

Politics of the Religious Political Parties in Dera Ghazi Khan: An Analysis

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Abstract

The role of religious political parties in Dera Ghazi Khan is an important but complex topic, which is closely related to the local social, cultural and political context. The aim of this study is to analyze the presence, influence and reasons for their limited success in electoral politics in this region. In this regard, parties like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), Jamaat-e-Islami, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan and Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan have been taken as case studies. The research has adopted a qualitative methodology, under which political trends, voter attitudes and social structures have been examined at the local level. The results obtained indicate that tribal system and community-based politics are very strong in Dera Ghazi Khan, due to which religious parties are unable to achieve significant electoral success. Voters mostly support influential figures and major political factions, which divides the vote bank of religious parties. Moreover, the strong organizational structure and developmental politics of major political parties such as Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan Peoples Party also pose a major challenge to religious parties. Internal differences, lack of unity

and lack of modern electoral strategies of religious parties also play a major role in their failure. Despite this, these parties have significant influence at the religious and social levels and play an important role in public opinion formation, religious awareness and welfare activities. The research concludes that if religious parties change their strategies keeping in mind local social realities, promote unity and focus on public issues, they can improve their political position in the future. This study can be helpful in understanding the politics not only of Dera Ghazi Khan but also of South Punjab.

Keywords: Dera Ghazi Khan, Feudalism, JUI, JI, Elections Politics, Religious Parties.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this article, which is primarily historical in nature, is qualitative in nature, but quantitative elements are also included to make the results more comprehensive and reliable. The research began with a literature review, which included a study of books, research articles, newspaper reports, and official election data on Pakistan's electoral politics, the socio-political structure of southern Punjab, and the role of religious parties. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to obtain primary data. Local voters, political activists, analysts, and journalists will be included in the interviews to obtain information from different angles. Election records are also included for quantitative data. Through this methodology, an attempt has been made to understand why religious political parties in Dera Ghazi Khan are not successful at the electoral level.

Review of Literature

The role of religious parties in Pakistani politics has always been important but controversial. According to several researchers, religious parties, despite being ideologically strong, have not been able to achieve significant success in electoral politics. Studies conducted in this regard show that the religious narrative is not able to create complete harmony with public issues, such as the economy, employment and basic amenities, due to which voters' preferences remain different. Research work conducted in the context of southern Punjab, especially Dera Ghazi Khan, indicates that politics here mostly revolves around communalism, tribal structures and influential figures. According to researchers, the role of "electables" is extremely important at the local level, who win elections based on their personal status, resources and social influence. In this context, religious parties, which play politics mostly on ideological grounds, lag behind in this local power structure. Furthermore, some studies have also revealed that organizational weaknesses, internal differences and lack of modern political strategies within religious parties also contribute to their failure. Lack of familiarity with the media and modern methods of election campaigning also emerges as a significant factor. Some researchers have also raised the point that voters consider religion important in personal and social life, but in political elections they prefer practical performance and development promises. This contradiction makes it difficult to convert

religious parties into votes. Overall, the existing literature seems to agree that the reasons for the electoral failure of religious political parties in areas like Dera Ghazi Khan are multifaceted, including social structure, political culture, and organizational issues.

Discussion

Dera Ghazi Khan is the southernmost division of Punjab and is the center of tribal and feudal politics. Despite educational backwardness, religious affiliation is quite prominent in the area. While various political parties have their influence, along with the Pakistan Muslim League and the People's Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam also have a significant vote bank, but this vote bank does not translate into success in general elections and religious parties dream of winning by getting only a few thousand votes and fail to achieve electoral success. The main objective of this study is to examine the politics of religious parties in Dera Ghazi Khan.

Religious political parties are prominent in Dera Ghazi Khan, but their influence is mostly limited to the socio-religious level, while their success in electoral politics has been limited. Some of the important religious political parties in this region are as follows: The most prominent party is Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), which has influence in the network of madrasas and religious communities. This party gains support especially in rural areas on the basis of its religious affiliation. The second important party is Jamaat-e-Islami, which is known for its organized organizational structure and educational and welfare activities, but it does not find much success in electoral politics here. Similarly, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan has made its presence felt in recent years, especially on religiously sentimental issues. Moreover, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan also represents the Barelvi school of thought, but its influence is limited and diffuse. The role of these parties in Dera Ghazi Khan is mostly limited to religious gatherings, madrasas, mosques and welfare activities. The main reason for their weakness in electoral politics is the local tribal system, the role of influential figures (electables), and the dominance of major political parties. Nevertheless, religious parties play an important role in shaping the religious identity, social values, and public opinion of the region, and from time to time they also try to strengthen their political position but failed. The failure of religious parties in electoral politics in Dera Ghazi Khan is the result of a complex socio-political process, which can be understood in the light of various factors. First, the tribal and community system is very strong in this region, where voters mostly prefer candidates from their own tribe, chieftain or influential family. Due to this, the tendency to vote on ideological or religious grounds remains weak. The second important reason is the strong roots of major political parties like Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan Peoples Party and PTI, which attract voters through development works, resources and political influence. The third factor is the internal differences and lack of unity of religious parties. Parties like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) and Jamaat-e-Islami often contest elections separately, which divides their votes. Fourth, the change in voters' preferences is also an important reason. Now the public gives more importance to issues like education, health, employment and basic amenities instead of just religious slogans, where religious parties lag behind in showing clear

performance. The fifth reason is that the organizational structure of religious parties in rural areas is weaker than in urban areas, due to which they are unable to run effective election campaigns. Furthermore, the role of influential figures electables at the local level is also very important, who often ensure their success by joining major parties, while religious parties are rarely able to include such candidates.

After the establishment of Pakistan, many religious leaders from religious parties, including Maulana Qazi Obaidullah, Attaullah Shah Bukhari, Maulana Abdul Qadir Dervi, have participated in elections in the past, but only a limited success was achieved. For example, in the 1970 elections, Dr. Nazir Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami succeeded in forming an alliance with Shaheed Tamman Khosa, who became the MNA of Jamaat-e-Islami and Sardar Atta Muhammad Khosa was elected MPA. The success was due more to the personal efforts and personality of Dr. Nazir Ahmed than to Jamaat-e-Islami, and the Khosa group also played a significant role. Later, when Dr. Nazir Ahmed was martyred, Atta Muhammad Khosa also resigned and after that, Jamaat-e-Islami was deprived of winning any election again. Another highlight of this election was that two other religious parties, including Khwaja Qutbuddin from Jamiat Ulema Pakistan, lost by getting 30,155 votes compared to Dr. Nazir's 32,827 votes, while Maulana Abdul Sattar of Jamiat Ulema Islam also got 21,500 votes.

In Dera Ghazi Khan, along with the vote bank of religious parties, another important issue is the absence of any prominent political figure who is important in the electoral political system. Another aspect is the powerful political families who have dominated electoral politics for the past hundred years. In the last two decades, Jamiat Ahle Hadith has also joined the field of politics and Hafiz Abdul Karim from Dera Ghazi Khan, who has become the central leader of Jamiat Ahle Hadith and is a capitalist, has been elected as an MNA and senator by forming an electoral alliance with the Muslim League-Nawaz. The main reason for this is that he is contesting the elections on the Muslim League ticket and election symbol. In the recent by-election, his son Usama Abdul Karim has also been elected as an MP. This is a success due to his personal politics and wealth. While the votes of Jamiat Ahle Hadith range from five to ten thousand, which is insufficient to win the elections.

Similarly, if we talk about the politics of religious parties, on the one hand, where there is a lack of leadership, on the other hand, there is a common impression of division among the people along with mutual hostility and division on the basis of sect, which is undesirable. In such circumstances, the assumption is generally increased that the success of the candidate will fuel sectarian and sectarian sentiments. Then, politics in the name of religion is also not much liked anymore because the people's main problem is economic. Religious parties have failed to establish any specific narrative to the people.

The special impact of sectarian division is also linked to propaganda, as unlike election days, religious leaders focus on traditional politics at other times and openly propagate their sectarian beliefs to gain the attention of their like-minded people, which weakens their politics. If religious parties unite, their

combined vote bank can become a challenge for secular political parties. But when religious parties join forces with major parties like the Muslim League, the People's Party, and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf to contest elections, the public decides to reject them outright, as has been the case for the past two decades.

The central leadership of religious parties has also lost its organized status and most of the time the leadership itself loses the elections. Then in this remote area where the leadership is not interested, this area is also ignored and it is also not given any proper representation, which is certainly not encouraging for religious parties. In the past decades, it has been seen that many personalities of religious parties have joined big political parties by limiting their long journey of affiliation, which is the reason for their not getting acceptance in their own parties. The impression of a family-limited party is also gaining strength in religious parties, as this idea was earlier for the PPP and the Muslim League. But now Jamiat Ulema Pakistan, Jamiat Ulema Islam, Jamiat Ahle Hadith, and other religious parties are either divided into factions or a few people are in control of the party, which is certainly enough for political failure. In these circumstances, only Jamaat-e-Islami has maintained democratic values in the party to a large extent. Which is certainly a very positive aspect of Jamaat-e-Islami. Jamaat-e-Islami is facing both a lack of leadership and a crisis in Dera Ghazi Khan. It seems that only one family is running the party. After Dr. Nazir, the limited role of his family in the party has caused damage to the popularity of the party. Dr. Nazir, who was a beloved political figure here, continued his political path as a role model for religious parties, whose politics were a model of service to the people, peace, social and religious harmony, which is now missing in political parties, especially religious parties.

If we look at the individual success of Jamaat-e-Islami in 1970, it is remarkable, but if we look at the 1977 elections, it was possible due to national unity and unity among religious parties. The success of Maulana Mufti Mahmood was a great success, but the religious parties failed to maintain this continuity because they became divided. While the breakup of Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan caused irreparable damage, the limitation of Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami to two provinces also paved the way for the failure of religious politics. Maulana Mufti Mahmood's victory in the 1977 elections was no small feat. He defeated the PPP candidate and it should be noted that the government machinery used all the tactics to somehow defeat Maulana. But the religious voter appeared intact for the first time in this election, which paved the way for Mufti Mahmood's victory despite pre-poll rigging and by thwarting all the government tactics on election day. In this election, the PPP broke all records of rigging and the results of the provincial assembly elections held two days later were the first, including the results of Mujahid-e-Millat Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi.

Now after all this discussion, the question is that it is very important to understand where religious parties in general and in Dera Ghazi Khan in particular are present in electoral politics. Is it possible to win in the national electoral mainstream by playing the politics of madrasa, sect and sect? The answer

to this question will definitely be in the negative. Rather, in the current unfavorable political situation, religious parties need to promote politics on the basis of national unity, as opposed to hatred, so that in national affairs they become a party in state affairs instead of a madrasa and a monastery, and not just a pressure group. Religious parties need to promote politics of public interest by keeping justice, equality, nation and religion in mind so that the public's trust is restored. All religious parties will have to do politics by setting aside their mutual differences and sectarian divisions. Only then will their vote bank be able to unite and guarantee success. And at least they will be able to play the role of an active opposition. Which will certainly help promote religious and national harmony in the country, while also contributing to the strengthening of Pakistan and the Ummah.

Table Election Results 1970 NA-88

Registered Votes	Cast Votes	Accepted Votes	Rejected Votes	Turn out
239158	130169	127174	2995	54.4%
Candidate	Party	Votes	Position	
Dr. Nazeer Ahmad Shaheed	JI	32827	1st	
Khawaja Qatub-u-Din	MJUP	30155	2nd	
Manzoor Ahmad Khan	PPP	23625	3rd	
Molana Abdul Satar	JUI	21477	4th	
Muhammad Khan Laghari and all other Independents	IND	19090	5th	
Religious Parties secured 1 st , 2 nd and 4 th position and achieved 84459 votes out of 130169				

While in second constituency NA-89 Ghulam Muhammad of JUI secured 13142 Votes

PP-136 Result Elections-1970

Registered Votes	Cast Votes	Accepted Votes	Rejected Votes	Turn out
77356	37501	36847	654	48.%
Candidate	Party	Votes	Position	
Sardar Atta Muhammad Khosa	JI	18131	1 st	
Bashir-u-Din Salar	PPP	9853	2 nd	
Fazal Ali Khan	MJUP	5262	3 rd	
Religious Parties secured 1 st , 2 nd and 4 th position and achieved 23393 votes out of 36847				

Table Election Results 1977 NA-124

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Registered Votes	Cast Votes	Accepted Votes	Rejected Votes	Turn out
197008	104670	1102549	2121	53.1%
Candidate	Party	Votes	Position	
Molana Mufti Mehmood	JUI	52159	1 st	
Manzoor Ahmad Khan	PPP	49886	2 nd	
Religious Parties secured 1 st , 2 nd and 4 th position and achieved 84459 votes out of 130169				

Conclusion

The above mention discussion is concluded with this summary that religious parties have always participated in the electoral politics of Dera Ghazi Khan, but their success has been very limited. Throughout the electoral history, apart from the victory of Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Dr. Nazir Ahmed Shaheed in the 1970 elections and the victory of Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam head Maulana Mufti Mahmood in 1977, religious parties have failed, which may be due to several reasons, some of which are prominent. The failure of religious political parties in electoral politics in Dera Ghazi Khan is a complex and multifaceted problem, driven by several social, political and organizational factors. The most important reason is the traditional political structure of the area, which revolves around fraternalism, tribal affiliation and influential figures. In areas like Dera Ghazi Khan, voters often vote under the influence of their tribe, family or local elders rather than on ideological grounds. In this context, religious parties, which rely mostly on ideological politics, are unable to compete with winning horse who have strong networks at the local level. Another important reason is the growing trend of development politics. Voters now give more importance to practical issues such as roads, education, health and employment. Religious parties usually emphasize ideological and religious points in their manifestos, but they lag behind in presenting concrete plans for public welfare. As a result, voters hesitate to vote for these parties. The third reason is the organizational weaknesses of religious parties. Leadership issues, internal differences, and a lack of modern electoral strategies are prominent within these parties. Modern methods of campaigning, such as effective use of social media and data-driven strategies, are less visible in these parties, which makes them weaker than other major political parties. Furthermore, the narrative of religious parties sometimes reaches only a limited constituency. Although religion is an important part of people's lives, voters prefer more practical and mundane issues in political decisions. This contradiction makes it difficult to translate religious sentiments into votes. Another important factor is the presence of major political parties at the national and provincial levels, which are not only rich in resources but also have a strong electoral structure. These parties gain an edge in the electoral arena by bringing together local influential figures, which further limits the space for religious parties. In conclusion, it can be said that the main reasons for the failure of religious political parties in Dera Ghazi Khan include traditional social structure, the importance of developmental politics, organizational weaknesses, limited narrative, and the dominance of major political parties. All of these factors combine to create an environment where it becomes difficult for religious parties to achieve electoral success.

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