

Mythical Animals in Indo Iranian Tribes: A case Study of Balochi Folklore, Science and Superstitions

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Abstract

The animals which subdue human supremacy and intelligence with their power and strength are always considered to be possessing special powers in indigenous communities around the world. Like any native population, the Baloch sphere is also replete with the stories of these mythical animals and their special powers which other animal kingdoms are lacking. In this paper, it is revealed how these animals are treated in Balochi folklore, the powers these animals possess, and how the Baloch society uses these supposing powers to enhance their strength.

Keywords: folklore, hyena, wolf, crocodile, bear, snakes

Introduction

The origins of folk stories, myths, conditions, and the time under which they emerged are unknown. The folktale is a story passed on by word of mouth rather than by writing, and thus partly modified by successive re-telling before being written down or recorded (Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, 2008, p.132).

In mythology many roles can be seen for animals, often depending on the culture from which the myths come since the beginning of history, people lived in close contact with animals, generally as hunters and farmers, and have developed myths and legends about them and that specify humans and animals relationships. Sometimes animals perform services for humans, including guiding them or helping them complete tasks.

The Baloch tribes have their peculiar mythology and legends that reflect their culture, values, history, and geographical location. There are many mythical animals in Baloch folklore. Folklore is an important subject of study that includes all traditional and oral art, skills, and knowledge. Folklore includes folk literature, folk psychology, folk culture, folk art, traditional knowledge, and skills.

While studying the topic it becomes clear that these prevailing myths are by no means discrete in nature rather these are one way to the other and are integrated from one indigenous society to another and passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, these myths are

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the commonwealth of folk wisdom that own and practiced by all rustic societies around the world. The similarities of these myths also indicated our common ancestral heritage which despite a thousand years of isolation and separation from each other still existed among these human tribes.

Methodology

The context of the study was Pakistani society where all types of folktales are prevalent. The investigative objective of this study was to investigate and study the influence made by folklore with mythical animals in the Baloch community in terms of sociological, cultural, Psychological, and philosophical dimensions.

In this study, the mythical animals in Folklore of Aryan Tribes: A case study of Baloches: Science and Superstitions are investigated by studying the Balochi tales, compiled by Mansel Longworth Dames published in the journal "Folk-Lore" A Quarterly Review of the Folk-Lore Society London from 1878 to 1889 and series of "Gedi Kissa" compiled by Balochi Academy Quetta.

A qualitative research approach is used in the study. Using this method, the researcher would be able to learn in-depth details about the mythical animals in the folklore of Aryan tribes and myths and explore relationships between humans and animals. The authors also visited the Manjo Pir Karachi, Lasbal district, and Makran to gather data and observe the behavior of these mythical animals. Academic publications, books, and online articles about mythical creatures are used as secondary sources.

In this paper, the authors have tried to enlist these myths regarding some animals commonly found in the Baloch sphere and their relationship with other indigenous societies around the world. Therefore, the study will enrich the academic understanding of animals that are considered with possessing special powers as well as those which exhibited their long-lasting impacts on prevailing Baloch culture and traditions.

Theoretical Framework

Different theories deal with the origin of myth but none of the theories give absolute answers to the question that how myth has come into existence and how mythical creatures / mythical animals become part of folklore. The most important theory about the origin of myth has been given by Euhemerus and followed by Friedrich Max Muller, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, Bronislaw Malinowski, Sir James George Frazer, Levi-Strauss, C.G.Jung and Freud.

The conceptual structure of the study titled "Mythical animals in the folklore of Aryan tribes - a case study of Baloches: Science and Superstitions" can be linked with the Functional Theory given by Bronislaw Malinowski. The functional myth theory explains that myths were used to teach morality and social behavior. According to

functional myth theory, myths were created to maintain discipline in society and myths told about what types of things should and shouldn't be done, and the consequences for those wrongdoings.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do folktales with mythical animals influence the Baloch community in sociological and cultural aspects?
2. What is the educational implication of folklore?
3. In what ways do folktales exhibit their long-lasting impacts on prevailing Baloch culture and traditions?

Literature Review

The majority of animals, mostly reptiles appeared during the Mesozoic Era, which is again subdivided into the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. The Cretaceous Period was the longest period which lasted for approximately 79 million years. During the Mesozoic Era, the continents were different compared with the present time. At the beginning of the Mesozoic Era, all present continents were conjoined with each other and made a single supercontinent named Pangaea that later drift away. The supercontinent Pangaea is again subdivided into northern and southern continents namely Laurasia and Gondwana continents respectively, separated from each other by the massive Tethys Ocean. The Gondwana continent comprised present South America, Africa, India, Australia, and the Antarctic continents. During the late Jurassic Period (145 million years ago) the Indian continent along with Madagascar and Seychelles Islands separated from the main African continent. Therefore, from the Jurassic to Cretaceous periods these "African" animals also migrated from the African mainland to the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia.

During this period, most of the flora and fauna migrated from Africa and settled in present-day Balochistan. The prehistoric environment of Balochistan was comparatively ideal for maintaining the large populations of these migrating flora and fauna in their newly settled areas. However, it must be kept in mind that the evolutionary tendency did not stop after "the out of Africa" rather, they continued to evolve and there are also several examples that support the theory of the Asian origin of these animals and their migration to the African continent.

These desolated places when occupied by the early human settlers, encountered and competed with animals for available limited resources, therefore, they loathed each other, and their fears deepen into the mind of ancient humans. As Tolkien in his book "The Lord of the Rings" put it, "History became a legend. Legend became myth"

(Tolkien 1991). From ancient times to modernity these myths became parts and parcel of Baloch's surroundings. Stories of these animals, heroic acts of early humans, unfulfilled desires, and activities relevant to fulfill these desires, ceremonies, and daily events are told in the form of stories that are transferred from generation to generation. The transferring of these myths from one generation to another is not restricted to Baloch culture, rather it is common to many indigenous societies around the world. For instance, the native Hawaiian legends unit human and animal forms into a single unit that always exchanges their forms with each other (Westervelt, 2005). This concept prevailed in ancient Roman mythology. It is suggested that before the "scientific explosion" particularly during the 20th century, up till the nineteenth century, people all around the world believed and practised magic for different reasons. However, they have well acquainted with the limitations of these rituals (Zipes, 2001). The same is true with the Baloch society which indulged in different rituals and still believed in the supernatural powers of some mighty animals existing around their abodes. For instance, the Indian wolf or Grey wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes* Sykes, 1831) was considered the harbinger of good luck particularly its forehead and fondness of female black bears (*Ursus thibetanus gedrosianus* Blandford 1877) in captivating men in their caves as well as the metamorphosis of black cobra (*Najanaja* L.) from animal to human form are some examples of the relationship between Baloch societies with these wild animals. Moreover, in Baloch tribal societies even in modern times, the shoulder bone of sacrificed goat (*Capra aegagrus hircus* L.) is used for forecasting the weather pattern. The visibility of blood vessels on the pectoral girdle (shoulder bone) are assumed as symbols of river and rivulet which means the next growing season to be favourable for agricultural purposes. On the other hand, if these vessels are invisible on such a bone, famine is assumed. The question that arises is how these myths get started, particularly among indigenous societies. James Fraser in his outstanding voluminous work on myths prevailing among the native societies around the world, elaborated it in these words: "people do not usually observe a custom because, on a particular occasion, a mythical being is said to have acted in a certain way. But, on the contrary, they very often invent myths to explain why they practise certain customs" (Fraser, 1912).

Therefore, such a phenomenon is not restricted only to the Baloch sphere and indigenous societies around the world also used the bones of animals for the same purposes. Most of these communities are still living a hunter and gatherer life and are dependable upon the hunting animals and the witchdoctors or shamans preserved the whole skeleton without breaking a single bone. On the other hand, the Baloch society is semi-pastoral and the livelihood depends upon animal husbandry as well as limited agricultural activities. Therefore, their

lives are dependent upon rainfall due to the lack of any permanent and reliable water resources. Therefore, using the shoulder bone for oracles is a very common practice prevailing among nomadic Baloch tribes of *Mari-Bugtis*, *Jhalawan*, *Sarawan*, *Makrani* as well as *Rukhshanitribes*. It is interesting to observe two extreme ways of living using a single symbol for oracles. For instance, Mari and Bugtis tribes are mostly pastoral nomads and their livelihood depends upon animal husbandry. The pasturelands are important for animal grazing and vegetation cover is dependent upon annual precipitation, therefore, the summer and winter rainfalls are important for their pastoral life. On the other hand, once pastoral nomads who settled in rainfed agricultural areas are also depending upon the seasonal precipitation for growing drought-resistant cereal crops.

Therefore because of their past experiences with consulting the shoulder bone for oracles, they also use the said bone of goats and sheep for that purpose. The unbroken bone in these cases the shoulder bone is important and most of the nomad tribes also do the same practices for some other purposes. For instance, pastoral tribes of the Caucasus particularly the *Abchases* reserved one-third of the animal herds for themselves because the rest of the herds they sold to a stranger who may handle the animal's bones disrespectfully. The herds which these tribes kept for themselves were considered special and eaten by their family members or tribal clans and the bones of these sacred animals were collected unbroken and buried or hanged on a crown of the old tree (Fraser 1912). It can be postulated from these stories that the pastoral nomads have a special respect for their herds and they did not indulge in any molestation regarding their bones because they assumed that doing so it might affect their animals. The utilization of shoulder bone for oracles possibly be a remnant of centuries-old pastoral traditions which transferred from generation to generation. Interestingly rich *Kalmucks* tribe is fond of a special ram which they usually called the "ram of heaven or spirit" they usually sacrificed that ram on a special occasion (Georgi, 1776).

A similar practice is also common among the Baloch tribes of Makran regarding the *Char-Shahian-Gurand* (four-horned sheep) which is a unique and rare sheep breed and mostly found in animal herds of pastoral nomads of Awaran and surrounding areas of Balochistan. This special ram is raised with care and fed well and sacrificed during the *Eid-ul-Azha* (an Islamic festival to celebrate the inclination of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) to follow Allah's orders to sacrifice his son, Prophet Ismail).

From these examples, it is clear that these prevailing myths are by no means discrete in nature rather these are one way to the other and are integrated from one indigenous society to another and passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, these myths are the commonwealth of folk wisdom that own and practices by all rustic

societies around the world. The similarities of these myths also indicated our common ancestral heritage which despite a thousand years of isolation and separation from each other still existed among these human tribes.

In this paper, the authors have tried to enlist these myths regarding some animals commonly found in the Baloch sphere and their relationship with other indigenous societies around the world. Therefore, the following is the list of animals that are considered with possessing special powers as well as those which exhibited their long-lasting impacts on prevailing Baloch culture and traditions.

1. Marsh Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris* Lesson, 1831) in Balochi also known as Gando, Wago or Nihing, belongs to the family Crocodylidae. Marshy *gando* or simply *gando* is found in all major perennial rivers of Balochistan including Hingol, Porali (Lasbela district), Nihing (Kech district), Shadi Kaur, Basol (Gwadar) Bolan, and neighbouring areas. It is one of the most common species of the crocodylidae family which is found in freshwater rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, and marshes of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Compared with a female, the male grows up to 4-5 m in length however female of this species is comparatively smaller in size (approximately 2.45 m). The distinguishing morphological features of this species include the broadest snout which makes it a resemblance to an alligator found in southern marshy areas of the United States of America. In India and neighbouring countries, the family crocodylidae has three different species however *Crocodylus palustris* Lesson, 1831 is the only species found in Balochistan and the neighbouring Iranian province of Sistan-Balochistan. At the juvenile stage, they are dark in colour, however, in later stages particularly once reached matured the body colour of *C. palustris* turned into dark grey or brown. The diet of this species includes fish, small lizards, waterfowls, and small mammals (Boulenger, 1890). Unlike saltwater crocodiles, the *gando* is less aggressive and no report has been found of humans attacking by this species. It is one of the calmest species found in freshwater resources of Balochistan and most of the time found resting near the banks of a river or in shallow water and patiently waiting for his prey.

Crocodiles in Balochi Folklore and Myths

The *gandoo* is also regarded as a sacred animal at the mausoleum of Sufi saint, Pir Manghopir situated in the north of Karachi city. These gandooos play an important role in the spiritual life of the local Baloch communities of Karachi and neighbouring cities. Every year the indigenous Baloch communities of African origin celebrate the annual festival of Pir Mangho and these crocodiles were treated with spiritual zeal and crowned with garlands and feed with flesh of sacrificed animals. According to local legend, the crocodile

which is populated in a restricted pond around the mausoleum of the saint is a manifestation of *Pir Mangho*. As the legend goes on these crocodiles are believed that were *Pir Mangho's* lice which he turned into crocodiles. The British chroniclers in their writings of the 19th century mentioned these creatures swarming in the neighbouring pond. The British chroniclers suggested that gando at Pir Mangho has been here for “thousands of years.” It is most probable that these crocodiles originally belonged to the nearby Hub River which in course of history turned its direction towards the west and these animals were confined in these ponds, although there is no scientific evidence available to prove this argument. Some scientists and archaeologists argued that in antiquity the area already had a lake connected with the neighbouring river and during a flood, in ancient times these crocodiles washed away from the river and were restricted in this area. The carbon dating of the surrounding area suggested that this area belongs to the Bronze Age (3300-1200 BC) and is a contemporary of the mature Indus civilization period. Moreover, the designs found on copper artifacts discovered in this area suggested that the local population domesticated the crocodiles and worshipped them (Paracha, 2016). From antiquity to modern time these crocodiles have evolved through an anthropogenic induced evolutionary process and unlike any other population of this creature found elsewhere, they had been tamed and dependent on the food provided by the devotees of *Pir Mangho*. These docile creatures never attacked humans and remained sluggish around the pond and the local caretaker forcibly open their mouths with a stick and insert the meal into their guts.

Besides the Manghopir shrine, *Crocodylu spalustris* in Chabahar, particularly the Bahu Kalat, Kaju, and Pishin rivers of Western Makran also found in large numbers and it was estimated that around 200 individuals were found in these rivers. Nevertheless, due to prevailing drought conditions and anthropogenic interferences in these watercourses, they are becoming outnumbered and have been threatening to become extinct over the past few years (Rafsanjani and Karami 2011).

Unlike devotees of Manghopir who regarded these domesticated crocodiles as pets of saints, the Balochi folktales prevailing in southern parts of Balochistan treated these reptiles differently. According to a Balochi folktale prevailing in Makran and Kharan areas, one day a poor peasant walking in a desolated and barren desert of Makran saw a crocodile anguishing in the scorching sun and shouting for help. “What the matter with you? why you are crying?” The kind-hearted peasant inquired. “I am dying because of thirst in this desert and please take me to the bank of the river because I cannot walk for long distances” replied the crocodile. “How would I trust you because you are a fierce animal and you eat me if I take you to the water” the peasant mumbled. “No, I swear to God I won’t, just for sake

of God please take to the water” the crocodile craved. The man put the massive crocodile on his back and took him to the river and once they reached the river the clever crocodile requested him to please take him to deep water. Once they came to deep water the cunning crocodile showed his true colours and told the poor peasant, “I am going to eat you”. “Why you are doing this to me, I did you a big favour by taking you out of death and now you are giving me this reward of saying that I eat you,” said the peasant inconveniently. During this entire episode, *Mulla Roba* (the wise fox) sits on a rock, watching them patiently. When the peasant saw *Mulla Roba* he requested him please come and help me and protect me from a crocodile. *Mullah Roba* pretended that he couldn’t hear him, therefore, shouted: “A man comes closer I cannot hear you.” He miserably looks towards the crocodile because at that time he was absolutely on his mercy and the crocodile allowed him to go closer to *Mulla Roba*. Once he reached the muddy bank of the river he again started telling his miserable story and *Mullah* again pretended that he could not hear him. Finally, he along with the crocodile came out of the river and reached the rock where *Mullah Roba* was resting and told him the whole story. “I don’t believe that you carried that massive animal at your back and brought him from the desert to the river, no way I don’t believe that” *Mullah Roba* was not convinced. At this time crocodile interrupted their conversation and said yes he took me from the desert and brought me to the water and now I want to eat him. *Mullah Roba* said to the peasant that he delivered his ruling only on the original place where this incident started, therefore, you have to carry this crocodile at your back and take me to that place. Therefore, the peasant, crocodile, and *Mullah Roba* all three went to the desert then *Mullah* order the peasant to throw the crocodile on the hot dunes and save his life. It was too late for the crocodile to understand the trick of wise *Mullah* and once he realized he started crying and begging him that he did a mistake please take him again into the water and don’t let him die in the scorching sun but *Mullah* and thankful peasant left him in this place and went to his home (Yousuf Aziz Gichki, *personal communication*).

This sort of story is also prevalent in different Asian cultures, for instance, in Japanese folklore the same theme is narrated in different ways. According to a Japanese folktale, once upon a time a monkey and a crocodile were diehard friends of each other. The wife of the crocodile becomes jealous of their friendship and cunningly tried to break up their relationship. One day she pretends that she is very sick and as a cure for this ailment she was recommended to eat the heart of the monkey. The crocodile tried to trick his friend, the monkey and told him lets go for a picnic in the sea and put the monkey on his back. On their way into the sea, the crocodile sheepishly told his friend that his wife is very sick she needs his heart. The monkey understands his trick and is well aware that he could not do anything

in the sea to protect himself from the crocodile. Therefore, he made an excuse that he left his heart in a tree and please take me to the tree then I will give you my heart. When the crocodile took him back to the land he ran away (Uther, 2011). This story originated from the Indian subcontinent and was narrated in the Buddhist Pāli text of *Pañcatantra*, whose origin is still unknown. The original text of *Pañcatantra* is translated into Sanskrit and other Indian local languages as well as in the Pahlavi text (Edgerton, 1924). Therefore, it is possible that in Balochi folklore the story of the crocodile and the peasant is inspired by the *Pañcatantra* story when translated into Pahlavi text with some modifications particularly the monkey primate to a human being. Although in Balochi folklore, the crocodile did not have a wife nor does the local peasant get the guts to protect himself from the crocodile but the *Mullah Roba* (the wise fox) came to rescue him. Therefore, in Balochi folklore, the wisdom of the fox which is because of its cunningness and docile nature found its special place and is highly regarded. The story is also portraying the rustic Baloch society in ancient times which showed the divisions in the social structure of the Baloch sphere at that time. The scenery and landscape of this story are a typical Baloch sphere, harsh, desolate, arid, and tough. It also shows the relationship between three unrelated characters of the biological kingdom, one categorized as prey (human), the wise creature (*Mullah Roba*) fox, and the last being a predator in nature (crocodile). The mullah Roba though wise but also cunning and did rescue the peasant but not for free he also demanded his reward for rescuing him. If we implement this story on the Baloch social hierarchy of that time it still fits in the present day where, the Baloch as he was an old-time, is still under the bondage of *Mullah* and the powerful stratum of this pyramid (the *Sardar*). Similarly, this story also demonstrates that it was the *Mullah* who saved the life of an ignorant peasant from the meat-eater crocodile. Therefore, if the local mass because of their ignorance and illiteracy know nothing about these demonic creatures and only the *Mullah* can protect them from these devils. It is true because these petty *mullahs* in Baloch society were well acquainted with the Persian language and literature, hence they were well aware of the above-mentioned monkey and crocodile story and they just modified that story for their interests. On the other hand, it is also true indeed that these *mullahs* were also aware of their vulnerabilities in the Baloch society was the centre of the power circle around the chief and they could afford the animosity of these powerful chiefs, therefore they uphold the stringent boundaries of Baloch society.

The negative role of the crocodile also prevailed in the story of Mororo, the mythical seventh son of Mai Kolanchi, of Karachi fame. According to local tradition, Mai Kolanchi had seven sons, who were assiduous fishermen, and used to go out fishing in the open sea.

Mororo, among seven, was the youngest one and stayed at home with his mother because he was handicapped and incapable to walk. His industrious elder brothers ventured forth to earn their livelihood even during the rough season when no fishermen bother to go for fishing. During the monsoon season, the Northern Arabian Sea becomes dangerously rough, and high tides do not let the local fisher to venture forth for fishing beside as legend goes, there was a huge bloodthirsty crocodile also lived in these water which threatened everyone. One day when Mororo six brothers went for fishing and after several weeks none of them returned home, their relatives started worrying about their safety and believed that they were eaten by that bloodthirsty crocodile. The docile and handicapped Mororo when realized that now he has to take revenge for his brother's blood, and then he decided to go to sea. He knew very well that a crocodile is dangerous and he cannot defeat him due to his poor health condition, therefore he prepared an iron cage tied to long ropes drawn by bulls. He sits on that iron cage along with a harpoon and is thrown into the open sea. When the bloodthirsty crocodile smells the fresh blood he came closer to the iron cage and tried to attack Mororo who was ready for that and inserted the sharp harpoon in his belly and killed him on the spot. According to legend, Mororo also recovered the corpses of his six brothers from crocodile stomachs and buried them in the Gul Bhai area of Maripur village. His heroic story becomes a household item in nationalist circles of Sindhi and Baloch of Karachi where the local folks sang the praising songs of Mororo(Mujtaba, 2012).



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2. Striped Hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena* Linnaeus, 1758) also known as Haftar in Balochi, and Khaftar (Persian): is another mystical creature of the Canine family (Family: Hyaenidae). It is one of the endangered species listed by the IUCN and it is threatened to near extinction(Abi-Said and Dloniak, 2015). It is found in Sub-Saharan and East Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia as well as in Balochistan and neighbouring Afghanistan and Iran. There are less than 10000 individuals left in the wild. In ancient Egyptian civilization, the hyenas were considered a pest that threatens their

crops as well as livestock. Therefore, it was the duty of Egyptian peasants to kill hyenas for pleasure as well as their annoyance nature (Osborn and Helmy, 1980). Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, hyenas are considered for their cowardice, therefore the inhabitants of this region thought the killing of a hyena is their moral obligation and for sustaining their dignity (Kingsley 1884). A similar attitude also prevailed during British Raj in the Indian subcontinent when British officers hunted hyenas for sports (Pocock, 1941).

The peculiar morphological characteristics and behaviour are the main reasons which always place hyenas in a special position among the inhabitants where they are found. For instance, the people of Afghanistan particularly those who hunt hyenas for sports used a special technique for this purpose. In Afghan society these people also named as *payloch* (Dari: barefoot), entered into the cave of hyenas with a noose in their hands and started murmuring some magical words “*turn into dust, turn into stone*”. It is suggested that by listening to these words, the hyena became hypnotic and let the hunters tie the noose around their forelimbs and dragged the animal out of their cave (Frembgen 1998). Similarly, in Iraq and neighbouring Arabian countries where hyenas are found in the wild, the local people used a similar method for catching hyenas. Like *payloch*, they also entered the dens of hyenas and started citing Arabic verses with the view that hyenas understand Arabic. They cajoled the hyena in Arabic and said: “You are very good and attractive and quite like a lion.” It is suggested that once the hyena heard these words then he allowed the hunter to tie a rope around their neck and did not show any resistance in this regard and became docile and easily dragged out its den (Kingsley, 1884). Despite the authenticity of these stories, one thing is clear hyenas are different, and in areas where it is found, the local inhabitants regard them as special for instance they understand their native languages.

In Baloch society, particularly in Makran and neighbouring areas, it is believed that hyena is the pet animal of “*Jati*” (wicked witch, sorceress) who used to ride on hyena (Frembgen 1998). When humans are asleep at night the *Jati* came riding on a hyena and recited magical hymns due to which humans become motionless and intractable. Then, these *Jatis* take out their heart from their body and let the vulnerable victim die in desperation. In “*Ain-i- Akbari*” (the Constitution of Akbar), Abul Fazl, a courtier of Mughal Emperor Akbar, also mentioned such an event (Jarrett, 1948). According to this story, this sorceress, which is the most beautiful female comes by night and takes the heart out of the body of their victim and converted it into the grain and when they put that grain onto burning coal it extended again like a marshmallow and they eat it. The most popular story which prevails in Makurani Baloch society is of “*Chakar-i-Char Chum*” (*Chakar* with four eyes). According to this story, Chakar along with his three brothers earned their livelihood by working in their

agricultural field. The Chakar was the younger among them and the wise one. One day they found a beautiful goat which was a female sorceress who saw these lonely brothers, they caught her and brought back the goat to their abode. The goat (sorceress) was different she gave milk of unlimited amounts and *Chakar* and his brother were happy to have such a goat in their possession. However, their joyful life is suddenly ruined when one day they wake and found one of their brother missing. Without any clue, they thought their brother might be leaving them and went elsewhere. The next day the second brother went missing subsequently the third one also disappeared. When all three brothers went without any clue then *Chakar* worried about himself. *Chakar* tried to find out any pugmark of any ferocious animal which might take them away but in vain. Suddenly he thought about the peculiar goat and he started surveillances her. At night he pretended that he is sleeping but he was awaking. After midnight he saw the goat unite herself and became a beautiful female and proceeded to his bed and started murmuring some magical words. In the middle of these magical rituals, *Chakar* caught her from the back and started beating her. The sorceress pleaded for her life and promised to make *Chakar* rich if he left her alive. The sorceress also admitted that she killed all his brothers but by sparing her life she could do any he wants. *Chakar* thought he already lost his brothers, therefore, he could not back them alive he agreed with her with a condition that she swears in the name of Hazrat Suleman the king of djinns and human beings that she did not harm him. She pledged in the name of Hazrat Suleman not to do any harm to him. Then *Chakar* released her and she kept her promise and *Chakar* became rich and prevailed.

In these stories, two elements are common, i.e. the sorceress and their riding animal, the hyena. The question that arises is why feminine characteristics for this heinous and savage crime and why, not a masculine characteristics. It is suggested that in Proto-Indo-European languages the word witch an equivalent of *Jati* applied to both male and female, therefore it is nothing to do with sexism. It is also true in Balochi folklore, though the majority of the *Jatis* are a female character there are male *Jatis* also exists in Balochi folklore. In old English, the word magician which are used for a woman who is supposed to deal with evil spirits and to be able to perform supernatural phenomenon. In the above-mentioned act of taking out the heart of a living human being without using any metallic weapon is something unorthodox, therefore considered a supernatural phenomenon. The involvement of a pretty woman though might be correlated with the unfulfillment of the sexual desire of commoners of Baloch society. Everyone despite the heinous crime undertaken by these *Jatis* wished to be the companion of this sorceress because by doing so they not only fulfill their sexual desires but also become in a position of supernatural powers.

In the outstanding Arabic storybook of *Alf Layla-wa-layla* (One Thousand and One Nights) the stories of demons and *jatis* are mentioned which transformed into human forms. In Arabic, they are called *ghoul* which is infamous for their changing form and bloodthirsty nature. These creatures live on human flesh, particularly the travellers who lost their ways and children of minor age. The female ghoul known as *ghula* who have a lust for beautiful males and she used to marry that misfortunate who later on became her prey (Marzolph, 2007). In Balochi folklore, there is a similar word “*aghoul*” that used to travel in the form of a whirlwind and once this creature saw a lonely human being it killed that poor soul. The Baloch women, particularly in Makran, threatened their children that don’t go outside alone because if you do that then *aghoul* takes them away from them and disappeared you. Though in Balochi folklore the *aghoul* is placed separately from *jati* the role exhibited by *ghula* is so resembled *jati* that it might be possible that the Balochi word *jati* is a synonym of Arabic *ghula*.

The questions that arise are why hyenas used to be the ride of *jati* and why they placed such a role in Balochi folklore. Although, in Balochi folklore, it is difficult to extract any explanations in this regard except for the abovementioned act. However, Middle Eastern and Persian literature are full of stories about the supernatural powers of hyenas and their relationship with demonic and lethal acts. In this literature particularly in Middle Eastern ones, hyenas are regarded as symbols of deceitfulness and foolishness (Abi-Said, 2006). According to Frembgen (1998), in Near and Middle Eastern countries hyenas are also regarded as having supernatural powers and incarnations of demons or djinns. The Balochi word “*Hafter* (hyena)” actually etymologically originated from the Persian word “*kaftar*” which is said to be half-man and half-hyena (Frembgen, 1998). In the Arabic text of the 13th century, there is also mentioned a tribe of people who are called “Hyena People” who are always become the prey of hyena (Frembgen, 1998). Moreover, Abi-Said (2006) in his dissertation also elaborated on the stories of hyenas written by Arabic scholars of the medieval time in which they mentioned the negative role exhibited by hyenas. In these stories, it is narrated that hyenas due to their demonic characteristics attacked brave people at night and suck their blood from neck arteries. When hyenas entered their victim’s abode they hypnotize them with their eyes and the poor soul became helpless and demonic creatures suck their blood with ease (Abi-Said, 2006). From these stories, it can be concluded that though in Balochi folklore, *Jatis* and hyenas are two separate characters but in reality, these two demons are embedded into a single body. Hyenas itself may be the *Jati* who sucks victim blood at night. However, in the prevailing literature of medieval times particularly in *Ain-i- Akbari*, Abul Fazl mentioned such a character. Therefore, the *Jati* and hyenas are two separate

characters but due to similarities in their demonic acts of sucking victims blood in Balochi folklore, they are regarded as the companion of each other.



Photo courtesy = Wikipedia.

3. Indian wolf or Grey wolf, *Gurk* (Balochi): (*Canis lupus pallipes* Sykes 1831) is another mysterious animal of Balochi folklore. Grey wolf belongs to the family Canidae. It is suggested that the Grey wolf evolved during the Pleistocene era when the weather of the earth started becoming drier and occupied large tracts of arid zones (Sharma *et al.* 2004). In Balochistan, wolf mostly found in arid desert areas and are one of the common predators of domestic goats and sheep. It is one of the largest carnivorous animals found all across Balochistan and is considered one dangerous enemy of animal husbandry. The human-animal conflict started when human-settled in these where wolves were roaming before their settlement. These conflicts become intense, particularly in Balochistan, because Balochs are pastoral nomads and their livelihood depends upon raising goats and sheep. In Balochistan, wolves are regarded as an enemy and dangerous and a constant fear prevailed among the nomadic and settled Baloch tribes.

In Balochi folklore wolf is considered to have some supernatural power, particularly the forehead skin (*Gurk-i-Pishani*) brings good luck. Wolf is considered the harbinger of good luck because despite all precautionary measures this wild animal prey on domesticated animals. Therefore, it is thought that it must be because of wolf carries a lucky charm for himself which helps him in hunting and that is found on its forehead. It is one main reason that Baloch folks believe that if someone possesses the skin of a wolf's forehead,

he becomes rich and well off. However, it is not easy to get the wolf's forehead because when the wolf hunted down it rubbed his skull with soil and diluted the forehead. Only skilled hunters can obtain the forehead skin before it spoiled. People who proclaimed that they possess such skin usually put it in a well-decorated box and do not let anyone see it because doing it might spoil the lucky charm of the forehead. The skull of the wolf is broad (230-290 mm) and underneath of eyes the arch of bone known as zygomatic is also unlike other animals comparatively broad (120-150 mm). However, the forehead area is merged with the zygomatic area because if someone notices the head of a wolf then apparently he notices the absence or narrowness of the forehead. This is one of the main reasons that the forehead is hardly obtainable from the hunted wolf and because it is hard to find that's why it becomes important and mythical.

The usage of body parts of specific animals as amulets or lucky charms is common among different nations around the world. For instance, people in Europe, China, Africa, and South America believe that the foot of a rabbit is carried good luck for them. It is suggested that this belief has existed in European cultures particularly among highlanders (Celtic people) for centuries (since 600 BC) (Panati 1989). It must remember here that not every rabbit fulfills the criteria of becoming a contender for a lucky charm. Therefore, the donor rabbit must have some peculiar attributes as well as the hunter also possesses special qualities (cross-eyed man) the timing, and place of hunting are also important in this regard (Panati 1989). There is a prevailing belief among the people of Indo-Pak as well as neighbouring Sri Lanka and Bangladesh that the jackal's horn (*GeedharSinghi*) also carried good luck. Not every species of jackals possesses such a horn and it is suggested that occasionally only golden jackals have such a horn that is grown on the skulls due to some internal mutation. The cone-shaped bony structure which occasionally appears on the skull of jackals is measures half an inch and covered by skin fur. The jackal's horn is usually placed in a specially made small silver box with fragrance-bearing stuff. According to prevailing beliefs, the jackal's horn helps the client who owns this good for many things, for instance, wealth, seeing in the dark, and seducing women (Shrestha, 1997). From these myths, it can be deduced that the animal stuff which hardly be found has always fascinated the imagination of native people, particularly those who remained unsuccessful, docile, and looking for loopholes for their success. The selection of particular animals depends upon the availability of the specific animal in its surroundings. For an instant, in Baloch society wolf is always considered shrewd, powerful, agile, and luckiest, therefore, it becomes the successful contender for making such an amulet which brought the same qualities to a person who owns that mythical body part that otherwise not easily acquired.

In Baloch society, the wolf is considered mythical animals and even there is one tribe that owns the name of *Gurgnari* (the wolf tamer) residing in the Jhalawan area of Balochistan. According to legend prevailing among the *Gurgnaritribe* that they are descendants of Brahim (Ibrahim or Braho the founder of Baloch ruling of Kalat) and he had five sons, *Kalandrani*, *Mirwani*, *Sumalani*, *Kambrani*, and *Gurgnari*. Each inherited a particular device for his livelihood from their father except *Gurgnari*. He complains about this to his father Brahim that he had nothing to plough his agricultural land then his father gave him a wolf (*Gurg*) to plough. Therefore, they named after this wolf as *Gurgnari* means people who plough their land with the help of *Gurg* (wolf) (Zafar Gurgnari, *personal communication*).

Most of the myths in Baloch society originated from the Persian sphere, however, so far legends related to wolf are completely indigenous in their nature. It is due to the fact that in Zoroastrians' sacred text, the wolf is considered a devil or evil spirit. According to *Bundahišn* a Middle Persian text of the Zoroastrian religion, the wolf was created by Ahriman, (the evil spirit) from darkness and is one of the filthiest animals of the animal kingdom (Moazami, 2005). In *Bundahišn* one chapter is dedicated to the nature of wolves and categorized fifteen or sixteen different animals in one group of a wolf. These animals are as follows: *gurg*, (wolf), *gurg-i-sya* (Black wolf), *babr* (tiger), *šagr* (lion), *pulang* (panther), *yōz* (cheetah), *xaftar* (hyena), *tōrag* (jackal), *gār-kan* (Balochi, *gorput*, grave digger, skunk), *karzang*, (crab), *gurbag*, (cat), *būg*, (owl), *gurg-ī-ābīg*, (aquatic wolf) *kōsag*, (shark), and *gurg ī čarnak/čahār wāg*, (wolf) (Moazami, 2015). According to these texts, there are several human miseries such as fever, diseases, and some unseen evils are come up from them. The Evil Spirit (Ahriman) created these evil animals which are collectively named as a wolf in secret. Although not all of them are evil spirits some of them can be tamed such as elephants and lions most of them should be avoided out of fear. When Jews were freed from the Babylonian bondage by Cyrus the Great and resettled in their homeland they also acquired these Zoroastrians texts and added them to their sacred scrolls. Therefore, in Judo-Christianity wolf is considered evil or the devil, and even in Modern days, in North America, the European settlers indiscriminately hunted them down due to their religious prejudices.



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4. Balochi Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus gedrosianus* Blandford, 1877), in Balochi, it is also known as “Mum” belongs to the family Ursidae. The Balochi black bear is a subspecies of the Asiatic black bear and is found in the mountainous range of Wadhareas of the Khuzdar district. Unlike any other Asiatic subspecies, the Balochi bear has remarkably thin fur because it is found in the comparatively warmer arid zone of Balochistan. The Balochi black bear is an omnivore and eats anything available in the sparsely grown vegetation of the arid environment of Balochistan for instance, it can eat wild figs, the meristem of dwarf palm (*Nannorrhops ritchiana*, locally known as *Pesh*), and its fruits (*peru, konar*). Unlike another Asiatic black bear, the Balochi bear is comparatively smaller in size (55 to 75 inches in length) and weighs around 200-400 pounds, and the coat colour ranges from reddish-orange to deep black. One of the typical characteristics of the Balochi black bear is the presence of a creamy crescent on the chest which is comparatively darker in appearance compared with other subspecies. The Balochi black bear was once found in almost all mountainous areas of Balochistan but due to anthropogenic interferences and prevailing misconception among the local tribes regarding it, its ferocious nature resulted in a complete wipeout of this species in different parts of Balochistan.

There are several folktales narrated by local Baloch tribesmen regarding the mysteries of a black bear. One of the common myths which are prevailing among indigenous inhabitants of Makuran about the black bear is its lust for choosing a male human companion for copulation. According to local folktales, the female black bear took a human male in their den and licking his foot. By doing so she made the human male counter vulnerable so he could not escape from the bear den. They live together and she gives birth to human babies due to which it is believed that there is a Baloch clan who named after the

bear as *Mumozai* (decedents of the bear). The question that arises how did this myth get started and where it comes from in Balochi folklore.

The myths related to black bears are also common in Native Indian tribes of North America, particularly the love of bears to become a part and parcel of human society. For instance, the Yuchi Indian tribe of North America, who is also proclaimed the direct descendant of the black bear never molested bears. The Yuchi Indians called themselves the Bear clan people (Speck 1909). The question arises why the bear is the major contender among the animal kingdom for that peculiar characteristic that prevailed among two unrelated tribes who never had any sort of contact with each other. The answer to the first part of this question might be found in morphological similarities found in both bear and man, for instance, both are omnivores, and unlike any other beast bears also have the ability to stand straight with the help of hind limbs (bipedalism). Although some primates also have the partial abilities of bipedalism their body size is not equal enough to a human being and the myth in question is relevant in the areas which are lacking these primates. The second part of the question is related to unrelated tribes with common myths. The answer to this question was answered by Joseph Campbell in his outstanding work on myths and termed it universal wisdom because the *Homo sapiens* subspecies *sapiens* have common ancestries along with their common myths (Campbell, 2003). When humans expanded then they migrated to different continents and accrued the same myths along with them. Although there are some disparities regarding these myths the central concepts are the same. Following are some Native American stories regarding the relationship between humans and black bears.

According to a legend prevailing among the native tribes including *Haida*, *Tlingit*, and *Tsimshian* who are residents of the Northwest coast of North America, their chief had four sons and a daughter who used to gather berries from the village. One day when collected lots of berries and on her way back to the village her basket broke down and all berries tumbled out. Her companions told her to just leave these berries because it was getting dark but she insisted that she cannot leave until she picked up all the berries. Then her companions left her alone in the jungle and she stayed behind. When she was busying in collecting berries two young men came along and offered their help in collecting the berries. It was already dark therefore they led her to their village which is unknown to the chief's daughter. The young men knew that she is the chief's daughter, therefore, she was escorted to the house of the chief of that village. The housemaid told her that these young men who helped her are not humans but bear and she is in the bear village. Later on, she married one of the chief's sons and gave birth to two children who later on as the story goes on came along with their mother to their grandfather's village. However,

because they are half-breed humans, therefore, they became rowdy and rough and made lots of trouble for them, due to which her mother let them go forest and live with their bear clan. The people of the bear clan are the descendants of these two half-breed humans (Reid 1996).

In another story, as narrated by Cree native Indians of Canada that a bear found a boy of their tribe who was lost in the woods and he cared for him like a father and son. They lived together for several years and thought him several things about the forest. During summer they hunt together and in autumn they collected wild berries. They also planned for winter because in winter bears are hibernating therefore they chose a place for winter in which bears stored lots of food for a boy who did not have the abilities of hibernation. The son's real father started singing for his son who was lost in the wilderness. Bear tried to avoid the boy's father who in his songs described the circumstances in which his son lost. The next winter boy's father again came in the winter season because he knew that during the winter bear hibernate and he can have picked up his son from the bear den, therefore he again started singing. Now bear realized that he is losing the boy because his father did let him keep his son, therefore he did several tricks to avoid the boy's father to come near their dens but all in vain. As the story went on, when the bear realized that boy's father was about to kill him, so he gave him his body part and told him to cover up with animal skin and hang in his tipi (tent) over his setting place. Finally, the boy's father killed the bear and brought his son back to their village. Bear told the boy several secrets of bear hunting and he became one of the most successful hunters due to a body part that the bear gave him (Barnouw, 1977).



Photo courtesy = Wikipedia

5. The Indian cobra (*Najana naja* L., Family Elapidae, in Balochi it is called *Siah Mar*) is another mythical reptile in Balochi folklore. This species is found all across the Indo-Pak region including Balochistan. It is also listed as one of the main sources of snakebites in Pakistan and neighbouring countries. The dread of this snake is so intense that the Indian cobra is revered in prevailing myths and culture of indigenous communities of these countries including Balochi folklore. In normal circumstances this snake avoided a human encounter, however, when it smells danger then it becomes ferocious and injected its lethal venom with the help of acute and pointed incisors into the target's body. The venom of this snake contains a strong postsynaptic neurotoxin which damaged the neuron or nerve cells as well as is also involved in cardiac arrest. Unlike any other snake commonly found in desert areas, the Indian cobra avoids extreme desert environments and is mostly found in forests and areas abundant with vegetation. Therefore, in Balochistan, this species is frequently spotted near the banks of seasonal rivers, streams, oases, and dates groves. Moreover, the Indian cobra does not dig burrows and mostly prefers holes, termite dunes, the crevice of rocks, and animal dens.

Like any other reptile particularly geckos (*kulair*), the Indian cobra also has the ability to shed its skin and it is very common to find out the empty skin sheath of these snakes in the wilderness. It is one of the reasons that the indigenous societies of Indo-Pak including Balochistan believe that the Indian cobra changes its form from a reptile into a human being. In Balochi folklore, the story of *Mar Goshri* is very popular, particularly among the people of Makuran. According to this story, there was a young and beautiful widow who lived along with her only son, *Dar Goshri* in a desolate place somewhere in Balochistan. Her only son, *Dar Goshri* was a petty shepherd own a few goats which he used to graze in the wilderness and his mother used to fetch water from a nearby rivulet. One day when *Dar Goshri* went for grazing his goats he saw a dried date (*Aarug*) near a snake burrow he picked it up and gave it to his mother. The next day he found more and subsequently he gave all of these dried dates to his mother who passionately ate them without inquiring about the source of these dates. Eventually, one day when *Dar Goshri* visited the same place for more dates he saw one fierce black cobra standing in front of the burrow angrily and he loudly said to *Dar Goshri* "come! come! I am waiting for you". "These dates which you gathered from my den are not for free and these are dowry of your mother because I want to marry your window mother and go home and tell your mother that I am coming to her home at night and marry to her," said the cobra. Shocked and nervous *Dar Goshri* quickly collect all his goats and went home and told the whole story to his mother. The widow was surprised and afraid that how come a snake may marry a human and when *Dar Goshri* assured her that snake was talking to him than she prepared

herself for her bride the snake. At night snake came to their abode and he married *Dar Goshri* widow mother. From this marriage, she gave birth to another son whom they called *Mar Goshri* because he was the son of a snake. *Mar Goshri* was smarter and quicker than his half-brother *Dar Goshri*. However, both brothers loved each other, but their father did not like their friendship and started complaining about the *Dar Goshri* because of their passiveness. One-day snake told his wife he is going to kill *Dar Goshri* because he hates him. The poor soul was fond of her snake husband she agreed. Meanwhile, *Mar Goshri* hiding outside of their home, heard all the conspiracy against his half-brother and went into the jungle where *Dar Goshri* was busy grazing the goats. When he saw his father coming towards them he killed him and roasted him and brought cooked meat at home and presented it to their mother who ate the poisonous meat and died due to poison.

As the story goes on, both brothers decided to leave the local abode and went in two different directions to try their luck. Fate helped *Mar Goshri* and he became prosperous while poor *Dar Goshri* was not lucky enough and became the victim of the farmer who starved him to death. *Mar Goshri* once heard about the unfortunate death of his brother he took his brother's revenge and with a trick killed that mean farmer and later on left happily ever after.

The story of *Mar Goshri* has indicated the prevailing circumstances of the Baloch society in the past. The poor and young widow with her only son, her lust for a better life and acceptance of reality i.e., marrying a snake. On the contrary, even though the snake came into human form but he did not give up his evilness and tried to kill *Dar Goshri*. Therefore, the snake retained his animal form and bigotries relevant to animal instincts during the daytime but at night he transforms into a benign human who loves his wife. Simultaneously, the love between husband and faithful wife and between stepbrothers with each other can also be depicted in this story. One of the peculiarities of this story is the advocacy of intermarriages between non-relatives rather than between cousins. For instance, *Dar Goshri* who was apparently the son of a father who used to be his mother's first cousin and died at a young age, was imbecile and sort of dull-witty in nature while the *Mar Goshri* is shrewd and intelligent because he was son of non-related persons. Karnad Girish also mentioned to some extent, the same kind of story of *Nag* and his human wife in *Naga-Mandala* which is prevailing in southern Indian Hindu mythology (Karnad, 1994).

The myth of the metamorphosis of the snake into a human form is a common perception that can be found among different indigenous societies, particularly in the Indo-Pak region where the cobra consider a sacred animal. According to Indian folklore, if *Naag* (male cobra) and *Naagin* (female cobra) are pledged not to bite any living beings for a hundred years they could transform from reptiles to

human forms. Because the human form is guaranteed of better and more secure life compared with the reptile form, therefore, they prefer to be in the human form forever and avoid hurting any human being (Berninger, 2010).



Conclusion

In the above-mentioned Balochi folklore, the most appealing thing is the desire of a poverty-stricken lonely young widow who is looking for love and a serpent came and rescued her from this loneliness. However, in the male-dominant Baloch tribal society, it was always the woman who was to be blamed in terms of sexualized temptation and evil deeds. Therefore, the serpent as well as in hyena stories are fully loaded with political ideologies in which a supreme leader within tribal society has incredible command and authority over his subjects and their beliefs. Although the artisans who are responsible for constructing and narrating these stories in the Baloch sphere, sometimes unconsciously mentioned these atrocities metaphorically. For example, in the crocodile story where that massive reptile can be depicted as the chief himself, however, these stories did not bring any change in the Baloch sphere. From these examples, it is clear that these myths migrated from one part of the globe to another and evolved according to local circumstances and traditions but to some extent, they retain their originalities. In Joseph Campbell's words, these are our common heritage which he named "universal wisdom" which migrated from one sphere to another (Campbell, 2003). Therefore, despite differences in culture and geography, these prevailing stories retained empathies and resemblances in meaning and it is mostly because these mythical characteristics are often associated with cosmic and environmental factors.

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