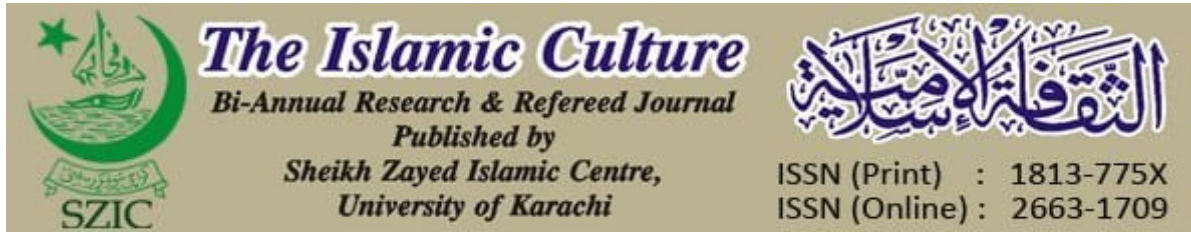


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THE SOCIO-RELIGIO TRADITIONS OF EX-BAHAWALPUR STATE 1727-1947: A CAREFUL STUDY ABOUT THE DISCOURSE OF THE HISTORY

Dr. Tariq Naeem Shah

Visiting Faculty,
Department of Pakistan Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Dr. Saeed Ahmad

Assistant Professor,
Department of Pakistan Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Muhammad Faisal Nadeem

Scholar,
Department of Pakistan Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Abstract

The Ex-Bahawalpur State was one of the Muslim State among more than six hundred States of the Sub-continent. Its rulers had the status, was sanctioned as His Highness and seventeen guns' fire accordingly. It was also the first and largest Muslim State which made an alliance with newly created Muslim country Pakistan after the partition of India. It covered the area of approximately 20,000 square miles in the extreme South-west of the Punjab. It was bounded in north Sutlej, Chenab Indus Rivers. In the South-West Sukkur district of Sind & in the north-east the Ferozpur district of the East Punjab, while in South and South-east lays the boundaries of the Rajputana States of Jaisalmeer and Bikaner. The greatest length of the area was now and then from north-east to South-West having 320 miles, while the average width is over fifty miles. In total area of twenty thousand square miles only six thousand seven hundred square miles comprised the agricultural zone while the rest was consisted of desert which was known, now and then, Rohi or Cholistan. The part of the State was an integral part of Rajhistan desert of India, where the cultivation was seldom possible and nomadic population of grazers was to be found.

Keywords: *Religious Believes, Behaviors & Customs Faith or Traditions of State & Social Pattern, & Culture of the Bahawalpur State*

Introduction & Background of Bahawalpur State

BWP State remained the part of British India, Subcontinent 1727-1947. It had unique place due to its own political, social and religious values. In the following discussion these two aspects will be highlighted. Besides this the geographical and historical background of the Bahawalpur State will also be taken into account. These Socio-Religious values and traditions caused to develop various civilizations in the world. Some of them were more sound, polite and civic than others, but they all had to face decline due to various internal and external factors. Among them the Hakara valley civilization was one, which arouses in the sub-continent and ultimately, met to decline in the same way. The region of Bahawalpur was an integral part of the Hakara valley civilization. Its two-third land was comprised on desert which once was green and also the center place of developed Harappan Civilization. Besides this, the region had a significant geo-Strategical place as was a pathway to the southern parts of the sub-continent, for the invaders. The inhabitants of the region had peculiar features of socio-religious manners.

The Ex-Bahawalpur State was the Muslim State among more than six hundred States of the Subcontinent. Its Nawabs had the status as His Highness & awarded seventeen guns salute accordingly. It was also the first and largest Muslim State which made an alliance with newly created Muslim country Pakistan after the partition of India. It covered the area of approximately 20,000 square miles in the extreme South-west of the Punjab. It was bounded in north Sutlej, Chenab and Indus rivers. In the south-west Sukkur district of Sind and in the north-east the Ferozpur district of the East Punjab, while in South and South-east lays the boundaries of the Rajputana States of Jaisalmeer & Bikaner. The greatest length of the area was now and then from North-East to South-West having 320 miles distance, while the average width is over fifty miles. In total area of twenty thousand square miles only six thousand seven hundred square miles comprised the agricultural zone while the rest was consisted of desert which was known, now and then, Rohi or Cholistan. The part of the State was an integral part of Rajhistan desert of India, where the cultivation was seldom possible and nomadic population of grazers was to be found. The terrain comprising Bahawalpur State has been remained an integral part of the Hakara valley and Indo-Aryans civilizations, historically. In the same way the population which was obviously Hindu dominated, and a few other religious communities followed the socio-religious traditions, cultural manners and ethical values which were prevalent in the region. The civilization set up by them had the quality to absorb other cultures which entered the region. But only Islam as a religion and its civilization could stand in front of it and escape its effects, although it could not prevent itself completely from its effects.

Besides this, the land comprising on Bahawalpur State had been remained historically, the gate way to the subcontinent, particularly to southern India, for all foreign invaders. This geographical position of the region made it more significant than any other area of the subcontinent. Many of the foreigners entered the land and had settled there permanently. Not only this but also foreign expeditors made some settlements for their troops there. As it is said that during ancient ages there was a force of one hundred thousand soldiers stationed in Uch. In this way some were going on the way and some were coming back on the way, inhabited there and developed permanent settlements with the passage of time. The people settled at the land in various times, belonged to different areas of the world and so had their own socio-cultural values and customs. The only common thing among them was Islam, but the notable thing is that they never made an attempt to separate themselves from local population. Not only this but also they adjusted themselves among local population in social manners and religious values. Nevertheless, among religious persons and preachers working as missionaries, stopped at the land and made it the center of their missionary activities. Among those Hazrat Safi-ud-Deen Gazrooni (353-98 A.H) a person of great learning and knowledge, came from Baghdad in 370 A.H and settled in Uch. He was the first who set up an institution there which had a reputation of international level.

It started to give the knowledge, religious education and spiritual training as well as traditional social manners to the thousands of local people and foreigners also. Later on, many other saints flooded to the region and made the town of Uch the seat of their purpose, were; Hazrat Syed Jalal-ud-Deen Bukhari

Surkh-Posh (the Saint of Red Robes) (595- 690 A.H), Hazrat Bandagi Muhammad Ghous (833-923 A.H), Hazrat Syed Abdul Qadir II (863-940 A.H) and many others. They performed their religious duties with full devotion and worked as real missionaries of Islam in the Subcontinent and attracted thousands of people of other religions towards Islam. Due to their character role there hundreds of Hindus living in Bahawalpur State, Sind, Baluchistan and Southern Punjab who said the names of Muslim Saints with reverence, paid visits to their shrines and made offerings there. They kept a solid base of new civilized society which was not only different but also more polite more civic than any other part or society of the subcontinent as well as the world, and was an index of tolerance and endurance in social and religious manners. In this situation the Muslim saints, scholars as well as religious preachers had made a space at the land for creation of new Muslim State. At this a person Sadiq Muhammad Khan I, the chief of a branch of the Abbasids had a chance to move from Sind with his family and followers in the area, now known as Bahawalpur. He invited there by Makhdoom of Uch and succeeded to have Chudhary as a Jagir by the Governor of Multan. Later on he succeeded to incorporate a new Muslim State to join the whole area after some expeditions. After that his heirs continued this monarchy more than two centuries, and in this way they served as forerunners of a type of civilization which brought a revolution in the outlook of masses towards Islamic social ideology. The study of History of the land reveals the fact vividly that the area remained under the control of different monarchs. It was divided in different families under high regional powers as petty States.

In this situation, however, the credit goes to the Abbasids who not only, welded these petty States into a United Kingdom and also developed it as a modern Islamic State. With that they promoted socio-religious traditions as well as cultural values according to Islamic civilization. During this duration the Abbasid rulers played significant role not only to extend State's boundaries and overcome internal and external conspiracies but also to develop it as a progressive and prosperous Muslim State as well as to make it strong economically and self-dependent in every field. So the local people accepted overwhelmingly the new rulers as well as the new set up. 7. M. Anwar Nabi Qureshi, 1952, p. 11. While the rulers never behaved the local population inhumanly. They also appreciated the local's attitude towards them and never made an attempt to suppress them. On a number of occasions ruling Nawabs even, confessed the support and co-operation of the local population in occupying the region. But it is also verity that the Abbasid rulers never made themselves superior one and never kept themselves away from the local population but they mingled with them. They adjusted themselves among them. They not only learnt the local language which was the base of contact as cultural set up but also adopted socio-religious traditions and habits and manners of the locals. They even promoted the socio-religious traditions of the area and retained the print or shadow as an Islamic State of Bahawalpur. With that the people of the land accepted the personalities of various areas and nations having various socio-cultural values and traditions as well as welcomed Muslims saints, preachers and religious scholars. They not only adjusted them among themselves at the land but also accepted their message of Islam and its social values of morality. That is why, the people of the region converted their religion from Hinduism to Islam at such a scale that Islam became the biggest religion of the area and Muslims won the majority population's status at the land while they always remained a minority population in the residuary parts of the subcontinent. It was due to sincere attempts and character role of Muslim saints and scholars as well as the flexible and openhearted nature of the people of the land which had been developed by the vastness of the desert and hot climate and atmosphere of the region. The people of Bahawalpur followed the social traditions of Hakara civilization but their thoughts and habitual manners were some different from the people of other parts of the subcontinent.

As it was a male dominated society where the father had the sole power and so the son had more importance, while the elder son was regarded as father, in case of death or absence of father. Their life style was simple but at the same time the religious structure of ancient India was so complicated that every new religious philosophy entered the land ultimately merged in it except Islam which after entrance in the land mauled the socio-religious land scape. The real history of the terrain is initiated at the time when the Abbasid made foundation of Bahawalpur State. The people of the State land were already trained socially and followed rich religious manners. They observed occasions of pleasure and sadness with social and religious enthusiasm and zeal. 10.Masood Hassan Shahab, 1962, p.185.

The both principal communities, Muslims and Hindus participated each other's occasions of joy and sorrow. They performed the rites according to their own religious traditions and orders. But the Muslims in spite of having majority position observed various Hindu social rites in the ceremonies. The people led simple life style. They were simple in dress, dwellings and food manners. Their dress was a symbol of dignity and modesty as well as, their houses was a model of simplicity. Although there were some burnt bricks" houses and mareas of wealthy persons but mostly people had mud or crude bricks" houses. The notable thing about dwellings that they were scattered in various inhabitations. Their villages were small and were not built on systematically. The philosophy behind the tradition perhaps was that they preferred to live on brotherhood, clan or even family basis and the tradition is still prevalent. Likewise, they mostly used simple but pure food as vegetables, meat, whey, butter, milk etc. Although; they used to eat pulses of all types yet, not as a favorite dish. The people of Bahawalpur were promoted in their habits and manners by Muslims saints, religious preachers and climate of the land as well as the Abbasid rulers. They were hospitable, co-operative, simple and sincere. They were land lovers, contented, God fearing and were not voracious. They never liked to go outside of their homeland to earn more. They preferred to have simple food, attire and dwellings at the land instead of luxurious life style outside the homeland. Although this thought had made them sluggish and indolent yet they were contented and had firm belief in Allah the Almighty.

Nevertheless, they lagged far behind in the race of modernism as well as progress and prosperity due to this nature and habitual tradition. Unlike this they had rich features of sincerity, humility, modesty, unprejudiceness, respect, co-operation etc. which became an index of their social setup. As they were hospitable and gave proper respect to the guest whether familiar or unfamiliar. They respected elders, Syeds, Pirs religious scholars and any other noble personality as well as they loved to Youngers. They never sat or walked ahead of any Syed or Pir showing back but ever welcomed them and stood up and always received them with touching their knees or feet. It is reality that they disliked the formalities and served others sincerely and affectionately. Likewise, they gave reverence to elderly persons of the family; grandfather, grand mother, father, uncle etc. and treated elder brother as father in his absence and gave him the same protocol. It is said that when an elderly person entered the place more than one time where the youngers sat, they received him standing up on each time. In the same they never had prejudice for invaders or strangers but also they let them settle politely according to their rich social traditions and the nature of good morality. Besides this, the people were also simple and rich religiously. They followed religious values devotedly. They respected religious persons, followed their advice and had belief in friary system and celebrated Urses and Melas at the shrines of the saints. They participated in them with religious enthusiasm, but these Urses or Melas" were also the center of their economic activities as well as amusement. They mostly had interest in religious education and started their early education by learning of the Holy Quran. Moreover, they had faith in Islamic values and traditions and so there were great number of Hafizs, Ulema and Hajees at the State land. They respected the Islamic rites as well as signs whole-heartedly. They had no prejudice for minority communities participate their socio-religious ceremonies. In the way the State seemed a real model of an Islamic State. The real History of Bahawalpur State can be divided in two ages: the preliminary ages and the modern ages. But in both ages it remained as a model of Islamic values and civilization.

The rulers of initial age (1727-1866) were simple and followers of religious traditions and values. While the rulers of modern age were also the up holders of Islamic values in spite of having modern training completely and some deficiencies in food and attire ways. As they wore English dress and had English and Indian foods in their kitchen with local food. The notable thing is that the Abbasid rulers of both ages were the followers of Islamic values and traditions as well as they provided religious atmosphere to the inhabitants of the State. They adjusted themselves in local atmosphere. They often participated in both types of ceremonies of the people and amusement programmes as well. Besides this, they also observed socio-religious traditions prevalent locally regarding birth, wedding and death manners as well as religious ceremonies and festive occasions. They preferred to have religious education first and then other branches of knowledge and so they provided the opportunities to the subjects. Even the ruling chiefs of modern ages that had modern training and education, also started their early education from learning of the Holy Quran and so a number of ruling chiefs were themselves Hafiz-e-Quran. In the

same way they respected Ulema, Saints, Syeds, Pirs, Hafizs and persons of noble families and often stood up to receive them as the tradition prevailed among people of the land. The remarkable thing is that they never made any discrimination between majority and minority population of their subject and always participated in celebrations (social and religious) as well as festivals accordingly. In this way they had made the State a role model of tolerance and equity.

The Bahawalpur State comprised two-third desert of its total land area. It also known as Rohi or Cholistan, which existed with its rivers and blooming greens and had remained the Centre of ancient civilizations. Its people were polite, civic and prosperous economically and rich in social and religious manners. But later on the rivers diverted their ways due to unknown geographical reasons and converted the land into desert. In desert area of the State, life was very tough where the water was now and then principal problem of the people and no pasture for livestock which was the major source of income of the people. There mostly people had nomadic way of life and so their socio-religious traditions were different from those of the residents of the State. Nevertheless, they mostly had similarity in socio-religious traditions regarding birth, wedding and death ceremonies. A large number of Hindus also lived with Muslim majority following the same social manners. The note able thing is that they both participated in each other's celebrations of social and religious nature and had sense of endurance and polite attitude towards each other. Besides this, they were passionate followers of the social traditions as well. Their traditional manners regarding birth, wedding and other social activities were simple but full of amusements. They observed death rites with grief and sorrow and with religious zeal. On the whole they had rich socio-religious traditions but the lack of water had changed their physical and social character. Notwithstanding their socio-religious set up had been affected badly when a large number of settlers settled there. After the partition of India, millions of Indian Muslims were refuge in the State land.

They both had their own social traditions and cultural values of various areas of the sub-continent and never tried to pacificate with locals but ever kept themselves separate from them with a thought of being superior to them. Even they started to abominate with locals and never tried to adopt local socio-religious traditions and adjust themselves with them. Their social traditions and cultural values regarding birth, wedding and death were some different from those of locals. Although they often participated the occasions of joy and sorrow of each other yet they never intermarry. Later on, with the passage of time they started to extend social contracts with each other. In this way they did intermarries but very rarely. The both communities affected each other in socio-religious aspects; nevertheless, the local people lost more than the other community of immigrants. They (locals) merged themselves in socio-cultural manners and lost their rich socio-religious traditions and set of ethics which were an index of their social set up and part of Muslim civilization. It is undeniable fact of the human History that poor nations can survive with financial assistance of others but no nation can survive without its own civilization and traditions. The State was rich in socio-religious traditions and cultural values. The people were peaceful, hospitable and gave respect to everyone. They never resisted invaders. It is reality that the Bahawalpur State had peculiar socio-religious values, socio-cultural traditions and manners in the sub-continent. The polite attitude of the people of the State was edified by the religious scholars, preachers and saints but it was developed by the Abbasid rulers, who played an eminent role to make the State a model of real Islamic State.

In spite of having modern education and civilization they followed religious values and social activities with full zeal and enthusiasm. As the last three rulers liked modernism but they never lost their socio-religious traditions and activities. Not only this but also they even, sometimes, led the prayers. They not only followed themselves the Islamic orders and respected Islamic signs but also provided religious atmosphere to the subject for the same. Besides this, the people of Bahawalpur were so openhearted. They were also sincere, affable and coy. They never disgusted strangers or foreigners but even treated with good attitude. Like their males the females of Bahawalpur were also model of shyness, reverence, dignity and prudency. They never went anywhere without veil or covering in full dress and a male member of the family.

Likewise, they never wandered in bazaars and there was no permission for them to go into bazaars alone as it is said that no girl more than eight years old went to bazaars unveiled. The rich traditions regarding veil were also followed by ruling families as well but even more strictly. As the female entered the haram (seraglio) could never saw a male shadow. Although the tradition was prevalent in Muslim community as well as Muslim rulers of the sub-continent yet in Bahawalpur it was observed more carefully. It is reality that the Bahawalpur State was regarded as model Islamic State due to its rich socio-religious values and traditions in the sub-continent as well as the whole Muslim world. The Abbasid rulers made strenuous efforts continuously to develop the State politically, economically and socially. They took various steps in this regard. As they were fond of cultivation and wanted to exceed State's income.

They also had a wish to meet the thirst of the desert and to make it more and more cultivatable. In this context they initiated such plans which became helpful to promote its production. As they started Sutlej valley project to supply water for cultivation more and more land of the desert as well as other parts of the State. They invited settlers from Punjab and other part of India for the purpose. These settlers made hard Labour to cultivate the desert land and played a significant role to exceed the State production and income. The remarkable thing in this connection was that the local population also co-operated with them and supported them for the purpose and adjusted them in the new atmosphere. Besides this, the Abbasid rulers played an important role to promote education and social traditions. They opened a number of educational institutions and participated in social activities. They also appointed foreign officers to promote modern education as well as patronized religious education and spiritual training. Moreover, they invited a number of learned persons form the sub-continent to settle in the State who played a significant role in this regard and to develop socio-religious activities and traditions. On the partition of India lacs of Indian Muslims refuge in the State and caused to develop socio-cultural values. They not only filled the space, spared by Hindu community of the State but also performed an active role to develop economic condition of the State by holding business and trading sector of the Hindu community. A civilization or culture and social traditions of a nation or a society are an acquaintance of its social set up and physical character. Its destruction caused to destroy the nations. A language is a basic factor to develop cultural values and social traditions. But the rulers of Bahawalpur continuously promoted the other languages and their cultural activities instead of developing local language.

Although they followed themselves the local traditions and local language. Likewise, they continued the policy of appointing non-local personals in the State offices which was unfavorable for local traditions. But it is verity that due to these foreign officials the State started its journey on the way of progress and prosperity. They were hard working and played a significant role in this regard. The Abbasid rulers invited these erudite and experts from various areas and patronized them because they wished to make the State developed and prosper. In the same way to protect the State from internal and external conspiracies they made alliance and friendly treaties with the British which were also compulsory. It is true that the British had great interest to develop the State in various sectors and made many plans of progress and prosperity of the State. But their entrance and exceeding influence caused to develop the English culture and decline of the local traditions. Even, the ruling Nawabs of later ages adopted the British culture in dress and food manners particularly. Moreover, the bureaucracy was English fostered and had little interest to promote socio-religious traditions of the local population. They made short term economic policies which were not beneficial for the State and its people. Not only this but also in matters of settlement, hurdles were created for local peasantry and non-local settlers were encouraged. Although it is said that the local people were not interested to take and cultivate desert land yet it is also fact that they had to face unbelievable obstacles made by non-local bureaucracy in their way and such policies were introduced which were more beneficial for foreign settlers instead of locals. That is why; the locals had to show their grievances against the discriminatory attitude of the bureaucracy towards them. They made some local organizations and published a pamphlet *Izhaar-e-Dard* and Bahawalpur grievances etc. They also started to express their grievances against the behavior of highly officials. On this Nawab had to setup an institution which determined the State's citizen ship and issued Riasat certificate in three categories A.B.C.

But the local people could not have proper benefit of the policy because the settlers and others had become organized at that time and also made organization for the protection of their rights. Besides this, another social element entered the State land at the partition of India in shape of Indian Muslim refugees who were from different areas of the sub-continent, having various cultural traditions. Likewise, the settlers entered the State before the partition, also had their own religious and social values. The both communities (settlers and Muslim refugees) moved to State from various areas family wise and even, a group of families of the same clan mostly settled and inhabited in the State land in the same sequence. It is said that the diversity in social traditions and cultural values is the beauty of a State or society. The similar situation appeared in BWP State & both communities retained their own Socio-Religious manners and never tried to merge in local social set up although they participated in each other's ceremonies. It is true that these settled communities of the State continued following their own traditions of socio-religious manners and affected the local traditions so much in this sense.

As the local population was of simple nature of sincerity and humbleness. They merged themselves into them instead of absorbing them among themselves in social manners. Although the both communities affected each other yet the fact is that the local population lost more than others. Resultantly, the local population started to lose its own identity. But the fact cannot be ignored that a sense of competition of progress and prosperity started among local population, on watching the prosperity of settlers. That is why at the time of partition the State was self-dependent socially, politically and economically. On making an alliance with Pakistan the Nawab of Bahawalpur bestowed millions of rupees to Pakistan, from the State's reserves which was proof of sound economic condition of the State. Obviously, it was due to special interest and policies of the Abbasid rulers. They made efforts to improve political and economic conditions of the State as well as socio-religious setup of the people and to make them more polite and civic. But in spite of all the services and efforts it is found that there was need to have more steps and measures for the progress and prosperity of the State and protection of its socioreligious traditions and cultural values. In this connection the modern education would be given in local language which developed local cultural traditions. There are many countries still in existence on the map of the world with their own local customs and social traditions. Likewise, the work of habitation or cultivation the State land would be taken by the locals instead of settlers. In the way State resources be in the State and used for the state benefit. Besides this, the local domestic industry of vessel-making, wood-work, textile and leather work was in developed condition. It needed to be developed and patronized by the rulers and to be changed into big industrial units at national level. In this way the State income would be increased and provided employment opportunities to the local population. Besides this, the State's wealth would be used for the educational and cultural development of the State people, instead of squandering away thousands and lacs rupees on the different institutions and organizations of Punjab and other areas of the sub-continent. Moreover educational institutions and cultural centers would be opened in which modern and local education would be given to the people and local traditions would be promoted and encouraged. The local persons would be appointed on high official posts that played a role in social, economic and political development and gave protection to socio-religious traditions and cultural values accordingly. There would be fixed a limitation of settlers and refugees. So that the population ratio of the locals was not changed in minority due to coming of countless number of settlers and refugees. In the same way rich local traditions of the people would be encouraged and patronized. So that rich social traditions and religious values could be preserved and even, exported to other areas. Notwithstanding, now it is need of the hour that the efforts should be made to revive and appreciate the rich social and religious traditions and cultural values of the region by local population. Moreover, local language should be spoken and encouraged everywhere at any stage by locals from common man to highly officials as well as wealthy persons.

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