

Religion and Electoral Politics in Punjab: A Case Study of 2018 General Elections

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ABSTRACT

This study is focused on the impact of religion on the electoral pattern of the people of Punjab. Religion as a determinant of voting behavior is best expressed in the votes secured by the religious parties. Thus, religious parties vote in Pakistan and Punjab is studied to build an argument. Religion has a strong impact on human life. It influences each act and attitude of the individual especially in developing countries. In Pakistan; religion has a solid affect in shaping the political attitudes and beliefs of the individuals. It is one of the key elements of politics. 2018 general elections saw a sudden rise in the vote bank of religious political parties. It witnessed a 2.17 % increase in the religious vote country wide and 1.32% increase in Punjab. Tahreek Labbaik Pakistan appeared on the scene as a radical Sunni Islamic party, it mobilized the barelvi vote bank to great effect. And it emerged as the third largest party of Punjab, in terms of votes polled. 2018 general elections also witnessed the rise of Milli Muslim League which was a political wing of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, who were previously rejecting the parliamentary form of government and were critical of voting in elections. The increase in the influence of the various spiritual gaddi nasheen in the electoral politics of Punjab was also a prominent factor during the 11th general election.

Key Words: Religious trends, Politics, Elections, Electoral pattern

Introduction

Religion has deep imprints on human life. Each act and attitude of individual is shaped by the influence of religion. In the same way, religion has strong effect on political attitudes of individuals. Religious affect can be seen in two different ways. Firstly, religion affects the value system. Religious teachings prioritize social values by accepting few and rejecting few of them. This value system then influences the political attitudes of individuals that formulate their voting behavior. Then, religion directly influences the political behavior of an individual. As a particular group of people in the society belong to a certain religious sect vote their like-minded political party (Butt & Awang, 2017). For example, most of the Roman Catholics in Belgium vote for the Christian Democrat party in elections or as Sunni-Bralevi voted for Tehreek-e-LabbaiK Pakistan in 2018 elections in Pakistan.

Voting is an action of individual that involves a definite behavioral act. Therefore, it proves valuable for understanding the social and psychological trends. Election results clearly open up the various aspects of human behavior that helps to pin point the factors that shape their political character and voting preferences (Sheikh, Bokhari, & Naseer, 2015). There are numerous social and political determinants that formulate the voting behavior and religion is one of them. Religion as a determinant of voting behavior is best expressed in the votes secured by the religious parties. Religious parties are the one who uses religion for the purpose of electoral success.

Pakistan has Islam as the state religion which has been followed by 96% people in the country. State administration is being run keeping in line with the basic Islamic principles. Religion is one of the key elements of politics in Pakistan. It has a strong affect in shaping the political attitudes and beliefs of the individuals. People support such parties having religious standing keeping in view that these religious parties would govern the country according to the Islamic principles.

Although religious parties have huge followers but their performance in the elections is not satisfactory. Interestingly, in 2018 general election the vote bank for religious parties have increased. In three of the four provinces, religious parties ranked in the top three parties in terms of maximum number of votes. In Punjab also, the religious parties got 6.30% of the total polled votes, which is 1.49% more than the average religious votes of previous elections. However, it is 3.18% less than the religious votes polled overall in Pakistan.

This research work will study the role of religion on the electoral attitudes of the people. It will also find, whether religion is a key determinant behind voting behavior of people in Punjab. The number of total votes polled in the favor of religion-based parties will be analyzed to build an argument.

Vote and voting behavior

Man is a social being and an integral part of society. His participation in the social structure is pertinent and the whole social structure is based on the decisions and actions of man. The methods and means of human participation are a key to political scrutiny. Election is an important area in social sciences. It has become a proper field of specialization. The study of elections is called psephology (Akhtar, Awan, & Shuja-ul-Haq, 2010). It is a process of representing political choice of masses in order to form their government.

Voting in an election; is a process to understand the mood and behavior of respondents. It is an important tool for respondents to become a vibrant citizen and play an active part in the state matters (Kanwal, Shahid, & Naeem, 2016). Broadly speaking, voting is a process in a democratic setup to elect your leadership in order to run the affairs of the government. Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines voting as "A fundamental right of almost all citizens over the age of eighteen and it ensures that the will of the people is preserved (Muhammad & Hasan, 2016).

Determinants of voting behavior in Punjab

Voting behavior determines the trends in electoral politics. There are numerous social and political determinants that formulate the voting behavior. Voting behavior is shaped and reshaped at two levels. Level first focuses on the socio-cultural setups which effects on the voting behavior such as religion, caste, ethnicity, feudal structure, and power. The second level focuses other techniques such as deception, spreading rumors, believing conspiracy theories and wired projection of candidate at print and electronic media (Sheikh, Bokhari, & Naseer, 2015).

Various researchers and thinkers have focused on several determinants of voting behavior worldwide. As Leighley & Nagler, (1992) believes that voting is influenced by the demographic factors such as age, sex, education level and even income level. Hoene, (2011) puts that the level of education, level of income and gender are important variables in the voting behavior, because people have different voting preferences in each strata. Lednum, (2006) talks about race and ethnic factors in voting behavior, while Hamad and Naseem gives importance to cultural influences in determining voting behavior. Shachar & Nalebuff, (1999) believe that the leader impacts the voting behavior and increases the voting turnout. Pinkleton, Austin, & Fortman, (1998) say, media is important in shaping the minds of the people towards a person or a party, they indicate the positive impact of media coverage on voting choice.

Pakistan is a politically developing country. People's voting choice is determined by various factors. There is a huge difference in terms of voter's choice between rural and urban areas of Pakistan. In rural areas mostly, psychological factors affect the decision making. That includes race, biradari, religion, traditional groups and family loyalties etc. While in urban areas rational and educational factors play an important role, such as party manifestos, party loyalty and socio-political issues (Muhammad & Hasan, 2016).

Lots of work has been done by different researchers on the impact of biradari in politics of the country especially Punjab. M. Ahmed & Naseem, (2011) say that social systems influence the political system a lot. And biradari is one key factor. In rural areas even, political parties nominate a candidate on the basis of his race and clan. People are inclined to vote a candidate who belong to their tribe, race or cast and party does not matter (Barbet Porta, 2016).

Biradari works as an attachment and as well as a social status carrier at the same time. (Chaudhry, Ahmad, Khan and Hussain, 2014). Especially in rural Punjab biradari is decisive in electoral decision making. It influence the whole process of the elections from the nomination of candidate to formation of panels and also election campaigns (Usman, 2016).

Biradari appears as a force to meet physical, psychological and social needs. Nasir, Chaudhry, Khan, & (Hadi, 2015) give figure of 66.7% people vote on biradari basis both in rural and urban setups. Biradari is some time used as exploitation factor to weaken the political parties (Ahmed, 2008). Non-party

elections, martial law government and local bodies' elections also strengthen the phenomenon of biradari.

Kinship relations are another form of baradari dominance. In rural Punjab people vote on the basis of kinship relation. Consequently, the whole village vote, in form of a block in favor of a leader or a party. People are mobilized by the village elite. People follow their village elites because they have regular contacts and access to them, and they can seek their benefit easily through them.

Of late, the second most favorite topic of study relating to voting behavior is the role of media. Media is playing an important part in making minds of the people towards a particular candidate or party. Media is considered an important source of influencing human behavior. (Kanwal, Shahid, & Naeem, 2016). In terms of rural-urban division, media impacts more on urban voters rather than rural people however, this trend is changing rapidly. The impact of newspaper media is very significant in political motivation. 56.6% people read newspapers for only political information (Yaser, Mahsud, Chaudhry, & Ahmad, 2011). The percentage varies in terms of male and female, age groups, rural and urban, income wise and even educational level wise. Social media is the latest form of media. The role of twitter is very prominent in this regard. Twitter is used as a tool for the direct interaction with voters' especially young voters S. Ahmed & Skoric, (2015). It was one of the major reasons behind PTI success in 2013 elections.

Other than this, various researchers have discussed several other variables of voting behavior just as Shawar & Asim, (2012) say that people vote for candidates not for party. Race and ethnicity have great influence on voting behavior. And further adds that biradari, parent's choice, party agenda, and the role of media are some key determinants of voting behavior in Pakistan. while Yaser, Mahsud, Chaudhry, & Ahmad, (2011) assert that personality of a candidate, biradari, ethnicity and party affiliations play a major role in voting decisions.

The most in depth study on voting behavior in Punjab; the largest provinces of Pakistan in terms of population is done by Andrew Wilder (1999). He says that party identification is a key determinant of voting behavior since 1980 particularly in urban areas. Political parties of candidate, party integrity, party leadership, and party manifesto are very important factors in this regard.

Religion: as a determinant of voting behavior

In Pakistan, religion as a determinant of voting behavior has been a neglected area. There is hardly any study specifically deals with the impact of religion on voting behavior of people. Researchers have talked about ethnicity, religious extremism and radicalism.

Religion dominates in a conservative and underdeveloped society. Madrasa education is an important factor of religious dominance. Madrasa as a place of learning for Islamic education provides Qur'anic teachings to Muslim children. Madrasas provide economy education to society. They deliver free education and also boarding and lodging facilities to students. (Ramzan, 2015), (Rana, 2009).

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One aspect of religious influence in the political process is the dominance of Sufi-shrines especially in Punjab. These shrines have huge following in rural areas, not only because of their religious importance but mainly because of the lack of education, ignorance and even feudalism. These shrines have also exploited these simple rural people. They collect money from their followers and then spend it back on them to achieve their political goals (Kalhor & Saleem, 2016).

Religious behavior is an important factor behind social development; both are inter-linked and cannot be seen separately. Religious behavior is manifested in many different ways including offering prayers, fasting, pilgrimage to Makkah, growing a beard, dress code, veil burka, charity donation to mosques and madrasas (Azam, 2010). Religion is one of the most fundamental characteristics of Pakistani society. It is also a key factor behind voting. Religious parties manipulate religion for securing electoral success. Basic reason for voting religious parties is the wish to see Pakistan as a purely Islamic state.

Religion affects human behavior both at individual and community level. However, religious beliefs have lesser impacts on the political attitudes of people in a society having diversity in terms of language, culture and ethnicity. Rather it is ethnicity that tends to influence voting behavior more than religion (Butt & Awang, 2017). However, the situation can be otherwise in a uni-ethnic society.

Hence, there is dearth of literature related to religion as determinant of voting behavior, most of work founds related to the religion's role in politics of Pakistan. Researchers have spoken about the impact of religion in the political process of the state but hardly anyone has talked about religion as a determinant of voting behavior.

Vote bank of religious parties in Pakistan and Punjab: a historical comparison

The electoral history of Pakistan is full of hiccups and obstacles because elections in Pakistan were not held on regular intervals. The political party system has failed to develop and there are huge differences among the political players and state institutions. Elections are an integral part of the modern representative democracy and political parties are an integral component of elections. History of elections in Pakistan is full of turbulence although from 1947 to 1970 the country has gone through election process many times, sometimes indirect and sometimes controlled. However, the first general elections in Pakistan were held in 1970.

Since 1970 to 2018, eleven general elections have held in the country. Religious parties have been a key player of Pakistan electoral process since beginning. Their vote bank is very critical in the success of the candidates of other political parties.

1970 elections witness the maximum number of votes in favor of religious political parties. Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema Islam West Pakistan (JUI-WP), and Jamiat Ulama Islam Noorani (JUI-N) were the major religious parties along with Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadees Pakistan (MJAHP), Markazi Jamiat

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Ulama Pakistan (MJUP), Pakistan Masihi league and Islamic Gonotonri Dal. They all secured 21.33% of the total polled votes for National Assembly seats in Pakistan. While in Punjab their vote was 19.86% of the total polled votes for the National Assembly seats.

Table Showing Comparison of Religious Parties Vote Bank in Pakistan and Punjab

General Elections	Pakistan			Punjab		
	Total Polled	Religious Parties vote	Percentage	Total Polled	Religious Parties vote	Percentage
1970	16318808	3481284	21.33	11246753	2,233,569	19.86
1977						
1985						
1988	19591265	447706	2.29	12859606	75466	0.59
1990	21263209	1173063	5.52	13993083	488069	3.49
1993	20620659	1378430	6.68	14721025	547,357	3.82
1997	19683249	430002	2.18	2754001	75,518	2.74
2002	29972353	3511851	11.72	18996880	1,271,330	6.69
2008	35637072	780103	2.19	21442088	50,586	0.24
2013	46217482	3035893	6.57	28760265	920,185	3.2

Prepared by the Researchers based on the data from ECP

1977 elections faced a unique dilemma for religious parties vote bank because almost all the religious parties were part of the Pakistan National Alliance. So, election record for religious parties vote bank cannot be maintained. Same sort of issue was with 1985 elections when elections were held on non-party basis. Fourth general elections were held in Pakistan in 1988. Most of the main stream religious political parties were part of an election alliance in the name of Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI). In spite of this Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan-N (JUI-N), Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat Pakistan (JASP), Tehreek Nafaz-e-Fiqah Jafaria (TNFJ), Tehreek Inqalab Pakistan were major religious parties. In 1990 elections, main stream religious parties were part of election alliances namely IGI, and PDA other than this JUI-F, JUP-Niazi, JUP-Noorani, Pakistan

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Awami Tehreek (PAT), JASP were contesting the elections. 1993 general elections were first general elections in a way that religious parties came in the electoral process in the form of alliance between themselves. Jamaat-e-Islami led the Pakistan Islamic Front, JUI-F and JUP formed Islami Jamhoori Mahaz and other smallest religious parties contested elections as Mutahida Deni Mahaz. They all secure 1378430 votes in Pakistan, and 547357 votes in Punjab. In 1997 elections Jamaat Islami stayed away from the voting process, other major Islamic parties were JUI-F, JUI-S, JUP, MJAHP, Jamiat Mashaikh Pakistan, Tehreek-e-Islam Pakistan. It was probably the only election when religious parties could not be seen in top five parties in any part of the country.

Eighth general elections held in 2002. Religious parties formed an alliance named Muttahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). Other than this JUP-Nifaz-e-Shariat, MJAHP, Sunni Tehreek (ST) and PAT also contested elections. They all attained 3511851 votes in Pakistan, making 11.72% of the total polled votes and 1271330 votes, 6.69% of total votes in Punjab. In 2008 general elections MMA was again in the field along with Markazi Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (MJUP), JUI-S, MJAHP, and ST. They scored lowest ever percentage of vote in Punjab which is 0.24% In 2013 general elections religious parties secured 3035893 votes in Pakistan and 920185 votes in Punjab province. Making it 6.75% and 3.20% of the total polled votes respectively. Prominent religious parties include; JUI-F, JIP, MDM, JUI-Nazriyati, JUP-Noorani, Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST), Islami Tehreek Pakistan and Markazi Jamiat Mushaikh Pakistan.

The overall trend of religious vote bank in Pakistan and Punjab is almost identical. Whenever the religious votes increase in Pakistan it also increases in Punjab as well, and when religious votes decrease in Pakistan same think happens in Punjab. However, it is quite evident that the ratio of religious vote in Punjab is quite less than that of Pakistan. In Pakistan religious parties received an average 7.55 % vote in all the 11 general elections. Whereas, in Punjab the average votes of religious parties is 4.98 percent. This is 2.57 % less then Pakistan's. It indicates that the share of religious vote of Punjab is quite less and the center of religious vote bank is somewhere else.

Statistical description: correlations coefficient

Correlation is a statistical process that determines the mutual relationship between two or more variables which are thought to be mutually related in a way that systematic changes in the value of one variable are accompanied by the systematic changes in the other and vice versa.

A correlation was measured between total polled votes and religious parties votes in Pakistan and then in Punjab. Furthermore, a correlation was measured between percentage of the total polled votes in favor of religious parties in Pakistan and percentage of total votes of religious parties from Punjab to assess the share of Punjab's vote.

SPSS version 25 software was used to conduct the test. Pearson test was applied. The value of correlations lies between (-1 to +1), whereas +1 shows a perfect relationship.

Test No. 01:

Total votes polled in Pakistan (tvpak) and total votes polled to religious parties in Punjab (rpvpak)

The relationship between total votes polled in Pakistan and total votes polled to religious parties is moderate because the value of correlation coefficient is 0.621.

		Tvpak	Rpvpak
Tvpak	Pearson Correlation	1	.621
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.074
	N	9	9
Rpvpak	Pearson Correlation	.621	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.074	
	N	9	9

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

		Tvpun	rpvpun
tvpun	Pearson Correlation	1	.371
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.325
	N	9	9
rpvpun	Pearson Correlation	.371	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.325	
	N	9	9

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Whereas the positive sign of the Pearson’s test value shows that the direction of the relationship is positive which means that if number of total polled votes increases the number of votes for religious parties also increases and vice versa. And it is a significance relationship as the p value is 0.074.

Test 2:

Total votes polled in Punjab (tvpun) and total votes of religious parties in Punjab (rppvun)

To explore a statistical association between total votes polled in Punjab and total votes polled to religious parties in Punjab correlation was measured. Pearson’s test value is 0.371 which indicates a weak moderate relationship. Whereas the positive sign shows that the direction of the relationship is positive which means that if number of total polled votes in Punjab increases the number of votes for religious parties also increases and vice versa. But this trend is nearly weak because the ratio of increase in number of votes polled to religious parties is quite less than the amount of total polled votes. And statistically it is a insignificant relationship as the p value is 0.325.

		rppvun	rppvun
rppvun	Pearson Correlation	1	.929**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	9	9
rppvun	Pearson Correlation	.929**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	9	9

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Test 3:

The percentage of religious parties’ votes in Pakistan (rppvun) and percentage of religious parties votes in Punjab (rppvun)

In order to find a relationship between total votes of religious parties in Pakistan and Punjab a Pearson’s test was figured. Correlation coefficient value is .929 which indicates a strong relationship. whereas the positive sign shows that the direction of the relationship is positive which means that if number of religious parties votes increases in Pakistan the number of votes for religious parties in Punjab also increases and vice versa. And statistically it is a significant relationship as the p value is .000.

All the above measured tests verify that the religious parties vote bank in Punjab increases with the increase in the total polled votes. The comparison between Religious parties vote in Pakistan and Punjab indicates that if religious vote increase in Pakistan it also increases in Punjab and vice versa. However, the ratio of increase of votes in Punjab is less than the Pakistan. As far as Punjab’s contribution to the religious vote bank is concerned it is less considerable. This indicates that the epicenter of religious parties vote bank is located somewhere else.

Breakup of religious vote bank in general election 2018

In total 103 political parties contested the general elections 2018, to which party symbols were allotted by the Election Commission of Pakistan. And 86 political parties appeared on the score card. Religious parties were Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan (MMA), Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), Allah-ho-Akbar Tehreek (AHAT), Tehreek-e-Labbaik Islam (TLI), Jamiat Ulma-e-Islam Nazryati Pakistan (JUIP-N), Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan-Samiulhaq (JUI-S), Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan (MWMP), Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST) and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

Table Showing Religious Parties Vote in 2018 Elections

	Party Name	Pakistan Vote Secured	Punjab Vote Secured
Total Votes Polled		54321031	33937762
	MMA	2573939	217870
	TLP	2224316	1705683
	AHAT	172120	152039
	TLI	55155	51915
	JUI-NP	34247	0
	JUI-S	24582	0
	MWMP	19615	1500
	PST	5943	3094
	SIC	5939	599
Total Religious Parties Vote		5148001	2138040
Percentage of Total Votes		9.48%	6.30%

MMA a coalition of five religious parties got maximum numbers of votes throughout the country. TLP a Sunni hardliner party and Allah Hu Akbar Tehreek a political wing of Jammatt-ud-Dawa who was contesting elections for the first time, came at 2nd and 3rd place. In Punjab TLP got maximum numbers of vote and stunned every expert.

Religious trends in Punjab in the general elections of 2018

Religious parties vote bank got an upward lift in the 2018 general elections in Punjab. Religious parties received third highest percent of votes after 1970, and 2002 general elections. Religious parties gained maximum number of votes in 1970 elections, it was 19.86 % of the total valid votes, and in 2002 elections they all got 6.69 % of the total polled votes. While in 2018 general elections religious vote was 6.30 % of the total polled votes. Religious parties got 1.32% more votes as compared to overall average percent votes of previous ten general elections. However, the percentage of religious parties' vote was less in Punjab as compared to the percentage of religious vote country wide.

Certain prominent features of general elections 2018 related to religiosity are mentioned below.

The Rise of Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan

The 2018 general elections saw the rise of a new religious party named Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP which is a right-wing party supported by the barelvi sects of Sunni Islam. TLP is purely based on religious ideology and it presented as the guardian of Islam's honor and the protector of Pakistan's blasphemy laws (Nambiar, 2017).

Barelvi are probably 60 to 65 percent of total population, but they didn't have a proper voice in the political filed of country. Earlier there were few parties claiming the barelvi support but none of them has succeeded to gain electoral weightage. Even it was quite evident that other main stream political parties have been using the barelvi sentiments for their support particularly PML-N (Zaidi, 2017).

It was the issue of blasphemy which has become a reason for the emergence of TLP and to apply themselves as a strong force within the barelvi followers (Khan, 2018). So much so that TLP has become a champion of barelvi followers, even some other prominent barelvi groups have merged with them. As Teehreek-e-Sirat-e-Mustaqem and Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Islam. Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan purely appeared as an anti-blasphemy party (Pakistan Today, 2018). They have taken up the issue so nicely that even other sects of Deobandi and Ahle Hadith schools of thought have been supportive of them.

It was year 2010 when a bill was proposed by the PPP government to amend the blasphemy laws, but it was withdrawn because of the harsh reaction of religious parties. Governor of Punjab Salman Taseer who was very vocal for the support of the bill was murdered by Mumtaz Qadri, who was governor's personal security guard. Qadri was arrested and during his trial people came to support him in large numbers. TLYRA started a movement to release him from jail (Nambiar, 2017). When he was hanged in 2016 his admirers proclaimed him a martyr and protested across Pakistan during that period TLP headed by Khadim Hussain Rizvi

arose as a strong supporter of Mumtaz Qadri (SHAH, 2018). Since then they have been proclaiming themselves as defenders of Sunni Islam.

Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan openly supports that, vigilant style mob justice is fair to deal with anyone who has been alleged to blasphemy Prophet Mohammad PBUH. They have praised people who are involved in religious violence over the issue of blasphemy. People also have backing for such mob justice and joining their movement in large numbers which has popularized TLP (Salman, 2018). They are securing barelvi vote bank by raising the religious sentiments of people. TLP took a lift during the last days of PML-N government when a change was made in the oath for members of national and Provincial assembly the error was rectified but TLP staged a sit in at Faizabad for more than two weeks., it halted the life of twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad and further showcased their strength as a potential political party.

So, owing to this background TLP participated in the 2018 general elections. They fielded 130 candidates in Punjab for National Assembly's 141 general seats and 263 candidates for Punjab provincial assembly seats. TLP hit a success and bagged 2234265 National Assembly votes throughout the country (ECP, 2018). And it became the fifth largest party of Pakistan. TLP's biggest success came from Punjab province where they emerged as the 3rd largest party of Punjab with 1705683 votes.

Tahreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's anthem "Deen Aya Deen Aya" switched people to support them keeping in mind that they are the true bearer of Islam. Khadim Hussain Rizvi even termed their success as God's will. And claimed that "the seed of TLP was planted by Mumtaz Qadri, now it has become a plant and on way to becoming a large tree" (Yusuf, 2018).

TLP used religion for the political goal. They used the mosques to a great level for spreading their message to the people. They also used the holy month of Ramzan for their political purpose. Their gatherings around sehri, iftar and even taraweeh prayers turned good for them. Even during their gatherings, they took oath from people by raising hands to support their cause (Yusuf, 2018).

TLP had provided an effective platform for barelvi supporters to vote for them. Because previously barelvi voters did not have a proper say in elections. Sunni Tehreek was present but could not attract people much. So barelvi politics have found a room in TLP. Interestingly majority of their votes came from urban areas especially from Faisalabad, Gujranwala and Lahore.

Emergence of Milli Muslim League

The emergence of Milli Muslim League on the scene of politics is another significant feature of 2018 general election, which contested the elections on the name of Allah Ho Akbar Tehreek. They are the followers of the Ahle-Hadith teachings. Milli Muslim League has the backing of Jamaat-ud-Dawa. Which is a charity wing of Hafiz Saeed's headed Lashkar-e-Taiba.

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Hafiz Saeed formed a political wing of Jamat-ud-Dawa in August 2017 named Milli Muslim League to contest the elections. The purpose was to make Pakistan a real Islamic and welfare state. MML's charter asserted that it aims to implement the injunctions of Quran and Sunna in socio-political matters of Pakistan (Fair, 2018). However, MML was banned as a political party to contest elections by the Election Commission of Pakistan because Lashkar-e-Taiba is an accused militant group and their activities are banned by the government of Pakistan. Even Hafiz Saeed has been declared a terrorist by United Nations Organization with 10 million dollars on his head money (Pakistan Today, 2018). Furthermore, USA has also declared Lashkar-e-Taiba as a terrorist organization in year 2002 (Fair, 2018).

Despite such allegations, it is a fact that Jamaat-ud-Dawa's charity work has been very popular. Their efforts after earth quakes and floods have created lots of goodwill for them in society. Many people believe that Jamaat-ud-Dawa can better deliver the services that even Pakistan state has failed to deliver (Pakistan Today, 2018). That is why MML (AHAT) performed very well in elections. They obtained 435000 votes in both National and Provincial elections and among that its major share of votes came from Punjab (ECP, 2018). A large number of supporters of Jamaat-ud-Dawa came to vote for the first time in elections and casted their vote in favor of MML (AHAT).

Interestingly, Hafiz Saeed and LeT has been critical of politics and termed elections and voting as an un-Islamic thing (Abbas, 2018), that is why initially Hafiz Saeed has denied their links with MML, but it has proved other way around. And letter on Jamaat-ud-Dawa has openly supported MML candidates and Hafiz Saeed 'pictures were displayed on their campaign poster and banners.

Decline of Jamaat-e-Islami vote bank

Jamaat-e Islami is the oldest religious party of Pakistan, is having a downwards trends in their electoral support. There was a time when JI was the biggest religious party of the Punjab having a handsome amount of vote bank. They have been a key player in the electoral politics of Punjab. Although JI could not succeed to win many seats, yet their votes were very critical in the victory of other congesting candidates.

Jammat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulema Islam along with Jamiat Ulema Pakistan has a relatively moderate approach of Islam. They always believe in bringing change in society through elections and votes (Abbas, 2018). Moreover, they had also contributed in the formation of 1973 constitution.

However, with the passage of time these oldest religious parties are losing their popularity. Same was the case in 2018 election when JI faced the dilemma of confusion, they supported PTI in the KP government but lost the gains near the 2018 election by being critical of PTI'S policies. This created a major dent to their electoral support (Abbas, 2018). They could not impress voters much in elections although they contested election under the banner of MMA. Lack of votes to

MMA from Punjab shows that JI totally failed to get much support from their voters in Punjab.

These older religious parties could not change themselves according to the new pattern of post 9/11 politics and it gave way to more hardliners as TLP and MML to attract more voters.

Pirs and politics in Punjab

Pirs are men of all political seasons; they are an integral component of Pakistan's electoral politics. They play a vital part especially in the rural politics of Punjab. (Ghauri & Malik, 2018). Islamic practices are deeply rooted in Pakistan society. People show huge respect towards mosques, madrasas and shrines. Pirs or gaddi nasheens; who are custodians of shrines of the religious and spiritual persons, are a significant figure of our society.

There are vast number of shrines scattered all over the country, having thousands of followers. They have a massive influence in their area. People give them respect, honor, love and devotion. These Pirs holds the spiritual, religious and even land power which makes them a strong reality of their area. (Rehman, 2018).

The Sufis have contributed a lot in spreading the teachings of Islam in subcontinent. It is because of their inspirational life and character that people of subcontinent converted towards Islam (Warraich, 2017). They have beard difficulties and sufferings during their cause. That is why Sufi saints enjoy respect, love and devoutness. However, with the passage of time many custodians of shrines have indulged in the worldly gains and manipulate their power and position. They have used religion for the sake of their lust for power and to safeguard their interests.

Their role in politics is almost thousand years old, history has many examples of their intervention in politics. Moinuddin Chishti the founder of Chishti order, Nizam Uddin Auliya, Amir Khusro, Baba Farid Uddin Ganjshakar, Noshu Ganj Bakhsh all of these have a strong political influence during their time (Warraich, 2017). After the creation of Pakistan centuries old traditions continued rulers like governor general Malik Ghulam Muhammad, Field Marshal Ayub Khan and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto all of them have their Pirs, to whom they pay regular visits.

Because of Pirs influence over large amount of people they become a dominant player in the electoral politics. as their devotees look for their guidance during elections. They play an important position in the electoral politics either by directly contesting the election or by supporting a candidate of their own choice (Ghauri & Malik, 2018). Their support or opposition to electoral candidates plays a critical role in their success.

Due to Pir's dominance in a respective area all the major political parties willfully offer them party tickets. However, because of their huge followership even they have been able to win the elections without the support of a major political party. They contest election as an independent candidate and after

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winning they join the party of their own choice. This places them in a better position to bargain maximum benefits for them (Shah, 2018). Recently the term “electable” have been coined to show their influence in an area to win election comprehensively as an independent candidate.

Pirs and Syed families are not even 1% of the society however, their presence was 11% in the 2013 Parliament, 46 members were pirs or gaddi nasheens out of 446 total seats, which indicates their importance (Warraich, 2017). And in 2018 general elections as well Pirs were very active in various constituencies of Punjab. In terms of numbers there are around 64 shrines in Punjab who have direct political connections. District Multan has the highest number of shrine families in politics followed by district Jhung, Rahim Yar Khan, Okara, Taunsa Sharif (Shah, 2018). There are three influential spiritual families of Punjab who hold significant position not only religiously but also politically. They use religion for gaining political purpose in their locality it includes pirs of Taunsa Sharif, Siyal Sharif and Golara Sharif.

Sialvi is the biggest spiritual family of Central, Northern and Southern parts of Punjab. it dominates in districts Sargodha Khushab, Chiniot, Faisalabad and Jhung. Khawaja Hameed Uddin Sialvi is the Sajjada Nasheen of Hazrat Khawaja Shamsuddin Sialvi's shrine. Their supporters and followers win elections because of their open support and favor (Warraich, 2017). Hameed Uddin Sialvi was very pro-active during the 2018 elections because the issue of Khatme Nabuwat. He has influence in many constituencies of National Assembly including NA-88, NA-89, NA-90, NA-91, NA-92, NA-93, NA-94, NA-99, NA-100, NA-106, NA-114, NA-115 and NA-116 (Abrar, 2018).

District Jhung is highly rich in terms of shrines. It is the home of shrine of Hazrat Sultan Bahu, whose descendant is Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan who contested elections from NA-114, and his cousin was contesting from NA-116. Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat who is successor of the shrine of Hazrat Shah Jeewna, contest election from NA-114 and his brother Asad Aayat contested election from NA-99.

Tounsa Sharif is a subdivision in Dera Ghazi Khan where the shrine of Hazrat Muhammad Amaan Shah Taunsvi is a cause of magnetism. They have a strong hold in DG Khan and Dera Ismail Khan's political scenes. In South Punjab the shrine of Hazrat BahaUddin Zakariya Multani is a source of inspiration for thousands of Muslims. Shah Mehmood Qureshi is the Sajjada Nasheen of this shrine in Multan and contest election from NA-156 and NA-157. Golra Sharif if is the shrine of Pir Mehar Ali Shah their followers are actively involved in politics of Rawalpindi and Islamabad (Abrar, 2018), and plays a critical role in the success of candidates in elections.

Conclusion

Religion as a determinant of voting behavior is best expressed in the vote bank of religious political parties. Religious parties are the one who manipulate religion

and religious beliefs of people for their political gains. They wish to subordinate politics to religion and are very eager to use state apparatus to make people good Muslims and turns the country into a fort of Islam. The history of religious vote bank in Pakistan and Punjab indicates a worrying trend. Religious parties have huge followership, but they could not convert their support into vote. Religious parties have received an average 7.55% votes in Pakistan and 4.98% votes in Punjab. The religious votes increase in Punjab when it increases in Pakistan and vice versa. However, the ratio of increase of votes in Punjab is quite less than Pakistan. In Punjab religious parties began in 1970 elections with 19.86% votes, which is their maximum score so far, yet it shows huge variations in the next elections and has even got 0.24% votes in 2008 elections which is their lowest score. In 2018 general elections religious vote bank increased mainly because the emergence of some new religious groups in the electoral politics as TLP and MML.

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