

Role of Elite Class in Political Groupings and Orientation of Local People: A study in *Taunsa*, Dera Ghazi Khan Pakistan

SHAMS ZOHA ALI

Anthropologist

Department of Sociology & Anthropology
PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi
Pakistan

Dr. ABID GHAFOOR CHAUDHRY

Incharge, Department of Anthropology
PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi
Pakistan

AFTAB AHMED¹

Anthropologist

Pakistan Association of Anthropology (PAA), Islamabad
Pakistan

Abstract:

All institutions of society have some individuals who own a superior position than others in their particular group or institution. They have or considered to have the ability to lead and control over the people's thoughts. They are called elite class in their respective institution like as political, spiritual, economic, religious or intellectual one. Elite class has some influence on local people's choices respectively and has the ability to change the choices of common persons and wins the loyalty by them. The purpose of current paper was to study the impact of local elite class on political groupings and orientation of local people as well as the voting behavior of people. It also explored that how local elite class made their influence on people. The locale of the study was Taunsa city, District Dera Ghazi Khan. A sample of 100

¹ Corresponding author: huda.aftab@gmail.com

respondents was drawn from people of different classes like lower, middle, upper and interviewed randomly.

Key words: Elite Class, Political Grouping, Political Orientation, Voting Behavior, Local People.

Introduction

Socioeconomic status is an indicator for class determination. Socioeconomic status is determined by ranking people usually according to income, education and occupation levels, and grouping them into corresponding high, medium and low socioeconomic status groups (Germov, 2005). So the indicators of a class are the income level, occupation, education and lifestyle. This class background affects the individual's likes and dislikes, preferences and voting behavior.

The elites control a significant part of the means of production, for example land, herds, water, capital, farms or factories. Those born at the bottom of hierarchy have reduced chances of social mobility. Because of elite ownership of rights, ordinary people lack access to resources (Kottak, 2002). In the Hpalang community, as Leach (1964) stated, the 'Rich man' owned two or three buffalo and several hump-backed cattle and one or more plot of wet paddy land in the valley. He had large houses, they owned antique gongs and shotguns, and their womenfolk had a store of fine jewelry for show occasions. 'Poor man' cultivated only a plot in the hill side *taungya* clearing. They had no cattle but probably a pig or two and several chickens.

The landlords provide land to tenants for cultivation and dwelling. These tenants live there and work for landlord and this servitude transfers from generation to generation. *Sardars* and landlords have the authority of decision making among people. They resolve disputes and provide protection to their

groups and individuals in case of disputes. In case of which they win loyalties of the people in different ways and are obeyed by them.

Political orientation leads political grouping which characterizes the thinking of a group or nation's ideology or an integrated set of attitudes and beliefs of people about politics. Political groupings normally are founded in two ways: by social elites who gather around them a group of influential supporters to defend their positions, or by citizens who seek the support of like-minded people to achieve political or social change. Different groups are in competition for influence and power (Hofmeister and Grabow, 2011).

The elite class in Pakistan influences the politics by using different tools. One is the *qaumism*; by which elections are contested on *qaum* grounds. Appeals are made to the electorate based on common *qaum* membership. The other thing is religion. Religion is used to manipulate people in the politics. Language and interests are also used to win the politics by the elites (Lyon, 2002).

Those individuals reaching the assemblies may have a party identification, but still be local notable backed by landed or other source of power. The large landlords are the largest group in the Pakistan National Assembly and have managed to hold about half the seats since 1970 elections. Most Pakistanis are under the impression that the National and Provincial Assemblies are still the playing fields of power elites (Adil, *et al.* 2000). Khan, *et al* (2007) stated that in voting behavior of people in *Mansehra*, *biradari* is the most important criteria in determining whom to vote for but party affiliation is not an important one for voters. Women are no less likely to vote independently than men. The voting behavior is connected to *biradarism* because *biradari* leader has a great importance. In this case, the religious affiliation is also prominent and religious leader also has a little influence and consequences.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in *Taunsa* city, a Tehsil of District Dera Ghazi Khan. For this purpose, a sample of 100 respondents, by using stratified random sampling technique, was selected from the stratified population of *Taunsa*. In order to collect and observe the opinions of local people, an interview guide was developed by which formal and informal interviews were conducted. Data was also collected by in-depth interviews from respondents. In spite of this, the techniques of participant observation and key informants were also used, as well as the socio-economic survey forms to observe the socio-economic condition of the people.

Results

Local Politics

Different types of politics exist in *Taunsa*. Tribal and *sardari* system, spiritual factor (*Piri-Muridi*), relations and connections (*Ta'alluq-dari*), personal interests, threats, court politics (*Thana-kachehri*) and caste *biradari* are the factors which provide the base for politics in *Taunsa*.

The migrated population of *Taunsa* city and its neighboring rural areas are under social and political influence of *sardari* system. The prominent tribes *Qaisrani* and *Buzdar* exist there whose head is called 'chief'. As in African Ngwato, the Bemba, and Ankole, where a tribe or kingdom ruled over by a chief or king, what may be called the 'political society' (Fortes and E-Pritchard, 1940). The chief is also called '*tumun-dar*' and his tribal community is called his *tunum*. Due to having the whole *tumun*, chief has his personal vote bank. The chief has too influence on his tribal people to act anything with his own consent. People, by birth, accept him as *sardar* and give him vote without any demand. He either does work for people or not, he wins in his area due to his *tuman*. The other politicians

want to make coalition with chiefs. He either chooses MNA seats or MPA, and support the other partner in this coalition. As Lyon (2003) said that 'Landlords actively participate in elections, either as candidates or behind-the-scene, kingmakers'. The tribal people are much loyal to their tribal system as well as their chief. They love and respect him without any demand. According to the people's response, this loyalty was more in *Qaisrani* tribe than in *Buzdar*.

The other thing was threat, which forces people to attach with *sardar*. If someone opposes the *sardar* or doesn't act according to his consent, *sardar* does not care for him and doesn't solve his problems. Some respondents described that they supported their tribal chief and gave him vote because if they didn't act like this then sometimes they became the victims of revenge. They were sued and they were entrapped in *thana-kachehri* matters. If any government employee acted that then he was transferred out. So that, according to people, they attach with *sardar* or the political personalities because everyone wants to make sure his survival. This type of views gave those people mostly who were involved in *thana-kachehri* matters.

In spite of this, the other mixed politics as relationships (*Ta'alluq-dari*), spiritual factor (*Piri-Muridi*) and personal interests based was executed. This type of politics usually related to *Khawajgan*. People gave vote to *Khawajgan* on relationship basis (*Ta'alluq-dari*) or faith (*aqidat*) or achievement of personal interests. The political personalities could not win votes of people without struggle in this type of politics. They had to do something for people then they could win in elections because these political personalities didn't have their personal vote bank like *tumun*.

Political Grouping and Voting Behavior

The political grouping and choice is developed by material and nonmaterial satisfaction. The material satisfaction includes the

fulfillment of material needs as employments, good earnings, development work, infrastructure, good health and education facilities etc. The non-material satisfaction mostly depends upon ideology basis. The person who gains the ideological satisfaction from any personality or party, he attaches that personality or party. Some people impress by the ideology of any particular party or personality so they become the part of that particular group. The reason behind some people's attachment with any political group or person would be loyalty or relationship (*Ta'alluq-dari*). Some show attachment for achievement of personal interests or due to caste/ *biradari* etc. The composition of a political grouping system, in other words, results mainly from the factor of the structure of social conflicts and interests. In the present situation at local level, as people were interviewed in the locale, different responses about the reasons behind their political groupings were given. During interviews, people described the reasons behind their attachment to their desired politicians or parties were as under: 41% respondents said that they gave vote on loyalty basis or due to their personal relations to the politicians. The ratio describing loyalty was mostly attached to *sardars* of *Taunsa*, and the people telling relationship (*Ta'alluq-dari*) or *aqidat*, the cause of voting were mostly attached to *Khawajgan*. They all people told that they gave vote to their desired candidate without any demand. 16% of the respondents told the reason to give vote to their desired candidate as personal benefits. They people said that they had some issues like employment opportunities, transfers in government jobs, court cases and *thana-kachehri* matters as well as time to time occurring problems and their solution, disputes in *biradaris* etc. They said that which one helps them and assures them to solve their mentioned problems, they give him their votes and support him. But if he fails to fulfill his promise, then next time they will oppose him in elections. 11% people responded that they gave vote to that person who did development work in the area.

They said that development work should be done on equality basis so that the deserving people can get opportunities to boosting their lives up. They stated that relationships (*Ta'alluq-dari*) or reference based work manipulated the rights of deserving people. 23% of respondents told their reason to become the part of any particular political group were according to their family or *biradari* decision. They said that as their family or *biradari* head decides, they give vote to that personality. Mostly females respond like this. They said that what their husband/father/uncle/grandfather etc., said to give vote they acted same. All above mentioned categories, according to their responses, gave vote to any local political personality rather than any political party at national level. The local political personalities either join PML-N or PPP or any other national political party, they had no concern about this. They only look their *sardar* or *pir* or *ta'alluq-dar* etc. other 7% respondents represented their voting behavior according to the party ideology. They people were less in number as compared to others. That situation usually would be associated mostly for PPP (Pakistan People's Party) in *Taunsa*. They people supported and liked the ideology of PPP. Some of them were called '*jealay*' who were much enthusiastic about *Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto* and *Benazir Bhutto* and *Bhuttoism*. Other 2% people gave different answers about their voting behavior like as threat or habit to give vote etc.

Discussion

Political Orientation

There are many factors that shape and influence political views of people as well as behavior about upbringing, career and friends and partners. Some medical scientists suggest that there could be a more fundamental factor behind people's choices and political views; it could be influenced by their genes. A field of study geno-politics describes that identical

twins shares more similar political opinions than fraternal twins. Stafford (2012) stated that 'political choice isn't just influenced by dinner table conversation, which both kinds of twins share, but also by parents' genes, which identical twins have more in common than fraternal twins'. Anyhow the political behavior may contain both nativist and empiricist perspectives.

The political orientation is done by formal and informal ways. By the informal way, this political orientation is done from family and peer group. From the birth of the child, he is orientated in his cultural, religious and political beliefs by his family, peer group and society. He sees his parents as the part of particular social, religious and political groupings and by following them he also becomes the part of those particular groups. He observes his family members to praise some personalities and bad comments about someone else. By this process the images of good and bad personalities and groups are made in his mind and reaching the age of adolescence he becomes the person of those concepts which are owned by his family members. This is an informal way of political orientation of people by which people mentally attach to some particular personality.

Then political orientation is done by educational institutions and process. Educational syllabus praises for the national heroes and the state and elite class takes benefits by this process. Plato (360 B.C.) said that 'All education is designed to serve the state, to unify the classes and to strengthen the commanding role of the elites'. He further added that 'The education of workers (lower class) teaches them to obey their superiors and control any excessive materialistic desires. The auxiliaries (middle class) learn to accept and follow their rulers' every command, and are trained to be courageous in protecting the state'.

The formal way of political orientation exists in different forms. In the locale different political organizations of students at college level were established which were affiliated to political parties and politicians promoted these organizations by providing funds and facilitated to arrange groupings and conventions. These organizations include PSF, MSF, BSO and ISF etc., which orientated students for politics at local level. After this stage the organizations at grassroots' politics provided some designations to local people as Tehsil President, General Secretary, Finance Secretary, and Information Secretary and so on. These people collected funds from various political personalities and arranged different political programs, public debates, celebrations on specific occasions at local level which developed interest in local youth for politics and they became the members of particular groupings at local or national levels.

Another form of political orientation was political meetings, gatherings. That was the most common way of personal contact of politicians and local people. This thing was observed and caught at sight during election campaigns doing by politicians. They established political gatherings in which they orientated people by political tricks by assuring them to remove their all problems after winning in elections. Personal contact is the way to approach people and to convince them to join their party or group or give them vote. A carefully prepared home visit that was conducted with politeness and sagacity facilitated the decision to join them in elections. The politicians sometimes introduced their party ideology if they were affiliated to that. Political orientation was also done by political personalities by providing jobs and development projects to those people or groups which were their permanent voters. They also solved their routine problems in court cases and *thana-kachehri* and others.

In spite of this, print media also played an important role in political process in *Taunsa*. Political orientation of people to some extent was also done by print media like local newspapers and magazines. The news about politicians and their own descriptions orientated the political views of people.

Role of *Biradari*

Biradari was one of the major factors which forced people to make political groupings in the area. People of the community living together in their respective *biradaris* were interconnected through social ties within *biradaris*. The bonding in *biradaris* was different in various castes. The tribal castes kept a strong *biradari* bonding. They have a 'centralized political system in which power and authority were controlled and executed by a most influential person called chief, he has control over a number of individuals or groups' (Scupin and DeCorse, 2009). Those *biradari* groups had a supreme head called '*chief*' as in *Zulu* tribe of Africa (Fortes and E-Pritchard, 1940). All community members and small group-heads usually followed the supreme head and sometimes provided their opinions during counseling at particular occasions. The tribes '*Qaisrani*' and '*Buzdar*' kept this type of set up. At the time of political settlements or elections, this kind of counseling takes place and political matters and affiliation to a particular political party are suggested. Then what the *biradari* head adapted the political party or made coalition with some particular politician, most of the members of *biradari* followed him. Some non-tribal caste groups also had their head and people followed him at different social and political matters. People supported and gave vote because candidate is their *sardar* and belonged to their caste/ *qaum*/ *biradari* etc. Fortes and E-Pritchard (1940) said that 'In the stateless societies, kinship ties appear to play a more prominent role in political organization'.

The tribal head or local community leaders played an important role in social and communal matters. According to respondents' views, inter groups and intra groups' clashes and disputes were controlled and resolved by the *biradari* head or local community leaders. The disputed groups followed the final decision taken by their head. Some people also had violated behavior and ideas to the *biradari* values. They didn't want to follow the decisions by their *biradari* head. They had their own will and ideas and political choice but this type of people were very rare. According to them, they could not express their ideas due to their social set up, which forces to follow the practiced principles or keep silent in case of opposition.

Religious and Spiritual Factor

Religion is the most important factor to influence people's will and choices. As Frazer (1922) described that "Religion and magic give support to the political organization of society. Religion has primarily served to legitimize and protect the interests of ruling class." The elite class of *Taunsa* also influenced on people by using religion as a tool to win their political choice. The relationship and level of trust between elite class and local people existed on the basis of religion and spiritualism. The local politics of *Taunsa* city was mostly captured by *Khawajgan* who were the most religious and spiritual personalities, *pirs* and *gadi-nashin* of the shrine of *Taunsa*. The *Khawajgan* were involved in politics and had the most prestigious rank in the area. They win the loyalties of people due to their *gadi* and being *pirs* of people as well as by politics. In the period of government by PML (Q) and PPP, MNA seat of *Taunsa* was owned by *Khawajgan* and at present in the government of PML (N), they has MPA seat. In spite of this, *Sajjada-nashin* of the shrine of *Taunsa*, remained the acting minister of religious affairs in the regime of *General Parvez Musharaf*.

They have complete influence on local people. Children of *pirs* and *gadinashins* when spend time with servants and followers, this provides the opportunities for them to learn that they are superior from others. They see different rituals being performed on shrine and people's loyalty (*aqidat*) for them and they learn to be *pirs*, nobles and spiritual elites. Same situation was about *sardars*. The son of *sardar* would be a *sardar* by birth and people obey him like their *sardar*. On the other hand, the children of local people learn from their parents and from society that they have an inferior position in society and they have to follow the elites for their survival. People give vote to the elite class because they are their *sardar* or *pir* or they belong to their *biradari*.

Conclusion

Between the elite class and local people in *Taunsa*, a class struggle (Marx and Engels, 1847) exists. Both classes struggle for their personal benefits. Elite class, for their popularity, getting votes, winning loyalties, and maintaining their position strong in political environment, visit local people, listen their problems and solve them. They care for their vote banks and *biradari* members and provide protection in case of disputes and problems. The local people, for their personal interests, attach to politicians and *sardars* and give them vote. They always represent their attachment to them for being their positions strong in the eyes of dominant personalities and to get their attention. They show their loyalty to them and do work during election campaigns. This class struggle between the elite class and local people provides a strong base for the politics of *Taunsa*. This class struggle constantly exists like as the 'social contract' (Rousseau, 1762) in which a reciprocal relation between elites and local people establishes a social set up. People exchange their political consent and freedom of expression in return of their protection and problems solution.

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