



REGIONAL CULTURAL MYTHS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SIRAIKI POETRY

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Abstract

This article explores the profound impact of regional cultural myths on Siraiki poetry, highlighting how these narratives shape the poetic landscape of the Siraiki region. Local myths often encapsulate the community's beliefs, values, and historical experiences, providing a rich source of inspiration for poets. By weaving these myths into their verses, Siraiki poets express themes of love, loss, nature, and the human condition, while also addressing societal norms and challenges. The study examines key mythological elements present in Siraiki poetry, such as supernatural beings, folklore, and archetypal characters, revealing how these components resonate with the audience's cultural identity. Furthermore, the article analyzes the ways in which these myths not only enhance the aesthetic quality of poetry but also serve as a vehicle for preserving cultural heritage and transmitting wisdom across generations. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the enduring significance of local myths in enriching Siraiki literature and fostering a deeper understanding of the region's cultural essence.

Introduction

A myth is a traditional story or narrative that explains fundamental aspects of the world, human behavior, or the origins of a culture or society. These stories often involve supernatural beings, gods, or heroes and are deeply rooted in the beliefs, values, and history of a particular community. Myths serve as a way for cultures to convey their understanding of the universe and human existence, providing a framework for interpreting experiences and events. Myths play a crucial role in explaining the unexplainable. They address profound questions about existence, creation, and morality, offering insights into natural phenomena and the complexities of human life. By articulating these explanations, myths provide a sense of order and meaning to the world, helping individuals navigate the uncertainties of existence.

Additionally, myths often employ symbolism and archetypal characters, representing universal themes such as the struggle between good and evil, creation and destruction, and the hero's journey. These symbols resonate across cultures and time periods, highlighting common human experiences and emotions. Moreover, many myths convey important moral or ethical lessons, guiding individuals in their behavior and shaping their understanding of right and wrong. In essence, myths are more than just stories; they are integral to the cultural fabric of societies. They offer insights into their worldviews, help shape identities, and provide a means for communities to communicate shared values and beliefs across generations. Through myths,

cultures preserve their heritage and pass down wisdom that continues to influence contemporary life.

The history of any region, along with the psychology and temperament of its people, is deeply embedded in the literature of its language. Literature is not just a collection of stories or artistic expressions; it is a reflection of the times, the struggles, and the mindset of the people living in a particular place and era. When we immerse ourselves in the literature of a region, we are given a key to unlock the thoughts, emotions, and experiences that shaped the identity of its people. Through the lens of their written works, we are able to gain a deeper understanding of their internal world — the fears, hopes, and dreams that drove their actions and decisions. This makes literature an indispensable tool for historians, sociologists, and anyone trying to decode the cultural complexities of a society.

Literature reveals the depths of a people's psychology in ways that formal historical accounts often cannot. While historical records might present a chronological series of events, it is literature that captures how people felt about those events, how they experienced them on a personal level, and how those events influenced their collective mindset. For example, novels, poetry, and drama often explore the emotional and psychological toll of war, migration, poverty, or oppression. Characters in literature can represent the collective psyche of a population, helping us to see how ordinary individuals coped with extraordinary circumstances. Whether it is through the lens of tragedy or triumph, literature allows us to see beyond surface-level facts and into the deeper emotional and mental landscape of a community.

Furthermore, literature serves as a critical tool for understanding the temperament of a society. The way in which characters behave, interact, and respond to challenges in literary works often mirrors the real-life cultural and social dynamics of that time. For instance, societies steeped in tradition may produce literature that highlights themes of honor, duty, and collective responsibility. Conversely, literature from more individualistic cultures might emphasize personal freedom, self-exploration, or rebellion against societal norms. The tone and themes in literature offer clues about how people viewed themselves and others, as well as their approach to life's challenges. Through these stories, we can see the underlying temperament that has guided a community through periods of prosperity, crisis, or transition.

Beliefs and ideologies are also intricately woven into the fabric of a society's literature. Through literature, we can gain insight into the religious, philosophical, and political beliefs that shaped a culture's worldview. Many writers use their works to comment on or critique the dominant belief systems of their time, revealing both the accepted norms and the tensions brewing beneath the surface. Mythology, folk tales, religious texts, and philosophical treatises have long been central to the literature of many cultures, offering us direct access to their core beliefs. Even in more contemporary literature, the exploration of personal faith, social justice, or existential questioning provides us with a window into how people grappled with larger, abstract concepts like morality, destiny, and human purpose. In essence, literature acts as a living archive of a people's mental and emotional evolution. It is not just a reflection of external historical events but also an intimate record of how those events shaped the inner lives of individuals and communities. By studying the literature of a region, we gain not only a richer understanding of its historical context but also a more empathetic view of the people who lived through it. Their stories, as told through literature, allow us to connect with their experiences across time and space, making literature an essential gateway to truly understanding any society's psychology, temperament, and beliefs.

The Siraiki region is an important part of the Indus Valley civilization, and its history reflects various cultures and religious traditions. This area is included among the ancient centers and religions have settled. Various ancient of human civilization, where different communities civilizations have flourished on the land of the Siraiki region, including the Indus Valley civilization. This area is known for agriculture, trade, and urban life, and the arrival of various ryans, Persians, Greeks, and Muslims has significantly influenced its groups such as the A cultural structure. A popular theory regarding earthquakes is that the earth is supported by a bull causing an on its horns. When the bull gets tired and shifts to another horn, the earth shakes, c earthquake. This narrative is primarily part of public cultural concepts used to explain natural phenomena. There are also other local stories that explain natural forces, such as storms, rain, le in people's lives and strengthen their and earthquakes. These stories play a significant ro cultural identity. The Siraiki region's civilization and its local theories about natural phenomena exist not only in history but also in the depths of culture. These concepts reflect public traditions ortance in people's everyday lives, allowing them to understand the mysteries of and hold imp .nature and further solidify their culture. Molvi Lutf Ali Bahawalpuri writes:

برسر آب زمین دی چادر قدرت نال وچھائی

(1) ڈانڈے دی شاخ اتے رب دھرتی سب دھرائی

Bashir Ahmed Zami Bahawalpuri describes:

"The ancient people believed that this earth consists of seven parts or layers, and these seven layers of the earth are being carried on the head of an ox. This ox stands on a fish, which is in an endless ocean of water"(2)

In the Saraiki region, a rich history of folklore and mythology is developed around various animals, each associated with unique beliefs and meanings. For instance, the quail's call is viewed as an omen, signaling that rain is imminent. This belief highlights the close connection between nature and the agricultural lifestyle of the Saraiki people, who rely on rain for their crops. Similarly, the crow holds significant symbolic value in this cultural context. When a crow caws on a rooftop, it is often interpreted by women as a message or sign from their parents or beloved. This association with the crow as a bringer of news reflects the deep-seated beliefs in the power of nature to communicate with humans. The crow is viewed as a messenger, often bringing good news or significant messages, which illustrates the importance of animals in the community's understanding of their world.

These interpretations reveal how animals are not just part of the environment but are also integral to the cultural narratives and practices of the Saraiki people, serving as conduits for communication and omens that influence their daily lives and decisions. The beliefs surrounding these animals highlight the interplay between human emotions, relationships, and the natural world, emphasizing the significance of folklore in shaping cultural identity and understanding. As Khawaja Fareed says:

کانگل کھنڈ دیاں چوریاں ڈیساں

(3) کر کئی ملن دی بات

He further writes:

کاں کو کو کر کر لاندہ ہے

(4) کوئی قاصد یاد دا آندا ہے

Asghar Gurmani talks about the same myth in this manner:

کندھاتے کاں اج لوندا بیٹھے

(5) اج تاں مہندی لاوئی پوسی

Saleem Ahsan spoke about it in following verses:

کاں آ-نیرے بولے

(6) ودھ ویندے دل دے رولے

Rizwan Tabassum Durrani also writes:

نور حضور دا ویلا

کاں نے کاں کاں لائی

(7) کوئی خیر دی چھٹی آئی

Khawaja Fareed, in another verse, says:

عمر وہانی کا نگ اڈیندیں

(8) تھڑی تک تک راہیں

Fortune telling is the practice of predicting information about a person's life or future, often using various tools and methods. These can include tarot cards, astrology, palmistry (palm reading), crystal balls, and numerology. Fortune tellers interpret signs, symbols, or patterns to provide insights or guidance, and they may focus on aspects such as relationships, career, health, or general life path. While some people view it as entertainment, others believe in its potential to offer real insight or advice. Khawaja Fareed wrote about this in these verses:

واٹ نہاراں کا نگ اڈاراں

پنڈت جوسی دے کن کھاواں

سو پونج ہاراں فالان پانواں

(9) اوسی میڈا یار کڈا ہیں

He further says:

من من منتاں پیر مناواں

ملاں گول تعویذ لکھاواں

سڈ سڈ جوسی پچالاں پاواں

(10) کردی سون ہزار

Khawaja Fareed also wrote:

سنجریاں راہیں پاواں فالان

(11) ڈیناں ڈہالے ماراں

Superstitious beliefs are traditional practices that attribute specific meanings or consequences to certain actions, events, or objects, often lacking scientific support. These beliefs can differ greatly across cultures and may influence everyday behavior. Common examples include the idea that certain numbers, like 7, are lucky while others, such as 13, are unlucky, leading some buildings to skip the 13th floor. Friday the 13th is often seen as a day of bad luck,

while breaking a mirror is thought to bring seven years of misfortune. People might knock on wood to avoid jinxing good fortune or believe that a black cat crossing their path heralds bad luck, although in some cultures, it's considered good luck. Other practices include making a wish upon seeing the first star in the evening, throwing salt over the left shoulder after spilling it to counteract bad luck, and hanging horseshoes over doorways for protection and good fortune. Such beliefs can provide comfort, create a sense of control amid uncertainty, and reinforce cultural identity. Ahmed Khan Tariq writes:

کوئی ڈیکھے تاں کئی ڈہنٹاں توں بدل کھڑن بدھے

در سجن دے ڈاڈھا آن کر شور کیتا ہئی مینماں (12)

A well-known Siraiki poet Riffat Abbas says:

آترے جھاترے سوم سمورے در دپر انا گے

کال کلنگیاں رندے شندے ڈندے واپس نیون

مینہ مندر مینہ مندر مینہ کال گھوڑا مندر وں

وات اندھاری کاری باری پچھنڈے واپس نیون (13)

The Saraiki region is characterized by vast plains and is primarily known for its agricultural activities. This area plays a crucial role in the economy of Pakistan, particularly due to its fertile land and favorable climatic conditions. However, the region's geography is marked by the presence of two significant deserts, Cholistan and Thal, which have a profound impact on the local climate and agricultural practices.

Agriculture in the Saraiki region is largely dependent on rainfall, as the monsoon season dictates the success of the harvest. The fertility of the land is greatly influenced by the amount of precipitation received throughout the year. In regions where water is scarce, not only does the growth of crops become a challenge, but access to potable water for the local population is also heavily reliant on rainfall. This dependence on rainwater underscores the importance of seasonal precipitation for both agricultural productivity and daily living.

Due to the critical need for water, rainfall is regarded as a significant blessing. The people of the Saraiki region have a deep-rooted cultural connection to this natural phenomenon, which is reflected in their traditions and folklore. Various folk sayings and prayers in the Saraiki language express their hopes and desires for rain, illustrating the community's reliance on divine intervention for sustenance. These cultural elements highlight the spiritual significance of rain, as it is seen not just as a physical necessity but also as a source of life and prosperity for the region. As a result, there are various folk sayings of prayers in the Saraiki language to ask Allah for rain

اللہ سائیاں مینہ وسا

ساڈے پلے کیا گناہ

سن نکے بالی دی دعا

Another Lok Bool is:

کالی بکری کالا شینہ

سٹودانہ سے مینہ

“BadNazar” is term that is commonly associated with the concept of the "evil eye." It refers to a belief that certain individuals can harm someone else's prosperity or success due to envy or dislike, which is termed “bad nazar” To protect against the evil eye, people adopt various measures, such as wearing amulets, reciting specific prayers, or performing particular rituals. This concept exists in many cultures and highlights the significance of intention and attention in human relationship.

To protect against the evil eye, various methods are used in Siraiki regions as well. For instance, children are often adorned with a black mark or a black dot placed on their foreheads to shield them from bad nazar. Similarly, phrases like "Masha Allah" may be inscribed on buildings, or black pots might be placed on rooftops as protective measures against the evil eye. These practices reflect cultural beliefs aimed at safeguarding individuals and their properties from negative influences. Asho Lal talked about evil eye in his poetic verses:

کتھوں جاگ بھٹی ڈدھ ٹونے دی
کتھوں پن اپنے دی جوت بھٹی
ایڑی سوہنی جا کوں آخر میاں
آپ نظر تاں آکھو لگنی ہائی (14)

Aziz Shahid writes:

کھل کے اپنے آپ کوں وی نہیں ڈٹھا
ہنڑ تو نیں آپنی نظر دے ڈر کنوں (15)

Javed Asif also wrote about the same topic:

میں بد نظری دا بہن قائل تھیا ہاں
جیرے ڈینہہ توں او نکوں عینک لگی (16)

In the Seraiki region, there is a myth about the bird known as the crane. The crane is recognized as a migratory bird that travels from the icy regions of Russia to siraiki areas during the winter. It is famously said in the Siraiki culture that if a person calls it by the name "Koonjaan ni Koonjaan, Sakhi Sarwar da Phera Paati Wanjo," it will turn toward them, circling seven times. This tradition reflects the connection between animal behavior and human beliefs. Due to its nature and heavy body, when the crane senses danger, it circles in the air to elevate itself. This action demonstrates both its intelligence and simplicity. Such traditions and stories are an important part of Siraiki literature, illustrating not only the cultural heritage but also the deep relationships between humans and nature. Dr. Nasrullah Khan Nasir said:

کونجاں نی کونجاں
سرور سیں دا پھیر اپاتی و نجو
کونجاں اپنے پنہدھ کھناتے
پھیرے پاوں لگن (17)

In Siraiki society, a rich history of traditions and beliefs exists, reflecting the cultural depths of the community. One common belief is that if a person leaves home for work and hears someone calling them from behind, they often exclaim, "You have ruined my work." This saying

ting that distractions underscores the cultural significance placed on focus and intention, sugges
.can disrupt one's plans or efforts

Another fascinating aspect of these traditions is the interpretation of physical signs, particularly the twitching of an eye. In Siraiki culture, this phenomenon is not merely a random occurrence but is believed to carry deeper meanings, associated with both pain and happiness. Depending on which eye twitches, it may indicate forthcoming good or bad news, highlighting the future the community's tendency to read into everyday occurrences for guidance about the. Additionally, there are beliefs surrounding footwear that reveal much about cultural attitudes and superstitions. For instance, if a shoe is found upside down, it is thought to foreshadow that a likely stems from the idea that upsidesomeone may face a beating or punishment. This belief in down shoes symbolize bad luck or a disruption of order. Similarly, if one shoe is placed on top of another, it is interpreted as a sign that a journey is imminent. This notion reflects the Siraiki regard of travel and movement as significant events that require preparation and people's understanding attention.

These traditions collectively illustrate the intricate ways in which Siraiki culture how the intertwines daily life with deeper meanings and beliefs. They serve as a reminder of how the community interprets the world around them, blending the mundane with the mystical and reinforcing social norms and values through shared sayings and practices. Such customs not only preserve the rich heritage of the Siraiki sense of identity and continuity but also foster within the community. Khawaja Fareed says

اجکل اکھ پھر کاندی ہے
کوئی خبر وصال دی آندی ہے (18)

Najeebullah Nazish writes:

چند تھڑکدی ودی اکھ پھر کدی ودی
نی سمجھ آندی میکوں جو کیا تھیونے
سکھ کھڑو دا ڈکھ و لہردا ودا
دل اکھیندے اسان ہن جدا تھیونے (19)

Furthermore, Hafiz Fayyaz Gulab says:

تیدے پیر دا جوڑا اکہ بے تے
آج دت چڑھدا پئے کیڈے توں ویندیں (20)

Similarly, Aziz Shahid described it in his verses:

تیدی جتیاں دے جوڑے تھئے کچوڑے
کھائیں دل سفریں تے تیاری تاں کائنی (21)

In the Siraiki region, there is a myth that in the ruins of cities that were destroyed, a treasure is hidden. It is believed that in the ruins of these devastated palaces, gold treasures are buried, or perhaps under the roots of a large pipal tree lies a pot of gold, or somewhere in an ancient mansion, a treasure is concealed. A snake is said to sit as a guard, protecting this treasure. Many stories have spread among the people about these hidden treasures, but in each of these stories, a snake continuously guards the treasure, ensuring that no one attempts to find and grab it. Najeebullah Nazish writes:

زلف چہرے تے ایں لہراوے

ناگ شوکے جیویں خزانے تے (22)

In the Siraiki region, since ancient times, not only humans but even living creatures have been given respect and honor. This is evidenced by the animal figurines found in the ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley. Similarly, in Siraiki poetry, animals are mentioned with respect. Siraiki poetry also reflects myths in a unique way. Even among modern poets, myths are vividly present. There is a belief that if one encounters a black snake and requests it to move, it will clear the way. Likewise, there is a myth regarding the black snake that if it is killed in the month of Sawan, it will surely seek revenge. Riffat Abbas says:

مشکی ناناگ کو ساون دے وچ مار بیٹھے ہیں رفعت

ہن تاں ہک بچھانواں ساڈے چار چنیرے رہندے (23)

He further writes:

مشکی ناناگ کو آکھ ڈیوتا رستہ چھوڑ دیندا ہے

پورا جنگل ایں قسے کوں ڈاڈھا جاندا ہئی یا (24)

"Āb-e-Hayat" is a well-known term deeply rooted in various mythologies, symbolizing eternal life or immortality. Literally translated, it means "water of life" or "fountain of eternal life." This concept appears in numerous cultures and legends, where Āb-e-Hayat is depicted as a magical spring or an elixir that grants immortality to the one who drinks from it, ensuring that they never age or die. It is often sought after by heroes, kings, and seekers of eternal youth, as it is believed to hold the ultimate secret to defying death and achieving everlasting life.

In the Siraiki region, there is a widely believed myth concerning Khwaja Khizr, a figure revered across many cultures, particularly in South Asia. The legend states that Khwaja Khizr has consumed Āb-e-Hayat, which has granted him eternal life. Khwaja Khizr is often portrayed as an immortal guide and protector, who aids travelers, especially those on journeys across seas, rivers, and other water bodies. His association with water and his eternal presence in myths have made him a symbolic figure of guidance and survival for those who traverse uncertain paths.

According to this myth, Khwaja Khizr's immortality was achieved after drinking from the mystical Āb-e-Hayat, which is often hidden in secret, mythical locations. As a result, he is believed to have gained divine wisdom and the ability to appear in times of need. His presence is often depicted in folklore as a benevolent force, guiding lost souls and sailors, and providing protection during perilous journeys. In Siraiki storytelling, Khwaja Khizr is mentioned as a figure who watches over those in distress, particularly near water, and ensures their safe passage.

This belief in his immortality through Āb-e-Hayat has made Khwaja Khizr a central figure in many South Asian legends. He is frequently invoked in prayers by travelers, fishermen, and sailors for protection and safe journeys. The myth of Āb-e-Hayat and its connection to Khwaja Khizr emphasizes the universal human desire to conquer death and the fascination with achieving eternal life, a theme that resonates across cultures and centuries. Hassan Raza Gardezi talked about the myth of Āb-e-Hayat in following verses:

مٹھڑے ہنجوں والا چشمہ ول ہک بخش کیتوئی

آب حیات وچ پارے دا کوئی کشتہ گھول ڈتوئی (25)

Rohal Fakir also wrote:

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of regional cultural myths into Siraiki poetry plays a vital role in shaping the poetic expressions of the Siraiki region. These myths, deeply rooted in the traditions, beliefs, and historical experiences of the local people, serve as a powerful source of inspiration for poets. By incorporating mythological elements such as supernatural beings, animals, and archetypal characters, poets are able to connect their verses to the collective consciousness of their audience, making their poetry resonate on a profound cultural level. The Siraiki poets not only use these myths to explore universal themes like love, nature, loss, and the human condition but also address societal norms and moral lessons. The symbolic use of animals, such as the crow and the quail, reflects the close relationship between the Siraiki people and nature, where animals are seen as messengers and signs of important events. This connection to nature is woven into the fabric of their poetry, highlighting how cultural narratives provide a framework for interpreting the world and life's uncertainties.

Moreover, these myths enrich the aesthetic quality of Siraiki poetry, adding layers of meaning and depth to the verses. The use of familiar mythological motifs allows poets to speak to their audience's shared identity, reinforcing cultural values and preserving local traditions. As such, poetry becomes a medium not only for artistic expression but also for the preservation of cultural heritage. The study of these myths within Siraiki poetry reveals their enduring significance in the region's literature. These narratives continue to influence contemporary Siraiki poetry, bridging the past and present by transmitting cultural wisdom and values across generations. In essence, the integration of myths in Siraiki poetry reflects the region's rich cultural history and provides insight into the beliefs, emotions, and worldview of the Siraiki people. This tradition of embedding myths in poetry ensures that the region's cultural identity remains vibrant and relevant, even in the face of modernization and change.

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