

A Brief Sketch of Brahui Classical and Folk Literature

Language & Literature

Waheed Razzaq

Research Officer, Balochistan Study Centre,
University of Balochistan Quetta, Pakistan

Abdul Haleem Sadiq

Chairperson, Brahui Department,
University of Balochistan Quetta, Pakistan.

Yousuf Ali Rodeni

Lecturer, Pakistan Study Centre,
University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

Muhammad Yousaf

Lecturer, Brahui Department,
University of Balochistan Quetta, Pakistan.

Abstract

Brahui an indigenous language in the sub-continent belongs from the North Western group of Dravidian languages also known as Brohi, Birahui, Brahvi, Biroki, Brahuigi Kurdi, this language is spoken in the central parts of Balochistan, interior Sindh province in Pakistan and in the Sistan o Balochistan province of Iran, Helmund and Nimroz provinces of Afghanistan, and in the Gulf States. The exact figure about number of Brahui people is not available although according to a rough estimate there are about three million people in the world who speak Brahui. Brahui was used only as an oral language until the post-colonial period in Balochistan. There was no tradition of Brahui as a medium of instruction or as a written language.

In this paper the evaluation of Brahui literature particularly its folk and classical literature will be discussed. The interesting version of the paper is that the authors will try to reply the question that who were the people who had created the folk songs, folk stories in Brahui.

The paper further discusses the reasons why Brahui adopted different orthography styles during the course of history.

Key Words: Brahui, Dravidian, Folk literature, Orthography

Introduction

Brahui a North Proto Dravidian language spoken about 2000 km far from other South Dravidian languages in South India i.e. Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Gondi etc and Central Proto Dravidian languages in the Central India i.e. Kurukh and Malto by about three million people. Brahui is spoken in the central parts of Balochistan, interior Sindh province in Pakistan and in the Sistan o Balochistan province of Iran, Helmund and Nimroz provinces of Afghanistan, Gulf States, and also there are few families have still preserved Brahui in Mari province of Turkmenistan'. (**Sabir, 1994**)

what is the exact population of Brahui speaking people, according to Addeltson, (**1986**) 'The exact figure about number of Brahui people is not available although according to a rough estimate there are about three million people in the world who speak Brahui.

The Brahui Language has three major dialects i.e Srawani, Jhalawani and Chagi or Rakhshani dialect. The Srawani dialect is most widely used in Brahui literature also. The Jhalawani dialect is spoken in the southern parts of Balochistan and in Sindh province, The Rakhshani dialect is most influenced by Balochi spoken in the Chagi, Kharan, and Panjgur areas while there is a reasonable number of the speakers in different parts of Sindh. (**Sabir, 2008**)

In compare with the other non literary tribal dialects of Dravidian languages Brahui is enjoying a worth mentioning literary status in Balochistan-Pakistan. The past history of Brahui language is witnessed that it has been used only as an oral language till post-colonial period in Balochistan. There was no tradition of using Brahui as medium of instruction or in writing. Although some works in Brahui had appeared before then, the Brahui literary movement started in the reign of Khan Naseer Khan in the 18th century but a standard literary movement started only after the 1950 when some newspapers started publishing in Brahui besides Balochi in Pakistan.' (**Sabir, 2008**)

Emeneau (**1980**) says that the Christine Lassen was the first person who labelled Brahui a Dravidian language in 1848. The linguist classified Brahui as a North Dravidian language because of its close relationship with the Kurukh and Malto languages in central India. The other Dravidian languages, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Kunri, and Gondi, are spoken in southern India. According to the modern definition, Brahui belongs to the

north-western group of Dravidian languages. It is most closely related to the north-eastern group of these languages which includes Malto and Kurukh; Brahui is related more distantly to the Gandawana group, which includes Kui, Kuvi, Monda, Pengo, Konda, and Gondi and still more distantly to the central group, which includes Parji, Gadaba, and Naiki. The languages of the southern group (Kuruba, Kannada, Kodagu, Kota, Toda, Kurru, Malayalam, and Tamil) are the most distantly related to Brahui. The main Brahui populations are in Quetta, Kalat, Chagai, Naseerabad, and Lasbela divisions in Balochistan and Larkana and the Hyderabad and Nawabshah divisions in Sindh Province. The Brahui language has three main dialects, Sarawani Brahui, Jhalawani Brahui, and Chagai or Rakhshani Brahui. Like in Balochi, there is no noticeable difference between the infinitive verbs in the Chagai, Sarawani, and Jhalawani dialects.

Folk literature

According to Sabir (2003) that Brahui is rich in folk literature but at the same time it is matter of great concern for the local linguists that due to various influences it has lost its ancient Dravidian folk literary forms. The known history of Brahui folk literature is not much ancient as language itself is. Although, Brahui folk literature like other neighbouring languages comprises of both prose and poetry. Brahui prose consists of folk stories, folk tales, proverbs, and riddles. The poetry is generally based on various poetic forms i.e; *lailimor* (love songs), *barnaazanaa*, *laiko*, *hallo* (marriage songs), *loli* (lullaby) and *modah* (elegy) etc. For recreation of their children and other family members Brahui nomad shepherds and farmers mostly created folk stories. These stories are still narrated around a camp fire in the night in every nomad camp. It is believed that the folk stories in Brahui have mostly been created by some creative mind persons after sunset and before going to bed, the best passing time for the inhabitants for the purpose. Mothers also used to tell these folk stories to their kids before going to bed.

‘There are three types of folk stories in Brahui literature. Firstly, those created by Brahuists themselves, secondly, translated form other languages into Brahui and thirdly, those stories which were derived form other languages but have become Brahuized. The main subject or topics in folk stories include human wishes, kings and their behaviours, prince and princess and their love stories, thieves, poor persons, conquerors, shepherds, term and peasants etc. The animals and birds in Brahui literature have always been symbolized in various shades and meanings according to their attitudes described in the particular stories. In prose and poetry, animals are also symbolically used for colour, pace and gait etc. The animals and birds which have been characterized in Brahui folk stories as symbols are lion for bravery, crow for

cleverness, dog for faithfulness, fox for greed, sheep for simplicity, ox for power and camel for tolerance etc. The language used in Brahui stories is very simple and understandable by the children and adults both'. (Sabir, 2003)

It is presumed that most of the Brahui folk songs have created by the shepherds and farmers during their grazing of cattle or fieldwork. Brahui women segment has major role in the creating of the Brahui folk songs. The vital issues described in Brahui folk songs are based on the social problems, for instance, droughts, women and men labour, insufficient food stuff, difficulties of the mountainous and nomadic life, flock keeping, tribal disputes; travelling problems, wildlife danger, lack of information and communication etc. It is worth mentioning that due to the rigid Brahui traditional norms, the love stories are lacking in Brahui folk literature. (Sabir, 2003)

The popular Brahui folk songs are *laili-mor*, *Keluara*, *Barnaazna*, *Momal modi*, *Liko*, *Haalo* (marriage songs) and *Modah* (elegy) *Lali-mor* is a very common poetic form in the Brahui speaking areas of Balochistan. Every Brahui nomad and villager definitely knows some verses from *Laili_mor*. It has two lines in a stanza, in the first line a social or general problem is discussed while in the second line the beauty, gait or sketch of the beloved is described and drawn.

'The Brahui folk tunes can easily be adjudged among other neighbouring languages like Balochi, Pashto, and Sindhi. *Laiko* is a poetic form as well as a common folk tune of the "*Zairok*" another poetic form. It has three lines 5-7-5 just like a Japanese Haiku. In some Brahui folk songs the difficulties and problems of nomadic life, faced during travels of caravans are commonly found. Brahui nomads normally travel between Kachhi (the Plains of Balochistan, present *Sibi* and *Naseerabad* Division of Balochistan) Sindh (plains of Indus River) and *Khurasan* (The mountainous land, presently Quetta and Kalat Divisions) in search of pastures'.

A large number of Brahui proverbs are commonly found in Brahui prose but occasionally in poetry. The Brahui folk stories provide proverbs ranging from five to fifty. The common proverbs used in the stories are related to the feelings of human being, natural beauty, animal characteristics etc. There is another form of Brahui proverbs possessing complete real background stories. These proverbs are not part of the stories but a story is found behind them. The most popular proverbs in Brahui are "*Balwaan naa baram* (marriage of Balwaan), "*Nasrohi naa luma naa kafan*" (The Coffin of Nasrohi's mother), "*Gaaji naa shiwahi*" (The bad luck of Gaaji), *Shaahi kharwaar baawa ust deer kek*" (Four bags of wheat on quarter rupee but

father died due to hunger), *khwaari pok aa jaafar khan* (regard less Jafar Khan) etc.

Brahui Classical Literature

Brahui was used only as an oral language until the post-colonial period in Balochistan. There was no tradition of Brahui as a medium of instruction or as a written language. The first printed book on Brahui was written by Christine Lassen, an Englishman, and published in 1839. The first book in Brahui was written by Malik Dad Kalati in 1173 AD in Kalat.

Brahui has been written in first time in Pashto style Arabic script in the first manuscript written by Mullah Mailk Dad a religious scholar and Brahui poet in the 1759 BC in Kalat. Later on Brahui writers of Mukatab-i-Durkhani the famous religious school in Dhadar Balochistan used same script for their Brahui Books. After 1950 Brahui is being written in the Persian script and now all books, magazines and newspapers are being published in the Persian style Urdu script. **(Rehman, 2001)**

According to dr Abdul Rehman Brahui, **(1982)** Durkhani Religious School near Dhadar (Balochistan) was the first school in which Brahui was used as medium of instruction. This religious school was established under the leadership of Muhammad Fazil Durkhani Raisani in about 1880. The pioneer of the Durkhani movement was Maulvi Mohammad Fazil Durkhani (1823-1896) whose village, Durkhan which is about ten kilometers from Dhadhar in Balochistan. The work by this School of thought can be mentioned as a literary and religious movement for spreading religious awareness among the Baloch and Brahui people. There was apprehension among the Baloch religious scholars that Christianity would spread among them. Since the missionaries had translated their holly book bible in the Brahui languages between 1905 to 1907. Mohammad Fazil and his followers Molvi Abu Bakar, Mullah Nabo Jan, Abdullah Durkhani, Muhammad Umar Dinpuri, Mullah Saleh Muhammad wrote Islamic books for the common people in Brahui language. This institution started publishing of books written by local scholars and printed, in Lahore and Dehli.

The exact number of books published by this institution cannot be mentioned although Dr.Abdul Rehman Brahui in his book "Brahui Zuban o Adab ki Mukhtasar Tareekh" (Brief history of Brahui language and literature) says that around 1000 books were published in Brahui. While another scholar Aseer Abdul Qadir Shahwani lists 210 books in Brahui. **(Shahwani, 1998)** There are various lists scattered, each book published from this institution has also a list of fresh books published by this institution at its back page.

However, the institution created a very rich religious literature in Brahui and Brahui which has now holding the modern Brahui literature's building. Madrasa Durkhani adopted Arabic type orthography for Brahui and used retroflex lateral voices in their Brahui and Balochi texts.¹² (Naseebullah, A.R Sabir,) Maktaba Durkhani is the first institution which giving Brahui language the status of teaching language was taught along Arabic and Persian. Later, a number of scholars of this Maktaba which had acquired education in these languages created best literary pieces.

Taj Muhammad Tajal is the only figure of Brahui mystical poetry. Although, quantity of his published Brahui poetry is not such as other mystical poets of the region have, but his few more mystical poems are unexplored and are still un-published and will be included in the forthcoming complete "*Dewan*" or "*Kulyat-i-Tajal*". (Sabir, 2008)

In the countries where Brahui is spoken, including Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and the Arab Gulf states, the language is considered neither an official language nor a medium of instruction for Balochi-speaking areas. In Pakistan in 1989, Balochistan government adopted Balochi and Brahui as the mediums of primary education in the province and this continued until his government was dissolved in 1992. At present, courses in Brahui language and literature are offered at colleges in Balochistan and at the University of Balochistan in Quetta at the bachelor's and masters' levels. There are also some Brahui newspapers and magazines published in Brahui in Pakistan; the main and oldest newspaper in Brahui was the weekly "Elum", published from Mastung since 1960. Presently Talar is the most regular newspaper in Brahui. The Brahui Academy of Quetta and the Brahui Adabi Society of Quetta receive limited government funding and publish books, including various profile-raising projects on Brahui like a standardized Brahui orthography. Radio stations in Quetta and Khuzdar broadcast in Brahui. Brahui programs are also telecast by the Television Centre, Quetta and on other private channels.

Conclusion

Many linguists are of the opinion that despite an old language the literary history of Brahui is not much ancient. Brahui is rich in folk literature; the classical version of Brahui Maktaba Durkhani is the first institution which giving Brahui language the status of teaching language was taught along Arabic and Persian. Later, a number of scholars of this Maktaba which had acquired education in these languages created best literary pieces.

When we compare Brahui with the other non literary tribal dialects of Dravidian languages, it seems that Brahui is enjoying a worth mentioning literary status in Balochistan-Pakistan. The past history of Brahui language is

witnessed that it has been used only as an oral language till post-colonial period in Balochistan. There was no tradition of using Brahui as medium of instruction or in writing. Although some works in Brahui had appeared before then, the Brahui literary movement started in the reign of Khan Naseer Khan (of Kalat) in the 18th century but a standard literary movement started only after the 1950 when some newspapers started publishing in Brahui besides Balochi in Pakistan. This movement gave a boost to the Brahui modern literature.

References

- Addelton, J.S. (1986). Importance of regional languages in Pakistan. Al-Mushir (The counsellor) Vol XXVIII No.2.
- Brahui, Abdul Rehman, (1982) "Brahui Zuban o Adab ki Mukhtasar Tareekh" (Brief history of Brahui language and literature) Markazi Urdu Board Lahore, p-85.
- Emeneau, M. B. (1980). The Brahui language. Edited by Anwar S. Dil Language and Linguistic Area California. p-316,
- Naseebullah, and A. R. Sabir. (2005) Mystical thoughts in Brahui Poetry. bi-annual Research Journal "Balochistan Review", Balochistan Study Center, University of Balochistan, Quetta.
- Rehman, Tariq. (2001). The Learning of Balochi and Brahvi in Pakistan. Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies [USA] Vol. 24: No. 4 (Summer 2001), Pp.45-59.
- Shahwani, Aseer Abdul Qadir. (1998). Brahui Zuban o Adab. Brahui Academy, Quetta. P.63.
- Sabir, Abdul Razzaq. (1994). Balochi aur Brahui Zubanon ke rawabit. Ph.D Dissertation submitted to University of Balochistan, Quetta, p.75.

Sabir, Abdul Razzak. (2003). Brahui Folk Literature. South Asian Folklore an Encyclopedia Edited by Margaret A. Mills Peter J. Claus, and Sarah Diamond Editors Routledge New York and London. P 72-75.

Sabir, Abdul Razzaq. (2008). Brahui as Medium of Education in Pakistan. IJDL, ISDL Therivandrum Kerala Vol-37 No2 p-209-210.