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Chore of Cast System in Decisive Socio-Political Realities: An Analysis on Local Election of Punjab

Abstract

The caste system, or 'Baradari,' is a complicated web of socioeconomic and political relationships. The 'Baradari' system has deep origins in Pakistani politics and has changed over time. The function of cast system in decisive socio-political reality and municipal elections conducted in Punjab was investigated inside this research. We attempted to stress the impact of cast, or 'Baradari,' on Pakistani politics and voting behaviour in this study. The survey research method was used to obtain data for this study. The research participants were chosen using a convenient sampling procedure. The questionnaire was completed by 200 people in total. We discovered that the 'Baradari' system is really effective. We discovered that Punjab's powerful 'Baradari' system has a significant impact on general voting behaviour. Various 'Baradari' organisations back their own cast's candidates. As a result, selecting candidates who do not have 'Baradari' backing is extremely difficult, especially in rural areas. Although there has been a change in Pakistani people's conduct in reaction to the crisis that is emerging in the country on a daily basis. Many aspects of Pakistan's political culture have changed in the modern age.

Key Words

Cast System, Socio-Political, Election, Voting behavior

Introduction

Pakistan known as a state of multi divergence in names of ethnic, legalistic and by culture with a diverse population of rural and urban dwellers. The caste/baradari colonial legacy has played into the hands of politicians in rural regions, which have forever used it to their benefit and furthered their agenda.

The caste/baradari colonial legacy has benefited politicians in rural regions, who have always conveniently used it to advance their personal purposes rather than they playing their role in establishing a countrywide progress and in progress of a consensual national political culture. Furthermore, the army's violations, as well as civil authoritarian regimes supported by the self-centered feudal classes in collusion with the clergy, have splintered the country's political and cultural traits. Pakistan has had a governance structure significantly impacted by colonial impulses to concentrate power and control its inhabitants from its establishment. This issue alone has a significant impact in shaping the country's current conflictual political culture. (Ullah, 2013).

A major part of political culture is Caste System. Word caste is a Spanish word which means pure and ancestry. It is also known as a rigid social system where little mobility is often allowed from generation to next generation out of the real position or where the person survive. Only the social authority makes major decisions. Thus in social system, caste system is structure where people are alienated into separate groups known castes, in English and *zat* \ *biradarīn* Urdu in Pakistan (Ahmad, 2004).

The Baradari system and its impact still exist in the Politics of Pakistan, although its intensity is reduced but still it is the most acute factor. Mc and Maclean described that *Zat*/baradari plays significant role in routine life of people. For decisions about their children, parents consult their castes known as Baradari thus *zat* form a Baradari that is particular socio cultural unit in which all castes rules and regulations are executed. (Mc, & Mclean, 2003)

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Andrew and Wilder proposed that there is a common concept that family, caste, kinship are primordial groups of Biradary, which plays a significant role in shaping voting behavior. (Andrew, & Wilder, 1999). Baradarism and Castism both are core constituent of the culture which has deep impacts on political system or political coalitions of the inhabitants. These factors showed more significance in the time of non-political governments especially in Pakistan and these Biraderism and Castism influences Local Political System (LPS) (Ahmed, 2006). So, Biradri is constantly considered central factor in casting vote in the voting and this is the reason that local feudal elites dominate in rural Punjab in particular and in Pakistan in general. The main core of this study is to weigh up role of cast system in decisive socio-political realities and local election in Punjab.

Methodology

This research is quantitative in nature. For this study survey research method was adopted to collect data about caste system in Punjab. Convenient sampling technique was used to select respondents for the research. The questionnaire was filled by 200 respondents on the whole. The questionnaire was self-administered by the researcher. We analysed our data using SPSS software to report frequencies and percentages.

Analysis and Discussion

Quantitative data on socio-political realities and ramification of caste system in Punjab is analysed in this section. It contains primary analyses and discussions of socio-political realities and consequences of ‘baradri’ system in Punjab.

Table 1

Table # 1 Model Narrative of the Study on the Origin of age		
	Frequency	Percent
less than 20 year	60	30.0
20 to 40 years	70	35.0
more than 40 year	70	35.0
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation

Above table shows that 30% respondents were less than 20 year, 35% respondents were 20 to 40 years old, 35% respondents were more than 40 years old.

Table 2

Table # 2 Model Narrative of the Study on the Origin of education		
	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	70	35.0
Up to matric	70	35.0
Above matric	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation

Above table shows that 35% respondents were illiterate, 35% respondents were up to matric and 30% respondents were above matric in education.

Table 3

Table # 3 Model Narrative of the Study on the Origin of Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	100	50.0
Female	100	50.0
Total	200	100.0

Above table shows that 50% respondents were male and 50% respondents were female.

Table 4

Table # 4 Model Narrative of the Study on the Origin of Profession		
	Frequency	Percent
Landlord	50	25.0

Farmers/Peasants	50	25.0
Laborers/Workers	50	25.0
Other (Service, Business etc)	50	25.0
Total	200	100.0

Interpretation

Almost 25% respondents were landlords, 25% respondents were farmers/peasants, 25% respondents were laborers/workers and 25% respondents were others (Service, Business etc). **Table 5**

Table # 5 Model Narrative of the Study on the Origin of Residence

		Frequency	Percent
1	Rural	100	50
2	Urban	100	50
3	Total	200	100

Interpretation

Above table shows that 50% respondents were rural, 50% respondents were urban.

Above Figure shows that 100 out of 200 respondents were from rural area while 100 respondents were from urban background giving equal presence.

Table 6

Table # 6 Issues related to cast or ‘baradri’ system

#	Questions	Yes		No	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
1	Is Caste (Biradri) a name of one’s tribe / family derived from prominent ancestors	146	73	54	27
2	Caste refers to a separate group of people based on a specific blood lineage	156	78	44	22
3	Profession related to bradriis a way of earning one’s livelihood	194	97	6	3
4	Caste and profession are same things	52	26	148	74
5	Everyone now adopts his family profession	72	36	128	64
6	Superiority on the basis of caste should be justifiable	38	19	162	81
7	You like strict hierarchical order on the basis of caste	44	22	156	78
8	Undue caste patriotism strengthens ‘Biradri’ politics in the Punjab	176	88	24	12
9	‘Biradri-ism’ positively affects voting behavior in electioneering	52	26	148	74
10	Strict endogamy (marriage within same caste) is a problem in the present society in finding suitable match for marriage	136	68	64	32
11	Marriage in another caste should be prohibited	38	19	162	81
12	Caste repulsion increases honor killing, rape, ‘karokari’, ‘vani’, marriage with Quran etc.	118	59	82	41
13	Old caste system is strictly practicable /applicable in contemporary era	60	30	140	70
14	Caste system is weakening in the Punjab in recent times	124	62	76	38

Interpretation

Above table shows that 73% of the respondents agreed that ‘caste’ (Biradri) is a name of one’s tribe or family derived from prominent ancestors whereas 27% of the respondents disagreed with the view. Almost 78% of the respondents agreed that ‘caste’ refers to a separate group of people based on a specific blood lineage and 22%

respondents disagreed. Analyzing the third question we found out that 194 out of 200 respondents agreed that profession related to 'baradri' is a way of earning one's livelihood while 6 respondents disagreed. 26% respondents expressed that caste and profession are similar and connected while 74% of the respondents disagreed with the idea. Therefore, it is decided that majority of the respondents disagreed. From 200 respondents almost 36% respondents agreed that most people prefer to adopt family profession and 64% respondents disagreed. Majority of the people were of the view that superiority on the basis of caste is not justifiable (81% respondents) and 19% respondents disagreed. 44 respondents out of 200 expressed that they like strict hierarchical order on the basis of caste while 156 respondents disagreed. Undue caste patriotism strengthens 'Biradri' politics in the Punjab (88%) and 12% respondents disagreed. Biradri-ism positively affects voting behavior in electioneering system (26%) and 74% respondents disagreed. Majority of the respondents (68%) agreed that strict endogamy (marriage within same caste) is a problem in the present society in finding suitable match for marriage and 32% respondents disagreed. It was found out that 19% respondents agreed that marriage in another caste should be prohibited and 81% respondents disagreed.

30% respondents agreed that old caste system is strictly practicable /applicable in present era and 70% respondents disagreed. 62% respondents agreed that caste system is weakening in the Punjab in recent times and 38% respondents disagreed.

Discussion

Cast has engaged people from centuries as it acquires a mata-legal approval. The matter of cast has never been a simple ritual hierarchy because it comprises of an entire matrix of socio-economic and political affairs. Cast is not just a plain concept of system and values. It is very significant to understand the behavior patterns of people involving the role of cast as a system. "Cast has become a matter of interpretation rather than substantialization" (Sharma, 2012). An extensive study of this domain can shed light on the social, cultural, economic and political issues of our country. Although the evolution of social realities have changed the environment over the time, cast has changed into an individual's mind set. Older generations have kept this mindset alive till today.

Caste or "Baradari" names are the one's tribe or family identity that is usually derived from prominent ancestors in the lineage. In the present era the surname is often related to cast or 'Baradri'. It is also easier to track family history and the caste one belongs to using a surname. Usually surnames are based on paternal cast or ancestry. Caste refers to an exclusive group of people based on a specific blood lineage. Caste in general is "a system of social stratification sometimes categorized by endogamy, hereditary transmission of a lifestyle which often includes an occupation, status in a hierarchy, customary social interaction, and exclusion". This system has particularly gone through immense evolution during the years among rural and urban social classes (John, & Gordon, 2005).

From the Mughal eras we have seen strict 'baradri system that were connected to professions. Till today such distinctions and stratification could be observed in our society. Professions related to 'baradri' and cast were adopted by masses for earning bread and butter. People belonging to separate casts had their distinct residential areas such as "BaghbanPura" an area of Lahore city, where the gardeners of "ShalamarBagh" used to reside. In the same way people belonging to a particular cast were allowed to adopt specified professions related to 'baradari' only. The skills were transferred from generation to generation to the children and younger lot. As value of manual laborious skills have seen serious decline due to the industrial revolution, learning of ancestral skills have also seen rare instances as well. Everyone previously adopted family profession. In the past, caste and profession were almost similar but in the recent years this particular phenomena has been discontinued. Young generation is more interested in new becoming professions and corporate sectors white collar jobs.

In the areas where feudalism has strong roots the communities exist in strict hierarchical order on the basis of caste and 'baradri', with classical domination of more prestigious upper class casts. This concept has been observed to be still in practice in the areas of interior Punjab and local far fetched regions (Debnath, 1995). To some extent the rural areas of interior Punjab has been the model of emulation among the castes and tribes below the upper casts such as 'Chaudhary', while this phenomena has weakened in the urban areas. Although in consideration to higher morels superiority on the basis of caste should not be practiced because it gives rise to a number of social evils. And the discontinuation of such phenomena could be helpful to avoided it negative consequences.

Strong caste patriotism strengthens 'biradri' politics especially in Punjab. As proposed by Andrew and Wilder (1999) family, caste, kinship are basic groups of 'biradri' which plays significant role in shaping voting behavior especially in Pakistan and particularly in Punjab. Various Baradri groups support their own candidates in local and national elections. And candidates who do not have strong support from their cast have great chance of being not selected in elections. Every cast group desires to have the member of their cast to acquire a position in

politics. This phenomena could have beneficial effects for their personal interests. 'Biradri-ism' acts as a key role inside the political system of interior Punjab. Although the revolt towards Baradri-ism has been seen in the past few decades. A great example could be found in the elections of 1970 in Pakistan, for the first time in the history of our country people in Punjab voted along class lines defeating kinship.

Although cast system has some benefits, its negative impact have also been observed. In the current scenario strict endogamy (i.e. marriage within same caste) creates great problem in the present society to find suitable match for spouse selection. In regard to finding suitable match for young girls and boys in regard to age, educational background, and socio-economic status proposes a serious problem. In addition to these factors marriage in the same cast limits the options for families. This particular practice should be discouraged at societal level. But previously for decisions about marriage of children, parents used to consult their senior castes members (Mc, & Mclean, 2003). Honor killing, rape, 'karokari', 'vani', marriage with Quran etc. emerge due to caste repulsion. This phenomena is most prevalent in other provinces of Pakistan but some instances have also been reported in Punjab as well. It is seen that caste system is weakening in the Punjab in recent times.

Conclusion

In Punjab, the cast system has a significant role in shaping socio-political reality and municipal elections. The preceding discussion shows both the benefits and drawbacks of our society's cast system. Our region's 'Bradri' or cast system has profound roots and may be traced back to prehistoric times. Throughout Pakistan's political and social history, the Bradri system has had a significant impact. The response of the Pakistani people to the scenario that is emerging in the country day by day shows a shift in their conduct. Many aspects of Pakistan's political culture have altered in the twenty-first century. This dynastic control has passed from the hands of the elders to the youth community.

'Baradari' is more important in central and northern Punjab than in southern and western Punjab, in rural constituencies than in urban areas, and in local elections than in national elections.

Future Recommendations

The future researches could be carried out on other areas of Pakistan. Heterogeneous sample can prove to be highly beneficial in revealing the crucial factors shaping local elections. As cast system is very deeply rooted in our culture, therefore its potential influences should be studied in detail.

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