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### THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL AUTONOMY & ROLE OF ETHNO-NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF SARAIKI IDENTITY IN SOUTH PUNJAB (ANALYTICAL STUDY)

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**Dr. Sohail Akhtar, Dr. Jawed Hassaan Chandio, Dr. Ayaz Ahmad Rind, Hafiz Muhammad Fiaz, Sajid Hussain. The Struggle for Political Autonomy & Role of Ethno-Nationalist Movement in The Socio-Political Construction of Saraiki Identity in South Punjab (Analytical Study) -- PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 18(18), 1601-1609. ISSN 1567-214x**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The paper is an analytical study of the South Punjab where the people are struggling to establish their political identity in central Pakistan especially in South Punjab. The study emphasis to analyze that the issue of Saraiki movement and demand of new Saraiki province is basically the issue of identity as ethnic and linguistic issue in Punjab as Hazarra in KPK and Karachi in Sindh and it is considered as a challenge for the state how to address it. The demand of Saraiki Province as an identity is connected with language and therefore some political scholars measured it as a linguistic issue. But the changed phenomenon of the world the new administrative units are formed on identity based while language is a tool of expression for the people in every part of the world. Among the large numbers of languages, Saraiki is one of them. In Pakistan the majority people of South Punjab speak Saraiki and continuous claims that they are Saraiki. From the last two decades the issue of Saraiki identity with the demand of Saraiki province raised by the people of this region. This paper highlights the issue of Saraiki identity in Pakistan which is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The topic is a detailed discussion regarding the Issue of Saraiki Identity because all the people of this region South Punjab claim to be Saraiki rather than their own mother tongue. It is thought that the people of this region are marginalized and politically deprived from their representation and socio-economic facilities. The issue of Saraiki identity is one of the important challenges which is facing by the state due to deprived feelings of the people of South Punjab and as a popular tool of power sharing mechanism Saraiki speaking people consider it as linguistic ethnicity for their political representation the separate Province Saraikistan.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Historically, before the recognition of Saraiki the word Saraiki was known with different name in the different era e.g. Multani, Riasti, Jatki, Sirki, Jagdali, Jhangi and Dervi but now this is Saraiki and the people of this belt especially in South Punjab also called Saraiki which was unanimously decided as Saraiki by the Saraiki nationalists in the Saraiki conference 1962.

### ***Ethnic Identity***

Acquisition of political rights is becoming an important and fundamental issue in different parts of the world. The struggle for national identity of the Saraiki people living in the southern part of Punjab, as in other parts of Pakistan, is a link in the same chain. The Saraiki linguistic group has been trying to establish its separate identity under different names and periods. The main aspect is to achieve their political representation and rights in the existing political system. In Modern Political perspective there are various tools of politics to gain representation and among them ethnicity is also one of the best and most important, remarkable and vibrant concept of identity in twentieth century for politically marginalized groups to use it as a tool of power sharing mechanism. As a state of plural societies Pakistan, where multi-ethnic and multi lingual groups i.e Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtoon, Baloch, Saraiki and Muhajir are the inhabitant. All these groups tried to establish their dominancy and marginalized groups also struggled for their identity after the emergence of Pakistan. The debacle of East Pakistan also encouraged the other regional groups to loud their voices for their representation and political identity. Now people of the South Punjab are demanding Saraikistan as their socio-political identity. They consider it a solution against Punjabi dominancy. People of the South Punjab claim Saraiki a different linguistic group than Punjabi as a dialect of Punjabi. They want their political representation on their Saraiki identity with their separate Saraiki province. This paper is an attempt to highlights the historical and cultural aspects of the Saraiki region.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Literature review is an integral part of the research and in this regard the most relevant data has been consulted to compile this research with the help of primary and secondary based sources as books, articles, interviews, parliamentary proceedings, elections record and newspapers. The historic method has been used for this research paper with qualitative approach.

## DISCUSSION

The issue of identity is becoming a serious challenge in the world and the main reason for this philosophy is not only the acquisition of fundamental rights but also the acquisition of power. The desire for identity of every individual in society cannot be denied. And if an individual or a group is tried to be suppressed, it competes with the dominant group for the survival of its identity. In the modern age the authoritarian democracy has provided an opportunity to the people to get their representation and in this context the marginalized groups use their unity as their tool of existence in the system. The concept of identity as the core to understand sovereignty and democracy. Identity as a concept and its relation with democracy is one of the fundamental parts of human wisdom and in plural societies a tool of power sharing mechanism.<sup>1</sup> With the emergence of Pakistan the challenge of identity started through local and regional identities. Pakistan badly affected with the formation of One Unit province. The marginalized groups felt the adverse position of their representation. Especially, the People of South Punjab also looked marginalized collectively in all disciplines. Therefore they are demanding separate province for their Identity on lingual basis.

### *Ethnic Identity*

Ethnicity is also used for identity because it represents a group having same qualities and in plural societies people enjoyed their identity through racial, lingual and cultural basis. It is also important for politics because ethnicity and politics has reciprocal for one another in democratic process. In the authoritarian type of democracy, it has provided a good opportunity to the people that they use the power of ethno-nationalism as a tool for their identity. After the emergence of Pakistan, the delay of constitution increased the ethnic concerns of different groups in Pakistan and they demanded the representation against dominant groups. The voices raised on socio-religious, ethnic, lingual and racial bases. One unit created the feelings of exploitations among the provinces not only but promoted intra-provincial difference and intra-ethnic problems. In election 1970, the separation of East Pakistan was a clear message for marginalized groups to loud their voices for their rights. Punjab is a multi-lingual province and Punjabis represent the largest ethnic group in Pakistan of total population especially in Punjab and Saraiki is the second largest ethnic group.<sup>2</sup> Saraiki population is Districts of the Punjab are following;

District	Population %	District	Population
D.G Khan	84%	Raheem Yar Khan	63%
Rajapur	76%	Lodhran	70%
Layyah	63%	Mianwali	60%
Muzaffargarh	86%	Vihari	15%
Multan	61%	BWP	65%
Bakhar	72%		

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<sup>1</sup> Erick Erickson, Identity, Youth and Crisis, Oxford, 1997, P.9

<sup>2</sup> Government of Pakistan, Population of Administrative Units, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The data is collected and compiled from District Census Reports published by Population Census Organization,

The Saraiki speaking group is the major linguistic group of south Punjab especially in Bakhar, Mianwali, Dera Ismail Khan, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan and Bahawalpur Division. While the adjoining areas of Sindh and Balochistan with South Punjab i.e Kashmore and Barkhan, Loralai Districts have a majority of Saraiki speaking group. All these areas are considered the predominantly the Saraiki speaking regions.<sup>4</sup> As Dr. Christopher Shackle claims that Saraiki is a totally different language of central Pakistan as compared to Punjabi or a dialect of Punjabi.<sup>5</sup> In the linguistic survey of India Grierson also claimed that the language which spoken in the West of the Jhelum to the Bahawalnagar region is a Southern Lahinda. While Lahinda is a Punjabi word which used for West, while Hindko as well as Pothohari languages are the northern Lahinda. Gankovsky considers, Saraiki a dialect of the Punjabi. He claims that since 15th century to onward, Punjabi was used a generic name to Lahori, Pothohari, Multani, Bahawalpuri and for western and eastern dialects.<sup>6</sup> These notions are totally false and had no reality because the Punjabi intellectuals always tried to prove Saraiki as dialect of Punjabi. Although Saraiki is the language of Southern Punjab and it is spoken in the areas of Sindh and eastern Balochistan. While during the British era, in the South Saraiki was considered falsely as a dialect of Sindhi. Multani Riasti, Lahinda and the other dialects were also included to Punjabi.<sup>7</sup> Same practices were continued till census 1981. During Zia era Saraiki listed as separate language.<sup>8</sup> The population of Punjab is ethnically heterogeneous and this diversity is intensifying political and ethnic issues. Southern parts of Punjab are demanding separate province. Saraiki movement was started in 1960 when first time a move was launched to divide Punjab. Shafqat Tanvir Mirza writes that first time the slogan of local and non-local was raised in Multan in 1962 elections by Sajjad Qureshi Sajjad Qureshi raised the point that Multani is a separate language. The word Saraiki was not in vogue in those days. He also claims that certain bureaucrats in Ayub period, who were very close to him, like Qudrat Ullah Shahab, supported Multani as a separate language.<sup>9</sup> According to Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, another early protagonist of Saraiki province was senior irrigation Engineer Syed Noor Ali Zaman Haidri<sup>10</sup> it was in 1971, Bahawalpur Suba Mahaz movement after the dissolution of One Unit got momentum. Riaz Hashmi formed in 1973, Saraiki Suba Mahaz, the first political organization in Bahawalpur. In 1975, All Pakistan Saraiki Conference was held to promote the cause of Saraiki language. In 1975, the Lawyers of Lahore High Court belonging to Saraiki speaking areas joined this movement and a Saraiki forum was established by Taj Langah, a Lawyer of Multan.<sup>11</sup> On 6th of April, 1984, Saraiki Suba Mahaz was established

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Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, P.124.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Shackle, Language, Dialect, and Local Identities in Northern Pakistan (ed.), Wolf Gang Peter Zingal, p.316.

<sup>6</sup> Garison, The Linguistic Survey of India. P.54.

<sup>7</sup> Feroz Ahmed, Ethnicity, State and National Integration, Pakistan Perspectives, Vol. 4. No, 2, July December 1999, Karachi, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, pp.25-26.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Census Report 1981, Pakistan Census Bureau, Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad.

<sup>9</sup> Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, The Origin and Politics of Saraiki Movement, Daily Dawn, Lahore, Sunday, May 24, 2009, p.19

<sup>10</sup> Tariq Rehman in his book Language and Politics in Pakistan also shares the same point. For details see, page no. 180.

<sup>11</sup> Umbreen Javaid, Saraiki Political Movement; Its impact in South Punjab, Journal of Research (Humanities)

which latter in April 1989 was changed into Pakistan Saraiki Party. This was the first time in Zia regime when Saraiki was listed as a separate language. But even there a contradiction exists within the groups demanding the division of the province. As the southern Districts are predominantly Saraiki but there is a split among Saraiki Nationalists on the issue of Saraiki Province. Bahawalpur province movement is getting strength and their demand is that Rahim Yar Khan to Bahawalnagar including Bahawalpur should be declared a separate province. The protagonists demand that Bahawalpur State was merged into One Unit in 1955. At that time, the government had stipulated that the princely state would revert to its original status. The demographic study of these districts shows that there is substantial number of Punjabi speaking communities in these areas. As in Bahawalpur the Punjabi is the language of one third population. In Rahim Yar Khan, the ratio of Punjabi speaking is more than one third. As far as Bahawalnagar is concerned, the Punjabis are in majority.

In South Punjab the feelings of exploitation increased due to backwardness and a low-level development. As compare to upper Punjab the people are more deprived from their basic rights. This perception has considered as the Punjabization supremacy against South Punjab. After All Pakistan Saraiki Conference the slogan of Saraikistan is an attempt to construct the Saraiki identity. The leaders of Saraiki Soba Mahaz is an important example this new phenomenon of the social construction of Saraiki identity in South Punjab. The Saraiki nationalists also claimed that Saraiki language is different language than Punjabi. Therefore, the people of South Punjab are struggling for their representation on lingual basis ethnicity. They considered themselves as marginalized group in Punjab and now they are continuously demanding Saraiki province as Saraikistan rather than South Punjab which is a mostly dominated by the Saraiki speaking people. After 2010, during PPP government, Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani announced to constitute Saraiki province as a slogan of PPP but they could not establish Saraiki province due to shortage of numbers for legislation. PTI also included Saraiki Province in its manifesto in election 2018 but again similar position as PPP and the voice of the province is still in progress. This research paper highlights the role of ethnicity in the social construction of Saraiki identity in South Punjab.

The research also clarifies that an ethnic group living in a particular area that is not under the influence of any other group in its vicinity needs its political representation rather than its core issue. Is. The inter-political system of mixed ethnic states either dominates or exploits a group. In this way, the fear of ethnic groups is justified and this fear is because the current political system deprives some small political groups of representation in the name of national politics. If we talk about Pakistan, it is facing group and ethnic politics due to its multi-ethnicity. While the local leadership in different areas also encourages ethnic politics. Which is considered a means of obtaining political representation.

The movement of Saraiki province is the major demand of the people in the Southern Punjab for their political rights. The demand has become strong after 2010 when Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. Punjab

is a largely populated province of the country and the people of southern Punjab are mostly deprived from their basic facilities of life and they thought the upper Punjab and the Punjabi Bureaucracy is responsible for this socio-economic discrimination. After the National Saraiki Conference 1961 all the intellectuals of Saraiki nationalist bitterly raised their voice for the formation of new Saraiki province on the base of Saraiki language and this region. Muslim League Nawaz and Peoples Party used this demand as election slogan to gain the sympathy of the people of southern Punjab but after election they neglected this issue and even used tactics to delay this matter and also raised couple of provinces as Bahawalpur and Multan to divide the people of this region. Actually the issue of Saraikistan is basically the matter of Saraiki identity which is linked with socio-economic perspective of disparity and inequality. The region is thought the most backward area of Punjab due to lack of sources. Health, Education and modes of employment are unavailable. This paper highlights the issue of identity in southern Punjab which is the basic element for the separate province of Saraikistan. The issue of the construction Saraiki identity is also due to the social and economic inequality. At the time of the freedom movement of Pakistan all ethnic groups constructed their Muslim identity. But after that people of south Punjab merged with Punjabi identity. Without any suitable representation and economic interests created a sense of exploitation among the ethnic groups the region and they created a new social identity after 1961 when some nationalists proposed Saraiki as a new social identity for this region not on linguistic base but also on territorial basis. All the ethnic groups as Saraiki, Punjabi, Muhajir and Baloch have a new identity as Saraiki. While people in the South Punjab are angry and have lot of concerns regarding economic interests. Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan and Dhareja<sup>12</sup> states that the demand for a separate province in south Punjab is a reaction of the people against the dominant Punjabi elites. He also claims that formation of separate Saraiki province will be decrease ethnic tension. This new province will bring a balance between Saraiki and Punjabi regarding financial and economic sources. Dhareja explains that this act will also be grant and awarded a very suitable share in the NFC Award to separate province, The Saraiki nationalists, therefore constructed a new identity in the form of Saraikistan. Saraikistan is an identical Unit for all the inhabiting ethnic groups i.e. Saraiki, Punjabi, Muhajirs Pathans and Baloch and they are called Saraiki for their regional and territorial identity.

There are different concepts and theories about the Saraikis, their meaning, term and origin. Danni<sup>13</sup> claims its originates is linked an ancient Sauvira dynasty or Kingdom, which is mentioned in the Mahabharata. It is accepted by the various linguistic experts of Pakistan.

Grierson<sup>14</sup> explained in Linguistic Survey of India Saraiki mean North. He argued, "it is Siro which mean North in Sindhi language". Shackle<sup>15</sup> rejects such concept. While some Scholars explain the originated is from word "Sarai"

<sup>12</sup> Zahor Ahmad , Dhareja, "Saraiki Soba Pakistan Ki Zrort" Jhok Publishers,Multan,2017,P.4-5.,53

<sup>13</sup> Dani, A.H. 1981. Sindhu-Sauvira: A Glimpse into the Early History of Sind. H. Khusro (ed.), Sind through the Centuries. . Karachi: Oxford University Press, pp. 35-42.

<sup>14</sup> Grierson, G.A. Lahnda or Western Punjabi. Linguistic Survey of India, vol. 8(Part-I). Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2005..

<sup>15</sup> Shackle, C. 1977. Saraiki: A Language Movement in Pakistan. Modern Asian Studies 11(3), P.379-403.

“which mean is one of a place of the rest on the road side. South Punjab was considered gateway for those invaders whom came from Afghanistan or Iran towards subcontinent. They came through Sakhi Sarwar Pass located Dera Ghazi Khan. On this route, many *Sarays* were built for the caravans and traders. They used these Sarays for stay. This word is considered for Saraiki, Rehman<sup>16</sup> claims, Multani rulers of Sumras whom also ruled over Sindh, Multan as well as Uch used the Saraiki as official language. Saraiki is also observed on walls of a fort in Bahawalpur, a period of Devanagari script. Few Punjabi linguists claim Saraiki is dialect of the Punjabi language. But Rehman rejected it and claims that classical writings in Punjabi of central and northern Punjab are largely relate to the Saraiki language.

If it is carefully observe, millions of the people speak Saraiki language in central Pakistan particularly in South Punjab, Upper Sindh, Dera Ismail Khan and eastern Balochistan i.e in Loralai District and Naseer Abad. Saraiki is one of the major language in South Punjab not only but other regional languages as Pashtu, Sindhi and Balochi also used in Saraiki belt due to its geographical and geo strategic position as it is the junction of four provinces.

Saraiki nationalists demanded Saraiki identity and issue was raised by in a politically radical way. In the Census 1981 Saraiki as a language included in the national census as one of the regional language. It was also a reaction against the Punjabi dominancy as Punjabi intellectual tried to declare Saraiki as a dialect of Punjabi. Therefore the demand of separate Saraiki province in south Punjab is basically the result of Punjabi politics and poor economic conditions in South Punjab. In Punjab Saraiki is not considered a separate regional language but a dialect of the Punjabi language. In Punjab's educational institutions, the text books for Punjabi a book is prepared, which are also taught at undergraduate and graduate level in South Punjab and it is clearly indicates Saraiki as a dialect of Punjabi language. While no Saraiki poet included in textbook of Punjabi. Due to this feeling of inferiority, some Saraiki speaking parents teach their children to speak Urdu and English and instruct them that it is better for them. Will provide suitable employment opportunities for In 2011 and 2012, Pakistan's largest political party, the People's Party, used the slogan of making South Punjab a separate province for political gain. However, this was not possible at the time because the political party did nothing about it in the 18th Amendment. However, the formation of new provinces is no longer the manifesto of any major political party. All political parties use the slogan of new province in order to get the votes of sympathy. After the election they resort to constitutional compulsion and postpone its formation. Government does not consider this proposal at time because other ethnic identities have similar grievances and demands as Hazarywal and Muhajir that may not be possible for the state to accept this demand. Another demand is to divide Punjab in upper Punjab, South Punjab and Bahawalpur province. While a voice has also risen to restore Bahawalpur as a province before it merged into the One Unit in 1955. For the satisfaction of the people in south Punjab it is necessary for the state to make some certain constitutional amendments to fulfill the demands of various ethnic identities based on economic interests. The demand of Saraiki province

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<sup>16</sup> Rahman, T. P.454.

is a serious political and constitutional challenge for the state. The result of Election- 2018 clearly indicates that people of South Punjab supported the PTI candidates or its alliance which contested the elections with the slogan of separate Saraiki province. In the elections 46 seats of the National Assembly of three divisions of South Punjab PTI won 30 out of 46 seats of the National Assembly.

Sr.##	Division	Total Seats	PTI Seats	PMLN	PPPP
1	Multan	16	11	05	Nil
2	Bahawalpur	15	07	06	02
3	D.G.Khan	15	12	Nil	03

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### CONCLUSION

As conclusion of this debate identity is a concept which constitutes a relation among the individuals to groups and develops high traits of equality, love, justice and rights for the people. Identity creates loyalty to a social group or community to achieve political rights and representation. Saraiki identity is considered an important challenge for the state of Pakistan and political parties are basically try to avoid the division of large province Punjab. For constitutional amendment PMLN is not ready to support the division of Punjab. Saraiki people are feeling continuously deprivation and exploitation as marginalized groups due Punjabization and their dominancy. They claim that they are deprived from fundamental rights and their political representation. The under developed condition of the region and lack of facilities motivated them to demand a separate province for their rights. As a marginalized group they still have a fear for their survival and want to form their identity on linguistic based ethnicity which has become a mechanism of power in the modern era of the world after the post-colonial war. Saraiki which is an ancient language and the patronage of the civilization but thee different intellectuals called it as a dialect of Punjabi or Sindhi is a real threat of Saraiki identity to the people and that's why the Saraiki nationalist are trying to establish a new province after the Saraiki conference of 1961. During Bhutto and Zia period the voice of Saraiki province louded but could not successful. During the era of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, he addressed in National Assembly and announced that PPP will form Saraiki province as political point scoring but could not take practical step due to simple majority. Due to a plural state ethnicity is a major factor in Pakistani politics and that's why ethnicity has an important role in the social construction of the Saraiki identity. In election 2018, the politicians of South Punjab formed Soba Mahaz and contested the elections as alliance of PTI with this promise they will form South Punjab province and after the victory in elections on ethnic based, the promise is still pending and it looks impossible due to simple majority. So it is concluded with this reality that the role of ethnicity is very important in the social construction of Saraiki identity because the people of the area are now agree on Saraiki ethnic group as compare to Punjabi in South Punjab. In short the issue of Saraiki identity is also linked with a new province and that's why the demand of separate Saraiki province in South

<sup>17</sup>.Election-2018, National Assembly Result Gazette Islamabad.



Punjab is rising gradually to achieve the political rights for the people of South Punjab on linguistic basis which is the important tool of identity.

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