



Reflection of Brahui Culture in Brahui Modern Prose

Dr. Muhammad Ali Dinakhel

Lecturer, Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar.

To cite this article: Muhammad, A.D.(2020)Reflection of Brahui Culture in Brahui Modern Prose, Al-Burz, Volume 12, Issue 01

Received: September 29, 2020; **Accepted:** October 26, 2020; **Published:** December 31, 2020

KEYWORDS

Brahui Language,
Brahui Culture,
Balochistan, Brahui
Literature, Brahui
Modern Prose

ABSTRACT

Literature reflects society. Following this idea, it is true that the best reflection of a culture and society is found in the creative literature of that very society. Writers reflect culture in their writings because they can't live without being influenced by the culture and society in which they live. Culture and society have their influences upon writers and that is why writers and poets directly or indirectly describe their society and culture. As compare to poetry, culture is explicitly found in prose. Same is the case of the reflection of Brahui culture in its prose. We easily know about the main cultural tenets of Brahui people through their literature. Their life-style, customs, food, education, professions, religion etc. are found in the prose works of Brahui Literature. Modern genres in Brahui Prose, like novel, short story, drama etc. are the main sources of understanding the Brahui Culture. This article attempts to analyse modern genres of Brahui prose like novel, drama and short story to discover main features of Brahui Culture. It is a documentary research and thematic analysis approach has been employed for this study. Main Limitation of this research is that it is based on Urdu and English translation of Brahui modern prose.



1. Introduction

Brahui is the oldest language of Pakistan. It comes under the Dravidian group of languages (Rooman, 2006). The first book written in Brahui is that of Malak Dad's *Tuhfat-ul-Ajaib* (Sindhi, 1992). History of Brahui Literature divided into four periods. Among them the fourth and last period starts after the Partition of India. In Brahui literary history this period is termed as Modern Period (Brahui, 2004). In Modern Period, short story, novel, drama, essay, travelogue etc. were introduced and promoted. First short story, *Musafar*, was published in the first issue of *Nawa-i-Watan* on 1st January 1955 (Brahui, 2004). Three collections of the short stories of Waheed Zaheer have been published. In his short stories, evil customs of society, tyranny

and oppression on the poor people by the *sardars* of the upper class have been depicted (Brahui, 2004).

First Brahui drama, *Raabi*, written by Ghulam Nabi, was published in 1956. After the establishment of Radio Station in 1956, one can find numerous Brahui radio dramas.

First Brahui novel, *Dariho*, is written by Gul Bangalzai (Murad, 2009). *Rosh Paish* is third Brahui novel. It was also been written by Gul Bangalzai. According to different aspects of the novel, critics have declared it, in true sense, as the first novel of Brahui (Sabir, 1995). It has been translated into Urdu by Ghawas Bakhsh Sabir. Major themes of the novels of Gul Bangalzai are: caste system, negative tribal traditions and customs, poverty etc (Murad, 2009). Other prominent novelists are Dr. Naseer Aqil, Nigar

Shaheen Baranzai, Dr.Ghulam Sarwar Parkani, Ghulam Dastagir, Shahzad Ghani etc.

Tradition of travelogue writing started properly in modern era i.e after the creation of Pakistan. Qayyom Baidar has written the very first travelogue, *Silani*, which was published in 1995. The second one is that of Ghulam Sarwar Parkani *De Tak na Musafar*. Among the prominent travelogue-writers Noor Muhammad Parwana, Dr.Abdur Rahman Brahui, Abdur Razaq Sabir, Jawhar Brahui, Azizullah Aziz are very famous in Brahui literature (Murad, 2009).

Progressive Movement also influenced Brahui Literature. Under the influence of Progressive Movement, drastic changes are found in the themes of Brahui Modern Prose. Dr. Abdur Rahman Brahui, Amirul Mulk Mingal, Gul Bangalzai, Habibullah Jatak, Ghulam Haidar Hasrat, Ghulam Nabi Rahi, Zafar Mirza, Moosa Toor, Dr. Abdul Nabi, Prof. Abdur Rauf, Yusuf Sani, Noor Muhammad Parwana, Pir Muhammad Zubirani, Malik Muhammad Panah etc. founded the Brahui Progressive Movement. Modern Poem, short story, novel, drama, free verse, close verse, sonnet and song were introduced under the influence of Progressive Movement (Brahui, 2009). Besides the creative literature, there are prominent researchers like Dr. Abdur Rahman Brahui and Dr. Abdur Razaq Sabir who have conducted research on Brahui literature and especially about modern prose (Rizvi, 2007).

Brahui Language

The word Brahui has been explained in various ways. Different variations have also been given. Among them one is Barohi which means “mountain dweller” or “highlander”.

Linguistic Geography

To the extreme north-west, far away from all other Dravidian languages, in the heart of eastern Balochistan, Brahui language is spoken (Grierson, n.d.). The Brahui or Brohi people live in the rugged hills of Pakistan's western borderland. Mostly they are living in Pakistan's Balochistan Province around the town of Kalat. They are also found in southern Afghanistan and Iran. There are three dialects of Brahui language. Among them one is Sarawani (spoken in the north), Jhalawani (spoken in the southeast), and Chaghi (spoken in the northwest and west). The Brahui language is related to the languages spoken in South India. That is why in Pakistani

Languages it is an isolated language therefore its vocabulary is only 15% Dravidian. Grierson says that it has freely absorbed words from the vocabularies of the neighbouring Persian, Baluchi and Sindhi (Grierson, n.d.). Although most of the kings/Khans of Balochistan were Brahui speakers but they did not adopted Brahui as their official and court language.

Many Brahui-speakers are bilingual, speaking Baluchi or other local languages. In this regard Grierson says that almost all of Brahui people are bilingual. According to Mr. Bray, at that time, the Khan of Kalat used to talk Brahui to his mother and Baluchi to his father and brothers. Some of the Brahui tribes hardly speak at all; thus the Mirwaris, true Brahui as they are reputed to be, speak Baluchi almost to a man (Grierson, n.d.). There is no distinct indigenous script for Brahui; it is written in Perso-Arabic alphabet. As already told that writing tradition in Brahui literature is not ancient but has been started recently. That is why Grierson has written in his Linguistic Survey that the language has no written literature. When written, the Persian character is generally employed, although in books written by Europeans the Roman character is preferred (Grierson, n.d.). The separation of Baluchi into two dialects, according to Grierson, is due to the Brahui Language. In this regard he says Brahui is spoken in the central part of British Balochistan, and separates Baluchi into two clearly distinguished dialects, viz., Eastern Baluchi and Western Baluchi or Makrani (Grierson, n.d.).

Tribes

Well known Brahui tribes are Mengals, Bazenjo, Shanwari, Raisani, Zaeri, Zarakzai, Sasoli, and Qalandrani.

Brahui Folklore

Brahui has its rich folkloric history. Brahui Modern prose is based on the folklore and oral literature. The stories and other folklore of Brahui present the Brahui view of the qualities and strength of character desirable in a men and women. As in the following story of Mula Mansur desirable qualities of a woman have been described. Scepticism is also seen toward religious leaders who preach purity to the world but practice otherwise.

Mulla Mansur was an orphan and working in a Qazi's house. The qazi was not a sensitive man. Although Mansur served the qazi for seven years, but

one day he was beaten by qazi over a little mistake. Mansur started travelling in the world and left the qazi. He came across a shepherd. He fell in love with the daughter of the shepherd. Later on he married her. On his coming back along with his beautiful wife, everyone from king to qazi, started interest in his wife and desired to have her in their possession. She was very sincere and honest to Mansur. When qazi tried to tease her, she disclosed the matter to the public. Condemnation of qazi was started by all of the people including the king. As a result, the qazi was banished from Brahui lands.

Cultural Resemblance with Neighboring Cultures

For centuries the Brahui people have been lived near the Iranian and Sindhi people. Brahuies people used to go to Sindh whenever they needed (Sabir, 1995). That is why they have close cultural resemblance with Sindhis and Iranian. In addition, they are almost entirely Muslim, usually of the Sunni Sect. Due to this cultural interaction Brahui language has resemblance with neighboring languages. In this regard Grierson says that Brahui has freely absorbed words from the vocabularies of the neighboring Persian, Baluchi and Sindhi languages (Grierson, n.d.).

Religion

The religion of Brahui is Islam. Belonging mostly to the Sunni sect of Islam. Brahuies follow all rituals related to Islam. Although, they are Sunni Muslims, but they don't have fanaticism. Islamic practices and beliefs as mentioned in the Quran are being followed by them but still some of their customs have their Indian origin. They offer congregational prayers in the mosque. Brahui people have a respect for saints and they are visiting shrines of *pirs* (saints) (Sabir, 1995). They have particular saints for every family. Khurda from the shrines of these saints is being kept in homes by the women. They believe in jinn and sorcery and evil spirits. Different ways are adopted for protection from these spirits including reading the Quran by sayyed or mullah and providing amulets and chants by them.

Major Holidays

Brahui people follow holidays according to Muslim calendar. Tenth day of the Muharram, also known as Imamak is the holiest day. Special dishes including meat and rice are being cooked by women for these

special days. Near sunset, all of the family members gather and a mullah reads the Quran and says prayers for deceased family members. These dishes are distributed among neighbours and relatives. Reciprocally, they also share their dishes. Head of the family is supposed to visit the graveyard on next morning. This visit is to pray for their deceased relatives. They dressed themselves in new clothes on *Eid* occasion (Sabir, 1995).

Relationships

On their meeting hug and shake hands. They inquire about each other's health followed by *byhāl* (exchange of news) about cattle, friends, family or other matters (Sabir, 1995). Women do not shake hands with those men who are not their relatives (Sabir, 1995). In close relations, the women do not cover their faces from the friends of husband (Sabir, 1995). Among family members enmity between cousins and uncle and nephew is found. Each of Brahui tribe has its a hereditary *sardar* (chief). Usually, they have extended family but those living in urban areas have small families.

Family Life and Wedding

Brahuies follow typical Muslim ways for their weddings but slight variations are there related to various customs. Marriage with first cousin is favored. They have arrange marriages. Sometimes couple is being asked about their choice but in majority cases only the parents have the authority to arrange it (Sabir, 1995). Early age marriages of girls are common (Sabir, 1995). When a children was born, in the past, marriages were arranged. But due to state's laws this practice is no more over there. Among the important ceremonies, marriage and betrothal are important for both of the families (Sabir, 1995). At the time of betrothal, finger ring is given (Sabir, 1995). At the time of marriage, family disputes are being settled. On account of economic realities most of them are monogamous despite the permission of polygamy in the religion. Economic system can be reflected from family structure. Nomadic Brahuies, predominantly have short family. Village inhabitants have extended family. Cases of divorce are rare in Brahuies. Death was the punishment of adultery in early times. Remarriage of a widow is allowed.

Before marriage it is not allowed for a girl to meet his fiancé. Bride sit in *kund* (corner) and only allowed

to meet their immediate family. Bride's family is paid with *lab* (amount) by the groom. This lab can be used for expenses during wedding (Sabir, 1995). It is not a common practice among all of the people. Expenses of the wedding will be bear by the groom. Brahuies have no concept of dowry. After taking a bath and wearing *boski* (dress) a groom is not allowed walking himself. After this he will be lifted on shoulder by his cousins. Groom is taken for *sargas* before *nikah*. After *Sargas*, he sits on *Saej*, and served with *Shurdi* (sweet). On this occasion he is also asked for some amount. Grierson says that they intermarry freely with non-Brahui tribes, and owing to the mixed character of the race nearly every Brahui is bilingual (Grierson, n.d.).

Rites of Birth

Male child's birth is celebrated and considered a pride. In these celebrations gunshots are fired in the air. Goats are being slaughtered for this celebration. To protect child and mother from jinn and witches, they follow different rituals. Within six months a male child is circumcised. Circumcision is also celebrated. Two Sheep for a son and one sheep for a daughter are being slaughtered. On this occasion feast held for neighbours, relatives and friends. To name a child, sometimes, the name of an ancestor is given. Ritual of *sar-kati* (head-shaving) is often performed at shrine of a saint.

Rites of Death

After one's death all of the relatives are being informed for the participation in funeral. On the third day of death, meals are prepared. Meals are also arranged on every Thursday. Thursday meals are prepared till the *Chaliyo* (40th day). The *Chaliyo* is an important day (Sabir, 1995). *kafan* (shroud) is usually sent from outside. There is a place of washing and the dead body is carried there when the mullah is arrived. Mostly mullah or near relatives wash the dead body. In case of a female the mullah's wife is also washing the dead body. In a procession the dead body is taken to the graveyard. The mourners reciting the *kalima*, Mullah offers prayer at graveside. Other rituals like singing of *moda* (dirges) and *varagh* a death feast are also important. The first anniversary is celebrated with a feast.

Life style and Economy

Grierson says that the people lead a pastoral life, subsisting on the produce of their herds, and are generally inoffensive, sociable, and given to hospitality (Grierson, n.d.). Economic activity of Brahui people is reflected in their settlements. Traditionally, many Brahuies are nomads. Temporary camps and tents are being used by these nomadic herders. They migrate with their cattle and pursue pasture. Main products they use are of their herds. In recent years many Brahuies adopted farming and settled while left pastoralism. That is why pastoralism declined.

Physique of Brahui People

Brahui people that they are somewhat below the medium height, with oval face, round eyes, and high slender nose, have no physical characteristics entitling ethnologists to class them as members of the Dravidian race of India proper, but that their language is in its essence Dravidian (Grierson, n.d.). Brahuies can easily be distinguished from their neighbors like Baloch and Pashtuns in terms of their physique. Brahuies are of dark brown colour. They have often brown not black beard and hairs. They are hardy and active race. They are less turbulent and more trustworthy. Weapons they use include swords, shields and rifles.

Clothing and Dress

Shirt, tunic, cloak and some trousers gathered and tight at ankles is their common dress. Turban is used by men for covering their heads. A page completes the outfit for men (Sabir, 1995). There is no strict veil for women. People of all classes wore sandals made up of goat and deer skin in early times. Knee-long shirts and loose shalwars were used by men. Female wear a shirt (frock) having a pocket at its front. The shirts are decorated with embroidery work and small round pieces of mirror (Sabir, 1995). Shoes are also decorated by embroidery which are liked (Sabir, 1995). *Chaadar*, a long rectangular cloth is used by women. Young boys also wear cloths like men. In early times, due to poverty and lack of clothes, at the age of three years, first trousers were given to a young boy. Loose, big trousers are found everywhere. Among the Brahui of the Jhalawan region, women use black shifts. Various designs and patterns are made on women clothes with thread of different colours. Nose

rings (vat), finger rings (challav), and earrings (panara) are common ornaments of women. Those Brahuīs who have been settled in Sindh dress like the Sindhis.

Food

Baloch and Brahui use almost same food. *Sajji* is their famous dish. Leg piece of sheep or goat cooked on fire is called *Sajji*. Brahuīs have, mutton, an important part of their diet. Millet and wheat is cultivated by the settled brahuīs. Rice is used on special occasions. They eat food with one hand from a communal platter. They drink milk. They also make curds, buttermilk, butter and ghi (clarified butter) (Sabir, 1995). Wild fruits, vegetables and dates are also an important part of their diet. Chabati and Shorba are usually eaten (Sabir, 1995). Tea is also after meals as well as during different social ceremonies (Sabir, 1995).

Justice System

Usually, Brahui take their disputes to formal courts. They have their *Jirga* which is an informal judicial system (Sabir, 1995). It consists mainly on five members called *Panchh*. Decision is given by the Sardar of the tribe. *Jirga* decides rules. It also enforces these rules. Commonly practiced rules are given below: if murder is involved, the murderer is supposed to get his sister or daughter married in the family of the victim or he will have to pay blood money. Sometimes a woman from the family of murderer goes as maer to the family of victim and thus the murderer is forgiven.

Education

There is extremely low literacy rate among Brahuīs. According to the census report of the year 1972, literacy rate is only six percent. They don't know the importance of formal education and especially the female education. Only a small number of people avail formal education. They also don't have access to schools. In early times the Brahui sardars did not like the people to be educated (Sabir, 1995).

Health

A sick person is treated with folk medicines and wild plants (Sabir, 1995). Amulets are also fastened round his neck (Sabir, 1995). They help each other, by

giving cash or cattle, in sufferings especially when someone falls ill (Sabir, 1995).

Hospitality

Brahuīs are very famous for their hospitality (Grierson, n.d.). In Brahui culture, guests are considered a blessing. That is the reason that guests are being served with great meals (Sabir, 1995). For special meals of the guests, animals are slaughtered. The whole village consider a guest as their own.

Crafts and Hobbies

Garments of Brahui women are embroidered with many beautiful and coloured designs and patterns. Goats' hair and sheep wool are used for making rugs and tents.

Music and Dance

An oral tradition of heroic poems and folk songs is there in Brahui culture. Professional musicians and minstrels sing these folk songs. These professionals are called *Dombs*. Every Brahui community has their *dombs*. *Rabab*, *Siroz*, and *punzik* are famous musical instruments. Events like weddings have special dancing.

Superstitions

They believe in various types of superstitions. For example, when they leave for some work and everything goes right they consider it as a sign of a good omen (Sabir, 1995). They think, killing of someone or oppression upon someone, as the main causes of famine and other natural disasters (Sabir, 1995).

Professions and Occupations

Brahuīs, being pastoral nomads, were migrating with their herds of goats, sheep and cattle from mountains to plain areas (Sabir, 1995). Today, they have left this pastoral life. Either they have settled or they are seasonally migrated between lower and higher areas. They have started farming. Now-a-days educated Brahuīs work in different government departments.

Sports and Recreation

target-shooting and horse-racing are traditional sports which have popularity among various Brahui tribes. For entertainment and recreation, they are depending on own resources. Recreation and entertainment activities include their religious festivals, traditional folk dance and songs and family celebrations. Nomadic Brahuis are still following these practices but Brahuis settled in urban areas can enjoy more opportunities for their recreation and entertainment.

Social Problems

The Brahui people inhabit in most isolated, least productive and harshest environments in Pakistan. Rainfall in Brahui areas are low and it has a dry earth (Sabir, 1995). All these are responsible for low standards of living and traditional economic systems of the community (Sabir, 1995). There are not considerable efforts by the government for the development of this region. Main cause of belated government efforts is nomadic and rural character of the people because they are not in a position to pursue and follow their rights. Brahuis, dominated by ethnic elites, are important among tribal minorities. Illiteracy, and lack of enough written literature and many other factors are responsible of assimilating of Brahui language with Balochi language.

The Behaviour of Sardars

The character and behavior of some of the sardars is not good. They are against the education of the common people and want them to be in darkness (Sabir, 1995). The poor people pay tax to the sardars (Sabir, 1995). Whenever an issue is presented to sardars, they take partial decision (Sabir, 1995). The sardars don't shake hands with poor people (Sabir, 1995). Harassment of women by sardars has also been found (Sabir, 1995).

2. Conclusion

Brahui has a very rich oral literature. In modern period written literature has also developed in Brahui. Modern literary genres, like novels, short stories, and dramas have introduced in Brahui literature. Folklore as well as written literature reflects the real Brahui culture.

In modern Brahui literature, Brahui culture is visible in the fiction literature like novels and short

stories. For understanding Brahui culture, Modern Brahui fiction literature is very useful. Minute cultural tenets are also found in Novels. Brahui novels and short stories translated in other languages like Urdu and English can help other people in understanding Brahui culture. There are many similarities in the cultures of Brahuis, Pashtuns and Baloch. Brahuis living in Sindh regions have tenets of Sindhi culture.

3. References

- Brahui, A. Rahman. (2004). *Jadeed Nasri Adab (Brahui)* in Study Guide M.Phil Pakistani Languages: Baluchi, Brahui Zaban-o-Adab, Islamabad, AIOU.
- Brahui, Sosan. (2009). *Urdu awr Brahui: Lisani wa Adabi Ishtirak*, in Pakistani Zubanin Mushtarik Lisani wa Adabi Warsa, by Dr. Inam-ul-Haq Javed and Abdullah Jan Abid, Islamabad, AIOU.
- Grierson, G.A. (n.d.). *Linguistic Survey of Pakistan Vol. I Introductory (Being Vol I Part I of the Linguistic Survey of India)*, Lahore, Accurate Printers.
- Murad, Afzal. (2009). *Mukhtasar Tarikh Zaban-o-Adab Brahui*, Islamabad, NLA.
- Rizvi, Kashif. (2007). *Pakistani Zubanin*, Islamabad, Asif House.
- Rooman, Anwar. (2006). *Brahui awr Urdu ki Lisani wa saqafati rawabit*, in Pakistan min Urdu (Vol. II) by Prof. Fateh Muhammad Malik and others, Islamabad, National Language Authority.
- Sabir, G. Bakhsh. (1995). (Translator), *Aftab Taza* by Gul Bangalzai, Islamabad, Pakistan Academy of Letters.
- Sindhi, A. Majeed, (1992). *Lisanyat-i-Pakistan*, Islamabad, National Language Authority.