

## **Saraiki Ethnic Identity: Genesis of Conflict with State**

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### **Abstract**

The Saraiki, one of the ethnic groups in Pakistan is based on lingual identity. In Pakistan, most of the ethnic groups have their primordial basis and language is an important identity marker. The Saraiki ethnic group also distinguishes itself on the basis of Saraiki language. According to the 1998 Punjab Population Census Report, overall Saraiki speakers constitute 17.4 percent of the Punjab. In rural areas 21.4 percent and in urban areas 8.4 percent people speak Saraiki language (Census Report, 1999, p. 32). Despite the fact that Saraikis have strong regional base, they are not recognized as a distinct ethnic identity. They have rich land resources, even -then the area has remained under developed and people are continuously deprived of various services. It is the most unfortunate fact that sometimes state shows reluctance to recognize specific ethno-lingual identities. This denial becomes a natural cause for ethno-national unrest. At present, apart from Baloch and Mohajirs, Saraikis are also raising voice for their recognition as distinct identity and their due share. The present study will highlight the development of Saraiki political consciousness, nature of the issue, and genesis of conflict with state.

**Key words:** Saraiki identity, lingual base, Political consciousness, deprivation, political power, South Punjab

### **Introduction**

Geographically, the federation of Pakistan is divided into six areas on the basis of their physical features: (1) Northern mountainous areas, (2) Western Mountainous areas, (3) the Salt range hills and Potohar Plateau, (4) the upper field of River Indus, (5) the lower field of River Indus and (6) the Balochistan Plateau. According to this distribution, the Northern Mountains are extended inward to Pakistan's northern territory, Kashmir and Gilgit. While the western mountainous series divides Khyber Pakhtoon Kho and Balochistan. The Potohar Platue and Salt ranges are the part of Punjab province. The upper

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field of Indus River is also the part of Punjab and known by the name Saraiki belt, Saraiki area and Saraiki waseb. The lower field of Indus River is included in Sindh province. The whole territory of Balochistan is Plateau (Husnain, 1994).

The four federating units of Pakistan have variety of ethno-lingual identities. The Mohajir in Sindh province especially in Karachi city is known as a lingual identity different from Sindhies. The Baloch from Balochistan areas refer their strong association with the territory of Balochistan. The Pakhtoons from Khyber Pakhtoon Khowa (KPK) believe on the primordial basis of their group association. The present study focuses on Saraiki identity. Saraiki belt is the part of Punjab province. So a detailed account of its location and socio-political background is necessary to understand the nature of the issue.

### **1. Socio-Political Background of Saraiki Identity**

The word “Punjab” is actually conceived from Panch,aab. that mean “the land of five rivers” (Steinbach, 1976, p.2). These are River Indus, the Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej and Beias. To understand the geographical and cultural heterogeneity of Punjab, it could be divided into three regions, first, the Upper North-Central Punjab, second, the Potohar Plateau of North-West Punjab, and third, the Southern Region of Punjab (Lieven, 2012, pp. 227-280), known as South West Punjab. The areas from district Sialkot to Lahore are included in the North-Central Punjab. District Rawalpindi to District Chakwal is part of the Potohar area and in the Southern districts Multan, Bahawalpur, Bahawal Nagar, Rahim Yar Khan and Dera Ismail Khan are included. The Southern areas are also bordering Sindh and Balochistan (Shah, 1997, p. 121).

#### **Map of Punjab**



**Source:** PILDAT discussion-Paper Page.03

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Punjabi is the dominant language of North-Central Punjab. However, there is high disparity in local dialects. Potohari is spoken by the people of North Western areas and Saraiki is the major language of the South West Punjab, spoken by approximately twenty five to forty million people (Shackle, 2001, pp. 657-659).

Historians and anthropologists have marked the existence of Saraiki Civilization nearer to the Indus valley on the Western side and Harrapa Civilization on its Eastern shores. It is also noted down that Multan, Uch and Bawalapur remained the centre of power and culture (Shackle, 1977, p. 379). Like most of the civilizations of the Indus Valley, the Saraiki culture represents historic pre-Aryan people of a Semite origin whose forefathers were the founders of the Agrarian Culture in Indus Valley Civilization. Even then very little is known about the ethnic origins of the Saraikis, before the invasion of Alexander the great. The historians who accompanied Alexander during his Indian invasion also referred Saraiki language in their writings.

Malloi and Oxydrakai two tribes are referred with their large capital city near Multan (Kazi, 1993; Wagha, 2010, pp. 115-116). Wagha (2010) shows the Greek version of the names of rivers and areas included in the Saraiki belt in the following table:

**Table 2.1:**

Greek Version	Name at Present
Indus	River Indus (< Sindh)
Chandorabhage / Sandrabala / Akesines / Asikai	River Chenab (not a Persian compound as commonly perceived)
Hudaspes / Vista, Bedasta	River Jehlum
Huydraotes	River Ravi
Hyphasis	Bed of the River Beias
Hesidrus	River Sutlej
Malloi / Malvya of Sanskrit	People and their place, the city shown and described at the location of present day Multan

Oxydrakai	People and their areas shown at the point of joining of the rivers called Punjnad
Sibai	Thal
Arashtra	Area of Rachna Doob

**Original Source:** Crindle, M (1869) maps pp. 56, 432, Index pp. 418-432. Edinburgh: Geographical Institute. Researcher adapted from (Wagha, 2010, p.115).

Various writers have discussed the origin of Saraiki. Some believe that it comes from Sindhi word “Siro” means North. “Wicholo” is also a Sindhi word that means Centre that indicates the Hyderabad region. The word “las” highlights the Southern Sindh. So, most of the writers are agreed that Siro is the origin of Saraiki. However, the opinion of Ahmad Hassan Dani, one of the renowned palaeontologist of Pakistan is different. He pointed out that word “Sauvira” instead of “Siro” which is mentioned in Mahabharata (Ahmad, 2005). He suggested that with the passage of time “Sauvira” was changed into Savistan (p. 3).

After the Arab invasion in 712 A.D, Saraikis were under the Sindh country that started with the river Indus up to its confluence of Ravi River. Some writers believe that it comes from Sindhi word “Siro” that means North. The cultural and linguistic bonds among the speakers of various dialects have presented an excellent example of multi-ethnic integration in this region (Kazi, 1993). Over the years, Saraikis developed their own separate national character and Multan became the centre of various developments. According to *Ain-e-Akbari*, during the early period of Mughal rule, Multan was an important city of Lahore Sooba. Later on, Shahjahan separated Multan and Lahore into two independent provinces (Azizuddin, 1992, pp. 145-146).

Aboul Fazal who wrote *Ain-e-Akbari* was one of the most renowned scholars of Mughal Emperor Akbar. He also introduced the Multani Civilization in this book. According to him, “Multan is greater than first, second and third Aqleem. It stretches from Ferozpur to Seestan, and Chitorrh to Jaisulmir on one side, and on the other side it is associated with Keech and Makran” (Dhareeja, 2013, pp. 7-8; Fazal, Ind, p. 1036-1037). During Mughal rule, Multan had a semi autonomous status. Nawab Muzaffar Khan Sadozai and his family ruled over Multan for about seventeen years and they were the last rulers of Multan. After the death of Auragzeb Alamgir, Multan came under the influence of

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Maharaja Ranjeet Singh when he occupied Punjab and the demise of Ranjeet Sindh brought it under the control of Britishers.

Multan and its adjacent areas, where majority of the population was Saraiki speaking, often remained the part of Punjab province but their civilization was much influenced by the Sindhis and they developed historical and cultural relationship with them (Gankovsky, 1973, p. 107). Apart from its relations with Sindh, Multan also developed its relations with the neighbouring princely State of Bahawalpur, where language spoken by majority of the people was also Saraiki.

In 1947, many areas were divided for their inclusion in India and Pakistan. Punjab was also separated into East and West Punjab. East Punjab became the part of India while the State of Pakistan got Western Punjab. Apart from Punjabi, Saraiki was the other important language spoken by majority of the people.

In geographical terms, the area where Saraiki language is spoken stretches from Punjab to Sindh, and towards the areas of Balochistan and KPK. Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan) touches the borders of KPK. Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan (DG Khan) are the adjacent areas of Sindh province. The geographical proximity put a considerable influence on the socio-political life of the people. The rulers of upper Sindh areas including Jacobabad, Sukkur and Khairpur were Saraiki speaking, so they supported all those who spoke the same language. The lingual homogeneity combined them into a strong cultural relationship. Their social structure was also highly influenced with each other's values and traditions. They developed trade relationship. Both the areas had their dependence on the waters of river Indus and their main source of income was agriculture. The people of this area were very much loyal to their land. Despite hardships and droughts when they could have only dates to eat, even then they were not ready to leave their homeland. Presenting their hardship through poetry is also an important feature of Saraiki society (Azizuddin, 1992, p. 148) which influences Sindhi culture as well. Like Sindhis the people from Saraiki area are not conscious about their religion. They are not particular about their prayers but they do believe on mysticism. A majority of people used to follow spiritual guidance from their saints and still they celebrate festivals on the death anniversary of their saints (Mirani, 1994, p. 28).

## **2. Ethnic Narrative of Saraiki**

Despite having some traces from the ancient Monda, Kool, Bheel, Dravidian, Aryans and White Huns with some vivid influence of Arab, Turkish, Persian and Mongol Culture (Bukhari, 2010, p. ii), the Saraiki language and culture

has developed its own specific identity. In South Western Punjab, Saraiki language is intrinsically connected with the ethnic identity of their people. Their ethnic narrative is also supported by various theorists and scholars of ethnicity who are continuously demonstrating in their writings the validity of language as an identity marker. Hertz (1944) also describes that language is a symbol of independence and honour of a group (p. 78). Smith (1986) highlights the attributes of ethnicity which include, race, territory, religion and common culture (p.21).

The Saraiki's historical ethnic narrative is based on the claim that Punjabi is one of the dialects of Saraiki, and Saraiki is a language in its own right (Rehman, 2006, p. 176; Omniglot, online Encyclopedia). History reveals that prior to independence, in the colonial setup, all other languages spoken in the areas of Multan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalpur, Leiah, and D.I. Khan were known by their regional names like Multani, Muzaffargarrhi, Liehi, Riasti, Derawali, Jaghdali, Jatki and Landhi (Wagha, 1990, pp. 5-7). The reason of the regional identification was the colonial rule. It is also a fact that before Britishers, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh kept the autonomous status of Multan that was the centre of Saraiki speakers which was called Multani at that time. Langah (2010) notes down that the political interests of Maharaja and Britishers forced them to push down the importance of local languages (p.3) and after independence their local names were unified in the term Saraiki, first time in 1960s with the consensus of all Saraiki nationalists. Rehman (2006) has also cited in his book that Mehr Abdul Haq who is one of the early researchers of Saraiki language in his thesis in 1963 entitled "The Study of Saraiki Language" claims that Saraiki is the mother of Urdu (Haq, 1967, p. 679-691). Although it is controversial that whether Punjabi language is the foundation of Saraiki or Saraiki gave birth to Punjabi language. Shackle has claimed in 1985 that despite having variation in alphabets and pronunciations both the languages have remarkable similarities (p. 322). He further adds that for a successful linguistic movement, literature plays an important role. The ancient literature of both the language can become helpful in deciding that which one is more ancient. He also identifies three major groups of dialects in the Punjabi language. These groups are central Punjabi, Saraiki, Hindko and Pothohari. The detail discussion of all these dialects shows that Shackle presented Saraiki as the Punjabi dialect (Shackle, 1985, p. 317). Besides Shackle, Gankovsky (1973) also has the same view. He noted that among all the Western and Eastern dialects including Lahori, Multani, Pothohari and 'Bahawalpur'; "Punjabi" holds the status of "generic" (pp. 110-112).

The Saraikis claim that the famous mystic poets of Punjab Baba Bullehe Shah who belonged to Kasur, Madhou Laal Hussain Shah, from Lahore and Mian Muhammad Bukhsh who was from Kashmir were Saraiki poets. Moreover,

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another prominent and towering figure is Khowaja Ghulam Farid, his diwan of mystical hymns is written in a pure and distinctive Saraiki language (Shackle, 1977, pp. 391-392). Gradually, various Saraiki groups and cultural organizations are formed to recognize Saraiki as a distinct language. For the promotion of Saraiki narrative, literature and the identity, people of South Punjab celebrate festival in the name Jashn-e-Farid, in the memory of great Sufi Poet Khowaja Ghulam Farid. It became a regular feature that helped to originate other cultural assemblages for the promotion of Saraiki language. In Multan, Bazme-Sadaqat and Saraiki Academy are printing various books and newspapers in Saraiki language. The moderate development of Saraiki consciousness among the people has strengthened the sentiments of separate ethnic group form Punjabis. On the basis of this traditional ethnic narrative, their efforts to re-shape the Saraiki origin are visible.

### **3. Development of Politics of Ethnicity**

The ethno-lingual groups in Pakistan are successful in developing the feelings of ethnicity among them. Notwithstanding that ethnicity or ethnic association is helpful to create ethnic bond among the group members, which is a major source of destabilizing the national cohesion. Ethnicity is often used as a political tool to pressurize the authorities which is considered a serious threat to national integration. Despite having primordial basis, the Saraikis are now using their ethnic association for political purposes and language has become a tool to fulfil their socio-political aspiration. It is a fact that primordialists see language as an important ethnic attribute. The language is used to create oneness among the group members but when the ethnic unity is used to achieve politico-economic objectives then it is transformed into politics of ethnicity. It is a stark contrast to the primordialists thinking who believe on the ineffable quality which is derived only for personal identity (Hutchison & Smith, 1996, p. 8). The instrumentalists treat this social association as a social, political and cultural ability of various interest groups. The language based ethnicity is devoted to pursue political power (Asif, 2009). According to the theory, the role of leadership is utmost important in manipulating the symbols, especially language. The leaders who are in competition focus on language and use it for gaining the support of that social group for achieving specific goals.

To understand, whether the awakening of Saraiki movement is only for their social recognition and identity or it is instrumental for socio-economic and political objectives, an inclusive study about its nature and the issue is essential. The following part focuses on it.

#### **4. Nature of Issue**

There are multiple factors, making the issue more complex to comprehend the nature of the issue these factors could be studied as;

##### **4.1 Saraiki Versus Punjabi: Cultural and Linguistic Differences**

Notwithstanding, that Punjabi and Saraiki languages are mutually intelligible (Rehman, 1996, p. 175), the language planners from both the sides stress that one is the dialect of other. Shackle (1979) and Gankovsky (1973) clearly stated that Saraiki is the dialect of Punjabi. The narrative of Saraiki linguistic is vice versa. Dhareja (2011) Rasool Puri (2011), and Chandio (2011) also stress the dominance of Saraiki over Punjabi. In personal interviews with the researcher they reiterated that Saraiki was very old as it had been mentioned in the sacred Mahabharata of Hinduism. Azzizuddin (1992) also mentioned in his book, "*Can We Live Together*" that historically, the evolution of Saraiki territory is different from the rest of the Punjab, thereby the two belts are culturally different from each other. Saraiki belt has historic connections with Sindh while the Central Punjab or Lahore remained closely associated with Northern India. Azizuddin further argues that the cultural relationship of Lahore with Delhi and of Multan with Sindh is largely due to their geographical features, mutual interaction of the people of these areas, and the economic interests. Lahore was nearest to the Eastern Punjab that had Ganges River on its one side and on the other side of the river, there was Delhi Province. Due to this geographical proximity, once Britishers included Delhi into the Punjab province. People from both the sides had economic relationship also. A great number of Punjabi traders were settled in Delhi and U.P. Due to this very reason they were named "Punjabi Tajran-e-Delhi" (the Punjabi traders of Delhi). It is quiet natural that juxta position put strong cultural impact on each other. Because of the reason, prior to partition, "Haryanvi" language was spoken in Eastern part of Punjab and UP had the traces of Punjabi and Urdu both (pp. 146-147). On the other side, the province of Multan was nearer to the Sindh province. A plausible number of people resided in Sindh and after centuries became the part of Sindhi nationality. Professor Azizuddin (1992) claims that the Talpur rulers of Sindh were Saraiki speaker and merged with Sindhi nationality. Despite their cultural relations the people from Saraiki areas remained dependent on River Indus. It was the only aquatic transit rout available for those people (p. 147). Moreover, in the words of Kazi (1993) the Kalhoras in Sindh reunited the Saraiki areas with the Sindhis and at that time, Saraiki was the part of their official language. The process of linguistic dialect integration is also seemed in a way that the Kahlhora rulers in Larr (South) were used to speak Saraiki language and their cousins, who ruled Bahawalpur spoke Larri. This close association of the two regions also put strong influence



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on the development of their language. Due to this territorial affiliation some intellectuals believe that Saraiki is one of the dialects of Sindhi language (Kazi, 1993).

Another important contribution regarding this debate is also presented by Rehman (1996) who has quoted Shackle (1979), Gankovsky (1973), Wagha(1990) and Mirani (1994). He is of the view that Punjabi and Saraiki both the languages share morphological details and much of the vocabulary that makes them mutually intelligible. However, the term dialect, which lacks proper definition, is the source of conflict (p. 175). The Saraiki speakers mark the historical development of Saraiki language. They also present Saraiki literature and various words spoken by Alexander the great and his soldiers to show the antiquity of their language, thereby the term dialect for Saraiki language is counterproductive. Among thirty four districts of Punjab, Punjabi language is spoken in twenty five districts and Saraiki is the main language of nine districts. However, in Saraiki spoken areas a substantial number of people also speak Punjabi. In Multan around 21.63 percent and in Bawalpur 28.39 percent people have Saraiki as their mother tongue and widely spoken language.

Following table shows the first and second language and the ratio of their speakers in all the districts of Punjab:

**Table 4.1.1: District wise largest and second largest linguistic groups and their percentage in Punjab**

<b>District Name</b>	<b>Major Linguistic Group</b>	<b>% of Linguistic Group</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Linguistic Group</b>	<b>%2<sup>nd</sup> Linguistic Group</b>
Attock	Punjabi	87.14	Pashto	8.31
Bahawalpur	Saraiki	65.15	Punjabi	28.39
Bahawal Nagar	Punjabi	94.61	Urdu	3.74
Bhakkar	Saraiki	72.99	Punjabi	17.45
Chakwal	Punjabi	97.69	Pashto	1.15
D.G. Khan	Diraiki	80.25	Balochi	14.33
Faisal Abad	Punjabi	97.47	Urdu	1.17
Gujrat	Punjabi	98.04	Urdu	1.06
Gujranwala	Punjabi	97.03	Urdu	1.88
Hafiz Abad	Punjabi	98.66	Urdu	0.9
Jhelum	Punjabi	96.58	Urdu	1.93

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Jhang	Punjabi	95.85	Urdu	3.31
Kasur	Punjabi	88	Urdu	6.23
Khanewal	Punjabi	81.20	Urdu	7.78
Khushab	Punjabi	96.8	Urdu	1.47
Lahore	Punjabi	86.18	Urdu	10.19
Layyah	Saraiki	62.25	Punjabi	32.55
Lodhran	Saraiki	69.01	Punjabi	18.03
Mandi Bahuddin	Punjabi	96.97	Urdu	2.45
Mianwali	Punjabi	74.17	Saraiki	1.47
Multan	Saraiki	60.67	Punjabi	21.63
Muzzafar Grah	Saraiki	96.83	Punjabi	7.47
Narowal	Punjabi	98.02	Urdu	1.24
Okara	Punjabi	95.71	Urdu	3.51
Pak Patan	Punjabi	95.87	Urdu	3.67
Rahim Yar Khan	Saraiki	62.62	Punjabi	27.31
Rajan Pur	Saraiki	75.72	Balochi	17.1
Rawal Pindi	Punjabi	83.89	Urdu	7.46
Sahi Wal	Punjabi	98.07	Urdu	1.42
Sargodha	Punjabi	93.28	Urdu	5.84
Sheikopura	Punjabi	98.1	Urdu	0.95
Sial Kot	Punjabi	97.11	Urdu	1.49
Toba Tek Singh	Punjabi	98.59	Urdu	0.78
Vehari	Punjabi	82.85	Urdu	11.35

**Source:** (Roofi &Alqama ,2013)

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Gradually, the Saraiki language has become a symbol of ethnic association of Southern Punjab. Maintenance of their exclusive ethnic association is the prime objective of the people of that area.

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Geographically, culturally and politically, Southern Punjab had more commonalities with Sindh province than the Northern and Central areas of Punjab. Since the colonial period, the Northern Punjab remained an important base of recruitment for state and military services. The districts included in Central Punjab were also getting benefits from the Canal colonization projects, of British government (Ali, 1988, p. 50). But the people of West and Southern Punjab remained reluctant to travel for employment. They were more home bound (Ahmad, A. 1988, p. 145) than the Punjabis of other regions. Rising disparities in the Saraiki areas is the main reason of this widened gulf within Punjab province.

### **4.2 Inter and Intra-Regional Differences**

Various differences exist within the four regions of Punjab province. The data compiled by Punjab development statistic (2005) and the 1998 population Census Report shows that the Central and Northern Punjab are mostly developed areas, having a large number of participation in the state machinery. The area is also industrially developed so they have better chances of employment and are spending quality life. While the Southern and Western Punjab or the Saraiki areas have comparatively worst conditions. They have severe problems regarding their average income, human capital asset, access to public services and of course, the quality of life. These differences have made the Saraiki area backward while the other two parts have become more urbanized. The following data shows clearly the income and expenditure per-capita within the Punjab.

**Table: Per Capita Income and Expenditure in the Punjab Region**

	<b>North Punjab</b>	<b>Centre Punjab</b>	<b>South Punjab</b>	<b>West Punjab</b>
Mean Household P.C.E*	1264	1181	901	886
Mean Household P.C.E Rural	1080	1002	777	813
Mean Household P.C.I**	1551	1580	1274	1090
Mean Household P.C.I Rural	1204	1329	1121	1003

Source: Cheema, Ali, Khalid and Patnam (2008, pp. 163-188).

\*P.C.E stands for Per-Capita Expenditure

\*\*P.C.I stands for Per-Capita Income.

The Punjab Development Statics Report 2005, shows that the differences also exist in their pattern of employment. There is a higher ratio of adult work as daily labour as their primary employment. Contrary to this and in the Central and Northern Punjab people have greater access to government employment and the private industry is also very well connected with international market (Punjab Development Statistics, 2005). Apart from these differences among the four regions of Punjab province, there are certain other intra-regional differences. Due to the differences, the nature of issue has become more complex.

### **The Issue of Bahawalpur Region**

South Punjab is consisted of three divisions including

- a. Bahawalpur Division
- b. Dera Ghazi Khan Division
- c. Multan Division

These three divisions are comprised of eleven districts. Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan divisions have four districts each, while Bahawalpur division, includes three districts namely, Bahawalpur, Bahawal Nagar and Rahim Yar Khan districts. Comprehension of the issue of Bahawalpur region requires a brief study of its historical background. Before partition, Bahawalpur was a princely state. In 1947, it was the first state that joined Pakistan when Nawab Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi V signed the document of accession on October, 3 1947 (Durrani, 2012). In 1951, an agreement was signed between Governor General Khowaja Nazaim-u-Din and Nawab of Bahawalpur. According to this agreement the status of Bahawalpur was elevated as an administrative province. According to 1961 Census Report, the population of Bahawalpur was 2,574,066 and the area was 17,508 square miles (Census 1961, II-66). Provincial elections were held in Bahawalpur in 1952 and according to the results, Muslim League won by majority. Makhdoom Syed Hassan Mahmood became the Chief Minister and (R.T).Chief Justice Abdul Aziz was appointed as Chairman Public Service Commission. In the meantime a plan was laid out for the One Unit system. It was proposed to create parity among all the administrative units. According to the plan, Bahawalpur was merged in to One Unit. East Pakistan made One Unit and the West Pakistan including Punjab, the then NWFP, Sindh and Bahawalpur become another unit. At that time, Balochistan was not given the status of province. From 1955 to 1970 Bahawalpur remained the part of West Pakistan. In 1970, General Yahya Khan abolished One Unit and Bahawalpur was merged again into Punjab province (Mattahida, Mahaz Bahawalpur, 2012, p. 1-2). Since then, a

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movement has been started for the restoration of a provincial status of Bahawalpur. Muhammad Ali Durrani told the author in one of his personal interviews, that first movement for a separate provincial status was launched for Bahawalpur. He further said that Saraiki movement for the creation of Saraiki Province was the effort of the government to politicize the Bahawalpur Sooba Movement. He added that in 1975 the then PPP government by itself initiated Saraiki language movement so that the intensity of the original issue could be minimized (Durrani, 2013, int). Kamal Omer's argument could also be presented in this support. He presented his views in 1975 saying that the Saraiki movement had started in the reaction of Bahawalpur movement (Kamal, 1975, p. 15).

Durrani's voice is also supported by Nawab Salahuddin Abbasi, who was the heir to the last ruler of the State of Bahawalpur. He launched the Bahawalpur Awami Party with the specific objective of restoration of Bahawalpur State as a province. The other supporters of this move were Ahmad Mehmood, member of Punjab Assembly, his father was the last Prime Minister of Bahawalpur State (Ghayoor, 2011, p. 62). Akram Ansari (2011) who is the General Secretary of the Movement for the Restoration of Bahawalpur province declares: "we are only demanding that a martial law dictator's decision should be nullified and Bahawalpur region should be restored to its status as agreed, when it was merged into Pakistan. We are only asking for its revival" (Ansari 2011, Int).

### **4.2.1 Intra-Linguistic Group Differences**

The Saraiki speakers of Southern Punjab and the advocates of Saraiki ethnic identity collectively claim that their identity is based on their language. They also assert that the state of Bahawalpur was the part of Multan and the rulers of Multan gave the area to Abbasis (Javaid, 2011, p.19). Saraiki language was not only taught in the educational institutions but it was used in the lower courts also (Garierson, nd, p. 140). They argue that many of the supporters of Bahawalpur province movement lately joined Pakistan Saraiki Party (that is struggling for the linguistic identity of the people of Southern Punjab). One of the major example is Riaz Hashmi, who for the first time used the word "Saraikistan" (the Saraiki speaking area) and a map of this area was also proposed. Contrary to this view, the supporters of Bahawalpur Sooba Mahaz have the same arguments. They are not in favour to create a province based on lingual identity but for them Bahawalpur had historically distinct identity as a princely state. After its decision of merger within Pakistan, in 1947 it acquired the status of a separate state. Now on this basis Bahawalpur province should be formed (Ahmad, 2004, p. 104). Second important difference is that Saraiki is not the only language which is spoken in South

Punjab. In the Bahawalpur division the widely spoken language is Riasti (Language of the State) which is different from the standard Saraiki language. Above all it is also a fact that in various areas Punjabi speaking people are in majority.

Various conferences are convened and literary and cultural activities are also conducted by the cultural activists for the conscious building about Saraiki identity. However, it is a reality that split views about Bahawalpur province and Saraiki province have damaged the movement of Saraiki ethnicity. Durrani has also argued in his interview that the activists and supporters of Bahawalpur province movement are united for their cause but on the other side, they have about six or seven parties and only one is registered organized party having numerous differences among them.

At present various political parties are working in South Punjab. Following table shows the detailed picture about it;

**Table 4.2.2.1: Various Parties and Groups in South Punjab**

<b>Name of the Party</b>	<b>Head Office</b>	<b>Year of formation</b>	<b>Leading Personalities</b>
Pakistan Saraiki Party	Multan	1989	Barrister Taj M. Lengah, Aslam Rasulpuri
Sirakistan Qaumi Council	Multan		Shoukat Moghal, Zahoor-A-Dhareeja
Saraiki Qaumi Movement (SQM)	Karachi	1988	Bibi Shahida Naz
Saraikistan Qaumi Movement	Dera Ghazi Khan	1990	Hameed Ashgar Shaheen
Saraiki National Party	Rahim Yar Khan	1992	Abdul Majeed Kanjoo
Saraiki Qaumi Ittihad (SQI)	Mithawkot	2004	Khoaja Ghulam Farid Sani
Saraiki Lok Party (SLP)	Kehrorr Lal Esan	2007	Mazhar Nawaz Lashari
Saraiki Qaumi Ittihad	Rahim Yar Khan	1988	Daud Abbassi
Saraiki Sooba Movement	Multan	2002	Malik Mumtaz Hussain Jai

**Source:** compiled by the researcher, information collected form Herald (Karachi), Dawn (Karachi) and Jang (Lahore).

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For a long time these political parties and groups are working separately. They have no relation with each other, due to this very reason these groups remained unsuccessful to create consciousness of their lingual identity among the local people, thereby they are failed to do any work for the development of Saraiki ethnic movement. Except PSP, no party was able to place its candidates in the local elections. They used to support the other political parties of national level.

In 2002 elections, Pakistan Saraiki party was also failed to make any impression. The head of PSP, Taj M. Langah took part in the elections and got 107 votes from NA 149 Multan 11; from NA 154 and 155 Lodhran and Bahawalpur, he got 440 and 988 votes respectively. His total votes were 1435 from six polling stations (Election Commission, 2002). The other linguistic political party participated in the election was Saraiki Sooba Movement. Malik Mumtaz Hussain Jai advocate (President of the Saraiki Suba Movement) contested the elections and got 348 votes (Election Commission, 2002).

With due course of time, especially since the year 2002 to onward, the movement of, Saraiki identity is getting momentum. Mazhar Nawaz Lashari, who was the President of the SLP spoke in one of his interviews that in Pakistan, various ethno-lingual groups are focussing on the issue that their provinces must have ethnic, cultural, religious, historical and linguistic basis. Under this consciousness the ethno-lingual movement of the people of Saraiki Waseb (Saraiki area) is very relevant. The other factors which helped are lack of integrative efforts from the state authority, administrative inefficiency and economic suppression have created a huge disconnection between state and society (Ghayoor, 2012, p. 64). Though, lack of coordination among these political groups has delayed the success of their collective interests, nevertheless, it successfully created a sense of lingual identity among the people of South Punjab. It has become difficult for the state authorities to make policies without listening to the demands of Saraikis.

## **5 Development of Conflict: A Chronological Order**

It is believed that the struggle for the recognition of Saraiki ethnic identity was started in 1818, when Ranjeet Singh seized Multan's independence. Prior to Ranjeet Sing, the Saraiki area remained independent or semi independent province. Ranjeet Singh sealed his independent position and made it a subordinate territory to Lahore that was its centre of authority (Langah, 2005, p. 1). After that, during British rule, Saraiki poets, philosophers and writers started resistance and their movement contributed a lot towards their recognition.

Britishers succeeded Ranjeet Singh and during their rule, they changed the geographical boundaries of various regions and areas. One such area was the Saraiki belt. The British government separated Abbotabad, Hazara, Peshawar and Kohat from the settlement of Punjab and the areas of Bannoun, Tank and Dera Ismaiel Khan from Saraiki region and created a new province by the name of North West Frontier Province (Dhareeja, 2013, p. 21). People, belonged Dera Jaat, showed strong resistance against this decision. These areas were part of the Saraiki Waseb through centuries. In 1947, when the boundaries of Pakistan were determined these areas remained the part of NWFP and administration did not bother about the separate integrity of the Saraiki belt.

### **5.1 One Unit Scheme and the Development of Conflict**

The most crucial time was started when in 1955 the government decided to merge the whole West Pakistan into One Unit. Though the move was totally undemocratic and against the constitutional arrangements, but on the principle of parity (that lately incorporated with the new Constitution of 1956), two wings were created, East and West Pakistan. The areas of Punjab, NWFP, Sindh, Balochistan and the State of Bahawalpur were included in the West Pakistan (Abbasi, 1999, p. 188).

The establishment act of 1955 clearly explained the status of West Pakistan and its various regions including the state of Khairpur. Its clause 7 and 11 were related to the explanation of their relationship under One Unit. Anyhow the act was silent as far as the State of Bahawalpur was concerned. Though the legislative Assembly of Bahawalpur was not abrogated but suspended, however the rulers at that time ignored the legal and constitutional matters altogether. Before the creation of One Unit, the West Pakistan Amendment Act 1955 was presented before Governor General from the Legislative Assembly of Pakistan. It was approved on November 18, 1955. Under this act the State of Bahawalpur was given a right to elect twenty three members for the Legislative Assembly of West Pakistan. Most interesting aspect was that on November 12, 1955, the session of Bahawalpur Legislative Assembly was called and it elected twenty three members for West Pakistan's Legislative Assembly. It was a historical fact that the resolution about the merger of Bahawalpur State into One Unit was not approved from the Legislative Assembly. The Nawab of Bahawalpur sacrificed for Pakistan (Ansari, 2009, pp. 40-41).

The people from Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP made an anti One Unit Front. The members of the Front had some participation in the West Pakistan Assembly where they submitted their reservations against One Unit scheme.



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During the same time, General Ayub Khan imposed Martial Law in 1958 but the Anti One Unit Front continued its struggle. Despite the strong response of the state when all the protestors were sent into jails, the movement maintained its momentum which forced Ayub Khan, the Chief Martial Law Administrator to form a committee headed by Mr. Fazl-e-Akbar, a judge of Supreme Court. The committee presented its report before Ayub Khan and later before General Yahya Khan when he imposed another Martial Law in 1969. The committee forcefully recommended the dissolution of One Unit and the creation of five more provinces. According to this report the fourth province would be the former State of Bahawalpur and Multan division while the fifth province would be the province of Balochistan (Ahmad 2000, p. 104-105).

#### **5.2 Dissolution of One Unit and Demand for Saraiki Province.**

After the failure of fifteen years struggle, the activists further mobilized various political groups and created All Parties Action Committee in 1969. Furthermore the political activists of Bahawalpur also formed Tahrik-e-Tahaffuz-e-Hokuk-e-Bahawalpur. After partition this was the first Saraiki Nationalist Movement started from Bahawalpur. It is also assumed as the first effort of politicization of Saraiki ethnic identity. Riaz Hashmi, a renowned Saraiki activist who was the member of anti One Unit Front also insisted to create Bahawalpur Province (Hashmi, 1972, pp. 126-127; Shahbaz, 1972, pp. 21-28).

It was a fact that till 1969, there was no ethno-political group in Southern Punjab. With the passage of time Saraiki nationalist's movement took its shape with clear objectives. At the time when One Unit was abolished, former status of Bahawalpur State was not restored but it was merged within Punjab Province notwithstanding that the Fazl-e-Akbar Committee suggested a fourth province based on Bahawalpur division and Multan division (Durrani, 2009). In reaction, various political groups and associations were formed to revive the old status of Bahawalpur State. The most important organization was Bahawalpur Mutahidda Mahaz (BMM). It was also known as Bahawalpur United Front. The Front became successful in creating awareness about their separate identity and organizing large public processions. Gradually the authorities were getting disturbed and its various leaders were arrested. When the most popular leaders of the Mahaz went behind the bar, the movement became more popular. The prominent personalities like Ch. Farzand Ali, Sardar Muhammad Khan, Mian Nizamuddin Haider, Seith Ubaidur Rehman were sent behind the bar. The Urdu speaking community settled in that area, also participated in the movement.

On April 24, 1970, during a peaceful procession the police opened fire and killed two and wounded hundreds of participants (Rehman, 2006, p. 182, Kanjoo, 2007). This was the first violent clash between the government agencies and the Saraiki activists. Resultantly, the movement was calmed down by force. All the leaders were arrested and an inquiry was launched but it was rejected by Mutahidda Mahaz or United Front (Sajid, 1972, pp. 51-52).

Despite the fact that the movement for Saraiki ethnic identity had lost its momentum but it was successful in a sense that the movement deeply manifested the sense of distinctiveness in the hearts of the people. It was proved during the 1970s, general elections, when PPP was defeated by Mutahidda Mahaz. In the National Assembly (NA) elections, the areas including in the Southern Punjab had a minimum percentage of voting for PPP. The detail is highlighted in the following table:

**Table 5.2.1: Districts with Low PPP Vote in the NA Election**

Sr. No.	Districts	No. Of Constituencies	No. Of Constituencies won by PPP	Percentage of Vote Polled for PPP
1	Mianwali	02	Nil	5.59
2	Jhang	03	Nil	6.13
3	D.G. Khan	02	Nil	19.74
4	Muzaffar Garh	03	02	26.08
5	Bahawalpur	02	Nil	16.17
6	Bahawalnagar	03	02	38.14
7	Rahim Yar Khan	03	01	31.31

**Source:** (Ahmad, 1976, p. 90)

The table shows that the turn out in favour of PPP was on the lowest edge and the poll went to the sympathizers of the Mahaz (Kanayat, 1972, p.10). Though the Saraiki people gave a clear mandate in favour of their separate province but it was not accepted in the Legislative Assembly. Unfortunately, after these elections Pakistan was dismembered and East Pakistan became Bangladesh as an independent state. This was another reason that the

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movement for Bahawalpur Province became silent. The Bahawalpur Movement was completely fizzled out in 1972 because the Prince Saeed ul Rashid Abbasi clearly said that the demand for the new province was not a priority (Musawat, 1972). After this declaration, Riaz Hashmi, a prominent leader of the movement, and Ubaidur Rehman Seth, started working for Saraiki Province because they joined Pakistan Saraiki Party (PSP).

In 1973, when the constitution of Pakistan was formalized, two members from Bahawalpur region Molvi Nizam ud Din Hiader and Noor Muhammad Hashmi did not sign the constitution because the issue of Saraiki Province was not addressed (Langah, 2005, p. 2).

#### **5.4 1977 to 2000, The Period of Slow Progress**

The Saraiki activists believe that the Bahawalpur Sooba Movement did not sponsor lingual ethnicity except as a local language. After the abortion of this movement, initially it went underground. Gradually, the Saraiki activists started raising voice against injustice and discriminatory policies of the government. For this purpose, off and on Saraiki activists used to organize various forums. In 1984, Saraiki Sooba Mahaz (SSM) was created in Multan, lately various branches of this party were launched at Liyyah, D. G. Khan, Rajin Pur, Bahawalpur, etc. Saraiki Sooba Mahaz collaborated with various main-stream political parties. Contrary to the elections of 1970 in the elections of 1988 SSM declared unconditional support to PPP. In the meantime, it was debated in the Saraiki Movement that SSM should be replaced by Saraiki Nationalist Party but various members of SSM were not convinced to leave their political parties. One of the very important leaders of SSM, Taj M. Langah was also a very committed worker of PPP. On the assurance of PPP's leader Ms. Benazir Bhutto, SSM gave unconditional support to PPP. After elections PPP's government did not pay any head to this issue, thereby the leaders decided to make a political party which was named as "Pakistan Saraiki Party" in 1989 (Langah, 2005, p.8).

From 1990 to 2000, the issue of Saraiki identity was not very explicit on political forum but it is a fact that the development of conflict between Saraiki nationalists and state authorities was getting momentum in a very implicit way. Various other organizations which initially had only literary and social objectives now were transformed into political parties having clear political targets and objectives like Saraiki Literary Conference, its objectives were also changed from the development of Saraiki literature to the recognition of Saraiki ethnic identity (Rehman, 2006, p. 183). Another very important development was the creation of Pakistan's Oppressed Nation's Movement (PONM) in 1998. At this forum Siraikis were successful to recognize as the

fifth nationality of Pakistan. In the charter of demands presented at this forum, the word Saraikistan was clearly stated as the separate federating unit of Pakistan (Ahmad, 2004, p, 110). The charter of PONM put great impact on the state authorities. They became conscious about the Saraiki issue and at that time it was considered as a threat to the federation. Kanjoo, the prominent Saraiki leader said in one of his interviews that, "After viewing the Charter of PONM, Benazir Bhutto, the then Chairperson of PPP said, that PONM was a bunch of political orphans" (Kanjoo, 2010, Int). Abdul Majeed Kanjoo who was the Vice President of PONM also raised voice for the recognition of Saraiki ethnic identity at local and international forums. The Saraiki activists organized huge public processions throughout the country. During this period almost all the nationalist Saraiki parties and organizations were unified at the platform of PONM.

### **5.5 Changing Nature of Conflict: 2000 to 2013**

The political activities of all the parties were ended in October 1999 with the military's take over. General Musharraf banned all the political parties. Various leaders of PONM went outside the State. Due to the lack of communication and intra party conflict PONM became ineffective.

From 2000 to 2010, the Saraiki activists again started to work on their basic organizational platform. Although they participated in 2002 elections but their participation was not considerable. The most important factor of this time was the revival of Bahawalpur Sooba Movement. After 1970s, there was no voice against the Saraiki province in which Bahawalpur divisions was also included. The split in opinion was observed in the decade of 2000 to 2010. The movement was revived by Muhammad Ali Durrani who was the senator and vocal for the revival of the status of Bahawalpur as a separate administrative unit (Durrani, 2012, Int).

Although there is no violent clashes between the state authorities and Saraiki ethnic group except the one incident, but the tension between both the groups is getting intense. The Saraiki activists now believe that the revival of Bahawalpur Sooba Movement is basically a government's conspiracy against the people of Saraiki Waseb. Two provinces within Saraiki belt are not acceptable for the Saraiki people (Dhareeja, 2013, Int). The resentment among the Saraikis is increasing day by day. The PPP government formed in 2008 was not in favour to create any kind of animosity with the people of Southern Punjab. The PPP's Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani who also belonged to Multan tried to console them. They repeatedly indicated in the public processions that the PPP government would address all the

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grievances of Saraiki's and creation of Saraiki province would be the part of their next election manifesto (Dunya News, 2011).

Same promises are also being done by various political actors but there is lack of trust thereby every move, even a single word from state officials is considered as an effort of political manoeuvring. Furthermore Saraiki activists feel that the support of Saraiki Sooba from PPP is only a political stunt. The seriousness on this issue can only be judged if the government got mandate from the National Assembly for the creation of fifth province for the preservation of Saraiki ethnic identity (Langah, 2012). Contrary to the PPP's support to Saraikis demand various resolutions were passed from the Punjab Assembly for the Unity of Punjab Province. The revival of Saraiki identity movement has created a new debate in Pakistan for further division of Sindh and KPK also. At present like Baloch and Mohajir ethnic groups the Saraikis are getting strength. The Saraiki political organizations are seeking support for their separate province based on linguistic ethnicity while the state authorities are trying to avoid any violent conflict with them.

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