

## **SHAH-JO-RAAG AS ECHO OF PEACE AND TOLERANCE: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

*Every night at shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai a group of spiritual singers in black dresses sit and sing poetry of Shah chapter by chapter while playing musical instrument. Spiritual music is a unique over the world because it naturally raises echo of harmony with low and high pitch voices. Listener of this music quickly turns towards melodious voice, closes eyes and starts moving head in an unusual way – this happens while someone listen the melodious music which is commonly known as “Shah-Jo-Raag”. This spiritual music promotes sociability towards peace and tolerance among people of different religions. It has natural flavor to communicate deeply and bring people together with love and cooperation because it is not an entertaining application but is best medicine for the stability of human body and soul. Even scientific studies have also demonstrated the health benefits of music i.e. it helps to increase our capacity to learn, lower blood pressure, heart and respiratory rates, reduce cardiac complications etc. Therefore, spiritual music can have a profound physical effect on the brain as well. In true sense Shah-Jo-Raag is categorized, as the voice of human spirit and it can go beyond language, beyond age, or race, or gender or nationality, beyond religious or political difference – straight to the heart and mind of*

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*all people. It is an effective and powerful tool for reaching people and building good connections, relations all around the world. In the same way as Phil Ochs says that “one good song with a message can bring a point more deeply to more people than a thousand rallies”.*

**Keywords:** *Tambooro (a musical instrument), Shah-Jo-Raag (Spiritual-Music), Faqeers (Singers of spiritual music), Shah-Jo-Risalo (compiled book of Shah’s poetry), Surs (Poetic chapters of shah’s poetry), seven heroines (women presented as leader in seven folk-tales which are highlighted in Shah’s poetry).*

## **Introduction**

Peace lies in the hearts and minds of all people. Every one of us strives to build peace, a desire for peace, a willingness to work for peace. It is naturally exists in the hearts and minds of our people. If we listen Shah-Jo-Raag, we would be citizen of peace loving global village because Shah teaches us the art of lovable relations with mankind. The echo of a beautiful voice is a form of language that conveys the message of peace and tolerance. It has the natural ability to connect hearts of people and it works on bringing people together. The spiritual music (Shah-Jo-Raag) is a combination of beautiful voices that have true echo for listeners to connect hearts of people globally and become peaceful citizen of global village. It was the genuine endeavor of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai who established an institution of Shah-Jo-Raag. He made a circle-shaped sitting arrangement with beautiful voice to convey the global community on connecting hearts of people together. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai was a saint, spiritual scholar and a great poet of all times. He composed his poetry in Sindhi language with the unique flavor of seven cultural folk-tales, namely Umer-Marvi, Noori-Jam Tamachi, Sasui-Punhoon, Moomal-Ranu, Leela-Chanesar, Suhni-Mehar, and Sorath-Raidyach. The taste of Shah’s poetry is melodious in its original composition and it has the great lesson for people to love humanity and be tolerated and for bearing during all seasons. Shah invented a unique musical instrument called “Tambooro”. Amazingly, Tambooro is very exceptional and different from other (traditional) musical instruments in structure. There are five sequentially arranged musical-strings namely base (Ghor), twins (Jaryoon), Tongue (Zabaan), low and high pitch voice (Teep) which are specified stages of

melodious tones. The invention of Tambooro was initial step towards institutionalization of Shah-Jo-Raag to convey the people to promote human love and tolerance whatever the religions do have – human love and tolerance are such social practices which create sense of cooperation among people. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai asked his devotees (Fakeers) for performance of Shah-Jo-Raagin his presence. In this way this spiritual music was established with the flavor of different varieties while using the five strings. The basic social norm was essentially set-out that the singers (devotees) of Shah-Jo-Raag will promote open-mindedness and they will not disappoint anyone while performing Shah-Jo-Raag. Everyone was taught the lessons of good human being. They were asked to carry out this legacy towards the future generations. Since the inception Shah-Jo-Raag has been great interest of people globally. People from different walk of life, from different religions and countries were interested to listen the music and feel its intensity on hearts towards connecting mind and hearts together. Its arrangement is fully institutionalized – in way that they (singers) usually sit in a circle shape – the group leader at the center –he keeps his face towards the shrine. While performing Shah-Jo-Raag the group leader recites stanzas from different poetic chapters (Surs) in low pitch voice while his followers repeat the same stanzas in low and high pitch voices jointly with the connectivity of melodious strings. It goes from chapter to chapter in the same way but each chapter (Sur) comes to an end with the performance of melody called “Wae”. Performance of melody is very fascinating segment for the listeners, even many people do not understand the meaning of original words but they acknowledge their devotion with natural style. Every one of us has same devotion towards listening the melodies of Shah-Jo-Raag. It openly invites people to follow the integrations of their social, cultural and religious practices for peace and tolerance despite the different colors, castes and creeds.

### **Literature Review**

Literature review is done of books and related stuff regarding the sociological concepts which are related with mental faculty for peace, tolerance and best social interactions. The ideas related to socializations and sense of cooperation has been referred in present research paper.

**a. Spiritual-music is one of social needs that promote mutual cooperation:**

Social needs causes' social interaction and physical interaction is first step towards building strong relations. Shah defines the importance of social relations says: "Come closer, Sweetheart! Do not go afar, Return oh logic of life! I would perish in hills, Do not abandon pedestrian; oh Punhoon on trial" (Mushtaque Ali 2012.p65).It is often stated that changing conditions create new and genuine needs and music is one need of mind. A culture is integrated and therefore changes in one part of culture create a need for adaptive changes in related parts of culture (Paul B. Horton and Chester L. Hunt (1984 p.522).The social interaction increase when people are not rigid in their beliefs whereas rigidity does not permit people to be reciprocal with those whose beliefs are different. Rokeach Milton has offered the definition of belief any simple propositions conscious, unconscious inferred from what a person says or does capable of being proceeded. Beliefs, attitudes, and values: A theory of organization and change (1968 p.113). The creative substance is related with peace and tolerance. Young and Mack have viewed about this concept of connecting people together and socializations. They added that it is the process of inducting the individual into the social world. In common sense socialization in form music is a life-long training for the adjustment of one's life in society. This process of socialization is of learning norms, roles, techniques and other cultural patterns.(Abdul Hameed Taga 2010, p.214).

**b. Shah-Jo-Rraag is an institutions of social interactions:**

K.F Mirza in his work has elaborated a tradition about Shah-Jo-Rraag. He said; once Shah himself narrated that sometimes he feel it was breach of religious laws, apparently but he said in his heart there was a plant of Divine Love, which unless he hear music, gets dry. Without it his attention cannot be fixed on that perfect object. As soon as he uttered these words the music (Shah-Jo-Rraag) commenced playing from musical instrument automatically. Seeing this many Muslims Scholars did not argue and they understood that it was something special and not common type of singing but it has intensity to brining people beyond the religious differences (K.F. Mirza1980 p.43). The thinking process of sociologists has been focusing on societal experiences that are helping the people to handle with life-hardships and never go in the isolation rather live in harmonies and societies. John J. Macionis as discussed the process of living together in cooperative way is

socialization. It is believed that peace and tolerance comes through socialization of people. He viewed that it is a life-long social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. (John J. Macionis 2010 p.118). In present times our generations are looking for peace because many religious scholars have created intolerance and extremism. In real sense all people from different religions have the same demand of peace and love for mankind. The same message has been conveyed in music of Shah. He (Shah) is a peace maker for every generation and genius of Sindhi Literature. His verses are distinguishable by rhythmic flow, richness of thought, and beauty of expression. He was great musician having excellent knowledge of classical Indian and local folk-music. His invented melodies (Surs) are equally listened by Muslims, Hindus and people of other religions. The great beauty of his poetry is that his every single line or couple is sung with specific note or melody till today (Rasheed Bhatti 2002 p.139).

**c. Shah-Jo-Raag cultivates cultural cooperation:**

A great research scholar of Sindhi language (Late) Dr. Nabi Bux Baloch has opined that Shah-Jo-Raag presented the stories in musical form. Shah's higher conscious is tandem with human psychological undulations and alternations. Shah's higher vision and consciousness lie in his cognition of human relationship like love and affection. This understanding comes through his inner perception and subjective emotional experience that is reflected from the arrangement of this music (Dr. Nabi Bux Baloch 2010 p.29). The verses from the poetry of Shah are beautiful symbols of musical stages. Elsa Kazi in her work of translations of verses from Shah's poetry has mentioned that in all spiritual perceptions, the extent or duration contact seems to be immaterial. If we know another person at all, it is not because we have known him for long time – here, as elsewhere; the first encounter though brief could be the most revealing. If we know another at all we know him before we meet him. There is some sort of pre-established sympathy between some souls which seems to transcend at all limitations of space, time, and language which normally subsist as implements in the way of mutual understanding between them. The greatest manifestations of the mind of man always seem to come from an unknown source. (Elsa Kazi 1996 p.3-4). Professor Annemarie Schimmel did her work Sindhi culture and spiritualism together. She inscribed that one understands well that both Muslims and Hindus

have been attracted by Risalo and Music of Shah. One of his touching songs is devoted to the Prophet of Islam (Sur Sarang), who is compared to the life-giving rain that quickens the dead land: both the rain and Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) is divine of God. (Annemarie Schimme 1986 p.4). Another scholar has written that the Indigenous musical modes have evolved others for centuries, influencing others and assimilating foreign attitude, suiting the genius of the soil. Thus the frontier of our music has been extended with a pleasant blending of elements which could fit in the local patterns and enrich the local tradition. (Professor Ghulam Ali Allana 2010 p.295) Shah acclaimed himself as Sufi poet. The popular image of Sufi is a saint who has totally withdrawn himself from this brief interlude of existence on earth and sold himself away in eternal quest of the One, the Incomprehensible. He belongs to the original class of Sufis who believed every human must perform the duties of serving for people. (Abdul Hameed Akhund 1993 p.19-20). Good deeds bring affirmative results and it is undeniable fact that when we demand for peace we must be prepared to strive and sacrifice cheerfulness just remain in pursuit of truth and divine. Dr. Hotchand Molchand Gurbuxani revealed that there is sacrifice of love and loyalty in the world. The people have tempered their sincerity. Man is at the throat of another man. There is more love among birds and animals than men. Nonetheless, one should not give up one's own virtue. To do well is act of the good and evil that of the evil men. If one becomes evil with an evil man there remains no difference between the two. But, if there is good man and you are convinced that you will be benefited by the company, you should not forsake him; however badly he may treat you. You should live by him even if he drives you out. (Dr. Gurbuxani 2009 p.79). Shah Latif proposes to enquire into the concept of peace and point out the path to peace. The theme is of universal interest and applicability. Whatever the rank of individual aspires for peace and tranquility and desires to change the present sickly state of existence of a healthier one. Concept of peace is associated with the concept of integrated state, an integrated humanity and a universe. Why human being is so interested in unity, harmony, love and peace? Latif offers us a wealth of suggestive guidance. Only when we read his poetry and listen Shah-Jo-Raag with the profound respect do we realize how grateful ought we to feel for his universal message which alone can save us from decay and disintegration. (Akram Ansari 1983 p.22).

## **Methodology**

It is a qualitative as well as quantitative mixed methods (multi-strategy) research. The qualitative research methodology conducted to explore the spiritual music and its deep phenomenon. The quantitative approach was included for exploring the perceptions of different people regarding spiritual music (Shah-Jo-Raag). In qualitative portion face-to-face interviews were arranged with respondents whereas in quantitative form some themes were selected and data was gathered through Likert rating scale was used. The list of devotees was received from the singers of Shah-Jo-Raag and then randomly sample was selected of the devotees for the present research study. Sample size was 132 that were calculated by Raosoft ([www.raosoft.com](http://www.raosoft.com)) sample size calculator. There was 5% margin of error and confidence level was 95% and (universe) population of devotees was 200.

## **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed both qualitative as well as quantitative forms. In data collection process two research tools were used. The focus group discussion (FGD) tool was used for collecting qualitative data and a research tool having rating scales 3-strongly agreed, 2-agreed and 1-disagreed was implemented for quantitative data.

### **a. Qualitative Analysis**

The qualitative responses were collected through arranging focus group discussions (FGDs). The running notes were taken during the FGDs and the qualitative responses were analyzed through thematic framework analysis technique. The data was categorized in the themes and then results were drawn.

## **Summary**

The five focus group discussions were arranged at various locations where respondents were involved in research study. The timing of each focus group discussion was different it was almost 40-50 minutes where male and female respondents were involved in the discussion regarding Shah's music, peace and tolerance. Each focus group discussion was held in a part (region) of Sindh because language dialects are different at each location. The respondents (male and female) shared the opinions about the themes related to peace and harmony. They narrated the concepts of cultural stories and discussed the role of women

and their voice as symbol of love and sacrifice in the present age. Shah's music (Shah-Jo-Raag) was performed at various locations after finishing the focus group discussion.

### Analysis (Theme – i) Peace

The peace, devotion, Love, self-worth were discussed. Following quotes were recited while talking about the theme of peace. The strings of musical instrument sounds for peace and human love “We listen Shah-Jo-Raag because it gives us immense pleasure to be tolerated and peace villagers” “All chapters (Surs) are about human love” “We love this spiritual music because this music is entirely different and we feel immense pleasure when Shah's words are praying for the prosperity of mankind through melodious Wai” Respondents recited following lines from the poetry of Shah in a melodious voice.

سارنگ سا لهيج، الله لڳ اجين جي،  
پاڻي پوچ پتن تيءَ ارزان ان ڪريج،  
وطن وسائيج، ته سنگهارن سک ٿئي.  
(سرسارنگ، ۱-۶)

*Oh, the rainy season you are a Divine blessing, be merciful to the people of this country, and take care of them. Let it rain heavily so that the land has abundance of water. Make this land which is full of grief and sorrow, happy and prosperous. Let there be plentiful grain in this land that the poor can have a few moments of comfort and joy.*

“The poetic words of Shah are full with music and devotion we recite poetry sing music and live in peace. The instrument is sign of beating hearts means in sorrowful if other people are in trouble or facing difficulties”.

### Theme – ii Tolerance

The theme tolerance was discussed and following verses were recited by the respondents;

نہائينءَ کان نينهن، سيڪ، منهنجا سپرين  
سڙي سارو ڏينهن، ٻاهر ٻاڦ نه نڪري  
(رپ)

*Learn to love in secret, adopt ways of the kiln,*

*It is on fire the live long day, yet emits no stream.*

The tolerance –Shah’s music creates environment where people attentively listen music and start moving head in devotion. After listening this music people share love and respect. Following quotes were recited while talking about the theme of tolerance. “Shah’s music is beginning of each social gathering - we always honor our guests those who pay visit in Sindh” “Shah-Jo-Raag is liked by women and men alike on special events” “Melody of Tambooro has fascinating tones which invite us to listen it and sit patiently for hours and hours this is what we consider the teaching of patience and tolerance” “Chapters (Surs) are arranged systematically which are sung by the singers (devotees) from dusk to dawn but it has the subject of interest that keep us active throughout the night”.

### **Detailed Analysis**

The focus group discussions highlight the peace and tolerance with respect to spiritual music (Shah-Jo-Raag) of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. People sing and recite poetry with sequence of narrations of seven heroines in each chapter. Many words and melodious tone offer sense of peace, love and tolerance. Respondents discuss these stories for seeking encouragement and self-respect. Women are the role-model heroines on promoting peace in the society. Sindhi community narrates poems verses which have great spiritual power resolve social issues. The continuous circulation of Shah-Jo-Raag in Sindhi language is best medicine for regular listeners to be friend of mankind. It is conveyed through music that every human on earth has right live in peace. In present times Shah-Jo-Raag is widely circulated through media and people from different countries are seeking peace and universal love through music.

### **b. Quantitative Analysis**

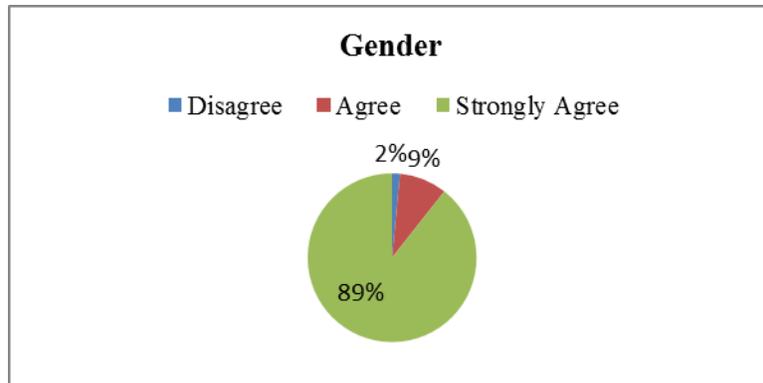
The quantitative data was gathered through Likert rating scale. There were five responses/statements in research tool. The response of each statement was imported on software special package for social science (SPSS). The key research question: Is there any Difference in perception about Shah-Jo-Raag is echo of peace and tolerance between gender, religion, across age, qualification, mother tongue and regions of respondents? The null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) are there any

disparity in perception about Shah-Jo-Raag is echo of peace and tolerance between gender, religion, across age, qualification, mother tongue and regions. And alternate hypotheses ( $H_1$ ) There are a significant difference in perception about Shah-Jo-Raag is echo of peace and tolerance between gender, religion, across age, qualification, mother tongue and regions. Following is the detailed analysis of above stated null and alternate hypotheses.

**Table: 1**  
**Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

Gender		Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
	Male -1	0	4	108	112
	Female -2	2	8	10	20
Total		2	12	118	132

**Diagram -1**



**Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.835 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	30.906	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	40.689	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	132		

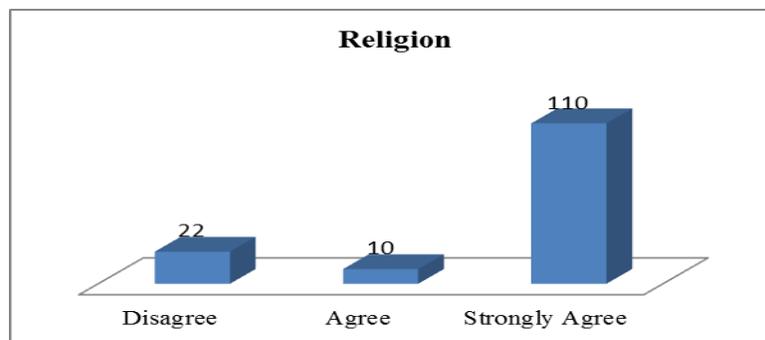
P Value .0000

The above given table and diagram presents the distribution of the respondents by gender on their perceptions regarding Shah-Jo-Raag is echo of peace and tolerance. The chi-square test was applied to test independence of two variables. The correspondence p-value was .000 there was highly significant difference between perceptions of respondents. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected and original hypothesis was accepted successfully.

**Table: 2**  
**Distribution of Respondents by Religion**

Religion of Respondents	Disagree	Agreed	Strongly agree	Total
Muslims -1	16	10	100	126
Hindus -2	6	0	0	6
Total	22	10	100	132

**Diagram -2**



**Chi-square Test**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.429 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	23.034	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.455	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	132		

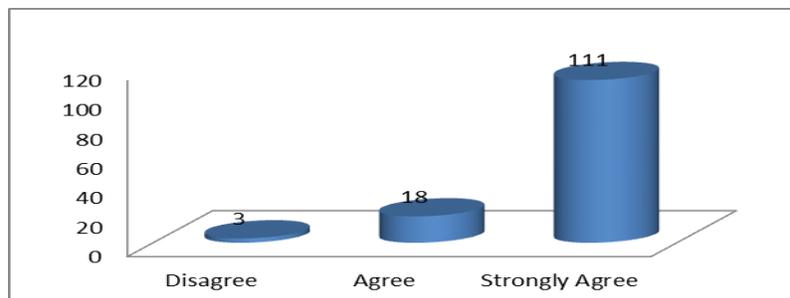
P Value .000

The above table and diagram presents the distributions of respondents by religion on their perceptions regarding Shah-Jo-Raag is echo of peace and tolerance. The chi-square test was applied to test independence of two variables. The probability

value was .000 thus there was highly significant difference among the perceptions of respondents regarding the hypothesis and the null hypothesis was rejected and the original hypothesis was accepted.

**Table: 3**  
**Distribution of Respondents by Age**

Respondents age	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed	Total
Age years				
18	0	2	1	3
19	0	6	4	10
20	0	6	4	10
21	0	0	6	6
22	0	2	6	8
23	0	0	4	4
24	0	1	7	8
25	0	0	9	9
26	2	0	6	8
27	0	0	10	10
28	0	0	13	13
29	0	0	4	4
30	1	0	8	9
31	0	0	2	2
32	0	0	2	2
35	0	0	7	7
38	0	0	1	1
40	0	0	5	5
42	0	0	3	3
45	0	0	5	5
49	0	0	1	1
50	0	1	2	3
52	0	0	1	1
Total	3	18	111	132

**Diagram -3****Chi-Square Test**

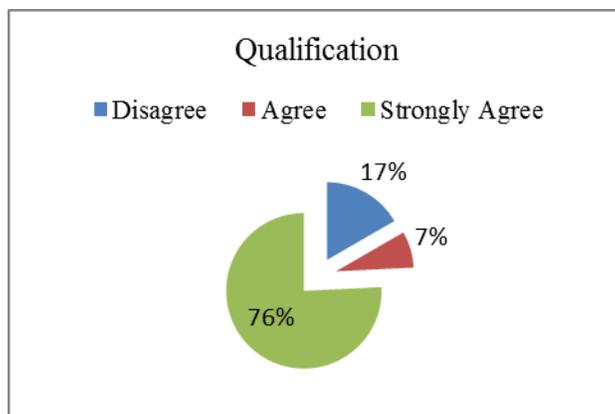
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	83.536 <sup>a</sup>	44	.000
Likelihood Ratio	68.038	44	.012
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.668	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	132		

P Value .000

The above table and diagram presents the distributions of respondents by age on their perceptions regarding Shah-Jo-Raag is echo of peace and tolerance. The chi-square test was applied to test independence of two variables. The correspondence p-value was .000. The null hypothesis was rejected and the original hypothesis was accepted.

**Table: 4****Distribution of Respondents by Qualification**

Qualification of Respondents	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Postgraduate and Above-1	16	3	54	73
Graduate -2				
Matriculate-3	0	0	1	1
Primary -4				
Literate -5	6	7	45	58
Non-literate-6				
Total	22	10	100	132

**Diagram -4****Chi-square Test**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.446 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	14.297	4	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	.883	1	.347
N of Valid Cases	132		

P Value: .000

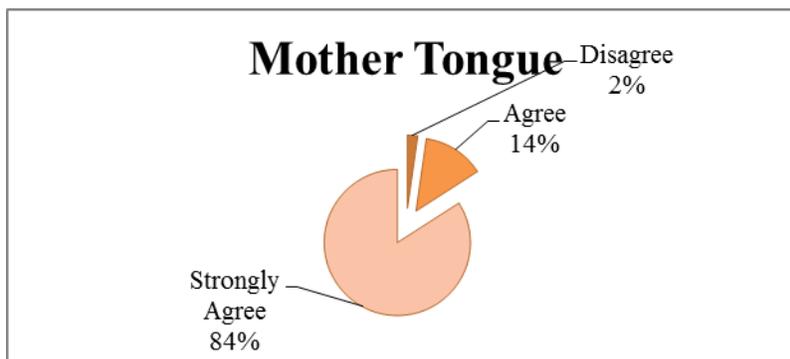
The above table and diagram presents the distributions of the respondents by qualification on their perceptions regarding Shah-Jo-Raag is Echo of peace and tolerance. The chi-square test was applied to the test independence of two variables. The correspondence p-value was .000. In this way the null hypothesis was rejected and the original hypothesis was accepted.

**Table: 5****Distribution of Response by Mother Tongue**

Mother Tongue	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sindh-1	0	12	111	123
Urdu-2				
Seriki-3	2	2	0	4
Balochi-4	1	4	0	5

Mother Tongue	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sindh-1	0	12	111	123
Urdu-2	2	2	0	4
Seriki-3	1	4	0	5
Balochi-4				
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>132</b>

**Diagram -5**



**Chi-square Test**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	79.307 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	43.706	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	54.207	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	132		

P value .000

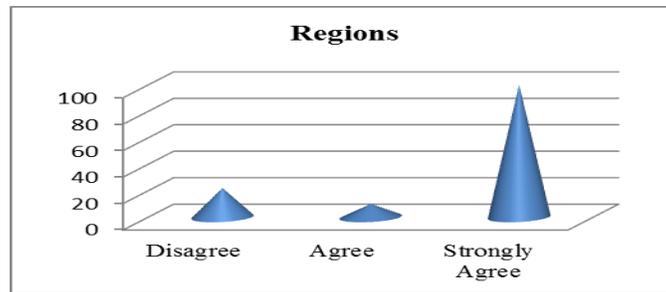
The above table and diagram both presents the distributions of the respondents by mother tongue on their perceptions regarding Shah-Jo-Raag is Echo of peace and

tolerance. The chi-square test was applied to test independence of two variables. The correspondence p-value was .000. Thus null hypothesis was rejected and the original hypothesis was accepted.

**Table: 6**  
**Distribution of Respondents by Region**

Region	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Central Sindh (Vicholo) -1	2	0	11	13
Lower Sindh (Lar) -2	10	6	16	32
Eastern Sindh (Thar) -3	6	2	42	50
Northern Sindh (Uttar) -4	4	2	20	26
Western Sindh (Kachho) -5	0	0	11	11
Total	22	10	100	132

**Diagram – 6**



**Chi-Square Test**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.789 <sup>a</sup>	8	.016
Likelihood Ratio	20.581	8	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.464	1	.035
N of Valid Cases	132		

P Value .016

The above table and diagram presents the distributions of respondents by region-wise on their perceptions regarding Shah-Jo-Raag is Echo of peace and tolerance. The chi-square test was applied to test independence of two variables. The correspondence p-value was .016. Thus null hypothesis was rejected and the original hypothesis was accepted.

## Conclusion

The spiritual music (Shah-Jo-Raag) is a voice of humanity. It helps people to understand the reason of love, patience, and peace. The strings of musical instrument (Tambooro) are melodious having fascinating charming sound which touches the heart directly and connects people globally. In the present research study the qualitative as well as quantitative techniques were used. In qualitative form many concepts were discovered related to fortitude, peace and tolerance. In quantitative fraction the chi-square test was used for testing the hypotheses as Shah's music is echo of peace and tolerance: gender-wise, religion, across age, qualification, mother tongue and regions of the respondents. In five hypotheses correspondence p-value was .000 and in sixth hypothesis it was .016. The null hypotheses were rejected and alternate hypotheses were accepted. The results have proved that Shah-Jo-Raag is real echo of peace and tolerance. It gathers people beyond religion, beyond age beyond color caste and creed.

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