

Pre-Islamic Roots of Pakistani Culture

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The creation of the universe and the birth of mankind on the planet earth opened so many chapters regarding different aspects of life. It was basically the inauguration of a complex human phenomenon which at that time seemed and felt to be a simple one but with the changing circumstances and expansion of human being on this earth, lead to the exploration of many hidden treasures. In every walk of life whether it was social or cultural, economic or political and scientific or technological, man being a social animal observed and went through various experimentations and experiences in all these spheres of life. The gradual encroachment of human being in the process of change played a significant role in the human history.

The cultural evolution of a particular area depends upon the population that resides in that area. Culture in the regions of Pakistan evolves over a long period of time and gets gradual change with the passage of time in order to accommodate itself according to the changing circumstances. However, the roots of these cultural traditions have been developed since several thousand years. According to Ibne Khaldun geography also plays an important role to determine the attitude of the people and way of life of a particular region or area. For instance, the attitudes of the people who live in desert are different from those who reside in hilly areas. Pakistan being a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country presents a colourful picture. Many cultural aspects of the region which make present day Pakistan are hundred years old. For instance, most of the languages spoken in Pakistan are pre-Islamic and had evolved before the arrival of Islam. Similarly other institutions which are still prevailing like marriages ceremonies, death and burial, festivals and other social gatherings such as *punchayat* and *jirga* etc are too pre-Islamic in nature. So, the cultural roots of modern day Pakistan can be traced back in the Indus valley civilization and latter on in Gandhara civilization.

All the above observations are the ample proof that the modern day institutions which still exist in Pakistan are certainly pre-Islamic. Before the arrival of Islam a lot of

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progress had been made in the cultural milieu of Pakistan. Though Islam spread in all the regions of today's Pakistan yet its shade is slightly different from that is practiced in the Arab world. Islam in Pakistan is inclined towards Sufism. The culture of shrines is the ample testimony of this fact. It is more tolerant and exclusive in nature. Sufis who propagated Islam borrowed many strategies from pre-Islamic Pakistan. The usages of music in the form of *qawali* and *dhamal* are substantial proofs of pre-Islamic roots of Pakistani Culture.

Although substantial research work has been done in the post Islamic period but not too much research has been conducted to trace back pre-Islamic roots of Pakistani culture which are still prevailing in the modern day Pakistan. In this regard a framework is suggested in order to study the pre-Islamic roots of Pakistani culture. According to this framework all the four provinces of Pakistan can be taken as case studies in this regard and the scholars interested and experts in the field can be given a particular aspect of culture such as:

Belief System

Before the arrival of Islam, the regions which make Pakistan were under the influence of different religious order and belief systems. For example, the North West Frontier Province was under the influence of Buddhism while in Balochistan Zoroastrianism was the prevailing religious order. In the like manner most of the regions of Punjab and Sindh was under the influence of Hinduism. When Islam came to these regions it amalgamated itself into the local culture.

Traveling

The people residing in the regions of Pakistan before Islam used horses, donkeys, camel (in case of deserts), carts, elephants etc. so there seems a thorough divergence between pre-Islamic and post Islamic culture in respect of traveling system. This divergence is basically due to the modern technological developments occurred with the passage of time.

Nomenclature

The pre-Islamic history of Pakistani culture clarifies that the nomenclature at that was slightly different from that of today's nomenclature. For example, in the regions of NWFP in case of male member the commonly used names throughout the regions of

NWFP were Batoor Khan, Sher Kahan, Zalme Khan, Bahadar Khan and in case of female spogmay, brehna, orazpana, zalanda etc, which are still being used. So, after the advent of Islam in the regions of Pakistan, amendment have been made in the nomenclature.

Different Ceremonies

Marriages

The gathering of relatives and neighbours at the time of marriages and the use of music were common throughout the regions of Pakistan. The rituals of dowry, mehndi, doli, providing milk to the groom etc were the common characteristics of in all the region of Pakistan.

Festivals

Various festivals in the regions of Pakistan particularly in Punjab and Sindh such as the festival of besaki which has been celebrated at the time of harvesting wheat crops, festival of basant, naoroz on the eve of spring in balochistan and NWFP.

Games

Different games such as polo, buskashi, kabaddi, dog fighting , roast fighting, malakra, wanju were the games observed in pre-Islamic period. .

Foods and Eating Habits

The people of this region liked spices foods since long. They used to eat meat, vegetables such as tomato, potato, cucumber, pumpkin etc.