

BALUCHISTAN: A STUDY OF ITS DEMOGRAPHY

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Like Afghanistan the province of Baluchistan derives its name from the dominant race of its inhabitants. Literally, it means a place where Baluch people live.

Baluchistan is the north-western province of Pakistan, bounded on the east by Sindh, on the south by Arabian Sea, on the north-west by Iran, and on the north-east by Punjab and north by Afghanistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

It is one of the largest provinces of Pakistan comprising 3,47,190 sq. kilometers. 1 Thus, the province of Baluchistan is nearly equal to Sindh and Punjab provinces. Baluchistan is bigger than the U.K. (United Kingdom), and Belgium is 1/12 of its size.2

On the north, the districts of Chagia, Quetta and Zhobe make a border of 732 miles with Afghanistan. On the West, Makran division, district of Kharan and the western part of Chagia district make another border of 521 miles with Iran. On the south, the province has a six hundred miles coast line with eight bigger and smaller ports like Gowader, Pasni, Jewani, Ormara, Sonmyani, Gadani in Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.3 Due to above important geo-political features, Baluchistan has become the cockpit of big powers' intrigues since the last quarter of the previous century. With the prevailing conditions in Iran, Afghanistan and Persian Gulf it has become the hot bed of rivalries and conflict between super powers.

The geographical features of the contemporary province of Baluchistan are the consequences of British rule in the region, as it was extended to Baluchistan by imposing the treaties of 1841, 1845, 1876 and 1879 on the rulers of Kalat and Kabul, 4 and its boundaries resettled. Boundary between Kalat and Iran was fixed by the Boundary Commission in 1871, and it was revised in 1895. These Commissions gave away roughly 1/4 of the far-west area of Baluchistan to Persia, which is now called Iranian Baluchistan. 5 In the north, Durand Line assigned a small strip to Afghanistan in 1894. Jacobabad (old name Khangarh), and Dera Ghazi Khan were handed over to the then British province of Sindh and

the Punjab.

On the other hand, present Pushtun areas were ceded to Baluchistan from Afghanistan. Inclusion of the Pushtun areas into Baluchistan was the result of Gandamic Treaty in 1879, and treaties of 1891 and 1894. The areas included in Baluchistan through these treaties were Sibi, Pishin, Loralai and Zhob valley.

Re-shuffling of the territories during the British rule changed the ethnic character of traditional Baluchistan. By the blessings of these changes, Baluchistan became a multiracial and multilingual province. Baluchistan is a thinly populated province with total population of 4.3 millions only--2/5 of N.W.F.P. and 1/11 of Punjab's population. Density is only twelve persons per sq. Klm, which is the lowest, while Sindh has 135 per sq. Klm., and the Punjab 230 per sq. klm.⁶

The inhabitants of Baluchistan are divided into three main ethnic groups ---Baluch, Brahui and Pushtun. Beside them Jats are indigenous residents of Baluchistan. Baluch is a major group, and Baluchi language is commonly spoken by 36.3 percent of the population in Baluchistan. ⁷ As far as the racial origin of this group is concerned, it is difficult to express a candid opinion about it on account of many reasons. Source material of Baluchi History is scarce, and whatever is available, its authenticity is doubtful which needs a careful study. Hence, one has to sort out facts from fiction. Another problem is that the researchers/scholars on the subject of Baluchi history are mainly foreign-based which include British, American and Russian. Some are native elites and Urdu writers. These conceive difference of opinion regarding the racial origin of Baluch. Their opinions and arguments are simply a guess, based on language, physical features or system of tribe. Another source utilized is war ballads of the old Baluch poetry and folklore, but these are no more available in pure form. Keeping in view the above circumstances one has to assess the origin of Baluch on the source material available and leaving the task of scientific research to the literary organizations of the concerned ethnic groups and future historian.

Hetto Ram gave the linkages about the racial origin of the Baluch that they are descendent of Amir Hamza, uncle of Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H), the Quresh tribe. ⁸ But, the history repudiates and rejects legend because Amir Hamza died unmarried. But, Firdausi wrote cer-

tain verses in Shahnama in which he has narrated an incident occurred to Baluch in 531 A.D. during the reign of Noshervan the Just, which provide a strong proof that Baluch were present before the advent of Islam and Amir Hamza. Another historian namely, Gul Khan Nasir, opines that Baluch are related with Namrud, historically, spiritually and racially. 9 Jan Mohammad, himself a Baluch, propounded the proposition that Baluch belong to the Aryan racial group. 10 On the other hand, national school of Baluch historians, links Baluch ethnically with semitic chaldian ruler of Babylonia. 11 Mir Khuda Baksh Bijarani Marri connected them with Aryan tribes originally from Asia Minor. 12 Mir Ahmed Yar Khan (late) described that Baluch are Arabs. He based his opinion the way the Baluch lead their lives, and similarity of their tribal system with Arabs. 13

It is generally believed that the ancient abode of the Baluch was a valley between Tigris and Aleppo in Syria. Baluch and Kurd were two brothers living together in this valley. They migrated from their motherland due to two reasons, firstly, mutual clashes erupted between these two brothers, and secondly, for searching new pasture lands and fresh water. The migration at mass level started from 521 A.D. Baluch migrated towards Kirman where they were attacked by Noshervan the Just, about 550 A.D.

During this period there were two migrations of the Baluch. First on the Suljuk invasion when they left Kirman and settled in Sistan and western Makran. On second occasion they entered into eastern Makran. This migration corresponded to Changhez Khan's invasion. Kurd migrated towards north-west.

It is an irony of fate that these two brothers (Kurds and Baluchs) have passed through the same political conditions. Their inhabitations are divided among three countries: For Kurds, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, and for Baluchs, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Both have faced the hostility of all the three governments.

Baluch speak Baluchi language which belongs to Indo-Iranian family of languages. Presently, this language is spoken into two different dialects which are Makrani and Sulamani. 14 Makrani is common in the Western part of Baluchistan, which is Mukran Division, while Sulamani is spoken in the eastern parts i.e. Sibi and Nasirabad Divisions.

Same is the case with Baluch tribes. They reside in the east and the

west of the Baluchistan, and are separated from each other by a compact block of Brauhvi tribes. In the eastern Baluchistan they reside in Sibi and Nasirabad divisions where their famous tribes are Marri, Bugti, Rind, Lasher, Magsi, Khoso and Jamali. In the western part they occupy Makran division.

Brauhvi is another important ethnic group in Baluchistan, and according to one estimate they are seven lac in number. Another source of information puts them 1/4 of the total population of the province. 15 The number of their important tribes is about 29. Famous among them is Ahmed Zai (ruling clan of Kalat State). This clan is a branch of the Kambrani tribe. Besides, there are Zarak Zai, Raisani, Mangal, Shahwani, Lehri, Bizanjoo, Perkani, Pandhrani and others. These tribes owe a loose allegiance to Brauhvi Khan of Kalat even today. They occupy the area from Bolan Pass through the Bolan Hills to Rass Mauri on the Arabian Sea. The members of the Brauhvi tribe are mostly nomadic. They move towards east to Kacchi plains and Sindh during winter season and go back to the mountain in the summer. These migrations are oftenly seen in the months of October and November to eastward and in February-March to westward on the National Highway passing through Bolan. Brauhvis generally are herdsmen and keep sheep and goats.

The origin of this ethnic group is controversial. They speak Brauhvi language, which belongs to the north-western members of the Dravidian family of language. These are spoken in peninsular India. The speaking of this language by Brauhvi tribes have misled the ethnologists, and they formed a wrong opinion that Brauhvi are the pre-Aryan people and are the last remnant of pure dravidian stock.

Foreign scholars namely, Steem, Dr. Trump, Longworth, Dans and Sir Bray are of the same opinion about the origin of Brauhvi tribes. Russian researchist, Yuri Gankovisky also opines in favour of the theory that Brauhvi belong to the Dravidian stock. 16 Naseer Brauhvi who himself belongs to one tribe of the Brauhvi looks agitated on the opinion of foreign scholars and indicates that fabrication of this theory might be the part of the British Government to divide and rule. He requests the scholars for intensive research of the theory. 17

So far as the ethnic connection of Brauhvi is concerned all the nationalist and local writers differ with the theory that Brauhvi are

different ethnic group than Baluch and belong to the pre-Aryan dravidian race. They opine that Brauhvi and Baluch are the members of the same ethnic group and belong to the same ancestors.

Veteran politician of contemporary Baluchistan Mr. Ghaus Bakhsh Buzanji also favours the opinion that Baluch and Brauhvi belong to same ethnic group. According to him Baluch and Brauhvi are not two separate tribes but one and the same. The only difference is of the language which they speak. 18 Another famous historian of Baluch history also agrees that Baluch and Brauhvi are the members of the one and same ancestors. He writes that first group of Baluch came from Burz Koh, means Koh Al Burz and later on they were known as Brauhvi. He denies the opinion that Brauhvi belong to a different ethnic group on the basis of their language. 19

One leading member of the Brauhvi tribe tells the story that when Noshervan the Just attacked the Baluch, there was a great massacre which compelled the Baluch to leave Persia. They divided themselves into two groups, one under the leadership of Mir Saad who settled down in Sistan, while the other under Mir Jalal Khan Rind who crossed over the Iranian Baluchistan. The sons of Mir Miro and his younger brother stayed in Sistan for sometime and then moved over towards Chaghia and Kharan, from where they came to Sia Koh and Surab. This group which was called Ibrahim Baluch later on came to be known as Brauhvi Baluch. 20 However, the controversy looks common while tracing the history and origins of the tribes, specially nomad tribes living in the less developed areas of the world.

Pashtun or Pathan constitute a third major and distinctive ethnic group in Baluchistan. Pathan territory of Baluchistan is mainly the outcome of Gandamic treaty of 1879 and the Durand Agreement of 1894. The British concluded the Gandamic Treaty with Yaqoob Khan son of Sher Ali the then ruler of Afghanistan. 21 Pashin, Zhob, Loralai and Sibi districts were ceded to Baluchistan under the above agreement.

The area which Pashtun territory covers is 23 thousand sq. miles out of the total area of Baluchistan. The Pashtun population according to the Pakistan census of 1972 was 5.0 laacs. 22 The area which Pathan occupy is mountainous and witnesses a severe cold climate, with heavy snow falls in winter. Mountains' range Suleman, with its peak, Takht Suleman, Ziarat Valley a Summer Hill Station and Kan Mehtar Zai

highest Railway Station of Asia, are situated in this area.

Like Baluch, Pathan are divided into tribes. Head of the tribe is called 'Khan'. These tribes are divided into clans, which are called Khail and subclan named Zai. Well known tribes of the Pathans are Kaker, Mando Khail, Kab Zai, Achakzai, Kansai, Ghalzai, Tarin, Issa Khail and Kaka Zai. They live in Pashin, Quetta, Zhob and Loralai districts. The others who live in Sibi district are Jafar, Loni, Pana Zai, Shadezai, Zarkun, Barozai, Khajak and Marghzani.

Olaf Caro describes about the origin of this ethnic group that "they seek to link obscure beginnings in a manner half historical, half mythical, with great figures of Hebrew Kings David and Solomon." 23 He further said that "Afghan Historiographers maintain that Saval had a son named Irmia (Peremiah), who again had a son named Afghana, neither of course known to the Hebrew scripture." 24 He assesses the theory in detail in the light of history.

Mir Khuda Baksh Bijarani Marri, who himself a Baluch, also comments on the theory of ethnic connection of Pashtuns saying that Pathans have their own folklore and historical war ballads. 25 In one such ballad they claim to be the descendent of Bani Israel. But historians and linguists are not ready to accept this theory. Historians say that Pathan are hermetic race but Aryan. It is generally believed that they are inhabitants of Suleman Mountains.

Pathan speak Pashto which belongs to Indo-Iranian family of languages. The Pathan of Baluchistan speak Pashto with different dialect which is called Kandhari. Pashto is spoken by 25% inhabitants of Baluchistan. 26% Pathans are no more strictly tied with tribalism. They are religious minded and Sunni Muslims. They are hardworking and industrious.

Besides above, many other ethnic groups also live in Baluchistan. Among them, Jats or Jamoot are the major one. They live in Sibi and Kacchi on the north and Lasbela on the south. They speak Sindhi and are thought to be the indigenous population of Baluchistan. Meds live along the coastal belt while Lores live in predominant area. Hindus are also found in Baluchistan. They also speak Sindhi, and are thought to be the old inhabitants of this area. Parsi who are Zoarist, have also presence in Quetta.

Alongwith Baluchi, Brauhvi and Pashto, many other languages are

also being spoken in Baluchistan. These include Persian, Sindhi, Siraiki and Punjabi. According to a source, Sindhi is spoken by 8.3 percent, Siraiki by 3.1 percent and Punjabi 2.1 percent of the population. 27

Baluchistan is a multiracial and multilingual province. This is the outcome of the British imperialist policy. Almost all the major countries of the world and their geographical units are multiracial and multilingual. But this kind of ethnic division sometimes proves dangerous. One feels clear polarization among different ethnic groups in contemporary Baluchistan. Causes of this polarization are the scarce resources of Baluchistan region, super powers interests, intervention through neighbouring boundaries and past history and historical incidents. Baluchistan is a strategically located province of Pakistan which has become sensitive province due to its present geo-political position, and demands a constant eye concerning ethnic relationship of different ethnic groups.

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