

SIGNIFICANCE OF FOLKLORE AS A SOURCE OF HISTORY AND CULTURE: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FOLKLORE OF SINDH (PAKISTAN)

Humera Naz

Department of General History

University of Karachi

Karachi-Pakistan

humera_naz@uok.edu.pk

Key Words

Folklore, Sindh, History, Culture, Women

Introduction

This article, as the title itself indicates is an attempt to examine the importance of folklore as a source of history with special reference to the status and the character of women. Folklore is 'a part of oral traditions which are the messages or testimonies transmitted orally from one generation to another.'¹ The testimonies are transmitted in the form of folk tales, sayings, ballads, songs or chants. In this way, it is possible for a society to transmit history, literature, law and the other knowledge orally across the generations without any writing system. It has been argued by the scholars that the accounts transmitted through oral traditions has generally formed or provided the basis of literature in the world, though of semi-historical nature. The genesis of the *Odyssey* of Homer in Greece, the *Shahnama* of Firdusi, a great world epic of Iran and the *Divine Comedy* by Dante in Italy has been rightly traced back to the oral traditions.

However, the term 'folklore' lends itself to multiple definitions. For a lay man, all folksy material (songs, customs, and stories) constitutes folklore. But in its wider sense folklore implies a socio-cultural corpus specific to a particular ethnic group, and includes folk-behavior or the study of folk-traditions. This term may be treated in its narrow sense as being coterminous with folk literature and folk say. It includes both poetry and prose, though the former is historically older than the latter. Folklore truly represents the socio-cultural milieu of the people over ages.

In the other words, "folklore is the study of antiquities or archaeology, embracing everything relating to ancient customs and usages, notions, beliefs and superstitions of the common people. It is the science

¹Roma Doctor, *Sindhi Folklore: An Introductory Survey*, Vol. 96, no. 2 (London: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1985), p. 223.

which treats of the survival of archaic belief and customs in modern age.”² They play a dominant role in literature and need not to have an intellectual, philosophical, religious or a humorous motive, but none of these subjects is ever ruled out. Literature holds a mirror to life and is the criticism of life. In fact, it shows life in miniature and also means of ‘the common man without any tempering by artificiality, or conscious efforts of any artist.’³

Almost all the world literature, since the dawn of civilization has been folklore until writing was developed in Egypt and in the Mesopotamian civilization in Sumer. Over centuries, a vast record of written literature produced in the form of hand-written manuscripts to paper print, though alongside this exists the lore of people, the observations, experiences and sentiments of the common people expressed through the folklore. A minor difference between folk and academic history is to be found in the medium of communication. In oral history, it is difficult to preserve the unmemorable; the jumble of dull detail and fine webs of qualification that make written arguments seem complex and convincing do not belong in good tales.⁴

The folklore is different from folk-stories, which are recited by the professional minstrels at feasts and festivals, versified by the folk-poets, and alluded to by the classical and other recognized poets of Sindhi language in their poetry. The folk-tales or folk-stories have no clear historical background except in-so-far as faint childhood memories, superstitious lingering from early times, or social mores and morals are dimly reflected in them. On the other side, folklore includes the narrations which have some geo-historical basis. In them, names of some persons and places and references to some events and occurrences could be identified historically.⁵ These may be pseudo-historical or historical. Adventure, romance and intrigue are among their more conspicuous elements. Folklore usually reclaims from the historical past that which is more exciting and romantic, and uses it after diluting it with its own unbelievable. Each story has its geographical habitat and a background in history.

Like the other regions of the world, Pakistan also has a wide variety of folklore, mostly circulated regionally. However, certain tales have related variants in other regions of the country or in neighboring countries. The region forming modern Pakistan was home to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization and then, successively, recipient of ancient Vedic, Persian, Indo-Greek and Islamic cultures. The area has witnessed invasions and/or settlement by the Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Turks, Afghans, Mongols and the British.⁶ For this reason, Pakistani folklore contains elements of all of these cultures. The themes, characters, heroes and villains of regional folklore are often a reflection of local religious traditions, and folklore serves as both entertainment and a vehicle for transmission of moral and religious concepts and values. Some folklore performances are integral to religious rites and festivals.

Folklore of Sindh

² M. A. Saleem, *Folk Music in Sindh*, Quarterly ‘*Kalachi*’, Vol. 7, No. 4, December 2004, Karachi, University of Karachi, 2004, p. 05.

³ Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana, *Lar Ji Adabi aen Saqafati Tarikh* (Literary and Cultural History of Larr), (Jamshoro: Institute of Sindhology, 1977), p. 243.

⁴ Henry Glassie, *Folklore and History*, Journal of Minnesota Historical Society, 1987, p. 190; www.mnhs.org/mnhistory

⁵ Dr. N. A. Baloch, *Folklore of Sindh: Anthology of Prefaces* (Karachi: Culture Dept. Sindh, 2014), p. 223.

⁶ Roma Doctor, op. cit., p. 224

In the region of Pakistan, the province of Sindh in the south is equally rich in folklore. Yet the folklore of Sindh, like all other folklore is the result of an interaction of cultural, geographical and religious factors and offers valuable historical evidence of cultural influence.⁷ It is a very important historical source in such a region as Sindh where there was no tradition of recording important events in writing till the fifteenth century.⁸ The oral testimonies were introduced in Sindh during the last days of the Arab rule (in the eleventh century CE) and the successive Soomra period, particularly in the form of folklore. Yet the folklore of Sindh, like all other folklore is the result of an interaction of cultural, geographical and religious factors that offers valuable historical evidence of cultural influence.⁹

Throughout most of the area's history, only scholars and administrators were literate; poetry and literature were transmitted orally and folklore and folk tales offered education in religious precepts and moral values, preserved political understanding and history, and provided entertainment. Since, according to the modern trends, history is more a history of people than politics, though it is difficult to segregate the two if a meaningful description of activities of people is to be presented in a particular era as people have always been affected and subordinate by government policies, wars, intrigues of nobles and other players of history. The history of Sindh written so far is accessibly loaded with the role of the rulers, vis-a-vis, their nobles and adversaries, wars, expeditions, palace intrigues, tombs, folklore, and fiction etc. There is little or no information on past common life of the people specially the role played by the woman and her status in the society.

This is an approved fact that we have no knowledge of any authentic and reliable written record compiled during the Soomra (r. 1050-1350 CE) and the Samma (r. 1350-1520 CE) periods. It is strongly believed that the Persian and Sindhi literature would have been developed in more than 500 years of the Soomra and Samma rule but would have been totally destroyed due to the upheaval of the times with exception of the *Chachnama* and a few Sindhi poems of a dozen poets.¹⁰ The historical references of this period are meager; rather people received historical records from the folk-lore stories, romantic poems, epics and ballads of local Bhats and Charans.¹¹ All these semi-historical sources add substance to the historical record of Sindh.

The earliest record of Sindhi literature and written folklore dates back to the Soomra period (1050-1350 CE), when Sindhi became the common language of lore and verbal narration. This period is regarded as the 'romantic period' of the history of Sindh, which gave birth to patriotism and folk-literature.¹² The local Soomra rule in Sindh's history holds extraordinary significance in terms of intellectual awakening among the masses. It gave birth to the eminent stages and rhapsodists (local Bhats and Charans), who memorized the historical, regional and traditional folktales and folk-stories. They laid foundation for Sindhi folk literature by composing and popularizing the classical narrations of chivalry and legendary romances, prevalent with the folk in prose and poetry.

⁷ Ibid., p. 295.

⁸ Khan Bahadur Khudadad Khan, *Lubb-i Tarikh-i Sindh*, ed. Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Khan Baloch, (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1959), p. 48.

⁹ *Sindhi Folklore: An Introductory Survey*, op. cit., p. 295.

¹⁰ M. H. Panhwar, *The Causes of Decline of Persian in Pakistan and Remedy*, presented in a Seminar at Hyderabad organized by the Iran Culture Centre in 1973.

¹¹ D. N. Majumdar, *Races and cultures of India*, op. cit., 4th edition, (New Delhi: Asia Publication House, 1961), p. 16.

¹² Dr. N. A. Baloch, *Sindh: Studies Historical* (Jamshoro: University of Sindh, 2003), p.

Thus, a number of folklore became popular among the people such as Umar-Marui, Moomal-Rano, Sohni-Mahiwal, Saif al-Maluk-Badi al-Jamal, Leela-Chanesar, Sorath-Rai Diyach, Sassui-Pannun and Noori-Jam Tamachi etc. This folklore provided foundation to history writing in Sindh. Beside the folklore, there are some famous epics and ballads such as the battles between the Soomras and the Gujjars; Ala al-Din Khilji and the Jams.¹³ There are also some local ballads such as *Dodo-Chanesar*. These are very important semi-historical sources in such a region as Sindh where we found no written history till the fifteenth century.¹⁴

The native annals of Sindh are written in three languages; Arabic, Persian and Sindhi. The author of the *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, Mir Ali Sher Qani Thattavi expressly states that no attention was paid to the subject till about 1216 CE, when Ali Kufi of Ouch translated an Arabic account of the conquest of Sindh entitled the *Fathama-i-Sindh*, commonly known as the *Chachnama*. After the *Chachnama* of Ali Kufi the other sources are the *Tarikh-i-Masumi*, *Beglar Nama*, *Tarikh-i-Tahiri*, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, *Lubb-i Tarikh-i Sindh* and some local ballads such as the *Dodo-Chanesar* etc.¹⁵ All these sources relied upon the folklore, particularly for the history of the Soomras.

The all above mentioned source material on history of Sindh, which though written in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries based on oral testimonies does provide an image of the social setup of the era. Folklore is considered as the semi-historical material and is the only source to bring the historical facts to light. Folklore was preserved orally for centuries by local *Bhats* and *Charans*. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1689–1752 CE), a Sufi scholar and saint, is considered one of the greatest poets of the Sindhi language. His most famous work, the '*Shah Jo Risalo*', is a compilation of folk-tales and legends in verse. The original work was orally transmitted and became popular in the folk-culture of Sindh. The women of Shah Abdul Latif's poetry are known as the Seven Queens, heroines of Sindhi folklore, who have been given the status of royalty in the '*Shah Jo Risalo*'. They are featured in the tales of Umar-Marui (Marui), Moomal-Rano (Moomal), Sohni-Mahiwal (Sohni), Leela-Chanesar (Leela), Sorath Rai Diyach (Heer), Sassui-Pannun (Sassui) and Noori-Jam Tamachi (Noori). These women are celebrated throughout Sindh for their positive qualities: honesty, integrity, piety, and loyalty. They are also valued for their bravery and willingness to risk their lives in the name of love.

The story of Umar Marui has been there in Sindh since the ancient times. This story started in Soomra rule (1050-1350 CE, then through the Soomra period onwards the street bards and poets have sung the story with full commitment and lyricism so much so that this lyric was called Raag Marui.¹⁶ This story has been written in Persian entitled the '*Naaz o Niaz*' by Tahir Muhammad Nisyani, the author of the *Tarikh-i-Tahiri* which was written in 1621 CE.¹⁷

During the period of Umar Soomro, there was a girl in a village 'Malir' of Thar. The fame of her beauty spread far and wide. Umar, the king fell in love with her and took her to his palace in Umerkot. However, he offered her gold, jewels and all kinds of luxuries but she did not accept and kept on mourning and crying day and night in the memory of her husband and home without food and sleep. No offer of

¹³ Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Khan Baloch, *Sindhi boli aen Adab jee Tarikh* (The history of Sindhi language and literature), ed. 4 (Jamshoro: University of Sindh, 1999), pp. 99-108.

¹⁴ *Lubb i-Tarikh i-Sindh*, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁵ Mir Ali Sher Qani, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, ed. S. Hussamuddin Rashidi, vol. 3, ed. I (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1971), p. 70.

¹⁶ Dr. N. A. Baloch, *Umar Marui Story* (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1976), pp. 2-3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

luxuries, riches and high status as a queen could swerve her from her path of chastity, determination and loyalty for her family and home.¹⁸ After a whole year, when *Umar* realized her chastity and loyalty to her husband, he called her husband and handed over her with gold and other precious things.

The character of Marui is portrayed as a symbol of love, freedom and patriotism. In order to protect her chastity, she turns down the offers of all the luxuries of the palace. It proves the purity of character and raises the woman's character very high. It shows the significance of Sindhi woman to sacrifice anything to keep her prestige and honor. Her character expresses the idea of a free human who instead of bowing to the oppression and injustices should turn her poverty and weakness into power and remain confident. Her ego and self-respect become her weapons. An image of a Sindhi woman who loves her husband and folks and her country and whose purity and chastity was beyond doubts. She loves the homeland, her soul longs for her loved ones and her folks.

The poets presented so many qualities in this one character; patriotism, love for freedom, freedom of conscience, self-respect, standing up to oppression, height of purity and character, pride in her poverty, self-determination, consistency and optimism. She was presented as a symbol to deliver a message, a historical fact, some social truth as an ideal character instead of being helpless and weak person as woman is considered in society.

The folklore of Noori-Jam Tamachi represents the tragic story of the love between King Jam Tamachi of Unar, and Noori daughter of a fisherman (Muhana), an innocent and humble girl. This folklore originated during the Samma rule in Sindh (1350-1520 CE). Jam Tamachi, the ruler of the country (1388-1392 CE), was a renowned king among the Samma rulers of Sindh.¹⁹

He loves this woman of a lower caste of the Gandra community who lived and worked on the Keenjhar Lake. In this love, Jam negates the differences of caste, creed and social inequality.²⁰ Noori's character is high and her qualities being gentleness and humbleness and possession of such qualities makes her superior to the well made up royal women. Always keeping a low profile is a quality Noori possessed most.

The society during that era was one of contrasts and contradictions where there were privileged classes, there were also the deprived classes. People did not like these differences, so the poets tried to raise their status and place in the society by giving a better character to them in their poetry and portrayed Noori as the symbol self-respect and freedom of conscience for women. In the Sindhi society such a woman is considered an ideal that is humble, gentle, and has patience to tolerate everything. In this context, Noori's character in that era was an ideal character and the most praiseworthy aspect was her self-respect and pride in origin.

The story of Sassui Punnun, apart from a few contradictions in various languages, is the same everywhere. She was the daughter of a washer man. Punnun comes with a caravan of Baloch traders, falls in love with Sassui and in order to get married with her, poses as a washer man. Sassui falls asleep on the wedding night and Punnun is fetched away by his brothers. Sassui follows them.²¹ This story expresses her love, pains and agony, self-devotion and infinite suffering, while going barefooted on mountains and across the jungles in her beloved's search.

¹⁸ Khudadad Khan, op. cit., p. 52.

¹⁹ N. A. Baloch, *The Chronology of the Samma Rulers of Sindh* (Karachi: Govt. of Pakistan Press, 1957), pp. 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-63.

From the characterization in this story the philosophy is visible that the character suffers due to her cursed sleep. A message is conveyed to the people of the time to abandon carelessness and sleep and to wake up and root the sleep out from their eyes. Through the character of Sassuipoet intends to give women the lesson to come out of their confines for a purpose and depend only on the truth of feelings and emotions.

During the 15th century, Moomal was a princess of a Gujar tribe during the Hameer Soomra's period. She made a palace and used her beauty to acquire wealth from the rich and wealthy men. She also wanted to choose the most intelligent and handsome groom for herself.²²The character of Moomal arises as an arrogant princess who chooses Rano amongst hundreds of princes due to his intellect and wisdom. Moomal is symbolized by the knowledge, wisdom and beauty of woman.

This story shows a contrary type of character where lover had a suspicious character and beloved is shown as a whore who was ready to meet the spectators on fulfillment of her demand in the Kak Palace. Moomal's cruelty and viciousness proves by her lust for wealth. In order to acquire treasure, she got many people killed. This story also determines the wisdom, alertness and courage of Moomal. It is, however, proves that a woman could be accepted as a ruler as well and she possessed the rights to select her life- partner.

The folklore of Leela-Chanesar belongs to the region of Liore or Lihore in the Lower Sindh during the Samma period. Kaunro was the daughter of a wise and brave king 'Khanger'. As a lady of royal family, Kaunro expresses her arrogance and pride. She accepted the challenge to lure Chanesar towards herself, who was the most handsome and rich person, possessed pomp, power and a vast kingdom. He loved his wife Leela in a true sense.²³Leela fell in love with him at first sight. The character of Leela is shown as a wise, intelligent and understanding woman but she loses her husband for her greed for the diamond necklace of Kaunro. Her love for jewelry is used as a symbol of greed for riches.²⁴

On the other hand, the consistency of Kaunro is proved by her desire to win Chanesar's heart. The characters of the two women are completely different rather opposite to each other. One loses all of her wealth to secure her love while the other loses her love by falling for riches. Here repent and remorse is symbolic. In the end, self-esteem of Leela increases the dignity of woman. Circumstantial evidences tend to show that Chanesra Dasrro was a Samma chief, some villages of the Dasrro clan of the Sammas still flourishing in the south of Hyderabad district. This story was versified in Persian in *mathnawi* form by the poet-historian Idraki Beglari under the title of Chanesar Nama in 1601 CE during the Mughal period (1691-1737 CE) in Sindh.

Ganga was a charming lady from the 'Tamim' tribe. She was married to one of the ministers of Umar Soomro. Umar was impressed by her eternal charm and beauty and fell in love with her. Umar wrested her from her husband through a tricky plan. Her husband laid his complaint before Sultan Ala al-Din Khilji. Sultan called Umar before him and chastised him for such an offensive attempt.²⁵

After a thorough analysis of all these stories we can infer that woman enjoyed an important position and commanded immense respect in the society. Her social status and consciousness can be gleaned from

²² Qani, op. cit., p. 70.

²³ Syed Tahir Mohammad Nisyani, *Tarikh-i Buldah-i Thatta* alias *Tarikh-i Tahiri*, ed. Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1964), p. 136.

²⁴ Ibid., 138.

²⁵ Qani, p. 77.

these stories. However, the most significant aspect of her life was to keep her prestige and pride higher. Purity of woman is dignified through the stories of Omar-Marui, Moomal-Rano, Ganga-Omar, Leela-Chanesar. This historical record also determines the patriotism of Marui, self-esteem of Leela, wisdom and courage of Moomal, consistency of Kaunro, steadfastness and bravery of Sassui, and chastity of Ganga. However Marui, Sassui, Sohni, Moomal, Leela etc. are characters which are from stories and epics of Sindh but in fact are exemplary and are true and relevant from the society.²⁶

Actually during that era, people's minds were so suppressed in a feudal society that they did not have any collective idea of nationality. They have hardly any social, political or other collective movements. They have no set economic and financial goals. Monarchy and autocratic governments through centuries never allowed such thoughts. Due to this reason, the great body of literature and poetry in particular has come, that interpreted the feeling of patriotism that is particularly portrayed in the character of Marui.

In a tribal society as Sindh, the existence of woman has such an importance that the man desires for her and this is what the folklore describes. Indeed, woman of this society must have had to strive to get the attention and love of her husband. She accordingly had to struggle hard to excel herself in the art of monopolizing the polygamous husband. The king had many queens and concubines but for her, king was the only groom. In this regard the stories of Leela-Chanesar, Moomal-Rano and Noori-Jam Tamachi are evidences.

In such a society, through the folklore, it is tried to depict woman of the poor class in the guise of Marui, Sassui, Ganga and Noori as virtuous ladies while the woman of the upper class like Leela, Moomal and Kaunro are shown as arrogant, self-centered ladies who turned a blind eye to their duties and swerved from their real path. However, the woman of the lower class, in spite of being suppressed plays a vital role in the society. By participating actively, she retains the equal share in the economy, too. She proves the importance of her existence through her hard work and struggle. Here question arises that why so much stress is laid on the chastity of woman? And why she is being elevated to the highest rank of purity and grace? The purpose of this myth was to raise the low status of woman in a feudal based society and to train them for playing a satisfactory role in a tyrant married life to keep society going smoothly. These characters were symbolically expressed to give a message to the weaker classes by giving them the examples of the courage, struggle, sacrifice, determination and perseverance of the heroines of these stories. Furthermore, in order to make them realize that if these innocent, tender and weak girls could achieve their goals by crossing all the difficult obstacles of the way, then why they couldn't do so?

Although, some fictitious parts of the stories which are about the magical and unnatural things are not acceptable for the modern human minds and seem to be used to add color to the story, such as Marui, at the end, in order to prove her chastity, holds a red hot iron rod in her hand and walk on fire,²⁷ Moomal burns herself on a pyre²⁸ and in the story of Leela-Chanesar, Leela goes back to her parents and when Chanesar reaches there; both die seeing each other,²⁹ and at the end of the story of Sassui-Pannun, the earth bursts and Sassui buries alive into it.³⁰ These events spread optimism and

²⁶ Ayaz Qadri, *Research on Classical Sindhi Poetry after Partition*, Monthly 'Paigham', Karachi, March-April 1984, p. 32.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

²⁹ Nisyani, op. cit., p.140.

³⁰ Qani, op. cit., p. 79.

hopelessness. The entire structure of all these stories has been developed on the foundation of chastity of woman.

The historical evidences prove the social discrimination between the man and the woman, in which the man from the upper class was allowed polygamy at least one of his own choice even from outside the clan,³¹ while generally women neither had the right to select their life-partner nor to marry outside the family. Marriage was usually for life, although divorce was theoretically possible but very rare indeed.³² However, all these events and customs prove that the woman had been treated as a worthwhile commodity and prey. Like money and land they were considered as private property. The man having authority or opportunity had many wives and concubines.³³

In any case, the status of woman narrated in the folklore cannot be separated from the society. The phonetic world of ritual myth or drama expresses social truth. A socio-cultural analysis of these characters helps to arrive at an opinion about the status and character of woman in the society. The information generated from the folklore adds substance to the interpretation of the empirical realities based on concepts. It serves as one of the mechanism of social control. It provides support for social institutions and behavior patterns of a culture. It also serves to instruct and remind the members of society of the sagacious codes of conducts. Ancestral legends mock the idle and improvident. It exalts individuals who exemplify the admirable virtues attributed to cultural heroes in ballads and legends and reflects those dominant values of society whose observance is rewarded by success.

The ballad of Dodo Chanesar is a great Epic of the Lower Indus Valley of Sindh, judging from its dimensions, both quantitative and qualitative, it can be regarded as one of the greatest in the world literature. It originated in the Soomra period of the history of Sindh (r. 1050-1350 CE) and has been transmitted through oral tradition.³⁴ It represents that an aggrieved party from Sindh seeks help of Sultan, whose powerful armies invade Sindh. Scores of battle are fought in which the defending heroes of the Soomra dynasty and their allies fell one after another but fought it out to the finish wiping out the bulk of the invading army. These wars and valor of the heroes constitute the main theme of the Epic. References to such an event having taken place are found in the Sindh's histories such as the *Tarikh-i-Masumi* (c. 1600 CE), *Tarikh-i-Tahiri* (c. 1621 CE) and *Tuhfat al-Kiram* (c. 1768 CE), though the names of the princes and the kings involved differ in different accounts.

Its present version is artistically narrated at least in the seventeenth century. In its current form, it tells us about the topography of Sindh in its main events. The myth and the historical element get integrated into its body. Sultan Ala al-Din Khilji (1296-1316 CE) did not personally command his forces in Sindh. Though, he sent his armies under the command of Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan. Chanesar and Dodo were among the Soomra rulers of Sindh as confirmed by the contemporary evidence from history. According to *Tarikh-i-Jahan Gusha'i* and *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, at the time of Jalal al-Din Khawarzim Shah's advent, Sinan al-Din Chanesar was the ruler of Lower Sindh. Dodo was the last but one of the Samma ruler whose son Hamir ruled during the early reign of Sultan Feroz Shah Tughlaq, as confirmed by Mahru

³¹M.H. Panhwar, *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Soomra Kingdom of Sindh*, 9(Karachi: Soomra National Council), 20070, p. 155.

³²S. M. Masum Bakkhari, *Tarikh-i Sindh* alias *Tarikh-i Masumi*, ed. Dr. Umar bin M. Dawood Pota, (Puna: Bahandarkar Oriental Institute, 19380), pp. 60-61.

³³Qani, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

³⁴*Folklore of Sindh: Anthology of Prefaces*, op. cit., p. 214.

in his *Munsha'at*. This epic is the only source provides reference about these two brothers as central characters.

Conclusion

Viewed from within, from the perspective of the historian at work in a community, all histories are history. Viewed from without, are histories are folk history, in some measure fabricated and irrelevant. Simply, folklore is what we call other people's history. It is actually the history confected in the little community of the academy.³⁵ A minor difference between the folklore and academic history is to be found in the medium of communication. The major differences between them abide in the culture of historian. From deep in their cultures, historians extract an idea of the real, which forms the basis of their description of action. Actually, history is culture. Different cultures shape different histories. Without resort to falsification, historians select different facts and arrange them differently because historians live in different societies governed by different needs. Accepting the challenge of folk history and the opportunity of the artifact, we have a chance to co-operate in the construction of history that will entail the truth in all histories that will embrace multitudes.

The folklore which is employed as a source for compilation of the earliest written record on history of Sindh enables us to understand different perspectives of the society. Particularly the character of woman, each of them is distinct, having different attributes and qualities. These qualities are loyalty, patriotism, endurance, fearlessness, steadfastness and intellect. Her natural flaws and weaknesses are also exposed from these stories and provide a complete picture of her individuality which provides help in understanding her role in the society.

All these characters express some social, cultural and moral values of the place and time as well as the psychology of the people of that era. The message of freedom and patriotism is found from the story of Marui. Importance of this feeling is felt when the country faces problem. As this record was narrated during the Kalhora period (1737-1783 CE), there was a need to ignite such a feeling among the people in that deteriorated economic, political and social conditions of the oppressed people. However, the woman must have had to strive to get the attention and love of her husband. She had to strive to excel herself in the art of monopolizing the polygamous husband. The stories of Leela-Chanesar, Moomal-Rano and Noori-Jam Tamachi are evidences in this regard. The folklore of Sindh, though considered being fundamentally fictitious but it is important and significant as the only historical source that provides an image of social set up of the past era. During this era, love, loyalty, and the qualities of chaste woman are glorified but she was a victim of social inequality and injustice. Narrators depicted the picture of woman as they wanted her to remain in the society with a pure and chaste character.

The attitude of a society towards its women is an indicator of the extent of its decency. In the folklore, the attitude towards woman shows two distinct traits. One, the actual status of a woman in that feudal society and second, apart from the actual position it represents ideal of a perfect woman. So, in order to give her lost status in the society, the woman of the time was given so much importance that her emotional state was also being considered because of the fact that she was a representative of suppressed and suffering class. There was a need to make her feel sympathy in order to give her deserved status in the society. These characters express the feelings and emotions of different types of women which provide an opportunity to analyze the causes of disruption of the society.

³⁵ Henry Glassie, op. cit., p. 190.

Folklore is uninterrupted continuity of oral tradition embellishing the epic and its narration which makes it not only a significant contribution within the domain of folklore but also a valuable source of information on the historical and cultural aspects of the Soomra period. In absence of any contemporary record of this period with the exception of a few passing references in some historical works, this epic in its different dimensions becomes a valuable source of information to the historians to piece together a more valid account of the political, social, cultural, economic and ethnological conditions of Sindh during the twelfth to fourteenth century.