

A Comparative Study of Pashto-Baloch Folkloric Genres

“Kakarai Ghara” and “Dehee”

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Abstract:

Cultural and social histories can be retrieved through the folklore created by ordinary people of any community. Particularly the Postcolonial Studies unveil the possibilities of tracking histories through sources that are stemmed in local and folk memories and folklore. Baloch and Pashtoon residing in the province of Balochistan, live and share the same natural landscapes. Hence they have interesting commonalities in their tangible and intangible cultures. This paper is going to present a comparative study of the folk genres of Pashto and Balochi that is Kakari Ghara and Dehee. One of the main reasons of selecting these two genres was that, both of the genres have survived under coercive situations waged by global consumer culture. The paper underpins reasons that how these two genres still survive and regulate its creative energies that have encompassed both literate and illiterate people of these languages. The paper presents interesting thematic analogies in both genres.

Origin of Folklore and Oral Tradition:

The study of written text confirms that until 4000 BC, all literature was oral (Thompson, 2011)i. Egyptians and Mesopotamian inscriptions written during 4000 to 3000 BC are assumed as the first glimpses of the written text. Encyclopedia Britannica on the origin of folk literature, as of the origins of human language; there is no way of knowing. “None of the literature available today is primitive in any sense, and only the present-day results can be observed of practices extending over many thousands of years. Speculations therefore can only concern such human needs as may give rise to oral literature, not to its ultimate origin”ii.

Folk literature consists of several genres of both poetry and prose. It varies from area to area. The cultural realities of each society shape its forms of expression through folk genres. It is an interesting phenomenon to see that in all traditional societies people express their feelings in poetry or prose, while other mediums of expressions like painting, sculpturing, etc are not practiced at a larger scale. One of the common features in folk lore is the unanimity of authors, creators and even singers.

Culture evolves in a dialectical way through natural attributes. Hegel’s conception of “The state of Nature” depicts men struggle to earn freedom from nature and transcend its status from a “Noble Savage” that is a great illustration of men dialectical relationship with nature (Blunden, 2007)iii. Analysis of various theories and conceptions concludes that human created cultures for its immediate and strategic needs. As expression of feelings and emotions is one of the most important aspects of human society therefore folkloric genres created in the different corners of the world have a dialectical relationship to the nature and culture of people.

Unpacking the term “Folklore”:

As an outcome of cumulative cultural process, folklore has been defined and elaborated in diverse ways. The online Etymology dictionary traces back the coinage of the term Folklore that in 1846, it was coined by antiquarian William J. Thoms (1803-1885). The dictionary further elaborate that, “this word revived folk in a

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modern sense of "the common people, whose culture is handed down orally," and opened up a flood of compound formations, e.g. folk art (1892), folk-hero (1874), folk-medicine (1877), folk-tale/folk tale (1850; Old English folctalu meant "genealogy"), folk-song (1847), folk singer (1876), folk-dance (1877)iv.

One of the best known explanations of folklore is found in Alan Dundes's brief essay, "What Is Folklore?" Dundes disputes the notion that "folk" should be automatically identified with peasant or rural groups, or with people from the past. He argues that contemporary urban people also have folklore and suggests that rather than dying out, folklore is constantly being created and recreated to suit new situations (Dundes, 1965). Dundes asserts that "folk" can refer to "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is-it could be a common occupation, language, or religionbut what is important is that a group...have some traditions that it calls its own." Folkloric performances are constantly created and recreated depending upon the circumstances. Malinowski agrees with Dundes that folklore is not something of the past. It is quite weak theoretical assumption to believe that folklore belongs to past because if it was the case then it would have been sequencing and researching events in history done by historians. They would just have collected date and place of folklore's origin. But folklore is something that belongs to past as well as present with a specific context.

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, "Folklore consists of traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances, or art forms preserved among people. It is defined as a branch of knowledge that deals with folklore an often unsupported notion, story, or saying that is widely circulated"v. It tells us about emotions, feelings of people or group of people with diverse and unexpected creative expressions with traditional elements. Its development takes place naturally, becoming a part and parcel of one's daily life and it includes folk songs, folk dances, folktales, handicrafts as well as beliefs of the members of a particular group. (Green, 1977)vi **Folkloric Genres:**

Cultural zones possess its discrete folkloric landscape, particularly traditional societies have a great potential of sustaining oral tradition that is the backbone of folklore communication and process of its creation. Pashtun and Baloch tribal societies living at the fringes of nation states of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran still rely on the oral tradition and folkways of communication. The traditional Pashtun-Baloch societies still manifest traditional features. People living in rural areas still depend on oral tradition and folkloric genres and wisdom.

Comparison of the Dehee and Ghara:

While focusing the cultural and ethnographic assimilation in Pashtun-Baloch tribes living on the Sulaiman range¹⁵, interesting commonalities are observed in terms of value system, means and tools of production and folk traditions. The District Gazeteers of Balochistan compiled during the colonial era (1900-1907) show almost no difference in the value systems and code of honors that is Pashtunwali and Balochi Nang (Kakar, 2011)vii. As most of these tribes live across cultural fault lines and are associated with livestock as major way of livelihood, therefore commonalities in both material and non-material cultures of these tribes can be akin in many respects.

The two specific folkloric genres that is Kakari Ghara from Pashto and Dehee from Balochi will validate an overarching commonality in the real life situations, worldviews of the people, their romances narrative, friends and foes and the very masculine features of the society. Literature review regarding the two specific genres

¹⁵ Notes: The Sulaiman range runs north in Loya Paktia and meets the Spin Ghar range northeast of Gardez in Paktia province. To the northwest, the Sulaimans merge beyond Loya Paktia into the Koh-i-Baba range. To the east, the Sulaimans enter the districts of Dera Ghazi Khan in Punjab and Dera Ismail Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and approaches the Indus River near Mithankot in the Rajanpur District of Punjab. The eastern slopes drop very quickly to the Indus River, but towards west, the mountain range drops gradually in Kandahar southwest into Helmand and the Sistan Basin. Extracted from <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Sulaiman+Range>

indicates that society segregate this poetry in three distinct ways, that is the 1) epic poems and ballads, 2) romantic poetic genres and 3) comedy poetic genres. **Pashtun Folklorists about Kakari Ghari**

The women folklorist Ghutai Khawri's account on Pashto Folklore, casts a cursory glance over Kakari Ghari, and it is simply described that a short poetic genre encapsulating almost all aspects of social, political, religious, economic, cultural and historical facts and occurrences (Ghutai, 1985) viii . Professor Wali Muhammad Sial Kakar has written an account "Ghari" that better illustrates the cultural process, oral tradition and the use of indigenous and sub-local dialects in this genre (Sial, 1969)ix. He has traced the poetic emergence and evolution of this very rhythmic and simplest verses created and sung by people in the society including both male and female. Prof. Sahibzada Hameedullah describes the essences of this genre equivalent to that of Vedic literature and the epics of Homer, and Persian Firdousi (Hamidullah, 1985)x. This genre has been studied over the period of times. Syed Khair Muhamad Arif, reckoned poet and folklorist has published a profound account that analyzes both thematic and rhythmic characteristics of this genre. He has opined that this genre is one of the most prevalent one after the genre "Tappa" and he confirms that women folk comparatively have a major part in the creation of this genre (Arif, 1995).xi

Anyhow, the evolution of this genre has trimmed its capability to easily travel through diverse cultural zones of Pashtun territory stretched on both sides of the borders.

Baloch Folklorist and *Dehee*:

Dehee, has proven its essence as one of the most effective folkloric genres in Balochi. The main reason for its popularity and effectiveness may be due to its simplicity of themes and composition. There are several opinions about its origin and epistemology. The reckoned Balochi poet Atta Shad opined that Dehee is derived for Deh that manifest the soil or love of one's country. Hence he reduces it to the nationalist chants (Meer, 2016). While Muhammad Sardar Khan Baloch tagged it as the Caravan songs. "The Caravan song Dehi to the nomads was their favorite muse and in their estimation, the first form of singing"xii.

Dedicated Baloch Researcher Sajid Buzdar has carried out his M.Phil thesis on Dehee. He is of the view that "Dehee is the shortest way of impression which can convey its message in very impressive way and mostly in two lines or verse. In Dehee poetic form the historical events with true references can be narrated. Mostly, Dehee is the folk poetic form composed by mainly by women folk but men has also composed some of it. Like all other poetic forms, Dehee is also mourning of lovers, it depicts social realities of the society"xiii. Abid Meer portrays Dehee as one of the most common genres in Balochi folk poetry. He describes that Dehee covers almost all aspects of a real life situation and it is not conditional to the specific time and space (Meer, 2016)xiv.

Evolution of the two genres:

Both of the mentioned genres have evolved through drastic changes in its themes and poetic constructions. The indigenous Kakari Ghara is not rhymed and it consists of two lines. One the other hand ancient Dehee consists of three lines and has tremendous analogy with Japanes Haiku¹⁶. Kakari Ghara gradually became rhymed with the passage of time and in most of the cases it consisted of 16 or 15 syllables. The two lines each of 8 or 7 syllables are rhymed. Whereas Dehee has reduced to rhymed lines each consisting of 8 or 9 syllables or sometimes may reach 12 syllables each. The major shift recorded in the course of history is its condensation and rhythm. Thematically both of the genres have evolved and have transcended a typical tribal and rural infrastructure of metaphors and symbols.

¹⁶ Notes: A haiku is an unrhymed Japanese poetic form that consists of 17 syllables arranged in three lines containing five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. (Written twice, kindly check the correct number)

One of the commonality between Dehee and Ghara is that it has great potential to go hand in hand with emerging urban civilization. One can easily identify frequent use of the names of automobiles, computer, telephone, vehicle, cell phone, text message, phone call, modern ornaments, institutions like hospitals, jails, police station, perfume, etc. One of the main causes could be the shortest and smartest form of the poetic genre that can easily live even in the urban memories as one of the reminiscent of the oral tradition.

The cultural process that expedites creative expression in the folkloric form is almost the same in both of the cultures. Folklore is not created for leisure; it follows a natural course of action. The romance, epic and tragic types created within concrete social realities and hence the beloved, hero, joys, sorrows and melancholies mentioned here are not fake but have authentic historical basis.

Generic Themes:

Beside this segregation we can find diverse themes, subthemes of cultural, environmental, economic, mystical, romantic, political and religious nature. Habibullah Rafi, the renowned Afghan historian and folklorist confirmed in his account that Kakari Ghara has an unprecedented thematic expansion that stretch from sociocultural to geopolitical and philosophical landscapes (Rafi,1973).^{xv} He has sensed and unearthed acute realism in this genre that is described with examples. Love for nature, realism and pragmatism are the elements that shape most of the folkloric genres, so Kakari Ghara and Dehee possess these characteristics. Here are some of the examples.

د ترکو کډې بار سوې شین خالی نجونه کتار سوې^{xvi}

د نړۍ والې پر غاړه زما ارمان سوې د گران سواله^{xvi i}

Spontaneous expression of love:

Love between male and female is a concrete social reality. It is not a fantasy as it is described by some of the non-Baloch and non-Pashtun writers. Although society has strong moral boundaries and do not encourage both male and female to interact freely and express their love for each other. But the folkloric genres encapsulate the intensity of unconditional love from both sides. ی ئم برا کن بلبلې جهان تهرا کهلان آن روش ن

تک گلگل ن ن ئم بونان

Oh my wild nightingale

I will not leave you till

People doomed to sip my blood

Similarly, in the following Kakari Ghara, a lover asks for the will of his beloved, if she is agreed, no matters what happens afterwards, he will happily bear all odds even a quarrel with sharp blades.

شین خالی د راته ووکي

بیا د جنگ په چرو شروع سي

My beloved, if give me her consent

I will not be worried even if war start with sharp blades.

Although men display their masculinity in wake of presenting challenging the social decorum and asserting their love. But the social coercion is far deeper and overarching and women sensed it with utmost diligence. In

the following two chants we can see an interesting phenomenon of restraining and realistically appeasing the love affairs. A girl forbids her beloved to be cautious about the norms of meeting and realizing the social realities that limits men-women free meet ups during day time. Kakari Ghara:

زما تر برونه بد سپري
خړ کالی؛ ډېر ځله راځي؟

My cousins“ are really bad men
Why does he (beloved) come so frequently?

On the other hand a Baloch girl warns her beloved to take care of the social bonds. She protests.

Dehee:

دوست ت كئى پ يچ اگون آن
گون همې نيم روش
عشق ا رو
كش
ليوكهنون پونان

My Friend, no doubt I am at your side
But your boldness to meet me in day light

Will surely ruin us

The study of tribal societies shows that there are very primitive and raw value system which revolves around masculinity and that the performance of man is supposed to be a sole protector of his family and clan as well as personas of rational thinking and bread winners. The values of hospitality, providing sanctuary, fighting for ones guests etc are the values that are not compromised generally. Those who discard these values are strongly opposed in both Pashtun and Baloch societies. In Pashtun society, the identification mark of a Pashtun is recognized by his „Pashto-Kawal“ i.e. Pashto doing and by that it means he/she should be abiding by the codes of conduct described and defined by Pashtunwali. Those who fight till last breath is an ideal man and the person who deals behind the curtain are cursed in the folk poetry of the tribes. One of the greatest social pressures on men is to fight if it comes and there is option of retreat to fight the other day. In a nutshell we can say in Pashtun and Baloch tribes, Fighting is to be Masculine.

As traditional societies mostly depend on their memories of past. In a peculiar situation of war, who was standing where, has been one of the most important questions in collective social history of people. Those who retreat in the battle field are entitled as coward, or unmanly. Disloyalty and faithlessness for money, power or position by anyone is always remembered as traitorous and collective enemies. Both Dehee and Ghara capture such characters and incidents acute actuality. Poetic genres perpetuate and conserve both history and the important messages that are meant for tribal men. Although, both Pashtoon and Baloch tribes live in distinct areas but poetic tradition become unified when it come to the question of masculinity and the sustaining the honor of men. Examples of such chants should be avoided as in most of the cases it caters to real life characters.

Poetic of Gham or Melancholy have almost the same patterns. A girl has become ill and she outrightly refuse to be taken to doctor, because it is the eyes of her beloved, the sole remedy of her illness and reason of her healing. There is a couplet in which both Pashtun and Baloch oral singers expressed the situation of their illness in the their own time zone and era and has surprisingly same expression for their illness which they believe have no cure other than the presence of their beloved. Following Pashto and Balochi chants respectively presents this uniformity. Kakari Ghara:

که مي يوسي تر ملتانہ

زما علاج نشتنه بے گرانہ

Even if you take me to Multan (Hospital)

My remedy is not possible without my beloved

Very interestingly, here we find a modern Dehee that is a couplet, and portrays the same situation.

Dehee:

ملتان ڈاکدا رن کئی

ت کئی مرضاں

زاناں برو مل و کن

یارا تھرا رکھ

جواناں

Multan's Doctor does not know my disease

Only my beloved can heal my wounds

Oral tradition has been very functional in preserving historical events that has carved deep impacts on the social consciousness of these tribal communities. For example, the atrocities carried out by British colonial authorities have been remembered through poetic genres. Both genres in Balochi and Pashto have served the purpose to keep the record straight and conserve the event and characters.

An arrogant British colonial officer, Gilla Ram was killed by a Baloch notable who challenged the code of Baloch-Nang. This character has been depicted in the Dehee's from almost more than hundred years. Gilla Ram has become a metaphor of disrespect and hate. Ordinary people reproduce this metaphor time and again.

Dehee:

ارمناں گنداں راہ داڻی

من و کن نازاں مزدا

گیلا رام کھواہ

داڻی

If I could get a way to reach

my beloved's husband

I would treat him, as Gilla Ram

In 1945, Sher Jan Jomezai a reckoned freedom fighter killed a British political agent named Barnus (Arif, 2000)xviii . People have presented extraordinary tribute to him in the form of folk poetry.

Kakari Ghara:

پہ تحصیل کپی تکھار دی

د سرو بنکار کوی شیر جان دی

Tehsil is echoed with firing

Probably, Sher Jan got hunting the reds (Ferangees)

Beside phrasing the heroic accounts, folklore records other historical events. The devastating earthquake broke in 1935 almost wiped out Quetta. We can see the scale of destruction in the Pashto-Balochi folklore. Quetta was occupied by British authorities and was predominantly a garrison for their troops. The evolving colonial culture in the city was perceived a threat to the local cultures.

Kakari ghara:

کوټې خود به نړې دې

په تا کې څه نڅرې کیدې

For its ill-mannered activities

Quetta Doomed to be destroyed Similarly

this event is depicted in a Dehee, as a metaphor of stack destruction.

Dehee:

درکف دراین

شونډے وی

ماه ی دیم ا ډیپه ناه

ی کوټه

کھواه ین

Show me your face, Oh my Beloved,

Otherwise your cold heartedness

Will destroy me as Quetta

As shared above, both these genres have great tendency to sail through the very alienated and somehow depressing cultural impositions of modern and postmodern era. One can see frequent use of the modern terms in both genres. In the following Pashto Ghara, we can see the words levies, tasweer, hotel, takleef etc.

Kakari Ghara:

زموږ په کلي گران میلمه

ادې لیویز ود روہ^{xix}

My Beloved is invited in our village Oh, Mother,

Do call the Levies (force) Kakari Ghara:

په عمل د خدای خبر دی

سرې تصویر د برابر دی^{xx}

Only God knows your deed

Although your picture is quite pretty

Kakari Ghara:

د هوتیل چائنکه نه ده

ډېر تکلیف غواړي زما خله ده

It takes pretty hardships to get my kisses

Certainly it is a kettle of tea to be ordered at a hotel

Similar words can also be observed with high frequency in the Dehee. Following two modern Dehees (couplet form) carry the terms pejaro, cell phone, and wristwatch Dehee:

لال پجارو کھ کئی بال

گرانا بُری دیریں پندا ں

ڈا دیٹ جھانا

My beloved's furious red Pajero When
reaches, marvels the people Dehee:

تھراکل ن خ ن فی

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ے بیٹی

ی

مناں ت کئی دست موبائل نوا ں مناں دیرا س

Probably you do not value these good days As
your mobile phone, my beloved! do not drop me Dehee:

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من ت کئی دست گھڑی آن نواں مناں بوڑے س ئ

All the people know about your Ego But,

I am the wristwatch of your hand.

Conclusion:

The emerging trends figured out of the textual and thematic analysis of both of the genres indicates interesting similarities. As Folklore depicts the collective social and historical consciousness of people, therefore it is easily evident that both nations living side by side have experienced almost the same set of external and internal elements that shaped their cultures and worldviews.

This generic comparative study of the two genres validates the reality that people and communities live and interact on human levels. Quite contrary to political segregations, cultural faultiness amongst nations and ethnicities are not easily visible and hence cannot be easily erased, undermined and extinct. These two nations being overshadowed by the political narratives, cultural assimilations are least recognized and in most of the cases are defined unilaterally. The cultural bonds amongst Pashtun-Baloch tribes, sharing the same natural terrain, landlocked and dry rangelands of Sullaimanian range, witness interesting analogies and contrasts. Analysis of the cultural process, cultural codes and traditional manifestation of life validates the grand narrative of cultural construction. The nexus of culture and nature is confirmed even in the comparative study of folklore. There are overwhelming analogies and similarities in terms of both tangible and intangible modes of culture. Particularly the study of oral tradition, folklore genres, musical instruments, myths and overall worldview of the people will figure out interesting patterns that validates the theory that nature nurtures the cultures.

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