

SOCIOLOGICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON SINDH PAKISTAN: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Pakistan is one of the countries of the world where culture is considered a driving force for the people of the land. Sindh is the second biggest province of Pakistan. It is rich in natural beauty. The civilization and cultural heritages of Sindh are known throughout the Asia. Sindh inculcates the some of the oldest cultural heritages like heritage of Moen-jo-daro which has 5000 years' oldest history. The culture of Sindh is rich and enriched with multi-dimensional aspects. On one side culture is rich in religious rituals and on the other hand it has a good flavor of secular outlook. People of Sindh are peace loving. People rejoice on little occasions and make those events remarkable and memorable. Therefore, the sociology and ethnography of Sindh is full with of colours and rejoices. In the present paper an attempt has been made discussing the culture, civilization, customs and cultural events, and the overall sociology of the people of the land with the help of sociological eye.

Keywords: *Sindhi, Culture, Traits, Ceremonies, Customs.*

Introduction

Pakistan is one of countries of the world where culture and civilization are well practiced and respected. In other word the land is known due to adherence of cultural values and religion norms. People feel happy and contented when they follow their culture. Such province is more tented towards Sufism. Poets and Sufis like Shah Adul Latif Bhittae, Sachal Sarmast, Qalandar Shahbaz, Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Sufi Shah Inayat and Sami and many others are well known among the people. Their poetry is considered important. Urrs and celebrations are celebrated since

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unknown times.

The Sindh province is one of the four provinces of Pakistan. It has a distinct history which dates back many centuries (Allana, 1998: 1-2). Sindh covers an area between 56,000 and 57,000 square miles (Khuhro, 1999: XXI). The province is divided into five divisions and 21 administrative districts including 8 municipal corporations and 8 cantonments. It includes 84 talukas and 74 sub-divisions. The districts are further divided into sub-divisions (Provincial Census Report of Sindh, 1998: 14).

Postan (1973) is of the view that Sindh has always been divided geographically and politically into two principle portions: Upper and Lower, or rather Northern and Southern, distinguished by names in Sindhi language as "Lar and Sirra". Burton (1999) considers three principal portions. Southern Sindh (or "Lar") covers areas South of Hyderabad. Central Sindh (or "Wicholo") includes areas lying immediately around Hyderabad. Northern Sindh (or "Siro") comprises the districts of Sehwan, Larkana, Khairpur, and the tract which separates Sukkur from Cutch. These divisions have their particular climate, soil and productions, and are otherwise marked by physical peculiarities.

Religion is the core of culture of any society. Most of our cultural patterns are taken from norms. In Sindh, Islam is dominant religion in society. Besides Hindus, Christians, and Mehwahar are also living in Sindh. Sindh is the land of sufies and tranquently. People by nature are subtle and very much followers of peace and love. The brotherhood and tolerance are the essence of local Sindhi culture. They celebrate the festivals on the shrines of suffies and religious scholars, since long time such celebrations are known as the celebration of land. Even all over Pakistan people come to participate on those celebrations and rejoice.

Sindh province is also known due to the people's attachment towards cultural traits and rituals. People here since centuries follow

the culture and have the firm faith that if they ignored the culture they may face some mishap in their life which may turn their lives useless and adverse. As a result people of the land fully adhere to the even small things, religious poetry and even dresses. Family institution occupies very important place in Sindhi society. Joint family system is mostly preferred and endogamy, the marriage within kinship or *bradaris* are preferred. After the birth of child religious education is given. For recreation, children are given handmade clay toys. Folkways are also common in Sindh and for elders recreation includes *kachahri* at night.

The another distinct thing of the land is that the civilization of the land is among the oldest civilizations of the world. It dates back some 5000 years back and is known as Indus valley civilization the essence of that civilization is that it is remarkably attached with the agriculture and cultivation. The rivers also have an important place in the development of local culture. People rejoice and even some dresses and foods are known due to the crops. Family is considered the important and people of Sindh feel proud to their ancestral assets they are proud of their castes, tribes and communities, they originate, therefore, the culture of caste and tribalism. Within the family elders are well respected and the culture of patriarchy is the most dominant system of the family. The elder members of the family are the head of family where orders of elders considered like the order of the state. Informal social order and social control is well adhered due to the strong attachment of the family. Likewise, the eldest members of the caste is also considered as the most respectable and people from that particular caste follow the order of that elder member. Perhaps the culture of respect for the elders has vanished from many parts but in Sindh it is well practiced.

The social life of Sindh was also affected by the settlement of Arab Soldiers, scholars and intellectuals in different parts of Sindh. Tabari speaks of Arab soldiers in several military colonies seeking solace for their lost homes by marrying native women of the country, and

leaving their lands and plunder to be inherited by their Sindhi- Arab descendants (Ali, 1957: 327). The Arab conquest of Sindh followed by dissemination of Islamic beliefs played a significant role in reinforcing and strengthening orientation of Sindhi culture towards Islamic land. It also provided a new socio-economic basis for Sindhi society giving it a distinctive Islamic look (Ansar, 1980: XXV11).

Naming habit is an example of socio-cultural influence among the lower class, for example fisher folk, hunters, farmers, cattle breeders etc. Indigenous names occur very commonly, which are not found elsewhere. These include the names of flowers, trees, fruits, birds, months, days of weeks etc. A man styled Kausar or Mohammad Kausar or Aachar or Mohammad Aachar is immediately recognizable as belonging to this class. In the same way one may recognize a Sayyed by the presence of Shah among his name, e.g. Zaman Shah etc. (AlIana, 1998: 319). The use of Arabic names is in accordance with certain fairly well defined practices. Any Muslim Sindhi is like to include among his patronymics the name of Prophet, Caliph, Imam or Saint on his offspring. Certain Hindus of Sind' are also recognizable by a restricted range of Islamic names which they employ e.g. 'divan' Amil' and others immediately denote a Hindu gentleman (ibid).

Sindh is agricultural province and its land is fertile. Mostly in village agriculture is main occupation apart from it domestication of cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats etc. is practiced. In Sindh business is also source of earning for many people. Large scale division of labour is noticed, Goldsmiths, ironsmith, brisk maker, carpenters, government servants, politicians etc. Sindhi society is stratified here in three major classes. Upper class consists of landlords, industrialist and middle class consist of government employees, farmers, shopkeeper and other businessman and lower class consist of labor etc. In Sindh no doubt due to in wearing modernization and globalization the dressing, food, items, mode of recreation and changing but traditional food of Sindh is Saag, jawer, all kinds of

food, meat, mutton, fish and chicken are include in food of upper and middle class people Ghee, butter, curds etc.

Mud and backed clay bricks are used in walls and roof is made of sticks. Most people wear lower garments fastened round the waist and upper garments thrown the war the shoulders. Shalwar qamees is the dress of Sindh Women. Most of the women use veil before going outside. Men and women even children sum or black stone powder apply round the eyes, oil their hair with mistral oil, women grow lengthy their hairs.

The Culture of Sindh

The culture of a nation is an aspect of ultimate values. These values possessed by a particular society are expressed in that society's collective institutions. Culture in a sense, is an essence, within the boundaries of which individuals live by. They express their cultural values in their dispositions, habits, feelings, passions, attitudes and manners.

Basis of Sindhi Culture

The first definition of Sindhi culture emanates from that over 7,000 years old Indus civilization. This is the pre Aryan period, about 3,000 years B.C. when the urban civilization in Sindh was at its peak. It is pure, sublime, unique and rich.

The people of Indus valley were not only great town planners, builders, engineers, architects and' masons, but they were also expert - potters, goldsmiths, jewelers, artists, artisans, musicians and lapidaries. Over the centuries, this land has been the home of various people, the breeding ground of major civilizations and meeting place of numerous migrations. A rich and varied cultural heritage has thus been handed down.

Sindhi Cultural Traits

(a) Ajrak

The correct pronunciation in Sindhi language is Ajrak' (Singular) and Ajraka' (Plural). Sindh is the real and actual birthplace of this marvellous cloth, which is predominantly used with dignity and pride.

(b) Rilhi

Rilhi is another Sindhi icon and part of our heritage and culture. Every Sindhi home will have a set of Rilhis. One for every member of the family few spared for guests. It is also given as gifts to friends and visitors. It is used as bedspread as well as a blanket.

(c) Ornaments

Ornaments used by Sindhis are a significant part of our culture, especially for womenfolk- Sindhi Zewar-a or Ggaha' (Ornaments) for different parts of the body. Different and varied ornaments are used by Sindhi womenfolk for the head, ear, nose, neck, arms, hands, feet ' and so on. The ornaments for the head are: Aali, Tiko, Jhumar-a, Tiklo, Kundho, MuhanDanini, Sagiyoon, Chotee-a, Phul-u, Bakal-u, Cilp-u, Taaj-u.

(d) Sindhi Cap

Sindhi cap is the most important trait of Sindhi culture. It is the item which makes them very happy while having it. It is much loved and revered by Sindhi people. It is beautifully weaved by interlacing threads of different colours and ornamented with small pieces of mirror glass. Sindhi people are proud of it as the main item of their identity. It is also presented as a gift to the guests and visitors.

Social Ceremonies

(a) Chhatthi

As soon as a woman in a family gives birth to her first child she becomes a proud mother. At the birth of the child, is it a boy or a girl, rejoicing takes place in the family. If a child is male, more rejoicing is there. The elder member of the family is called to give Azan' in the ears of the infant. This rejoicing continues for six days. On the sixth night the women of kith and kin assemble. They dress the mother and the child in new clothes. Thread bands are tied in the arms and ankles of the child to protect him/her from any bad omen. Sweet dishes or other delicacies are served to everyone present there. After that the women sing songs on a "Duhul" (Small drum) till midnight. Some kind of sugar product (Patasha, Ladoon, and Boondi) is distributed among them when they disperse.

(b) Aqqiko

This ceremony is performed, when the child grows to the age of a year or two. The principal part of this ceremony is the sacrifice of a goat or sheep, free from any defect or blemish. The animal is slain according to the Islamic rule of 'Ozuha'. The whole or major part of the meat is distributed among the poor relatives and others. Some Sindhi families cook it in rice and hold a feast for their kith and kin. Rejoicing takes place on a very small scale. This ritual has religious significance but since it requires expenses, it is performed by well to do families only.

(c) Sunnat or Tohur

The ceremony of Tohur or circumcision is called "Sunnat". It is generally performed when a boy is five to ten years old. Although like 'Aqqiko' there is no age bar, in Sindhi families the over age circumcision is often avoided

Almost all kith and kin, singers and dancers (Male and female) are invited for the occasion. Rice cooked in beef or meat, and in sugar is served to the guests.

For circumcision the boy is obliged to wear loose red pieces of cloth. He is then asked to sit on an earthen flat pot. The elders and other male relatives of the boy keep some money under the feet of the boy, as an offering. The offering always goes to the family barber who performs the operation. At the time of operation, the attention of the boy is drawn to the sky. He is motivated to look at the golden bird flying in the sky. By that time the operation ends. At night the group of women sings "Sehras" and "Ladas" Thus the ceremony ends.

(d) Marriage Customs

Marriage

After the betrothal, both the families continue to exchange presents. The wedding date is fixed by the parties in consultation with each other. After fixation of the date of wedding, a party of "Manganhar" is called to play drums at the door of the bride and the bridegroom. Following are the ceremonies connected with marriage:

- a) The bride is kept confined in the house for a whole month before the wedding.
- b) A week before the event, the beautifying of the bride begins. This custom is called "Wanvah" (Mayoun).
- c) During this period she is confined to a room or a corner of a room wearing a veil sent by the bridegroom and is fed on "Churo" an unleavened cake of wheaten flour made into dough with butter and mixed with "Dried Molasses" brown sugar.
- d) Apply bilious mess, supposed to increase the delicacy of the skin.

Massage

A trustworthy woman normally wife of a local barber arranges a daily bath, she massages her with wheat flour and mustard oil, which is called "Pithi". She blackens her eyes with "Kajjal" dyes her lips with "Musag" and her palms and sole with "Mehandi".

Nikah

On the wedding day, the bridegroom is groomed by his friends and relatives, and is dressed in clothes presented by the bride's father. The bride is dressed in the clothes and ornaments supplied by the bridegroom. The bridegroom is taken on horseback in a procession to the bride's house where the ceremony of "Nikah Khawani" is performed.

On the occasion of "Nikah" two of the nearest kins from the bride's side take part as "Vakils" or official witnesses. They come to the bride and ask her whether she accepts to be married to the bridegroom. When the "Vakils" return and express the willingness of the bride, the Nkiah Khawan performs the "Nikah" rite. After that the bridegroom is taken to a room where the ladies perform other customs and ceremonies.

In the Thar area it is a custom for the bridegroom to give a small gold ornaments to the bride as a good omen for the marriage. The bride's family gives a woolen or a "Khatho" i.e a light woolen blanket in exchange.

In the same area, the bridegroom generally wears a "Godh" a kind of "Shalwar" i.e baggy trouser, a red-colored turban is invariably worn by every bridegroom. The bride wear a brief tight fitting blouse and a big skirt with lots of "gather" reaching down to the ankles.

The bridegroom in the "Menghwar" tribe keeps on his shoulder a printed cloth called "Maleer" which has embroidered corners. This

cloth is given to him by his in-laws.

Breaking of “Dakhani”

The bridegroom is also asked to break the earthen lid of a jar with a single kick of his heel.

“Nekheti”

After all the marriage customs have been completed, the bridegroom takes his bride home in a procession with a local orchestra, either on camelback or in a bullock cart decorated with red cloth of Ajrak. This custom is called “Nekheti” which means the departure. The scene of the bride’s departure from her home is traditionally a sad one, and usually the bride’s mother, father, other member of the family and relatives burst into tear as the bride sets off for her new home.

After the marriage, the bride is expected to visit her parents every Friday until her first child is born.

Divorced or Widowed Women

A divorced woman or a widow is allowed by Sindhi Muslim society to marry again, and there is no bar on the marriage of a divorced woman or a widow.

(i) Manginno (Betrothal)

It is a custom or practice only formal and is not a binding by faith. In fact the betrothal is only a preliminary to marriage. One Sindhi proverb says that everyone has a right to throw a stone to a tree full of ripe berries. Therefore, this custom serves the purpose of palpable declaration binding the parents of the boy and the girl to agreement on wedlock between the two in due course.

The ceremony of 'Manginno' is performed at a fixed date keeping in view an auspicious night i.e. Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Friday. On the fixed date, after sunset, 'the parents and the near

relatives of the bridegroom visit the family of the bride, along with the presents for the bride. The presents include the golden or silver ring, three or five suits of fine cloth, the articles of adornment, cosmetics, sweets etc. The parents of the bride also invite the near relatives. The males and females of both the families exchange greetings. After that the presents brought by the parents of bridegroom are sent to the ladies on the side of the bride. In return, milk is offered to the guests. After the milk ceremony, the eldest of all is requested to recite 'Dua-eKher' from the Holy Quran. The sweets brought by the parents of bridegroom are then distributed among all present.

Between the period of betrothal and marriage, the parents of bridegroom send some presents, clothes and shoes, sweets, fruit, and money to the bride, through her parents. The parents of the bride also send some presents to the bridegroom and his parents. It's reciprocal.

(ii) Wanwah

Wanwah is a kind of prelude to the marriage. This ceremony is performed about a week or a few days prior to the marriage day. The ladies- of the bridegroom visit the home of the bride. They bring some sweetmeat, pure ghee, perfumes, perfumed oils, powder, mehndi Hinna etc. for the bride. The bride then sits in a corner of her home and retires of her homework. She wears a large chadar (piece of cloth) and a colorful and decorated veil with eye-holes (Akhyo) to hide her face from sunlight and dust in order to look fresh and beautiful at the time of her wedding. She is also supposed to hide it from the eyes of all the male in the family or outside. This exercise continues till the last day of her marriage Wanwah is considered to be the first phase of the marriage (Wihan). The other stages are 'Buki', mehndi, 'Nikah' and Ladoon or 'mathaerr'.

(iii) Mehndi

(Hina) on the seventh night of the Wanwah, Mehndi (Hina) is applied on the hands and feet of the boy and girl (Baloch, 1978: 121-125). This occasion is also celebrated by singing special songs of Mehndi and dancing by the women of the family and friends.

(iv) Mor a /Sehra Bandi

The bride groom has to wear a veil made of flowers before proceeding to the Nikah ceremony. The Women of the family specially his mother and sisters tie the knots of this Sehro while singing special songs.

(v) Nikah

Marriage ceremony on the eighth day the Nikah ceremony is held. From the boy's side clothes are presented. They are mostly in odd in numbers, e.g. 7, 11 or 21 suits. Generally Kangan and Chooriyon (bangles or bracelet) Tiko and Jhumar (ornaments worn by women on the head and which rest on the forehead); a Nath (a large nose ring) made of gold; two pairs of shoes and a vanity box containing make-up material are offered to the bride from bridegroom's side (This is called Piro or dowery).

From the girl's side gifts, such as one or two suits, shoes, a handkerchief and a ring made of gold (if financially possible) are presented to the boy. In the village the dinner on the day of marriage is hosted by the boy's family. Marriage is the most special day for enjoying & eating, singing and dancing as great pomp and shows as possible.

(vi) Laoon / Matha-merr

After the Nikah is performed the groom is brought inside the house and is made to sit facing towards the bride, on a Sej (Special bed spread). While singing special songs and having fun, the married couples in the family come one by one and holding the heads of the

bride and bride groom lightly touch/ strike them with one another this is called Laoon. This ritual accompanies a few other ' rituals such as Arsi Mushaf (showing the brides face in the mirror) Phul Chundan or Picking flowers and Ann mean or measuring grains all symbolizing loving, happy and prosperous life for the new couple.

Conclusion

Sociology of Sindh traces back to old Indus civilization which is pure, sublime and rich in all respect. In sociological perspective the peoples of Sindh are simple, moderate in their behavior and attitudes. By faith they are Muslims and Sufi minded and a homage to the shrines of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Sachal Sarmast, Qaladar Shahbaz, Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Sufi Shah Inayat and Saami etc.

Sociology of Sindh is the richest and versatile. It is considered as having one of oldest civilization of world. The culture of Sindh is rich with flavor, the land is known as the land of Sufis and peace. Therefore, the sociology of Sindh is the mixture of secular and religious outlook. It includes all types of dresses, dances festivals and religious rituals. It is also one of the cultures of World which has maintained distinctness even it faced cultural wars during different historical periods.

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