



RESEARCH PAPER

Representation of Cultural Values in Balochi Classical Poetry

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ABSTRACT

The study explores classical Balochi poetry from the 16th century onwards, tracing its evolution through different eras and highlighting key themes of bravery, love, and societal norms. The research methodology employs qualitative analysis, focusing on classical poetries from renowned Balochi literature works. Thematic coding is utilized to categorize and analyze recurring cultural themes, offering a deeper understanding of how poets represented Baloch cultural identity. The paper explores cultural elements such as the protection of "bāhoat," adherence to vows, the tradition of revenge ("Beirgiri"), and the social practice of "Shigaan" or taunting. The intricate analysis sheds light on the multifaceted nature of Balochi classical poetry, emphasizing its role as a preserver of cultural identity. The paper concludes by suggesting the need for further research to unearth hidden nuances within the poetic tradition and explore contemporary resonances of Balochi classical poetry in the context of cultural preservation and identity assertion.

Keywords: Baloch Cultural Codes, Balochi Classical Poetry, Protection of Bahoot, Social Practices, Tradition of Revenge

Introduction

Culture is a very broad term that includes in its self all our walks of life, our modes of behaviour, our philosophies and ethics, our morals and manners, our customs and tradition, our religious, political, economic and other types of activities in the society.

Basically, culture is a concept of anthropology. The British anthropologist, Sir Edward Tylor in his book primitive culture projected that culture, systems of human behaviour and thought, follow natural laws therefore can be studied scientifically. His definition of culture provides an overview of the subject matter of anthropology and thus quoted widely, "Culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1871/1958, p. 1). According to Phatak, Bhagat, and Kashlak, "Culture is a concept that has been used in several social science disciplines to explain variations in human thought processes in different parts of the world." According to J.P. Lederach, "Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them." Whereas anthropologist Clifford Geertz defines culture as ideas based on cultural learning and symbols. Cultures have been characterized as sets of "control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions, what computer engineers call programs for the governing of behavior" (Geertz 1973, p. 44). We absorb these programs through enculturation in a particular tradition. People gradually internalize a previously

established system of meanings and symbols. This cultural system helps them define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgments. Our culture helps guide our behaviour and perceptions throughout our lives (Kottak,2017).

Literature serves as a creative endeavor that vividly portrays the human experience within a given society, offering enjoyment, comprehension, and practical application for the community. It functions as a vehicle for societal communication, reflecting life's realities and interpreting human expressions to provide insights into living. Pradopo (1994) emphasizes that literary works serve as depictions of the world and human existence, with truth being a pivotal criterion for any portrayal by the author. Literature serves as a representation and exploration of diverse facets of life, as noted by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (2009), who assert that it encompasses not only written content but also spoken words, expressions, and inventions in various forms.

The components that work together in a common environment to advance human values and customs are culture, language, and literature. These are the tools that serve as a reflection of the culture in which they are used. They are the voice of human communication as well as a representation of their innate abilities, productivity, and inner ideas. Collectively, they offer a solid foundation for a healthy society (Shah & Shah, 2015).

Whereas literature is considered to be the sources of manifestation of internal and external or overt and covert feelings and conditions of any society. Literature enables to understand the nature, soul, feelings, expression, wishes, experiences, observations, experimentation, concept of goodness and badness of the society. In this regard, Balochi literature is the most influential source of manifestation of Baloch society. In this way, Balochi literature was not unconscious from the surrounding, social environment, traditions and customs and culture of Baloch society. This has a strong bond with its land and culture. It means that Balochi Poetry generated a strong civilizational heritage in its background which connects with intellectual and creative aspects of various generations of Baloch. This reflects the culture, social values, history, thinking process, feelings and conditions of the Baloch society (Buzdar, 1998: 49).

Balochi poetry traces its roots back to the 16th century, specifically within the poetic era of Mir Chakar. However, it is acknowledged that the existence of Balochi poetry predates this period, suggesting that poetic compositions waxed and waned alongside the evolution of the language. The literary works from this era, as reflected in the novels, indicate a sophisticated and advanced form of poetry. It is evident that our literary heritage was not effectively transmitted to us before this period. The poetry from Mir Chakar's time embodies values such as truth, justice, sanctity, revenge, Baloch self-respect, and bravery. These compositions are predominantly martial and historical, involving the intellectual minds of that era. In the 18th century, the centralization of government in vast Balochistan areas influenced the emergence of a distinct citizenship with its values, consequently impacting Balochi poetry. The prevalence of romantic poetry over war-related verses during this time conveyed messages of sensitivity, love, friendship, and, most importantly, peace and security. Notable poets like James Doric contributed significantly to this shift. Moving into the 19th century, poets such as Mulla Fazal, Mulla Qasim, Izzat Panjguri, Mast Tawakuli, Mulla Ibrahim Bahui, Mulla Bohir, and Mulla Bahram continued to enrich Balochi poetry (Sohail, 2023).

In Balochi classical poetry bravery and love are the basics of Baloch culture and customs. The characteristic of classical, i.e. maturity of mind, maturity of social style,

maturity of language which are marked by T.S Eliot are observed widely in Balochi classical poetry in each and every aspect (Sharaf Shad, 2020).

According to Altaf Baloch, Balochi classical poetry is not only the history of Baloch poetry rather it is societal, national, cultural and linguistic history. It is also the history of our daily routine activities. Likewise, the classical poetry has two significant parts i.e. war and love (2020).

We get the symbols from the folk literature. Folk literature is the manifestation and guidance of civilization, social behaviour and social activities of any society. Apart from all the wonders of nature, folk poetry gives glimpses of social and cultural life. Balochi folk poetry is full of such examples. This includes from birth to death, pregnancy to marriage, joys to sorrows, and all ceremonies and festivals songs. This clearly provides a true picture of emotional relationships and socio-cultural values. The soul of Baloch nation is seen clearly dancing.

These continuity and attributes are abundantly seen in Balochi classical poetry as well. Where not only the beauty of nature and colours of the seasons are seen but various aspects of cultural values are also attributed in it like fulfilment of promises (Qool o Qarar), hospitality (mehman nawzi), bravery, refugee (Bahut), joys and sorrows (Khushi o gham), tolerance (rawadri).

Bravery, Love and poetry are considered the basic pillar of Baloch culture on which the sociocultural structure of Baloch society stand on it. The meaning of bravery is the self-esteem, national respect and devotion to the land. The process of love and poetry are considered to be bravery and human self-esteem. Because it is understood in the Baloch society that only brave people can do love and poetry. Because without strength and integration love and poetry both are impossible.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for understanding the representation of culture in classical poetry is constructed upon several foundational concepts and theoretical lenses that guide the exploration of cultural nuances within poetic expressions.

As per Hall (2005), The ability of description or imagination is called representation. Representation is significant because formation of culture is done through meaning and language, likewise, language is considered symbolic form or a type of representation.

Language serves as a medium via which all members of a culture may share the meaning of culture. Hall uses this to highlight the need of representation in social contact and communication. In fact, he claims that representation is a fundamental communication requirement that is necessary for human interaction (Nugroho, 2020).

Moreover, Hall (1997) categorized the representation into three categories. 1) Reflective Representation, 2) Intentional Representation, and 3) Constructionist Representations. Language or different symbols that reflect meaning are examples of reflective representation. When a speaker uses language or symbols to express their own goals, this is known as intentional representation. Constructivism describes the process of reconstructing meaning "in" and "through" language.

Hall developed two techniques for constructionist representation: the semiotic approach and the discourse approach. This way of thinking is similar to the media studies principles of encoding and decoding that Hall established. While decoding is the process by which information consumption reconstructs the information, encoding is the way in which the speaker packages the information (creating information) (Storey, 2006: 11-12).

The Cultural Representation Theory forms the foundational pillar of this theoretical framework. Drawing on the works of Stuart Hall (1997) and Stuart Hall et al. (2013) in cultural studies, this theory posits that classical poetry acts as a mirror reflecting the multifaceted aspects of a culture. It explores how poets, consciously or unconsciously, embed cultural elements, symbols, and values within their verses, shaping and preserving the cultural identity of a community. This lens encourages an in-depth examination of the ways poets employ language, imagery, and themes to represent the lived experiences and traditions of their culture.

Material and Methods

This investigation is carried out within the realm of qualitative research, which entails the gathering and examination of non-numeric data to understand concepts, viewpoints, or personal experiences. In this research classical poetries are studied, and researchers analysed the data through interpretation or subjective meaning attached to these classical poetries. Data are collected from five famous Balochi classical poetries books written by prominent scholars and researchers. The name of books; Meeras by Faqeer Shad (2016), Balochi Classical Shahiri by Ghafoor Shad (2014), Popular Poetry of the Balochis by L.W. Dames (1988), Balochi Kohanen Shahiri by Sher Muhammad Marri (1963) and Balochi Ashqia Shahiri by Gul Khan Naseer (1979). A purposive sampling technique was used to select classical poetries from these selected books. In the Purposive sampling technique researchers choose the subjects according to his/her opinion apply to the topic of study. Thus, the chosen sample encompasses a diversity of themes, linguistic styles, and historical periods within the Baloch poetic tradition. Through a meticulous examination of the linguistic nuances, metaphors, and cultural symbols embedded in the poems, this study aims to unveil the layers of cultural representation. Thematic coding was employed to categorize and analyzed recurring cultural themes, and a comparative analysis across the selected books was discerned variations and consistencies in the representation of Baloch culture.

Results and Discussion

Balochi literature, rooted in the rich cultural tapestry of the Baloch people, serves as a vital manifestation of their societal norms, values, and history. The study explores classical Balochi poetry from the 16th century onwards, tracing its evolution through different eras and highlighting key themes of bravery, love, and societal norms. The data are presented and interpreted thematically.

Protection of Bāhoat

A person granted protection was referred to as a "bāhoat." This protection could be either implicit or explicit, with neighbors always being considered as being under this safeguard. The Baloch people considered it their primary duty to defend a bāhoat, and they were willing to use force, if necessary, to protect the life and belongings of the person under their care. In theory, anyone could request this protection, and such

requests were generally accepted without hesitation, regardless of the potential risks involved. However, individuals with declared criminal status were typically not granted this privilege. The straightforward method of seeking bāhoat status involved entering a Baloch's home and expressing the desire for protection. The Baloch not only took on the responsibility of defending the bāhoat but also, if needed, resorted to armed actions to recover lost property or seek retribution for any injustices perpetrated against the protected individual (Dashti, 2022).

قول انت پہ بلوچی ننگء

گوبرام ٻل نہ بیت اے رنگ ء

ناحقین کُشگ ہزانی

تاتکہ محشر ء ارمانی

میان اش کج اتان جنگانی

اتکان یک گورے نوبانی

ورنا زبرکنیں پادآتکان

لیبویں بہان اش آنورتاں

گوں نہ سد زیم جنیں گازیان

گوں نہ سد بلمہریں تازیان

ورنا ئے تمام زمینتاں

(میراث، فقیر شاد، ستمبر 2016: 67)

"Vows for Balochi respect, Gohram will not be left like this, for killing of innocent calves till the day of judgment, tightened the backbone for battle, from one side Nohani came, emotional youngsters stood up, toys of mares are brought, with 900 poets fighters and with 900 dogs, all the youngsters were taken".

The 30-year conflict between the Rind and Lashaar tribes was reportedly instigated by an incident involving Gohar's camels, as she held the status of Baahot under Mir Chaakar, the Rind Chief. The Lashaar allegedly killed Gohar's baby camels following a dispute triggered by what seemed to be an unjust decision by Rind judges in a horse race between Raamen Lashaar and Rehaan Rind. Despite advice from Meeraan and Beebagr, Mir Chaakar chose to wage war against the Lashaar, adamant about teaching them a lesson. Mir Chaakar argued that the Lashaar had insulted the entire tribe by harming the camels of Gohar, who was under his protection. Despite losing the battle, Mir Chaakar refused to accept any accusations that might have arisen had he not promptly responded to the provocative act by the Lashaar.

Keeping the Vows

Commitments, known as vows or kaul/soagend, held significant importance in Baloch society. When a Baloch made a solemn promise or swore to undertake or avoid specific actions, he steadfastly adhered to that pledge of honor. Occasionally, these vows led to unfortunate outcomes. The Baloch typically pledged by invoking the sanctity of

his father's head, his sword, or simply by holding his beard while expressing the intentions of what he would or would not do.

ایش انت منی قول ء بنا

پشمبے ء سٹھب ء سر ء

من مسجد ء وانان نماز

کسے دادبہ لوٹیت چہ من ء

من دادن ء بند نہ باں

(مرید)

(ہزانگ: فقیر شاد،، اپریل 2016: 155)

"This is my vows and promise, Early morning of Thursday, I offer prayer in the mosque, if someone wants praise from me, then praises would not be stopped".

On a Thursday morning, Shey Mureed pledged that he would never turn down whatever a minstrel requested. When a group of minstrels sent by Mir Chaakar specifically asked him to marry Haani, to whom he was engaged, he publicly stated his decision not to do so. He became a Darwish after experiencing severe mental suffering, having to leave the area for several years, but he fulfilled his word.

The Tradition of Revenge (*Beirgiri*)

One of the main components of the traditional Baloch social customs was revenge. It would turn into the main goal for a lifetime or longer. An ancient Baloch's life was changed and revolved around one goal: to get revenge for the killing of his people. As long as his relative's blood remains unpaid and his *beir* or revenge is outstanding, he thinks of himself as a man waiting for an opportune moment to take revenge.

In avenging blood, any method could be adopted which was considered necessary. However, it was a normal principle that before attacking, the victim was warned and reminded of his guilt because deceitful manners were generally considered below Baloch status.

An enmity once started never subsided. Blood must have to be paid in blood.

سنگ اگان چاتانی بن ء ریز انت

کینگ چہ مردانی دل ء کنز انت

نہ سنگ ریز انت نہ کینگ کنز انت

بیر بلوچانی دان دو سد سال ء

لسہیں آہوگے دو دنتانیں

"If stone could melt away in waters then the spirit of revenge could be subsided, but neither the stone melt away nor the spirit of revenge could be extinguished in Baloch heart. For two centuries it persists and remains smart like a young deer of tender age".

Baloch culture had evolved to strongly value revenge. It would turn into the main goal for a lifetime or longer. The need to get revenge for the blood of his relatives altered and centred his whole existence.

گس گبرے پہ گاری ء نیلیت

من وتی آریپس پتء بیراں

چون کلاں گوں دژمنیں مرداں

کہ بیر منی چمانی تہ ء گرداں

(میراث، فقیر شاد، ستمبر 2016: 233)

"Individuals who seek revenge experience restless nights, remain vigilant throughout the day, disregard advice from adversaries, relinquish material wealth, and are willing to sacrifice their lives. How could he forget the murder of a great father or brother or any other relative when nobody would give up easily even a pie lost in the jungle?"

Shigaan

The Baloch people consistently upheld a demeanor marked by respect and honor, their conduct guided by a stringent social code. Any display of weakness or deviation from the accepted social ethos was met with scornful rebuke from the community, constituting a profound insult. Taunting, known as shigaan, served as an integral element in Baloch culture, functioning as a permanent check on the behavior of its members. It represented an unfiltered and sincere expression of others' opinions about each other. Individuals were acutely aware of the potential for mockery, not only for their own actions but also for those of their family and friends.

Mistakes, whether inadvertent or committed by family members, were promptly evaluated, leading to immediate and scornful ridicule. Such derision typically occurred at Diwaan or during ceremonial occasions. A person whose spouse was suspected of infidelity would face either direct or indirect derisive contempt from others. Failure to avenge the blood of a relative resulted in social disdain, with individuals being looked down upon with hatred and subjected to mockery. If someone fled from the battlefield, curses followed them, and their actions were remembered even after death, with subsequent generations receiving appropriate taunting.

The Baloch people, unafraid of death, harbored a profound aversion to living a life tainted by disgrace. The sentiment "One dies once, but if the living is taunted a hundred times, it is no doubt far worse than death" encapsulated the idea that enduring continuous taunts was deemed unbearable, emphasizing the significance placed on honor and reputation in Baloch society.

Various scenarios invited taunting: a person suspected of having an unfaithful spouse, someone failing to avenge the blood of a relative, or an individual fleeing from the battlefield. Baloch society held a strong aversion to living a life of disgrace, valuing honor over fear of death. Mir Gwahaam, the Lashaar chief, taunted Mir Chaakar, the

Rind tribe chief, after a defeat, challenging his leadership and intelligence. This insult spurred Chaakar to vow revenge.

In the battle of Panipat, Bibi Baanadi's taunting of the Baloch Lashkar not only incited fierce fighting but also influenced the battle's outcome. Similarly, the mother of Doda taunted him, asserting that those who kept Baahot would never rest peacefully, prompting Doda to join a raiding party and meet his demise. Graannaaz, disappointed by her husband Lalla's retreat from the battlefield, severed their marital ties, unable to accept being married to someone she perceived as a coward. Honor and reputation were of paramount importance in Baloch society, making the impact of taunts and insults particularly significant.

The story goes like this:

پہر من بستنت پیسری روچاں
 گوں وتی جانی دز گہارکاں !
 کنیت تنی شیریں گشتن ۽ احوال
 گوں سری ورنایاں شلا نگیں
 نیل کناں کل ۽ ہر چہار سریگاں
 در کناں پراہ کنڈیں کڈولیاں
 گوش بنانی پارسنگیں دُراں
 مالک و نیل آپاں کناں سُہراں
 درستان من زیانیں من زیانیں خُہے شیاں
 سر مصیبتیں میڑہے ، ننداں
 نہ تلیں باہنیکاں بُوریناں
 سیل کناں جام ۽ بیر میں کوٹ ۽
 بلوچی لوک داستانیں ، غوث بخش صابر ، 2011: 125-126)

Some time ago I used to express pride, Sitting among my dear friends, That the news of your death like a lion will come, Along with the names of the men who would die in the first attack of the war, Then I will put mourning marks on the four walls of my house, And I will put away the heavy bracelets, Earrings and gold ornaments, I will scratch and make a mournful face, Put all the jewellery in a lost and found safe, I will sit in the crowd of mourners, Bangles with nine layers will be broken, And the eyes will be fixed on the formidable tower of Jam Fort.

Graannaaz, daughter of Mir Baaraan, a nobleman of Kalmath, was married to Lalla. A few days after their marriage, Baaraan and his sons had to fight an old enemy. Lalla also decided to fight on the side of his father-in-law. During the fight, Baaraan and his sons were killed while Lalla received grievous injuries and was about to fall from the horse back when his trusted servant whipped his horse away to save his life. Reports came to Graannaaz that her father and brothers had been killed. The proud lady was told that while the battle was going on, Lalla had withdrawn from the fight and had fled

away. This was the gravest insult to Graannaaz who could not think of her husband as a coward. She had boasted before her friends that Lalla would be among the first few brave people to be killed in the battle. She swore not to accept Lalla as her husband.

Conclusion

This literature review highlights the multifaceted nature of scholarship on the representation of culture in Balochi classical poetry. The historical evolution, thematic analysis, and linguistic exploration converge to provide a comprehensive understanding of how poets have effectively captured and preserved the cultural identity of the Baloch people.

The society was based on the Baloch code of conduct and traditions which had a stronger influence than any statutory law. Even the *Sarḡār* could not act contrary to tribal principles evolved throughout centuries. He was to follow these principles in his public as well as his private life and to apply them to every member of the tribe. He was answerable in his action to the council which was the custodian of the tribal code. By the time, under the prevailing circumstance of perpetual conflicts, the tribal system evolved from a rudimentary one to a more sophisticated union of various tribes making a *rāj* and manifesting the tribal feelings of unity into an ethnic or national identity.

Living a life of continuous hostilities with other tribes and powers, personal bravery became an integral part of the ancient Baloch social traditions. Respect for the brave while despising the coward was an important social behavior. However, they fought their battles keeping in utmost regards the highest possible noble traditions regarding the enemy and the non-combatants. The sanctity of home was among the fundamentals of the Baloch war ethics. Protection of low castes, minstrels, and clergymen was part of cultural behavior. Harming non-combatants, old people, minors, and women were considered unethical. An injured foe was never put to death and a person who ran away from the battlefield was never pursued and killed. Expressing respect for a fallen hero, even belonging to the enemy was something unique among the Baloch.

The social practice of *lajj o mayār* was the disciplinary inner strength of the individual regulating his entire conduct. *Śegān* or taunting as an established factor in Baloch culture was a permanent check on its members. It played a major role in a person's life to keep it within the boundaries of prescribed social ethos. The social practice of giving asylum or protection when asked was although an essential part of an agro-pastoral or nomadic lifestyle, for a Baloch it was inconceivable to avoid the request for asylum or protection. Although, personally avenging an insult or the blood of a relative was the basic pillar of the society but as a whole, justice delivery in the ancient tribal system of the Baloch was dealt with by the council of elders. It was swift and just according to the ethos of that period. The practice of sending *meid* and asking forgiveness was so entrenched in the justice traditions that it was very rare for a Baloch to disregard the plea of a person or a *meid* for forgiveness.

Further research in this field is essential to uncover hidden gems within the poetic tradition and to explore contemporary resonances of Balochi classical poetry in the context of cultural preservation and identity assertion.

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