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Cultural Diversity in Pakistan

Assignment 1

# Overview

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One of the major reasons which lead to the creation of Pakistan was that  the people of South Asia needed a separate homeland. A separate homeland where there’s only a single type of people? No! Pakistan consists of Muslim nation predominantly and this doesn’t restricts it in any way to be culturally diverse. So what culture is actually? *“Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.”* So, how’s this possible that Pakistan being a predominantly Muslim country is also culturally very diverse. The thing is culture is not to be confused with religion. Islam covers every culture of the world. Every culture of the world is Islamic culture. It’s because Islam accepts any knowledge, behavior, value or a tradition unless it doesn’t contradict the core principles of Islam.

Pakistan accumulates a wide variety of cultures. And this habit exists not only in the ethnic domain but nearly all the possible domains which differ by distance(location) and time.

Considering ethnicity Pakistani society comprises various diverse ethnic groups including Punjabi, Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtun, seraiki. Mohajir, Kashmiri, Makrani and the ancient Wakhi and Burusho groups in the north. These groups are so different from one another that they are very easily recognizable. One can easily tell if the second person is Punjabi or Pashtun or else.

Another dimension of diversity among the people of Pakistan is the linguistic diversity which by the way is related to ethnicity in many terms. Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi and Seraiki etc are some of the local languages spoken by the respective ethnic group generally where as Urdu is the national language of Pakistan spoken by relative unrelated and a very diverse ethnic group. English is also widely understood and spoken.

If we take the values under consideration, different parts and different communities have their own values and traditions apart from the common values. All Pakistan are practice their religion while the preference and stress on a particular subject by one group is more than other. Apart from the religious domain there are some unwritten rules that vary from place to place and are ought to be followed by everyone. Also, there are some qualities for which people of different areas are known for, like Pashtun for bravery and everything related to Pashtunwali and the same are important values for them. Punjabi people are very warm hearted and fun loving. Similarly, there are notable qualities varying from place to place which also count for their values and people strictly adopt them.

Events and festivals have also a great diversity in them. There are national festivals as well local festivals. Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha and Eid-Milad-Nabi are the three religious festivals which are celebrated by most people; Independance day, Pakistan day etc. being the national festivals while there are local festivals and melas which relate to a particular group or place. People have started enjoying international days as well.

Hence Pakistan is home to a vast majority of different traditions, values and cultures while they are strongly connected.They love their country and people very much.

# Factors of Cultural diversity

The cultural diversity of Pakistan has so many factors and so many reasons. It mainly depends on our location, our history, our religion etc.

Per the history, Islam first came to this part of the world in 700’s AD. From that time to 1800’s this part of the world has mainly stayed under the rule of Muslim rulers (Mughals). After that British came to this area and captured this land and ruled not for a very long time but this time is a important factor of our culture diversity. before independence Hindus and Muslims were the two main communities which lived in the sub-continent. These two religions from the basis are opposite in nature, but unfortunately, they both had to stay together for some period. We absorbed so many cultures and traditions from Hindus in that time.

One of the other reason that is the cause of culture diversity is our location and our relations with our neighbors. In the north-western part of Pakistan, we have Pashtuns and most of them are originated from Afghanistan. Pakistan had good relations with Afghanistan due to similar religion but these days things are a little upside down due to the unrest on the Pakistani side. A lot of migration took place and many Pashtuns of Afghanistan traveled to Pakistan and are still staying here. Similarly, we have Iran, we have good relations with Iran too. We have India as a neighbor with whom we don’t have good relation but still we have absorbed a lot from their culture and whether we like it or not we are greatly affected by their presence as hating India is somewhat a part of our culture. We have China on the northern side. We have very good relations with China and in the northern areas we can see many Chinese families living with Pakistanis, so things among China and Pakistan are great.

There are four provinces in Pakistan and some federally administered tribal areas. Each of these have a different culture, basics remain the same but traditions way of living, family systems, likes dislikes changes per the region and the people. These are the reasons why all these different groups are still together in Pakistan is our Religion. As most of the people living in Pakistan are Muslims, religion creates a sense of belonging among these people and binds them together. Islam was the reason that these people belonging to different cultures came together to fight for a separate country in the first place. So, the main reason of cultural diversity of Pakistan is our religion. Islam creates a sense of belonging harmony among the people living in an area. People in Pakistan treat each other like their brothers and respect each other’s culture.

# Major Cultural groups:

## PUNJABIS:

     Punjab is situated in the center of Pakistan, It is the biggest province with respect to the population. Punjab (the land of five rivers) is the biggest land area of Pakistan and is popularly known for its culture. It shares most of its cultural and carnival values with Indian culture. Per population, 56% of the total population of the country is situated in Punjab Province. It has a total of 36 districts and contributes approximately 50-60 % of the economy.

Punjabi Culture is one of the oldest in world history, dating from ancient antiquity to the modern era. The scope, history, complexity, and density of the culture are vast. Some of the main areas of the Punjabi culture include: Punjabi cuisine, philosophy, poetry, artistry, music, architecture, traditions and values and history.

Punjabi people are very warm hearted and fun loving. Punjabis are heterogeneous group comprising of different tribes, clans, communities and are known to celebrate each tradition of their culture.

In villages’ people usually live in small communities (biradaris), however they live in peace and harmony with each other. They take active part in the happiness/grieve of each other and give a great deal of respect to their culture, norms and run their lives according to their set traditions. Punjabi people are famous for their hospitable and loving nature.

Punjabi is the provincial language of Punjab. It is spoken as the first language by majority people in Punjab, even spoken and understood in areas beyond the confines of Punjab. Facts and figures show that Punjabi language is spoken as first language by 44% of Pakistanis. Urdu language is also commonly spoken in this region. Key Punjabi languages/dialects are: Pothowari, Hindko, Jhangvi, Shahpuri, Pahari, Majhi, Saraiki

In most of the villages of Punjab men wear Pagri(turban), dhoti, kurta, khusa. Women wear gharara, or choridar pajama or colorful shalwar kameez, paranda, duppata, khusa, kola puri chappa. Whereas in urban areas of Punjab men and women follow latest trends and fashion, generally they wear different styles of shalwar kameez.

Punjab is famous for its cuisines. People of Punjab love to eat (they don’t care what they are eating if it is delicious). Punjabis love to express their joy by dancing on occasions like wedding and on other festivals. The most famous type of dances are bhangra, luddi, mujra etc.

Punjab is famous for its cloth. Faisalabad is the center of textile industry in Pakistan.

Pakistan’s cotton is world famous and is exported all around the world. Sialkot is famous for its sports items and utensils. Excellent sport items are made here and is exported all around the world.

Sufiism is also a major culture of Punjabis. People of Punjab have a strong believe in Sufis like Lal qalandar, baba farid, warish shah etc.

## Pashtuns:

Pashtuns are an ethno-linguistic group of people. Their origin is unclear but they claim that they are descendants of Bani Israel and are related to the Jews.

Pashtun culture is mainly based on Pashtunwali which is a non-written ethical code. They follow it strictly. The main components or values of Pashtunwali are:

* Melmastia (hospitality) Kabhi ao na khusbu laga k! :D
* Nanawatai (forgiveness or asylum)
* Nyaw aw Badal (justice and revenge)
* Turah (bravery)
* Sabat (loyalty)
* Khegaṛa / Shegaṛa (righteousness)
* Groh (faith)
* Pat, Wyaar aw Meṛaana (respect, pride and courage)
* Naamus (protection of women)
* Nang (honor)
* Hewaad (patriotism)

They try to be close to Islam and practice Islam actively. But their culture is not necessarily related to Islam in every aspect. They have some different values and tradition passed down to them by their ancestors so many similarities are found between them and the Jews.

One the major qualities Pashtun people have is bravery. They’ve been regarded as fierce warriors. There are many examples which narrate and testify it. e.g. Alexander wrote to his mother he was near to death after being hit by an arrow: “You have brought only one son into this world, but everyone in this land can be called an Alexander”. Dr Brydon was the only lucky person among the army of 16500. (Anglo Afghan wars)

Pashtun people take a great interest in music. They arrange meetups and enjoy music on events. Traditional Pashto music is mostly ghazels’. The popular musical instruments they use are rabab, sitar, tabla, portable harmonium and flute etc.

Their dances are lively and smooth. Attan dance where dancers perform to the beat of music involving 2-5 steps with a clap and speed varies with music, khattak dance which is fast and more like juggling and the worrier attan, previously performed at times of war but now is a cultural one, are the major types of dances of Pashtun culture.

Pashtun dress consist of shalwar kameez mostly. They normally take chaddar with them. Peshawari chappal is a common foot wear.

Penda is the major component of pashtun cuisine. Others are different naan and kebabs. They sit on floor and family members have meals together. They also organize meetups where they prepare best among their dishes and invite someone which are known as ‘sobat’.

## Sindhi:

Sindh is one of the four provinces in Pakistan, which is  located at the Southern border. The province of Sindh has been named after the famous River Indus. In Sanskrit, the province was dubbed “Sindhu” meaning an ocean. Around 3000 B.C, Dravidian cultures urbanized and gave rise to the Indus Valley Civilization. According to the Historians, Indus Valley Civilization declined due to the natural disasters such as floods but the invasions of Indo- Arians caused the sudden collapse of it. In the recent history, Sindh was conquered by the British in 1843. Sindh province remained the part of British India until 1947 when it was made one of the provinces of Pakistan.

Sindh has always been the land of peace, love, romance, and great cultural and artistic values. The Sindhis are peaceful, hardworking, hospitable, open-minded community. Sindhi culture is quite similar to Punjabis where they have great respect towards fellow human beings.The tolerance and harmony that Muslims and Non Muslims enjoy in Sind is not seen elsewhere in Pakistan.

The predominant profession of rural Sindhi population is agriculture. However in contrast to Punjab Sindh has a large number of big landlords who own most of the cultivable land. Majority of people work as landless peasants on lands owned by big landlords. This has given rise to abuse of human rights at the hands of landlords and a culture of oppression of weaker segments of society.

Women in Sindh work in the fields and tender animals like their Punjabi counterparts but are subject to more control by men. They are an object of male and tribal honour. Marriage by choice is still not an option for women whose nuptial affairs are settled by male members of the family. Honour killing, where women are killed for illicit relations with men, is often resorted to restore family and tribal honour.

Sindhis are the second biggest ethnic group in Pakistan after Punjabis. In terms of proximity to Hinduism they are even closer than Punjabis. A large number of Pakistani Hindus live in Sind province. Major Urban centres in Sind are dominated by the Urdu speaking migrants from India. These are the people who migrated from areas presently in India at the time of partition in 1947. They were the most advanced segment of Pakistani society at the time..

Sindhi language is an ancient language evolved over a period of 2400 years. It is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by approximately 41 million people in Pakistan(second most spoken), and 12 million people in India, mostly spoken in the Sindh province. The language of the people of Sindh, after coming in contact with the Aryan, became Indo-Aryan (Prakrit). Sindhi language, therefore, has a solid base of Prakrit as well as Sanskrit, the language of India, with vocabulary from Arabic, Persian, and some Dravidia.

Sindh also is the land of great Sufis, mystics such as Sachal Sarmast, Shah Abdul Latheef Bhitai and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.There were the great theologians of the Naqsh bandi order in Thatta who translated the fundamentals of the religion of Islam into their mother tongue. There were the great Sufi (mystic) poets like Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai who was the cherisher of truth and spent all his life in its propagation, pursuit and quest. Bhitai was also an excellent musician. He invented a new type of musical instrument, Tambura (drone instrument),

Sindhi cuisine refers to the native cuisine of the Sindhi people from Sindh, Pakistan. The daily food in most Sindhi households consists of wheat-based flat-bread (phulka) and rice accompanied by two dishes, one gravy and one dry.Some dishes are served at special occasions are Sai bhaji chawal, Koki, Seviyan, Sindhi Kadi, Kheer Kharkun, Pallo Machi, Taryal Patata.

Sindhi women wear the Shalwar kameez or the sari and the men wear the shalwar kameez or the kurta with pyjama . Sindhi chadar named as “Ajrak” and Sindhi cap are considered as sign of sindhi culture, it is used not only in Sindh but also liked by all Pakistanis  worldwide .Sindhis love their culture and  Sindh Cultural day(Ekta day) is celebrated worldwide every year on first Sunday of December, by wearing Ajrak & Sindhi Topi. On that occasion, the musical programmes and rallies are held in many cities to mark the day with zeal.Major hallmarks of cities and towns are decorated with Sindhi Ajrak to highlight the cultural values of Sindh.

## Baloch:

Baloch culture is opposite to the general perception about it. Though Balochistan is an area of barren lands, deserts and mountains, the Baloch culture is full of traditions, arts and crafts. Balochi embroidery is one of the most popular arts and crafts which are done by the females. Baluchistan is also known for its tribes and festivals. Another distinct feature of Baloch culture is the storytelling tradition.  Poets and storytellers are highly respected in Baloch culture.

The people belonging to Baloch tribe speak balochi language. Balochi language is an ancient language. Its roots are traced back to Iranian branch of Indo-European family.  It has resemblance with languages such as Sansikrat, Avesta, Old Persian and Phalavi, which nowadays are said to be as dead languages.

They live in tribes and each tribe has a head known as “sardar”, the sub divided tribes also have heads known as “Malik” or “Takari” or “Mir”. These tribe heads are members of districts and local Jirgas.

In Balochi culture  the marriages are different and unique than in the other provinces of the Pakistan The marriages are according to Islamic principles. Every member of the family takes part in the marriage; they express their joy and happiness by following the traditions of their culture. Usually the marriages are done in young ages (teenage) but are arranged in early childhood or at birth. There is a very low or negligible ratio of love marriages as this is not appreciated across the culture in all tribes. Usually the marriages take place within tribes but at times intra tribal marriages are also conducted. Divorce rate is very low in the Baluchistan as compared to the other provinces of Pakistan because they consider is a matter of disrespect for the family and honor of the tribe. Different rituals are celebrated in different tribes. In some tribes there is a tradition of takings “Valver”, it is a sum of money paid by the groom to the family of the bride.

Like all the other provinces of Pakistan the national dress shalwar kameez with distinct additions and modifications are worn in Baloch culture. The people dress up very pleasingly and in the same way in all the tribes. Turban is the common headwear of Baloch men along with wide loose shalwar along with knee-long shirts. Females dress consists of a shirt having a big pocket and embroidery and embedded round mirror work in front. A big Dupatta/ Chaddar is taken to cover the head and shoulders.

Baloch people celebrate both religious and social festivals. The religious festivals are same as across the country like Eid-ul-Azha and Eid-ul-Fiter. These religious festivals are celebrated by decorating houses wearing new dresses cooking special dishes. Baloch culture is full of many social festivals like Sibi festival which has folk music performance, cultural dances, handicrafts stalls, cattle shows and several other entertaining activities showing the colorful side of Baloch people. Buzkashi is another festival showing rather enhancing the bravery tactfulness and bravery of Baloch people. It is celebrated on horse-back by two teams that use their skills to snatch a goat from the each other.

Baloch culture is rich in folk music dances and songs. Famous wedding songs of Baloch culture are Nazenk and Salonk. The instruments used are mainly a flute, locally called Nal, Tamboora and Soroz. A common Baloch folk dance is known as Dochaap. Women also move in a circle clapping their hands on certain occasions. Other dances include the Lewa, Latti and Hambo.

Usually Baloch people have meals in morning and evening. Men and women eat separately. Wheat, millet and rice are part of the Baloch meal. Meat is also an important part; “Sajji” is the favorite dish of most people. Sajji is the food eaten with knife other than that Baloch people usually eat with hands. Milk, butter and vegetables are also part of Baloch cuisine.

Popular games include chauk, and Ji. Also, games like wrestling, horse racing, shooting and hunting pastimes among the wealthier people of tribes. Card games and gambling are also popular among groups of some tribes.