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Extended Abstract

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Studying the Effect of Climate on Balochi Children's Songs and Their Educational Functions

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Introduction

Children's songs and rhymes form a vital part of folk literature. Like other oral traditions, they emerge from the natural environment, climate, and the lived experiences of communities and remain deeply rooted in these elements. A significant portion of Balochi folk literature, particularly oral traditions related to children, remains undocumented and unpublished. Without proper recording, analysis, and dissemination, many of these cultural treasures risk being lost or altered over time, making it difficult to access the inherited cultural legacy and leaving gaps in our understanding of the Baloch people.

Each geographical region and ecosystem carries its own unique characteristics, which inevitably shape human life. These environmental factors also influence the literary expressions of a society. This is clearly reflected in Balochi literature, including its children's songs. This study aims to examine Balochi children's songs through the lens of climate and environment, exploring how these factors shape the themes, structures, and educational roles of such songs.

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By analyzing the interplay between ecological conditions and oral traditions, the paper sheds light on the cultural significance of children's songs in Baloch society and emphasizes the urgency of preserving these intangible heritages before they fade or transform beyond recognition.

Method, Purpose and Review of Literature

The research materials in this article are derived from the author's fieldwork in Balochi oral literature and, therefore, appear to be previously unpublished. This study represents an effort to document, introduce, and analyze these works, examining the ecological features and educational functions of selected Balochi children's songs through descriptive and analytical methods.

Balochi literature remained predominantly oral until the mid-20th century and was transmitted from one generation to the next in this manner. This oral tradition encompasses literary works that are taken seriously within the community such as epics, love stories, folktales, and historical narratives—let alone children's literature, which continues to be largely oral to this day. This is especially true in Iran, where Balochi scholars began documenting oral literature later than their counterparts in neighboring countries like Pakistan.

As a result, research in this area is relatively scarce. Existing studies mostly consist of collections and transcriptions of songs, particularly lullabies. The distinction of pioneering work in this field belongs to Western researchers such as Longworth Dames (1988), who published a number of songs and lullabies. However, the introduction and analysis of Balochi children's literature in Iran requires works that engage with Iranian and Persian-language publications. The credit for the first serious scholarly work on Balochi children's literature in Iran arguably goes to Jahandideh (2023), who analyzed the structure and themes of Balochi lullabies.

It appears that the present article is the first study to examine Balochi children's songs from the perspective of ecology and their educational content. The songs discussed here have been selected from the body of folk literature prevalent in the Mehrestan region (Ma_gas), and thus are presented in the dialect specific to that area.

Discussion

Given the hot and dry climate of Balochestan, a significant portion of Baloch children's songs reflect or are influenced by this environmental feature. Many of the children's melodies in Balochi are associated with wishes for the arrival of clouds, water, and rain, and it seems that this conceptual domain appears more frequently than other themes in Baloch children's songs.

An example of a translated song: “The clouds will come and the rain will fall / Those who have barley seeds will have abundant barley / Wheat will be plentiful for the chiefs / Corn will be abundant for the farmers and peasants / Millet will also be plentiful for the poor.”

Animal husbandry has been both a profession and a form of entertainment for children in rural and nomadic areas, and as a result, some songs, rhymes, riddles, and stories in children's literature are connected to rural life and livestock. This theme is also reflected in Baloch children's literature. In earlier times, hunting was an important pastime and a major source of nourishment, and its presence is widely seen in Baloch children's poems and songs.

Trees and animals of each region are manifested in the language and literature of that land, and children, through their interaction with the natural environment, become familiar with them via literature. Many of the earliest awarenesses of Baloch children are shaped by these concepts through songs and poems. Example: “manoŋ mamme čogol pā/ woti čokkoŋ jato košt/ pa kōhi kōnaliyoŋ košt/ pa porki bāšgiyoŋ košt”. [I am the bear with puppy feet (puppy: newborn dog) / I struck and killed my child / I killed him for the fruit of the wild palm / And for the blossom of the mountain palm called “Pork.”]

Many other social and cultural themes are also reflected in Baloch children's literature, and children encounter these concepts through such literary works. Among them are names of mythical heroes, imaginary creatures, and similar figures. Folk literature originates from the heart of society and thus reflects the language and culture of the people. However, a cultural condition or a linguistic or social tradition may undergo transformation. Nevertheless, traces of it may remain in folk language and be passed down through oral traditions and children's songs to later generations. Discovering such cases and examples is rare and challenging but achievable.

Conclusion

Children’s literature, like other literary genres, reflects key characteristics of society and serves as an important source for understanding its social and cultural conditions. Through the study of Baloch children's literature, we encounter educational methods that have emerged in harmony with the environment and climate of the region, as well as references to traditional ways of interacting with nature and the ecosystem.

The arid climate of Balochestan, the significance of clouds and rain—and conversely, summer floods—along with the trees, plants, and animals of this desert region such as palm, daz, konar, and creatures like the Baloch bear, desert lizard, and hoopoe, are all reflected in children's songs. These elements not only illustrate the impact of climate on children's literature but also convey linguistic and cultural teachings related to these concepts.

Encouraging girls to learn the art of embroidery, references to aromatic substances like cardamom and clove, aspects of pastoral, rural, and agricultural life, and the names of legendary figures such as Mir Chakar are all present in Baloch children's songs. As in other cultures, Balochi children's songs sometimes

contain phrases that lack strong semantic connections to the lines before or after them, or appear entirely disconnected in meaning.

Keywords: Folklore literature, children's literature, regional literature, Balochi.

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