

Evoking Indigenous Professions in Subcontinent: A Case Study of *Between Clay and Dust* by Musharraf Ali Farooqi

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ABSTRACT

Culture forms the foundation of every nation. Whether tangible or intangible, it sets one nation apart from another. This article explores the indigenous culture of the subcontinent as portrayed in the celebrated Pakistani writer and translator Musharraf Ali Farooqi's novel *Between Clay and Dust*. The novel primarily revolves around the traditional spaces of "Kotha" (courtesan house) and "Akhara" (wrestling arena), which were once integral to the cultural fabric of the subcontinent. To analyze this cultural representation, Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* serves as the theoretical framework. This theory emphasizes the importance of culture, its deep connection to identity, and the distinction between internal and external cultural influences. It is an undeniable reality that the partition of the subcontinent caused a severe decline in its cultural heritage. Through a close examination of *Between Clay and Dust*, particularly the characters of Ustad Ramzi and Gohar Jan, the novel brings to light the fading traditions of Kotha, Akhara, and other once-revered professions. Both characters are deeply devoted to their respective arts, yet over time, they find themselves gradually stripped of their status. Their successors lack the ability to uphold their ancestors' legacy, ultimately leading to the dominance of external cultural influences over indigenous traditions in the subcontinent.

Introduction

Musharraf Ali Farooqi was born on July 26, 1968, in Hyderabad. He is recognized as one of the prominent South Asian writers who have earned literary acclaim for their distinctive writing style. His works are written in both English and Urdu, making him one of the few bilingual authors in the region.

After the partition, the Muslim literary world suffered a decline, with very few poets, novelists, and storytellers who could effectively articulate ideas and provide meaningful guidance to society. However, Farooqi stands out as a writer who not only addresses societal issues but also highlights the crisis of identity. His work goes beyond the theme of partition, shedding light on the

lasting impact of colonialism, which not only disrupted the subcontinent but also instilled a sense of mental subjugation among its people. His narrative style reflects his criticism of both colonialism and the blind acceptance of modernity. Through the development of various characters, he effectively conveys his thoughts, portrays social realities, and offers valuable insights to help individuals preserve their cultural identity.

Farooqi's literary contributions include five essays, three novels, four works of children's fiction, and five collections of folktales in Urdu. A recurring theme in his work is the struggle for identity, a crisis that became especially significant after 1857. With the arrival of colonizers, the indigenous people of the subcontinent were forced into

submission, their cultural values were eroded, and they gradually adopted the foreign customs imposed upon them. As a result, many people lost awareness of their own heritage, traditions, and identity. This crucial issue has been explored by several esteemed writers who have sought to awaken the masses to its consequences. Although Farooqi is only 51 years old, his writings capture the depth of the subcontinent's history, making his work a significant contribution to South Asian literature.

. subcontinent and examines the consequences of colonialism through the characters of Ustad Ramzi and Gohar Jan. Ustad Ramzi, the head of the Akhara, is deeply devoted to his profession. His dedication and mastery earn him the prestigious title of Ustad-e-Zaman after defeating his rivals. Respected in his era, he attracts many students to his Akhara, eager to train under his guidance and become pehlwan (wrestlers).

However, over time, the traditional importance of the Akhara begins to decline. People who once admired and celebrated wrestling gradually shift their interests to other professions, leading to the fading significance of this age-old practice. Ustad Ramzi, a man of unwavering principles, is willing to sacrifice everything to uphold his honor and legacy. His steadfast commitment ensures that he remains a respected figure in society.

His younger brother, Tamami, also aspires to attain the same title, but unlike Ustad Ramzi, he lacks the discipline and passion required to succeed. Recognizing his brother's shortcomings, Ustad Ramzi refuses to let Tamami represent their family's name, knowing he does not possess the necessary talent. However, Tamami ignores his brother's warnings and insists on proving himself. He enters a match against a rival, but

the outcome is disastrous—he loses.

The shame of defeat weighs heavily on Tamami, and soon after, he passes away. However, Ustad Ramzi, still resentful over his brother's failure, refuses to attend his funeral. Despite the persistent pleas of his closest friends, he remains firm in his decision, unable to forgive Tamami for tarnishing their family's honor.

The second part of the novel focuses on the Kotha, depicted through the character of Gohar Jan. In the subcontinent, the Kotha has long been an important part of cultural traditions, where people would gather for entertainment and artistic performances. It was once considered a highly regarded profession, providing a source of amusement and refinement. However, with time and the increasing influence of materialism, people gradually lost interest in this tradition. As audiences begin to disappear, financial struggles arise for Gohar Jan. Despite facing hardships, she remains composed and refuses to show any signs of worry. To maintain the dignity and stature of the Kotha, she even sells her valuable gold. Towards the end of the novel, Farooqi presents her as a determined woman who, despite her old age, refuses to abandon her profession. While most mehfil (gatherings) in the subcontinent start fading away, her Kotha remains open until her last breath, continuing to hold its reputation in society. Due to her widespread fame, even the well-respected Ustad Ramzi attends her mehfil and remains with her in her final days.

Gohar Jan spends her life in celibacy, longing for a daughter, yet she never lets personal desires interfere with her profession. Many aspiring nayikas (young performers) come to her Kotha to learn the art, but she never grants them opportunities based on personal relationships. Instead, she insists that they prove their talent to society

and earn a name for themselves. However, as societal values shift, the Kotha begins to decline, and in the end, Gohar Jan passes away a natural death.

Through this novel, Farooqi attempts to revive the significance of indigenous professions by portraying the struggles and dedication of characters like Ustad Ramzi and Gohar Jan. The effects of colonialism led people to turn away from their native professions, and instead of preserving their own cultural heritage, they began opposing it. Throughout the novel, Farooqi urges readers to reflect on the traditions that were once deeply rooted in the subcontinent but have now faded into obscurity.

It is an undeniable truth that culture is an essential part of a person's identity. Without it, one may have a home, yet still feel displaced. Culture is what distinguishes individuals and societies, giving them a sense of belonging. Farooqi highlights the importance of cultural identity and encourages readers to reconnect with and preserve the rich traditions of the subcontinent in their own way.

Statement of Problem

The study of *Between Clay and Dust* by Musharraf Ali Farooqi highlights indigenous professions in the subcontinent, both directly and indirectly.

Research Objectives

The present research is designed with these objectives:

- To explore how *Between Clay and Dust* by Musharraf Ali Farooqi reflects the indigenous culture of the subcontinent.
- To examine how external professions have come to dominate traditional, and local professions.

Research Questions

- How does Musharraf Ali Farooqi portray the indigenous culture of the subcontinent in *Between Clay and Dust*?
- How does external culture come to dominate indigenous culture in *Between Clay and Dust*?

Research Methodology

This research is conducted within a qualitative paradigm and aims to highlight the indigenous professions of the subcontinent through content analysis. By analyzing *Between Clay and Dust*, the study emphasizes the importance of culture and revisits the historical context of the subcontinent. The novel is used as a representative sample within its genre and serves as the primary source for this research. In addition, secondary sources such as internet materials, journal articles, relevant books, magazines, and newspaper articles are also consulted to support the analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The present research is conducted by applying the theory of "Orientalism" by Edward Said. He introduced this theory in 1978 and published a book entitled *Orientalism*. Although the term "Orientalism" has been defined by various prominent writers over time, Said presents the concept from a different perspective, particularly through the lens of postcolonialism. In his theory, he introduces the idea of binary oppositions that create distinctions between different cultures. He explains that these binaries, as constructed within the framework of Orientalism, originate in the West and are projected onto the East. One is portrayed as civilized, while the other is seen as uncivilized. Similarly, the notions of purity and impurity are shaped by

cultural perceptions. According to Said, culture becomes the basis on which one group is labeled as civilized and the other as uncivilized. He further argues that the East is often regarded as uncivilized because it is perceived to lack a distinct identity and is instead seen as adopting the culture of the West.

His theory is considered one of the most dominant and influential in postcolonial studies. Edward Said is recognized as one of the first scholars to address the issue of cultural identity within this framework. Through his exploration of cultural identity, he developed the concept of Orientalism, which suggests that the West views the East as inferior—often characterizing it as dirty, backward, and lacking a clear sense of identity. According to Said, Eastern societies are perceived as merely imitating Western culture in an effort to attain civilization and modernity. In the term Orientalism, the word "Oriental" refers to the East, while its opposite is the West. Rather than preserving their indigenous traditions and professions, Eastern people are often pressured into adopting Western culture. As a result of this cultural hybridity, they begin to forget their own heritage, ultimately becoming what Said describes as "mental slaves."

The concept and theoretical framework of the present research highlight the importance of indigenous professions for any region. The novel *Between Clay and Dust* evokes indigenous traditions, while Edward Said's theory of Orientalism emphasizes the significance of cultural identity. Due to these similarities, the theory is applied to strengthen the core argument of the research, ensuring that the reader does not encounter any ambiguity in understanding this central idea. Both the novel and the theory address the aftermath of colonialism, suggesting that it has damaged

human identity through its oppressive and artificial narratives. Although both authors were born after the partition of the subcontinent, they engage deeply with the legacy of colonialism and convincingly portray its lasting effects. Therefore, the present research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the value of indigenous culture, particularly in the context of the subcontinent.

Literature Review

There are different words which are used to highlight the concept of "indigenous" such as native, aboriginal, original and local. The term "Indigenous" means "belonging to a particular place rather than coming to it from somewhere else." (Indigenous, n.d). The term "indigeneity" is the name of restoration of human's rights of some even they narrate the idea of liberty in the term of indigeneity because in indigeneity a man feels himself as a secure and safe. He attains of every type of rights like right of sovereignty, right of education, right of wealth, right of freely living in society (Iverson, Patton, & Sanders.2000). Oliver (1998) defines the indigenous peoples in precise words. He says that indigenous people are the offspring of native persons. Their forefathers are native and original therefore they are called original inhabitants.

It is naked truth that Indigenous persons have an original occupancy. It means that their culture, traditions, living style and ethical values are depended upon the native land. These things show their own possession and, on the behalf, indigenous persons are looked differently in a society (Tully, 1993). With the passage of time society is changed according to need of people. Different persons lead their lives differently even their life style, culture, traditions and rituals create the discrimination among themselves.

According to A World Bank report (2005) that indigenous persons cannot compile them in a single definition because they are treated differently by changing the different places. Even some countries they are announced with different names like “native people”, “aboriginals”, “hill tribes”, “scheduled tribes”, “minority nationalities” or “indigenous ethnic minorities”. Wagha (2012) prescribes that there are pack of issues that are faced by indigenous peoples and due to these issues they are looked down upon in a society. Although they have their rights yet due to some prominent issues like lack of education, deficiency of sanitation system, gender discrimination, poverty, shortcomings in future leadership and besides all their fundamental rights are snatched and deprived of their domestic rights.

Due to these issues, even their culture is destroyed and outcome is that indigenous people cannot lead their lives according to their own culture. Non indigenous impose their own culture by showing their superiority and degrade their culture by understanding it as an inferior. Triandis (2000) defines that “Culture is to society what memory is to individuals. It refers to tools and ideas that are shared and transmitted to succeeding generations because they were once practical at some point in time” (p.13). Said (1993) elaborates that culture is the name of binary and no one can cross and damage the binary except native’s permission but here indigenous cultures are going to die day by day. Lacking of their culture they face countless obstacles in their lives and cannot eradicate them until and unless they evoke their culture. One of them is an economic problem due to it native people suffer from poverty and they cannot progress in their lives by leaps and bounds as Gray (1996) suggests that culture may have a significant indirect effect as well as a direct

effect on economic performance. Thing is that the economic performance revolves around the culture if the culture is being well reputed definitely the economic performance raise day by day but if the culture has no any significance in the society “the result has been unhappy and poor people” (John, 2008 p. 65).

Ahmed & Naseem (2011) elaborate that the main reason of dying one’s culture is due to a discriminatory behavior and “discriminatory behavior is a blend of ideas of being a superior and inferior one” (p.2). As Varshney (2003) describes that not only society and religion and moral values effect to other nation rather the dominant culture influences the subordinate culture. Through the discrimination process one’s culture is raised and one’s is died although it is unfair process because culture identity is a crucial aspect for spending a good life because culture gives a direction to lead an enjoyable life and the culture which gives a direction is called an ingenious culture.

Before 1947 the subcontinent was consisted of three countries like Pakistan, Indian and Bangladesh but after the partition the word subcontinent is abolished and now three countries have become independent countries. Its history goes back approximately five million years. Due to an intensive mob there were different kind of languages, religion, rituals, life style and different aspects of culture (Swarup, 1968). According to Naqvi, Ibrar & Bangash (2011) Subcontinent “has mountains, plains, forests, deserts, lakes, hills, and rivers with different climate and seasons throughout the year” (p.2). It is naked truth that different natural beauties bring different rituals and these rituals make the culture. It means that Subcontinent had its own indigenous culture that showed its presence but, when the British came, they started to show their superiority in the subcontinent and according

to said (1993) culture is known as mixed culture in subcontinent. He further explains that the indigenous people of subcontinent were ready to omit their culture and rituals rather they started to practice of British culture. Now, the movement of discrimination in subcontinent started and the aftermaths of this movement brought negative aspects for the inhabitants of Subcontinent. British started themselves as a superior and they are considered as an inferior due to change their culture. They had no any recognition of their culture rather they saw their culture in an inferior culture. He remarks that British were the cunning and they entered in Subcontinent due to special strategy and finally, they succeeded to achieve their own goal. Indigenous persons were trapped and British tried to eradicate their natural and indigenous culture and wanted to impose their own culture in not only some specific place rather in the whole subcontinent. On the behalf of culture he nominated them with colonizers and colonized. Colonizers were the British who tried their might to dye and eradicate the subcontinent culture and wanted to impose their own culture on colonized. As Bhabha says (2004)

The migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream, or the racist's nightmare, of a 'full transmissal of subject-matter': and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference (p.324).

The culture identity is an essential part to maintain his identity in the society. In the book "intercultural competence interpersonal communication" Lusting (2013) says that culture identities "are

central, dynamic, and multifaceted components of one's self concept" (p.133). it means that it is one of the most components that may be saved one's identity and importance because culture is the embodiment of religion, language, tradition, living style and other rituals. According to him culture identity is the only way which differentiates among different sects and strata. He has different ideas about culture identity then other theorists. He explains his own concept that culture identity changes with life experiences and it is transforming according to social context.

In the novel "Between Clay and Dust" farooqi evokes the indigenous culture through his own writing style. Although the novel is composed in a small genre yet its wordings and ideas are meaningful. Even Murad (2012) says that hierarchy of the novel "Between Clay and Dust" is so powerful even the quest of reading goes to a peak after reading even one story. He draws the reader attention through the novel even in his writing style he gives a history of Subcontinent through metaphorical words and characters' actions. Even he writes about the novel that "This is a story of uncertain, unfulfilled relationships and lives where what is not said and not done is as important, if not more, than what has been said and do" (p.6). His style is so impressive and reader catchy even Lewis (201) appreciates his writing style and marks a comment that he has liquid reader attractive style although the wordings are not difficult yet meaningful. Kamal (2014) gives a review with these words "Between Clay and Dust is a novel whose characters are invested in their own mythologies and resent the passage of time, and the author's de-historicized approach enhances the lyricism of the writing" (p.234).

Content Analysis

This chapter aims to explore how indigenous

culture can be revived in the subcontinent. When examining the history of the region, the researcher is often met with a sense of ambiguity, as many indigenous professions have been lost or destroyed due to the rise of capitalism. When the British colonized the subcontinent, they attacked native professions and attempted to reshape them to fit their own economic and cultural frameworks. As a result, the inhabitants of the subcontinent, unaware of the subtle manipulation, began to abandon their traditional professions and adopt Western, materialistic ones.

Today, it seems nearly impossible to fully revive these indigenous professions so that the new generation might benefit from the rich heritage of their ancestors. Under British rule, people became so deeply influenced—both mentally and physically—that they were no longer willing to accept their own professions as worthy or exemplary. Although they had a sense of freedom, they did not embrace their native culture as a model to follow.

It is an undeniable truth that the subcontinent was once renowned for its rich and diverse indigenous professions. However, the aftermath of colonization imposed a dominant power structure that forced people to abandon these traditional roles. Before colonialism, professions such as wrestling in the akhara, courtesan culture in the kotha, various forms of art, music, and hospitality held significant value. Gradually, these professions began to disappear, and eventually, no one was left to revive them in their original form.

In his novel *Between Clay and Dust*, Musharraf Ali Farooqi seeks to revive the indigenous professions of the subcontinent by weaving them into the lives of his characters. It is commendable that Farooqi chooses to highlight these traditional

professions in an era driven by materialism, where most people have forgotten their cultural roots and become slaves to wealth.

The title *Between Clay and Dust* itself reflects his deep connection to the indigenous way of life. By using the words "clay" and "dust," he evokes the simplicity and authenticity of a time when people lived modestly—often hand to mouth—and in harmony with their surroundings. Back then, people lived in mud houses, but over time, society has shifted toward modern lifestyles, replacing clay homes with concrete structures. As he writes, "Streets connecting new colonies skirted off its periphery" (Farooqi 10), showing how the spread of modern developments has distanced itself from the traditional inner city.

Although the inner city was originally designed around indigenous professions and values, modernization has altered its structure and aesthetic. Still, remnants of the old ways can be found "there were a few enclaves where the last of its remnants were yet visible" (Farooqi 10). And even though "the inner city had been emptied of most of its old inhabitants" (Farooqi 10), its buildings continue to stand as living proof of the subcontinent's cultural heritage.

In this novel, both implicitly and explicitly, Farooqi highlights the indigenous professions of the subcontinent. Although "things would be greatly changed" (Farooqi 10), he uses a sorrowful tone to underscore the fading dignity of these traditions. Through his narrative, Farooqi not only emphasizes the importance of time but also draws a poignant comparison between the past and the present. In doing so, he effectively communicates his purpose—to preserve and honor the cultural roots of the subcontinent.

Among the professions he explores, the tradition of the Akhara holds a

particularly significant place. It not only reflects a noble legacy but also recalls the historical richness of the region. Farooqi brings this profession to life through the character of Ustad Ramzi, who is “the head of a pahalwan clan” (Farooqi 11) and is portrayed as a man of unwavering

principles. Due to his deep dedication to his craft, he earns the title “Ustad-e-Zaman” (Farooqi 11), symbolizing the respect and mastery he commands.

Ustad Ramzi represents the lost talent of the subcontinent—a symbol of cultural pride that has faded due to the erosion of traditional values. Every individual is a master within their own realm, but once they step outside it, their uniqueness begins to diminish. This idea aligns with Edward Said’s theory in *Orientalism* (2013), where he explains that culture operates in binaries, and crossing from one to another often requires permission or acceptance. Within his own realm, the Akhara, Ustad Ramzi achieves extraordinary recognition and defeats many rival pahalwans because of his unmatched expertise in his profession.

In the character of Ustad Ramzi, when he wins the title, he not only brings honor to his own name but also fulfills the long-cherished dream of his clan elders (Farooqi 11). His deep commitment to his profession is evident when he vows to remain celibate in order to attain perfection in his art and shuts his mind to thoughts of women (Farooqi 15). These words highlight the sincerity and dedication he shows toward his craft—even to the extent of sacrificing his personal desires for the sake of preserving and honoring his culture. Throughout the novel, Ustad Ramzi remains celibate and eliminates all distractions that could hinder his path. He also swears to uphold his self-reliance and refrains from any action that might bring dishonor to his

status. By portraying such qualities in an indigenous character, the author brings attention to a cultural tradition that has faded in the Subcontinent. Ustad Ramzi symbolizes those individuals who are willing to sacrifice everything—even their personal happiness—for their values. They remain unwavering in their principles and work tirelessly to protect their traditions and professions. In the end, they succeed and earn lasting respect in society.

Besides this, Farooqi highlights the religious values of the Subcontinent, which once symbolized unity and devotion among its people. When Ustad Ramzi enters the wrestling ground, “he never enters it without making ablutions” (Farooqi 11). This act reflects that many inhabitants of the Subcontinent were Muslims who believed in the oneness of Allah Almighty and followed the teachings of Islam with sincerity and dedication. It shows how deeply rooted their religious values were—so much so that even their professional lives were governed by spiritual discipline. In the past, individuals would not even step into their workplaces without purification, indicating how intertwined their daily routines were with religious observance.

Furthermore, the indigenous people not only practiced religion in spirit but also expressed it through their appearance and surroundings. They wore traditional Islamic attire and often included Quranic verses in their clothing. As the story progresses toward its climax, the author evokes these religious elements through Ustad Ramzi’s dress: “His shoulders are covered with a coverlet embroidered with Quranic verses” (Farooqi 32). Not just Ustad Ramzi, but even his brother and trainer are seen “reciting the Qasida Burda” (Farooqi 32) before beginning their exercises. This shows that their practices and routines were never started without invoking blessings and

remembrance of the divine.

These examples suggest that in the Subcontinent, religious consciousness was not limited to a few individuals—it was part of the collective identity. People understood the principles of their faith and carried them into every aspect of life, including their professions. Through these depictions, Farooqi is not merely telling a story but reviving the memory of an indigenous culture that has largely faded and been replaced by modern influences that often contradict traditional values. As readers engage with the novel, they are prompted to reflect on the loss of that deeply rooted cultural and religious heritage.

As the story progresses into its middle, the reader begins to feel a sense of anxiety while reflecting on the lifestyle of indigenous people who once lived in the Subcontinent. They consumed traditional, wholesome foods that were deeply connected to their way of life—but unfortunately, in the present era, such practices have been overshadowed and degraded by modernity. In the novel, Farooqi describes how, when the wrestling clans enter the ground, they do not eat fast food for breakfast. Instead, “bout pitchers of sardai, prepared with almonds, milk and herbs, and platters of dried dates were taken to the grounds to be served” (Farooqi 32). This not only reflects their eating habits but also highlights the values of an indigenous profession deeply rooted in tradition and culture.

In today’s materialistic world, such customs are being forgotten. Through the detailed portrayal of these ethics and eating styles, the author is, in fact, recalling and honoring the lost history of the Subcontinent. The concept of sardai—once a symbol of strength and natural nourishment—has nearly disappeared from society. The younger generation is largely unaware of its

significance, both in terms of health and heritage. This cultural amnesia is the result of a broader shift, where the rich traditions of the Subcontinent are being abandoned in favor of foreign cultures that often conflict with the values once upheld. Farooqi, through such depictions, is not just preserving memory—he is also warning of a deeper cultural loss that could be harmful not only to identity but to the broader human experience.

The novel *Between Clay and Dust* revolves around two central spaces: the Akhara and the Kotha. While initially focused on the traditional wrestling ground (Akhara), the narrative also shifts to the Kotha, another historically significant indigenous profession of the Subcontinent—though now it is often looked down upon and dismissed by society. Through the character of Gohar Jan, the novelist revives the dignity and depth of the Kotha, presenting it as a space of art, discipline, and cultural identity. Gohar Jan is portrayed with the same

sincerity and dedication as other indigenous figures in the novel. She maintains her profession with grace and structure, and many still visit and appreciate her Kotha.

Although there were many Kothas providing entertainment during that time, few attained the same reputation as Gohar Jan’s. As the novel notes, “her kotha still attracted patrons” (Farooqi 18), while others failed to gain recognition due to instability and changing societal values. Her Kotha stands as a symbol of the lost cultural identity of the Subcontinent. Through its detailed description, Farooqi is not merely telling a story, but evoking and honoring a once-respected indigenous profession.

Gohar Jan is also portrayed as a patriot—one of those individuals who are willing to sacrifice everything to preserve the

values and traditions of their homeland. Despite societal shifts and financial hardships, she remains committed to her art. The novel reveals that she “had been quietly selling her gold since the previous year to maintain the kotha” (Farooqi 18). This act reflects her loyalty and passion, especially during difficult times. While society begins to move towards the emerging film industry, “join the fledgling film industry” (Farooqi 18), she remains devoted to her secluded world, refusing to abandon her profession. Even in financial decline, she sacrifices her valuables to protect and sustain the legacy of the Kotha, highlighting both her resilience and the cultural richness of a fading era.

The character of Gohar Jan represents those individuals in society who hold their professions in the highest regard and refuse to tolerate any compromise in standards. As the narrative unfolds, the reader observes that Gohar Jan not only trains her students but also provides opportunities for them to perform on a stage known for its elegance and cultural significance. However, she is highly selective—only those who meet her rigorous expectations are allowed to perform. Although Malka is considered one of her closest students, “whenever Malka expressed a desire to perform before an audience, Gohar Jan summarily rejected the request, saying that Malka still had to learn a great deal” (Farooqi 21). This shows that Gohar Jan does not base her decisions on personal relationships, but on the quality and readiness of a performer.

Her commitment to excellence is so respected that even others, like Bandy Ali, acknowledge her authority: no one can perform at the Kotha without her approval. This strict adherence to merit over favoritism reflects the values of the Subcontinent’s traditional culture—one that was upheld by individuals who were deeply loyal,

disciplined, and principled. It is because of such sincere and dedicated figures that these professions once held great prestige and were considered honorable contributions to society.

Truly loyal individuals do not confine their professions within personal limits—they strive to pass them on with all their strength. Through the character of Gohar Jan, Farooqi highlights those indigenous figures who dedicate their entire lives to preserving and promoting their art. The reader is struck with a sense of unease upon discovering that although Gohar Jan “decided to raise the girl at the kotha, she never showed her any fondness” (Farooqi 20). This moment evokes a deep emotional response because, typically, every person desires to leave behind a legacy, often through children. Yet, despite having maternal instincts, Gohar Jan never marries—perhaps because of her beauty or societal expectations—but more importantly, because she refuses to let anything disrupt her commitment to her profession.

She chooses to remain celibate, sacrificing personal relationships to preserve her art. Even in her old age, when her body can no longer support her fully, she does not abandon her calling. In the final pages of the novel, Farooqi emphasizes this unbreakable connection to tradition. When Ustad Ramzi visits her kotha and finds her unwell, she does not retreat or refuse. Instead, she quietly says, “Please uncover the sitar” (Farooqi 40). These powerful

words serve as a final reminder of the dedication that once defined the professions of the Subcontinent—professions that are now vanishing. Through Gohar Jan, the novelist celebrates those rare individuals who are patriots in the truest sense: people who do not abandon their art, even with their last breath.

As the novel draws to a close, Farooqi once again evokes the traditional professions and values of the Subcontinent—this time through a quiet yet powerful act of hospitality by Gohar Jan. Hospitality was an essential part of Subcontinental culture, extended to all, regardless of status. Although Gohar Jan is ill and unable to walk, she still honors this tradition when Ustad Ramzi visits. She instructs her servant, “Bring some water for Ustad Ramzi” (Farooqi 40). Through this simple gesture, Farooqi highlights the deep-rooted cultural values of respect and warmth that once defined everyday life in the Subcontinent.

In traditional households, it was customary to show great respect to elders and express affection toward children—core values that held communities together. Sadly, such traditions have been eroded, replaced by more individualistic and impersonal behaviors that dominate modern society. Overall, by presenting these carefully chosen incidents, Farooqi attempts to revive the memory of the indigenous professions and customs that once made the Subcontinent a deeply respectful and culturally rich society. Although its culture may have appeared simple on the surface, it carried profound values, and its people lived with a sense of maturity and discipline rooted in those traditions.

Conclusion

After analyzing *Between Clay and Dust* by Musharraf Ali Farooqi, the underlying truth becomes evident: culture holds immense importance, even when it appears simple on the surface. This study aims to revive awareness of indigenous professions that have been underestimated and diminished due to the effects of colonialism. Using Edward Said’s theory

of Orientalism, it becomes clear that every region derives its identity from its unique culture, which can lead to cultural discrimination and divisions. Said introduces the concept of binary oppositions in his theory—such as East vs. West—arguing that culture itself becomes a driving force behind colonialism. In line with this, Farooqi supports the idea of cultural identity and

advocates for the value of indigeneity through his portrayal of two central characters: Ustad Ramzi and Gohar Jan. Both are shown as guardians of their respective professions and are symbolic of indigenous values and patriotism. A true patriot does not abandon their traditions, values, customs, or professions—even if doing so demands great personal sacrifice. While many in the Subcontinent gradually chose to leave behind professions like the Akhara and the Kotha, both Ustad Ramzi and Gohar Jan remain unwavering in their commitment to their heritage.

Beyond just Akhara and Kotha, Farooqi also subtly recalls other traditional professions throughout the novel. Though they may no longer be widely practiced, they continue to represent the identity and cultural richness of the Subcontinent. Through these characters and professions, Farooqi not only mourns the loss of indigenous culture but also encourages readers to recognize and respect its lasting significance.

In a nutshell, the research shows that without culture, human beings are like skeletons without souls. Unfortunately, people from the subcontinent have started shifting their focus towards the film industry and foreign cultures. As a result, they’ve become disconnected from their own identities and, in a way, turned into mental slaves.

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