

**SOCIOCULTURAL STUDY OF VALUES AND TRADITIONS OF
SINDH AS DEPICTED IN SHAH'S POETRY**

*Ali Murad Lajwani
Khalida Shaikh
Dr Aslam Pervez Memon*

ABSTRACT

Sindhi people are tolerating forbearing and famous for their good practices of hospitality. There is always a guest house (Otaque) at village level in Sindh society where guests are served delicious food with simplicity. The welcoming moments of the male and female guests are bringing many sensitizations and lovable feelings when they are presented with indigenous cultural gifts like Sindhi cap and Ajrak. These human values and good traditional practices reflect about Sindh as piece of land with vigorous seed of spirituality. This congenial seed was spread on Sindh with the friendly visits of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai along with his disciples. He observed the social and cultural dynamic values of common people who were living for flung areas in Sindh. He composed his poetry in the language of the common people. Shah did not prefer luxury life but he faced many hardships during the travel in far and wide areas. His poetry highlights social conditions of people living in Sindh where social and cultural values are presented in each chapter of poetic collection. Shah's poetry is a chief source of offering folk-wisdom to those people who are not formally educated but they keep all good qualities of a well-educated person. The poetry sensitizes people to own their peculiarities with good character building customs in present times as well. The poetry has been travelling in oral and written forms with much of interest of readers which are very rare phenomenon. Many non-literate women are participating in scholarly discussions with references of Shah's verses generally they keep memorizing very difficult words. This is largely rendered and discussed in literary forms. The exploration of good values and traditions from Shah's in the field of social sciences will perform some characters building qualities to our future generations to bring peace, tolerance and respect for the societies.

Keywords: Otaque means a Sitting Guest House in a Sindhi Village, Ajrak a Cultural Cloth.

INTRODUCTION

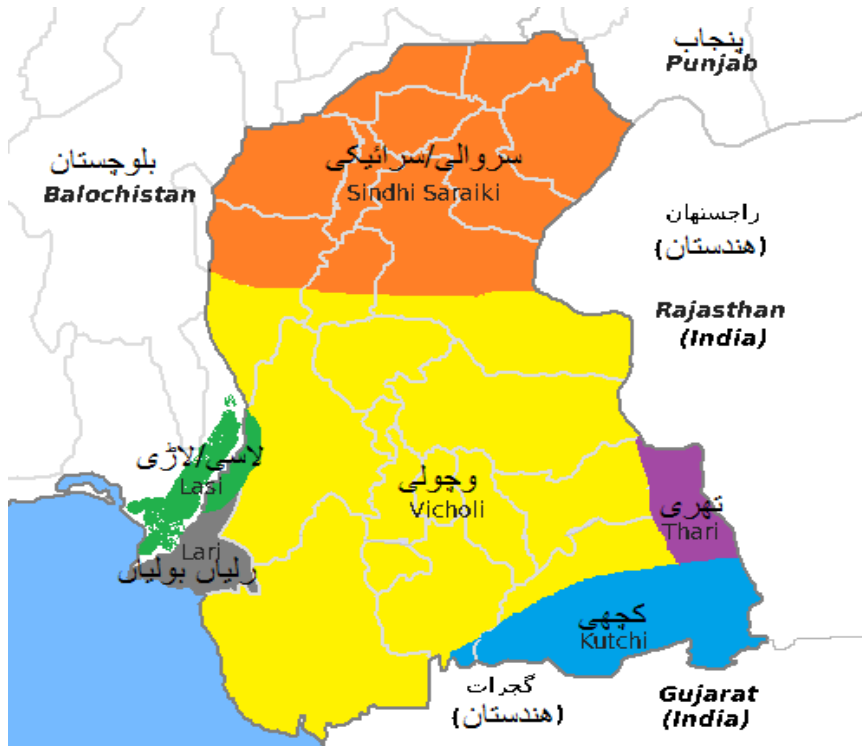
Sindh is naturally a piece of beautiful land with flourishing flow of river Indus and blessed presence of many saints whose spiritual message is always for the well-being of mankind. Originally word “Sindh” comes from an old Sanskrit language and it is modified form of “Sindhu” which means “river stream” or “river flow”. Sindh is also known as “Mehran Valley”, very rich in social and cultural values, literature, art, customs, and social phenomenon. Such arts make Sindh as unique in the global picture. Sindhi society is very famous because of its cultural heritages, handicrafts, indigenous arts high-quality textiles, Jandi, wooden paintings, and pottery which known as “Kashi”. An indigenous piece of cloth namely Ajrak has great significance at local as well as international level. People consider “Ajrak” as mark of respect and dignity – a very good tradition is familiar with presenting of Ajrak. “If a man offers Ajrak to a woman then she becomes his sister without a blood relation”. In many homes of Sindhi society women have great courage to participate and support men in household income with the art of sewing. In sewing art quilt-making is an entirely unusual work which is prepared with small pieces of clothes of different geometrical shapes. Truly, the art and cultural related work of local artisans is also self-possessed in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. There are many signs which promote character-building qualities of people from different religions. Shah’s poetry says there is only one religion which is named as religion of mankind. In this way people living in Sindh having their different religious practices enjoy the same reading flavor. Shah in his poetry has remarked even the little things that escape the attention of many. He rhapsodizes on the greatness of the needle. He says:

A needle to me is more than kingdoms worth ^(Shah)
 It clothes all the naked of the world
 Itself alone it naked keeps

The service of a needle is to cover up the others and this sacrifice is the good value and we human being should learn the lesson of such minor and thin object. The poetry also reflects dialects of regions in Sindh but it vividly discusses the themes of all human beings apart from religious confinements. These pre-arranged five regions in Sindh are (i) central region (Vicholo), (ii) northern region (Uttar), (iii) western region (Kachho), (iv) eastern region (Thar), and

(v) southern region (Lar). The map of Sindh is showing language dialects as below:

Map of Sindh Showing Language Dialects 1:1



SOURCE: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Sindh

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maa possesses feelings of reciprocity but sometimes they have so called grounds for outwardly power and secondly lust for wealth which creates many contractions locally as well as globally. It means people are associative as well as dissociative in their attitudes but rather social values and good traditions always construct a positive behavior among them. In present times we need such qualities in worldwide to make a global village of love, respect and peace.

SOCIAL VALUES/GOOD HUMAN VALUES

The good human values always extend cooperation among the multi-cultural segments. It is associative in social process and there is

reciprocity in each paradigm. Robin Murphy in his work has mentioned that human value is a sort of wisdom and knowledge which needs some positive experience to make judgments for the self and it is a mirror of character as well. It is very first ability to differential between right and wrong. Someone has to recognize it and then just start the practice of doing good deeds – it is an individual initiative with constructive approach. Murphy says social value is a basic foundation of social return in any society and during the circumstance of rapid social change these values play a vital role for the stability and rehabilitation of any society (Robin Murphy, 1970). Shah's poetry narrates cultural folk-tales where women are presented as heroine of each story. In this way the good values are highlighted through chief character of story. Suppose the Marui stands for good and virtue whereas the Umer ruler for evil. In Sindhi cultural Marui is living symbol of boldness. She loves her desert people, plains, sand dunes, huts, sheds, and simple vegetables. She says the people are poor but strong and steadfast in virtues. Their bodies are smeared with dust but their souls are clean like crystal (Agha Saleem, 2008:274). In the same context witty and Muscat have defined that the concept of social values are created when resources, inputs process and policies are combined to generate improvement in the lives of individuals and in society as a whole. They further added that social value is often referred as social investment, a form of investment that focused on the social return rather than the financial return (Witty and Muscat, August, 1999:467-87). H.M Johnson in views says the values are general standards and may be regarded as high order norms and Peter Wrosley defines the values are general conceptions of the good ideas about the kind of ends that people should pursue throughout their lives and throughout the many different activities which they engage (Abdul Hameed Taga, 2010:204). In fact values are progressive and assimilation of the Divine attributes that the self in us evolves and steadily acquires nearness to the Divine. The process is not one of union but of approximation – the dialogue between “I” and “thou” the servant and master as mentioned in Shah's poetry (Dr. Motilal Jotwani, 2006:118)

Servant too has no beginning no end shall see ^(Shah, chapter Asa)

Who the beloved found, shall be absorbed forever there

GOOD TRADITIONS

The traditions are behaviors and actions that you practice constantly. The regular rituals in life we perform at the same time and in the same way. Traditions can be big or small but they differ from routines and habits in that they are done with specific purpose in mind and require thought and intentionality (Meg Cox, New Family Traditions www.artofmanliness.com). The traditions and customs of Sindhi society are highlighted in the poetic verses of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in different chapters e.g. in Sur Khambhat; he presents creative excellence as it celebrates the higher values of human love as the factual pulsating institution of love prevailing in the real life in Sindhi society. Verses of chapter (Sur) Khambhat delineate the Samo period social mores of professional minstrels, mendicant, and musicians singing for reward at the door of the feudal lords at the break-dawn. In Sindhi society there are different folkways, and mores like marriage events, dress, and in mores ethical and religious concepts (Dr.Dure-e-Shahwar, 1988:102). The mystical poetry has great impact over the society Professor Annemarie Schimmel has mentioned in his work while she visited Sindh and explored the concepts of peace and Sufism. She was viewed that the poetry is equally functional in society and this has sociological spectrum in Sindhi society. As per her views the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai was not only first to use Sindhi literature. But other poetic work in different languages which narrated the societal issues and life-styles of people. The poetry does not merely reflect sectional interests, but furthers the common interest of public, gives them representation, allows symbiosis between groupings and their literary representations. The socially committed poetry has no answer to the world's manifest cruelties and injustices but conspiracies and capitalist caricatures. There is sociological and Sufism concepts for the progress, stability of people in living in remote areas, and the peace and harmony through social institutions. This is because the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif has vivid examples for poor people living in Sindh (Sub-continent). He built a complete catechism of Sufism based on the old folktales of the Indus Valley by transforming the heroines of these tales - Sassui, Sohni, Lela and others into symbols of strong social values and capabilities to face all kinds of challenges. This is the social strength of poetry which has been presented in real form with greatness of ingenious combination of folk-motifs and mystical interpretation on the one hand, in the use of mother tongue

(Sindhi) with expressiveness (Annemarie Schimmel, 1986:201-5). The originated thought in Shah's poetry contains multitudinous subject and aspects of life which every essayist will narrative in his own style. There are divergent meanings and interpretations of life imbued in the poetry of Shah which every writer will assess and observe according to his vision. There are higher intellectual signs and symbols, representations and images about individual and collective human character, reflective of multifarious vicissitudes of life in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (Dr. Baloch, Nabi Bux, 2010:50-51).

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research design whereas some quantitative data was included thus it is the combination of mixed methods. In qualitative methods the focus group discussions were arranged with responds on selected themes i.e. the social/human values and good traditions in Sindh. In quantitative portion there was a questionnaire with 20 sub-questions or statements. The responses of participants were received with Liker rating scale i.e. strong agreed -4, agreed-3, neither agreed nor disagreed-2, and disagreed-1. The collected data was organized and analyzed through a software namely special package for social sciences (SPSS). The comprehensive table was organized with perception of respondents.

a) *Quantitative Responses*

TABLE-1:1

TABLE OF RANKING OF PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONDENTS

Indicator/Statement	Rank	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Deviation
This is one of (social poetries) sociological poetries	I	440	2.5318	0.5921
The cultural dresses are highlighted in the poetry	II	440	2.4773	0.56893
Social customs are presented in the poetry	III	440	2.4409	0.54993
Social institutions are mentioned in the poetry	IV	440	2.4358	0.56634
Social values (bravery) are mentioned in the poetry	V	440	2.4273	0.5399

Poetry highlights Socio-economic conditions	VI	440	2.4261	0.55229
Sindhi folklores are mentioned in various couplets	VII	440	2.3425	0.57992
The regular customs at shrine promote harmony	VIII	440	2.3273	0.57512
Well-being of mankind is the core theme of poetry	IX	440	2.3	0.54143
Shah-Jo-Raag sensitize to promote tolerance	X	440	2.2864	0.55295
The poetry is core subject of social moments in Sindh	XI	440	2.2831	0.57648
The life-style of poor people in poetry	XII	440	2.2818	0.57548
The women are presented as heroines in poetry	XIII	440	2.2727	0.54746
The social groups are mentioned in the poetry	XIV	440	2.2682	0.5371
Shah's poetry promotes constructive attitudes	XV	440	2.2682	0.55385
Folkways and mores are mentioned poetry	XVI	440	2.2557	0.53192
People receive spiritual guidance from poetic verses	XVII	440	2.2431	0.55197
Cruelty is discouraged in many poems of Shah's poetry	XVIII	440	2.2318	0.62365
There are lessons for people to hold peace in society	XIX	440	2.2182	0.53859
The factor of extremism are not addressed in the poetry	XX	440	2.2136	0.54463

INTERPRETATION

Above given table shows the ranking of perceptions of respondents on different indicators/statements regarding the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. These indicators were formulated in sociological context. The responses were gathered as strongly agree - 3, agree - 2, disagree-1. The aim of this ranking table was to gauge the value of mean and standard deviation on these indicators. Results differences show indicators/statements that "Shah's poetry is one of social poetries" which is highly ranked. The mean value is **2.5313** and

standard deviation is **05921**. Whereas other indicators/statements like the “cultural dresses” and “stories mentioned”, “social customs”, and “social values” do have the high ranking. The perception of respondents shows that indicator “a factor of extremism is not addressed in Shah’s poetry” has very low rank the mean value is **2.2136** and standard deviation is **054463**. This high ranking shows that Shah’s poetry has great impact on human thought and it is one of the social poetics. It conveys the message of humanity and the values and good traditions work as themes of personality development and characteristics of good behaviors. The indicator which lowest ranking shows that poetry addresses issues of extremism. Result reveals the facts that Shah’s poetry promotes religious harmony, tolerance, and good human values.

b) *Qualitative Responses*

In qualitative paradigm the focus group discussions were arranged on selected themes of social values and good traditions. These good practices are framed in the poems of Shah’s poetry. The focus group discussions went smoothly and respondents highlighted these themes from different chapters of Shah-Jo-Risalo. The verses of poetry were recited which conveying good lessons for human being.

THE THEME OF SOCIAL VALUE

(1)

Social value	سماجي قدر
Tolerance and capacity to face life hardships	سهپ ۽ ڏک برداشت ڪرڻ جو فيصلو
	<p>نھائينءَ کان نينھن، سڪ، منھنجا سپرين! سڙي سارو ڏينھن، ٻاھر ٻاڦ نه نڪري (رپ)</p> <p>Learn to love in secret, adopt ways of the kiln, It is on fire the live long day, yet emits no stream.</p>

(2)

Social value	سماجي قدر
Bravery	بھادري
<p>سپت پچار پرينءَ جي، سپت هوت حضور ملڪ مڙو منصور، گهي ڪهندي ڪيترا؟ (سر سهڻي)</p> <p>“Whenever I go, I hear my Beloved’s story; Whenever I go, I see the Beloved in all his glory. Like Mansoor, all wish the gallows to embrace. How many will you kill? How many will you efface?”</p>	

(3)

Social value	سماجي قدر
Self-worth	من جي مضبوطي
<p>آئون ڪيئن ڇڏيان سومرا، تن پنهورن پچار جڙ جنين جي جان ۾، لڳي ريءَ لُهار ميخون محبت سنڊيون، هنيڙي منجهه هزار پڪا ۽ پنهور ڏني مون ڏينهن ٿڌا (سر ماروئي)</p> <p>O Soomra King, my people I have not forgot. How can I cease to talk how sad is their lot? The sharp printed nails in my heart Have been struck without a smith and his art. These nails with love inebriated; In their thousands in my heart are imbedded. Alas! For my people and for my humble dwelling For days without end I am pining.</p>	

(4)

Social value	سماجي قدر
Intensifying feelings of love	پنهنجن کان پري رهڻ سان ويتر سڪ وڌي ٿي
<p>اڃ پڻ اڪڙين، سڄڻ پنهنجا ساريا، ڳلن تان ڳوڙهن جون، بوندو بس نه ڪن،</p>	

<p>سندي سڪ پرين، لوڪ ڏني نه لهي (سر پروو سنڌي) Today, my eyes have remembered My Beloved, who has since long retired. Over my cheeks fall copious tears, And my sad heart they pierce. What, if others my eyes do see? From yearning for him I cannot be free.</p>
--

(5)

Social value	سماجي قدر
Keeping promise	انجام پارڻ
<p>پهرين تون پاريج، پارڻ پوءِ پنهنونءَ تي پول م وساريج، هو جو ڪيئي هوت سين (سر آٻڙي) Fulfill your pledge first, then Punhoon will comply Forget not the promise that you made which it did imply</p>	

(6)

Social value	سماجي قدر
Self determination	پُر اميد رهڻ
<p>مهندا! محتاجي ڪري، پنيءَ پير ڪٽيج قبيلائي! ڪيچ ڏي، حُج م هلائيچ، پاٿان ڌار پرين جي، سسي! ساڻ ڪٽيج، اوڏي عزازيل ڪي، ويجهي تان م ويچيچ، نا اميدي نيچ، ته اوڏي ٿئين اميد ڪي (سر آٻڙي) Sasui! Humbly follow His footsteps, While on way to Kech adopt attitude of utter helplessness, Forget self-existence, with yourself only love take, Approach not Azazeel till then, Let helplessness be your mate, that hope you may attain.</p>	

THE THEME OF GOOD TRADITIONS

(1)

Tradition	روايت
Residing in huts is a great benefit for the poor in deserted area in Sindh.	مارو/ ڳوٺاڻا پنهنجي پڪن ۾ رهڻ جي روايت کي پنهنجي لاءِ نعمت سمجهندا آهن
<p>اِيءَ نه مارن ريت، جيئنءَ سيڙ متائن سون تي، اچي عمرڪوٽ ۾ ڪنڊيس کان ڪُريت، پڪن جي پريت، ماڙين سين نه مٿيان</p> <p>(سرماروئي)</p> <p>It is not customary for the people of my fold To sell their person in return for gold. I have been brought to Umarkot's place How can myself with misdemeanor disgrace? Within me longings for my humble hut throb; How can our palaces myself If that treasure rob?</p>	

(2)

Tradition	روايت
Fishermen usually wear towel and banyan while fishing in lakes and rivers.	مڇي مارڻ وارا اڪثر گوڏ ۽ گنجي پائيندا آهن
<p>گند جنين جي گوڏ ۾، پاپوڙا پوشاڪ انهن جي اوطاق، راجا ريجهي آيو</p> <p>(سرڪاموڏ)</p> <p>My clothes are dirty and smelling Behold, I am an ugly dress wearing. Even then, the Beloved Sama King Will himself to my humble hut bring.</p>	

(3)

Tradition	روايت
It is one of the social customs that dead body is buried in	سنڌ ۾ اڄ نه روايت عام آهي ته مرڻ کان پوءِ

local graveyard of village where forefathers buried.	مردھجي يا عورت ان کي پنهنجي ڳوٺاڻي يا اباڻي قبرستان ۾ دفن ڪيو ويندو آهي.
<p>واجهائي وطن کي، ساري ڏيان ساه بت منهنجو بند، قيد م ڪريجاه تڏي وجهجهانءَ ٿرن جي، مٽي مٽي مٿاه جي پويون ٿي پساه، ته نجانءِ مڙه ملير ڏي</p> <p>(سرماروئي) If I die, longing for my native land, Free my body form these chains Keep no more this stranger away from her love, Over my dead body, spread Malir's cool earth, When I die, send my body to Malir, my native land.</p>	

(4)

Tradition	روايت
Wife of village headman is also a lead person among the village women.	ڳوٺن ۾ چڱي مڙس جي گهرواري به عورتن جي وڏيري هوندي آهي
<p>وڏيري هياس، ميڙومون گهر سرتين هٿ ڇهڻ هارجي، ڪڙي ڪانڌ ٿياس، ڍولي ڍيلياس، آيم ڏٺونءَ ڏهاڳ جو!</p> <p>(سرليلي چنيسر) I was first lady in Chansear's domain, Welcomed was I with flutes and drums wherever I went, My spouse drove me out, for that I am to be blamed</p>	

(5)

Tradition	روايت
Sitting at guest house and sharing personal experiences	رهاڻ ڪرڻ، گڏجي ويهڻ، دل جو ڳالهين ونڊڻ
<p>سمر جنين نه ساڻ، هوت حمايتي تن جو</p>	

چنان اڏبا چپرين، پنهنون ايندو پاڻ،
 ٿيندي روح رهاڻ، لحظي منجه لطيف چئي.
 (سرديسي)

Those who carry no provision, Beloved is their help,
 Dancing in the desert, Punhoon will come to them himself.
 Sweet converse will He then hold, sorrow in a moment will be gone

(6)

Tradition	روايت
Adolescent women visit at well or river in groups	نديءَ يا ڪوهه تي سهلين جو گڏجي وڃڻ
وندر جي وڃڻ، سي مر ٻڌن سندرا، ٻيون ڪوهه ٻڌن؟ چوڙي جي چڏينديون. (سر آٻڙي)	Let those gird up their lions desiring journey to wider rock. Those who would give it up halfway, why do they start?

CONCLUSION

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetic work is one of intellectual substance which creates collective wish for positive human social actions. The poetic verses highlight human values like tolerance to face life-hardships and making no any complaint like the kiln furnace emits nothing despite the continues fire burning inside. It is not an imaginative poetry but rather a well-composed thought process is there on the base of practical experience where Shah keenly observed the social norms, and good traditions of rural life. He saw women were engaged in fetching water from wells in groups and their simple life style. He mentioned in his poetry such good traditions which are needed to be revive or preserve for promoting a healthy society required to our future generations. The reading flavor of Shah's poetry offers sense of folk-wisdom and creative notions on promoting good practices despite the different castes and creeds. Shah's poetry genuinely invites us on adopting human values and good traditions for becoming peace lovers.

REFERENCES

Agha Saleem, (2008), 'Melodies of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai', Volume III, Karachi: Culture Department, Government of Sindh, Pakistan.

Baloch, Nabi Bux, (2010), 'The Life and Thought of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai', (Based on Commentary of Shah-Jo-Risalo Poetic Compendium of Shah Abdul Latif), Karachi: Culture Department, Government of Sindh, Pakistan.

Jotwani, Motilal, (2006), 'Shah Abdul Latif His Life and Work', Karachi: Culture and Tourism, Sports, Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sindh, Pakistan.

Murphy, Robin, (1970), 'American Society: A Sociological Interpretation' (II and III editions).

Schimmel, Annemarie. (1986), 'Pearls From the Indus, Studies in Sindhi Culture', Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, Jamshoro.

Syed, Dure-e-Shahwar (1988), 'The Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif', Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, Jamshoro.

Taga, Abdul Hameed (2010), 'An Introduction to Sociology', Lahore: Abdul Hameed Taga & Sons Al-Fazal Market Urdu Bazar.

Witty & Muscat (August, 1999). Social Networks and Status Attainment, *Annual Review of Sociology*. Volume 25, 467-487.

www.artofmanliness.com/2013/10/09/creating-a-positive-family-culture-the-importance-of-establishing-family-traditions.

—