
Impacts of Biradarism on the Politics of Punjab: A Case Study of District Khanewal

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The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Biradarism on the politics of Punjab in general and on the politics of the Khanewal District in particular. The concept of Biradarism is defined and distinguished from the concept of caste system in the Hindu culture and society. Different aspects of Biradarism which determine the voting behaviour and pattern in the subject area are carefully viewed and analyzed. Historical, analytical and comparative methods are applied which can fairly provide a preliminary base for those who may be interested in further studies on this topic.

Introduction

It shall be useful if we briefly define some main concepts which form the basis of this study. Politics can be defined as an activity by which conflicting interests of various stake holders are conciliated and resolved with in a given society or political system by providing them a share and opportunity proportionate to their political significance and strength, thus achieving collective welfare and survival of the society¹.

Biradari or Biradarism is derived from the Persian word Brother which means Brotherhood and can be defined as a common bandage or affiliations on the basis of religion, language, race, caste etc². In the Subcontinent this term is used for identifying the different clans in terms of their castes for mutual interaction.

It is interesting to note that during the British Raj in the Subcontinent all the legal and documentary transactions required declaration of caste by the person concerned thus the caste of a person served as a symbol of his or her identity and introduction. Among the Muslims of the Subcontinent this caste system or Biradari was used as an identity symbol and not as a status symbol. All the persons belonging to the same caste or Biradari, rich or poor having different social status were and are identified as equal members of the Biradari. For instance a land lord and a serf do have different social status due to their respective financial position but as an Arian, Jat, Rajput or Gujjar, they enjoy the common social identity.

Though the terms Biradari and caste are interchangingly used in the Subcontinent, it is pertinent to make the two distinct from each other for the purpose of this study. The term caste is derived from the Portuguese or Spanish word *casta* meaning a lineage pure of chaste, breed or race.

Caste system in the Subcontinent has ancient history stretching to the Vedic period i.e. 2000 BC to 1000 BC. When the Ariyans entered the Subcontinent from the Central Asia, they fought against the natives called Daroors and occupied the land. The natives were peaceful and simple people living in Jungles, caves and mud huts. The Ariyans enslaved them and called them Dashoo (workers). The Ariyans introduced a system based on social hierarchy assigning a social status to every one in accordance with his job or profession. Ariyans divided themselves in three

groups each group indicating a specific and hierarchical social status. These groups were;

1. Barhaman
2. Khashtari
3. Wesh

While the natives were declared as Shooders still known as untouchables in India who form the working class of the society. This is more or less similar to the Platonic classification. Though the social system of the Subcontinent is a collection of many cultures like Dravidians, Ariyans', Turks, Arabs, Mangols, Afghans, British etc, but among all, the Ariyans culture appears to be the most dominant one³.

With the advent of Islam which does not believe in caste system as a social distinction or hierarchal position, the concept of caste system among the Muslims of the Subcontinent changed all together. The Muslims use this caste or Biradari system as a mark of social identity for their introduction rather than for their hierarchical or social status.

The aim of this study is to examine the impacts of Biradarism on the politics and to analyze that how this Biradari system and voting pattern influential the politics of in general and the Punjab in the Khanewal District in particular. It is further examined that how Patron Client relationship has been used by different stake holders for fetching political supports and votes from these Biradarries to which they themselves do not belong⁴. For instance Syed Fakhar-e-Imam has a little number of his Biradari (Syed) votes in his constituency but he had many times won against Iqbal Hiraj who belonged to a local Biradari having a large number of votes to which Fakhar-Imam does not belong. He articulates through Patron Client relationship or channel of personal connections as Almond and Powell (1978) would put it. In this pattern different Biradarries conflicting and contesting among

themselves vote for a third party candidate through personal connection of their chiefs or Patron Client relationship which represents cross Biradari voting behaviour⁵.

Now we examine and analyse the major Biradari groups in Punjab which effectively influence the politics of the province. They are as under.

1. Local: These people are either sons of the soil or living in the area since quite a long time. They are Hirajs, Thaheems, Sameejas, Kharls, Pohors, Syeds, Sarganas, Sanpals, Bhojowans, Maralis, Dahas, Khagas etc.
2. Abadkar: Those people who, much before 1947 migrated from those areas which became part of India after the partition and had settled in the Western Punjab since long time. They are Bandeshs, Olikhs Jutts, Kianyans, Shiekhs, Cheemas, Noons, Gujjars and etc.
3. Migrant: Those people who migrated to Pakistan in and after 1947. They are Rajputs, Arians, Mughals, Ansaris, Jutts, Maliks, Paddas, Rohtikee etc, and are called as Muhajir.

The Britishers helped strengthening and sustaining this Biradarism for their own particular interests on the one hand they used it through the chiefs for penetration of their political authority and administration while on the other hand they kept these Biradaries on conflicting ends through their patronage thus obstructing the evolution of social harmony essential for a civil society. The chiefs of these Biradaries served as competing collaborators of the British government, thus facilitating the recruitment for the British Army from their respective Biradaries.

Punjab is the largest and the second largest Province of Pakistan in terms of population and area respectively. Having a population of 73.6 million, it contains 55.6% of the total population of the country; out of this total 68.7% and 31.7% reside in rural and urban area respectively (1998 Census). Rural Population is dominantly agriculturists having less civil facilities while the urban population is attached with trade, industry and service hence is more privileged in terms of facilities than the rural population.

The politics of the Punjab revolves around these major groups. These groups sometimes join different political parties, whereas in some cases they are found in same party under the patronage of a common patron through whose clientage they articulate their respective interests. These groups also apply the game theory in forming alliance with one or more groups against one or more groups to maximize their gains and the losses of the opponents. In some cases the same family i.e. Brother or son and the father join different political parties to cover their losses and maximize their gains⁶. For instance very recently (2012) Shah Mehmood Qureshi left Pakistan Peoples Party to join Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, whereas his brother Mureed Hussain Qureshi joined Pakistan Peoples Party. Tehmeena Doultana and Shahida Doultana are first cousins who contested the 2002 elections for the National Assembly as candidates of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan Peoples Party respectively. Syeda Abida Hussain, Syed Fakhar-e-Imam, Syed Faisal Imam, Syed Khawar Shah, Syed Mukhtar Hussain Shah and Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat are not only relatives rather belong to same family but have joined different political parties for the articulation of their political and other interests. They contest elections against each other while access to the political power remains within the family. Another example is that of Sumeera Milk who contested election as a candidate of Pakistan Millat Party against her cousin Milk Omar Aslam who belongs to Pakistan Muslim League (Quid-e-Azam). One may win the other may lose, they still wield political power

on the basis of Biradarism which plays a significant role in the politics of the Punjab⁷.

If we examine the data related to the higher power echelon of the Province we find that out of 14 Chief Ministers, 7 were Jut Rajputs, 03 were Kashmirees, 02 Awans, 01 Syed and 01 was Arian. There are 36 districts in the Punjab. If we examine the data, out of these only nine districts had Chief Ministers. District Lahore 04, Qasoor 02, Sargodha 02, Muzaffar Gar 02, where as Multan, Vehari, Okara, Khanewal and Gujranwala had one each. The first Chief Minister of Punjab Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Khan Mamdot belonged to Qasoor and was a Pathan by caste. Most of the Chief Ministers were rural based and belonged to one or other big Biradari. Different big Biradaries have and assert their influence in some specific areas of the province, where they have advantage of numerical strength⁸.

While during the field work, the author interviewed Mr. Aftab Ahmed Khan Daha, a four time (consecutive) M.N.A from District Khanewal. He said that Biradarism being a permanent support base for the candidate and having a substantial impact played a significant role in his/her success. He further said that through Biradarism a large number of people could be controlled by the chief of the said Biradari. The chief of a Biradari supports a candidate putting the weightage of his total Biradari on his side whereas the candidate acknowledges his support and patronise him through Patron Client relationship. He accords the chief great respect and status, which is source of strength and pride for the chief and members of a Biradari. In this way the candidate is able to fetch the support of a particular Biradari⁹.

The politics and the elections of the local government institutions in the Punjab reflect that different aspects of Biradarism influence the politics. The heads of the local government belong to major political Biradaries. A list of the former heads of the local government is given below.

District	Nazim in 2001	Biradari	Nazim in 2005	Biradari
Lahore	Amer Mehmood	Arian	Amir Mehmood	Arian
Sheikupura	Tawaquallah	Virk Jut	Jaleel Sharapuri	Arian
Qasoor	Rana Imtiaz	Rajput	Rana Imtiaz	Rajput
Okara	Sajjad Haider	Karmani	Asad Ali	Gillani
Gujranwala	Fiaz Chatta	Jut	Fiaz Chatta	Jut
Gujrat	Shafaat Hussain	Jut	Shaffat Hussain	Jut
Sialkot	Naemm Javeed	Arian	Akmal Cheema	Jat
MandiBahaudin	Nazar. M	Jat	Riaz Asghar	Jat
Hafizabad	Ali Ahmed	Awan	Mubasher	Bhatti
Narowal	Javeed Safdar	Jat	Niamatullah	Gujir
Rawalpindi	Tariq Kiani	Kiani	Raja Javeed	Rajput
Attock	Tahir Sadiq	Rajput	Tahir Sadiq	Rajput
Chakwal	Gh Abbas	Rajput	Gh Abbas	Rajput
Sargodha	Amjid	Noon	Inam ul Haq	Sheikh
Khuahab	Ahsanullah	Tawana	Gh Muhammad	Rajput
Mianwali	Umar Hayat	Pathan	Umar Hayat	Pathan
Bakhar	Hamid Ali	Nawani	Hamid Ali	Nawani
Faisalabad	Zahid Nazir	Arian	Zahid Tuseef	Rajput
T.T Singh	Ashfaq	Arian	Ab Sitar	Arian
Jhang	Hamid Sultan	Awan	Hamid Sultan	Awan
Multan	Riaz Qureshi	Sayed	Mukhtar	Shiekh
Pak Pattan	Amjid	Joya	Naseem	Rajput
Khaneawal	Ahmed Yar	Hiraj	Ahmed Yar	Hiraj
Lodhran	Abdul Rehman	Kanjoo	Abdul Rehman	Kanjoo
Sahiwal	Rai Hassan	Rajput	Rai Hassan	Rajput
Vehari	Mumtaz Khan	Khichi	Naseem Mehdi	Rajput
Bahawal Pur	Tariq Bashir	Cheema	Tariq Bashir	Cheema
Bahawalnagar	Ali Akber	Vains	Mian Mumtaz	Maityana
R.Yar Khan	Mehmood	Sayed	Rafique Laghari	Baloch
Jhelum	Ch Farrukh	Jut	Ch Farrukh	Jutt
Layyah	Shahadat Din	Rajput	Gh Haider	Jut
D G Khan	Jamal Khan	Baloch	Maqsud Khan	Baloch
Rajan Pur	Hafiz Rehman	Baloch	Raza Khan	Baloch
Muzaffar Gar	Sultan Hinra	Jat	Ab Quyyum	Baloch

Source: Daily Jang, 16th September 2005.

Analysis

The above list indicates that the politics of the Punjab is politics of Biradarism. In different areas of the Province, a specific group of Biradarities has influenced the local as well as national politics. In the local bodies' elections of 2001 and 2005, successful candidates of District Khanewal belonged to big Biradarities. In 2001 and 2005, Ahmed Yar Hiraj was District Nazim whereas Peer Ahmed Nadeem Bodla was District Naib Nazim. Similarly in

four Tehsils of the District. Tehsil Nazim and Tehsil Naib Nazims also belonged to political parties consisting of big Biradaries. Maher Zafar Hiraj, Peer Shujat Hussain Qureshi and Karamdad Wahla were Tehsil Nazims of Kabirwala, Mian Channu and Jahania respectively, whereas the union Nazims, union Naib Nazims and councilors also belonged to prominent and big Biradaries. Since the elections of 1985, Dahas, Hirajs and Syeds are prominent in the politics of District Khanewal. Dahas are strong in Khanewal city whereas Hiraj and Syed Biradaries influence the politics of Tehsil Kabirwala. In Tehsil Jahania Wahlas and Maitlas are influential Biradaries. The politics of Tehsil Mian Channu is dominated by the Bodlas and Qureshies¹⁰.

During field work it was witnessed that Biradarism has stronger influence in rural areas as compared to urban areas because Biradarism and Patronage have deeper roots in rural political culture than that of the urban, which culture is transmitted through generations. In District Khanewal, voting patron reflects transmission of this political culture from elder generation to their youngers. Moreover it becomes a feed back system. When a Biradari votes for a candidate and the candidate in return extends his support for it. This two way influence has further consolidated this voting patron and candidate/voter relationship.

It is analysed that the local bodies' politics is often used as a threshold for the Provincial or National politics. For instance Nishat Ahmed Khan Daha, who became a Tehsil Nazim in 2001 local bodies' elections, was elected as M.P.A from P.P-214 as a candidate of Pakistan Peoples Party in 2008. Similarly Karam Dad Wahla elevated himself as M.P.A in the general elections of 2008 who prior to that was Tehsil Nazim of Jahania. Moreover Peer Shujat Hussain Qureshi has become Member of the Provincial Assembly for many terms. Some of these politicians have used local and provincial/national offices as alternate positions¹¹.

This voting behaviour/pattern based on Biradarism has its rationale as well. If we examine the social and economic structure of the society in Pakistan, we find that day to day life of a common man totally depends on the favors of these influentials. The common man while using the instrumental style of interest articulation has to articulate his genuine or ingenuine interests through his personal connection with these bigs. Without using this connection, he cannot get the needful done by the officials of the police, education, health and other departments. For such tasks he either needs their recommendation or has to offer bribes which is very much prevalent in Pakistan. Moreover the influential Biradarities pressurize the M.P.A and M.N.A for the development programs in their locality through instrumental style of interest articulation. Some time these big Biradarities prefer that the said development programs should be confined to their precise locality which indicates the sense of parochialism among these influentials. Through this reciprocity the political parties fetch more and more votes with the help of these influentials and these influentials get more and more favors from them¹².

The role of these big Biradarities in the electoral return of the candidates can be explained with a few examples, For instance in the 2008 election, Raza Hayat defeated Syed Fakhar-e-Imam (N.A-156) because in that election big Biradarities of the constituency did not vote for Fakhar-e-Imam, similarly Mukhtar Hussain Shah (P.P-212) was defeated by Ghulam Jafar Sargana because big local and Muhajir Biradarities supported Sargana and not Mukhtar Hussain Shah. One of the reasons was that Pakistan Muslim League (Q) had not deep roots in Arians, Kambohosh, Sarganas, Rajputs, Therajs, Sameejas and other big Biradarities, which voted for Raza Hayat Hiraj and Ghulam Jafar Sargana. Moreover Ghulam Jafar Sargana is son of Nazar Hussain Sargana who himself was elected to public offices i.e. member Zila Council (Khanewal) and Nazim Union Council Kund Sargana and in 2008 as Member of Provincial Assembly. He had very old contacts with big Biradarities of the area which played a vital role in

the success of his son. When a ticket of a big political party having some roots in the Biradari is combined with the candidate's links, the rate of success is even increased. For instance in P.P-213 Abbas Zafar Hiraj, a candidate of Pakistan Peoples Party defeated Rana Irfan (Muslim League Nawaz), Husain Jahania (Muslim League Quid-e-Azam) and Peer Asad Abbas Shah (Independent). His family had a strong background because his father Zafar Hiraj and grand father Maher Muhammad Iqbal Hiraj were supported by the big Biradaries of the area and elected as M.P.A and M.N.A. Maher Muhammad Iqbal Hiraj was a Member of National Assembly (Pakistan Peoples Party) from 1988 to 1996 who defeated Syed Fakhar-e-Imam in these elections¹³.

During field work Asad Abbas Shah told the author, that he was defeated because he was neither a candidate of any big political party nor was supported by the big Biradaries of the area. Similarly in N.A-157 Hamid Yar Hiraj was successful in 2002 elections as an independent and in 2008 as P.M.L (Quid-e-Azam) candidate. He defeated Rizwan Khan Daha who could not fetch as much support of the big Biradaries as he could. He is son of Sardar Allah Yar Hiraj who had long background of political support in the area. His brother Ahmad Yar Hiraj also served as District Nazim for two consecutive terms. In P.P-214, Nishat Ahmad Khan Daha (Pakistan Peoples Party) defeated Rana Abdul Rehman and Sohail Sikinder Khan Daha. He also won due to long political background and support of local Biradaries. His uncle Aftab Ahmed Khan Daha served as Member of National Assembly for four consecutive terms i.e. 1988-1999. His brother Zahoor Ahmed Khan Daha was also a Member of Provincial Assembly (2002-2008), while his cousin Irfan Khan Daha was a Member of the Provincial Assembly (1988-1996). It is worth nothing that Nishat Ahmed Khan Daha is son of Hazray Khan Daha who served as Chairman of Zila Council (1987-1993) and as Tehsil Nazim during 2001-2005. Muhammad Yar Hiraj, brother of Hamid Yar Hiraj and Ahmed Yar Hiraj was elected from P.P-215 in 2008 general elections. In 2002 and 2008 elections Peer Muhammad

Aslam Bodla being a local respected as a spiritual figure of the area was elected from N.A-158. He defeated Syed Fakhar-e-Imam because Arian, Bodlas, Awan, Kamboh, Gujjar and other big Biradarries of Mian Channu supported him against Fakhar-e-Imam. On the same lines in 2008 general elections, Rana Babar Husain (P.P.P) was elected from P.P-217. The big Biradarries i.e. Arians and Rajputs of Mian Channu supported him, while Choudry Iftikhar Nazir (P.P.P) from Choudry Biradari of Tehsil Jahania was elected from N.A-159 with the support of his Biradari. In 2002 general elections, he was defeated by Ghulam Murtaza Maitla (P.M.L.Q) in the same constituency because in that election he could not fetch the substantial support of his Biradari and other local Biradarries. Further more in 2008 general elections Muhammad Jameel Shah son of Muhammad Ghous Shah defeated Nawabzada Abdul Razzaq(P.M.L.Q) because his father Ghous Shah had served as member of Zila Council and Vice Chairman of Zila Council and Nazim of Tehsil Khanewal from 1991-1994, 1998-1999 and 2000-2005 respectively. From P.P-219 Karam Dad Wahla a member of the Wahla family which is an influential Biradari of Jahania was elected with the support of other big Biradarries of the area¹⁴.

Conclusion

The above data analysis suggests that the big and influential Biradarries of Khanewal District are performing as pressure groups and interest groups which support different political parties in different elections. The candidate of a particular political party does count to some extent but the main factor in the success of a candidate still goes back to the Patron Client relationship maintained by the chiefs of the big Biradarries and the politicians. The influence of the big Biradarries can be viewed as Parochial and detrimental to social and political integration. Some of its causes can be traced in Zia regime when in 1985 the national and local bodies' elections were held on non- partisan basis, which resulted in the return of members from big Biradarries in the National and

Provincial Assemblies. Moreover as the local bodies' elections are still held on non- partisan basis. The influence of Biradarism prevails in the rural areas of the Punjab as well as in the Khanewal district. The same voting behaviour/pattern reflects in the general election because both the elections are contested by the same candidates and families which belong to the big Biradarries of the area ¹⁵.

Unless the political parties are organized and recruit the members of these Biradarries who being rank and file of a particular political family perform a political role and participate in issue oriented politics, the influence and impact of Biradarism shall continue to be a dominant factor in the politics and elections of the Khanewal District. The education and general awareness level one also important factors, which when increased can help social and political assimilation to agree on some common issues and evolution of cross Biradari affiliations and voting pattern. Meanwhile these Biradarries can be viewed as particular structures performing the processes of interest articulation and interest aggregation helping the decision making structure to form policy alternatives and decisions.

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