History of Bahawalpur State and its Culture

Aftab Hussain Gillani
Assistant Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies
Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Abstract

Bahawalpur was a princely State (1727-1947) established by Abbasies. They ruled over this State for more than 200 years. After the fall of Baghdad (1258) the Abbasids migrated to Egypt and then to Sindh. They have been gifted the region of “Chudhary” by Nawab of Multan Hayatullah Tareen on the recommendation of Gilani and Bukhari priests of Uch. In this way the state of Bahawalpur came into being and later on it was considered as one of the richest state. There were 12 different rulers called as Nawab in Bahawalpur served the Bahawalpur state successfully for more than 220 years. This state has its own heritage and rich culture. The peoples of the state were very simple, brave, courageous, good hosts and very co-operative. The rulers of Bahawalpur state tried their level best to give maximum facilities to the peoples of the state. They have the opinion that if the peoples of the state will be given basic necessities and justice, the state will flourish more and more and will be considered as welfare state. This was the largest and richest state in India after Hyderabad Deccan. This was the reason that this state also has the richest culture. In this article the history of Bahawalpur State and its culture has been discussed as Bahawalpur State has a rich culture and its own historical background.

Keywords: Culture, Heritage, Civilization, Courageous, Daudpotra, Dynasty, Relegious.

I. Introduction

As the family tree of the Abbasia Dynasty descended from Hazrat Abbas (RA), the uncle of the Holy Prophet (SAW) (Azam, 1838). After their decline the Abbasi clan migrated Egypt from Baghdad and from there some menhas of this clan moved towards the Indo-Pak Sub-continent. Initially the notables of the family stayed for a while in Mekran (Baluchistan), where they were respected as religions leaders. In Sindh the rise of Abbasis started firstly as religions leadership and later on their successor became Landlords, and feudals. They reaped the benefit the political unrest of the lower and upper sider and became as rulers of Sindh. Bahawalpur as a state came into existence in 1727 and Amir Sadiq Muhammad Khan I (1727-1746) was agreed upon as it first ruler; who belonged to the Abbasi Caliphs of Baghdad, the branch of Abbasia over a sufficient period of time.

According to the historical background of the Bahawalpur State, its creation actually started with a son of Abbasi dynasty Amir Chawani Khan, who had been honored the dignity of commander of five thousand soldiers. He had also been awarded the area from Ubaro to Lahori to his services, presence of mind and military life. Amir
Chawani Khan had two sons, Mehdi Khan the elder and Amir Daud Khan the younger one. Amir Mehdi Khan was appointed the successor of Amir Chami Khan after his death; but he could not live long. Afterwards Mir Ibrahim Khan and his family seized Sindh and the bugle of Amir Daud Khan’s sovereignty started playing upon in Bahawalpur State. Initially the Bahawalpur state came into being through Amir Daud Khan’s descendents; who was the seconded son of Amir Chami Khan. The head of this family was Amir Sadiq Khan I, who in the first instance stayed in Uch Sharif at the invitation of Bukhari and Gillani priests (Auj, 1992).

Before the inception of Bahawalpur State, this area was called “Chandarsi”. This was a land awarded by Governor Multan, Nawab Hayatullah Khan, to Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan I, due to his expected military assistance for Mogul Empire. Later on, after more conquest this area became famous as “Bahawalpur”. Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan I established Khan I, due to his expected military assistance for Mogul Empire. Lair on after more conquest this area became famous as “Bahawalpur”. Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan I, established Allahabad as his Capital near “Chandani” which achieved the distinction of being the first ever capital of Bahawalpur State. The Abbasi Daudpotras, steadily captured all adjacent areas to lay the foundation of Bahawalpur state. Sadiq Muhammad Khan I called on Nadir Shah Durrani (1736-1747) in Dera Ghazi Khan during 1739, and was awarded the title of Nawab, so his rule was accorded recognition in Shikarpur, Larkana sub division, Savistan Chattar, Chandani and Derawar (Parjani, 1810).

Afterwards the foundation of Mubarakpur, Sardargarh, Khairpur and Kot Sabzal was laid. In the beginning the sedition of the neighboring tribes was faced and for the punishment of tribal disturbance, Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan I easily overcame them. As the result of the conquests of Nawab Bahawalpur Khan I (1746-1749) the territories of Punjab e.g. Pakpatan, Dunyapur, Kahrro Pucca and Mailsi were included in Bahawalpur State (Auj, 1892).

The rulers of Bahawalpur State always feared foreign invasion and attacks from other states, so the construction of Bahawalpur City was planned on the military strategic point of view, as this city possessed a central position. Bahawalpur was constructed on the southern bank of Sutlej River and a wall of defense was built around the city. The foundation of the official buildings was also laid.

Shehar Farid was ruled by Lakhwera family at that time, which had spoiled the government system and the public was fed up of them. The Lakhweras were accused of disobedience. They would collect the revenue, but did not deposit in the government treasurer. Furthermore they had also been accused of unfair killing and plundering. Locally they had seized Fort That. Afterwards, during the rule of Mubarak Khan Abbasi (1749-1772), Bahawalpur Khan II (1172-1809) and Amir Muhammad Khan Abbasi (1809-1825) the administrative system of the state was run smoothly. Then the rule of Nawab Bahawal Khan III (1805-1852) is called the unfortunate period of the state. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in the command of his general Ventura launched a sudden extension and demolished Bahawalpur Nawab Bahawal Khan III turned towards East India Company after getting helpless due to the off and on aggression of Ranjeet Singh. The British signed an accord in 1832 of mutual friendship. Under the cover of this accord on one hand the state was ensured the security of state’s integrity and sovereignty, which
on the other hand the areas of Pakpattan’s riverian fence, Lodhran, Mailsi, Kahore Pucca, Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan were obtained by fond. Lf. Mack son was appointed political agent to keep a watch on state affairs in the royal court of Bahawalpur. In the light of the accord the British Government ordered to provide military aid to Nawab Bahawal Khan III to fight Diwan Moolraj. They Nawab went to the British commander Sir Edwards Herbert and under the commander of Lord Dalhousie and army of 23000 soldiers easily defeated the Governor of Multan, Diwan Moolraj. Nawab Moolraj surrendered himself to the British in 1848. After this battle the British Government was extremely delighted and the Nawab of Bahawalpur was awarded one lakh rupees annually and every soldier armed with rifle was granted a prize of Rs. 100/- each. A total of Rs. 800,000/- were spent on these awards and prizes. After crushing the Kabul conspiracy, the Nawab further gained the sympathies of the British; Bahawalpur State was illuminated with glittering lights on their defeated of Diwan Moolraj. The relation of Nawab with the British continued to extend further. Apparently the Nawab’s generosity was eminent in friendship with the British. Nawab Bahawal Khan III died in 1852 and was succeeded by Nawab Fateh Khan (1853-1858) who ascended the throne. During his rule the freedom was of 1857 took place and the Bahawalpur state army supported the British. After Nawab Fateh Khan, Nawab Bahawal Khan IV succeeded him as ruler. But his rule (1858-1866) was very brief, when he died in 1866, his minor son Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV became his successor but the mutual rifts and issues of Daudpotra family posed a threat to the throne of young Nawab, so the mother of Nawab requested the British for help. Hence in 1866 the commissioner Multan, Mr. . Ford was sent to Bahawalpur as a political agent and superintendent Bahawalpur State: soon after his arrival he took over all affairs of the state himself (Punjab State Gazette, 1904) and setup an agency comprising of British officers to run the state affairs smoothly until the adolescence of minor Nawab. The period of the agency was extremely fortunate as far as the administrative point of view. The state entered a new era of administrative reforms and institutions of British style were set up. Nawab Sadiq was conferred power and title of “Subh-e-Sadiq”. This period was memorable for public welfare project. In 1887 for the treatment and care of the women an exclusive Zanana (Ladies) Hospital was built where lay Gynecologists of British origin were appointed. In 1886 a higher education institution, Sadiq Edgerton Collage had come into being. In the tenure of Nawab Bahawal Khan V (1903-1907) the mega project of Bahawal Victoria Hospital was completed in 1906. An orphanage was also launched. Bahawal Club was also setup for the entertainment and recreation of the officers through indoor and outdoor sports. Nawab Bahawal extensively visited every city, town and village of the state after completing his academic career during 1900-1901. He also audited the land revenue record and reviewed the performance of all officers himself after coming into power. Nawab Bahawal Khan V died in 1907, which retiring from the Holy Pilgrimage from Hijaz-e-Muqadds. If Nawab Bahawal had lived a lit longer, he would have proved to be the most enlightened ruler (Aziz, 1900).

After him Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V ascended the throne (1907-1955), but due to his young age, a council of regency was established in the state. He was educated at chief’s college, Lahore and served as an editing to the Prince of Wales. He was conferred the absolute authority on March 8,1824. He presided over the annual function of Muslims University Aligarh, in 1930 and donated a huge sum of Rs. 100,000 (One Lakh only). He was blessed with the Holy Pilgrimage in 1935 and called on Khadimeen Harmain-e-Sharifeen King Abdul Aziz Bin Saud. He also generously helped the affecters
of 1935 earthquake in Quetta. On the coronation ceremony of King George VI Amir of Bahawalpur was on the top of the list of 600 state rulers invited to attend the function. Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan V performed a number of Public Welfare oriented services. He was popularly known as “Dulha Saeen” (Bridegroom) due to his polygamy habit. He would minutely examine and even thrash the corrupt officers soundly. He appointed the selected and capable persons from all over India on the high ranking posts of the state, which included Sir Sikander Hayat and Mushtaq Ahmed Guramani as Prime Minister, while Mr. Hayat was made a number of Radcliff Award later on, served as the Chief Justice of Bahawalpur High Court (Feroze, 1989).

Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi V designed a plan for the development of Bahawalpur City. During his rule several building was constructed including University Campus, officers, Hospital and housing schemes for the state employs. The historical achievement of his period was launching of Sutlej Valley Project in 1932-33. Under this project head works were built at three different places and canals were built for the irrigation of 1.5 millions areas of land in Cholistan.

In the developed political unrest and consequent situation prevailing in the sub-continent, during twentieth century, for the future he conducted elections of District and Municipal administration in April 1943 and elected the member of the State Assembly indirectly. He also constituted a five member cabinet to stabilize the government of Bahawalpur State on democratic lines, which took over the responsibility of looking after the state administration from 1949 -1952. During this democratic period the Bahawalpur Assembly imposed the Shari’ah Law in 1951. This democratic process further elevated when a 49 members Assembly’s election was held on the basis of adult franchise (Tahir, 2000).

Makhdoomzada Syed Hassan Mehmood was elected as the first ever Chief Minister of the state. It was the period of prosperity in the state. A number of development and welfare projects were completed. Free education was introduce up to Secondary level. In Jamia Abbasia, an Islamic institution established on the Jamia Al-Azhar’s pattern, three portion of education were determined, Wurood (descending), Uboor (mystery) and Rushd (rectitude) by the year 1954, a boarding educational institution, Sadiq Public School had been launched. Mobile dispensaries were introduced for providing medical facilities to the residents of the far flung areas of the state. When Pakistan came into existence, then Amir of Bahawalpur Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan V conquered the hearts of the people, when he declared the annexation of his state to the new born sovereign state of Pakistan. After Pakistan’s creation, Bahawalpur State continued to function as a separate unit, but when the one unit was proclaimed in 1955, the reputation of Bahawalpur as a state was abolished. But when One Unit was abolished in 1970, then Bahawalpur State was merged into Punjab Province (Shahamat, 1948).

II. Cultural Heritage:

According to sibte Hassan the System of purposeful creations and social values is called civilization (Hassan 1977).

The dresses, language, meals, customs and tradition, and fine arts fall in the circle of cultural heritage. While its meaning are extensive, and the elements of teachings, culture, agriculture, flourishing and development and included in it. Word “Tehzeeb” has
been used for culture in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. The culture has been created by man. The society teaches human beings about how to talk; functioning cultural heritage keeps on transferring from one generation to another.

Before Pakistan’s creation, Bahawalpur enjoyed separate identity as an Islamic state. The people of this state were considered to be the staunch followers of the religious principles. This land is enriched with every flavor and style of culture and civilization. The culture heritage of this area is of no less importance as far as the poetry, calligraphy, embroidery, motifs, music, paintings or various games, are concerned. The Islamic mode is very prominent in this area’s culture and civilization one side, which is visible in every walk of life and on other side the impart Sindhi and Punjabi are also included. The Islamic complexion is very dominating in their get together became of the natives of an Islamic state. The elders are very kind to their youngsters. During their general conversation the people usually call each other with god titles. They call their male elders on “Saeeen” female elders as “Mai Saeeen” and age fellows male as “Adda” for the age fellow females the title “Addi, Bhen or Bibi” and boy and girly of young age as “Kaka and Kaki” are used respectively.

Hospitality
The natives of Bahawalpur used to consider the guest as a symbol of auspiciousness and blessing. The guest is eagerly awaited. Some indication, which are thought to be the arrival of a guest are the cawing of a crow on the ridge of the wall, the dropping of the loaf of bread from hand, the sweeping of dust by some child. All these indicate the arrival of the guest (Malik, 1994).

Foods And Drinks:
The native of Bahawalpur State used to eat meat with great interest, especially cow, beef, mutton and chicken etc. The meat of partridge and quail were also liked very much. The food made with mutton, e.g. roasted meat (Seekah Kabab) pieces of flesh (Tikka) fries meat (Rarahi Goslat) and a kind of curry taken in the early morning (Nihari) was eaten by the locals of Bahawalpur with great interest.

Dress:
The dress or ethic is a significant part of a culture and heritage of any region. The traditional dress mostly worn by the people included plain shirt (Kurta) embroidered shirt (Karai dar Kurta) cloth (Lungi) Sheet (Chadar) Turban (Patka) Cap (Kulah) Shawl and crested turban (Turah). A special foot wear (Khussa) was the most popular and a cultural heritage. While the women would wear shirt (Kurta), Trousers (Shalwar), Scarf (Dupatta) gargle (Ghaghra) and veil (Burka) for concealing the body and use Khussa as footwear.

Handicrafts:
In handicrafts the beautiful and elegant looking embroidery on footwear (Khussa) and print of flowers (Gul Kasi) Calligraphy (Khattati), inscription gold and bronze’s utensils and the cut of pottery were worth mentioning.

Matrimonial Customs:
In Bahawalpur culture, the custom of any was common. Those, who did not possess the potentiality to do so, at least I had a desire. But Inspite of all these things,
these used to be mantel, family and social causes for the second marriage, which included permission accorded by the Sharah, the death of first wife, ailment of wife, the desire son, the trend of marriage of daughter in the family, the fear of the distribution of inherited property and crises-cross marriages were the motivational factors. In Bahawalpur state the upbringing of the children managed in a specific style. During the initial day, the baby was fed with the honey, managed with butter and the forehead was passed to make the features other face was passed and to keep the shall rounded, the baby was lied down straight after being tied (Tahir, 1977).

Superstitions:
The superstitions also possessed a special impact on the culture and tradition of Bahawalpur. In spite of an Islamic society the weak faith, ignorance and the uncivilized customs, developed due to spending a longer period of with the Hindus, had become an integral part of the society. Hindus were victims of these superstitions like they used to worship iron, fire and water, as they considered these elements for saving the human beings from calamity. The locals of Bahawalpur also were impressed extremely by the iron, so they would put item mode of iron near newlywed couple. Similarly the knife or any iron item was put by the side of women during child’s birth. If children of any women would die soon after birth, then the new born children, who survived, would be attributed ordinary and object names, as Kaki (Black), Faqir (Beggar) and Mureed (Disciple) etc. Similarly the first diet of the child was named as “Ghutti” which was derived from Hindus. Similarly the croaking of frog and the coming out of the ants in greater number with white eggs were considered as indication of rain.

Literary Taste:
The Bahawalpur State has remained to centre of literary meetings. In the meetings of poetry and speech the Dohra (Two couplets) was very popular. All four lines of the couplets (Dohra) as in similar rhyme, but no balanced. In Saraiki poetry, Dohra is the most incident kind of verse, like a sher or Bait (Verse) or couplet, the Dohra also used to comprise of too but now after passing through development stages, it comprised on four even six or seven lines of verse. The “Dohra” only achieved

Popularity and acknowledgement through power of expression, harmony, tantalizing, and artistic excellence and perfection. The couple (Dohra) is now the identity of Saraiki poetry. The topic of Dohra (Couplet) are close the real life and innovative. Whereas on one side it has flavor of metaphor on one side, the modulation melody is also contained in this kind of verse. This trend for compunction of Kafi (Mystic poetry) was also very popular. The word “Kafi” has been derived from the word “Kafi” which means the balanced seals. Kafi has the equal lines of a “Sher” (verse) and especially it has been associated with the language and region of Bahawalpur. In “Kafi” the flavor of folk music and spiritual exhortation (Khan, 1995).

Civilization:
The people of Bahawalpur State have been extremely simple, sincere and friendly. They were also hospitable; Sikhs and Hindus also lived along with Muslims so the customs and tradition of the area were adopted. The majority of the population was literate, so they adopted such customs, which would fall in the sense of ignorance. The people of Bahawalpur used to celebrate the birth of son very joyfully, overnight awaking was celebrated and the total night used to be praised sleeplessly. On this occasion the people of the state would arrange a function, in which the relatives and friends used to be invited. This was called as function of circumcision. On the conclusion of the child’s “Quran reading” a ceremony used to be arranged (Kawish, 2008).

When the children would grow up then the responsibility of their marriages would be enlisted to their parents. In the state the locals would marry their grown up children on achieving the age of puberty which is an Islamic way of life. The custom of crises cruse marriages also prevailed, but in the case of failure, of such marriages, not over but two families used to suffer. When the daughter would grow up then the boy’s family would submit the proposal of marriage. On this occasion the community would accrueable and the sweet offered. First usually the engagement would be celebrated and afterwards the date for wedding used to be finalized. When the wedding date was determined, usually the knots on a piece of thread were marked and handed over to the bridegroom’s family.

Similarly the funeral ceremonies were also very unique and still prevail in the region. When some person died, then no cooking was done in his home for three day, and the close relatives and friends would offer the meal. On the third day Quran Khawani (reciting of the Holy Quran) or Qul Khawani would be held and prayers for the departed soul for external prance were offered and for his pardon the dress of the deceased was given to some deserving as charity. On the same day the legal hernias appointed the successor and the ceremony was held. The close relatives, friends and village or community fellows used to gift “One Rupee” or two as ablation to the successor as Pay da Rupiya (Rupee for the turban). After the death, some poor would be offered regular meal for some period continuously. The natives of “Ubbha” (North) observed 21st day’s ceremony i.e. the community was invited to meal twenty one days after the death (Punjab State Gazette, 1908).

The entertainment and festivals were celebrated in the state through four methods.

i. 1: Festivals.

ii. 2: Sports.

iii. 3: Children’s Games.

iv. 4: Miscellaneous days observed according to the Urs of the saints

v. (Anniversaries).

In sports Wrestling, Kabbadi, Malhan (Suidli Wrestling), Chess, Playing Cards, Pigeon flying, Hunting of wild boon and Dears, Tube hiding, Rod holding, First seizure, and Horse racing etc were very popular. While the children’s games Sheedar, Foot ball, Gilli dand, (Club and wood rod) Kite flying, Playing marbles etc were included. In the miscellaneous games and days on Sunday of the month of Sawan (Rainy season) the people of the Bahawalpur state would assemble on the bank of river or canal, enjoy by cooking and bathing. Jhoomer was the most popular dance, which was played especially
on the occasion of marriages and Dhamal (mystic dance) was demonstrated on happy occasions.

III. Conclusion

The Bahawalpur state was Established in 1727. The Abbasies were migrated from Baghdad after its fall. They were migrated to Egypt then Sind and from Sind, they shifted to this region. They were gifted the area of “Choudry” by Nawab Hayatullah Khan Tareen of Multan. When this state was established the rulers of this state served the peoples with the core of their heart. The Abbasi rulers were very kin, generous and loyal. Out of 12, Nawab Bahawal Khan 2nd, Nawab Sadiq 4th (Subah Sadiq), Nawab Bahawal Khan 4th and Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan 5th were very kind and caring to the peoples of the state. This was the first state which merged with Pakistan unconditionally on 3rd October, 1947. As Hindu leadership have the pressure on Nawab of Bahawalpur Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan 5th to merge his state with India in spite of Pakistan. Hindu leaders Nehro and Patel met to Nawab through Mushtaq Ahmed Gormani for annexation of his state with India. Nawab of Bahawalpur Sadiq M. Khan 5th shown his character and he said the majority of the people of the state or Muslims, how can I merge the state with India? At that time he gave a historical statement that my front door is open in Pakistan and backdoor is open in India. Every gentlemen man love to enter in his house from front door. Bahawalpur state has very rich culture similar to Cholistan culture. The peoples of the state were very simple, brave, soft spoken, loyal and hardworking. Nawab of Bahawalpur gave full religious freedom to every citizen of his state, there were complete freedom of religion, sect, language, caste and creed. There were special arrangements in every event for the Muslims. The cinema remained close in Ramzan ul Mubarik and Moharram ul Haram. The women have been given full respect in the society. The women of state observed Veil. When they travelled by Horse Cart (Tanga) it was covered with cloth. We can say the culture of Bahawalpur State was almost an Islamic culture.

References


Punjab State Gazette (1904). Bahawalpur State.


