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## Tribal Life of the Pashtoons as depicted in Pashto Tappa

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**Abstract:** *Pashto Tappa is the most fluent and popular genre of Pashto folk poetry that reflects several stages of the Pashtoon tribal life. The shortest genre of only two lines of short meter Tappa has reflected the whole life structure of the Pashtoon in very expressive and communicated way. In this paper the author has tried to search out the different dimensions of the Pashtoon tribal life is depicted in Pashto Tappa. He quoted a few Tappas to throw light on the socio cultural aspects of the Pashtoons. He also discussed some regional versions of the Pashto Tappa and its regional identity. As a whole the paper deals with Pashtoon tribal life and its peculiarity.*

*Tappa* is a literary genre. Literature generally depicts the social life of a nation. Literature depicts psychology, religion, politics, economic and other important aspects of a nation. Literature is a manifestation of culture of a particular nation or generation. *Tappa* is a literary genre of Pashto language. Before discussing this genre of Pashto language we have to take into consideration different theories of literature. Then it will be observed that how much this genre is related to the culture of Pashtoon people and under what literary theory it may be discussed. It is also important that the word “literature” is a theory and a number of critics have discussed it. These critics generally before discussing any genre of literature have put the question that what literature is? Renowned intellectual Sheldon Pulock answer to this question as:

“What should be problematic, however, at least from the vantage point of contemporary theory, is claiming to know and define “literary.” There are good reasons for arguing – many have argued this for the past two decades or more – that anything can be literature; that the term needs to be understood pragmatically rather than ontologically, as pointing to ways certain texts are used rather than defining what those texts inherently and essentially are.” (1)

It is evident that literature is a theory and different intellectual, have given different definitions and explanations to this theory. Literally any written thing is literature. However literature includes and means those written material in which imagination has focal position. However there are certain intellectuals who are of the view that literature is a theory which

cannot be explained completely. However in literature different literary theories are explained and text is examined. We can say about different theories related to literature as,

“One of the fundamental questions for literary theory is “what is literature?”, though many contemporary theorists and literary scholars believe either that “literature” cannot be defined or that it can refer to any use of language. Specific theories are distinguished not only by their methods and conclusions, but even by how they define a “text.” For some scholars of literature, “texts” comprises little more than “books belonging to the Western literary canon/” But the principles and methods of literary theory have been applied to non-fiction, popular fiction, film, historical documents, law, advertising, etc, in the related field of cultural studies. In fact, some scholars within cultural studies treat cultural events, like fashion or football riots, as “texts” to be interpreted. By this measure, literary theory can be thought of as the general theory of interpretation. Since theorists of literature often draw on a very heterogeneous tradition of Continental philosophy and the philosophy of language, any classification of their approaches is only an approximation. There are many “schools” or types of literary theory, which take different approaches to understanding texts. Most theorists, even among those listed below, combine methods from more than one of these approaches (for instance, the deconstructive approach of Paul de Man drew on a long tradition of close reading pioneered by the New Critics, and de Man was trained in the European hermeneutic tradition). Broad schools of theory that have historically been important include the New Criticism, formalism, Russian formalism, and structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxism, feminism and French feminism, religious critics, post-colonialism, new historicism, reader-response criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism.’ (2)

"Listed below are some of the most commonly identified schools of literary theory, along with their major authors. In many cases, such as those of the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault and the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, the authors were not primarily literary critics, but their work has been broadly influential in literary theory.

Aestheticism – often associated with Romanticism a philosophy defining aesthetic value as the primary goal in understanding literature. This includes both literary critics who have tried to understand and/or identify aesthetic values and those like Oscar Wilde who have stressed art for art’s sake.

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- Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, Harold Bloom
  - American pragmatism and other American approaches
  - Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Richard Rorty
  - Cultural studies - emphasizes the role of literature in everyday life
  - Raymond Williams, Dick Hebdige, and Stuart Hall (British Cultural Studies); Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno; Michel de Certeau; also Paul Gilroy, John Guillory

Comparative Literature - confronts literatures from different languages, nations, cultures and disciplines to each other” (3)

If we want to examine Pashto *Tappa* under the above theories we conclude that Pashto *Tappa* can be discussed under theory of Cultural Studies. However other related theories for instance Comparative Literature, Gender Studies and Historical Studies may also be given due consideration. Because where Pashto *Tappa* has affinity to Punjabi *Maheya* on one hand so it may be viewed in the light of Comparative Literature Theory and on other hand generally *Tappa* sang from women side therefore we may also need recourse to Theory of Gender Studies. Similarly Pashto *Tappa* has its own historical background and Historical Studies Theory has to be given consideration while discussing Pashto *Tappa*. But generally *Tappa*, and cultural may be discussed in the light of cultural studies theory. Because *Tappa* is a folk literature and folk literature is the representation of culture. Pashto folk poetry comprises of *Tappa Charbitha, Ninkai, Loba, Ghagoona Ghaarey* and songs. These are different genres of folk poetry.

Pashto folk poetry is true representative of Pashtoon Culture. Among all the folk genres “*Tappa*” is the most fluent natural and effective in reflecting the norms and traditions of Pashtoon society. *Tappa* is the shortest, most comprehensive and most attractive form of folk poetry. Pashto language is proud of it because this genre is rare to be found in world literature anywhere in any language especially in oriental languages. However, the *Maheya* in Punjabi language is very similar to that of “*Tappa*” and a lot of verses also exist on the name of *Tappa* in Punjabi language which is the true copy of Pashto *Tappa*. This peculiar genre has a format of two lines, the first one of nine syllables and the second one is of thirteen syllables.

In historical perspective *Tappa* is the oldest and most popular genre of Pashto folk poetry. According to prominent orientalist Jens Enevoldson, the theme and structure of Pashto *Tappa* has very closed resemblance to the Aryan virtues and code of life. He narrates,

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“The tribal code is the old Aryan code of honour, which one may find in force in the early stages of all Indo European peoples. Take the old Scandinavian sagas and change geographical and personal names and you have an epic tribal history of Pakhtoons, particularly in the *Tappas*, which are mostly composed by women. We find descriptions of ideal manhood and the virtues, honour, bravery, justice, which the young girls would look for in her beloved or the old Aryan virtues”. (4)

Pashto *Tappa* is closely related to Pashtoon Women. We can say that: "There is a peculiarity that most of Tappas had been sung by women, which reflects the women Psychology in very natural and original shape, but a number of Tappas had been composed and sung by men too. Actually Tappa is the genre of Pashto folk poetry which every Pashtoon not only compose but also sings. Very often in his own personal tune adjusted to circumstances, without fear of ridicule but the greater part of thousands of Tappas in current use are made by the women. Being essentially emotional expressions the dealing with most common and the most celebrated of human relationships, that between lover and beloved. A related favorite theme of Tappa is that of separation not only the lover from the beloved but also of a friend from his friends, of a man from his country and his family.” (5)

*Tappa* is the real folk genre which represents the Pashtoon Culture and in true form. In the New Encyclopedia Britannica, it is mentioned that:

“It is the only form of folk poetry which is very impressive and effective in highlighting the culture of Pashtoons. It is the song, sung in the time of grief and on the occasion of marriage. In music it is sung with the traditional Pashto musical instruments “*Rabab*” and “*Mangay*” (6)

In short we can say that *Tappa* is a reflective mirror of the romances, patriotism, freedom loving nature, kinship relations and other norms and traditions of Pashtoons. We can see the real picture of social life, religious rituals, economical development, trade and journeys, hospitality, wars and resistance, jewelry, dress, music, foods and so many other things which are the elements of culture and civilization of Pakhtoon society.

**Tribal Life and Regional *Tappas***

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Pakhtoons, for a length of time, remained in tribal area. They lived in hilly and isolated regions from the beginning. However, due to invasions and economics reasons they went down to urban area. Most of them left their original area for economic reason and trade. But their collective structure of life has been generally tribal and rural. And they observe their customs in their urban life. By the way the oldest and greatest civilization of the world social life structure remained unchanged. Ali Gohar, a Pakhtoon writer, describes the tribal life and fundamental customs of Pakhtoon from historical point of view. He writes,

"Among such nations are the Pukhtoon communities that live across the Durand Line (International frontier) in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They have many tribes, sub tribes, clans and areas where they live. They are the inhabitants of high mountains, plain areas and even the deserts. The customs and traditions of each tribe, at a thirty-mile distance from another tribe, are slightly different from each other but the basic themes of codes remain the same. They have a verbal code of life called Pukhtoonwali. Pukhtoonwali consists of a number of different concepts and among the most famous are *Badal* (revenge) *Milmasty* (hospitality), *Jirga* (elders committees), *Nanawati* (Sanctuary) *Nang* (Honour), *Peghoor* (challenging someone with shame), *Lakhkar* (volunteer force), *Chagha* (announce and taking abrupt action in case of emergency), *Ashar Gopal* (community participation), *Hujra* (community center), *Tega* (a ceasefire symbol), *Toor* (Shame), *Tarboorwali* (first cousin rivalry). These people have preserved their traditions throughout the years through verbal teaching where the young learn from the elders in the Hujra or at home. They learn not only verbally but also by doing. It was not only important for the youngsters to learn the practices but also to adopt them in their daily lives. Any deviation from these practices is not only an act of shame for an individual but also for the whole tribe. The tribe then must commit to everlasting enmities or pays the price through other means like Swara (giving away a female child for reconciliation), khunbaha (blood money) or other traditional practices of restitution. The common azizwali (the Pukhtoon code of life) is a method to prevent an individual from acting against the social rules as it is considered an act of humiliation not only for the individual but also for the clan, tribe and nation. Those who call themselves Pukhtoon use Pukhto as a language, a code of life and an identity for themselves. During

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their discussions they haunt each that the other has no Pukhto, which means that they are not following the Pukhtoon code of life. It is an insult against a member of another nation if they challenge that you have no English French etc. With other nations who are not part of the Pukhtoon community there is a different type of identity for themselves. If other nations believe in “we vs. them” here in the Pukhtoon community they resolve their issues by identifying “I Vs. you.” A tribal chief, an elder, a religious leader, a father will also start with the issue that “I told you this but you violated it. If I am not here, then you are nothing.” This means that the privileges that you have are because of me and if I am no more then you will also lose. "(7)

Alongwith this historical background of Pakhtoon tribal life their cultural background is also much cleared. These cultural values are particular to Pakhtoon society, which are prevalent in this society for centuries. These cultural values of Pakhtoon can also be termed as tribal values. Musharaf Khan gives account of the major point of these tribal values in the following words,

"No society can survive without having its own code of conduct. The tribal society is having its own code of conduct, covering all the aspects of the social behavior. These codes are not meant for sending the guilty to jail or gallows but are meant for a compromise among the disputing parties. In most serious cases the major punishment which could be awarded would be burning the house, confiscating the property and sending the person or persons to exile to the area of some other tribe on permanent basis. The punishment of killing is strictly forbidden except in very rare cases where the sub tribe as a whole is demanding the shooting of the killer who is available in the close vicinity. The theft, dacoit or adultery are very rare for, in such cases shoot at site is allowed. The executive and judicial powers are exercised by the *Jirga* on case to case basis. For any conflict a fresh Jirga is constituted with equal number of members nominated by each disputing part. All these codes are unwritten, coming down generation and are acceptable to all. The only crime, which carries no punishment, is killing of a father by a son or a son by a father or a father or an unmarried brother by a brother. This is so because there would be no one to take revenge except the killer himself. Such crime is very rare in practice as the killer would become weak, armless and up-

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protected, would be looked down upon by people. As such he would be passing very miserable days for the rest of his life. In the tribal society family is not confined to father, wife and children. It is spread over all the relatives of the hill and on the paternal side like uncle, brothers, sons, nephews, nephew sons, and so on, for as long as they accept the enmity jointly and share their firing at the common enemy, who could be any member of another family whose any member has killed a person of this family. There is no distinction between the killer and the innocent, in so far as taking the *Badal* (revenge) is concerned but the victim must belong to the same joint family. The larger the family, the stronger it would be and would stay stronger while dealing with other. The profit and loss has to be shared equally by such family."(8)

Pakhto *Tappa* on one hand presents the sketch of those customs and tribal life and on the other hand certain particular regions their culture and geography has also been mentioned in it, which we can call as the sketch of Pakhtoon Tribal Life. Besides this Pakhto *Tappa* of certain tribal area has (the dialect) the effects of their particular accent. For instance the accent of people of Peshawar valley is called Peshawari accent. Mostly *Tappas* of Pakhto language are in this accent. But there are certain *Tappas* which have the effect of its particular area. For instance Kakar and Achakzai, Bolochistan, sing *Tappa* in their particular accent. Similarly region in Pakhtoonkhwa tribes like dialect, Khattak, Bannuchy, Afridi and Shinwaris etc sing these *Tappas* in their particular dialect. Here few *Tappas* will be presented which has reference to particular area and tribal areas and their speciality. In a *Tappa* a girl mentions nose ring (*Pezwan*) for her decoration and says that jeweler of Peshawar are not expert in nose ring (*pezwan*) making and that best nose ring are made in Kurram Agency. She says,

"پېزوان په کرمه کښې جوړېږي  
د پېښور زرگره مات دې شه لاسونه (9)"

**Translation:**

Original *pezwaan* has been prepared in Kurram Agency. O jeweler of Peshawar your hands *mey* be broken so that you can not prepare an original *pezwaan*.

This *Tappa* is very famous in *Bannu* district of N.W.F.P. (*Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa*) and I have taken it from the people of *Bannu* orally.

Swat and Bunir tribal area of Pakhtoon have their own traditional life style and customs. In a *Tappa* reference has been made towards the beauty and charm of Swat.

"سوات په شان د باغ حرم دی  
د لري لري شهزادگان ورته راځينه (10)

**Translation:**

Swat is like beautiful garden to which princess from far-flung area come for enjoyment.

This *Tappa* is familiar in Peshawar too but I have received it from the people of Malakand Agency.

Bunair is known for the tomb of renowned spiritual person "Peer Baba" to which people go and pray for their relief. To reach there, one has to pass through a hilly area of Malindary. In a *Tappa* reference has been made to this regional effect.

"مخ دي د پير بابا زیارت دی  
په ملندری غاښي دي سترې وخته (11)

**Translation:**

Your face is like pilgrim of Peer Baba tomb and I climbed the peak of Malindary exhausted.

This *Tappa* is also received from the people of Malakand Agency.

In a *Tappa* reference has been made to the seasons, environment and beauty of Peshawar and Kabul as;

"د پېښور وطن جنت دی  
د کابل ژمی زمهریر دی خود ترې ځمه (12)

**Translation:**

Peshawar and Kabul both are like paradise but I have to leave Kabul.

Although this *Tappa* is related to the people of Kabul but I have quoted it from the people of Peshawar orally.

Similarly there was a *Godar* in District Mardan known as *Jalala* the signs are still there. This *Godar* is mentioned in a lot of Pakhto *Tappa*. The *Godar* was famous for the fable that its water was sweet and delicious and girls from the surrounding areas used to take water to their house in pitchers. The *godar* has been mentioned in the following words:

"د جلاله اوبه خوږې دي  
پښتنې جوته ترې منگي راډ کوينه (13)

**Translation:**

*Jalala's* water is sweet and girls are filling their pitchers of this water. This *Tappa* is mostly sung by the people of Peshawar some other areas of N.W.F. P (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). Indus River is known as Abbaseen in Pakhtoon region. Besides this *Jalala*, Abbaseen has also been mentioned in Pakhto *Tappa* and with this reference has been made to Pakhto values in same *Tappa*. A *Tappa* is here for reference:

زما دې علم په کار نه دی  
د اباسين چپې دې يوسه کتابونه (14)

**Translation:**

I don't need your education and your books *may* drown in Abbaseen. This is a famous *Tappa* of Peshawar valley. Pakhto *Tappa* not only displays or demonstrates the social and cultural values of certain areas but also their accent and dialect. They sing these *Tappas* in their own local dialect with their particular accent. Pakhto language has two main dialects one is Qandhari and the other is Peshawari or Yousafzai dialect. Qandhari is mostly used in Afghanistan and Balochistan and Peshawari or Yousafzai dialect is mostly used in Peshawar valley and its surrounding. People of Peshawar speak the standard Pakhto language and most of the *Tappas* are in this dialect. But people from Afghanistan and Balochistan sing *Tappas* in their typical Qandhari dialect. Few *Tappas* are mentioned here for instance:

"جانانه بنه سوه چې زخمي سوي  
زه به دا خپله غاره هسکه گرځومه (15)

**Translation:**

It is good to happen that you have been injured for which I will walk with pride with chin up. I have received this *Tappa* from my friend Javed Iqbal a lecturer of Pashto in Balochistan University. In this *Tappa* "*sha swa*" and "*zakhmee swey*" are words from Qandhari dialect which will be pronounce as "*kha shwa*" and "*zakhmee shwey*" in

Yousafzai dialect and both pronunciation represent their particular tribes and folk.

"چې راڼه ياد سې حال مې نور سي  
جامې مې اور سي اندامونه مې سيزينه (16)

The *Tappa* has been narrated by Javed Iqbal in Quetta. In This *Tappa* also, “*yaad say*”, “*nor see*” and “*aor see*” words represent Qandhari dialect. They will be “*yaad shay*”, “*nor shee*” and “*aor shee*” in Peshawari dialect.

Similarly people from Peshawar valley sing *Tappa* in Peshawari dialect. However people of certain Southern region, e.g. Marwat, Bunuchi, and Khattak also demonstrate Qandhari accent and sing *Tappa* in their regional dialects. Besides these the people of Pakistan at Afghanistan boarder, e.g. Shinwari, Afridi and Mohmand generally present Qandhari dialect and sing *Tappa* in this dialect. However occasionally Afridis and Mohmands talk in Peshawari dialect and sing *Tappa* in this dialect. On this pretext we can conclude that Pakhto *Tappa* not only demonstrates different cultural, life and regional customs of all Pakhtoon regions but also their regional and particular dialects and accents. That is why Pakhto *Tappa* has a beautiful varieties due to its demonstration of cultural, customs and usages and other aspects of Pakhtoon life.

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