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## Religious Militancy, Migration and Identity: Reflection of Internal Displacement of Swat Pathans in Folk Poetry

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### Abstract

*Division of human beings into tribes, empires and states: most accurately into identities, is a matter of nature since existence. These identities are formed and reformed through various stages of human history; and conflicts, more importantly displacing conflicts, play an imperative role in this restructuring process. The Swat conflict consequent to Maulvi Fazlullah's Shariatization campaign resulted in forced migration of 2.7 million people in an utter despair. The migration itself, like the very nature of the conflict, had a confusing impact on the lives and thinking of the people of the area and poetry seems to be an important, if not the only source, of the situation analysis. Therefore, this paper tries to analyze the psychological distress of forcefully displaced people of Swat, called Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and will evaluate how forced displacement affects the very psychology of the people of the area. This mental illness is well reflected in the poetry developed in the area. Therefore, poetry of a poet of Swat has been used as a self-portrait of thoughts and emotions of the people of the valley in this paper. It has been concluded that identity seems to be a benign phenomenon, but it is seriously affecting the issue of belonging of people of the land to the state of Pakistan. Issues in the far clouds if not rectified now may create a situation which will be very difficult if not impossible for the policy makers to tackle with in order to keep unity, faith and discipline.*

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## Introduction

Islam being a religion of peace and order in life has its unique religious identity. In order to get a clear idea of the kind of the identity and identification it wants to give to its followers, let us study few of core teachings of Islam about it. In a tradition of the holy prophet PBUH he defines a Muslim as the one from whom other fellows feel safe. It is not a trait of a Muslim to harm others in any form or by any means. So, this is the base of Muslim religious Identity. The tradition of the holy prophet PBUH states that.

عن عبد الله بن عمرو بن العاص رضي الله عنهما عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:  
 “المسلم من سلم المسلمون من لسانه، ويده، والمهاجر من هجر ما نهى الله عنه” (متفق عليه)

In another tradition the holy prophet PBUH said that:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي خُطْبَتِهِ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَا يُكْتَبُ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ حَتَّى يَسْلَمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ يَدِهِ وَ لِسَانِهِ، وَ لَا يَنَالُ دَرَجَةَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَتَّى يَأْمَنَ أَخُوهُ بِوَائِقِهِ وَ جَارُهُ بِوَادِرِهِ، وَ لَا يُعَدُّ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ حَتَّى يَدَعَ مَالاً بَأْسَ بِهِ جَذَاراً عَمَّا بِهِ الْبَأْسُ. إِنَّهُ مَنْ خَافَ الْبَيَّاتِ أَدْلَجَ

The Messenger of Allah (S) said in one of his speeches: “O' People! Surely a servant will not be counted as one of the Muslims until other people are protected from his hand and his tongue; and he will never reach the stage of a true believer until his brother (in faith) is safe from his evil and annoyance, and his neighbour is protected and safe from his harshness and anger; and he will never reach the stage of being one with Taqwa (Allah conscious) until he keeps away from those erroneous actions which cause him to spiritually pollute himself. Surely the person who fears that he will remain asleep, keeps active and moves at night...”

Similarly, the five objectives of Islamic Shari'a are very important instruction to establish Muslim's identity. They are as follows.

مقاصد الشارع أو مقاصد الشريعة والمقاصد الشرعية كلها عبارات تستعمل بمعنى واحد،  
 ويمكن حصر المراد منها بالآتي

حفظ الدين

حفظ النفس

حفظ العقل

حفظ النسل

وحفظ المال

The five key objectives of Islamic shariah are therefore,

1. To preserve religion
2. To preserve self
3. To preserve mind
4. To preserve race
5. To preserve wealth.

So, from the above quoted lines it is evident that Islamic Shari'a is a comprehensive peace for all mankind. Discussing the position of boarder lines where people while crossing through face certain restrains is a highly debatable issue in modern political theory. It is often debated that these boarder lines are nothing but dividing one human whole into many. However, division of humans in tribes, areas and most suitably identities is indeed a matter of the nature of human being and one may feel it in the feelings reflected by people forcefully displaced. Displacement and internal migration create a boom for the mental health illness industry, especially when the conflict is itself of a particularly confusing and volatile nature like the one faced by people in Swat. This paper has tried to evaluate the psychological distress the people of Swat faced when they got a temporary identity of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's). In Swat, people adept with love, peace and respect for each other have been subjected to hatred, destruction, and disruption of their social setup. Natural beauty of the land and the rich cultural heritage has been targeted with extremism and violence. Life is now, quite simply, living with the dead and a key question people ask is, will peace come again or not? Attempting to answer this question leaves the displaced person in total hopelessness which combining with the political confusion regarding the situation leads to a type of psychopathic disorder and serious mental illness that impacts the whole of one's personality. This mental illness is well reflected in the poetry developed in the area. Therefore, poetry of a poet of Swat has been used as a self-portrait of thoughts and emotions of the people of the valley in this paper. If policy makers could themselves feel this pain, it may mean the

end of the regime of war, weapons and migrations. Perhaps the world could be converted into peaceful greenery with love, peace, respect and compassion, rather than the present wild-west. Moreover, identity seems to be a benign phenomenon, but it is seriously affecting the issue of belonging of people of the land to Pakistan. Issues in the far clouds if not rectified now may create a situation which will be very difficult if not impossible for the policy makers to tackle with in order to keep unity, faith and discipline.

This project evaluates the psychological impacts on the displaced persons (internally displaced persons – IDPs) from Swat valley during the conflict of Taliban and Pakistan Army in 2008-09 which displaced about 1.694701million people from the area (Khurshid Khan, 2013). I ask how the psychology of the general masses been impacted in the region as a whole. Mass migration and forced displacement of people, along with their families, has highly affected the consciousness of the people in the area. Furthermore, the nature of the conflict was so complex that there are several conflicting theories regarding the causes and nature of conflict in Swat, both academically and in public discourse. Some theories term the conflict as one of state and anti-state actors, or a war against extremism, or a strategic war, or a war of the state against her own people, or a class war in a society with volatile class boundaries (Ahmad & Anwar: 2017). Thoughts and emotions of the people who witnessed and were affected in the conflict are so impaired that perception of reality relating to the causes and nature of the conflict is severely disordered (Dr Sultan-e-Room, 2013). Therefore, I am hereby putting an analysis of the impaired psychology of the people in the socio-cultural context of the people using poetry as the spiritual self-portrait of the people.

The folk-songs of a nation are its spiritual self-portraits, provided the race is primitive enough to be honest (Ghani Khan: 1958). Literature has played its positive role in portraying the social and political life in human history (Hakimullah: 2010). Poetry plays an important role in every era; thus, poets are called the eyes of a nation (Maghmoom: 2007). Poetry has a long history in the area. It has also developed in the area as a popular reflection of people's perceptions regarding the nature of the recent conflict and its impacts on the people of Swat. Therefore, I will analyze a piece of

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poetry developed by Faiz Ali Khan Faiz, who is a poet and an internally displaced person (IDP) of the conflict. I used his poem to engage in a counter-discourse regarding presentation of Swat residents as 'terrorists' and to provide an alternative view as to why people have been forced to migrate and the impacts on their lives. I interviewed the poet by himself to present meanings and background of metaphorical phrases which the poet discusses himself. An informal group discussion (IGD) was arranged carefully selecting participants from all the three districts of Swat, Dir Lower and Buner—areas of high tension in the conflict. Findings from the poetry, interview and group discussion are presented and key message to the readers is included in the conclusion section of this paper. This paper will demonstrate that primary concern of people of Swat valley, during the conflict-ridden displacement, was based on an extreme care and compassion for their homeland. So keen and conscious were the people regarding the future of the valley that one can hardly find any reflection of the hardships and difficulties they themselves faced during the displacement in Faiz's poetry. It is said as, "how they can see their country to be destroyed/ you haven't seen the hearts of elders of my Swat" (Faiz's Poetry: 2010). This reflects intense love of the inhabitants with their habitat. This paper will present the methodology of the project by utilizing poetry and the limitations attached with. The poem under analysis is presented in English translated version for better understanding of non-Pashto speakers. This is followed by finding section which presents key findings of the project. These findings are then analyzed in the concluding section of this paper.

### **Methodology**

The methodology adopted for this paper is primarily content analysis of a piece of poetry developed in the area. The unit of analysis is a piece of poetry developed by a poet Faiz Ali Khan Faiz, an internally displaced person (IDP) of the conflict and is therefore used as a counter discourse to analyze the impact of mass displacement on psychology and feelings of people of Swat valley during the conflict-ridden displacement in 2008-09. The advantages of using poetry for the purpose are that it reflects a 'voice' that emerges from the social and cultural tendencies of the area; something other dominant discourses rarely consider. Limitations of content

analysis of poetry are that the metaphorical concepts may be subjected to varying definitions by various readers (Wimmer, Roger D. & Dominick, Joseph R. 1994). The poet by himself was therefore interviewed to present meanings and background of such phrases which the poet meant by himself. To include perception of others an informal group discussion (IGD) was arranged carefully selecting participants from all the three districts of Swat, Dir Lower and Buner; areas of high tension in the conflict. This IGD had two participants from District Swat, three from District Dir Lower and one from District Buner and was arranged in Peshawar. The poetry, interview and group discussion were analyzed, and the three main findings are presented in the findings section of this paper. Key message to the readers and main finding is included in the conclusion section of this paper.

A serious problem faced during this methodology was that respondents either hide what were exactly their feelings, opinions and experiences during the conflict, or they narrated on the condition not to quote it anywhere, even in the paper. Therefore, findings and conclusion in this paper has its limitations. This shows how complex and strategic nature the conflict had. Secondly, being victim of the conflict by myself, I was not able to think fully 'objectively'. However, this should not take me away from my work and analysis. Rather, in a spirit of academic reflexivity it enables the reader to understand the position from which I write: indeed all of us are writing from one position or another.

### **The poem**

***“Aman Ba Rashe Kana*** (if peace will come again)”

The translation of the poem “*Aman Ba Rashe Kana* (will peace be restored?)” of Faiz Ali Khan Faiz is now provided below and then analysed in the following section. Here the poet in displacement ask about the situation of his village and homeland from a friend passing by his village and the friend answers him of all his questions in the last two verses included in this poem from another poet Rahmat Shah Sahil.

### ***Aman Ba Rashe Kana***

*Will peace spring out again here?*

*How situation in my village was, when you were coming*

*Will hearts made apart become reconnected again?*

*How situation in my village was, when you were coming*

*Were buds of flowers of my garden-land burnt? I asked*

*Were Head Scarves (Lupatay) of my sisters disrupted?*

*What orphans of my village were saying while crying?*

*Was courage intact in the time of testing?*

*Still people hold mutual hatred for each other?*

*Were sentiments of love downed further?*

*Tell me whether people will change or not*

*How situation in my village was, when you were coming*

*Had there any new storm when you were coming?*

*Was the tallest tree of my village still the high?*

*Were there tears on the face of white bearded elder?*

*Was there anyone paining over pains of the younger?*

*Whether God will help us for the white beard of our elders or not*

*How situation in my village was, when you were coming*

*Were the burnt branches of trees become green again in the plains and hills of Swat valley?*

*Was the sweetness of water of springs in our village intact?*

*Narrate a story of the hell of our time to me please!*

*Were flames over my compatriots' heads and hearts cold down now?*

*I asked if the right and wrong doers be identified*

*How situation in my village was, when you were coming*

*Is it true that orphan of my nation wept every time?*

*Is it true that every youngster was weeping over the consequences?*

*Is it true that hills of "Gulibagh" and "Marghazar" were out of greenery?*

*Is it true that Kalam still was expecting not-coming tourists?*

*I asked if land of Faiz will again become prosperous and peaceful*

*How situation in my village was, when you were coming*

***And the answer was.....***

*“This will kill you and will make me lifeless even*

*Death doesn't seem to leave the grip of our neck”*

*(Faiz Ali Khan Faiz)*

## **Findings**

Findings of this paper include three sections

- 1) Love turned to hatred
- 2) A question of survival: will peace come again?
- 3) Hopelessness prevails

### **1) Love Turned to Hatred**

In Faiz's poem, strict social compassion and love for each other is lost in Swat as people are now engaged in hatred for each other. Sentiments of love are down to the lowest levels and hearts are much apart from each other. Orphans are now crying in the plains, which is a source of deep sorrow for members of the society. Head scarves (Lupata), a cloth-cover for heads of females and a symbol of respect for females, is no more placed on their heads. This is used as symbolic in the piece of poetry because head scarves are a symbol of respect of the virtues. Challenging this means total disruption of the society and Pashtun culture. Some are facing the pains of their younger's deaths. Death of love sentiments prevail all other losses in this conflict and displacement. This has led to tears on faces of elders of the valley besides their white beard in a society where respect for elders holds primary position in social interactions. Despite this, elders are the most courageous ones in the Pashtun society and tears in their eyes means extreme bitterness of the situation. Family institutions are damaged, and the bonds of love, compassion, and respect are broken. The one



responsible for creating the mess in not known and everyone is suspected, leading to hatred for everyone.

## 2) A Question of Survival: Will Peace Come Again?

The conflict has led to scarcity of peace but whether it will spring out again? is a question of high value for people of the land. The homeland of peace, love, respect, strict social compassion and natural beauty is disrupted to the very fabric of society and any positive development seems to be limited. "Will the burnt shoots of trees in hills and plains of the valley become green again?" (Faiz's poem: 2009) is a question prevailing thought and emotions of everyone in displacement. Sweet waters of springs of the valley enhances love the people have for each other and for their homeland. But this sweetness is now scarce, and its reconstitution defines life in the valley. Furthermore, there seems extreme complexity over the formation factors of the mess. "Will the wrong-doer be found out?" is a question of every mind in the valley. Who has brought this chaos and who is behind the whole scheme? Still one can find a question "*Da Cha*" (who did this) on faces of every individual in the valley. Everyone wonders either the wrong-doer be found out and punished and will peace come to us again? Everyone is confused and psychologically disordered.

## 4) Hopelessness Prevails

Finally, there seems complete hopelessness if the situation is going to become peaceful and filled with sentiments of love again. The last verse of the poem state that the mess, which the poet calls "*Margay*" (death or a tool of death) doesn't seem to leave the grip of our neck. "*This will kill you and will make me lifeless even/ death doesn't seem to leave the grip of our neck*" (Faiz's poem: last verse). This hopelessness forms a most important foundation stone for the psychosis and thought confusion of the general public in displacement and post-displacement era.

## Conclusion

Swat was famous for its rich tapestry and peace-loving people but the crisis which erupted suddenly in the beginning of the 21st century surprised many regional experts. 6680 killed (Islam; 2014), 6000 injured, 2.7 million displaced (UNDP; 2011), 8000 to 10500 houses (approximately) fully or partially damaged (Bangash; 2012),

about five hundred schools destroyed, forty-three (43) bridges and 663 kilometers of road were either totally or partially damaged by military operations (2007 to 2009) in a valley famous for scenic beauty and peace: the Swat Valley. The present conflict of military and Taliban in Swat in 2008-09 led to the mass displacements of the people of the valley. This displacement made people homeless in their own homeland. Traumatized and facing an inescapable vulnerability of life become a norm and people were psychologically scarred and concerned about the future of their homeland. So conscious were people regarding the future of the valley that in Faiz's poem one can hardly find any reflection of the hardships and difficulties they faced during the displacement. The only concern dominant in this poetry is worry of the future of their homeland. Indeed, this shows intense love of the inhabitants with their habitat.

The displacement has quickly turned love for each other to hatred. Hearts appear so apart from each other that the chances for reconciliation seem slim. As Faiz show, the nature of the conflict is also complex. The question "if the right and wrong doers be identified" (Faiz's poem: 2009) prevails the thought and emotions of the people. Total hopelessness is felt. This hopelessness has impaired human thought and emotions, leading to psychological distress amongst the people. Further confusion and intense care for future of the homeland has turned this psychological distress to psychosis—the deepest wound this displacement has left on the hearts of people of the land.

If only policy makers could feel the trauma of a displaced life, this would end the regime of war and weapons along with the critical forced migrations, and most importantly the internal displacements. Moreover, identity seems to be a benign phenomenon, but it is seriously affecting the issue of belonging of people of the land to Pakistan. It seems that converting the internal boundaries between the area and the state to permanent one may be as easy as not before for those who want to exploit the situation and mobilize people for a separate governance. Issues in the far clouds if not rectified now may create a situation which will be very difficult if not impossible for the policy makers to tackle with in order to keep unity, faith and discipline.

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