

From the Historical Archive: Saraiki Language and the Sociopolitical Identity of Saraiki Community

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Abstract:

This article endeavours to establish the antiquity of Saraiki language and its culture as well as civilization. It is unfortunate for this language that it used to be considered a dialect of Punjabi language in Pakistan for long time before its recognition as a separate linguistic entity. The works by Saraiki activists and language researchers helped in its recognition as a separate language entity in the Census. There are three traditions for tracing the relation between the Saraiki and the Punjabi language. The first tradition argues that Saraiki is the dialect of Punjabi while the second tradition states Punjabi to be a dialect of the Saraiki language. The third tradition claims the simultaneous development of Saraiki and Punjabi in different geographical regions independent of each other. The convergence of two languages took place in the later phase and the cross linguistic influences led to mutual intelligibility. This seems to be more realistic and also the main proposition of the current research. Pakistan is currently home to more than 70 languages out of which six languages claim more than 10 percent of the speakers of the whole population of the country. Saraiki language is among those six major languages, and it is widely spoken in the country especially in the southern part of the Punjab province. Despite its recognition as a language, the community of the Saraiki speakers is living in shambles as their sociopolitical conditions are not very good. This has resulted in the formation of Saraiki movement as its activists use language to mark their ethnic identity and build a pressure group in order to articulate their political, economic and cultural dispossession. The current research endeavours to document the sociopolitical struggle of the Saraiki community in Pakistan.

Keywords: Saraiki community, Ethnolinguistic vitality, Identity, sociopolitical struggle

1. Historical Overview of Saraiki Language:

This article endeavours to establish the antiquity of Saraiki language and its culture as well as civilization. The study of history is reflective of the fact the language which is now called Saraiki language has its roots in the Indus Civilization. This language had long been spoken under different names in this civilization and its history dates back to two thousand BC. The name Indus comes from the Indus River as this area was located on this river and now, some of its area is called Pakistan (Janobi, 1998). This area was populated by the Saraiki speaking population and included a long range of the northern Sindh to the Southern Punjab as of today, the territory of Dera Ismail Khan as well as the vast region of the eastern Balochistan; all these areas hosted the major Saraiki speaking population. According to Nadvi (1982), the Saraiki era is considered an era of enlightenment and the scientific and literary evolutions and innovations happening in the Sindh regions before the Muslim came and settled there as most of the historians cite multiple evidence to support this proposition. This helps us establish the antiquity of the Saraiki culture and civilization. It is considered to have existed as the premier culture and civilization linked to the Indus civilization since ages. This centuries old culture has been in vogue and largely followed by a large population. This culture widely followed today by the people of the Southern Punjab has its uniqueness in terms of history, economic systems, language, its laws, marriage customs, inheritance practices, death rituals which are unique and different from all other regions (Budh, 2006).

Talking about history, the Saraiki region boasted its own culture even after the inception of Muslims in the region. The efforts by Sikhs and later, British colony also remained futile to merge and change the Saraiki culture. Then Pakistan came into being which led to many changes in the region. The situation remained unchanged as the Saraiki language and its culture remained dominant in this region called the South Punjab (Javed, 1995). The culture of Saraiki is a merger of many cultures but has its uniqueness. The main reason for this diversity within uniqueness is its close contact with other cultures as there are many Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochis and Pashtuns who have settled in the region of Saraiki language. In this way, their influence has though modified the Saraiki culture to some extent, it still preserves many of its unique qualities. It is also hypothesized by some historians that the Saraiki language is even older than the Sanskrit language. Since there is multitude of evidence available to establish its antiquity in the Indus valley civilization and flourishing of the Saraiki language and its culture as well as civilization. That's why some modern historians cite that it was the Saraiki language and not Sanskrit which was spoken in the sub-continent long time ago. Fikri (1967) has also cited much evidence to explore the antiquity of the Saraiki culture, language and civilization by documenting its history spread over thousands of years. Though there is no doubt to the ancient existence of this language, culture and civilization, it is also said that those who disagree with this proposition content that the word

Saraiki language appeared quite late in the history. Logically deconstructing this proposition concludes that the existence of Saraiki language and civilization cannot be evaluated by the lens of the name *Saraiki* as this language and civilization existed with multiple different names. It was in a national conference in 1962 that the word *Saraiki* became recognized to present this ancient language and its civilization.

The careful perusal of history clearly reveals that the assigning of Saraiki to an already existing language and culture does not mean that it was not present earlier. It was just the change of name which happened in 1962. The Saraiki culture and civilization was so strong that it resisted mergence with other powerful cultures in its contact and active around its neighboring areas. This is reflective of the steadfastness and preservation power of the language that at different times of history, despite the emergence and exertion of influence by Aryan culture, Iranian civilization, Sindhi influence, Hindi or other cultures, the Saraiki language and culture has survived and held its uniqueness. Bahawalpur (2006) argues that the maintenance and evolution of the Saraiki culture can be historically traced by conducting research on different aspects of life. These aspects may include the social customs, music tradition, lifestyle, marriage practices, death rituals, economic institutions, concept of solidarity, traditions of sorrows and mutual harmony. The most potent articulation of the Saraiki culture is found in the traditions and practices of Urs and festivals in the region of Saraiki area. These festivals about the lives of saints are the rich articulation of the cultural vibrance and an expression of richness of the Saraiki culture. Some of other articulations of the Saraiki culture are found in the rich literary tradition and the unique geography of the Saraiki region. The writing tradition in the Saraiki language has presented the cultural norms, rich heritage and social traditions, indigenous arts with popularity. The perseverance of the Saraiki language is also attributed to the rich writing and literary tradition of the Saraiki community.

Speaking of the Saraiki community and their geographical presence on the map of Pakistan, their population is majorly concentrated in the South Punjab region. It spread on both sides of the River Indus, covers some regions near the rivers of Sutlej and Chenab and then reaches to the Northern Punjab. Since the Saraiki language is also spoken in the west of those areas of IndoAryan language, it has its intersections with many languages such as Balochi, Pashto and other Iranian languages. The linguistic features of the Saraiki language also bear some minor influence of Marwari dialects of the region Rajasthan, adding to its richness and fertility.

2. Recognition of Saraiki Language as a Separate Linguistic Entity

There have been some controversies to the status of Saraiki language in Pakistan as it was not initially recognized as a separate language but considered a dialect of Punjabi language (Shackle, 1976). The relationship of Punjabi and Saraiki language reflects the story of chicken and egg. It is difficult to negate any of the two languages as a foundation language giving birth to the other language. Both Punjabi and Saraiki are similar and mutually intelligible to a greater extent and the language planners from both sides assert that one is the dialect of the other. Based on the evidence of literature and study of dialects, Shackle (1976) considers Saraiki as a dialect of Punjabi language. On the contrary, the Saraiki scholars such as Rasoolpuri (2014) and Asif (2005 2010) argue the ancientness of Saraiki language over Punjabi. The third tradition claims the simultaneous development of Saraiki and Punjabi in different geographical regions independent of each other. He furthers that the convergence of two languages took place in the later phase and the cross linguistic influences led to mutual intelligibility and similarity. This seems to be more realistic, and the current research operates on these same views about Saraiki language.

On the contrary, the Saraikis claim the famous literary figures like, Baba Bullay Shah, Madhu Lal Hussain and Khawaja Ghulam Fareed. The Punjabis are of the view that these poets belong to them whereas the Saraikis also make the same claim. The Saraikis celebrate the Jashn-e-Fareed, a festival to commemorate the great Sufi poet with the purpose to promote their identity and literature. A contribution by Bazm-e-Sadaqat and Saraiki academy in the form of printed books has also reinforced the Saraiki consciousness and ethnic sentiments marking their identity distinct from Punjabi. It was 1970s which is considered the renaissance for Saraiki language as bulk of literature was published with the works in all genres (Jumani et al, 2011). Since then, 'Jhok' a Saraiki national daily is in circulation and the language of Saraiki 'wasaib' is considered an independent language (Mughal, 2004). It was during this time that the Saraiki community started working on their language as an independent language in Pakistan and ultimately in the regime of General Zia ul Haq, this language was recognized as an independent language (Roofi & Alqama, 2013).

The Census of 1981 for the first time included Saraiki language as a separate entry and the statistics showed that the Saraiki native community constituted 9.83% of the total population of the country and this percentage went up to 10.53% in the 1998 Census. There is still a hard-core debate in the firmaments of linguistics whether Saraiki is a language or a dialect. There are social and cultural dialogues regarding Saraiki as a separate language and the demarcation line is quite unclear because linguistics has no specific criterion set to differentiate a language and a dialect. This is the reason that ethnologue based upon its own criterion considered Saraiki a language but glottolog considered it a dialect but not of Punjabi as most of the Punjabis consider it but a dialect of Sindhi language. Some linguists also refer to the similarities between Punjabi and Saraiki to claim that they are one language. On the other hand, Saraiki activists emphasize the antiquity of their language and the presence of written literature in it. They consider the use of the term dialect to refer to Saraiki as stigma and assert their distinctiveness from Punjabi to mark their distinct culture and their ethnicity.

The linguists of Saraiki language (Asif, 2005; Awan, Baseer & Sheeraz, 2012; Javaid, 2004) are still striving hard to explore the linguistic dimensions of this language to obtain the status of language for it. They contend that it is a complete language, and it has its own phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems. Though it has some of the similarities with other languages, but it does not mean that it is a dialect. It is somewhat similar to Sindhi and Punjabi as both are its neighbouring languages. Dr. Mehr Abdul Haq in 1977 iterated its independent status and contended that there exist many words in Saraiki, which a Punjabi or an Urdu speaker cannot speak.

Even there are limited number of Saraiki speakers who know about the writing system and alphabets of their native language and same is the case with their reading ability. There are 42 alphabets in Saraiki language in which 5 of them are totally different

from Urdu alphabets and remaining 37 are from Urdu language (Rasoolpuri, 1976) and in the words of Haq, it has very rich phonological system. Latif (2003) observed that the Saraiki language has 7 long vowels, 3 short vowels, and 6 nasal vowels. As for consonants, these are 48 in number which means Saraiki has 64 phonemes. Kalanchvi (2008) has critically analyzed all major Saraiki linguists, who worked on the phonology of Saraiki language. In the views of Awan et al. (2012), there are 40 consonants and 54 vowels of Saraiki, which means Saraiki has 94 phonemes in total. So, there is a controversy among the scholars about number of phonemes in Saraiki language. The researchers numbered two types of consonants clusters in Saraiki initial and final positions and also that it is a syllable timed language so there is no vowel reduction in Saraiki as it has CCVCC structure for its consonant clusters (Awan et al., 2012).

In terms of morphology, there is no prominent work available except the work of Shackle (1976) which has its limitations regarding morphological structure of Saraiki language. It is said that Saraiki has 70-85% lexical similarity with Punjabi and 85% lexical similarity with Sindhi (Ethnologue.com). Saraiki is written from right to left as most of the Persio-Arabic script work. Its grammar is similar to Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi as these are its neighbouring languages. This is the reason that most of the Saraiki speakers can speak Urdu and Punjabi but very few Punjabi speakers can speak Saraiki language.

It is because of close contact with other languages that the Saraiki speakers besides their native language have the ability to use Punjabi, Urdu and English (*The Pakistan*, 5th June 2017). They are able to use Punjabi easily because their population is majorly concentrated in Punjab and the provincial language of the Punjab province is Punjabi. Since Urdu is the national language and the national lingua franca so the Saraiki native speakers can use Urdu as well. They also possess the ability to use English as it is an international language, the medium of instruction in higher education and the official language of the country. If we interpret a person's ability (who knows Urdu, Punjabi and Saraiki languages) in terms of triglossic condition, we can say, that Urdu is H variety and for most of the Saraiki natives Punjabi is the L variety leaving Saraiki in between, though some may consider Saraiki as an L variety. Sometimes, the situation depends upon the listener and his/her social status because this factor would decide the 'H' and 'L' variety among these three languages (*The Pakistan*, 2017). English is also used besides these three languages as it is the medium of instruction in higher education as mentioned earlier. Language contact between these languages sometimes leads to the phenomena like code switching and code mixing as well. A Saraiki speaker, most probably, would use Punjabi and Urdu in between the Saraiki sentences to show his/her familiarity with these languages. The people of Southern Punjab try to speak Saraiki as much as possible in almost every situation with the mixing of Punjabi and Urdu codes.

The British tried to downplay the role of these indigenous vernaculars, during the colonial period (Langha, 2010). In 1947, the Punjab province was divided into east and west part and the state of Pakistan got the western part of Punjab province. Besides Punjabi language, Saraiki was also a vital language of this region used by majority of the people. In the present times, Saraiki population is present in Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan. After independence, the Saraiki nationalists debated and contested over a period of time and reached a consensus to unify these local vernaculars in the term Saraiki. To another tradition Saraiki is also considered the mother of Urdu language, as cited by Abdul Haq in earliest studies on Saraiki language (Rehman, 2011).

The formation of ethnolinguistic identity in Pakistan has been used to pressurize the governments and assert the ethnicities. The ethnic association has helped the groups in creating an ethnic bond and marking their ethnic identities through language (Hashmi & Majeed, 2014). The Saraiki community has also used the language as a marker of their identity, with a purpose to achieve their socio-political aspirations. The use of a language as a tool and assertion of ethnic unity transforms the situation into politics of ethnicity. Asif (2010) maintains that the social activists often use the language base ethnicities to pursue political goals by manipulating the symbols like language.

The research on the Saraiki language has resulted in its acknowledgement as a separate language and consequently the need to highlight Saraiki identity has been created by its speakers. Garcia (2016) argues that the activists of the Saraiki movement assert that Saraiki is also an independent language because it has its roots in unique culture and ethnicity. The creation of their ethnic identity has various symbols out of which language remains the pre-dominant marker of their identity. Rahman (2011) traces the origin of the Saraiki movement and describes that the Saraiki people feel deprived of their socio political and economic rights. The areas where Saraiki speaking community is mainly concentrated are the underdeveloped areas of the Punjab province and their demands are the result of deep-rooted sense of deprivation.

3. Locating Saraiki in the Linguistic Landscape of Pakistan

Pakistan is a linguistically rich country and a home to more than 70 languages according to Ethnologue.com. This list of languages includes the national language Urdu which is widely used in all nooks and corners of the country (Kamran & Mansoor, 2017). Then there are provincial languages like Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi and other indigenous languages is use in the respective provinces and territories. Although English language as a British legacy is not an indigenous language yet it remains in use in all important power spheres (Rahman, 2011; Noreen, Ahmed & Esmail, 2015). The national language, the provincial languages and various other languages operational in various areas of the country make it a rich locale for linguistic research.

All these languages serve various purposes in specific domains of life in their own way. It is expected that each language is given due importance in the context of the country, but this situation does not hold true. The critics (Jan, 2016; Manan, David & Dumanig, 2016; Tsui & Tollefson, 2017) contend that the language policies of Pakistan have served to over-patronize Urdu, considering it a cohesive national symbol, at the expense of other languages (Rahman, 2011). This effort has underplayed the role of provincial as well as other indigenous languages as the speakers of these languages have raised ethnic voices as to preservation of their ethnolinguistic rights (Adeney, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Baxter, 2018).

Urdu occupies the status of national language and is considered representative of national identity in the country (Tsui & Tollenon, 2017; Kalin & Siddiqui, 2017). It is the native language of the people who migrated from India to Pakistan at the time of partition. Most of them started living in urban Sindh, the southern province of Pakistan. Since they had higher

education, they occupied most of the bureaucratic places in the country despite the fact that they were in minority (Nathan, 2016). Although Urdu has less than 8 percent L1 users as native speakers, however, its importance is enormous. It is also used as medium of instruction in educational institutes and also serves the role of a lingua franca in the country (Mahmood & Gondal, 2017; Mahboob, 2017; Abbas & Shehzad, 2018). The status of English language is that of a second language and it remains operative in important spheres of life such as law, education and media and others (Khan & Khan, 2016; Khalid, 2016). Being the legacy of British colonizers, it is considered a status symbol (Khan, Imran & Azhar, 2015; Umrani & Bughio, 2017) and is spoken widely by the highly influential portion of the population. English is considered a social capital and various institutes that teach English language speak a lot about the inevitable role of English in the country. English is supported by the ruling elite as it ensures the social distinction possessed by them (Rahman, 1997).

Both Urdu and English are the languages of education and are promoted in various spheres of life and are the languages of the domains of power (Rahman, 2005; Mahmood & Gondal, 2017). Alongside these two languages, there are four provincial languages spoken and then other local and indigenous languages having very small proportion of the population inheriting them. If we assess the importance of provincial and local languages against Urdu and English, we may conclude that Urdu and English have downplayed the role of the indigenous languages (Manan, David & Dumanig, 2017) and have created a situation where they are considered stigma instead of being acknowledged as repertoires of local knowledge.

Among all the languages spoken in the country, Punjabi has the highest number of speakers and makes more than 44 percent of the population. This language is majorly used in the whole country, but the province of Punjab has major concentration of Punjabi speakers (Rahman, 2017; Mahmood & Gondal, 2017). Over the recent years, the importance and use of Punjabi is on decline and the main reason is that many educated parents prefer to speak in Urdu rather than engaging in conversation in Punjabi with their children (Zaidi, 2010). The state of inertia as well as emotional association with Urdu as the chief icon of Pakistani identity, Urdu has gained extraordinary status. But since it is the language of the majority, its importance remains well acknowledged (Murphy, 2018). Sindhi language is the provincial language of Sindh province. It belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages (Cole, 2006) and a representative of Sindhi identity and cultural heritage (Rahman, 2011). Being the official language of the province Sindh, it is spoken widely in the province. This language has its native speakers not only in Pakistan but also in some parts of India like Mumbai and Gujrat (Cole, 2006). It is also used as a medium of instruction in educational sector at school and college level besides Urdu and English languages (Shamim, 2008). It is the native language of more than 10% of the total population of the country.

Balochi language is the provincial language of the Balochistan province and has the 4% of the native population in the country (Rahman, 2011). Besides Pakistan it is also spoken in Iran and Afghanistan. Spooner (2012) believes that the major contribution to the Balochi language have been made by Joseph Elfebein and Carina Jahani. This language has been associated with Baloch ethnic community as they use it to mark their ethnic and cultural identity. Pashto language is the language of the majority of people living in the Khyber Pakhtoonkhawa and has more than 15 percent of the population in the country (Rahman, 2011). More than 70 per cent of the people of the Khyber Pakhtoonkhawa and majority of the related tribal territories (i. e. about 16-17 million people) use this language (Weinreich, 2010). Pashto speakers identify themselves as an ethnic group (Khan, 2016) since they believe in their culture and linguistic practices being distinct from the other cultures and languages. Rahman (2003, 2011) contends that Pashto has been deployed as a marker of Pakhtun identity by the ethno-nationalist Pakhtun leaders as it is their desire to make it a symbol of identity and use this language in the domains of power.

Saraiki language is among the six major languages spoken in the country, especially in the southern part of the Punjab province and is the mother tongue of more than 10 percent of the population (Rahman, 2011). It's not spoken in south Punjab, but it is one of the common domestic languages of Sindh, eastern Balochistan and southern KPK. 32

There is a serious conflict between Saraiki and Punjabi speakers which has resulted in the formation of Saraiki movement (Rasoolpuri, 2010). Activists of the Saraiki movement use language to mark their ethnic identity (Hashmi and Majeed, 2014) and build a pressure group in order to articulate their political, economic and cultural dispossession. They have succeeded in emerging as a fifth linguistic unit and are acknowledged to have individual national identity (Rahman, 2011). The movement to promote awareness about language and culture has gained momentum recently. The Punjabis have tried to downplay the Saraiki movement by repeatedly creating discourse of labeling them as Punjabis (Rasoolpuri, 2014). Despite all efforts to undermine the movement, this language remains strongly associated with the ethnic identity of the Saraiki people. Asif (2010) also argues that this language is a source of ethnic identity for its speakers, and they have set out to develop an ethno-national realization for resisting any kind of assimilation whether of their ethnicity or language. This has become a useful resort to counter the insecurity of identity loss and also to challenge the misleading label of counting Saraikis as Punjabis.

4. The Sociopolitical Identity of Saraiki Community

Saraiki language is one of the widely spoken languages with more than 10 percent native speakers in Pakistan. Wagha (1990) quoted in his book that Saraiki is one of the major languages of South Asia and it contributed to the dialects of Asian Pre-Aryan, Dardic and Dravideans groups and is known with different names in different regions. Shackle (1976) has suggested six varieties of Saraiki as Multani, Bahawalpuri, Sindhi, Thali, Jhangli and Shahpuri. The Saraiki language is not only spoken in Pakistan but also in some parts of India and United Kingdom (Baart, 2001). In Pakistan, its native population is mainly concentrated in south part of the Punjab province and some parts of northern Sindh. There are several views about the origin of Saraiki language; Mughal (2007) considers it one of the oldest languages and citing Gardezi (1996), he talks about its inception in 5th BC, Rahman (2002) argues about its beginning in 1400 AD while Ahsan (1990) claims that it was being spoken in the archaic centre of Indus Civilization. This Ahsan's view has recently been supported by Rasoolpuri (2010) who also contends that Saraiki was the language of Haakra Valley even in the very starting period of Indus civilization.

The area dominated by Saraiki population is called Saraiki belt or Saraiki waseb and is located in the south part of the Punjab province and near the upper side of the Indus River. The anthropologists and historians traced the existence of Saraiki

civilisation and identified Multan and Bahawalpur as its culture and power center. The history of Saraiki culture and civilisation can be dated back to Pre-Aryan Semite origin. The earliest mention of Saraiki language appeared in the writings of historians who came to India during invasion of Alexander the Great. Saraiki as a language is believed to have originated from the Sindhi word SIRO which means 'north'. With the passage of time Saraikis developed their distinct ethnic character and Multan as well as Bahawalpur were the centres of its development. Dhareeja (2013) argued that the Saraiki population was concentrated in Multan and the adjacent areas. These areas were the part of the Punjab province, but Sindhi civilisation influenced the Saraiki civilisation. The close proximity of Multan with Bahawalpur also contributed to the development of Saraiki civilisation as it was also dominated by Saraiki speakers. Bukhari (2010) maintains that the Saraiki language and culture bears the influence of Arab, Persian, Turkish and Mongol culture. Hashmi and Majeed (2014), argue the antiquity of Saraiki ethnic narrative by describing the strong connection between Saraiki language and the ethnicity of Saraiki people. The Saraikis base their ethnicity on the claim that Punjabi in itself is a dialect of Saraiki language (Rehman, 2006). During the colonial period, there were many regional vernaculars like Multani, Riasti, Jatki, Landhi and Dera Wali spoken in the region currently known as Saraiki belt (Wagha, 1990).

All Pakistani Saraiki Conference with the purpose of promoting the cause of Saraiki language and movement was held in 1975 which resulted in uniting the leaders of Saraiki people. The label of Saraiki appealed to all ethno-nationalities of the area to gather on one platform since the activists of Saraiki movement termed their language as Saraiki in its own right and opposed to Punjabi (Rahman, 2011). Initially this was done to counter the fear of identity extinction and to get rid of the misleading label of Punjabis. This movement which was initiated in 1960s with a purpose to divide Punjab in two provinces was converted into Pakistan Saraiki Party in 1989 (Javed, 2004). There have been several resolutions by the national assembly of Pakistan as well as provincial assembly of Punjab in the recent years to create the south Punjab province (Roofi & Alqama, 2013). The name that had been proposed for the separate province of Saraiki community is Saraikistan. In few of the research studies on the social and sociolinguistic dimensions, the study conducted by Asif (2005) is groundbreaking. She has talked about the ethnic identity of the Saraiki speakers as they have been making efforts to promote their language and ethno-cultural identity which remains oblivious so far.

The Saraiki community has reacted to the threat to their language and identity and set out to develop an ethno-national consciousness in order to resist the assimilation of their ethnic group and language (Asif, 2010). Even though Saraiki is amongst the four major languages in Pakistan, no attention has been paid at official level to recognize or to promote it. As mentioned earlier, the language policies devised at various times have promoted Urdu at the expense of indigenous languages, but the other major languages find some acknowledgement as Punjabi, Sindhi and Pashto are the provincial languages of the Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtoon Kha provinces of the country. Saraiki language does not enjoy any official status, it lacks prestige or its implementation in educational sector as medium of instruction (Garcia, 2016). These reasons may affect the way the Saraiki native speakers view or use their mother tongue.

5. Concluding Remarks

It can be summarized now that the Saraiki language has an ancient culture and civilization as its cultural matrix. The Saraiki language marks a sense of identity and belonging for its speakers. In a linguistically competitive environment in which most of the Saraiki speaking population resides, it has potential threats from dominant languages such as English, Urdu and Punjabi. Though the Saraiki population is in millions, the ethnolinguistic vitality of the language is quite low on aspects of institutional support and its official status. There is a widespread sense of deprivation as these areas populated by the Saraiki community are less developed in comparison with the other regions. The study concludes that this deep sense of deprivation has motivated the Saraiki community to demand a separate province consequent upon the issues ranging from the linguistic marginalization and lack of employability to unjustified distribution of resources to the Saraiki populated areas and administrative hurdles faced by them. It is asserted that the sociopolitical struggle of the Saraiki community has created awareness in the Saraiki community about their linguistic identity, its preservation and augmentation of its power. It can be forecast that this sociopolitical awareness will lead to improved linguistic situation for the community.

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