

## Historical Anthropology of Cholistan Through Folk Tradition

### Abstract

*Folklore are consist of historical legend which form popular belief, customs, rituals and different types of traditional mega-narratives. Story-telling is an ancient profession and tradition of human civilization; thus folklore is a very common phenomenon to primitive racial societies as well as post modern complex cosmopolitan cultures. The folklore records the memory of how society or certain tribes lead their life through the history. It brings to lights various aspects of society dealing with religion, rituals, customs, beliefs, superstitions etc. It also provides background data to study the politics, economy and state of knowledge amongst given structure of cultures. That is why while writing history, historians have to rely heavily on the tradition of folklore. The same is the case with Cholistan and neighboring Rajhistan. James Tod in his Annals and Anquities of Rajhistan relied heavily on the data provided by Folklorists. Writing this paper oral sources of folklore are relied along with written sources*

### 1. Introduction.

Cholistan, once a part of Rajhistan in history, is an area which is called Southern cradle of Indus valley civilization around the river Sarswati which is lost in history.<sup>4</sup> Sarswati has been meant as 'passing Water'<sup>5</sup> and also as 'goddess of knowledge, art and music'<sup>6</sup> in ancient mythic tradition of Hindustan. It is supposed to be the region where Rig Ved was composed and orally transmitted to the generations to come.<sup>7</sup> A large number of Archeological evidences at Phulra, Fort Marot, Derawar Fort etc., and shrines of Sufis confirm the ancient historical status of the region. However, no written evidence of ancient times can confirm the historicity of these Archeological evidences. Not only the history of these archaeological sites even the history of Cholistan Tribes, either Muslim or non-Muslim, is not available in written form.<sup>8</sup> Thus there is no way left to understand the Cholistani culture except to rely upon Folklorists of Cholistan. For, this paper the methods of interview, group discussion, tour through Cholistan and personal observations are used. In this sense, the paper depends more on Inductive method

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the mythological status of Saraswati, an archaeological project is launched in India on the route of Saraswati. Reported by The Indian Express, March 9, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See for details [www.behindthename.com/name/saraswati](http://www.behindthename.com/name/saraswati)

<sup>6</sup> See for detail [www.thefreedictionary.com/Saraswati](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Saraswati)

<sup>7</sup> See for an archaeological and mythological history and arguments, Sanjay Sonawani, *Origin of the Vedic Religion and Indus Ghaggar Civilization*, Bloomington: Booktango, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Mukhtar Ahmad, *Ancient Pakistan An Archaeological History*, Vol. IV, Foursome Group, 2014, P. 463; also see Nurruzzaman, *Ancient History of Bahawalpur I*, Multan: Carawan Book Centre, 1987.

than deductions. The paper is divided into different sections approaching the understanding of different aspects society such as religion,

## 2. Religion of Cholistan

The people of Cholistan are true and simple folk. Due to desert's way of life and low literacy rate, they are not fully acquainted with the main stream teachings of universal religions, however, majority of the masses follow whatever they know about Islam. Dominantly, people of Cholistan are believers in popular Sunni-Islam, yet the impact of Shiaism is prominent. Most of their religious guides (Pirs) belong either to Shia sect of Islam or are influenced by Shiaism.<sup>9</sup> Most of the population of Cholistan is developed around pounds (Tobas), however, Cholistanis had no idea of mosques at their *Tobas* before 1947.<sup>10</sup> After the liquidation of the British Empire in India they began to construct mud bricks small mosque without roofs at their *Tobas*. However at some places burnt bricks small mosques are also found. No proper arrangement of five time prayer can be expected in these mosques. Majority of the Cholistanis who resided at *Tobas* do not observe prayer, yet old men are usually regular and punctual to perform their religious obligations. Younger generation seems to be less interested in religious affairs. In the desert fasting and *Traveeh* Prayer in the holy month of Ramzan can not be asked for. Fasting is an exceptional case and an act of extraordinary piety. The Muslims celebrate so many festivals including *Eid-melad –un – Nabi (S.A.W)* *Shab-e-Qadar*, *Shab-e-Barat*, *Eid –al-Fitir*, *Eid-ul-Azha* etc. To celebrate these festival, most of the male and female members return to their permanent settlements by leaving one or two young boys in the desert to look after their cattle. The celebrations of these festivals are always with great respect and love in accordance with traditional Islamic Lunar Calendar. At the day of the festival, they take bath and wear clean or new dress which is not a routine comfort in Cholistan. For the permanent residents of Cholistan, it was difficult to perform Eid prayers. They had to go to Fort Maroot, Fort *Phulra*, or Fort *Maujgarh* on camels' back.<sup>11</sup>

Cholistanis are used to offer livelihood and money to the religious deities and for the rituals and customs. Such offerings are called *Manoti*. *Manoti* is an ancient ritual practiced by all religions in the region in different ways. In Hinduism *Manoti* is a way to make happy their devis and Semi-gods. The aim of *Manoti* is to seek health, wealth, prosperity, child etc. through offerings to the deities. Simultaneously, when Cholistanis face any trouble or there is no rain in the desert or a serious epidemic broke out in Cholistan, it is considered due to the anger of saints To appease the saints they are used to visit the shrines of saints with offerings such as milk, goats, sheep, cow, fruits, etc.<sup>4</sup> Some popular rituals of offering are:<sup>12</sup>

(i). **Atta Ghata:** Someone make a vow if he is blessed with high financial status he will offer goat on that certain shrine. When his desire is fulfilled, his relatives and close friends are invited to attend the ritual. Goats or sheep are

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Malik Nazir Muhammad S/o Muhib Ali, Jan 13, 2015, Fort Mauj Garh.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Roshan Meer S/o Faiz Muhammad, Feb 9, 2015, Chak No. 424/HR, Fort Marot.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Manzoor Ahmad, March 19, 2015, Basti Boharan wali, Fort Abbas.

<sup>12</sup> For details of these rituals see Sabir Iqbal, *Ghost Shrines of Cholistan, A study of superstitious culture*, M. Phil thesis, department of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, 2013.

slaughtered, cooked and eaten at the shrine. The ritual is celebrated with dance (*jhomar*) and singing songs and then the celebrants return to their home. This is the common and most popular ritual among the Cholistanis.

(ii) **Nau-Rata:** To spend nine nights on the shrine is called *Nau-rata*. When Cholistanis face any serious trouble or serious disease or are childless, they are used to vow to spend nine nights at the shrine if his problems are solved. Before one's desire is fulfilled one goes to the shrine and spend there nine nights at the shrine of *Rangelay Shah* at Hasilpur, *Shah-e-Mardan* at Fort Maroot or *Chanan Pir* at Yazman (Bahawapur). They believe that during these nine nights they can find the solution of their problem through a dream.

(iii). **Laakh Darood** is another way to find the solution of their problem. That is to recite *Daroodsharif* for one hundred thousand times. They invite their *Biradri* at some certain place and request them to recite *Daroodsharif*.

(iv). **Visit of Holy place/Ziarat.** Followers of every religion visit their holy places. Visiting holy places in Islam is not compulsory to all Muslims as it depends upon financial position of believers. Some Cholistanis have visited the holy places at Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Syria. When by air facility was not available then they travelled with caravans.

## 2. Structure of Superstitions

It is a striking feature of ethnographical investigation among people of primitive cultures that it is impossible to obtain any rational explanation of rites and customs even when such explanation would seem to us obvious. The people are content to follow without question their social customs and rites of their religion merely that these were ordained by their fore-fathers. Superstition is an opinion, belief or practice which is not based on fact, scientists' knowledge or solid reasoning. It is interesting that since the known history human beings all around the world believe in superstition. Their superstitions are of different types. They vary from country to country.

In traditional Cholistani folk, an important part is played by the evil spirits, the demons, which are locally called *Bhot-prait*. They are numerous and the most dangerous among them are supposed to have their abode in graveyards and places for cremation. Most of the evil spirits live in trees, *Dahr* or an old building where nobody resides. These evil spirits are always hostile to men. They are the cause of disease, bad luck and bad-death for Cholistanis. They are to be feared everywhere, for there is hardly a place in Cholistan where they do not have their abode as per local customs and rituals. Among the dangerous spirits *Churail* and *Chhulaida* are well known to the Cholistanis. The first ones are ghosts of women which have died in confinement. The second one called *Chhulaida* can change himself into various bodies. Sometime they appear as a baby and the next moment can convert themselves into a dog.<sup>13</sup> A *Churail* is considered a very dangerous entity both for men and women. However, she prefers women's outlook. Whenever there is an opportunity she takes possession of a woman which causes illness and insanity and if not driven out causes a certain death. For men it is a source of

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Muhammad Nawaz S/o Muhammad Ramzan, November 25, 2014, Toba Jamsar.

fear resulted in illness and insanity as per Cholistani folk tradition. *Churail* and *Chhulaida* both are identifiable. It is said that *Churail* always light a torch when about to proceed on her tours and several torches will be seen around her. She has horrible big teeth and long hair. Her feet are turned back and her front side has appearance of a fully developed woman. When Cholistanis have fear of Jinni they shout 'I am bohar, I am bohar'. Consequently their fear disappears. When One comes across a *Churail* one becomes naked and consider himself to be saved from attack of *Churail* and continue his travel with confidence. One does not turns back and remains clothe less unless *Churail* disappears.<sup>14</sup> It is also a common practice among Cholistanis that whenever they bring uncooked meat they have onion with it and they believe that in this way they are safe from evil spirits who like meat. Similarly they drink milk out of the milk-pot whenever they bring it from jungle to their permanent residence, especially when they travel in the evening. This is also considered to be a way to keep evils away from their food. Cholistanis also believe in *Dyn* (witch), not in the meaning of magician but as an evil spirit. A *Dyn* is almost worse than a demon. There is no way to save life. If opportunity offered, the *dyn* will take possession of men or women and will eat his or her liver.<sup>15</sup>

*Churail*, *jin*, *Chhulaida* and *Dyn* are concepts also found in other regional popular cultures including Hindus. The Hindus also worship the ghost of the people died in accidents by the lower classes of the Hindus. Among the Cholistani Bhail tribe, accident is considered to be a privileged form of death. The one who has parted in this way, be it a man or woman or child is considered to have gone to the gods. He simply becomes a god. In this tradition, Chanan Pir and Rangila Shah, were buried alive, Thigri Shah was killed by a camel and Dodhlanwala Pir met with death due to thirst. All died by accident and enjoy a high esteem in Cholistan. To avoid the evil influence of spirits, certain places must not be visited without a company or in the night and amulets are to be used.<sup>16</sup> Other than these beliefs, there are a lot other common beliefs:

- i. It is a good omen to see a bird, called *Malahla*, flying on the right hand to the left and on the left to right vice versa.
- ii. When there is draught in Cholistan a long leg black insects tightened with thread are hanged with the front door of the Mosque to have a rain.
- iii. Black beetle is welcomed at the huts and homes by sprinkling cold water or *Lassi* on it. On the arrival of black beetle they also recite *Darood Sharif*. They believe that this black beetle is ghost of deceased family member.
- iv. The yawn of camel is bad omen when someone is ready to ride camel.
- v. It is also supposed bad omen to call the person when he has just crossed the front door to go somewhere.
- vi. If passengers see the women with their pot full of water it is a good omen. If these women are going to bring water with an empty pot it is bad omen.

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<sup>14</sup> Talib Hussain S/o Ahmad Din, June 25, 2013, Toba Kala Kari.

<sup>15</sup> Amir Hamza S/o Muhammad Sharif, May 05, 2014, Toba Jalal sar.

<sup>16</sup> Jeevan S/o Ahmad Bux, May 22, 2014, Toba Pannu wali.

- vii. To hear a donkey bray from the front side is a bad omen but behind the passenger is good omen.
- viii. To cross the print of thick rope, used in well to draw water in the night is bad omen.
- ix. The yawn of cow or goat is good omen. It is sign of rain fall. Similarly coming out of the insects from their hole in a sunny day is a sign of rain fall.
- x. When one is starting on a journey and other man while meeting sneeze is a bad omen.
- xi. Cholistanis do not like to travel on Friday. To travel on Friday is bad omen.
- xii. They do not allow, in the evening or at night, birds singing songs or chirping nearer to their huts.
- xiii. If someone is on the way to go somewhere and come across a woman going to the pond for water is regarded bad luck for traveller.
- xiv. Some diseases are considered as the results of witchcraft.
- xv. The widow and childless women are looked upon as unfortunate. Society does not pay proper attention to them. They are not allowed to attend marriage or birth ceremonies. Therefore they prefer to live calm and quiet and usually stay away from gathering.<sup>17</sup>
- xvi. The Cholistanis believe that a man who is attacked by buffalo or a snake will suffer misfortune and will lose something important and valuable to him. His enemy will get control over him and he will be defeated with the hand of his enemy.<sup>18</sup>

They attach to the dream precisely the same significance as to the actual event. Does this mean that their dreams are as substantial and possess the same measures of reality as the facts of their waking vision? If this conclusion was legitimate on these facts, the dream life would have been continuity with the waking life and possess a specific reality for them. The interpretation of unusual dreams is left to some old wise men. In Cholistan there are certain individuals known as *Pir* or *Moulvi* who are credited with the possession of supernatural powers. He exploits his reputation thoroughly and must show proof of his power from time to time. He is credited with the power of communication in dreams with the invisible powers of good and evil and also of seeing the spirit of the departed or of those who are ill.

Cholistanis believe in the truthfulness of their dreams and take note of them as forecast of events to come, in particular those of living in jungle with their cattle. In short, many people living in Cholistan still trust greatly to the value of dreams as guides to the ordering of their daily conduct. What modern psychology says about dreams is out of the scope of our present discussion.

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<sup>17</sup> Atta Muhammad S/o Hakim ali, October 10, 2014, Toba Kala kari, See also Gazetteer of Bahawalpur State, 1904, Sang-e-Meel publisher, Lahore.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, January 22, 2015, Basti Bohran Wali, Fort Abbas.

### 3. Role of Pir (Spiritual Teacher/Guide)

In this superstitious structure, the role of a spiritual guide or teacher or of a spirit survivor becomes more important than any one other. Cholistanis are staunch follower of Pirs or spiritual guides. No *Wahabi* or orthodox Muslim has been seen in Cholistan, Non syed can not be their Pir. They love Syeds as descendants of the prophet and prefer to become *mureed* of Syed Pirs particularly Bukhari. Cholistani Hindus are blind followers of their *pundit*. The same is true for Cholistanis who do not like to listen a single word against their Pirs. Pir is considered to be superior to other human beings. They believe in Pir's supernatural miraculous powers, very closer to God. Pirs prayers are always accepted by God. Cholistanis were the followers of Hindu creed in the near past and remained with Hindus even after embracing Islam, that is why Pir occupies a dominant position in the Cholistani society.<sup>19</sup> The dominating role of Pir may be observed in every sphere of Cholistani life. When a baby is born in Cholistanis tribe, they are used to visit the shrine of *Jetha-butha* to full fill their vows. When a boy reached at the age of twelve, he becomes Mureed (disciple) of his family Pir. Pir is also present at the occasions of *Rasm-e-Kulkhani* where he hands over a turban/*pagri* to the elder son of the deceased person and by this ritual the elder son of deceased becomes the head of the family. Pir has rights over the *Charpoy*, pair of clothes and some money of the deceased person and as reward of his prayers for the deceased. Pir is respected and loved in a way that they do not like to sit on *Charpoy* in front of the Pir and are used to kiss the hands of Pir and touch his feet.<sup>20</sup> Usually Pir visit the houses of all Mureeds once in a year. At that time everybody wish to present to Pir a sheep, goat, cow or money for his blessings. Whenever there arises any dispute regarding financial matters or others it is Pir whose decision is final. Nobody can dare to challenge his decision due to the fear of his miraculous powers.<sup>21</sup> Water is a matter of life and death in Cholistan. They have to face serious economic problem whenever there is a draught. Pir is supposed to play a role and is requested to pray for rain.<sup>22</sup>

Pir also plays an important role in the days of elections. Candidates try to approach the Pirs of different Cholistani *Biradris* to win the support of his followers. They obey the orders of the Pir and cast their vote in favour of the candidate supported by the Pir. Pir functions as a family doctor and veterinary doctor for his Mureeds. When Cholistanis themselves or their cattle's face any health problem they go to Pir for his blessings with amulets and sacred water respectively for people and their cattle. Sometimes Pir gives them amulets written on the piece of mud made crockery.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Muhammad Khan S/o Ghulam Khan, June 20, 2015, Fort Marot.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Muhammad Abbas S/o Muhammad Manzoor, October 19, 2014, Toba Jalal Sar.

Muhammad Yar S/o Muhammad Hussain, November 20, 2014, Chak No. 304/HR, Fort Abbas.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Muhammad Arshad S/o Muhammad Riaz, June 09, 2014, Toba Jam sar.

<sup>22</sup> In this connection many stories are in the mouths of Cholistanis. One story narrates that: Once Pir Syed Nawaz Hussain Shah Bukhari visited *Toba Dilo wala*. His mureeds requested him to pray for rain. There were no clouds in the sky. Pir asked them how much? They requested for heavy rain. As Pir put his hands together and pray for rain there was heavy rain within a few moments. The place where Pir pray for rain is now a sacred place for his followers. Story narrated by Muhammad Yar S/o Muhammad Hussain, November 20, 2014, Chak No. 304/HR, Fort Abbas.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Muhammad Bux S/o Sher Muhammad, January 10, 2015, Mansora, Fort Marot.

In Cholistan there are number of shrines. The famous shrines of Cholistan are Dhanan Shaheed, Jamal Din Shaheed, Thigri Shah, Langar Shah, Chanan Pir, Ghareeb Shah and Rangeely Shah etc. Cholistanis visit the shrine of Chanan Pir particularly when there is annual Urs which continues for a month from 20<sup>th</sup> February to 20<sup>th</sup> march. There is a district level public holiday on the last Thursday of the Urs. Cholistanis also visit the shrine regarding *atta-ghatta* and *nau-rata* rituals. Whenever they have free time they visit the shrine just to say salaam. This ritual is locally known as *salaam Bharna*.<sup>24</sup> Shrine of Shah-e-Mardan is most popular place in Cholistan as having the story of prayer mat of Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam attached with it. There is also a story of a lion that often visit the sacred stone. Cholistanis regularly visit the shrine of Shah-e-Mardan.<sup>25</sup> Syed Naurang Shah whose shrine is ten kilometers in the west of *Mailsi* was used to treat the cattle by beating a large flat plate of brass in the midst of the live stock without amulet and prayer.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Social Formation of Kammis/Low Caste

According to Will Durant 'like all peoples, the Aryans had rules of endogamy and exogamy forbidding marriage outside the racial group or within near degrees of kinship. From these rules came the most of the characteristics of Hindu institutions. Out numbered by a subject people whom they considered inferior to themselves, the Aryans foresaw that without restrictions on inter-marriage they would soon lose their racial identity; in a century or two they would be assimilated and absorbed. The first caste division, therefor, was not by status but by color. The early Hindu word for caste *varna* which was later on translated by the Portuguese invaders as caste, from Latin castes, pure. During the days of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* occupations became more specialized and hereditary, and caste divisions were more rigidly defined. According to Rig-Veda, Brahmans are created from mouth, Khastriyas from arms, Waishas from legs and Shudders are created from feet of Brahma. Allan Stacy says that the principle caste in Hindustan are the Brahmans-priest, Khastriyas or warriors, Waishas, the farmer and Shudders who do labour. Some modern Indian historians do not agree with this theory of caste system for instance, Krishan Kirpa Marti held the opinion that classification of people is based on acts and qualities. He considers the theory of four caste system as invalid and fake. Not only in India, says Will Durant, in general, every trade in Egypt was a caste, as in modern India, and were expected to follow and take over the occupations of their fathers. All ancient civilizations including Sumerian, Assyrian, Egyptian and Indian, followed a caste or class division.<sup>27</sup>

Low caste or Kammis were the part and parcel of Indian society. In agriculture society they had no respect but were hated everywhere. They were not equal to other member of the village society. But in Cholistan areas they are loved and respected. Cholistanis considered them as their family members. Old age Kammis are respected by the Cholistanis as their elders. Their woman are also

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<sup>24</sup> Discussion with Abdul Ghaffar S/o Khuda Bux, August 10, 2014, Chak No. 317/HR, Fort Marot.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Hussain S/o Muhammad Ramzan, May 12, 2014, Toba Jam Sar.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Muhammad Tahir S/o Muhammad Hasan, December 10, 2014, Toba Addi paal.

<sup>27</sup> See Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage-The Story of Civilization*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.

given due respect. They do not have any sort of contempt or class distinction in their heart and mind. That is why the Kammiss of the Cholistani served their masters whole heartedly. Cholistani Kammiss are trustworthy and honest. Cholistani heavily depend upon their Kammiss in their all matters. They are sincere to their Cholistani masters and are serving them from generation to generation.<sup>28</sup> These Kammiss include Nai /Barbar, Parnai /Circumciser , Charoya / Chef , Kumhar / potter. Dindar/ Server, Mashki / water carrier, Mochi/ cobbler, Pawali / Weaver, ,Daya/ health-Care , Dad-e-hal / Mirasi / Folklorist, The *Kammiss* are neither daily base workers nor salary paid servant but they do their jobs at certain occasions and receive their reward. Their economic condition is not poor. Even some of them have large number of sheep or goat received at different occasions. They lead happy and healthy life.

### 5. Folk lore and Folklorists

Folklore is a popular genre all over the world. From primitive to the present age all nations and tribes with different culture have their Folklores. Folklore laid foundation of history.

In Cholistan every tribe has his own Folklorists (*Mirasi*) is called *Dada* or *Dad-e-hal*.<sup>29</sup> The word *Dada* (grandfather) show how much folklorist is respected Cholistani Tribes. It has been observed that they respect their folklorist as an important figure of their Tribe. Among the Punjabi Tribes and families, folklorist is always treated as low caste and beggar. These folklorists are well aware of the history of Cholistan and particularly culture and history of the particular Tribe. They have biography of every member of the tribe. All information is kept verbal in mind and heart except genealogical table and dates of birth and death.<sup>30</sup> They know all necessary information about the tribe which is necessary for cultural historians and anthropologists. Cholistanis regarded them as their family member and *Purdah* is not observed in the presence of these folklorists. These folklorists attend all of their ceremonies from birth to death. For instance, his presence is necessary at circumcision, engagement and marriage programs and death anniversary. In this way they are eyewitness to their culture and history. They trained their children in this profession.<sup>31</sup> *Dada* is offered goat, sheep or cow at the occasion of marriage ceremonies. Story telling at different occasion is the only profession of folklorist. He earns money by telling stories and keeping the past record of that particular tribe. Cholistanis are so generous to their folklorists that some folklorists have more than hundred sheep and goats.<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that in the absence of any library, school and modern technology, *Dada* have good knowledge about the tribe. All the history of that tribe rests upon this single person. When *Dada* is invited to any ceremony he tells them the stories of their forefathers. For instance their bravery, generosity, love of humanity, sincerity,

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<sup>28</sup> For details see Zulfiqar Ahmad Tabassum, *Muslim Tribes of Cholistan: A case Study of Parhar*, M. Phil, thesis, Department of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with IntShema Bohar S/o Shado Khan, April 07, 2015, Basti Boharan wali, Fort Abbas.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Allah Dad, June 11, 2015, Toba Lessay Wala.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Muhammad Rustam S/o Noor Muhammad, June 17, 2014, Mansora, Fort Marot.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Jind Wadda S/o Gumay Khan, June 17, 2014, Fort Marot.

simplicity, honesty and piousness. Cholistanis listen these stories with great attention and feel proud.<sup>33</sup>

To Ahmad Ghazali<sup>29</sup> the number of Cholistan folklore reaches to fifty one. However, in lesser Cholistan there are some other folklores. In the winter or summer season when shepherded return to their *Tobas*, they sit in a circle and then requested their Father, mother or grandfather to narrate any story for them. The popular folklore among the Parhar tribe of Cholistan is *Qissa Sassi-Punho* as it is based on a narrative of desert life. Another love-story is about Mehindra and Somal. The stories about Mehindra's female camel are very popular in Cholistan. Other than these love stories, the narratives of *Hillo-Ranioyan*<sup>30</sup> and *Chanan Pir* are very popular.<sup>31</sup>

In Cholistan Parhar are well known professionals for detection of crime. Wherever there is any issue of theft left unsolved, Parhars conclusions are generally accepted with the suppositions that they have God-gifted qualities of detection. Such stories of Parhar's detection of crimes are very popular in Cholistan.<sup>34</sup> Ra Muhammad Ramzan has become a legend in the history of Cholistan. He was popular figure due to his expertise in the field of crime detection. Whenever any sheep, goat, cow or camel was lost or stolen in the jungle he was requested to help searching such cattle.<sup>35</sup> stories of his detections has become folklores in Cholistan. In the folklores, it is reported that once a female camel was lost in the jungle where she died soon after but left a *Toda* (baby camel) behind. After a year Ra Muhammad Ramzan went to greater Cholistan. There he saw the foot-print bearing similar signs to that of his female camel. Following foot-print he reached at the *Kacha* house. There he invited some other persons and talked about the foot-print of the said camel. After heated discussion the owner of the camel told the *Panchayat* that he found this *Toda* a year ago in the lesser Cholistan where his mother died after giving birth to this *Toda*. He brought this *Toda* with him to greater Cholistan at his house. Consequently, after the *Punchayat* decision the *Toda* was handed over to Ra Muhammad Ramzan.<sup>36</sup>

Another such story was narrated by hundred years old Ra Pehlwan. According to him once a camel was lost in the desert. All attempts to find that camel met with failure. After some years they saw a camel rider singing a song

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mirza Muhammad Akbar, June 21, 2014, Fort Mauj Garh.

<sup>34</sup> There are so many stories about this activity. Some popular folklore tell us that Once Ra Jalal prepared a meal in the evening and after taking meal fell in sleep. In the morning he was strange to know that there was no pot in which he had kept a meal to take in the next morning. However, there were foot-prints of a Jackal. In the mean while due to high wind foot print disappeared. Next year in the monsoon season when he was wandering in the desert with his sheep he was then happy to see the foot-print of the said Jackal. He followed the foot-print and arrived at the big hole under *Ber-tree* and found his pot there. It was a pot stolen by Jackal a year ago. How much intelligent Ra Jalal was to identify the foot-print of that Jackal. A year has been passed but he still remembers the particular sign of the foot-print. (Story narrated by Qasim Ali S/o Rahim Bux, april 25, 2014, Chak No. 325/HR, Fort Marot.)

It is said that once Muhammad Waryam's sheep was stolen by someone. After two years when he was wandering in Cholistan with his livestock he saw the foot-print of his sheep's lamb. Following foot-print of a lamb he arrived at a *Toba*. There he talked about the lamb. A man replied that he was owner of that lamb. After some hesitation he told that four years ago he had stolen the grandmother of that lamb. In short he paid the price of a sheep.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Shah Muhammad S/o Gul Muhammad, December 28, 2013, Toba Chah Parhar.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Gul Muhammad S/o Allah Rakha, May 12, 2014, Fort Marot.

while passing near their *Toba*. An old man asked his young boy to follow that camel rider and bring him back to their *Toba*. The camel rider returned in the company of a young boy and took meal with them. After taking meal the old man requestfaed his guest to return his camel that was stolen by him some years ago.

The camel rider asked the old man to provide some evidence if he has stolen his camel. The old man has nothing to prove but he replied with confidence that: oh! My son, the song you were singing at this certain place is sufficient evidence in which you remembered your achievement in the past at that *Toba*. On hearing this camel rider promised to return their camel.<sup>37</sup>

## 6. Folk Proverbs

Other than such stories a large number of folk stories are converted into proverbs of local dialects among different tribes of Cholistan. Some popular proverbs are common among all tribes but still some are particularly reserved for some particular tribes. These proverb are supposed to be cultural and historical collective assets of all Cholistanis. Some of these proverbs are :<sup>38</sup>

- (i) Jinhan juttay khuh, sukh na sudday oh.

Those who work wells do not sleep undisturbed.

- (ii) Paawli charay shikar te rab khair kray.

The weavers have gone hunting, May God prevent evil.

- (iii) Mangu te Jiwan, kuj ni thewin.

Mangu and Jiwan cannot do any task. One who begs cant do anything.

- (iv) Aya mian abul khair, Munh kala te nilay pair.

Here comes Mian Abul Khair with a black face and blue feet. One cant expects good from the person who is chanting slogans of goodness.

- (v) Oh nak kapan kon phirda he, oh akhaindi he bula ghara de.

The Husband is trying to cut off her nose, she asks him to make her a nose-ring. Husband don't like his wife and wife and demanding precious ornaments.

- (vi) Run di mat khuri wich.

A woman's wisdom is in her heels. One cant expect a work of wisdom by a women.

- (vii) Ghar gheu ni te phulkay shokh pakawin.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Allah Yar S/o Haji Khan, October 19, 2014, Chak No. 316/HR, Fort Marot.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Abdul Jabbar S/o Rana Faiz Bux, June 25, 2014, Fort Mauj Garh, See also Gazetteer of Bahawalpur State, 1904, op. cit. p.203.

He has nothing at home but expecting his wife to arrange a festive lunch.

- (viii) Maan manjho nangi, dhi da na bushka.

The mother has not sufficient cloth to cover her nakedness', but her daughter's name is bundle of clothes. Mother is poor and daughter pretends to be rich lady.

- (ix) Zaat de kummi, khawja khizar de dhotri.

She is a tortoise by caste and says that she is grand-daughter of khawja khawj khizer. One from low casts claims a high cast.

- (x) Akhi labbay na, nan chiragh shah.

He is destitute of eye-sight but his name is chiragh shak.

- (xi) Spihi de agari, ghoray di pichari.

It is not safe to go in front of a policeman or to go to the back of a horse, for you must receive a kick.

- (xii) Jhar da dhup, ghreep de chup, garden de muk, sur de gut.

The sunlight after the rains when clouds altogether disappear, the silence of a person oppressed by someone, a fist on the neck and the onsets of a boar are too severe to be borne.

- (xiii) Chittay kapray, salamaan de chatti.

Salutations are made to the authorities, but all such respect is fruitless

- (xiv) Jesi karni, wesi bharni.

As you sow, so shell you reap.

- (xv) Anna bolay, bola sunay.

The blind man speaks and the deaf man listens.

- (xvi) Jise koko wesay bachay.

As the mother, so the sons.

These proverbs are based on so many stories which are popular among different tribes.

## **7. Taboos and Totems**

Taboos means prohibited by social customs. Taboo is also common everywhere in the world. However like superstitions, these taboos are of different types in different areas. For example, the Banyok of upper Burma do not use gold or silver or precious stones, while on the other side in Baluchistan certain *Umrani Baloch* deliberately refrains from plastering their roofs as they were reported that one of their forefathers died under a plastered roof. The sanction of these taboos is

the belief that if violated, death, sickness or some calamity will happen either to the violator or some one of his group. Following taboos are common in Cholistan.

1. Before departure of the *Baraat* the groom goes to the mosque and pray there two *Nawafil*. *Baraat* do not left the groom's house without scarifying goat or sheep.
2. In the evening donkey is kept away from their cattle and sheep.
3. To steel something from any shrine is considered a big crime. Thieve may lost his eyes.
4. To hold prominent position in the gathering in presence of an old man or tribal chief is also considered a bad reflection among all Cholistanis.<sup>39</sup>

Cholistani Muslim or non-Muslim tribe has their particular totem. This is necessary in Cholistan where large number of sheep, goat, cow and camel are wandering from one *Toba* to another in search of water and fodder. To make distinction between same colour sheep or goat is a difficult task. That is why Cholistani has their certain totem. The Parhar totem is like Finger ring. They put this sign on the left thigh of their livestock, while Bohar cut the left ear lobe of their cattle in the memory of their embracing Islam.

### Conclusion

The Cholistani folk tradition reflects a varied and illuminated picture of the history and culture of Cholistan. It reflects the true spirit working behind the actions of the people of the region. Although most of the folklores, stories and proverb reflect the experiences of Cholistani life, but still a large part of it that forms the core of rituals, customs and traditions represents a state of ignorance which led to the prevalence of superstitious characters, personalities, entities and stories of so many different kinds. It reminds one about the mythological continuity of ancient deistic behavior and continuity of Indian tradition at large. The Islamic insurgence in the region may have some impact but in the Greater Cholistan, it seems to have not affected the lives of the people at large in terms of superstitious belief system. It seems that Hindu deities are replaced with the Muslim Saints and powers of supernatural are kept strongly intact. This historical continuity and transformation can not be desolated from the lives of the people of Cholistan. One can easily conclude that life experiences and historical continuity of folk tradition has formed the core of now current anthropological structure of Cholistan. Its comparison with the Thar Parkar and Rajasthan can bring to light new cultural and historical continuity which can be used potentially for the development of sustainable cultural knowledge.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Shema Bohar S/o Shado Khan, January 23, 2015, Basti Boharan Wali, Fort Abbas