

## Contributions of Rasool Bux Palijo in Sindhi Literature

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### Abstract

*This research article aims to explore the literary contribution of Rasool Bux Palijo and his motivation behind his efforts to rewrite Sindh's history. It examines the struggle of Palijo during one unit scheme to protect the Sindhi language and literature. Analysis of books and articles of Palijo is done in this manuscript which played a significant role in shaping modern Sindhi literature. Rasool Bux Palijo was a multifaceted personality, great political leader, scholar, intellectual, historian, writer and lawyer. Who played a significant role in shaping Sindhi Literature. The propose of his writings in different newspapers and journals was to aware Sindhi people regarding their fundamental rights, culture, and heritage. He sought to counter the biased narratives about Sindh and its history. He wished to advocate for a rational and objective approach to historiography. Moreover, the contribution of Palijo was not limited to Sindhi alone but he also engaged with other languages such as Bengali, Urdu, English and Chinese.*

**Key Words:** Sindhi Literature, Sindhi Nationalism, Critical analysis of Sindhi literature

## Introduction

Around the world, Literature is a fundamental support of a nation's intellectual and cultural identity. It preserves as the history, traditions and struggles for the nation. Also, it is considered as a powerful tool that not only educates people but also influences socio-political movements by providing a deep understanding of historical events and the actions of past records. Sindh's literature has been shaped by various writers, poets, and intellectuals who have played a pivotal role in preserving the cultural and political identity of Sindh. Rasool Bux Palijo have his place in the list of Sindhi nationalist leaders. After G.M Syed, he is considered as a firebrand nationalist leader of Sindh. He was a vocal leftist leader and progressive writer of Pakistan. He emerged as a key figure in Sindh who had paid a great contribution in Sindhi literature through his writing books and articles.

He was born on 21 February 1930 at the village Munger Khan Palijo, Jung Shahi, District Thatta, Sindh, Pakistan. He got early education at his village in Madrasa in 1935, and he went to Karachi for higher education in Sindh Madras tul Islam. Also, he completed a law degree from Sindh Muslim Law College Karachi in 1953. He is considered a progressive, leftist, Marxist leader, scholar, lawyer, writer, journalist, and progressive politician. He wrote 30 books in different language on various themes particularly on politics and history, Sindhi culture, language, Sufism. This study examines Palijo's contributions in Sindhi literature, mainly focuses on his philosophical depth, socio-political themes, and impact on Sindhi literature. Furthermore, this research aims to highlight Palijo's contributions in shaping modern Sindhi literary discourse and his influence on political consciousness in Sindh.

## Historical Context of Sindhi Literature

Sindhi literature has a rich and ancient history that dates back centuries. It has been shaped by various scholars, poets, and intellectuals who preserved and promoted the language, culture, and identity of the Sindhi people at global level. According to Abdullah, Sindh has historically been a land of tolerance and knowledge, home of great thinkers, philosophers like Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Sachal Sarmast, and Sheikh Ayaz, who contributed greatly to Sindhi literature. The Sindhi language flourished during different historical periods, particularly during the rule of the Samma, Kalhoras, and Talpur dynasties in Sindh. (Mahesar, 2024) However, after the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Sindhi literature faced numerous challenges. The migration of non-Sindhi-speaking communities to Sindh from Indian side led to an attempt to impose Urdu as the dominant language in Sindh which marginalized Sindhi literature. In 1955, the imposition of the One Unit Scheme further pressured Sindhi, culture, identity and literature which had led to a wave of resistance in Sindh among intellectuals, writers, political leaders and local citizens of Sindh. At that time, Rasool Bux Palijo emerged as champions of Sindhi literature and played a crucial role in resisting cultural erasure. He used his writings to preserve Sindhi history, highlight socio-political issues, and counter the biased narratives imposed by the state. (Laghari, 2022)

## Contributions of Rasool Bux Palijo in Sindhi Literature

According to Leghari, Palijo started writing through his habitual reading different books, newspapers and novels of multiple languages especially English. This kind of habit made him critical writer in Sindh and led him write several books in native language which based historical facts and figures. Palijo believed literature could be a powerful tool to social change for those communities already under oppression. (Laghari, 2022) Furthermore, Leghari states

that Palijo made extensive multiple contributions in Sindhi literature through his diverse work. Palijo was a fruitful writer, historian, and political thinker who utilized literature as a tool to create awareness among the educated people of Sindh. Authors stated that, Palijo spent his entire life on reading different nations literature, particularly Persian, Chinese and Britishers. Also, he translated those literatures into Sindhi local language for Sindhi people, to establish awareness in Sindh. As a writer, Palijo participated in different newspapers including *Al-Waheed*, *Nawa-e-Waqt*, *Sadaqat* and *Nai Sindh* newspapers. In these newspapers, he highlighted challenges of Sindh such as Sindhi identity, language, and historical injustices. He expanded his literary work beyond journalism through his writing of more than 29 books that covered diverse subjects like history, politics as well as biographies of important figure. Palijo's commitment to Sindhi literature was evident in his efforts to promote critical thinking, challenge outdated traditional narratives and inspire new generations of writers. (Lal Jarwar, 2019)

### **Philosophical and Intellectual Themes in Palijo's Writings**

Palijo's writings were deeply influenced by his philosophical and intellectual beliefs. Through his writings, Palijo explored nationalist ideas together with historical restructurings and anti-imperialist and socialist ideologies and cultural preservation narratives. The power of education fascinated him, thus he considered literature an essential tool which can empower individuals. His main focus involved the colonial and post-colonial historians misconstrued view of Sindh historical events which motivated him to promote critical yet unbiased historiographical analysis.

The philosophy of Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong shaped Palijo's thinking but Palijo found his most influential intellectual mentor in Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. According to Palijo's

interpretation, Bhittai was more than a spiritual poet; he functioned as a revolutionary thinker revealing messages about justice and the sufferings endured by the oppressed. The pieces written by Palijo centered on gender equality through his advocacy of Sindhi women receiving education and empowerment. He strongly criticized the feudal system, corruption, and the state's failure to provide basic rights to its citizens. His intellectual depth and sharp criticism of socio-political issues made him a controversial yet highly respected figure in Sindhi literature and politics. (Laghari, 2022)

### **The Significance of Palijo's Work**

In the library of Sindh Madressa-tul-Islam University, he was known as habitual reader, not only he read Sindhi literature but also different international literatures and then wrote reviews about these in Sindhi language for Sindhi People. Palijo's literary legacy includes a wide range of books, essays, and articles that have left a lasting impact on Sindhi literature and historical discourse. One of the greatest platforms of Sindh, Sindhi Adabi Sanghat, where people from different school of thoughts come and participate through their views about global and national issues. He joined Sindhi Adabi Sangat, there he explored his desire to rewrite Sindhi books and history of Sindh and Pakistan. (Lal Jarwar, 2019) According to Palijo, Sindh's history had been written by biased historians. His mission to rewrite Sindh history, which was based on the original historical narratives, also it should be objective and free from political or ideological manipulation. For example, some of his most notable works *Jeki Bangal Saan Thiyo* "What Happened in Bengal", *Sindh Pani Case 1859 Khan Wathi Kala Bagh Dam Tain* "Sindh Water Case from 1859 to Kalabagh Dam", and *Jail Diary*. *Jeki Bangal Saan Thiyo* is a groundbreaking book that provides a Sindhi nationalist perspective on the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. In this book, Palijo harshly criticized the role of the Pakistani military and

politicians, particularly Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in the tragic events leading to the separation of East Pakistan. (Palijo, 2020) His book *Sindh Pani Case 1859 Khan Wathi Kala Bagh Dam Tain* focused on the controversial Kalabagh Dam project, providing historical and legal arguments against the project that threatened Sindh's water rights. (Palijo, Sindh Pani Case 1859 Khan Wathi Kala Bagh Dam Tain (Sindhi), 2017) His *Jail Diary* offers a firsthand account of his experiences as a political prisoner during the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq. The book details his struggles in prison, the torture he endured, and his reflections on political resistance. (Palijo, Kot Lakhpat Jo Qedi, Jail Diary (Sindhi), 2015) Moreover, many of his works were banned by the state due to his critical stance on national policies, yet they remain essential readings for those interested in Sindhi literature and political thought. He strongly believed that academic dishonesty was damaging Sindhi society by producing graduates who have no real knowledge and education. Palijo also criticized the biased writings of Sindhi nationalist writers. He had a thorough understanding of literature thus he found the gaps in Sindhi literature and criticize every biased writing. He had translated literature of many countries into Sindhi language for Sindhi people to easily understand world literature.

### **Palijo's Contribution to Sindhi Prose and Journalism**

Rasool Bux Palijo revolutionized Sindhi prose and journalism by introducing a culture of critical writing. Before his time, Sindhi journalism largely consisted of reporting and storytelling without much emphasis on analysis or critique. Palijo changed this by encouraging investigative journalism and literary criticism. He used his position as an editor and columnist to challenge prevailing narratives and expose injustices. (Palijo, Dr Rasool Bux Bio, Best Collection, 2018) His early work in newspapers such as *Al-Waheed* and *Nawai Sindh* set new standards for Sindhi journalism. He was among the first to introduce critical commentary on

social political, and historical issues in Sindhi newspapers. His bold criticism of government policies, feudalism, and corruption made him a highly influential figure in Sindhi media. (Raja, 2019)

### **Promotion of the Sindhi Literature**

Palijo dedicated himself to ensuring both the growth and protection of Sindhi literary works. He resisted all those efforts which silence the Sindhi language and took action to make Sindhi literature maintain its central position in the cultural heritage of the region. In the Yahya Khan era, the government wanted to establish Urdu as the exclusive national language, but Palijo confronted this initiative by arguing that national unity required linguistic diversity. He exhibited that each ethnic language of Pakistan including Sindhi and Punjabi and Balochi and Pashto should receive equal support through the Urdu language to facilitate ethnic understanding. He proposed the federal government for introduction of all ethnic literatures including Sindhi in schools and universities to ensure that younger generations attached to their native heritage. (Raja, 2019) In addition to his literary work Palijo dedicated himself to actively arrange events such as conferences and seminars for promoting Sindhi literature. He organized the historic Sindhi Language Convention in Hyderabad during 1971 which assembled prominent writers along with intellectuals to plan the future of Sindhi literature. Through his work he established several Sindhi literary magazines such as Tehreek Magazine and Parore that served as essential venues for both writers and intellectuals. (Lal Jarwar, 2019)

### **Palijo's Role in Political Literature and Resistance Writings**

Rasool Bux Palijo was a more than a literary figure, his political thoughts shaped resistance literature through his important written works. His works were deeply rooted in the socio-political struggles of Sindh which made him one of the most powerful voices against

authoritarian rule, feudalism, and imperialism in Sindh and Pakistan. Unlike his contemporary writers Palijo dedicated his literary work to serving as a powerful instrument in the service of political activism.

His books and essays exposed the way of the state to suppressed Sindhi cultural heritage. One of the defining aspects of Palijo's political literature was his ability to connect historical experiences with contemporary struggles. He frequently provided references of historical injustices suffered by Sindhis, like the annexation of Sindh by the Britishers in 1843 and the exploitation of Sindh's geographical resources by the Pakistani elites. Palijo wrote a book titled *Sindh Pani Case 1859 Khan Wathi Kala Bagh Dam Tain* where he explains how Sindh's water rights had been exploited for over a century by the Punjab. Through his resist work, he made himself a greatest writer of Sindh, who dedicated wide effort to challenge the One Unit scheme that aimed to unify Sindh into West Pakistan province and eliminate autonomy of Sindh.

Moreover, he argued in the interview with Irshad Kazmi that his critical writings were not limited around Sindh alone, but he was a strong advocate for oppressed communities across Pakistan and even beyond. (Palijo, Dr Rasool Bux Bio, Best Collection, 2018) His book *Jeki Bangal Saan Thiyo* is a critical assessment of the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh, in which he highlighted the injustices faced by Bengalis. His writings often drew parallels between the struggles of Sindhis, Bengalis, Baloch, and Pashtuns and argued that all oppressed nations within Pakistan had a shared struggle against the ruling elite.

Additionally, his critical writings were not just theoretical, but it had consequences. Many of his books were banned by the Pakistani government and he was imprisoned multiple times for his honest views. However, even from behind bars, Palijo continued to write and inspire people. The book titled *Subha Thendo*, where Palijo described the concept of nationalism, described

his thoughts about formation of best party and highlighted his work which he performed. He wrote about the ways of doing politics, how to struggle against landlords for their rights, and how to do politics at national and provincial level. In this book, he advised students to struggle for their rights and advised them to remain united for the cause of Sindh. He advised students to study about the history of different ruling dynasties, history of Sindh and other regions to get lessons out of it. Through history one could learn how different dynasties ruled over Sindh and what the response of local inhabitants was toward the rulers. They should have knowledge about the struggles of their ancestors in protecting their land and could learn from the past. So that they could protect their rights. (Palijo, Subha Thendo (Sindhi), 2019) Furthermore, when the orthodox of Sindh criticized the modern tendencies of Shaikh Ayaz, blamed him for promoting western thoughts, exploiting the Islam in Sindhi language and declared him as *Kafir*. At that time, Palijo wrote a book named *Andha Ondha Weijh* in favour of Shaikh Ayaz. Because Ayaz was considered as the modern poet of Sindh who delivered the verse of Latif in modern form to Sindhis. Unfortunately, the publishers had dined to publish Palijo's book at that time. But after some time, Roshni Publishers published this book. (Palijo, Rasool Bux Palijo by part 1, 2010)

### **Palijo's Influence on Modern Sindhi Writers and Activists**

The impact of Rasool Bux Palijo's writings is still evident in the works of modern Sindhi writers, poets, and activists. His intellectual legacy continues to inspire new generations who seek to preserve Sindhi identity and challenge socio-political injustices. Many contemporary Sindhi writers draw inspiration from Palijo's analytical approach and his commitment to historical accuracy. One of the key aspects of his influence is the emphasis on critical thinking. Many Sindhi authors before Palijo dedicated their writing to folklore and poetry together with

traditional storytelling traditions. The literary tradition of folklore and poetry maintained its value after Palijo but he introduced political criticism and intellectual discourse as a new literary pattern in Sindhi literature. The literary path established by Palijo was continued through the work of Amar Jalil, Taj Joyo and Jami Chandio who wrote about unfair politics and historical modifications. However, active investigation journalism in Sindh is a result of Palijo's bold and analytical writing that journalists continue to implement for government policy coverage and national political reporting.

Beyond literature, Palijo's activism and resistance writings have shaped modern Sindhi political movements, such as the Awami Tehreek which Palijo himself founded, continue to advocate for Sindhi rights, using Palijo's writings, speeches and intellectual discourse as important tools in their struggle. His writings on feminism and gender equality have also influenced Sindhi women activists who fight for women's empowerment in a patriarchal society. Moreover, Palijo's influence extends beyond Sindh, as his works are now being studied in universities and literary circles outside Pakistan. Through his writing and bold statements, he has gained recognition among the top intellectual figures across South Asia. (Raja, 2019)

### **Challenges and Controversies in Palijo's Literary and Political Journey**

Rasool Bux Palijo made substantial achievements through his work yet encountered diverse problems and controversies in his political and literary career. During his entire life, he faced various challenges from both state authorities and political rivals. His honest criticism about the Pakistani establishment and feudal lords and select members of the left-wing community triggered constant opposition. Palijo faced one of the major challenges that was censorship. The government of Pakistan banned several books of Palijo because he criticized governmental

policies through writings. During the time period of General Zia-ul-Haq's, the Government had assumed Palijo's literary work threatened national unity, so he imprisoned him multiple times. Moreover, governments viewed Palijo's political views as revolutionary because he advocated for Sindh's independence and strong opposition to the status quo. Palijo's political beliefs evolved through time, becoming a divisive matter of public discussion. When he joined politics Palijo endorsed Communist-Leftist movements before dissolving his alliance with Communist groups when they failed to acknowledge Pakistan's oppressed nations specialized problems. Palijo received opposition from leftist intellectuals who disapproved of his shift from class struggle toward nationalist activism. Behind these critics, Palijo defended his hard work through showing both national liberty and class struggle connected to each other. Palijo committed persistent him to write, spoke on Sindh issues and challenged the ruling classes which hinders Sindhis rights. (Remembering Rasool Bux Palijo (1930-2018), 2022)

### **Critical Analysis of Palijo's Literary Contributions**

Rasool Bux Palijo's literary contributions demonstrate a significant commitment to history, politics and justice. Palijo's contributions in Sindh literature are notable not only for his content but also for his unique analytical style. Unlike other Sindhi writers who focused solely on storytelling, but Palijo analyzed historical developments through extensive research on the subject. Palijo combined the evidence of the past with the current political and social developments to create writing with deep social meaning. The strongest component of Palijo's literary work emerges from his tireless dedication to factual historical authenticity.

Palijo analyzed official historical documents as well as court records and state governance initiatives as he developed a coherent commentary on social issues. His works on Sindhi water rights are not just passionate appeals but are supported by legal and historical evidence. His

scholarly methodology set a new standard in Sindhi literature, encouraging other writers to adopt a research-based approach rather than relying on biased data, sentiment or folklore.

However, Palijo's literary contributions were not without their critics. Some argued that Palijo's writing was too deep and scholarly for the average reader, making it inaccessible to a wider audience. His works were often filled with complex historical references and political terminology that required prior knowledge to fully understand. Furthermore, his strong nationalist outlook brought him criticism from those who believed that his works prioritized Sindhi identity over broader class struggle or national unity. Another important aspect of his literary contributions was his fearless criticism of the ruling elite. While many writers avoided directly criticizing powerful individuals, Palijo boldly held individuals and institutions responsible for oppression. This fearless style made him a controversial figure, but it also solidified his reputation as an uncompromising intellectual.

### **Conclusion**

Rasool Bux Palijo's literary achievements are unparalleled in Sindhi literature. His writings not only enriched the Sindhi language but also played an important role in the field of political activities as well as history. The authentic evidence presented in Palijo's books, along with his articles and speeches, enabled him to narrate the historical truth of Sindh which was suppressed by the state for the purposes of the state. Not only Sindh or Pakistan but the entire South Asian region respects Palijo because he fearlessly criticized the injustices of the ruling elite and the state. Moreover, Palijo's legacy is not limited to Sindh, but his works have also received recognition in Pakistan and beyond. Today, Sindhi literature is evolving all over the world and his writings serve as a reminder of the power of resistance. He believed that the literature of any nation not only educates nations but also plays an important role in changing society. He

has written many books, articles, essays and also given interviews to various news channels which are available on YouTube channels. He was 88 years old and was facing heart and respiratory problems. He could not survive his illness and died in Karachi on June 7, 2018. He was laid to rest in his native village, Mungir Khan Palijo, Thatta District.

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