

**Retracing ‘Subalternity’ in South Asian Classical Literature: A Case Study of  
Shah jo Risalo**

M.Phil. Dissertation



**Submitted By:**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the presentation of my original research work. Whenever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly with due reference to literature and acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussions. This work was done under the guidance of Dr. Manzoor Ali Veesrio, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad (Pakistan).

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Maryam

To

Dr. Manzoor Ali Veerio

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## Glossary

Abri	Weak or Vulnerable
Askeen	A Greek word which means to work or to train
Begari	Labour
Brahaman	An uppermost cast of the Hindus
Dargah	Shrine
Deconstructionist	The one who follows the theory of Deconstruction by Jacques Derrida
Desi	The native
Diwali	A holy festival of Hindus
Holi	A holy festival of Hindus
Hussaini	Lamentation
Jagir	Feudal land
Jogi/ Sanyasi	A markedly reflective or mystical person
Kamod	Humility
Kapaiti	The spinners
Kedaro	Martyrdom
Khahori	Wandering ascetics
Khanbhat	Refuge
Kohyari	The Mountain
Kumhar	Potter
Maha-Bharta	A Sanskrit epic of ancient India
Marus	Native people
Masnawi	A book of the poem written in Persian by Jalaudin Rumi
Mazuri	The helpless
Molvi	Muslim religious scholar
Murshid	A guide or teacher
Mussalmans	Muslims
Panch-Hazari	The commander of 5000 troops
Popolo	People
Ramkali	Divine buds
Ramzan	A holy month in which Muslims fasts and prayers
Rip	Deep distress
Samooni	The seafarers

Sarang	Clouds
Shah jo Risalo	The book of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai
Shikar	Hunting as a sport
Post-structuralist	The one who believes the philosophy of Post-Structuralism
Subalternita	Subalternity
Sur	Chapter
Surinada	A musical instrument
Suriraag	Preparation
Varuna	A Vedic deity associated with justice and truth
Wankar	Plantation
Yamen Kalyan	Harmony and peace

## **Abstract**

*The aim of this research is to retrace the concept of subaltern in 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindh. The term 'subaltern' was first coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and later Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. While discussing the historical background of Sindh in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this study focuses on the two main aspects of Shah Latif's poetry. The first is related to the women in Shah Latif's poetry in which it is argued how hegemonic power structure in a society dominated them and in spite of their struggle their voices remained unheard in the history. Secondly, it deals with the representation of the lower class and caste that formed the marginalized sections of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Sindhi society. Shah Latif highlighted the miseries of the oppressed at the hands of the elites and powerful and encouraged the common people to battle against all types of manipulation and discrimination through his poetry. This study is an attempt to look at the classical literature with the post-colonial approach but it is limited only to the women and lower class/caste aspects in Shah Latif's poetry.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The term ‘Subaltern’ was first coined by Italian Marxist political Activist Antonio Gramsci who defined subaltern classes in his widely known book *Prison Notebooks*. He defined the concept of Subaltern as, —any—dw rank” person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation.”<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the Subaltern School of historiography emerged in the 1980s in India.<sup>2</sup> This group was made by a number of historians to discuss subaltern themes in South Asian studies. The concept of ‘subaltern’ links to the subordination of people belonging to different oppressed classes (with respect to class, caste or gender) in South Asia. Amrita Biswas states that —the subaltern Historians initially started as an Indian version of —History from the below” approach of West.<sup>3</sup> The main reason for this group was to eliminate the elitist bias which was found in most of the academic works in South Asia. It was a contribution by post-colonial historians to reassess the history of South Asia from the perspectives of Subaltern groups and to give them their due share in history. Many postcolonial scholars like Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, Gyan Prakash, and Homi Bhabha have worked on this issue related to class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture of the oppressed classes.

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<sup>1</sup>El Habib Louai, —Tracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications,” *African Journal of History and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2012): 4–8, <https://doi.org/10.5897/ajhc11.020>.

<sup>2</sup>NailaPervaiz, —The Subaltern School of Historiography,” *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2, (2017): 22,*

[http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest\\_English\\_Journal/38-2,2017/2.%20Subaltern%20school,%20Naila.pdf](http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/38-2,2017/2.%20Subaltern%20school,%20Naila.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Amrita Biswas, —Research Note on Subaltern Studies,” *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, 2009, 200–205.

By evaluating the facts from the concept of subaltern it can be assumed that Subalternity is a postcolonial approach that is introduced in the 1980s, but the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai contains the characteristics of this approach in 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindh.

Sindh was acceded to Mughal Empire in 1592 by Akbar and it has remained under the Mughals.<sup>4</sup> The establishment of the empire of Kalhora was in 1701 A.C.E after Mian Yar Mohammad Kalhora became the governor of Balochistan and until the year of 1760, the Kalhora dynasty gained full control over the territory and started ruling the Sindh. The socio-political conditions of Sindh seem very unfavorable for its natives or it can be said that these circumstances deeply affected them. Subalterns in 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindh used to live simple and contended life yet with limited resources. Sorley in his book, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, mentioned about the conditions of poor in Sindh during 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and added, —Sindh was an agricultural zone and to bring improvement in the irrigation system Empire or local dynasties did not show interest at any time, however, the people themselves built canals Persian wheels and wells<sup>5</sup>.” This depicts that the life of a common man was not much given any consideration by those who were governing them.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was born in 1689 A.C.E and died in 1752 A.C.E<sup>6</sup>. Although Latif belonged to an elite family he had developed a love for the oppressed in his whole life and also wrote for them. Usually, classical literature discusses religious, mystic and elitist themes but he is one of the poets of his age who wrote for locals and natives. Shah Latif is called as people’s poet as mentioned by Motilal Jotwani and he narrates in his work that, —Many poets appeared on the historical sight of Sindh earlier and later Shah Latif but nobody understood its society and people and felt their grieves and pleasures, their state of mind and objectives more than Shah

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<sup>4</sup>H.T Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) : 9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 113

<sup>6</sup>Motilal Jotwani, —Shah Latif—Man and Poet” 6, no. 2 (2016): 49.

Abdul Latif.<sup>7</sup> The poetry of Shah Latif focuses on some major subaltern themes related to class, caste and gender therefore it is an attempt to explain these themes by utilizing the concept of the subaltern.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937 A.C.E) used the term subalternity‘ (subalternita’) in his *Prison Notebooks* (written from 1929 to 1935 A.C.E)<sup>8</sup> referring to the marginalized/oppressed sections of the society. Gramsci did not only talk about lower classes or proletariat rather his theory of Cultural Hegemony deals with the other oppressed sections of society including women, race, religion, and cultures. In his theory, he has argued that how power comes to dominate society and hegemony is something a predominance of taking by consent. Here he talks about the consent of the *Popolo* (people) to be governed by the dominated groups in a society.<sup>9</sup>

In the essay —Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak elaborates that, —In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow”<sup>10</sup>. Spivak winds up the essay —Can the Subaltern Speak?” by restating her standpoint that —the subaltern cannot speak”. Spivak in her theory further explains that the message sent by the sender did not reach the receiver as it is disrupted by noise. Due to such noise and distractions, the voices of subalterns were lost in history and ultimately the oppressed were not given the chance to speak.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 49.

<sup>8</sup>Paola Merli, —Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*”International Journal of Cultural Policy Volume 16, Issue 1: Cultural Policy Review of Books (2010) : 53.

<sup>9</sup>Marcus E. Green, —Rethinking the Subaltern and the Question of Censorship in Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks,” *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 4 (2011): 388, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.641913>.

<sup>10</sup>Gayatri Spivak, —Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), 83.

By considering the above statement it can be argued that the subalterns were dominated and marginalized in the Sindhi society however these groups had voices in history but never heard or represented. The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai contains the voices from the marginalized sections of 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindhi society. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century classical poet, Shah Latif highlighted the miseries of the oppressed at the hands of elites and powerful. Unfortunately, the poetry of Shah Latif was not given much consideration in this regard. Hundreds of scholars and writers have worked on the poetry of Shah Latif but most of them focused on mysticism and religion in his poetry. A few writers have dared to write on the popular aspect of Latif's poetry. Dr. Fehmida, H.T. Sorley, G.M. Syed and Tanveer Abbassi have seen to utilize their energies to deconstruct the social conditions of commoners hidden in Shah's poetry but again none had worked exclusively on the representation of subaltern groups in his poetry. An effort is put to show that there is a study available that depicts the conditions and challenges of subalterns. This study does not go in detail to cover all the aspects of subalternity as it is an umbrella term rather it is limited to highlight the class, caste and gender-based issues of subaltern groups of Sindh. Shah Latif was the poet of Sindh so this study will cover the region of Sindh which is now the province of Pakistan.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

Subaltern Studies is a post-colonial critique and has proved to be one of the diverse studies like anthropology, and cultural studies, etc. That is the reason, subalternity is the direct criticism or rethinking of the already formulated discourses of colonialism and Westernism. The bitter reality is that even Marxism or Nationalism is Eurocentric by and large. Subaltern studies as an interdisciplinary approach emerged to undo the Western domination of knowledge as power with the rationale of Reason and Progress. This Western trajectory has strongly been unfollowed by the subaltern approach especially regarding South Asian (Indian) historiography.

However, the term —Subaltern” also appears to be a recognizable critical scholarship in regions other than India like Latin American, African, and Europeans.

Marcus E Green has put an effort to retrace the concept of subaltern and the question of censorship from the writings of Antonio Gramsci. In this article, the author has claimed that Gramsci uses the phrase subaltern social groups/classes not only for the lower class (proletariat) but for the peasants, races, religions, women or even women of the medieval society. For Gramsci, the subalternity is the name of subordination of certain kinds of groups of people to the dominant group that influences the power and leadership of that group. Gramsci was not much interested in the historiographical subaltern themes rather he emphasized the revolutionary side of the subaltern groups that would empower them from becoming subalterns. In this document, Marcus E Green has tried to highlight that Gramsci had deeply analyzed how ruling groups maintain their power by isolating the subaltern groups that provide to foresee the ways in which those subaltern classes can resist those structures and try to develop their organizations which characterize their political will<sup>11</sup>.

State’s repression and coercion in colonial and post-colonial India saved components of a nation-state but ruined the culture and politics of masses e.g. in Indra Gandhi’s tenure, subaltern voices especially those of nationalists and peasants were suppressed through state coercion but the mean result was that subalternity persisted even more strongly. In the 1970s, Cambridge school attacked the idea of nationalism with reference to India by arguing that Indian nationalism came as a competition among elites whether big or local. The very notion of nationalism was merchandised at every level e.g. by landlords, by religious groups or by peasants/working class, etc.

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<sup>11</sup>Green, —Rethinking the Subaltern and the Question of Censorship in Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks.”

Subaltern Studies plunged into this historiographical contest over the representation of the culture and politics of the people. Accusing colonialist<sup>12</sup>, nationalist<sup>13</sup>, and Marxist<sup>14</sup> interpretations of robbing the common people of their agency, it announced a new approach to restore history to the subordinated. In simple words, subaltern discourse provided a forum for the unheard or often ignored voices from the lower cadre of the society. And this ultimately means challenging the dominant discourse of West-centered and European subject of authority.

As Guha narrated that the main purpose of establishing the Subaltern Studies was to discuss the Subaltern themes in South Asia. Antonio Gramsci coined the term subaltern in order to refer to the oppressed section of society in terms of class, caste or gender, etc. and showed the centrality of dominated relationships in history. Ranajit Guha has emphasized that the elite/dominant class can never be extracted from Subaltern Studies as the subalterns have remained the focus of all their doings.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, according to the author, Subaltern Studies aimed to "rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work" in South Asian studies.<sup>16</sup>

As there are many changes in the use and adaptation of the term subaltern; therefore, the only persistent thing is the notion to rethink history in the subaltern perspective. The rise or emergence of subaltern discourses can commonly be attributed to the 7 volumes series of essays by prominent scholars like Guha, etc. They tried to explain the position of the elite in the socio-political spheres of society then gone further to confront this position with subalternity. But soon they were confronted first with the autonomous position of subalternity than elitism and then its

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<sup>12</sup>A person who supports the practice of gaining political control over other countries and occupying them with settlers. (Oxford Dictionary, Accessed on, December 23, 2019)

<sup>13</sup>A person who strongly identifies with their own nation and vigorously supports its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. (Oxford Dictionary, Accessed on, December 23, 2019)

<sup>14</sup>a supporter of the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. (Oxford Dictionary, Accessed on, December 23, 2019)

<sup>15</sup>Anand A. Yang and Ranajit Guha, —Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (1985): 474, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1852790>.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 475.

existence within the spheres of elitism because elitism would hardly be recognized without the existence of subalternity.

Chakrabarty(1992, 1998, 2008) writes that, insofar as the academic discourse of history—that is, "history" as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university—is concerned, "Europe" remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call "Indian," "Chinese," "Kenyan," and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe." In this sense, "Indian" history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history, Europe as a theoretical subject of all the histories. The dominance of Europe over history did not only marginalize many sections of society but also shaped their aim of establishing a separate nation-state. In reality, Subaltern Studies criticize the historical course of Indian Nationalism and nation-states. Ranajit Guha in his book, *The Elementary Aspect of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* argues that the nationalist historiography engaged in a systematic appropriation of peasants in the service of elite nationalism<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, Chatterji briefly analyses that 'History and Progress' can eliminate the irrationality of peasants in India. However, it can be assumed that history reified by Europeans can work as a discipline that empowers specific kinds of forms of knowledge while disempowers others<sup>18</sup>.

Subaltern approached challenged or criticized the three-pronged basic discourse of Western-centric scholarship i.e. Marxism, Nationalism, Colonialism versus Reason, Progress and Modernity. In the name of the above-mentioned discourses, the subaltern section of society and

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<sup>17</sup>Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Whority Histories, Subaltern Pasts," *Postcolonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 15–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688799890219>.



their scholarship was detained and not allowed to be counted as right and humanitarian. Whether it is the case of the *Sati* tradition (a tradition of Hindus in which a woman was forced to die with funeral pyre of her husband) of India or peasant insurgency, Subaltern Studies itself is an act of translation of the real meaning of any event happened in society.

Many studies are conducted on Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai which not only represents the message of his poetry but also draws the sketch of Sindhi society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Samina and Aman have focused on the historical aspect of Shah's poetry and argued that the great poet of Sindh has put an effort through his poetry in highlighting the sufferings of oppressed classes who were residing in Sindh at that time. This study focuses that Shah Latif was the only poet of his age who wrote poetry in his native language Sindhi instead of Persian. Persian language at that time was considered as the language of the elite but Shah Latif broke that stereotype and promoted his native language. While doing so, Shah Latif denounced the supremacy of the elite and gave importance to the natives and locals. Samina and Aman have tried to justify their arguments by describing the socio-political and economic conditions of Sindh that give an account of social injustice and inequity prevailing in Sindhi society. While focusing the lower factions of society Shah Latif has also depicted the miseries of Sindhi women and portrayed the challenges faced by them. Shah Latif has praised their loyalty and courage in his poetry as well as he is also seen to encourage the locals to stand against the rule of oppression, political domination, and economic exploitation.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. H.T Sorley in his book *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit* has represented a great poet of 18<sup>th</sup> century who lived in Indus valley whose poetry was neglected by the West before the first published work of Sorley in 1940. In this book, the author has depicted the historical background of Sindh since the advent of Islam (711 A.C.E) to the Kalhora period (1700-1782 A.C.E). The

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<sup>19</sup>Aman Memon and Samina Aman, —Shah Latif's Poetry: An Alternative Source to Study the History of Sindh," *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture* 32 (2011): 71–89.

depiction of historical accounts in Sorley's work enables readers to understand the socio-political and economic conditions of Sindh. The sources utilized in this book include facts from the records of East India Company as well as the writings of historians and travelers of that age are also analyzed which makes this work, a remarkable effort in conveying the true meaning of Shah Latif's poetry. This book deals with the detailed historical background of Sindh that faced two invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali. The trading conditions of Sindh are also recorded in this book which provides a background for Shah Latif's certain poems. Sorley has tried to highlight the social conditions of locals by comparing different political periods such as Mughals, Kalhoras and British. The author gives a deep insight into the social circumstances of people living in Sindh and ruled by different rulers like Arghuns, Turkhans and Mughals. He argued that the people of Sindh were tame and hardworking who developed a good taste towards music and poetry rather than focusing on war and battles. Moreover, this study also analyzes the status of privileged classes lived in that society which was mainly composed of high ranked government officials and people who belonged to religious class (Sayyeds and Pirs).

Dr. Sorley's work is a great effort that has ever done to spread the message of Shah Latif at every nook because it carries the most authentic historical accounts gathered from East India Company's record. On the other hand, Sorley had not enough knowledge for Persian and Arabic language which limited him to come up with more understanding of Shah's poetry. However, this book has given a better understanding of the 18<sup>th</sup> century's society and people of Sindh that have seen missing in other works.

Prof. Amena Kamisani is recognized by translating the whole Sindhi version of *Shah jo Risalo* in English for the very first time. Her book, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhitai*, gives details about not only the Surs (chapters) but also the life period of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. Along with the life of the poet, Prof. Amena also discussed the nature of Risalo in a detailed manner. She credits earlier authors of the world for translating the Risalo in English but in fact,

none has remained successful in translating the whole Risalo of Shah Latif into the English Language. In her translation, the author is seen as more inclined towards grasping the mystic meaning behind the poems of Shah Latif rather than focusing on other themes. Before the start of every Sur, she provides a brief introduction of the poem that makes it convenient for the readers to understand the meaning of verses. The translated version of *Shah jo Risalo* makes the reader comprehends the poetry of Shah Latif especially the one who is not familiar with the classical Sindhi language. Although this book explains the meaning of Shah's poetry mystically yet it is the message of Shah Latif that represents his immortal meaning into the English Language in an idiom and diction which is modern, current and easy to comprehend<sup>20</sup>.

The poetry of Shah Latif deals with a variety of themes. On one side his poetry reveals the theological and mystic meaning and on the other side, it highlights the major social problems like class difference, gender discrimination, and caste issues. An effort has put forward by Dr. Fehmida Hussain in her book named –*Shah Latif ki Shayri mein Aurat ka Roop*” (Images of Women in Shah Latif’s Poetry 1996) to discuss the women of classical times. In this book, the author gives importance to women of Sindh by deconstructing the meaning of the poetry of Shah and by doing so; she has opened several ways for new researchers to make use of the message of Shah in order to focus on different social issues.

Dr. Fehmida has described the social status of women from the birth of the first human being on earth and extends this to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in which Shah lived and composed his poetry. The status of women in every society has remained unequal and less valuable to men though women are considered as the major part to build a community. Due to inequality and considering as less valuable, women are also depicted as the symbol of love and loyalty in folk poetry. The women in folk poetry were seen playing different roles in society as on the one side she is

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<sup>20</sup>Prof. Amena Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)* (Karachi: Culture department Government of Sindh, 1994).

delicate, loyal and loveable but on the other hand, she lacks political wisdom to rule a territory or empire. Moreover, the author also mentioned grave issues of society in which a woman was considered as an object or tool to resolve issues between two clans. In the era of Shah Latif, women were socially deprived but the poet hailed the role of women in his poetry. He has depicted the image of women in a very different way as he has dedicated eleven Surs of his book to hail the courage, determination, and loyalty of women. However, in the rest of the Surs, Shah Latif did not forget to praise the efforts of women in society. The poetry of Shah Latif is based on the reality that is the true reflection of the women's psyche. The heroines depicted in Shah's poetry are seen to face different hurdles but their wisdom, valor, and willpower help them to cross all the obstacles<sup>21</sup>.

Abbasi discussed that in the realm of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sindhi society was not much depicted by historians of that age. Many historians were busy in hailing the rulers and great leaders at that time while the locals were not considered as important and one can hardly find the traces of local traditions and their lifestyle. Theological themes were also the focus of classical poets but Shah Latif's poetry is considered an exception as it is not limited to theology and mysticism. In this article, the author compares the poetry of Shah Latif and William Shakespeare and concludes that Latif's poetry is the narration of the sorrows and miseries of locals while Western poetry lacks this poetical theme as it is more romanticizing. The poetry of Latif includes the people from the lower and the oppressed class and caste. In his poetry, he is seen praising the ironsmith, weaver, fishermen, and women of society. Tanveer Abbasi further argues that Shah Latif did not only compose his poetry in the native language but also adopted their way of living.

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<sup>21</sup>Dr. Fehmida Hussain, *Shah Latif Ki Shayri Mein Aurat Ka Roop*, 1st ed. (Hyderabad: Shah Abdul Latif Bhit Shah Saqafati Markaz, 1996).

The heroines depicted in Shah's poetry belonged to lower class families which showed that Shah Latif was pure from any social bias and he always hailed the lower factions of society.<sup>22</sup>

Motilal Jotwani worked on Shah Latif in which he concentrated more on the mystic side of Shah Abdul Latif's work. He called Shah as the —People's Poet" and compared him with Tulsi Das. Motilal argued that Shah Latif is the only classical poet on the land of Sindh who wrote for locals and portrayed their grief and sorrows. The author provided the reader with a brief biographical account of Shah and later discusses that his poetry never represented a single community or religion because it was universal and written for all the people of Sindh. He stated that the religion of Shah is not confined to Islam but it is invariably —Man'. Love for *Jogis and Sanyasis* represented that Abdul Latif never favored class elitism similarly he did not create the line of demarcation between the religions in Sindh. Finally, by calling Shah Latif a universal, the author concluded that it is unjust to call him the poet of Muslims because he represented every section and religion of society<sup>23</sup>.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

How does the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif represent the concept of —subaltern" in South Asian Classical literature?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The current research is focused on retracing the concept of subaltern in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. This study will provide an insight to review the classical literature with a post-colonial approach. It will also help the readers to explore the different aspects of

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<sup>22</sup>Tanveer Abbasi, —Shah Latif Ji Awmi Shayri," in *Shah Latif Ji Shayri* (Kandiyaro: Roshni Publication, n.d.), 103–25.

<sup>23</sup>Motilal Jotwani, —Shah Latif—Man and Poet," *Indian Literature* 2, no. 6 (1963): 49 –57.

Subalternity in *Shah jo Risalo* that were not discussed in this research regarding religious or communal aspects.

## 1.6 Theoretical framework

The word subaltern is an umbrella term that includes the oppressed/marginalized groups of society belonging to a different class, caste, gender, race, and religion. Antonio Gramsci referred subalterns as the peasants and workers of that time and his work is only limited to show the oppressed class of society. In 1980, the Subaltern Studies group was established in India to eliminate the elitist bias from history and give ground to raise the voices of oppressed. The forefather of this group Ranajit Guha defines subalternity as, —a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way.”<sup>24</sup> He further elaborates that —subalterns are those groups who constitute the demographic difference between the total Indian population and the elite.”<sup>25</sup> The concept of subaltern is as it was used by Italian thinker and philosopher Antonio Gramsci and Post-Colonial theorist Gayatri Spivak. After providing a general view of Subalternity, the operationalization is done within chapters 3 and 4.

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* developed the term subaltern social classes and subaltern social groups in order to —evaluate the politics and actions of oppressed societal groups in Italian history.”<sup>26</sup> According to Green, Subalternity applies to not only the proletariats or peasants but it is a broader term that is used for religious groups, women and other marginalized sections of society.<sup>27</sup> In the theory of cultural hegemony, Gramsci has talked about the capitalistic structural system that has become hegemonic over time. Hegemony

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<sup>24</sup>Yang and Guha, —Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India.”

<sup>25</sup>El Habib Louai, —Tracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications.”

<sup>26</sup>Marcus E Green, —Rethinking the subaltern and the question of censorship in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks.” *Postcolonial Studies*, (2011): 387-404

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 394.

(the domination of one group over another) is a process within a society in which a class has emerged in a society; Leading and Dominating as explained by Smith; –The class leads the allied and dominates the oppressed<sup>28</sup>.” It can also be said that hegemony is the predominance of taking by consent. Hegemony is a process that is bared in civil society because of the ideologies constructed by civil society influence people and their behaviors.

Gramsci further gave the concept of an integral state in which he claims that civil society is combined with the political society that is an essential component of making power. Gramsci argues that should be an arena of civil society, supporting revolutionary apparatus that could end the coercive apparatus of the state (political society). Through achieving this, access to political power is gained and that would give rise to a consensual society in which no individual or group reduced to a subaltern status<sup>29</sup>. For Gramsci, subalternity does not only deal with the class structure of society but also looks at the marginalization and alienation of different groups and has given his own praxis-oriented<sup>30</sup> analysis of the concept of the subaltern. Moreover, —In Notebook 25, §4, named as *Some General Notes on the Historical Development of the Subaltern Social Groups in the Middle Age and in Rome* Gramsci replicates the questions of identity and distinctiveness in the creation of subaltern studies and the politics of marginalization<sup>31</sup>. He argues that subalternity cannot only be analyzed with class/structural relations rather it is seen in the context of class, race, religions, genders and other cultures. He mentioned the position of women in Roman history in his writing and claimed that:

*–The question of the importance of women in Roman history is similar to the question of the subaltern groups, but up to a certain point: ‘masculinity’ can be compared to*

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<sup>28</sup>Kylie Smith, –Gramsci at the Margins: Subjectivity and Subalternity,” *International Gramsci Journal* 1, no. 2 (2010): 39.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>30</sup>Action relating theory to practice, in a specific context that challenges power relationships and leads to transformative action. <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/the-power-of-praxis/23190>, (Accessed on, December 23, 2019)

<sup>31</sup>Green, —Rethinking the Subaltern and the Question of Censorship in Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks.” 395.

*class domination only in a certain sense; it, therefore, has greater importance for the history of customs than for political and social history”<sup>32</sup>.*

Shah Abdul Latif in his poetry *Shah jo Risalo* depicts the melancholy of the oppressed at the hands of elites and powerful. He did not only talk about class relations but also dealt with the other aspects including caste, gender, and religion.<sup>33</sup> The sufferings of the sailors and their families were represented in his work in Sur (chapter) Suriraag, the miseries of women were characterized in Sur Sohni, Marui and Sasui and the grieves of the lower class were also described. The poetry of Shah Latif provides a sequence to the readers which enables them to understand the hegemony of the ruling class which is present in the traditional structures and how the subaltern groups organize themselves under their rule.

Gramsci in his theory of hegemony views that subalternity is not only considered as a negative condition (lack of resources) which can be resolved with the confrontation of power structures. However, there is a dire need for historians and thinkers to understand the intricacies in the theory of hegemony in which subalternity must be understood with its true historical context (how people come to see themselves, subalterns). According to Gramsci, the subaltern groups are inferior to the powerful and that will impact leadership and dominant groups. It can also be said that the subordination of subaltern classes equals the level of political organization, independence, and impact upon the dominant groups<sup>34</sup>.

The concept of subaltern slipped to a more complicated theoretical debate with the intervention of post-colonialist and deconstructionist Gayatri Spivak. In her essay, —Can the Subaltern Speak?— she writes about the Indian Sati Tradition under British Colonial rule. She deconstructs the historical accounts and claims that subaltern groups have lost their voices in between two polarities. —One is British Humanist discourse that calls for individual freedom and

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<sup>32</sup>ibid., 396.

<sup>33</sup>Prof. Amena Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*.

<sup>34</sup>Green., —Rethinking the Subaltern and the Question of Censorship in Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks.” 400.



the other, the Hindu Native policy that calls for voluntary participation of Hindu women.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, ~~the~~ ~~voice~~ of the Hindu woman herself disappeared while these two discursive groups tried to give her a voice; the representation of Sati women contributes so much to a certain appropriation of their own free will to decide and deprived them of their subjectivity and space to speak from.<sup>36</sup>

Gayatri Spivak is the most celebrated figure in post-colonial studies. She is a practical Deconstructionist, Feminist and Marxist. Spivak's essay *"Can the Subaltern Speak?"* published in 1988 is based on the lecture which she delivered in 1983. Spivak talks about the certain constructions of identity in her essay which is crucial in the frame of subjectivity and answers the question of how through the framework of postmodernism one could criticize the way this construction form particular subaltern consciousness?

Gayatri Spivak criticized post-structuralist Western scholars Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's works who challenged the notion that individuals in a society are independent being with autonomous agency. Spivak argues that ~~when~~ Foucault and Deleuze talk about oppressed groups such as the working classes they fall back into precisely these uncritical notions of sovereign subjects by restoring to them a fully centered consciousness<sup>37</sup>. She says that in the work of Foucault and Deleuze they had committed epistemic violence by projecting Eurocentric epistemology into the third world. She claims that ~~In~~ Foucault to lose conversation the issue seems to be that there is no representation no signifier.... theory is a relay of practice....and the oppressed can know and speak for themselves<sup>38</sup>. Here Spivak says the Eurocentric approach of the Western philosophers does not show Signifier-Signified relationship which raises the question that does subaltern no longer need any representation? In the next section of her essay,

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<sup>35</sup>El Habib Louai, *"Tracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications."* 7.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>37</sup>Minu Vettamala, *"Can the Subaltern Speak- Summary,"* n.d. 2.

<sup>38</sup>Spivak, *"Can the Subaltern Speak?"* 74.

she answers the question by arguing that ~~the~~ small present proprietor cannot represent themselves they must be represented... their representative must appear simultaneously as their master as an authority over them as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above<sup>39</sup>.” By summing up all Spivak claims that post-colonial is a new instance of an attempt to liberate the ‘Other’ (subaltern). She further questions that ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ and then claims that “No”, subaltern cannot speak, and they always need representation. Western academic knowledge is produced to support Western economic interests and knowledge in post-colonial societies is transferred to the third world society as a commodity, she adds.

Spivak is credited for introducing questions of gender and sexual difference in her writing. She claims that it is impossible to recover the voices of the subaltern specifically women (as subaltern) who have lost their voices from the debates on the abolition of Sati tradition in India. During colonial time, there was a polarization between the two narratives. The first one was of the British’ who considered Sati tradition as a barbaric action and claimed that —~~while~~ men saved brown women from brown men<sup>40</sup>”. The other was the patriarchy in Hindu society in which Hindu men called it a valid and holy tradition and went against abolition from practicing Sati. Subaltern women had no authority to access British codification of law and similarly had no power to contribute to revisionist history. For Spivak, some Indian women wanted to practice Sati out of devotion and love while some never wanted to do the same. The heterogeneity of the British’s view and the homogenous views of the native (men) regarding Sati was denied by Spivak. She argues in her essay that, they (native men and British) are not acknowledging the possibility of complex subjectivity of women in which desire and interest are not the same.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 93.

Later, Spivak identifies two major problems in her work if someone tries to write for subalterns from outside; first is the logocentric assumption<sup>41</sup> of cultural solidarity among heterogeneous people is a dangerous assumption. Secondly, when someone speaks/writes from outside there is a dependence on the Western intellect that is inherently essentialist and that does not allow subaltern to speak for themselves<sup>42</sup>.

The eighteenth-century Sindh was dominated by male members of the society however, the women were merely considered as the beauty of the house. Shah Latif despite belonging to the elitist class of society (Sayyeds) stood against the patriarchic traditions which gave women a lower status in society. The poetry of Shah Latif gave voices to the oppressed and marginalized class of society. In his poetry women are depicted as an icon of valor, love, and honesty. For instance, Sohni, Sasui, and Marui stood against the set traditions of the society and broke the norm which considered women a delicate and soft creature. —Hispoetry represents the very strong feminist voice and inspiration for women who are from the ignored section of society<sup>43</sup>”.

## 1.7 Research Methodology and Data collection

This research is based on a case study method that refers to a detailed and in-depth study of anything. By being the qualitative nature of the study, the data analysis technique was content analysis at the first stage and then narrative analysis. The available contents were related to the topic were analyzed and then the narrative analysis was conducted for further clarification. This research is a ‘desk research’ therefore; it majorly relies on both the primary and secondary sources. The literature review shows the analysis of secondary sources while the content and narrative analysis is based on the *Shah jo Risalo* as a primary source.

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<sup>41</sup>Speech is the original signifier of meaning, and the written word is derived from the spoken word. The written word is thus a representation of the spoken word. (Jacques Derrida in the theory of deconstruction)

<sup>42</sup>Dr. Merin Simi Raj, —“On the Subaltern Speak?” : Deconstructing the Postcolonial,” 2018.

<sup>43</sup>Bashir Ahmed Jatoti et al., —Feminist Voice In The Eighteenth Century Sindh : Glimpses From The Poetry Of Bhitai Abstract,” no. 3 (2019): 111.

Since the literature on the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif is present in abundance but only those sources were considered were relevant to the subject matter of study. In the qualitative method, purposive sampling is done that includes the sites or references which can best help to understand the phenomenon and to develop a detailed understanding of the study.

## **1.8 Limitations and Ethical concerns**

- Subalternity is an umbrella term that includes oppressed groups from a different class, caste, gender, race, religion, community or culture but this study is limited to focus on the issues related to class, caste, and gender.
- Shah Abdul Latif is considered as the respectable personality of Sindh, so the study is conducted very carefully not to hurt the emotions of followers of the poet.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into four chapters. Chapter one contains the brief introduction of the topic, statement of the problem, research question, literature review, the significance of the study, theoretical framework, limitations of the study and definition of significant terms. The second chapter discusses the history of Sindh specifically in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The government structure, society and the lives of the people of Sindh are discussed in detail in order to understand the socio-political structure of the region. The third chapter highlights the portrayal of women in *Shah-jo-Risalo* in which the role of women in society was recognized by Shah Abdul Latif and he depicted them as the heroines of his book plus the operationalization of theory is also done. The final chapter deals with the subaltern groups that belonged to the lower class and caste. In this chapter, Shah Latif depicted the life of people who were marginalized in society and never recognized by any other poet of his age.

## CHAPTER 2

### Shah Latif and the Sindhi Society

#### 2.1 Sindh at a Glance

The present-day Sindh has a unique geographical location. It has Punjab in its north, the Arabian Sea is situated in its south, to the east it is bounded by the hills of Hallar range and to the west of its location, and it is bounded by a desert of sand.<sup>44</sup> Due to this unique geography, Sindh has remained to be a favorite place for the invaders.

The Muslims arrived in Sindh as conquerors during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The Muslims defeated the Hindu Rajput rulers of Sindh and captured it. It was later captured by Mehmood of Ghazni during the 11<sup>th</sup> century and was annexed by him and made a part of the Ghaznavid Empire. The Mughals later conquered it and made it a part of the Indian Mughals Empire during the year 1591. However, Sindh once again had to experience the Afghan rule. And it was during the year 1740 that Nadir Shah attacked Sindh and made it once again a part of the Afghan Empire of Nadir Shah. Nadir Shah imposed a tax of two percent of the local chieftains of the Sindh region. Later after the assassination of Nadir Shah, Sindh came under the rule of Durrani and began the era of the Durrani dynasty.<sup>45</sup>

As the power struggle between the Mughals and the Afghans was continuing, it was the Kalhoras who gained the rule of the Sindh. Noor Muhammad, who was from the Kalhora clan, was recognized as one of the capable rulers of Sindh. Noor Muhammad was succeeded by his brother, Ghulam Shah. In an agreement with Noor Muhammad during the year 1758, the British

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<sup>44</sup>The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Sindh PROVINCE, PAKISTAN," in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2011).

<sup>45</sup>Mohan Gehani, *Brief Introduction HISTORY OF SINDH* (Adipur, Kutch (Gujrat) India: Indian Institute of Sindhology, 1998).

were allowed to establish factories at Shah Bandar and Thatta.<sup>46</sup> In this regard, an order was passed by Ghulam Shah, the brother of Noor Muhammad, according to which some trading posts were allotted to the British and the British East India Company was also allowed to enjoy some trade benefits by granting them some concessions as far as the establishment of these trading posts were concerned and the establishment of factories was concerned. These concessions were allowed during the year 1761.

Sarfaraz Khan, who was the son of Ghulam Shah, became the ruler of Sindh after the demise of his father. Most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century of Sindh is characterized by the rivalry between the Kalhoras and the Talpurs. This rivalry was at its peak during the century. It was so intense that the British East India Company had to close down its factories in Sindh.

However, the political situation did not improve and it deteriorated further upon the execution of three chieftains of the Talpur dynasty which was ordered by Sarfaraz Khan Kalhora. Enraged by the order of Sarfaraz Khan and the subsequent killing of their Chieftains, the Talpur dynasty, which was Baloch by descent, vowed to avenge the killing of their chieftains and therefore raised a standard of revolt against the Kalhora dynasty.<sup>47</sup> As a result of the struggle of Talpurs against the Kalhoras, the last ruler of the Kalhora dynasty Abdul Nabi, was overthrown by the Talpurs during the year 1786. Consequently, Mir Fateh Ali Khan, the chief of the Talpur clan, became the ruler of Sindh. However, the rule of Talpurs in Sindh was also not peaceful and was full of conspiracies against the crown. The internal conspiracies were so ripe in Sindh during the era of the Talpurs that two of the renowned persons, Mir Sohrab Talpur and Mir Tharo did not accept the rule of Mir Fateh Ali Khan; they broke from him and founded their own rule in the areas of Khairpur and Shah Bandar respectively. This led to the division of Sindh in three parts:

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<sup>46</sup>Bashir Ahmed and Summer Sultana, "Downfall of Talpur Dynasty and British Annexation of Sindh: A Critical Review of British-Talpur Treaties," *WALIA Journal* 1, no. 35 (1907): 132, <http://waliaj.com/wp-content/2019/21w.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 132.

One was ruled by Mir Fateh Ali Khan; the other one was ruled by Mir Sohrab Talpur, and the third one was ruled by Mir Tharo. This also led to the establishment of three capitals in Sindh. The Upper Sindh which was being ruled by Mir Sohrab Khan and Mir Tharo Khan had its capitals in Khairpur and Mirpur respectively. The Lower Sindh which was being ruled by Mir Fateh Ali Khan had its capital in Hyderabad. Mir Fateh Ali Khan jointly ruled Hyderabad in unity with his three other brothers. The unity among Mir Fateh Ali Khan and his brothers became so famous that they were started to be called as four friends.<sup>48</sup>

It was due to the efforts of Mir Fateh Ali Khan that the British trade in Sindh revived. He entered into an agreement with the British according to which the British restarted their trade activities in Sindh. He had also issued orders for special concessions for the British during the year 1799. However, the annexation of Bengal and the advancements by the British in the subcontinent raised speculations regarding the British in Sindh also. This insecurity which was being felt by the rulers and people of Sindh from the British finally culminated in the removal of British representatives from Sindh.

Mir Fateh Ali Khan, the spectacular ruler of Sindh and the Talpurs, was died during the year 1801. He left a will according to which his rule, which comprised of the Lower Sindh, was to be divided into his three brothers in such a way that 50 percent of the lower Sindh was to be ruled by Mir Ghulam Ali and the other half was to be ruled jointly by the other two brothers; namely Murad Ali and Karam Ali. Also, the liability of around 13 Lakh rupees, which was to be paid by Lower Sindh to Kabul, was equally divided in the same ratio. Since the son of Ghulam Ali was not mentioned in the will. Therefore after the death of Mir Ghulam Ali, the 50 percent which was ruled by him according to the will fell into the rule of Mir Murad Ali and Mir Karam Ali. Since Mir Karam Ali had no son. Therefore, all of the Lower Sindh came under the rule of Mir Murad Ali. Consequently, it was Mir Murad Ali who was proclaimed the ruler of the whole

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 132.

Lower Sindh during the year 1828. After the death of Mir Murad Ali during the year 1835, the rule of lower Sindh was equally divided among the two sons of Mir Murad Ali and their two cousins. They jointly ruled Sindh until the British annexed Sindh in the year 1843. However, as the power in Lower Sindh was shared equally by the immediate family, it was in contrast to Upper Sindh. Both the capitals, Khairpur and Mirpur, were ruled singly during all this era until they were annexed by the British in the year 1843.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.2 The Standard of Life in Medieval Sindh

Lan-Poole argues that —[In]the East the people does not change', says Lane-Poole, \* and there far more than many more progressive races the simple annals of the poor, however moving and pathetic, are indescribably trite and monotonous compared with the lives of those more fortunate to whom much has been given in opportunity, wealth, power and knowledge.”<sup>50</sup> However, the words that are being said do not truly represent the scenario. Even to a greater extent, they can mislead a reader naive to the situation. Another depiction of the standards of living in the area described by writers like Gissing and Arnold Bennet argues that the area that comprised Sindh was an area that was rich in culture, which was industrious and inhabited by intelligent people who were living distinctively from the rest of the sub-continent.<sup>51</sup> Although neither of all the views is a wholly and true representation of the standard of living there. Therefore, it is needed to draw a balanced picture between the luxurious and bountiful situation on the one hand and the poverty-stricken situation on the other hand.

The common life in Sindh during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was mainly pastoral and dependent upon the cottage industry. The population was very well diffused and the town life in the area of Sindh was mostly concentrated in the town of Thatta. The village life was

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<sup>49</sup>P.N. Khera M.A, *British Policy Towards Sindh Upto Its Annexation 1843* (California: Sani Panhwar, 2015).

<sup>50</sup>Elliot: I, pp. 24-5. **Cited in** Sorley, H.T and D.Litt., (1940). *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit: His Poetry, Life and Times*. London: Oxford University Press. 109.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. 109.



not very flourishing as compared to town life. The people living in village life were considerably living in a precarious situation as compared to the town life in Thatta.

Irrigation has always played a significant role in the social and economic life of Sindh. Eliminate the irrigation system of Sindh and it would be difficult for the area to even sustain as small a population as it had during the days of Moghal and Kalhora eras. Some of the writers argue that irrigation in Sindh was neglected. However, evidence during the times of Mughal and Kalhora dynasty suggests that the system of irrigation in Sindh was very intelligently managed and sustained during those days and therefore it was able to contribute to the social and economic uplift of the people of that time. The Mughals, in this regard, were supported by their Persian aides, who already knew the knowledge of water distribution along channels and also were aware of the social and economic impact of such water distribution. In this regard, Akbar also passed the Canal Act in 1568 for digging and further deepening of the Canal which became to be known as Sheikh Nala.<sup>52</sup> —The promise, however, was but poorly fulfilled. Sindh certainly received no benefit in this respect from the Mughals. The Sindh canals, Persian wheels and wells were constructed by the natives of the land without any assistance from the Empire of Delhi, which showed no interest in them at any time.”<sup>53</sup>

### **2.3 Residence Places**

People in the common strata of life mostly lived in huts that were made of grass and which were constructed by the sides of the rivers and in the fields depending upon the convenience and the area available to people. A little affluent class than the common people were the merchants and the traders, who lived in mud houses while a few superior buildings which could be compared to the buildings of Lahore and Agra, could be found in Thatta only.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*. 113.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 114.

Although Thatta could never have reached the zenith of construction even during its heydays as was being witnessed Lahore and Agra, —Nonetheless the rich adorn the roofs and arched ceilings of their houses with carvings and paintings, plant ornamented gardens in their courtyards, make tanks and fishponds which are lined with tiles of various colours, construct artificial springs and fountains which fling showers of water far into the air and lay down promenades paved with brickwork or marble.”<sup>55</sup>

It could very comfortably be argued while keeping in view the available evidence that the common people in Sindh, who mostly comprised of the agricultural and pastoral population lived in huts in the fields or on the riverside either because of the reason that these huts could very speedily be erected and then could very easily be removed upon floods or because of the reason that they be pitched like tents near the pasture grounds which shifted from year to year with the set of the river or the line of the floods.”<sup>56</sup>

Very little evidence regarding the Kalhora days in Sindh is present. Most of the records of the social and economic life of Sindh dates back to the days of the Talpurs. The record which states the days of the Talpurs in Sindh mostly coincides with the events being mentioned in the Mughal period. The Talpurs did not spend much on their dwellings. In this aspect, they truly represented their Baloch origins. They mostly lived in places that did not align with the place of living adopted by dignitaries. Pottinger, in this regard, argues that —The early Arab writer Al Idris! had noted previously that' in Debal(Lahari Bunder) the houses were built of clay and wood.”<sup>57</sup> As regards Thatta, Pottinger thinks that —The houses here are built on a plan that I have never met within any other country, as the walls are made hollow by small pieces of the stick being nailed across each other from the outer edges of a small frame of wood; these bits of the stick are usually from eight to sixteen inches long and placed diagonally so that they form a very

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>56</sup>Reference Monserrate *Commentary*, p. 219. In Sorley, Op.cit., 110-114.

<sup>57</sup>Elliot: I, p. 77. In Sorley, op.cit., 115.

strong frame on both sides which is plastered over with mud or mortar and has all the appearance of a solid wall. Some of the buildings erected on this principle are three or four stories high with flat heavy roofs, which is proof that they are very strong.”<sup>58</sup>

## **2.4 The Population and Food of Sindh**

Vincent Smith, in his memoirs, argues that the prices of food in Sindh were low. There was an abundance of provisions in the markets. However, this statement by Vincent Smith does not necessarily mean that whether the provisions were truly abundant as a result of booming agriculture and pastoring or it was because of the decline in the population of Sindh due to the fall of the cotton weaving industry in the area.<sup>59</sup> It is being assumed by most writers that the population in Sindh was reduced by the Talpurs during their rule than what it was a century earlier. However, these could be regarded simply as speculations and therefore could easily be discarded because of the lack of any concrete evidence. Furthermore, in the year 1832, Lt. Del Hoste, calculated the population of Sindh to be equal to 850,000 people, and that among this total population, one-fourth of the population were Hindus by religion.<sup>60</sup>

However, Pottinger, in his accounts, expresses his distrust over such figures of the population. Although, Hamilton in his accounts written in 1699 have indeed noted that around eighty thousand weavers died due to the result of a plague that was caused because of no rain yet the population of Karachi during the year 1813 was thirteen thousand, which was one half greater than when it was during the year 1809. Among that population most of the people were Hindus. However, from the accounts regarding the population can be gauged, one fact is obvious that between the period 1740 to 1800, a shift in the population of Sindh was noticed which had taken place from Thatta to Shikarpur, Hyderabad and Karachi. It can therefore easily be

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<sup>58</sup>*Travels in Beloochistan and Sindhe*, p. 353. In Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Sorley, op.cit., 117.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 117.

estimated that the population of Sindh during the days of Mughals and Kalhoras could not have been greater than a total of one million.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.5. Wages, Prices and Social Condition

Very few accounts of the wages in Sindh during the periods of Mughals and Kalhoras can be found. However, it would be inaccurate to calculate the wages in Sindh as compared to wages in other places like Delhi and Agra during the same period. In Sindh as in any other part of the sub-continent, —Poor people then as now in India thought in terms of copper coins and the revenue accounts were made up in " dams " at the rate of 40 to the rupee."<sup>62</sup> According to the accounts of Farouki, Ordinary people in Sindh were paid a wage of two to three dimes per day. This amount was equivalent to an amount of 1/20<sup>th</sup> of a rupee. Skilled workmen were given rupees three a month while household workers were given an amount of rupees 2 per month. The emperor Aurangzeb, while during the 8<sup>th</sup> year of his reign had issued orders against forced labor. However, it is evident from the accounts of the time that these imperial orders were defied in Sindh and forced labour which was known as *-begari*" continued to be practiced as vigorously in Sindh as before the orders were issued. These Begaris constructed several canals in Sindh. One of the largest canals, which is still operational in Upper Sindh, constructed by these Begaris is still operational and is still known as the "Begari" Canal.<sup>63</sup>

There existed remarkable stability in the rates of wages as according to silver during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Sindh. Methold noted the rates for the persons who were working in the factory to be equal to Rs. 2 per month in the year 1622. Similarly, in the year 1658, William Smyth noted the rates of wages as four or five shillings in the same area. The Dutch also used to pay two diems to ordinary workers and an amount of seven diems to skilled workers in the year 1637.<sup>64</sup> A

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>62</sup>India. *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 388. In Sorley, op.cit., 120.

<sup>63</sup>Sorley, op.cit., 121.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 121.

slave at the Akbar's court, who was of the lowest grade, was paid an amount of one *dam* (rupee) daily. This stability of wages confirms the general stability, steadiness and uniformity in wages that existed at different parts of the Empire during the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Mughal period.<sup>65</sup> The Mughals were always successful in maintaining the purity of the coins. Thevenot argues that —the silver money of the great Mughal is finer than any money”. Similarly, Ovington believes that —the gold of Surat is so very fine that twelve and fourteen percent may be gained by bringing it to Europe”.<sup>66</sup>

## 2.6 The Health Sector

The health sector was not in good condition and was in a very deplorable condition. The conditions that existed in Sindh were ripe for malaria. The available evidence points towards the bad and deplorable condition of the health sector in the area of Sindh. Although Sindh was not hit by any significant famine and remained mostly immune to the famines, yet one great famine could be recorded in the year 1659 when it was recorded that the goods that were to be boarded at the port of Laribandar were to be few as compared to the goods that are usually boarded at the port because of the famine and plague which had hit the Sindh.<sup>67</sup> The famine was so intense and the goods were so fewer that they were being bought by the merchants at any price that was available to them. It is also evident from the evidence available that when Aurangzeb was the Governor of Multan, his Jagirs could produce very little revenue as it was mostly hit by famines, droughts and floods. Similarly, Hamilton records in 1699 that in the year 1696, the area of Sindh was hit by a plague due to the absence of rain in Thatta and as a result of this plague, around eighty thousand workers had died.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Moreland : p. 178. In Sorley, op.cit., 121.

<sup>66</sup>Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*. 124.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 134-35.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 134.

It is because of this deplorable condition of healthcare in the lower Sindh that the people in that area strived for European medicines.

## **2.7 Sources of Recreation and Amusements**

The condition of recreations and amusements in Sindh was as deplorable as was the condition of health. However, the people of Sindh, historically, have remained fond of amusements and laughter and even in such deplorable conditions, they have been able to find for themselves sources and reasons to amuse themselves. Although this amusement of the people would sometimes go immoral as the people would indulge in liquor and other intoxicating drugs and would even indulge in dancing girls which negatively affected their society and morality in large.

However, in addition to such immoral practices, which were even then considered immoral in society, there were religious festivals, like Ramzan, Eid, Diwali, and Holi. People in Sindh were fond of singing and music.

Intoxication was declared illegal by Emperor Jahangir. However, he did not obey the orders and because of this the Muslim nobles heavily remained dependent on intoxication for amusement. By the time of Emperor Aurangzeb, the ban on intoxication was imposed more vigorously and it was observed largely by the populace during his era. However, even after such stringent actions, intoxication mainly was prevalent in Sindh and was predominantly used as entertainment.

*Shikar*(Hunting) was also used as a way of entertaining during that age. It was a game for which the country presented a complete potential to play. The affluent people excessively played shikar. —They have a store of peacocks, pigeons, doves, duck, teal, widgeon, wild geese, curlews, partridges and plover free for anybody to shoot.”<sup>69</sup> Along with shikar, the nobles would also

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<sup>69</sup>Burton :*History of Sindh*, pp. 168-9. In Sorley, op.cit.,138.

indulge in Hawking. This sport has also been described in the Sindhi literature with great zeal, art and glory. People also enjoyed riding camels and horses.

Polo was played normally by the Mughal nobles with great enthusiasm. However, one cannot find any mention of this game in Sindh. In addition to these sports, several low-level games were being played like kite flying, which was one of the most popular games among the public, pigeon betting, cockfighting, ram fighting and wrestling.

## **2.8 The Kalhora Dynasty**

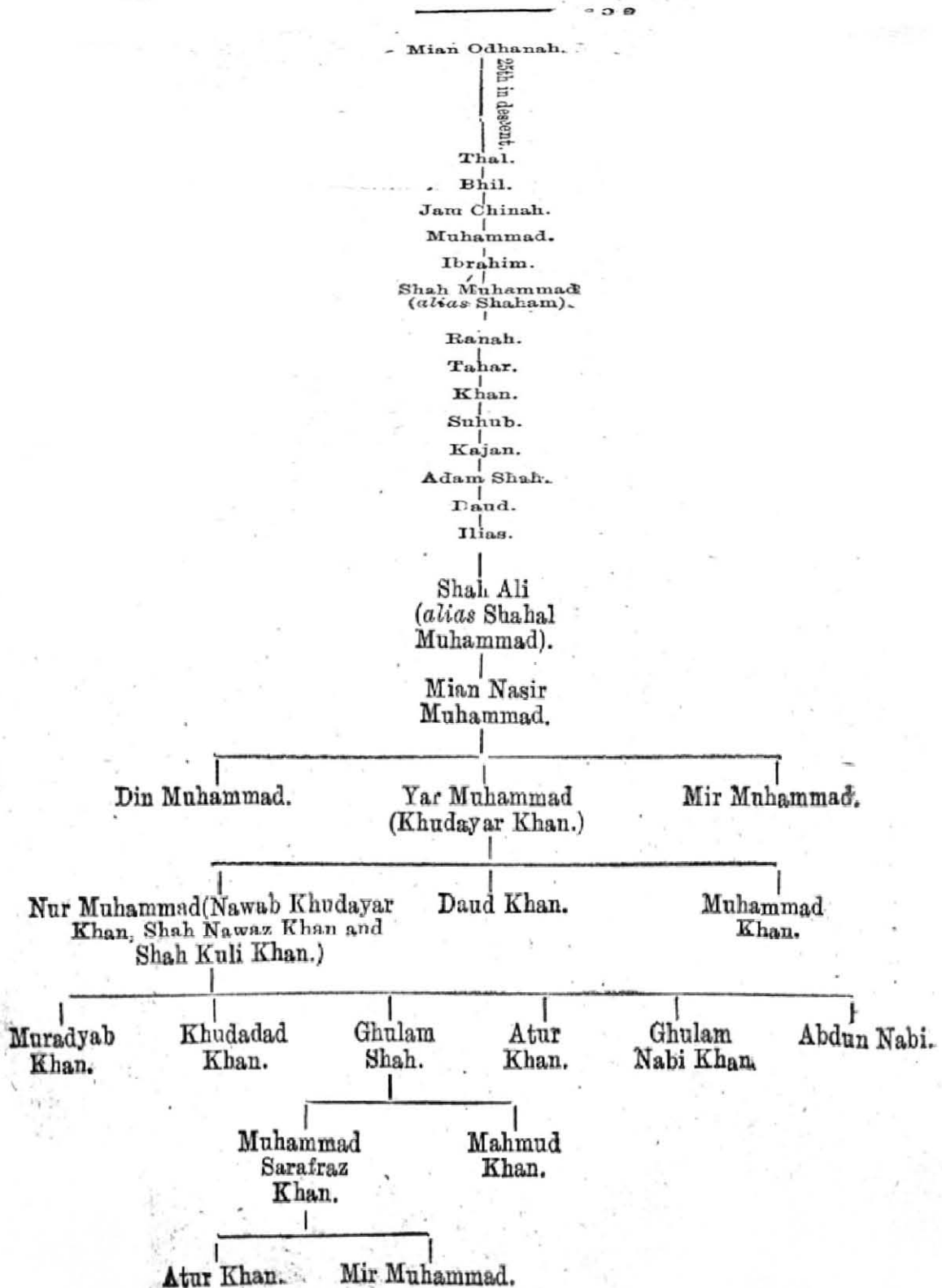
The Kalhoras are the descendants of the Abbasi dynasty. They are the descendants of the Prophet's (PBUH) uncle, Hazrat Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib. The Abbasi arrived in Sindh with a large force during the year 1370 A.C.E. Abbasis were accompanied by Sultan Ahmad II. Sultan Ahmad II was the son of Shah Muzammil, who was the ruler of Egypt. The Kalhora tribe became so influential in Sindh that they established the Kalhora dynasty in Sindh and ruled Sindh for almost 82 years. They were given power by the Mughal splendid Vizir, Mirza Ghazi Beg and far along established their own rule. Amir Muhammad Chanigot involved in the royal service and got selected on the rank of *Panch-Hazari* in 1583 via Mughal Ruler Akbar. After his demise, the governance of the dynasty was challenged between two divisions of the Kalhora family plus the other Daudpota family. Today this turns out to be an honor for his Family to jot down Kalhora as the name of their family. The dynasty of Amir Mehdi Khan identified as Kalhoras and the dynasty of Amir Daud Khan Abbasi called as Daudpota, mutually they were recognized as the children of Amir Chani Khan Abbasi. The descendants of the Kalhora dynasty are called Mian or Shah. The establishment of the empire of Kalhora was in 1701 A.C.E after Mian Yar Mohammad Kalhora became the governor of Balochistan.

The Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shah, during the year 1736 officially entitled Mian Noor Muhammad as the Nawab of the territory of Sindh. Ghulam Ahmad Shah Kalhora is being regarded as the most popular Nawab of the Kalhora dynasty. He also assisted Ahmad Shah

Abdali throughout the 3rd battle of Panipat against the Hindus when Ahmad Shah Abdali had attacked the Hindu Marhattas in an attempt to defeat the Marhattas for the restoration of the Mughal Emperor's prestige. After defeating Marhattas in the Battle of Panipat, Ahmad Shah Abdali also battled against the Rao of Kuchh, who was an ally of the Marhattas and was a staunch opponent to the dynasty of Kalhoras in Sindh. In 1762, the war was fought in the Thar Desert. A genealogical chart of the Kalhora dynasty is being given below:



(2) *Genealogical tree of the Abbásis or Kalthórah's.*



Source: Mirza QaleechBaig. 'History of Sindh'

Since the mid-18th century, to the foundation of Pakistan, the mid-20th century, for the duration of almost two hundred years that covers the Kalhora (partially), the Talpur and the British governments, Sindh had the agonizing history. On the inside, the tussle between the Kalhoras and the Talpurs to gain power disbursed the drives of the people of Sindh and created chaos with lives and properties of them. By the last conquest of the Talpurs, the region was distributed into the small territories and bared to assaults from outside. The rejection of the Talpurs to give taxes to the Durrani Kings initiated frequent invasions of the Afghan forces that caused a setback to Sindh's economic condition. Sindh that occasionally had like India, in the hugeness, size, and the number of inhabitants, none an only human residence was left. Many productive powers reduced to a distressing level declining the whole commercial life of the province. Many of the prosperous cities were abandoned. —The number of people of Thatta that were almost 300,000 at one time reduced to 20,000 in 1809 and 7,000 in 1851 A.C.E”<sup>70</sup> Sukkur was nearly deserted; the northern Sindh's chief trade hub, Shikarpur, was almost desolated; the income of Karachi decreased from Rs. 616,000 to Rs. 99,999 between 1799- 1808.<sup>71</sup> Agricultural activity was also disrupted. Due to continuous expeditions and disorder, and mismanagement by feudal lords, the cultivated region was nearly divided in a few years. Both income and profits from cultivated areas were seriously abridged. In addition to this, it was the severe burden of giving Rs. 15 lacs yearly to the Durrani as a homage. Hindu merchants were the ones who got benefited throughout this period of a universal decay in Sindh. The former collected wealth by backing the military operations of the Afghan leaders in Sindh and by gaining resource pacts for their militia, and then by doing business in foreign trade. Therefore, Sindhi Muslims were progressively disadvantaged, Sindhi Hindus became wealthy and obtained economic dominance in the region. The fall of the economic resources and lack of political stability gave birth to

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<sup>70</sup>Ahmed Abdullah, *The People and the Land of Sindh* (Los Angeles, California: Sani Hussain Panhwar, 2009), 30, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/13455764/The-People-and-the-Land-of-Sindh>.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

pessimism, anger, and loss of self-assurance among Muslims. They started to depend greatly on *pirs* and *murshids*, involved in using drugs and spending nomadic life of animal breeding or as cultivators. Since Hindus lived frequently in metropolitan areas, many of the towns of Sindh arose as Hindu majorities. By wealth and metropolitan life, the Hindus attained education and superiority though the once emphatic, active and enthusiastic Sindhi Mussalmans who were keen on acquiring education and to learn, art and culture, turned out to be lethargic, submissive, passive and vanished in the life of rural areas. The conquest of Sindh by the British in 1843 A.C.E intensified the desolation of the Muslims. The domination of Hindus in both the financial and educational grounds was strengthened that Muslims entirely became helpless before the Hindus at the start of the 20th century. However, the Muslims in Sindh have demonstrated that they hold immense power of improving themselves as they obtained intellectual and mystical heritage.<sup>72</sup>

## **2.9 The Life of Shah Abdul Latif**

Any significant and credible account of Shah Abdul Latif's life is lacking in history and will never be even available. There has been no significant recorded history of his life as the major portion of what is known about his personality is orally known. Till the 1980s, it was still possible to know a great deal about the life of Shah Abdul Latif as the elders of the times had heard a lot about his personality from their forefathers. However, after the passage of that generation, most of the oral data regarding the life and personality of Shah Abdul Latif has gone into oblivion.

Mirza Qaleech Beg (1853-1929) presents a detailed account of Shah Abdul Latif's life and personality, however, his work is a collection of oral traditions in which instances about the life of Shah Abdul Latif are narrated through the wordings of other people and every instance begins with narration like —Theywrite/ say, Men, say that”, etc. a similar work has been done by

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 31.

Dayaram Gidumal and Lilaram Watanmal, however, their work could not be treated as better than that of Mirza Qaleech Beg.

Regarding the dates of his birth, there are different narrations. However, deducing from such different narrations, it could be estimated that the birth of this great poet fell somewhere in the year 1689 and he died somewhere during the year 1752 A.C.E. His life was exactly during the period of Sindh's political transition from Mughals to Kalhoras. At the time of death of emperor Aurangzeb, Shah Abdul Latif was a blistering youth of eighteen years of age. During the invasion of Nadir Shah over and the subsequent sacking of Sindh into the Persian empire, Shah Abdul Latif was at the age of fifty. His age was 58 years when Ahmad Shah Durrani laid the foundations of modern Afghanistan and Sindh was made subservient to Kabul. Five years after this inclusion of Sindh into Afghanistan by Ahmad Shah Durrani, Shah Abdul Latif died.

Although Shah Abdul Latif wrote a considerable amount of poetry, yet it could hardly present a clear picture of the political situation prevailing at that time. He was completely disinterested in the petty issues and the fights between the Kalhoras. He, therefore, spent most of his life by restricting himself in a locality which is nowadays Hyderabad. He was not active during the political movements of his time. He was completely occupied by the ideas that would make him think and would remain aloof from any political developments that would take place in the echelons of power. He always was a concentration of unusual traits even as a boy. He was very thoughtful, fond of loneliness and would wander alone. He would always pass his time with *fakirs* and holy men surrounding him in order to understand the true virtues and ideals of life. In this aspect, Shah Abdul Latif has got habits that resemble that of Shiekh Musa, who was the ancestor of Abdul Fazul. This has been stated in *Ain-e-Akbari* as –ever contemplative on his prayer carpet of introspection wrestled in prayer with himself and spent his previous days in the ordering of the wayward spirit.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 171-72.

Shah Abdul Latif belonged to a noble family of sayyeds from Matiari which traced its roots from Herat. Syed Abdul Karim, whose Dargah is located in district Tando Muhammad Khan and is still a place of a great pilgrimage, was the ancestor of Shah Abdul Latif in the fourth generation. Shah Abdul Latif's father, Syed Habib Shah, was a resident of Hala Haweli which was located near Matiari at the time of the birth of Shah Abdul Latif. It can therefore rightly be said that Shah Abdul Latif was born with a golden spoon in his mouth. He enjoyed all the respect in society. However, he is seldom remembered to have used that respect in his own favor.

He is remembered to be a man of immense qualities. He is remembered to be gentle in his approach towards not only the other human beings but also towards animals. He was gentle in his manner and speech. He would treat everyone with the utmost respect and dignity. In a society that was flourishing with entertainment with women and all the evils a man would want, he displayed a character and chastity that was unprecedented in that society. He never indulged in pleasure-making. He left no heir to his position.

At the glory of his youth, Shah Abdul Latif is remembered to be a bearded man of average height, handsome, black eyes with a face full of youth and intelligence and was deep thinking and intelligent. He spent the initial years of his life at Hala Haweli and was then sent to a nearby village called Kotri by his father. Shah Abdul Latif married the daughter of his disciple who was murdered in 1713 by robbers and faced an untimely death.

Shah Abdul Latif had initially a turbulent relation with Noor Muhammad Kalhora. During his lifetime, the Sindh was ruled by Kalhoras. The rulers of Sindh had developed a strong relationship with Syeds because Kalhoras were religious people and being influenced by the Syeds, they did not want to antagonize the Syeds. However, Noor Muhammad Kalhora could not keep up with the independent and unorthodox views of Shah Abdul Latif. However, later in his life, Noor Muhammad Kalhora acknowledged the views of Shah Abdul Latif and became convinced of the purity of intentions of Shah Abdul Latif and therefore became close friends

with him. It is also being said in traditions that it was because of the blessings of Shah Abdul Latif that Ghulam Shah Kalhora was born.

Shah Abdul Latif, at this point, was establishing strong poetic fervor. This stage also witnesses the seclusion of Shah Abdul Latif from the people and the founding of his new village by the name of Bhit Shah. This place is called 'Bhit' because of the reason that this is built on the sandhills. Mirza Qaleech Beg and Gurbuxani praise Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai for the founding of the village as they note that it was the personal character and charisma of the man that he founded and later build this village with his own hands. —The whole episode had a vivid popular appeal enhanced by the fact that he was now reaching the summit of his power as a poet and as a man of Latifly reputation.”<sup>74</sup>

However Shah Abdul Latif was born in an upper class of Sindh, he renounced his hereditary social relationship and articulated his unity with the marginalized groups, mainly when they took part in the revolt against the elites. His progressive thought can be comprehended in the milieu of the tragic event which took place in 1718 in Jhok, while Shah Inayat, who was a well-known Sufi, a famous poet and, beyond this, a matchless social activist, was murdered.<sup>75</sup> He had a great impact on Latif, who visited the former often. Shah Inayat had performed revolutionary measures for the improvement of the lower classes. Through this, he built a society in the Jhok; that was free from all types of manipulation. Shah Inayat's heartbreaking death tormented Latif and he showed his anger and sadness in at least eight stanzas in *Sur Ramkali* of Risalo.

In the last years of his life, people numbering thousands would come to his village and would listen to the music and his poetry and enjoy and understand the beauty of the message enshrined in it by this great poet. It is being known that during the last days of his life, he intended to do a pilgrimage of Karbala. However, he was not allowed by his followers to do so

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<sup>74</sup>*Shavak Latifi*, Part I, p. 7. In Sorley, op.cit., 173.

<sup>75</sup>Memon and Aman, —Shah Latif's Poetry: An Alternative Source to Study the History of Sindh.” 82.

because they persuaded him that if he did so, this would amount to his desertion from his disciples as they would be left alone without him. Therefore, in order to quench his thirst for Kerbala, he wrote Sur Kedaro instead, which is a story of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) who was martyred in Karbala. It is being argued that —shortly before his death he retired into solitude. Coming out again he performed his ablutions, put on a white sheet and ordered the singing of songs. When the music stopped, he fell into a reverie of divine contemplation.”<sup>76</sup>

As far as the education of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is concerned, it is being said that he obtained no regular education. However, any information in this regard is unreliable. His poetry, although shows, a sharp acquaintance with Persian and Arabic. He certainly had an understanding of Jalaluddin Rumi’s work. It is famously known that in order to win back the favor of Shah Abdul Latif, Noor Muhammad Khan presented the poet with a copy of Masnawi. In 1754, upon the death of Shah Abdul Latif, Ghulam Shah Kalhora build a magnificent tomb upon his body. It was the same year when Noor Muhammad Kalhora died.

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid. 174.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Portrayal of Women in Shah Latif's Poetry

The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif gives an aesthetic sense to the readers as it does not only convey the spiritual meaning but also shed light on the socio-political conditions of the people residing in Sindh. While discussing the major subaltern groups, Shah Latif discussed the role of women in 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindh. He did not only discuss the role but also depicted them as a symbol of valor, love, and honesty. If one would deeply look into the life of the poet no major influence of any woman can be seen except his wife Sayeda Begum whom the young shah left and wandered with the *Jogis/ Sanyasis* for three years in the land. However, it is claimed that there are some verses from the Risalo that are dedicated to his maiden but there is no significant account can be traced.

The topic ‘Women’ has remained one of the major chunks of Shah Latif's poetry. He dedicated almost half of his Surs to the courageous ladies of Sindh and praised their bravery in achieving their goal. Keeping this in mind, it can be said that women have played a central role in his literary work. By analyzing the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Sindhi society it can be argued that society was based on the patriarchal system. The poetry of Shah Latif sheds light on the women's folklore. Once he visited Jaisalmer and saw the hospitality of their women later he recited about them in a way that “the women of Jaisalmer deserve all praise, because they allowed themselves to sacrifice their principles in the name of Beloved”<sup>77</sup>

Shah Latif let the girls and maidens from the oppressed classes rise to a higher position in society that is why most of the heroines in his poetry belonged to the lower class. In the medieval era, literature produced in the East and West was highly influenced by the elite class of the society and the characters in this literature were connected with the nobility. On the contrary,

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<sup>77</sup> Jatoti et al., “Feminist Voice In The Eighteenth Century Sindh : Glimpses From The Poetry Of Bhitai Abstract.” 116.



Shah Latif's poetry was composed of folk-stories and the selection of his characters is people from the lower class.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Shah Latif discussed the seven different female characters in his work but here it only discussed those who belonged to lower/oppressed class. For example, Sur Sohni, Sur Sasui, Sur Marui, Sur Kamod (related to Noori) and other Surs in which the role of women (belonged to the lower class) was described generally.

### 3.1 Social Condition of Women in Sindh

From ancient times two major cultural unities can be traced named *'Hind'* and *'Sindh'*. The name Sindh has derived from river Indus and it can be evident from the following statement of the work by Wheeler Sir Mortimer in which he states that India was the land of a great river named Sindhu/Indus that ironically follows generally within the current state of Pakistan.<sup>79</sup> On the other side, Rigved (a holy ancient book of Hindus) is considered as the oldest source for the history of Sindh. In this book, Sindhu was considered an independent and giant river.

The singer, O ye Waters in Vivasvān's place,  
shall tell your grandeur forth that is beyond compare.

The Rivers have come forward triply, seven and seven.  
Sindhu might surpass all the streams that flow.

Varuṇa cut the channels for thy forward course,  
O Sindhu, when thou rannest on to win the race.

Thou speedest o'er precipitous ridges of the earth,  
when thou art Lord and Leader of these moving floods.

His roar is lifted up to heaven above the earth:  
he puts forth endless vigour with a flash of light.

Like floods of rain that fall in thunder from the cloud,  
so Sindhu rushes on bellowing like a bull. (Rigved, trans. by Griffith 1896)<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>79</sup>B.B. Lal, *EARLY INDIA AND PAKISTAN*. By Sir Mortimer Wheeler. (Vol. 12 in the Series *'Ancient Peoples and Places.'*) Thames and Hudson, London, 1959. Pp. 241, 57 *Photographs*," *Antiquity* 34, no. 135 (September 2, 1960): 224–27, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00029410>.

<sup>80</sup>Ralph T.H. Griffith, *—River Hymn of the Rigveda*" *Discovering Pakistan*, February 2, 2013, <https://discoveringpakistan.wordpress.com/2013/02/19/river-hymn-of-the-rigveda/> (accessed December 26, 2019).

Similarly in Maha Bharta, the story of Daraupadi is narrated from which one can trace the accounts for an ancient society of Sindh being a rich region. Moreover, the remains of Moen-jodaro depict that the women in that age were fond of jewelry, embellished ornaments and had knowledge of cosmetics. According to this, it can be assumed that urban women were more civilized as compared to the Aryan women who were mostly used to live in the villages. As, H.T. Lambrick writes in his book that, –a great number of spindle whorls were discovered at Moen-jodaro that could have been used for spinning cotton threads and fortunately a piece of woven material has lasted there en-wrapping reserve of jewelry.”<sup>81</sup> There is no strong evidence found about the subaltern groups of the ancient Sindh but the historical scriptures discuss that Sindh was a prosperous region because of its wealth. In the time period of Aryans, no major class difference was found within the society. The size of the house used to be dependent on the number of people residing in it. As far as the status of women is concerned, the people of Sindh used to worship goddesses which show that women were considered respectable in society. After the advent of the Padri Rule in that region, a major class system could be seen in society. The society was divided into Aryans and non-Aryans groups in which Aryans were considered as superior and caste systems strengthened. The people of upper-caste used to call themselves the ‘\_Crætors and Preservers of Vedas (holy book of Hindus)’. The Vedas was written in Sanskrit language and later it remained confined to the clergy or upper class of the society.

Dr. Moti Parkash in his work, *Portrayal of women in Sindhi Poetry* narrates that women being a symbol of love and valor always remained vulnerable in society. He strengthens his argument by narrating the facts from ancient historical texts and says that Purshotum Ramchand left her pregnant wife Seeta just because of rumors spread by a washerman. Moreover, Daraupadi was insulted in the court by Vishasun but despite that, a woman has remained

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<sup>81</sup>H.T. Lambrick, *Sindh before Muslim Conquest vol 2*, (Hyderabad: Sindh Adabi Board, 1973), 16.

obedient towards her duty in every age.<sup>82</sup> In the time period of Vedas (1500c. 500 BCE), men were considered as the center of importance and women were respected as they had the opportunity to acquire education and take part in other daily life activities but they were not given that importance as men. With time, the debates regarding women's dignity and character were started to discuss. It was emphasized that women should be obedient to men that resultantly ended with the negligence of women's role in other spheres of life. Dr. Fehmida Hussain in her book, *Shah Latif ki Shayri mein Aurtat ka Roop*, quotes P. Thomas who wrote about the condition of Aryan women in ancient Sindh. It states that —the story of Indo Aryan women is a tragic tale of gradual subjection beginning from the legendary age of free love and ending up in the middle ages when they had lost all individuality and were even made to mount the funeral pyres of their husbands.”<sup>83</sup>

By the above-quoted lines, it can be assumed that the tradition of Sati was practiced in that age in which a woman's agency was lost and she was forced to die with the funeral pyre with her husband. Additionally in the post-Vedic era, women were married, abducted or even sold to the men. Although in ancient Indian laws women were considered as a symbol of dignity yet they were also considered as unfaithful. As a result, it was obligatory in the society to consider them as their slaves or even it was normal to get beaten up by their men.

With the advent of Buddhism women were got rid of many ancient Indian laws including the abolition of Sati practice, remarriage of widows/divorcee and elimination of early child marriages. However, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism declined and old Hindu traditions came into practice again. The Arab rule in Sindh granted social rights to women. Molai Shedai while quoting the facts from *Tohfah-Ul-Karaam* states that the women of Sindh in the Umayyad time

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<sup>82</sup>Moti Prkash, —Portrayal of Woman in Sindhi Poetry – Ph.D Thesis” (University of Bombay, 1980). 19.

<sup>83</sup>P. Thomas, *Indian Women through the Ages* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1946). 48.

period were bold and wise. They were given education and knew the art of fencing, tent pegging, and calligraphy.<sup>84</sup>

In the rule of the Soomro dynasty (1025 – 1351 A.C.E) the female characters like Bhagat Bai and Tara Bai who ruled for ten years until her brother sat on the throne. In Sama (1351-1519 A.C.E), and Arghun (1524-1554 A.C.E ) time period Sindhi women were stronger than Mughal women. They used to do household chores and work in the fields. Despite that, the status of a woman in a patriarchal society could not assume significant changes.

Kalhora Dynasty (1701–1783 A.C.E) was based on the feudal system in which women had low status in society. The center of attention for philosophers and poets of that age was women and the hurdles facing by them. The Western writers and travelers have written about Sindhi women and hailed their role in society. Mr. T. Postans writes and Dr. Fehmida Hussain quotes, –their women (fisherwomen) share the labor similarly as men and a strong less (woman) is commonly seen directing and paddling the boat while the men work at the nets.”<sup>85</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindh witnesses a major social stratification especially concerning the ‘Molvis’ and ‘Sayyeds’ who belonged to the upper class or clergy. The immigration of the sayyeds harmed the Sindh by taking from the people (natives) all they could and the condition of the masses got worsened day by day. Women of that society were taken to Molvis in the case of any medical emergency despite taken to the hospitals. Moreover, it was considered unnecessary for women to acquire education because they were seen as less competent and clever than Persian or Mughal women.

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<sup>84</sup>Molai Shedai Rahimdad Khan, *Tarikh Tamadan Sindh* (Hyderabad: Sindh University Press, 1959). 298.

<sup>85</sup>Thomas, *Indian Women through the Ages*. 99.

## 3.2 Shah Latif and Women

### 3.2.1 Sur Sohni

Sur Sohni is the tale of a young beautiful maiden who belonged to the lower class of Sindh, Kumhar (potter), who fell in love with a man named Mehar on the day of her wedding with Dum. The heroin, Sohni, was unhappily married as both (Sohni and Mehar) fallen so deeply in love with each other. One night Sohni decided to meet Mehar who used to live on the other bank of the river. One night Sohni sneaked out of her home, took a pitcher of baked clay and swimming by it came to Mehar's hut.<sup>86</sup> Later it became a routine to Sohni to swim to the Mehar at night and returned before dawn. The secret meetings could not stay long and Sohni's mother-in-law got to know her secret. In order to stop Sohni, she replaced baked pitcher with the unbaked one and when Sohni swam to the Mehar the unbaked pitcher started to dissolve in the water and Sohni drowned. However, when Mehar witnessed this, he also jumped into the deadly swelling river in order to rescue his love and both breathed their last.

Shah Latif in this chapter depicted Sohni in a different who sacrificed her life for love. Usually, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, men were seeing facing hurdles and doing efforts to get the women but here Sohni was the one who did every possible thing to get her love. It also breaks the stereotypes that women were confined to home, performed their household chores and obeyed their husbands. Here Shah talked about the individual's agency that being an individual Sohni was not bound to obey the conservative traditions of the society. It was not obligatory for any individual in the society whether men or women to submit themselves in front of existing typical societal traditions. However, in Sur Sasui, Noori, Moomal and so on women were seen who fell in love with their husbands but here the condition is quite different which clearly shows that

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<sup>86</sup>Agha Saleem, *Introuction to the Poetry and Mystic Thought of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai*, 1st ed. (Karachi: Culture Departmebt, Government of Sindh, 2012). 59.

Shah Latif thought about the wills and desires of women and his thought is different from the rest of the society. Here Shah exquisitely describes the situation of Sohni:<sup>87</sup>

جھي ٺڳڙي تي بيگي ٿي ڇڪس پڇي ڪي ٿي ٿي؛  
 ٺم ڇي ج غ ڇڪس اهي هي ٻڙي هي ٿي  
 ڇڪس بيگي ٿي، ڇڪس ڇڪس ڇي

She enters water anywhere, pretenders seek the right spot,  
 Dam was never her spouse, her mind in Mehar engrossed,  
 Lost in Mehar's love, river to her is a stream<sup>88</sup>

In this verse, Shah Latif narrates that whether Sohni was living with Dum but Mehar was always in her mind and soul. Shah Latif also described the oppression that was faced by Sohni by her husband and the society and stated that Sohni was alone in her grief. She did not have any friends or companions with whom she could share her sorrow. The state of oppression by Sohni's husband is defined by Shah Latif in his poetry. He states that:

ٺ  
 ٺ  
 ٺ

Those who in haste deep waters enter, meet greet distress.  
 Ten times a day Dam taunts, no heed she pays,  
 Love has modesty, sense and wisdom snatched.<sup>89</sup>

Shah Latif explains that Dum, the husband of Sohni, taunted her every time but she paid no heed to that and was living her life in the memories of Mehar. Here, Shah discussed how

<sup>87</sup> Abdul Majid Burgari, *Shah Latif Jo Risalo*, December 2, 2004, 120.  
<https://www.scribd.com/document/15775089/Shah-Jo-Risalo>.

<sup>88</sup> Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*. 105.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

Sohni was frustrated due to unnecessary bounds of the society and she responded to oppose the patriarchy in society.

Sohni was a beautiful woman but Shah Latif did not only praise her external beauty but also her inner splendor. He emphasized that the heart of Sohnī was filled with love, honesty, and commitment towards Mehar. She was brave enough to fight with the society and violent waves of the river to meet her beloved. From the Sur Sohnī, many people assumed that Shah Latif did not condemn the disloyalty of Sohnī with her husband but the truth was something else. Shah Latif was a pious man; he belonged to a Sayyed family never praised the immoral activities in the society. However, he voiced for the injustice that was done to Sohnī by her family and husband. He sang the melancholy for Sohnī while feeling her pain and highlighted that it was inappropriate to cage a woman in the name of traditions. In the following verse, the helplessness of Sohnī could be seen regarding her love;

وٺب ٺي هٺس ڪسي، نقبي هذجت هٺ  
تٺي ڪچي ٺي، پسون! ڪ لڳي ٺي  
بچي بچي ٺي، زچي ٺي  
چي پيٺي ٺي، ظڪڏي ڪي چٺي ٺي

Love tortures me day by day,  
Why don't you come and with it remonstrate?  
As long as she as alive, she did not rest,  
Languishing in love, she finally succumbed to death.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 119.

Shah Latif did not only talk about Sohni but also addressed other women of the society to not accept oppression or injustice against them. Seeking for the truth and voicing against the oppression was the advice given by Shah to the people of his age. He said:

اڙڙ ڀوڙا، اڃب ڀ اڳي ٿي  
 گسي ڀنگي ٿب ڪسي، ظستي ڀي ظنگ ڙا ڀي  
 صرت ج بظب ڙجي ڀب جي ڀي ڀي  
 ڏهه ڀلي ڀبي، گير ڙي گير ڙي

Many currents of water flow but the swift one is still further;  
 Friends! You sit come fortably at home under husband's care,  
 Had you a glimpse of Sahar's glourious face,  
 You would prevent me not, but all with jars in waters plunge.<sup>91</sup>

Here the poet gave a message to the people, especially women, in order to achieve your goal do work hard and leave laziness behind. Through strong determination and consistency, one can achieve the destination.

Sur Sohni gives a glimpse of the determination and brevity of a woman in a patriarchal society. It emphasizes the 'Agency' of the women and negates the oppression and injustice that is done against them. In most of the folk stories, women had died a tragic death which depicts the nature of society at that time that was feudal. Shah Latif seemed to praise the women and to teach other marginalized sections of society to voice for themselves.

### 3.2.2 Sur Sasui

Sasui was the daughter of rich Brahman as it was predicted that she would marry a Muslim man and to avoid the embarrassment, her father placed her in a wooden box and floated it on the river. Later, the box was found by a Muslim washerman and he adopted her. After

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 100.



growing up Sasui met with Punhoon who was the son of the ruler of the Kech Makran. Sasui and Punhoon got married and when the father of Punhoon learned that Punhoon got married to a washer girl, he sent his three sons to bring Punhoon back home. One night, the three brothers gave Punhoon a glass of drugged milk and tied him with the camel's back and took him home. When Sasui woke up and came to know that Punhoon was not there, she decided to find him and ran towards the jungle. Sasui ran wildly crossing the forest, over the sterile land, dessert, and rocky mountains. Her feet had gotten cut over the spines, branches, stones, and burning sand, without noticing the danger and difficulties of her way. In her way to find Punhoon, she met a shepherd who tried to molest her. In order to save her life and dignity, she prayed to God to escape the beast human in guise. Allah answered her prayer and the ground on which she was standing, opened up and swallowed her. After witnessing the incident, shepherd repented and made her grave. On the other hand, Punhoon remained successful in escaping from his father's prison and on his way back when he came to know that this was the grave of Sasui, he also died on the spot.

The story of Sasui is the story of a woman who sacrificed her life in search of her love. Sasui is one of the heroines of Shah Latif to whom the poet has dedicated five Surs of his work named; Sur SasuiAbri, Sur Mazuri, Sur Desi, Sur Kohyari, and Sur Hussaini. It was difficult to narrate the sufferings of Sasui in one single Sur that is why she was dedicated five of the thirty Surs by Shah Latif. L.H. Ajwani wrote about Sur Sasui that, —This Sur (Sasui) perhaps the most important Sur in the Risalo, along with four other sister Surs, Mazuri, Desi, Kohyari, and Hussani, deals with the woeful story of Sasui, the most famous of Sindh heroines.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>L.H. Ajwani, *History of Sindhi Literature* (Karachi: Allied Book Company, University of Karachi, 1984).4.

### 3.2.3 Sur Sasui Abri

This Sur is related to the pain and the sufferings of the Sasui in order to reach her love. It tells about the voyage of Sasui over the mountains and difficult rocks representing the hardships in her path. In Sindhi, the word Abri means ‘weak’ or ‘vulnerable’. In this chapter, Shah depicted Sasui as a weak woman who later became stronger than mountains in the search of her beloved. Here, Shah Latif is calling a woman physically weak but her sentiments and feelings are stronger than her body. In the following verse, Shah Latif has described the restlessness of the Sasui who is dying to see her Punhoon:

هذبت جي جي هي، هتي نگشوي تبز  
پي پي پي ° اج ج اچ لچ اتي بز  
ئي پي پي پي بز، ته اچلي ي اچلي بي

Those with love in their souls, are thirsty beyond relied,  
Drink a cup of longing, thus your longing increase,  
Punhoon! Yourself offer me the cup of love,  
That with longing I may quench the thirst.<sup>93</sup>

It means that those whose heart is filled with love always remain restless without their loved ones. The thirst for love never fades away rather it increases with each passing day. Shah Latif is seen encouraging Sasui to continue her journey in spite of uncountable hardships such as hot weather, sandy desert, and rocky mountains. Shah Latif mentions the hardships faced by Sasui in this verse:

اق فنڱه ڪ بز جي پي پي پي ڪي ن پي پي  
ج ج ل جلد ائي ڪ سي تي ڪي ڪي پي پي پي  
ل ڪي ل طي فچي ي، ه عوزه ت پي  
اتي ا ڏاء، ج ت ت ي ڪ ل ي ا بي

<sup>93</sup>Amena Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*, 123.

Unaware of Wankar, I took not even water's quart,  
 Formidable rock is terribly bright and hot.  
 Hot blows the wind on the helpless ones,  
 Be my relief Beloved, for I have none to help.<sup>94</sup>

Here, Sasui seems to complain about the difficulties that she was facing in the forest. She was wandering in there without any aid, dying of hunger and thirst and the scorching beams of the sun are torturing her with its heat. Shah Abdul Latif depicted Sasui as a delicate and tender woman but with the hardships she has become more tolerant and stronger who would rip the heart of mountains to get her lover.

### 3.2.4 Sur Mazuri

Mazuri means 'helpless', being a musical tone it is sung in the areas of Balochistan and played on *Surinada* (musical instrument). In this Sur, Shah Latif represented Sasui in a different way who forgot her comfort, desires, and needs in the search of Punhoon. It is the nature

ڙڙڙي چڙي، اڄ هڙي اڄ  
 لالڪ بزل چٽي ٿي ٿس ادز ج

Today, she climbs high trees with strides,  
 For Beloved's sake, she begs trees to oblige.<sup>95</sup>

Shah Latif further recites the valor and bravery of Sasui in a way;

ڪهڙا پي سيم، تنڀي لڪ لڳي؛  
 آڱس، آڱني ٺهڙي، پڇي پيس چڙي؛  
 ڏي ڏي ڏي پسيو، جتي جپتئي بي

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 147.

Though innumerable thorns pierce my feet,  
Rocks tear my soles, one toe, another cannot meet,  
Shoes, I will not wear, barefoot to Punhoon I will go.<sup>96</sup>

The consistency and perseverance of Sasui are quite applaudable in this Sur. She has a strong urge to meet the Punhoon that she is not stopped by any obstacle in her way.

### 3.2.5 Sur Desi

In this Sur, Shah Latif represented the emotional state of Sasui that anyone should control the needs and desires of lust. The world was never a home for sluggishness and rest; it is the place where the everlasting struggle is essential. She was seen complaining regarding the brothers of the Punhoon and mountains. Here Sasui is seen repenting loving aliens and emphasizing that affection should be with fellow natives only.

دی عیظی ٹھی، پس دی عی کلپوشی ی؟  
فی ذی لاؤ ٹکی، پُ جی دی طھی  
دیپٹھ پی ی، ک جیٹ پپز کی

Choose your mate from among your friends, not an alien,  
With bag and baggage anytime for their country they will leave.  
After Love's departure, give up Bhambhor's ease.<sup>97</sup>

Here Sasui is saying that after the departure of my love of life, I will not stay in Bhambor anymore. She was afraid that if Punhoon had left her just because she was an ordinary washerwoman and belonged to the lower class. Here, Shah Latif highlighted the class difference prevailing in the society and claimed that in order to prove her love, Sasui was convincing Punhoon that she belonged to Brahman class before and now she was alive only to see her Punhoon for one last time. She says;

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 150 .

اظىي پبٽ پست، پزىت پىءچجب  
 ٽڪت زيءى سىئى، هى مهيٺڻ چٽ  
 نٿن هج رگرت، ڪب ٽڪئى جي مڪسي

We are washer men, Punhoon's servants,  
 I smell of soap, Beloved accustomed to musk,  
 May no one's spouse her weakness expose!<sup>98</sup>

Distrusted by her brother-in-law, Sasui got misunderstanding that what if Punhoon was manipulated by his brothers and realized his status as a young noble belonged to the upper-class. The uncertainty in the mind of Sasui was making her more restless and painful. Shah Latif narrates that;

گڏي ٿي ڏءِ، ويٺو پبز چٽ م  
 اتي آزي چبم ج بقصد آي ط ڪء  
 اي ڪ بهل! ڪن ڇ ٿي جي پيچ ٿي پيٺي

With other washer men, Punhoon did the clothes wash,  
 There came messenger from Ari jam,  
 —Oh Sardar! It least Beloves you to strike the clothes with force”.<sup>99</sup>

### 3.2.6 Sur Kohyari

This Sur discusses the sufferings of the mountain. It indicates that how Sasui tolerated the adversities of mountains and problems she confronted throughout her way. The courage of Sasui was seen stronger than mountains and cries that due to her carelessness she was departed from Punhoon. Shah Latif also described it while reciting the following verse;

لچي لڳي ڏي لڪ ظي ئي، ڪلهي ڪي بء  
 قن ٿي، پوچي ٿي ٿڪي، اجل ط ت ج ڪبء

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 156.

هنفي! هوبئي ظي ي ، سي زاتُ بء  
جيان خطبي بء تي زش زئي يتي زاءِ م

You slept the whole night and not for an instant awoke,  
Get up, reach your Love, carelessness does not you behave,  
Keep awake and whole night entertain in the guests,  
Since you slept, you are left in the way<sup>100</sup>

Shah Latif warned Sasui to be aware of the dangers and upcoming hurdles. He emphasized that if she was attentive enough she would have never been apart from her beloved. He further narrated that, the difficult situations guided Sasui towards a new direction and the mountains that she was considering hurdles, became familiar with them. She spoke and complained about the pain that was caused by the mountains and that she felt while falling apart from her Punhoon. She expressed that:

ڏگس! ڏزاپ، پسي ي چي ڏي ط پوريءَ ڪي  
بيپس پڪتو هب، تس ي ي چي ي ت °  
زدن ٺه پيءَ ز ح م، قد زو ج ڪ °  
اڪ ڪ ڏي ط: ٻي ظبي ج ج ل ت ج ب ز ي ڪ سي

Rock, my first complaint against you to my love will be,  
Stones wounded my feet, my soles got bruised,  
You had no pity for me, nor you knew my worth.  
I will cry out, –Alas! The rock is hard on me”.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.2.7 Sur Hussaini

Sur Hussaini resembles the story of Hazrat Imam Hussain (A.s) who spent her days in Karbala, a city in Iraq, in hunger and thirst but never left the righteous path. Similarly, Shah Abdul Latif

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 161 .

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 162-163.

tried to show the sufferings of Sasui and claimed that the hunger and thirst had tormented her, the harsh path had bruised her feet but she kept going on.

ظس تي ئى! ظچي ظتجىبى كىبى ظىي لى  
پبٽي ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ  
بٺٺسى اچ، كىبٺٺى ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ ٺٺ

Friends! None is to go with me, for I discern desolation ahead,  
No water, long-distance, before me is desert and waste,  
Perchance, troubled by thirst, you might curse my Beloved.<sup>102</sup>

Here Shah Latif described the philosophy of ‘Pain’ that, the more sufferings bring ease and ultimately it leads to the destination. He beautifully recites that:

ڪٺي زي ط ٺٺي، گڏز گپٺسى ي ج  
ٺٺي ي ٺٺي، ڪي ئى ڪبدي ٺٺي

Sorrows led her thought intricate path,  
They guided to unite her with her Lord.<sup>103</sup>

According to this stanza, when Sasui was happy and contented she slept a carefreely and her beloved got apart from her but when she felt the pain of being alone she left everything and ran to find her love. Here Syed Durr e Shehwar narrates, ‘Latif does not discourage sorrows, indeed he considers them his friends and requests them to stay with him.’<sup>104</sup> Latif says,

ٺٺ ٺٺي جي ظ ٺٺي زي ب ٺٺ ٺٺي زي  
جيءَ زي، ظچٺ، آٺٺ ٺٺسى

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>104</sup>Durr e Shehwar Sayed, *The Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif* (Hyderabad: Sindh Adabi Board, 1988). 21.

—sorrows adorn joys, without sorrows joy disdain,  
Through such sorrows, my love came to me again.”<sup>105</sup>

In the five Surs of Risalo Shah Abdul Latif has depicted Sasui as a symbol of love, courage, loyalty, and determination who did not accept the destiny that departed her from Punhoon and fought with it bravely. In this story, Shah Latif also highlighted the misery of the lower-class who faced discrimination from the elites. In the following stanzas, Sasui seemed to complain of being from the lower class and the cruelty of the upper class. She says:

بلچب بڙي، ظب پڙي ظي ٿي  
پي پڙي زي، ظا هجي ذات جي

—Ashamed of me, early my beloved left,  
For in Bhambore he came to know of my parentage.<sup>106</sup>

ي ط جڙي بتهه ڪي ن ٿڪي سي تي  
اده ڇب طي ظي گي بلهه ڪي ڪبء  
ذات هه جي ههء! ڪڇ ٿي ڪي ڪي

I would complain of brothers-in-law if I were their kith and kin,  
Out of respect for them, I uttered not a word,  
Oh, mother! My ancestry appeared a blemish to the royal ones.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, Shah Latif through this Sur advised women to struggle hard and seek Truth. He represented through his poetry that he never favored the traditional role of women in a

<sup>105</sup> AmenaKhamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in verse)*, 176.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 172.



patriarchal society but encouraged them to participate in social activities along with men. He said that,

ڪي ڪڇي ڪڇي ڪڇي، پير پير تي ظب  
ئي ٿي ٿي ٿي جي جب، صل تي جي بي ئي

She, who took no burden, reached her love,  
She wore rich robes lost her love.<sup>108</sup>

ڪي ئي لطبتت بت جب، مته لئيتتت ي بز  
ڏزي بي بي ڏڪ بز گ زڙڪت ٿي بي

Divine lovers, I do not find, Divine love remains,  
Those who had searched for it took it with themselves.<sup>109</sup>

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony deals with the capitalistic cultural system that dominates the oppressed and they (subaltern) adopt it by consent. Gramsci presented his theory in a Fascist society for the peasants of Italy who were marginalized and discriminated against.

Hegemony is shown in the sur Sasui which depicts that the family of Punhoon seems reluctant to accept Sasui because she is considered misfit for the family. There is a hegemony of elite that does not allow the subaltern to assimilate them into upper class and later in the same sur, Sasui is seen condemning her kin and family because she knows that she is a washerwoman and due to the reason that she cannot marry a lord.

In the poetry of Shah Latif Sasui is seen searching for Punhoon and even Sohni is going to meet Mahiwal. Here the question arises that why these women had to go in the search of their loved ones. the answer lies in the poetry of Shah Latif which has different meanings . The first

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 179.

can be related to mysticism that is extracted by many scholars like Kalyan Avani, Amena Khamisani etc.,. The second meaning can be taken as Shah Latif has broken down the stereotype that women are weaker than men. Finally, the third is to highlight the sufferings of oppressed that in any situation the oppressed have to suffer. In the hegemonic structure of society, it is always assumed that the weaker person in society should have to bear the hurdles. Similarly, Shah Latif showed the oppression of the subaltern to represent how masses were suppressed by the powerful.

### **3.2.8 Sur Umer Marui**

The tale of Marui is famous among Sindhi folk stories. According to the tale, Marui was the daughter of a shepherd a beautiful maiden whose beauty captivated everyone in the town. Phog, the sharecropper of Marui's father was one of them. Phog sent his proposal for Marui but she was already betrothed to her cousin Khestan, his proposal got rejected and he felt insulted. Resentfully he traveled towards Umerkot and met with its ruler, Umer, and delighted him with a powerful depiction of Marui's charm and beauty. Umer, tricked by Phog, decided to travel to Maleer. After reaching there, he hid behind the bushes near a well where Marui used to fetch water. As soon as Marui reached there, Umer came out from bushes and asked her for some water. As she advanced to offer the water, Umer caught her hand and forcibly brought her on camel's back and came back to Umerkot. Marui was asked to marry Umer even she was offered expensive jewelry, clothes, good food, and comfortable life but she rejected all the tempts given by Umer. She insisted that her heart is filled with the love of her people and Khestan who was waiting for her back in Maleer. When Marui became lean and haggard she asked Umer that if her body would send to Maleer after her death. Umer was touched by this and agreed to send her back to Maleer and she was returned to her people with great joy and satisfaction.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Agha Saleem, *The Poetry and Mystic Thought of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai*, 99.

Sur Marui was interpreted in different contexts by many historians. Some people thought that it was written to show the patriotism of a woman towards her country, some thought that it was the story of a Sindhi woman who was captivated by the elite and some thought that it had a spiritual meaning that how humans writhe in the love of God. Here, Sur Marui depicted the courage of a woman, who belonged to a lower class and went against the oppression of the elite. This was the denial of patriarchal tradition in which men were considered stronger and could make a woman do anything they wanted. Marui belonging to a lower class never bowed down against Umer and ultimately made herself free from the chains of oppression. Shah Abdul Latif never represented Marui as a weak/vulnerable woman rather he depicted her as a stronger one. He wrote:

يٰ تپڻي، بڻڻڻ ڀي بي ڙپڻي ڀي زي  
 كل شي عوس جع ال واصل نه ت ي پڇو ج بگي ڀي ڪڻ  
 پس چي پڻڻ پ عبي هل ڪل ڀي س ج

This palace sisters, without my people, I would burn,  
 For my people I long, –all things to their origin return,”  
 Could I go back and see Maleer my native land.<sup>111</sup>

The era of Shah Abdul Latif was based on social hierarchies in which the lower class was considered as a slave to the upper one. The poetry of Shah Latif paved a new way to dismantle the chains of slavery and bring a significant change in society. In this Sur, Shah Latif highlighted the love of a lower class Sindhi girl with her land and people who disobeyed the command of an elite ruler and won her desire at the end. The character of Marui negated the rule of oppression and tyranny as well as it gave the lesson of determination and sacrifice everything to achieve the desired goal. Shah Latif depicted Marui a strong woman who belonged to a lower class who gave a message to the readers that living a miserable life while being independent was much better

<sup>111</sup> Amena Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)* 208.

than living a luxurious life in prison. The prison was symbolized as the rule of oppression by the elite who marginalized the lower class to fulfill their economic interests. Here Shah Latif recited the following stanza:

گب چل ۾ پل، ڪ فاس ڏي ۾  
 آڻي جي آسي ڀڙو ڙت بگل  
 هب ڙ ڀڙهلي، هلي سي هس ڪڻ °

In Thar there is neither restriction nor tax,  
 Red flowers from branches they break, in trough to place,  
 Marus are peerless folks, their Maleer a bright and happy land.<sup>112</sup>

The fight of Marui towards Umer's injustices was the eventual lesson for the one who hoped to serve his/her people and land. It was the guideline that became a base for love towards people, and contradiction towards the love for material riches. It was the struggle that made a clear division between the easiness of acquiring worldly gains and the tough judgment of refusing them for the affection of the poor.

اي ۾ هبني زنت، جي ڀڙن ظنت بي ڀي ڏي تي؛  
 پڇي عوس ڪڻ م، ڪڙي هلي ڪسي تي؛  
 ڪپي جي سڀي تي، هب ڙ ڀڙي ۾ هت هي

Desert dwellers change not their love for glittering gold  
 I will not misconceive, being in Umerkot,  
 Nor will I exchange love of huts, for gorgeous mansions.<sup>113</sup>

Here, Marui is seen rejecting the luxurious lifestyle, with all its honors and treats, that is an essential cleaning procedure to improve the lives of the underprivileged class. Through this Sur, Shah Latif tried to encourage the people of Sindh to take part in the struggle for freedom.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 216.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 210.

Most of the people affiliate the concept of patriotism with Sur Marui and it is evident in some of the verses of this chapter. On one side Marui was seen writhing for her land, Maleer, and on the other hand, she was also dishearted with the carelessness and the taunts she had to face by her people.

اَجَبِيَّيَ طِي كَيِيءَظِي، ذِي بِي ظِي  
 ت ت ت جُتُونِي هِد م كَسِي جِي  
 يِي بِي سِي تِي پَسِي يِيءَ زِي تِلْزَم تَزِي جِي  
 هَتِي تِي تِي جِيءَ تَسِي يِيءَ هَتِي هِي تِي تِي  
 جِي وِي تِي پَعَب، تَجَبِيءَ هَتِي هَلِي س تِي

If I die, longing for my native land,  
 Free my body from these chains.  
 Keep no more this stranger away from her love,  
 Over my dead body, spread Maleer's cool earth,  
 When I die, send my body to Maleer, my native land.<sup>114</sup>

Shah further says:

ظِي جِي تِي ظِهْس! هَبَزْ هَطِي جِي  
 گَتَبِ ذَاتِي تِي وِيءَ كِي دَب، كِي تِي يِي  
 جِي مَان لُو ه لَاهِي، تَه كَتِي چِي وِيءَ بِي

My folks will accept me not, my beauty is gone,  
 My Cousins, some taunt me, others will taunt,  
 Remove my chains that I be free to leave your fort.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 214.

If one could analyze the characters of Umer and Marui in this chapter, a noticeable difference could be seen. Marui belonged to a marginalized section where people were prior to famine, poverty, illness, and other social, economic or political disasters but they all were contented and living peaceful lives. On the contrary, Umer, being the ruler of Umerkot, did not seem happy or satisfied. Although he enjoyed all the luxuries of life yet he craved love and peace in his life. Shah Latif has given importance to Marui than Umer or Khestan and got inspired by her constancy in such difficult times who never compromised on her dignity and prestige. Shah Latif felt the pain of Marui, for whom, no one seemed concerned or asked for. He recited that:

گلیڑی بزئی لچی بریو تی بوض  
 تی بی تھی تنس، پل ک بیچ بوض  
 جس کی جس سئی، کئی آء کی بوض  
 ہبزی ہج میض، ببتبوی یہ بونط کی کی

Those for whom I these rags wear,  
 Not even once have they about me enquired,  
 Big buildings and spacious rooms worry me not,  
 Not Umer's buildings but my people's in difference, hurts me most.<sup>116</sup>

Marvi Memon, wrote about Marui in a way that, The power of Marui's personality is not induced into disowning her people and that is the spirit of Shah Latif's writing. —She was not used to the expensive delicate cup. She knew the simple unbaked bowl only. It was improbable that she would interchange her innate hut with your castle.” Her vow to her folks was visible from the mentioned lines: —My soul is captivated entirely in my people. I am greatly dedicated to

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 212.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 212.

the desert of Maleer and its natives.” —My soul is in the desert. My soil mould and skin only are here in Umerkot.”<sup>117</sup>

Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* designed a plan that was composed of six steps to study the subaltern. According to which, the subaltern classes have the same complex history as that of the dominant classes, though the later organizes the most formally accepted. —The subaltern groups’ history in Gramsci’s opinion has no evident unity and it seems to be in its very episodic totality because of their submission to the authority of the ruling groups even when they break with the established system.”<sup>118</sup> This shocking bifurcation forced this sort of inaccessibility to the resources through which the subaltern may limit and control their own representation and accordingly lack access to the social and cultural institutions of their state. However, it takes a long time, the one probable way from Gramsci’s perspective was to reach the state of freedom through a permanent victory which necessarily guarantees a dismantling of the master/slave pattern.<sup>119</sup> By relating this plan to the struggle of Marui, mentioned by Shah Latif, it is argued that Marui stood against the oppression and after struggling hard she did achieve independence from the rule of oppression. By generalizing the story of Marui to the subaltern groups of Sindh Shah Latif also had given the message to never give up and he knew that with the continuous effort the subaltern would be able to dismantle the hegemonic rule of elites.

### **3.2.9 Sur Kamod**

Sur Kamod is related to the story of Noori, the fisher girl, with whom the king, Jam Tamachi, fell in love with and started catching fishes. Sur Kamod is also considered as —*Modi of Humility*” in which the king left his royalties for his love and Noori after being married to the

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<sup>117</sup>Marvi Memon, —*Sindhi Heroine*,” *The Express Tribune*, December 15, 2010, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/89979/a-Sindhi-heroine/>.

<sup>118</sup>El Habib Louai, “Retracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Applications.” 5.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

king, never forgot her identity.<sup>120</sup> Jam Tamachi being the king of Sindh once visited the lake for hunting and recreation and saw Noori, a beautiful fisher girl, catching fishes. The king got so fascinated with the beauty of Noori, decided to get married to her. One day, the king rode to the village of fishermen where Noori used to live and stayed there for a few days. He forgot his throne and became one of them. Afterward, he sent his proposal to the Noori and both got married. Noori was brought to the castle after becoming queen. She never forgot her true identity instead she stayed humble and modest among all the queens.<sup>121</sup>

Shah Latif has depicted Noori as a personification of simplicity and purity. Noori is represented as lover and Jam as an object of love because the love of a woman is more passionate and deeper than that of a man. Shah says:

نُو تَتوب چي تڙتڙي، آهڻ ٿي هي؛  
هي ڪي ڏبڳ م ڏي، آهڻ بل يڙي ط ت ڙ جي

You are the ruler Tamachi, I am a fisher maid,  
Think not of leaving one, whom you have wed.<sup>122</sup>

The setting of this tale depicts the life of fishermen on the bank of the Keenjhar lake. Their filth, dust and stinky odor of nasty fish everywhere in the village. The natives were poor, lean and undernourished who were not given sufficient resources to live. They don't have proper clothes to cover their bodies and their women were dark-complexioned and dirty. The representation of the marginalized class can be seen clearly in the poetry of Shah Latif in a way;

<sup>120</sup> Agha Saleem, *Introuction to the Poetry and Mystic Thought of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhitai*. 115.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>122</sup> AmenaKhamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*. 228.



ڪڪيءَ بُڻڻي ڪبڙي، ڇڇي  
پيڻي جي پبڻڻي ڇڻي لڇ  
ظ و ڇم ڇڻي ڇڻي ڇڻي

Full of fish their baskets and their trays,  
Disgusting is the touch of their dress with your dress,  
Yet standing in their midst, favours them the Samo King.<sup>123</sup>

ڪبڙي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي،  
ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي،  
ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي،

Dark, ugly, displeasing to look at,  
Sitting on the road worth full of fish their baskets,  
Save Samo King, who would favour them?<sup>124</sup>

Shah Latif emphasized the existence of lower section of society whose reputation was not very well and was forced to live a miserable life. Shah Latif seemed to hail the humility and hard work of those people. He denies the caste-system and clarifies that caste has nothing to do with the wisdom and character of a person.<sup>125</sup> Noori being a fisherwoman was not only beautiful from outside but she was blessed with inner grace. Her humiliation and simple character faded the reality that she belonged to a lower class. Shah Latif himself praised the state of poverty and lived his life mostly with the people who belonged to the oppressed class.

ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي،  
ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي،  
ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي، ڪڇي،

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>125</sup>Dr. Fehmida Hussain, *Shah Latif Ki Shayri Mein Aurat Ka Roop*, 407.

Strange was Noori's humility's scene,  
Samo, the ruler of the land, she won,  
Other queens losing their position, behind her stood.<sup>126</sup>

Sur Kamod represents the fishermen of the society that is considered as the lower caste. Noori being a fisherwoman is considered a significant character in the poetry of Shah Latif. The factor of caste is shown in the poetry of Shah Latif because, in each sur (that represented subaltern), he has glorified those characters who constituted the subaltern groups. The practice of assigning specific caste by Shah Latif depicted that there was a strong social hierarchy prevailing in the society of Sindh in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The central idea of Shah Latif's poetry revolves around the subaltern. In ancient Sindhi society, there were strong concepts of caste, social hierarchy, and patriarchy that restricted subaltern, especially women to exercise their individuality. On the other hand, Shah Latif negated these concepts and depicted his heroines stronger than men. The tales told by him were generally tragic in its nature however he remained successful in maintaining the unity of thought in all of his Surs. The heroines in Shah Latif's poetry are the personification of love and life. Through them, he has depicted the structure of a prevailing social class in 18<sup>th</sup> century Sindh.

### **3.3 The Portrayal of Women in other Surs of Risalo**

Shah Abdul Latif represents the role of women in other Surs of Risalo as well These surs discuss the condition of women of Sindh.

In the Sur Khanbhat, the beauty of women is glorified. Shah Latif's poetry is the composition of thoughts of a woman towards her lover and Shah metaphorically describes that;

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 230.



Clouds remind them of their absent husbands,  
 Lightening's roar through their frames sends shudderings,  
 In silence they suffer, so helpless they feel.<sup>130</sup>

ڪبڙا! تڄي پبڙي ، ظڄي ڇي ٺهه ساي  
 ڪبهل! ايڪي پيئي ئي ٺهه ساي  
 تبزي ٺهه ساي، جيئي رڙي ٺهه ساي

Spouse! Without you, I shudder at eve,  
 Cold and depressed I am even in warm bed,  
 Yet I rely on the hope that dawn will bring you back.<sup>131</sup>

Sur Samoondi depicts the lives of the sailors. In this Sur, Shah Latif described the condition of the wives of the sailors who left alone after their husbands had gone on the voyage. In ancient times, the communication was weak and mariners used to sailboats that had no specific technology. The chances of drowning and danger were greater and due to lack of communication, the wives or loved ones of the sailors remained uncertain about their arrival.

جي ڪس اچي ٺهه ساي ٺهه ساي ٺهه ساي  
 آءِ! ڏيئي ٺهه ساي، ڏيئي ٺهه ساي

Would he come now, fortunate would I myself hold,  
 Embracing him tight, sweet talk I would hold?

Similarly in Sur Kapaiti (the spinners), Kedaro (the battleground) and Rip (the distress), Shah Latif discussed the grief and restlessness of Sindhi women towards their loved ones. He did not only mention the state of distress but also the courage and loyalty for their men and called them brave enough who were not afraid of anything but losing their spouse. Additionally, Shah

<sup>130</sup> AmenaKhamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*. 262.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 263.

Abdul depicted that Sindhi women were hardworking and used to perform several tasks. On one side they were seen working in fields and mills and on the other side, they are seen performing their household chores.

Here Shah Latif glorified the work of hardworking Sindhi woman:

ظِي ٺَڙِي ٺَڙِي ٺَڙِي، ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڙِي  
 ٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي، ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڇِي  
 تَه ٺِي ٺِي ٺِي ٺِي، ٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ٺِي

Galavanting stubborn woman! Why not use your hands worth gold?

Sit in a corner and spin, give up gallivanting, do not roam,  
 That smiling you may reply connoisseur's call.<sup>132</sup>

Similarly, Shah Latif discussed how a woman was no a hurdle in the way of a man rather she was seen encouraging him the battlefield to go and fight and bring good name to the country:

ڪَٺِي! ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي، ڪَٺِي! ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي  
 ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي، ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي  
 ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي، ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي ڪَٺِي

Oh bridegroom! Come in festive clothes for your nuptials,  
 Then where spear strikes against spear, come faster there,  
 There is no danger till martyr's marriage is complete.<sup>133</sup>

Shah Abdul Bhitai has indefinite respect for the women who were unnoticed in the eighteenth-century Sindhi society. However, women are fighting for their constitutional rights nowadays all over the world. In this manner, a new ideology has taken birth i.e. feminism but

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 320-21.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 251.

Bhitai became the voice for those women in the eighteenth-century. For instance, Shah Latif represents Sasui as a sign of bravery and struggle. He depicts Sohni's daring that she breakdowns traditional norms that were forced on her lacking her agency. Moreover, Shah Latif demonstrates Noori as a symbol of humiliation as she every time remains thankful to the Jam, who recognized her as a lifetime partner (queen) yet she belongs to an oppressed class and Marui never bowed down against the oppression of Umer and gave the message of bravery.

In modern times, the poetry of Shah Latif gives directions to the Feminist Movement in Sindh and all around the world. He has become a voice to the women to take action against any sort of inequality. He has implored not only the natives of Sindh but all the people of the world. Consequently, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's poetry is a great source of guidance for all the marginalized and oppressed women of the world.

## CHAPTER 4

### Representation of the Oppressed Class and Caste in the Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is famous for his love and kindness towards all the sections of society. On one side, his poetry discusses the mysticism and love for God and on the other side, he discusses the life of common people in his poetry. Shah Latif is credited for reciting poetry in the language of a common man (Sindhi) because in his time most of the people used to compose poetry in Persian. MotilalJotwani argues that Shah Latif is the only classical poet on the land of Sindh who wrote for locals and portrayed their grief and sorrows.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sindhi society was not much depicted by historians of that age. Many historians were busy in hailing the rulers and great leaders at that time while the locals were not considered as important and one can hardly find the traces of local traditions and their lifestyle. Theological themes were also the focus of classical poets but Shah Latif's poetry was considered an exception because it was not limited to theology and mysticism. The poetry of Latif included the people from the lower and the oppressed class and caste. In his poetry, he was seen praising the ironsmith, weaver, fishermen, and other subaltern groups. His love for Jogis and Sanyasis represented that Abdul Latif never favored class elitism similarly he did not create the line of demarcation between the religions in Sindh.

The literature produced in 18<sup>th</sup>-century European society is the —prehistory of novels and diverse travel narratives.”<sup>135</sup> The histories written in that period were blended in facts and fiction. The era of neoclassicism<sup>136</sup> was prevailing in Europe through which novel writing was

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<sup>134</sup>MotilalJotwani. "Shah Latif—Man and Poet." 49-57.

<sup>135</sup>Linara Bartkuvienė, *English Literary History of the Eighteenth Century* (Vilnius: Vilnius University Publishing, 2017). 50.

<sup>136</sup>Movement prevailing in the Europe, America, and various European colonies at various periods during the late 18th and early 19th centuries which is an Artistic and creative movement that reflects qualities of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, culture and art. (Dictionary.com)

encouraged in society. In the fictional course, Joseph Andrews is seen to play his part in the specific genre in his book, *Western Canon*, as he is accused of propagating white superiority, cultural domination, and ethnocentricism which is antithetical to the democratic nature of Europe.<sup>137</sup> Along with the novel-writing, satire and drama were also a popular style of writing in 18<sup>th</sup>-century European society. Nobles and lords were the dominant classes of society that is the reason that most of the writings were done to appease the upper class in society. *A Voyage to Lilliput* was written by Jonathan Swift in which the author discussed the political and military leaders of Europe. Furthermore, in 18<sup>th</sup>-century the poetry was not given much importance and the main themes in prose were religious, political, mythological or fictitious at that time.

The concept of subaltern is presented by Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak who defines subaltern groups are those who can not represent themselves in history and needs representation. She also argues that it is impossible to recover the voices of subalterns or oppressed subjects but with their representation in history the damage can be repaired. Similarly, Shah Latif in his poetry represented the subaltern groups who were not represented before in the course of history. On the other hand, while speaking about the problems of gender especially women, she quoted the example of Sati tradition in India. The cultural context of her theory was different from that of Shah Abdul Latif's because the society of Sindh was feudal in nature that suppressed not only women but also other sections of society. In this study, Spivak's understanding of subaltern is utilized to show how certain groups are marginalized and how are they depicted in the poetry of Shah Latif.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Shah composed his poetry for the common people of Sindh. Persian, at that time, was considered as the prestigious language of the nobles and most of the work was done in the same language. On the contrary, Shah Latif wrote in the language of the common folks; Sindhi. Allama I.I. Kazi wrote that Shah Latif wrote about the lower class, caste,

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<sup>137</sup>Bartkuvienè, *English Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*. 6.



fishermen, washermen and all the subaltern groups of the society of Sindh. He used those phrases and idioms that proved him to be one of them.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, in the Western society, the poetry was not written for locals as the center of the work used to be nobles or middle class because the language produced by Western poets was merely understood by the educated class, however, the periods of Shah Latif was considered as a landmark in the history in which a strong tradition of the writing for the common people developed. The subaltern groups represented in Shah's work proved that Sindhi poetry was advanced in depicting the conditions of locals than the Western. The heroes and heroines depicted in Shah Latif's poetry were the manifestations of the common people of Sindh. Sasui was a washerwoman and in her love, Punhoon left his nobility and became a washerman. Similarly, Sohni was the daughter of a potter and Marui belonged to a lower tribe of Thar. On the other side, in various Surs of Risalo, like, Kapaiti, Ramkali, Khahori, etc. common people were given importance.

Shah Latif traveled through every corner of the Sindh that makes his work closer to the reality of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century society. Many accounts are to be found that describe the reason why Shah Latif left his home and wandered in the Sindh. He fell in love with a beautiful girl from the Arghun family and his proposal got rejected by the father Mirza Mughal Baig. The rejection devastated Latif and he went away from his home and linked himself with the company of *jogis* and *sanyasis*<sup>139</sup>.

Sur Ramkali was composed of Shah Latif in the company of those *jogis* and *sanyasis* with whom he wandered for many years. He traveled through place-to-place with them and got an opportunity to mingle with the commoners of the land and witness their sufferings and grieves. Sur Ramkali is particularly related to the monotheistic beliefs of the *jogis* or their urge

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<sup>138</sup>Tanveer Abbasi, —Shah Latif Ji Awmi Shayri,” in *Shah Latif Ji Shayri*, 111.

<sup>139</sup>Aman Memon and Samina Aman, —Shah Latif's Poetry: An Alternative Source to Study the History of Sindh,” 73.

for the search of the Absolute/Truth ” but here, this Sur depicts the pains and sufferings of the masses of Sindh and how a specific section of the society used to live by facing several kinds of hardships. The origin of the word *Ramkali* can be traced from the Greek word *Askeen* which means to work or to train. In the sub-continent, it is related to those who live in the mountains or caves and meditate or perform *yoga* to reconcile themselves with God. It is called asceticism. This practice is common in all the religions particularly it initiated in the sub-continent by Hinduism and later it is also found in the other faiths as well.<sup>140</sup> Sur *Ramkali* is the continuation of the Sur *Khahori* and describes the ascetic *sanyasis* in the search for the ultimate Truth. It is depicted in the Sur that they have put their bodies over severe hardships and wholly thrashed their ego. It is also the representation of a class that struggles hard and faces hardships and neglected by society. Their stories are faded away from the pages of history yet they existed and never represented by anyone. The *jogis* depicted in the Sur were seen clothing dusty saffron dress, pierced ears and wearing big earrings. The poem *Ramkali* initiates with the crying of a young maiden in the love of *yogis*. He is seen fascinated by the particular group of *sanyasis* who have left him during his sleep, as he says in distressed and repeatedly, —cannot live”. In other sections of the Sur, Shah Latif highlighted the journey of the ascetics and the hardships they faced in the search of Divine Truth.

ازاڙي سرگي ڪي، ٿي مَظب فوج  
 قدم ڪب پيڙي جي، لڳائي لي ج  
 پيس ت پ عيٺ جي، جڻ ڪي جي ج  
 زات ڏي زڙي ج، آء ج ڏي اي زي

<sup>140</sup> Agha Saleem, *Introduction to the Poetry and Mystic Thought of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai*, 179.

Help me quick, forget not *yogis* for a minute,  
 Seek and seek, and find their footprints,  
 Humbly trace the path that they took,  
 Day and night, seek their track, without them, I cannot live.<sup>141</sup>

Shah Latif also describes the attire of those ascetics and narrates that they wear a saffron-colored dress and their hair is loosely tied. They are wandering with pierced ears with big earrings.

جھي ڏاڳ ٻٽو پڪو، جڳت ب شال  
 تڄي ٻٽي چي ئي چي ڏي ئي چي ٽي چي گي چي بل  
 ڪي ڪ ڪ ب پ ڪ ب پ ٿي، ڪي ب ڪ چي س

Their thread-bare dusty saffron dress, strings for tying hair in poor state,  
 Their hair arranged in some design on their neck,<sup>142</sup>

Ascetics with ears pierced and slit, wearing big-earrings.<sup>143</sup>

Later in the chapter, Shah Latif also discusses the pains and sufferings of *jogis* in their journey and claims that they have still gratified with the thought of meeting their Beloved. He also highlights the paths and dwellings of the *jogis* who submitted themselves to God and in spite of hunger and thirst they are not abandoning the path of righteousness.

ڪا ئي ڪا ئي ڪا ئي ب، ڌڙا ئي ج ڌڙا  
 ڪي بي ئي ڪا ئي ڪا ئي بي ل ڪا ل چي

Hunger is their alms, their bodies with ashes besmeared,  
 That grab they adopt, of which people ashamed.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>141</sup>Dr. Amena Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)* 298.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 301

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 317.

ڪٽي ڪپيئي، جبيءَ ٺهي ٺهي؟

Why have your ear slit, if you cannot face hardship?<sup>145</sup>

Finally, Shah Latif briefed about the nature of the wanderers who never settle down on a permanent place and are always tramping in different regions of the world. They stay at a place for some time, build small huts, light the fire and meditate. Afterward, they blow the fire and start a new journey after their departure, there is a stressful silence for those who want to be in their presence.

ٺهي ٺهيءَ جي زاتهن جي ٺهي ٺهي  
لي عليءَ ٺهي، لطي فچيئي ڪسي ٺهي ٺهي  
ٺهي ٺهيءَ جي ذاتيئي پسي ٺهي ٺهي

For a night, the patient ones are your guests, on tomorrow they depart,  
Let your every vein in their memory throb,  
Such *yogis* you may never meet again.<sup>146</sup>

Khahori means snake charmers<sup>147</sup> who make their living by charming and capturing snakes. Like *jogis and sanyasis*, they stay away from their homes and wander in the mountains to catch snakes. Shah Latif like Sur Ramkali depicted the hardships of the charmers and elaborates about their profession that needs physical labour. Here Shah Abdul Latif was giving significance to a minor section of society for whom no one wrote and even considered them as a part of their history.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 306.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 312.

<sup>147</sup>Saleem, *Introuction to the Poetry and Mystic Thought of Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai*. 174.

ڪنڀي ڪٽي، ظب هڻي ڏا ڏنڌا  
 ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي  
 ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي

Khahoris prepared early to depart,  
 Searching in the rocks, reduced to bones they are,  
 Giving much trouble to their bodies, they sought their goal.<sup>148</sup>

In the poetry of Shah Latif, the life and suffering of a common man are mentioned several times. He discussed all the sections of Sindhi society belonging to any caste, class, religion or gender. In the following stanza, Shah's love for the poor can be seen in which he praised the efforts of a blacksmith who works hard, day and night. In Sur Yamen Kalyan

پچبئي پيپٽ، ج ڇنڀن ڏي زڪ ڪي  
 ٿي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي

Those who melted ore and made it steel,  
 Their worth blacksmith alone can feel.<sup>149</sup>

ظس ظس ڏي ڪسي، پچ ج گس ل ب ز ج  
 ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي ڏي

Let you head be an anvil, stroke after stroke,  
 In Love ecstasy annihilate yourself with hammer's blows.<sup>150</sup>

Following is the example of a woodcutter that is depicted in the poetry of Shah Latif. He gave the example of a common woodcutter in Sur Kohyari in a way;

<sup>148</sup>Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*. 287.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 51.

ڏگس ٻٽي ٿيا! ڏاڍا ڪسي  
هي تي لکندي ٿي، جيئي ٿي ڏي ڏي

Cruel, strong mountain, Cruelly you deal with me,  
You cut me like woodcutter cuts the tree.<sup>151</sup>

Sur Samoondi represents the lives and work of the sailors who go on the voyages for several months while leaving their loved ones behind. In the previous chapter, this Sur is mentioned to highlight the sufferings and writhe of the wives of the sailors but here, it discusses the lives and hardships of the sailors who face the hazards of sea life. Shah Latif discusses it in a way;

اِي ۾ اُسي، ج ڏيھب جي  
هتي هب گئي ٿي، مءِ بظبه ڏي ظي  
ڪبتئي ڪي، جي ڪٽي زي ٿي!

Those sailors whose boat entered ocean's depth,  
Mother! They never to their home came back,  
For ocean's strong waves did overcome them.<sup>152</sup>

Shah further elaborates that;

ظئي ظي ٿي، ٿڌز جي ٿي تي  
ظئي ظي ٿي، ڪي ٿي ٿي  
ٿي ٿي ٿي، ٿي ٿي ٿي  
ٿي ٿي ٿي، لفظ ٿي ٿي ٿي

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<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 162.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 90.

Oh harbour's landing ground, sails they repaired,  
 Having repaired the sails, must they did left,  
 Their ocean flags they then unfurled,  
 With God's grace, they safely crossed the waves.<sup>153</sup>

Moreover, the word Kapaiti in *Shah jo Risalo* means spinner. This Sur is for those who spin cotton to make yarn and weave clothes in small cottage industries. Shah Latif portrayed the persistent efforts of the spinners and the hard work they do to make their yarn perfect and free from all lumps and flaws. The Sur initiates with the advice of Shah Latif to the spinners that they must be experts in their task and remove all the defects from their yarn. He also shed light on the efforts of those spinners who work day and night and weave fine clothes for others.

ذجف پبئى هي ڄ، زڏڙي ب جي؛  
 تي ڄس سولي، ان تيئي اگبيئي

Those with love in their hearts, who spurn coarse yarn,  
 Unweighed, the connoisseur accepted their yarn.<sup>154</sup>

ڪڇڪي پبئى، ڪڇي ڪتي؛  
 ڪبزن ظڏ ظازي ئي، آتڻ ه ڄ اچي  
 اي جيءَ ڇي، ظي ڇيئي ه سلف ئي ظڪي

Some such attachment spinners have, that they tremble while spin,  
 To get their gain at dawn they come to the spinning yard,  
 For such fine yarn even the connoisseur longs,  
 Such spinners' yarn was accepted without weighing it.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 321.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., 321.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai did not only highlight the sufferings of the poor but also called them to come forward for protest and struggle. It was apparent that the subservience and suppression of Sindh by external influences and the bloody civil war might have created the miseries for the common men, who were by this time grinding under the oppression of the so-called theocratic Kalhora rule. Shah Abdul Latif may perhaps not remained exempted from such a depressing condition and recognized himself with the grieved masses. In Sur Hussaini Shah described that;

ظری ظبٹ انچي تڻي، جی ڏی

My companion now is sorrow and suffering, Oh friends!<sup>156</sup>

Latif also portrayed the picture of oppressed classes in Sur Desi.

پڻسي پيڻو جبر ڳراهن، جی ڏی!  
 جی ي هڪي هبزی، ظری ظی ڀڙي؛  
 ازادي آڻي هڳبي ظی ڀڙي ڳکي

Living in washerman's vicinity brought me unhappy days,  
 I have been tortured and tormented to death,  
 Destiny wedded me to travelers strange.<sup>157</sup>

The miserable circumstances among the masses generated a sense of insecurity. They became uninterested in the existing political matters of Sindh due to absolute helplessness. The people were ignorant of their social and political rights. Therefore, they acknowledged the oppression as the decision of God. Moreover, Hindus were prior to religious discrimination by the quasi-religious Kalhora regime. According to H.T. Sorley, "The position of Hindus worsened

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 155.



still more, that they were considered as a kind of gold-mine that is to be strained upon at will.<sup>158</sup>  
 In these situations, Shah Latif voiced for the people of Sindh to gather on a single platform without any discrimination. He advised them to start an effort with the purpose of attaining political liberty and social integrity.

تتيڪڪبڪب، ڪب ڪيڙي ڪيڙي  
 هتبي ٿي ٿي، پيس ڪي ڪي ڪي

Whether hot or cold, march on, there is no time to rest,  
 Lest darkness fails, you fail to find Beloved's tracks.<sup>159</sup>

The political ideas of Shah Latif were inspired by revolutionist Shah Inayat. Latif was in favor of a system in which everyone was given equal rights in society without any discrimination and a social system without any kind of economic exploitation. The religious ideology of Shah Latif was quite different from orthodox scholars of that time and considered religion as a private matter of each individual. It is claimed by many writers that Latif preached and practiced Islam by his writings but the Islam he practiced was quite different from staunch *mullahs*. Shah Latif had a strong belief in the principles of Divine liberty, the egalitarianism of the people and social integrity for all the groups belonging to any faith and caste.<sup>160</sup>

ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي  
 ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي  
 ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي ڪي

<sup>158</sup>H. T Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*, 162.

<sup>159</sup>Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*. 170.

<sup>160</sup>Memon and Aman, —Shah Latif's Poetry: An Alternative Source to Study the History of Sindh." 83.

A fresh message from Rano came last night,  
From the bountiful one, we got this prize,  
Ask of not ancestry or caste, all who come here acceptance find.<sup>161</sup>

To sum up, Latif's poetry is the voice of the common people of Sindh he lived the life of a common man and amalgamated in society. Being a Sayyed he understood the people of subaltern class and manifested the sorrows and sufferings of them. He did not only highlight the oppressions but also encouraged the masses to stand against them. He strongly supported the principle of faith in 'equality among human beings', Shah Latif appeared as the advocate of egalitarianism and prosperity among all the countries of the world. He associated the concept of the prosperity of Sindh with the affluence of the world overall. He did implore only for the affluence of his motherland (Sindh), but also desired goodwill to the whole world.

ظبئ رئا ٺٺيا ڪسيءِ هتي تظٺ ڪبڙ؛  
د ٺٺٺ هب دل ٺٺون ظپ آٺ ٺڪسيءِ

Dear God, may you always make Sindh a land of abundance rare,  
Beloved mine, may you make prosperous the whole universe.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Khamisani, *The Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Translated in Verse)*. 203.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 265.

## Conclusion

The current study investigated the traces of subalterns from the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif by applying the concept of subaltern by Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak. It is argued in the study that Shah Latif did not only represent the marginalized groups of society but also highlighted their sufferings. The findings of the study revealed that women in the poetry of Shah Latif raised voices but they were not heard by the hegemonic powers. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak argued that the voices of women in history were not heard due to a strong hierarchical system and the inaccessibility of the subaltern to the elites, who constituted the notion of power in society. Similarly, in the case of Sur Sasui, and Sohni, Shah Latif depicted the subaltern women who could not exercise their subjectivity and suffered in society. On the other hand, it was also found out that in Shah Latif's poetry that he discussed the hegemonic power of the elite over the oppressed groups of the society. In the Sur Ramkali, Kapaeti, Khahori, Sasui, etc. Shah Latif highlighted that the subaltern in society was living a life that was given to them by a specific class structure under cultural hegemony. Hegemony is shown in the Sur Sasui that the family of Punhoon seemed reluctant to accept her because she was considered misfit for the family. There was the dominance of the elite that did not allow the subaltern to assimilate them into the upper class. On the other hand, in Sur Umar Marui, Shah Latif depicted her as a patron of valor and humility. At the end of the Sur, he depicted the victory of Marui against Umar that did not only highlight the courage of women but it highlighted the struggle of oppressed for independence from a dominating ruler. In other Susrs like Kapaeti, Ramkali, Samoondi, etc. the poet represented the class structure of society but also the caste system that was strongly inculcated in society. Shah Latif also depicted the social conditions of fishermen in Sur Kamod that was considered as the lower caste in society. Along with that, he also mentioned weavers, potters, ironsmith, washermen that represented that the 18<sup>th</sup>-century society which was based on a strong caste system. While giving the subaltern a central position to his poetry he negated the

prevailing social structure and taught the lesson of equality and universalism. In his Rislao, Shah Latif encouraged the common people to battle against all types of manipulation and discrimination. He gives the idea of a tireless struggle and sacrifice to attain the objectives of social justice, political stability and communal harmony.

The results obtained from the present research recommend that there is a dire need to work on Shah Latif's poetry in the post-colonial context. The concept of 'subaltern' used in this research is a post-colonial term that discussed class, caste and gender-based issues of subaltern groups of Sindh but there is a strong need to discuss this concept with regard to religion and ethnic/communal groups. Shah Latif's poetry is a classic masterpiece that deals with the issues that were inculcated in Sindh in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but their roots can be traced in the present society. It is time for the new researchers to look-up Shah Latif's poetry in the current scenario and compares it with the recent tensions like, in the context of the formation of ethnic groups or identity politics in Sindh.

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