

## EXPLORING THE FACTORS OF CULTURAL CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF KOLHI COMMUNITY IN SINDH

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### ABSTRACT

*This article i focused on the unique culture of the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh. This community is concentrated in the barrage areas of lower Sindh. The literature review conducted for this research, shows that no serious work has been done to investigate the culture of the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh. Thus, study genuinely contributes new ideas about the distinctive way of life of Kolhis. This paper shows the demographic conditions of the Parkari Kolhis and analyses socio-economic conditions of the Kolhi community. The paper also discusses various factors of cultural change. The data for this study was collected through variety of sources including participant observation, focus group discussion and interview method. Interview method was used to explore the process of cultural change in the way of life of an important ethnic community in Sindh.*

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**Keywords:** Culture, Parkari Kolhi Community, Barrage Area of Lower Sindh

### INTRODUCTION

Word culture is derived from Latin word *Cultura* from the verb *Colera*, to tend or cultivate (Kuper, A., 1996). First time it was used by Greeks for agriculture and the Romans used for moral and physical sense. The term culture can be defined as the distinctive way of life. It includes system of beliefs, traditions, customs, norms and values. Further, culture is defined by Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition; Culture as shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. Thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group (Zimmermann, K. A., 2017).

**Geographical Location:** Kolhi is a specific caste of Hindu society, by caste connection; the Parkari Kolhi meets to Kashtriya Rajput's origin of Dravidian. The Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh is

lived 60% in Nangar Parkar and 35% in the remaining talukas of Tharparkar (Parkari, P. M., 2000). Nangar Parkar having, desert features and ecologically faces high temperature and wind storms. Therefore conical shape straw huts are beneficial for natives. In lower Sindh, especially in barrage areas, straw is a natural growing plant beside the canals and water branches in large quantities. Due to easy access to straw Kolhi used it for home-building purposes.

**Brief History:** In Nangarparkar, Sodhas enjoyed freedom and were free from payment of taxes under Talpur rule. In 1843, Sindh was conquered by British. British began to impose taxes. In this way independent position of these tribes was undermined by the British. This region came under the control of Commissioner at Hyderabad in 1856, who made a new administrative policy, and conducted revenue survey. Subsequently, a revenue official (Mukhtiarkar) Mr. Deo Mal was appointed to collect taxes from farmers. He forcibly imposed taxes on grassland. This revenue official was also authorized to issue license for the production of opium. Mr. Deo Mal worked under the supervision of Captain Tyrwhitt was the deputy commissioner of the Tharparkar region. Karanji and Udhy Singh Poonjani Sodha of Ranpur rejected the policies of British and refused to accept new orders regarding the collection of taxes. As a result of confrontation, the battle broke out between Sodhas, and Britain on 15th April 1859. Among the farmers and warriors Rooplo Kolhi was considered as the expert in warfare, so he was selected as commander of Kolhi battalion. "Five thousand Kolhis participated in this war and martyred". However, Mr. Tyrwhitt escaped from the area. On 24th April 1859, colonel Aunis, commanding officer, fledged from Hyderabad with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baloch regiment. Finally, the war started between them on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1859. Rooplo Kolhi, the great-grandson of Parker, was laid to rest on the evening of August 22, 1859, hanging on an Acacia tree on the bank of the Gurdro River.

**ORIGIN OF ROPLO KOLHI**



**Sources:** Rinshal Kolhi, Govechand Kolhi, Loak Sagar Ja Moti, 2000.

**STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEMS**

This study is focused on the exploration of unique culture of the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh, particularly Kolhis settled in barrage area of lower Sindh. The literature review of historical

material indicates that this community has largely been neglected by researchers, and historians. Thus, the study is designed to fulfill the gaps in the arguments about the uniqueness in the culture of the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh in the terms of language, folklore, and way of living, dancing, singing, profession, worships, and birth and death ceremonies.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To investigate the socio-economic conditions of Kolhi communities in Sindh.
- 2) To explore the process of change in the culture of Kolhi Community in Sindh.
- 3) To investigate dress pattern, shopping mode and consumption patterns of the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh.

#### **HYPOTHETICAL STATEMENTS**

- 1) The Kolhi community in Sindh is deprived of their economic, social and political rights.
- 2) The culture of the Kolhi community in Sindh is affected by changes.
- 3) The Parkari Kolhi community has unique culture.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1) What are the Socio-economic conditions of the Parkarkhi Kolhi community?
- 2) What changes have occurred in the cultural way of life of the Parkari Kolhi community?
- 3) Why the culture of the Parkari Kolhi community is unique and different from the cultures of other ethnic communities in Sindh?

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Origin of the Parkari Kolhi Community:** Mahesar, G.H. (2014), articulated that the Kolhi Community in Sindh belongs to the Scythian origin of Punjabi Rajput. Aitken, E.H. (1986), described the origin of the Parkari Kolhi community that, they are descended from the ancient community of Meds of Sindh, but clear traces of Rajput connection appear to be found among them. Ursani, M.I. (1995) also discussed arrival of this community in Sindh, he argued that the Hindu

communities at Nangarparkar, including Rajput, Bheel, Kolhi, Menghwar, Jat, Charan, Malhi, Sonara, Sothar, Naai, Bajeer, and Mehshori came from Marwar of India.

Kolhi, B.M., (2014), described the demographic changes and its impacts on Kolhi community in Sindh. Their accelerated migration to urban areas has changed demographic records. Now they are learning modern skills and education. They have businesses, hotels, medical stores, and general shops.

Dr. Kishanchand, (2020), argued about social evils among Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh. Usage of antidepressants among the Kolhi community in Sindh is a social evil. Due to the low literacy rate and psychological stress, the trend of intoxication is vogue.

**Social Discrimination:** Sengar, S., (2007), mentioned that the Vedas do not mention Caste System and opposed caste system with tooth and nail while defending the scriptures. There is nothing in the scriptures, to justify the caste division, only the Varna System exists as an integral part of the whole society. It is not the caste system at all. Kirshna (2012) explained the social discrimination at school level. Girls from the Kolhi community were not allowed to drink water from a glass. As a result students remained thirsty. Even the attitudes of other fellow girls were not good towards Kolhi students. Parkari, P.M., (2000), described the discriminatory practices against Parkari Kolhis and other Kolhi communities in Sindh. He articulated that the Wadhiyara, Waghria and Mewasi Kolhi ethnically discriminate against the Parkari Kolhi, they understand them lower in rank, and therefore they avoid social contacts with Parkari Kolhi Community in Sindh. Mahesar, G.H., (2014) discussed about social deprivation of Kolhi Community, he argued that the graveyards for Kolhis are also located in separate areas.

**Socio-Economic Conditions:** Maliha, (2004), has discussed that the majority of seasonal migrants from Tharparkar to barrage areas belong to Non-Muslims low caste. They are low-income landless farmers and daily wages workers. Posten, T., (1973), articulated the women services in economic perspective. He argued that the agricultural laborers are paid at harvest time by a proportion of the produce. The women in Sindh do much of the out-door work and receive less in a certain proportion than the men". Sorely, H. T., (1968), has also mentioned the duties of the Kolhi community in gazetteer "*The Former Province of Sindh, Including Khairpur State*".

The majority of Kolhi Community in Sindh by profession was engaged a laborer. In farmer Sindh Kolis worked as labour.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study, the data was collected through variety of sources including interviews Focus Group Discussion (FGD). In addition, to these sources archival documents were also consulted for the purpose of data collection.

**Focus Group Discussion:** In order to explore the change in material and non-material culture of the Parkari Kolhi community and to discuss about the cultural and social issues, a focused group discussion meeting was organized and moderated by researchers. It enabled the researchers to understand the present cultural patterns of Kolhi community and to explore the levels of motivation for cultural change. Through focus Group discussion techniques, the researchers were able to understand qualitative narratives explained by the participants of this research.

**Observation Method:** It is the systematic way of watching realities and listening ideas of respondents. Participation in various activities of Kolhi community including their marriage ceremonies, rituals, and festivals helped to draw conclusions about cultural aspects of Kolhi community. The purpose was to explore the change in their beliefs, attitudes and their distinctive ways of behaving and interacting with each other. The method ensured validity and reliability of the data collected through interviews, and FGDs. The data was examined and analyzed to draw valid and reliable conclusions.

**Data Analysis:** The data collected through archives was analyzed through the content analysis method. This method has been used to identify the specific characteristics, ideas and themes participants. The Data collected through interviews was transcribed for comparative analysis. Using this method, data from different respondents was compared and contrasted. In this study comparative analysis method has also been used to compare and contrast the response of participants about the cultural change in the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh.

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question No. 01: Socio-economic conditions:** It can be argued that incontrovertible reality resulting from unfair

distribution of economic resources is the phenomenon of rising poverty and vast economic and social inequities. Thus, poverty begets poverty in the areas where poor are caught up in a vicious circle of economic backwardness mainly due to low incomes unfair price for crops and unavailability of employment opportunities. Kolhi community is facing innumerable problems including the lack of basic facilities. The Parkari Kolhi community is marginal community of Sindh. They are deprived socio-economically. Due to unfair market prices offered for their productivity, injustice and economic uncertainty are the main causes of the poverty. Further, poverty has increased sense of deprivation among Kolhis. In addition poverty has produced dangerous effects on the community which include growing drug abuse, early marriages and incidences of suicide.

**Research Question No. 02: Changes in material and non-material forms of culture:** With the passage of time the culture of Parkari Kolhi community is inclined to accept recent changes in small numbers. Following factors played significant role in the changing the culture of Kolhi community in Sindh.

- Technological advancement: Use of Mobiles, CD, DVD players and Television.
- Environmental factors: Droughts, Migration, and settlement in barrage areas.
- Communication and interaction with other communities.
- Modern education,
- Electronic and social media,
- Economic change
- Christian Missionary: Education, Health, and Religion.

**Living Patterns:** Due to migration and close contact with other communities, Kolhi culture has accepted geographical and ecological impacts which have influenced the Parkari Kolhi culture in the barrage areas of Sindh. Thus, their way of living has been changed. For instance their traditional cone-shaped thatched houses have been converted into bricked houses.

**Dress Patterns:** Changes have been observed in their attire. Their traditional dress *Pothio* and *Treto* were replaced by Shalwar Kameez. Youngsters wear Shalwar Kameez. Thus change in living pattern as well as dress pattern has been widely accepted by communities.

**Food Pattern:** Further, this study indicates that there are changes in their traditional and indigenous foods. The trend of hunting has stopped. In the barrage areas, they eat grown vegetables and pulses instead of the natural vegetables of the desert. Instead of barley, they are consuming wheat and occasionally rice also. Thus the study shows that there is a significant change in material culture of Kolhis.

**Bracelets and Bangles:** Un-married girls wear colorful plastic or glass bangles. Married women wear traditional (Choorra) full arm bracelets of plastic. Nowadays, instead of ivory they use plastic as a raw material, because it is cheap.

**Research Question No.3: Distinctive culture of Kolhi community:** Parkari Language is sub-dialect of the Gujrati language. It is consisted of four letters of Sindhi and fifty-two letters of Arabic script. This study investigated the following intangible features of their culture which shows continuity in the use of cultural norms and values. Examples are discussed as under:

**The Greetings:** For greetings people hold their palms together and take them to under the chin, and say Namaste. They join their hand palms and extending for handshaking to each other.

**Respect for Elders:** When the elders enter the house, youngsters stand up in the honor. They do not speak loudly or make argument. First, they serve drinking water and food to elders.

**To Bow and Touching Feet:** When young people leave for a trip or when they return from travel, they must greet the elders at home. During the wedding ceremonies, the groom and the bridegroom pay respect to their mother, father, and elders touching their feet. The study indicates that this practice is peculiar to Kolhi community.

**Love and Affection:** The husband feels awkward to express love for his wife in front of the members of his family. Married men and women are ashamed of being caught, handcuffed, or kissed in public meetings. Women hide their faces with dupatta, locally called Ghonghat (veil). Women avoid sharing romantic thoughts with their husbands in front of housemates and guests.

**Naming Protocol:** In honor of the elders, young individuals of the Parkari Kolhi community will never call them by names. As a matter of respect, they call them Uncle or Aunt. In the Parkari language, they call their mother 'Maari' and their father 'Baa'. Contemporaries call each other by the first name or by nicknames. The newly married wife does not call her husband by name. She uses a



specific term for calling. After the baby is born, for example, the baby's name is Nihal, and then she calls her husband as 'Nihal Baa' (father of Nihal).

**Community Service:** Obedience is the core value of the Parkari Kolhi community's culture. Often, men and women in the community remain eager to work collectively. Individuals in this community not only help each other during tough times but also participate equally in the grief of other communities residing in their neighborhood. They help one another during the cultivation and harvesting of the crop.

**Hospitality:** After welcoming guests, they spread the clean 'Rali' (quilt) on a cot under tree or cot placed in the courtyard of the house. The cold water of Earthenware is served. The eldest family member discusses with the guest about social issues. They prepare simple but delicious food for guests at home. Family members feel very happy when guests arrive. They offer dried fruits and vegetables of Tharparkar as a gift to guests. Rich families of the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh, give Ajrak, Shawls, and other embroidery items as gifts. The guests like to give some money to children in order to appreciate the family for hospitality.

**Minimum Wearing Shoes:** In process of participating in the various activities of Kolhis, the researcher has observed that individuals of the Kolhi community occasionally wear shoes-in households, especially children and women. This observation supported by other researchers, who have explained that there are two reasons for this: one is socio-economic conditions and the other is religious rituals, as Shilender Senger stated, "Shoes are considered impure in Hinduism. The cultured, Hindu never wears shoes or sandals inside a temple or shrine nor in his home or the homes other Hindus" (Sengar, S., 2007:32). Ursani has also discussed the rare use of shoes in the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh. He argued in his book 'Seer-e-Registan' that, "in general, the Parkari Kolhi walks on the 'Karonjhar' Mountain with bare feet at day and night" (Ursani, M., 1995:116).

**Nukh or Caste System:** Nukh is the hereditary, social status in the society. The caste system is rigid and unchangeable considered by Kolhis. In Sindh, many tribes of Kolhi live, genealogically they belong to Rajputs, and this historical record is preserved Majli Bhaat of Gujrat in village Bhatri near Palanpur city. The Kolhi Community in Sindh has divided into six castes and sub-castes. This research indicates that

Kolhis are committed to unchanged state of caste system. They have not changed their cast system.

**The Parkari Kolhi Community in Sindh has Divided into 6 Caste and 118 Sub-Castes**

No.	Caste	Sub-caste
01	<b>Goel</b>	Soorani, Bhoptani, Nadhani, Vastani, Aadani, Thawarani, Somlani, Dhagani, Jeerani, Naghahani, Kanai, Bolani, Satani, Amrani, Harijani, Tantia or Teejani, Bheemani, Jagani and Najatia.
02	<b>Parmar</b>	Veerani, Bhavani, Chayani, Sontria, Rakhoria, Hadani, Jesani, Okani, Sekhani, Aaplani, Bheemani, Dani, Phogarri, Rachyani, Aanani, Gangani, Kalani, Modri, Jelani, Narsinghani, Bhawani, Heerani, Panani, Dahoni, Aaherani, Veerani and Jemlani.
03	<b>Rathor</b>	Mooria, Ramsani, Dhankan, Sangani, Kalai, Veermani, Panchani, Bhawani, Pethani and Ramani.
04	<b>Chohan</b>	Madani, Balani, Sangani, Keshviya or Kahoya, Odani, Kalani, Gogani, Pagi, Hawrani, Satani, Mekani, Khorani, Chandani, Nagro, Mehani, Meerani, Tekmani, Bhangra and Sindhi.
05	<b>Jhala or Makwana.</b>	Lenbani, Lakhani, Ladhani, Chatrani, Bakhrani, Pharani, Aalani, Jethani, Bhawani, Dhobani, Aahani, Dhakrani, Tebrani, Hajani, Bhanani, Methani, Sakhani, Kalkani, Dayani, Pabani, Jewani, Tharadra, Narvani, Kharpi, Gogani, Garebani, Bhangriya, Manani, and Sograni.
06	<b>Solanki</b>	Bhojani, Sonani, Ratnai, Nathani, Godhrani, Modri, Sorani, Wastani, Jeerani, Parbhani, Jagtiani, Manani, Khanani and Khemani.

**Sources:** Loak Sagar Ja Motee, Parkari, Paroo Mal, 2000:178-199.

The majority of the Parkari Kolhi community lives together. The conjugal family system is observed after marriage. They have

established organizations to promote their language and literature and to preserve their culture. Temporary and internal migration is also observed among Kolhis, which plays an important role in preservation their culture. Continuity has been observed in performing traditional rites and rituals in social and religious events by elders. The Parkari Audio Visual, Mirpurkhas (MPK), the Parkar Nath Sudhar Institute, Parkari Community Development Programme (MPK) have successfully demonstrated their commitment to defend the Kolhi culture.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS**

- It has been found that early marriages are one of the major causes of suicide in the Kolhi community.
- This study indicates that the Kolhis are being forced to convert their faith due to economic reasons.
- This paper shows that farmers belong to Kolhi community do not get fair price for their productivity.
- This study indicates that there is little change in their behaviours and attitudes. This change is attributed to their interaction with other communities during the process of rural to rural and rural to urban migration.
- This study shows that there are push factors for rural to urban migration which includes poverty, rapid population growth, and unemployment, landlessness and social injustice.
- This study also indicates the pull factors which include better education and health facilities, better labour rates, opportunities provided by different labour organizations and NGOs.
- This study reveals that the Kolhi community has successfully preserved their language as their cultural identity through celebrating cultural events. It is observed that engagement of Kolhis in cultural activities has played significantly role in preservation of their culture and ethos.
- It has been found that protection of Kolhi culture has been institutionalized.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study concluded that the Parkari Kolhi community in Sindh belongs to the Dravidian origin. Therefore, their cultural patterns are

unique. Kolhi community's culture has remained part of Rajasthan, Gujrat, therefore their literature, language, and culture bear witness relationship with historical places of India, like Agra, Delhi, Calcutta, Mathura, Pawangadh, Adriyagadh, Jam Nangar, Ahmed Abad, Kuch Wagar, and Bombay. This study explored attributes behaviors of the Parkari Kolhi community. Kolhis avoid social evils such as kidnapping and large scale theft, but the usage of moonshine alcohol, time waste at hotels to watch Indian movies, excessive expenses, illiteracy, and early marriages are major causes of poverty and suicide.

This study concluded the main cause of religious conversion from Hinduism to Christianity was poverty. Due to unfair market prices offered for their productivity, injustice and economic uncertainty were the main causes of the conversion of their religion.

This study concluded that a significant change in the dress pattern. The old dresses such as Pothio and Treto from Bafta are being replaced by washing wear Shalwar Kameez their old and new dressing pattern. Married women wear their traditional dress with full arm bangles, but un-married girls wear Shalwar Kameez instead of an old dress.

This study concluded that the change in housing was an outcome of migration, modern education, and social interaction of Kolhi culture with other surrounding cultures. Research concludes that there is little change in the non-material forms of culture including beliefs, attitudes and performances.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Government should establish educational and technical institutions for giving them better educational opportunities.
- Government should introduce various poverty alleviation programs for eradication of poverty.
- Members of Kolhi community may be fully engaged in agriculture. Proper land reforms should be implemented in order to give landless Kolhi farmers the right of ownership.
- The present governments need to pay attention to education for all communities. For empowerment of Kolhi community, government should take necessary actions for providing good education and job opportunities.
- One of the essential characteristic of democracy is that no discrimination is to be made on account of religion, gender, race

and creed. Members of the Kolhi community in Sindh should be treated as equal citizens of Pakistan.

- Empowerment of this community can decrease the sense of deprivation among the Kolhi community in Sindh.
- The early marriages are prevalent among the Kolhi community which must be stopped. New laws should be made by Sindh Assembly for the protection of Kolhis.
- Use and manufacturing of moonshine alcohol by members of Kolhi community should be banned. Rehabilitation centers may be established for rehabilitation of Kolhis affected by drugs.
- Provision quality insurance be provided for protection of crops.
- Easy loans may be provided to Kolhi farmers for agriculture.
- Government should initiate poverty alleviation programs in order to reduce poverty and to impose socio-economic conditions of Kolhis.
- Local NGOs should introduce skill development programs for the uplift of Kolhi community.
- Government should ensure participation of Kolhi community in political process of the country.

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