through protocol which prompted intrinsically some generals like Gen. Hameed, Mittha khan, Ummar and their peers for revenge.”

Given in these circumstances if Bhutto ever would try to implement the constitution and give rights to the provinces, he could meet with no success due to the factors mentioned above. The observation also seconds this analysis that no constitution could succeed in Pakistan when the army does not consist of all the provinces. Hence, the constitution how so good it may be loses its effectiveness. Especially, the constitution of Pakistan could neither protect its maker, nor would impose dire punishment on the person who broke it.

With reference to the establishment of the separate Saraiki unit, the inability and containment of Bhutto is described by Allama Rahmat-Ullah Tariq thus:

“They say that once Ghulam Nabi Khan (Rahimyar Khan) said to Bhutto, “Sir! Neither Sindhis own us, nor the Punjabis acknowledge our separate identity, hence, either you should grant us a separate province, or merge our area with Sindh.”

Upon which Bhutto replied,

“This is beyond my capacity; the people of Punjab could give it any form they like because I belong to Sindh. However, the proposition of a separate unit can be promoted, but even that would not be able to have my blatant favor because, it requires amendment in the constitution. So, you should advance your struggle so that the case may reach the assembly and all the members agree upon the amendment to bring forth a new unit.”

The leader of the Saraiki nationalist movement and the president of the Pakistan People’s Party’ cultural wing (Saraiki zone) Ashiq Khan Buzdar (Aug, 2016) said in an interview:

“Once Riaz Hashmi, a Saraiki leader entreated Bhutto for the restoration of the Bahawalpur province, he replied, “You should rather demand a separate Saraiki province instead of pleading for the restoration of the Bahawalpur province. And, I shall support this demand on the floor of the assembly. Due to the some reasons, I cannot advocate this demand alone. At this, Riaz Hashmi narrated what happened in this meeting of his with Bhutto, before the Saraiki scholars during the carnival at Mehrey Wala. And, then the Saraiki Suba Mahaz was set up with Qari- Nur-ul- Haq- Quareshi as its founding president.”

Bhutto had much love with Saraiki Language its Sufi Khawaja Gulam Farid’s poetry as he had a soft corner in his heart for Saraiki literature. When he was trialed in the court in 1979, he cited a line of Khawaja Gulam Farid’s poetry:

“Dardan-di-Mari-Dilri-Aleel-Hai”

(the woe-stricken heart is sick)

This evinces Bhutto’s love for the Saraiki language. During the sittings of the Saraiki scholars, whenever Bhutto was talked about, this event was often cited.

As we have seen that the Saraiki movement sprouted secondary and tertiary roots during the ZAB’s era. During the period of 1973 -74, there were no mentionable literary, cultural and political activities. “Between” 14-16 March 1975, all Pakistan Saraiki literary conference was held in Multan. , the idea of conference incited reaction to the news that Punjabi language was going to be introduced as the medium of instruction at primary level throughout the

province; it was believed that the conference would serve as the show of strength and resistance against any such an idea. (Khan, 1975: 5-6). The organization of the conference was carried out with great pace and agility by an active body. The 'Saraiki Majlis-i-Amal, embraced representatives of most of the Saraiki literary and cultural organizations of the whole Saraiki area, and with the Pakistan foundation at its back, whose general secretary was Riaz Anwar. The conference was a Pan-siraiki gathering, in which representatives not only from within Punjab , but also from other provinces came. A great number of attendants came from Bahawalpur in this conference ; hitherto rather suspicious of possible domination by Multan and conscious of their separate identity. The conference can duly be regarded as the may fair of the saraiki voice and its first coherent exhibition as a separate movement. (Shackle, 1977: 398). In this conference, Seth Ubaid-ul-Rahman who was the active member of Bahawalpur movement explored logical outcome of failure of Bahawalpur province movement. He asserted that it was the movement of Bahawalpur ,aiming at creating a separate unit, that gave birth to the saraiki movement giving it the political face . (Khan, 1975:15-16).

Primarily, the conference was literary and cultural in character. The then Chief Minister of PPP Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi from Sindh, who was invited as the guest speaker, spoke volumes for the recognition of the Saraiki claims and creation of a separate Saraiki unit. But, to grant the conference's demands, especially in the educational sphere, it is utmost important to take important political decisions involving the award of some degree of local autonomy. (Shackle, 1977: 400-401). However, the conference ended in fiasco when the Saraiki activists distributed the map of the proposed Saraiki unit engulfing some of the Saraiki speaking territories of Sindh. This infuriated the Sindhi intellectuals and the politicians who categorically disagreed with the map and raised the slogan of Hosho-Sheedi 'Sir- daisoon- per- Sindh- na- daisoon' (I will rather give up my life than let go of Sindh). With that the Saraiki movement abandoned the idea of merging the Saraiki areas of Sindh in its proposed province, the stronghold of the feudal power is the shared agony and problem of both the areas. (Mirza, 2009: online documents). But, PPP strategist, thought that the discovery and promotion of the siraiki identity would have a lasting effect on the area. The issue of a common Saraiki identity for various areas that spoke saraiki had been on the agenda of Sindhi and Saraiki intellectuals and activists for almost a decade. The conference coined a new discourse on Saraiki identity. Consequently, the Saraiki identity was widely accepted and owned by the speakers of Saraiki language in different areas of the Punjab, as well as the Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa, Sindh and Balochistan. (Rais, 2013: online documents). The conference also gave political awareness and consciousness of unified identity to the people of the area and a resolution was passed in favour of a separate Saraiki province.

In this conference, some changes in the script of the language were suggested by two language- planning committees. One was suggestion was made by the Saraiki Sangat of Karachi, and the other by the Saraiki conference held in Multan in 1975. There was complete coherence between the two committees about employing naskh. However, the Multan committee advised the use of circles under over a number of letters, while the Karachi committee recommended dots for circles. (Khan, 1975: 7-9). At present, many publications apply dots for the implosives and other sounds typical to the language.

All the papers that were read during that conference, focused on the promotion of Saraiki Language and literature, and no paper addressed any political subject. However, many political figures and members of both the national and the provincial assemblies attended the conference raised the issue of Saraiki unit. The demands were made in this conference through resolutions, and backed up and accepted unanimously. Some of the demands were as follow.

- Along with the national language Urdu, the Saraiki language should also be immediately made the medium of education and the permission should be granted for choosing the Saraiki literature as an optional subject.
- The government should set up the department of Saraiki language and literature in the University of Punjab, the University of Multan, the Islamia University Bahawalpur, Gomal University Dera Ismael Khan and the Sind University Jam Shoro.
- The heads of all the colleges in the Saraiki areas should be instructed to allocate one portion for Saraiki as well along the Urdu and English languages.
- For the promotion of the Saraiki language and literature, the Saraiki literary organizations should be provided with financial aid, according to the promotion of the population/ proportionate to the population, so that the great Saraiki literature could be published.
- The Saraiki scholars should also be given representation in the Punjab Arts Council, equal to the Punjabi literary figures, and Arts councils should be established in Multan and Bahawalpur.
- The economic destitutions, deprivations and injustice with the haggard and woe begone people of the Saraiki areas should be amended, and they should be given their due share in the jobs and govt. lands. Besides the lands in Cholistan should be allotted to the indigenous Saraiki people.
- The parliamentarians belonging to the Saraiki areas should prefer to address in the assemblies in their mother tongue Saraiki. (Khan, 1975: 19-21).

The conference, in effect aimed at reinforcing the participants' sense of solidarity and common progress. the conference proved a great success in arousing the sense of identity among the saraiki folks. (Shackle, 1977:399) . It goes without saying that in the history of nations , sometimes small efforts bring great fruits . In connection with the saraiki movement the conference holds the significance that it brought the saraiki intellectuals on a unified platform. Though the mural of the conference was primarily delimited to literary and cultural scope on intellectual level, but it surely devised political direction for the saraiki folks which ultimately geared up the political movement.

In this concern, 1975, the lawyers of Lahore High Court from the Saraiki areas agreed on asserting the cause for the Saraiki unit. They decided to popularize the cause amongst the folks and also invite the mass involvement in the movement. Taj Muhammad Langah was elected as the president of newly established Saraiki forum in that very meeting.

The democratic government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (Dec 1971- June 1977) tried to provide better social facilities (education, health, communication, power and water). To provide jobs in different public works and small public sector industries there were, to some extent better opportunities for the Saraiki people. (Fakeer, n.d: 8-9). Besides, during this time, jobs were available outside the country and a great number of the Saraiki people succeeded in securing jobs abroad. Due to the human friendly policies of the Saraiki people, the Saraikis found the possibilities of their rights getting high born. However, due to the near complete control of the robust Punjabi lobby and a well nigh complete control of the Punjabi and Urdu speaking people over the Government machinery, the Saraikis could not have better position. The situation engendered and aspiration for attaining the national rights among the Saraiki scholars and the political workers.

As we have a look at the international political scenario during the year of 1976. We have come to the conclusion that the 70's emerging as the backlash of the previous decade. The colonial powers geared up their efforts of cincturing the democratic and national leaders through diplomatic and hidden ploys. Hence, we see that under this policy, the regimes of democratic powers in a number of countries of the world were over turned during the 70s. Pakistan was one of those unlucky countries where the nationalist democratic govt. was not welcomed with the neo colonialism. Consequently, in 1977 General Zia overturned democratic government and took over with the help of military power and conspiracy, hanged the elected prime minister on April 4, 1979. Martial law was imposed in the country, driving the people into a dark era. The policies and programs started by the democratic govt. were overturned. The ray of light that the Saraikis once saw, again vanished and the Saraiki folks again came under severe exploitation.

## CONCLUSION

after a detailed study, it can be inferred that the duration between 1971-77 has proved quite fruitful for the promotion of Saraiki literary, cultural, economic and political identity. Taking the benefit from the philanthropist policies of the democratic government, the Saraiki scholars independently, but conducting different literary and cultural activities did much for advancing the political process of the Saraiki movement, hence the movement started formally. And, the movement for the preservation of Saraiki national and economic identity entered the new phases. during this time, due to the democratic government of PPP, a great development came in different fields especially education, health, communication, power and water etc which ultimately strengthened the sentiments of patriotism and integrity among the folks of the Saraiki area. It can rightly be said that if the state takes care of the fundamental rights of its people, they prefer to their bonds with the country, rather than fostering the sentiments for their areas and region. It has been observed that the sense of injustice gives a way to the ethnic nationalism.

## REFERENCES

- Buzdar, A. (2016). An Interview, Monday 15 August 2016
- Fakeer, Y. (n.d). *Saraiki- Qaomiyati-Tehreek-Awamil-o-Maqasid*, Published by Saraiki
- Hashmi, R. (1972). Brief For Bahawalpur Province, Bahawalpur Suba Mahaz, Bahawalpur
- Javed, U. (2004). *Politics of Bahawalpur: From State To Region (1947-2000)*, Classic Publishers Lahore.
- Javed, U. (2011). Movement for Bahawalpur Province, <http://www.pu.edu.pk/polsc/jops/currentissue-pdf/Movement%20for%20Bahawalpur%20Province.pdf>, accessed 2 September 2011.

- Khan, H. A. (2004). Re-thinking Punjab: The Construction of Saraiki Identity edited by Samina Choonara, National College of Arts, Lahore
- Khan, U. K. (1975). Pehli-Kul- Pakistan-Abdi-Saraiki-Conference Multan, Bazm-i-Saqafat, Multan
- Mirza, S. T. (2009). The Origion and Politics of the Saraiki Movement,  
<https://waseb.wordpress.com/2010/04/19/the-origin-and-politics-of-the-seraiki-movement-by-shafqat-tanvir-mirza/> accessed 25 Feb. 2016
- Rahman, T. (2003). Language and Politics in Pakistan, Oxford University Press
- Rais, R.B.(2013).The Saraiki Card, Rais, HYPERLINK  
"file:///D:/Research/The%2520Seraiki%2520card%2520%25E2%2580%2593%2520The%2520Express%2520Tribune.htm"  
file:///D:/Research/The%20Seraiki%20card%20%E2%80%93%20The%20Express%20Tribune.htm  
acceded 22/07/ 2014 at 7:40 pm.
- Rehman, I. A. (2012). One Province Too Many,  
See the online version of constitution of Pakistan <http://www.pakistan.org/pakistan/constitution/> accessed on august 2011.
- Shackle, C. (1977). Siraiki: A Language Movement in Pakistan, Cambridge University Press. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311504> www.jstor.org/stable/311504. Acceeded: 22/07/2014
- Tariq, A. R. (2014). Insanyat-Pehchan-ki-Dehleez-Per, edited by Ahmad Kamran Magsi, Idarah Adbiyat-e-Islamia, Multan