

Power Brokers in a Punjabi Village: A Case Study of Power Manifestation

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Abstract

The purpose of paper was to study the role of power brokers in the Punjabi community to see how they replaced the cultural institution of leadership in the name of deraydar. The paper tries to bring forth the factors that made these power brokers influential and how did the traditional leader faded away from the cultural life of the villages. The paper also describes the sources of power that these brokers enjoy at local level and the manipulative strategies that are consciously held to maintain the social control through reciprocity towards group allies and coercive tactics towards the opponents. The paper also discusses political set up of the village to see how political set up revolves around the pressure groups of village. How are these formed as the source of power due to which each group tried to manipulate benefits using its political influence, links, and relationships, etc. The study also looks into how these politically influential groups try to over throw their opponent groups.

Introduction

Leadership is a trait as enunciated by many theorists and psychologists. An effective leader is said to be group focused and concerned with fulfilment of needs of members of the group. Since this leadership is labelled with meeting personal ends and goals, the

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role of a leader is usually corrupted. Much has been written on leadership and its styles. While considering 'authority', Weber referred by Ritzer¹ foregrounds various styles including rational, traditional, and charismatic. Weber's wording cited by Ritzer reveals that "traditional authority is based on a claim by the leaders, and a belief on the part of the followers, that there is virtue in the sanctity of age-old rules and powers. The leader in such a system is not a superior but a personal master."²

In the Pre Mughal period, leadership in the Punjab was traditional through the cultural institution of '*Panchayat*'³ or a village council duly recognized by the earlier establishments. *Panchayat* performed various important functions out of them two were vital i.e. administrative and judicial. Mughal period also retained this significant institution and gave it a legal status. Mughals invaded South Asia in the Sixteenth Century and were predominantly settled in urban areas. Although there were no well-organized, corporate local bodies in Mughal India, a system for their regulation did exist. The local administration in pre-British India was called 'Area Administration'. The office of the '*Kotwal*'⁴ evolved as the keystone of the municipal organization.

1 See. G. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 4th edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 1996), pp.122-26.

2 *Ibid.*

3 The term "*Panchayat*" was generally used to denote a meeting of the selected council representing the whole community. The name "*Panch*" may possibly indicate that this council had five members. The members of the *Panchayat* were appointed and they remained in office at the will of the King. They were socially recognized, trusted and respected among the people. Taxes were collected by the *Panchayat* and paid to the central government for a village as a whole. Villages were independent in their internal affairs. Maintenance of law and order, settlement of disputes, security of the village, adjudication and supervision of common property, and social services were responsibilities within the purview of the *Panchayat*.

4 The '*Kotwal*' was appointed under the '*Sanad*' or status. His primary responsibilities were to uphold law and order, and to maintain a body of horses, a city guard and an army of spies to accomplish his duties. The sources of public funds comprised contribution from individual members, donation from the King, profits from public works, fines and penalties. However, the Mughal Emperor Akbar gave unprecedented importance to '*zamindar*' class (the landed aristocracy). The '*zamindars*' were the leaders of the clan and tribes in the old settled villages; they were introduced by the State for revenue collection and the maintenance of the law and order. When the Mughal regime was in decline, the '*Panchayat*' type of organization almost disappeared from the urban areas and greatly decayed in villages.

The culture of the Punjab is traditionally marked with *dera*⁵ to be a socialization spot where people used to gather and socialize. It was a meeting place of men in a village thus providing a platform of assembling to bring various matters related to village concern on the anvil. It was not only a joint forum for elders to discuss matters of grave concern but also a place to plan diverse cultural activities among villages like village fairs, annual sports, and cattle markets. The development process has somehow undermined the importance of this cultural institution where matters were discussed and resolved with ample community participation. Mutual agreements and freedom of speech, representation of every cluster of village were main features of it.

The owner of *dera* was supposed to be a noble person equally respected by villagers and mostly a non controversial person leading the community on egalitarian grounds. He usually is an informative, comparatively more educated, socially aware and sensitized person. His leadership depends on the nobility due to which all strata of the community found worth visiting and seeking advice in various matters. Soon after the partition, there was a gap of leadership at local level due to huge number of migration across borders and reestablishment of human population. Though religious factor was common in West Punjab yet there was still a distinction among old and newly settled population. This phenomenon led to initial doubtful relationship between the two halves of population. The early literature⁶ produced soon after 1947 speaks of problems of identity among newly migrants against those who claimed to be the sons of soil.

After Mughals, Sikhs became the supreme power in the Punjab. But their rule mainly rested on the dictum of 'Might is Right'. During Ranjit Singh's regime, the empire was consolidated and the '*Panchayat*' system was revived, through the administration of civil elders or '*Sardars*'. The new Sikh regime restored to village communities their ancestral rights. However, stable government did not reign and the '*Panchayat*' system suffered a serious setback. The situation remained disturbed till Britain annexed the Punjab in 1849. After taking complete control, Britain took steps to modernize the existing distorted local government system.

- 5 Men's room (in anthropology) or a place where males of the village use to gather and socialize for various inter and intra village affairs.
- 6 For reference the literary work generated by Saadat Hassan Manto, Qudrat Ullah Shuhaab, Mumtaz Mufti, etc. can be cited.

The problem of identity led to segregation of the population between two halves of *muqami*⁷ and *mohajir*⁸ or *abaadkaar*.⁹ In initial days, there were severe misunderstandings between two strata. The locals were accepting the immigrants and vice versa. Numerous problems were due to allotments of agricultural lands to immigrants which were somehow making locals fearful of the future scenario. Similarly, both strata preferred to be in a position to establish their own identity and thus fragmenting the population into *Dhara* or 'interest groups'.¹⁰ The leadership pattern also embraced a change in a sense that a leader was previously common for whole population where as post migration scene brought a structural change thus dividing leadership specific for locals and immigrants. Both groups preferred to have their own *deras* revolving around their identity, interests, and stakes. Thus the issue led to emergence of factions among Punjabis of the then West Pakistan.

The change in the role of traditional leaders in Punjab not only brought fragmentation within population whose aftermaths were far-reaching. The caste based bond was strengthened which was further reinforced by the *muqami-mohajir* dichotomy. This element added a new dimension of conflict in social life of rural Punjab. The institution of leadership was withered away and replaced by newly formed leadership that was more like a middleman. This new form was not independent as it was in case of traditional leadership. The new form centred on enhancing numerical strength and getting benefits for the members of respective interest groups. This phenomenon was deepened during the 'Basic Democracies' introduced by Ayub Khan. The traditional institution transcended into a purposeful manipulative organization of people trying to take a lead in winning the number game and power play.

This paper is basically based upon an empirical research done in a Punjabi village that is predominantly a village of immigrants

7 Local.

8 Immigrant.

9 Settler.

10 As defined by Richard Schaefer, an interest group is a voluntary association of citizens who attempt to influence public policy. Schaefer further states that interest groups are occasionally referred to as 'pressure groups' implying that they attempt to force their will on a resistant public.

who were also active to participate in power politics of the area and thus becoming inevitable in local social fabric. The power brokers manipulated and attempted their best to influence the socio-cultural life of area and also development work in order to put their group allies to be the largest beneficiaries of development schemes. The current research focuses upon dynamics of power politics and role played by power brokers in the area to influence the newly established development approach titled 'devolution of power' to maximize their interests and social power.

Review of Literature

Reber defines Social Power as:

*"Degree of control that a person or a group has over other persons or groups."*¹¹

Schaefer refers to Weber who states power as "the ability to exercise one's will over others."¹² *The Social Science Encyclopaedia* edited by Kuper and Kuper¹³ states that during 1950s discussions of power were dominated by the conflicting perspectives offered by 'power elite' theories. This perspective is also endorsed by Mills.¹⁴ Weber¹⁵ refers to the tactics of power elites who use power as mean of domination.

I begin with power because, in my view, it is the main axis around which oppression and exploitation revolves. Power is multifaceted and ubiquitous. There is physical and psychological power, the scholastic survey on power issues unfolds that power can be of diverse and multifaceted dimensions. For example power could be economic, religious, political, and spiritual. Similarly, power relationship could be between two individuals, between two groups, two nations, among cultures, etc. Given its cardinal role in social life and social problems, I wanted to propose a working

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- 11 A. S. Reber, *Dictionary of Psychology* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), pp.562-63.
 - 12 R. T. Schaefer, *Sociology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1983), pp.350-54.
 - 13 A. Kuper, & J. Kuper, *The Social Science Encyclopaedia* (Lahore: Services Book Club, 1989), pp.635-39.
 - 14 C. W. Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp.267-301.
 - 15 M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds G. Roth and G. Wittich, (Berkeley and Los Angeles. (Original German, *Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft*, Tubingen, (1978 [1922]), pp.188-209.

definition of power that I developed with Prilleltensky and Geoff Nelson.

Power refers to the capacity and opportunity to fulfil or obstruct personal, relational, or collective needs. We distinguish among power to strive for wellness, power to oppress, and power to resist oppression and strive for liberation. In each instance, the exercise of power can apply to self, others, and collectives; and can reflect varying degrees of awareness with respect to the impact of one's actions.¹⁶

They further opine that:

The exercise of power varies not only across contexts, but also across time. Within a particular setting or relationship, people may occupy different roles at different times, making the exercise of power a very dynamic process.¹⁷

Anthropology when studies culture and human interactions becomes especially interested to study power relationship. In the same way, economic anthropology studies patron-client relationship in which power relations are of importance. Fogelson and Adams¹⁸ have also commented upon the relevance and appropriateness of anthropology studying power factors.

Power has been thought of by anthropologists as human influence and agency, and even as – reflecting various worldviews – situated outside humanity.¹⁹

C. Wright Mills argued influentially that:

Social stratification and hierarchy are forcefully maintained by the 'power elite', those who, between themselves, mobilize the power to transcend 'ordinary' social environments and make decisions that pertain to the lives of people.²⁰

Somehow related concept to power brokers at small community level is 'big man' well searched by anthropology. Power brokers in the study locale symbolically related to big man about whom *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* states:

16 I. Prilleltensky, and G. Nelson. *Doing psychology critically: Making a difference in diverse settings*. London: Macmillan/Palgrave, in press), pp.71-87.

17 *Ibid.*

18 R.D. Fogelson, and R.N. Adams, eds. *The Anthropology of Power: Ethnographic Studies from Asia, Oceania, and the New World* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp.27-29.

19 *Ibid.*, pp.27-29.

20 C. W. Mills, *op.cit.*, pp.267-301.

A central question concerns the means by which Big Men acquire and hold power without the traditional authority that chiefly status accords and without other institutionalized mechanisms of social control. A Big Man who underperforms or who overdemand may be elbowed aside by his competitors and abandoned by his following. Thus, Big Men typically possess aggrandizing and competitive personalities, but they must also be able to accommodate other people's demands for economic equivalence and political cooperation. Big Men must rely on skills of oratory and persuasion, leading by example or by cajolery in hopes – not always fulfilled – that others will follow.²¹

As per the above citation, the concept of 'big man' is also studied by Lindstrom who comments that:

Big Man, however, is apt anthropological terminology because it is a direct translation of indigenous terms for leader in numerous island vernaculars.²²

The pan appropriateness of the term 'big man' when applied to similar settings in which power relationships are studied van Bakel *et al.* state:

Anthropologists have spotted, for example, Big Men in the halls of the United States Congress as well as within a number of other political organizations worldwide.²³

Globalization is Colonization by a new name. Whereas in the past powerful countries invaded territories and dispossessed people of their resources by brute force; in the present, international lending agencies pressure poor countries to open their markets to foreign competition. Whereas in the past raw materials and slave labor were extracted from colonies, nowadays economic empires expect the poor to buy their products.²⁴ In many instances, as in the case of Haiti²⁵, countries became poor precisely because of a history of colonization, oppression, and dependency.²⁶ Forceful

21 A. Barnard and J. Spencer, *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Second edition (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp.80-81.

22 L. Lindstrom, Big Man: A Short Terminological History, *American Anthropologist* 83 (Winter, (1981), pp. 900-905.

23 M. van Bakel, R. Hagesteign and P. van de Velde, *Private Politics: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to 'Big-Man' Systems* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

24 D. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler/Kumarian Press, 1995), p.56.

25 J. B. Aristide, *Eyes of the Heart: Seeking a Path for the Poor in the Age of Globalization* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000).

26 D. Korten, *op.cit.*, p.56.

contact with colonizers not only depleted environmental resources but also tarnished social traditions of native groups. In the case of Indigenous Australians this resulted in economic deprivation, psychosocial problems and health outcomes comparable to so-called third world countries.²⁷ In all cases, power inequality is at the heart of poverty. Gender inequality, discrimination against disabled people, economic bondage; they all reflect the distinct domination of powerful or culturally privileged people over weaker but not indefensible people. Malik²⁸ says it was in the interest of the newly established government to remain influential over the rural subjects for a more controlled population in newly born Pakistan. He describes that:

After the British left the sub-continent, an independent Pakistani nation failed to smash the inherited pattern of colonial administration. If anything, the district officer began to acquire even greater power in the new nation. Each new government program was placed in the hands of the district officer for implementation. From the rehabilitation of refugees to census taking the district officer of newly independent Pakistan became the British Colonial officer incarnate.²⁹

Materials and Methods

Methodology refers to the structure of procedures and transformational rules whereby the scientist shifts information up and down this ladder of abstraction in order to produce and organize increased knowledge. Thus, defined “methodology” can be distinguished from research techniques in that, the latter term is useful for referring to the pragmatics of primary data collection, whereas methodology denotes the “logic-in-use” involved in selecting particular observational techniques, assessing their yield of data, and relating these data to theoretical propositions. In practice, the practical problems of using particular techniques of data gathering cannot be entirely separated from the examination of their logic-in-use. Any methodological discussion then must include some reference to techniques.

27 P. Dudgeon, D. Garvey, and H. Pickett, eds. *Working with Indigenous Australians: A Handbook for Psychologists* (Perth, WA: Gunada Press, 2000), p.129.

28 G. Y. Malik, “Regional Administration”, Muzaffar Qadir and Iftikhar Ahmad, eds., *Introducing Pakistan*, (Lahore: NIPA, 1966), pp.133-34.

29 *Ibid.*

Locale

The current study was conducted in the Union Council of Sacha Soda in tehsil and district of Sheikhpura — district of the Punjab province. The life of this Union Council is characterised by big political players who acted as middlemen in the local power structure. Sheikhpura District lies roughly between North latitudes 31.0 degree and 32.5 degrees and East longitudes 73.5 and 74.42 degrees. Its shape is roughly that of trapezoid with a triangular off-shoot to the west from the Southwest corner. The village Sacha Soda is 18 km from Sheikhpura city towards North West.

Methods

Data collection was done through the exploratory method while using main techniques of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and key informants.

Observational Method

To collect information from the respondents, the research team was properly trained and was especially asked to be vigilant in the field during the phase of data collection. It was also done so with a perspective to take notes of the observations made during the data collection.

Focused Group Discussions

The research team conducted one FGD at district level and various at village level that involved stakeholders from both public and private sectors also including the NGOs' staff. This method was helpful in a way that I used to get loads of information in short span of time as compared to other techniques. The importance of Focus Group Discussion is also stated by Dick³⁰ in the lines below:

Focus groups are a method particularly suited to preliminary research where some time-economy is a need, and where a more structured approach may be premature. It is common for the group session to be audio-taped (or sometimes videotaped) for later analysis, though that is not my preferred option. Focus groups are a method of group interviewing for obtaining qualitative data. It is not so much a research design as a data collection method.³¹

30 Dick, B. (1998): *Structured focus groups* [On line]. Available at <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/focus.html>

31 *Ibid.*

The way of conducting focused group discussion was very interactive in which members were very keen to participate. In a sense, it also provided a forum to the senior representatives to speak up and share their experiences. This method served four important functions which were as under:

1. Firstly, identification of the respondents who had been involved in similar activities;
2. Secondly, the preference was given to respondents, who were somehow involved in supporting any of the pressure groups in the area;
3. Thirdly, the necessity of knowledge about dynamics of community organization in their local terms; and,
4. Fourthly, their willingness to share their experiences was the basic condition during core group operation.

Traditional Political Organization

The ideas common to traditional way of Political life in Sacha Soda were as under:

1. “*Panchayat*” or “*Parya*” (Village Council) in settling inter-village related matters;
2. “*Keth*” (Social Gathering) to deal with extended families and caste issues;
3. “*Dhara*” (Political faction) for electoral process.

The Dhara and Electoral Process

The membership of *Dhara*³² is beyond the family and caste matters. Usually the *Dhara* deals with the electoral process. The *Dhara* is most commonly functional in the days of National or Local bodies’ elections. During the elections the candidates contesting the elections usually contact the heads of the *Dharas* for having a support in the elections. The support of *Dhara* leader means that all persons coming from a particular *Dhara* will be casting votes for the same candidate. Usually, the *Dhara* leader is supposed to be wealthy and influential so that he may be confident in contacting the politicians for having favours for the *Dhara* members in terms of jobs, loans, settling the police and court issues, etc.

32 The word *Dhara* in Punjabi language is used for a gathering of people for their vested interests especially electoral process. Literally means a Faction.

I came to knowledge that the *Dhara's* formation was need based. Anybody could join a *Dhara* of his choice. Mostly the common considerations that are in the minds of the villagers are having easy access to the *Dhara* leader and ability to make him accept the demands of the villager. Respondents commented on the *Dhara* that it was once used to be very useful for the villagers as most of them were illiterate and fearful of the government officials. The importance of *Dhara* faded away with the emergence of powerful *deraydars*³³ who also grouped people for their vested interests around them. The role of *Dhara* leader was somebody expressing one's needs and demands in democratic way. The *Dhara* leader was usually an educated person coming from a respected family. The leader could be an educated person from the village doing some government job or running his business. It was a voluntary activity that was undertaken by the people for the sake of their village brethren. Usually the *Dhara* leader's work place was crowded with people from the village for the matter like finding some good lawyer regarding the case in the court, getting admission of youngsters in city colleges or schools, consulting the doctors in the hospitals, etc.

An anthropological literature focused on studies on power reveals:

A view of power as not simply embedded in structural relations – maintained by force of one kind or another – but also as constituted through language and everyday practice.³⁴

The role of “*Dera*” (men's room) and *deraydar* was different. These were the people who were dominant in the village life and related issues. These people earned money by hook or crook and political influence after establishing unlawful inevitability with politicians, District and Provincial Bureaucracy and Police department. Most of them are having a criminal back ground in case of Sacha Soda. These people only served the matters of those who were their likeminded. They managed to influence the elections and development projects, etc.

33 Owner of Men's Room.

34 P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.71.

Political Structure of the Village

The village is represented at national level through constituency no NA 134, and at provincial level through constituency number PP 169. Besides this the union council of Sacha Soda is also working at a district level. The village is represented by the members of *Nazim* of Union Council at District level and the *Naib Nazim* represents the Union Council in Tehsil Council. Furthermore, another influential element in the village is the presence of local pressure groups which played an important role in the village politics and concerned politics at district, provincial and national levels. The power groups in the village headed by influential power holder interacted with devolution to increase their power and inevitability in the village. I will throw light on the picture of devolution in the village's UC level, Tehsil level, District level right up to Provincial and District levels.

It was clear from village political life that the national and provincial level politicians were very influential. Their strength was based on the bond of caste. The same caste based politics was not only practiced in the village but also at the district level. Sitting MNA belonged to the Rajput caste that was same of Ranas in the village. The MPA descended from the Gujar origin as in the village as well. The district Naib Nazim was from Dogar group, Tehsil Nazim was from the Virak group. At village level both of the seats were occupied by the Rajputs. This thing further led to the discernment that how much invigorative was to study the pressure groups in the village life and thus developing a clear picture of their relation in the politics and power life of the village, regional, provincial and national level politics. It was also indispensable to know that how the pressure groups manipulated the developmental plans and all innovations aimed at the welfare of general public of village.

Power Structure of Sacha Soda

The power i.e., political influence, numerical superiority and possession of land were divided with somewhat difference among the following pressure groups:

1. Rana Group
2. Gujar Group

3. Virak Group

4. Dogar Group

When I discuss the power distribution in the area, I mean the affiliation of villagers with these prominent groups. One outer group also came in the competition of beholding power that was Rai Group. Though every pressure group had its definite links in all institutions like parliament, provincial assembly, district government, tehsil council, union council, district administration and police department, etc. These pressure groups had serious tensions for one another, probably due to the desire to be more influential in the whole area. Many precious lives have been spoiled in the race of getting more influence.³⁵

Concept of “*Deraydari*” Politics and Influence

To be influential in Sacha Soda, the following things were very much important. Firstly, the potential leader should be having big land. It made no difference that how the person had achieved that land. He should be a “*deraydar*”³⁶ which means that he should have an open “*Baithak*” or “*Dera*”³⁷ where people gather to discuss different matters of village life. Other people come to see *Deraydar* to ask for helping various matters and problems. In fact the most important thing was the links which a “*Deraydar*” was having with politicians of all levels including district and tehsil level administration, national and provincial politics, civil bureaucracy and police. This thing makes the people believe that their *deraydar* is influential and has the guts to get his benefits and also for the people who join his “*Dera*”.

This influence was further strengthened by the number of “*Gundas*”³⁸ being employed by the *deraydar* for casting terror in the minds of people in general and the opponents in particular. Out of these armed guards, few of them always accompany the *deraydar*. Some of them always remain in the latent side. In return the *Gundas*

35 Field observation and Union Council Sacha Soda official archives and Police Check Post Sacha Soda’s Records.

36 An influential person who runs the men’s room, a local power elite.

37 Men’s-Room (in anthropology) or a place where males of the village use to gather and socialize for various inter and intra village affairs.

38 Bandits.

are given protection of the party of their *deraydar* from police. Each *deraydar* eventually develops his pressure group in the village and tries to make people of the village come in his group on the basis of “*Qaum*”³⁹ and also by obliging them by providing help in their problems which are usually concerning the water theft, destroying crops etc., in the police stations. As agreed by Jeff Vail:

Every entity, every pattern of power-relationships, demonstrates dependence on some type of resource for survival, maintenance and reproduction. The self-replicating nature of most such entities creates a dynamic environment of competition for scarce resources.⁴⁰

A *deraydar* was only considered to be more influential in terms of having more “*Taluks*”⁴¹ with the institutions mentioned above. He becomes more important in the area and establishes his “*Say*”⁴² there. People approach him for the solution of their problems. On the other hand, these *deraydars* during the elections provide support to their candidates in the area. The success of their candidate not only strengthened the political position of them in the village but also bestowed onto them benefits from this elected candidate. It was basically the crucial importance of these *deraydars* in elections and other related matters that their position brought them in a bargaining position with these politicians. The more influence the *deraydar* enjoys, more powerful he would be. For politicians these people were important as they provided more numerical support for them in elections. Due to the vested social and political reasons these politicians always encouraged these local power holders. Kondo stated in her ethnography of the crafting of identity in Japan that “power is ‘creative, coercive, and coextensive with meaning’”.⁴³

“Dera” Membership

I discussed that manipulation of developmental projects by the influential *deraydars* in village was main reason why these went fail. Similarly, devolution was also a new concept in which promises were made to devolve the power to provinces and district to promote

39 Caste.

40 J. Vail, *A Theory of Power* (New York: universe, Inc, 2004), p.16.

41 Links.

42 Worth.

43 D. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p.112.

participation of the public in their local matter through their representatives. Devolution Plan lacked one crucial factor that no concrete step was taken in order to sensitize the public about the concept and the benefits of the new system in comparative perspective. The power structure of village also interacted with new plan in a conventional way that they took it as a mean to strengthen their hold over area and lives of people.

People usually cast their votes as per directions of their *deraydars* primarily and then comes the status of caste which acts as a second important factor in determining the fate of vote. Unlike the zeal of participating in elections, people respond that normally no party as well as no political candidate has a manifesto. Nobody joins politics for participating in national development process or represents the national affairs. It is basically the interest groups who bring people in this field to safeguard their core issues. These groups are basically the feudal, religious elites, industrialists, military men and bureaucracy. This interest group hardly has any understanding of the ground realities and hardships of the public. Much of the time in assemblies is wasted in personal clashes whereas public remains at the outskirts in apex forums of country. Interestingly, when people join any *dera* the consideration of caste is taken into account on priority basis because of loyalty issues. It is simply why in elections, caste is important as that of the *dera*. It is because the *dera* that organizes people around the issues, and later bestows benefits on to its *dera* associates.

Role of *Deraydar*

There were five *deraydars* in village, according to research results, both middle class people illiterate or educated had links with the *deraydar* because they thought that they may be given help to get employment. However, the *deraydar* who maintained the “power relationship”⁴⁴ did not do so. They provided them maximally 4th scale job which was the largest benefit that people got from *deraydars*. Common people who had no approach to the *deraydar* thus could not get even this much benefit. The *deraydar* who

44 J. Vail defines it as “power-relationship” as the ability of one entity to influence the action of another entity. In his *A Theory of Power* (New York: universe, Inc, 2004), p.16.

utilized their votes implied double standards. The *deraydars* were actually landlords; they did not want to develop rural people as people wanted because they thought that if they developed them, they would not support them anymore, so it was better to keep them undeveloped. In resolving all sorts of feuds, rural people consulted with these *deraydars*. However, the decisions made were biased and usually tilted in favour of families having maximum votes.

“Biraderi”⁴⁵ System

The *Biraderi* system⁴⁶ had strong roots in society. The *Biraderi* possessing numerical majority had dominant role in all aspects like religious, social, economic and political. *Biraderi* was always led by an influential individual, selected or elected as a result of decisions made by some of the elders of *Biraderi*. So far as *Biraderi*'s decisions regarding voting were concerned in case of any election like local government, Provincial or National Assembly, they used their votes for candidates from their *Biraderi* without considering any political party etc. Moreover, there was no consideration like education. In short, *Biraderi* or caste system was prominent and dominant in almost all matters. In the village, leadership role was played by dominant castes. The important elements of dominance in village were numerical strength, economic and political power, ritual status, and occupation. Informal leadership was more important in different castes⁴⁷ regarding the *Deraydar*.

People commonly have prefixed names such as *Chaudhry*⁴⁸ as a sign of power and respect of their family. These prefixes represented pseudo urge of being superior. Generally, the people of village Sacha Soda were hardworking, traditional and very conscious about their social respect. They had a strong desire to change their living conditions, but due to illiteracy they did not have sufficient knowledge to do so. Class- stratification was easily seen in village. Castes had deep effective role in the establishment of lineage pattern. The *deraydar* belonged to higher-ranking caste. In

45 The term *Biraderi* is derived from a Persian word “*biradar*” that means a brother.

46 Caste Bond.

47 In village, the local terms used for caste are ‘*qaum*’, ‘*zat*’ or ‘*Biraderi*’.

48 Surname of traditionally powerful caste in the Punjab. Usually used by Gujar and Jat castes.

village, high caste was symbol of status and synonymous to power. They had all resources in shape of wealth, land prestige and power etc because it revealed worldly status. The *Biraderi* system played an important role regarding power institution and as well as political set up. The persons who were attached or belonged to these groups were powerful and possessed sufficient influence in the local level decision in development process also. It was observed that in decision-making and leadership process these groups had a great influence. There were different castes, which were considered to be of higher or lower status and had social influence in rural setup. The respondents were of the view that *Biraderi* system was successful if people were united and sincere.

Village Leadership and Concept of *Deraydari*

The village possessed a cultural structure of leadership which was totally different from urban life. Decisions were made according to their local social, economic and political problems in *Deraydari*. There were different views about *Deras* in village which were mostly as a primary institution in the land, animal, water and family disputes. Generally in Pakistan, formal *Deraydari* system does not exist but it exists in local communities and areas. It was noticed in village that this system operated through sub-councils existed in different shapes and settings. These sub-councils were the product of disputes and problems. One could also view these sub-councils as semi-*deraydar*. In these villages there were some informal sub-councils working under the supervision of *deraydars*. In case of any dispute or problem raised in village, *deraydar* tried to resolve it by nominating persons to look after in the matter. In my research field, *deraydars* were found to be nominating few types of councils to deal with certain matters. In below, I shall just discuss the issues on which these councils were working.

About the traditional view of *Deraydari*, elder people of village reported that it was a very old traditional institution, which was descending from their forefathers. Whenever people had a problem they approached their *deraydar* (a socially respectful person from upper quartile) traditionally took care of matters. The *deraydar* was a traditional leader as indicated by Menon cited in Bhargava and

Acharya's edited work⁴⁹ has commented that "traditional authority exists because of historical and cultural reasons." It was just like an assembly in which people participated in discussion on problems and attempts to resolve the same. Respondents told in old days when somebody was called a *deraydar* that meant a person with ample social approval. The traditional *deraydar* was a person upon whom people had their trust and belief that he would help them in time of need and protect them from police or other form of exploitation. This person was traditionally respected and possessed worth of making decisions and the people loved to honour the decisions.

The traditional leadership required the leaders to be generous and democratic in nature. The leaders usually had big land holdings but they were not feudal. They usually ran the *dera* as a common place for the village people used to come and socialize. The *dera* itself demanded economic resources for its continuous running and maintenance therefore only those who were economically well off land owners were the right people to run the same. Education was not common in old days due to many factors like non-availability of schools in or nearby villages, lack of economic resources to bear expenses of educating the children. Usually people preferred their children to seek the religious education that was almost available in all villages of the areas. It is probably due to which people still have high deference and regards for *Madrassas*.⁵⁰ It was also therefore that economically well off people usually preferred their children to get education and thus build their social status even outside the village.

The means of communications and the nature of the village being independent in major respects also made the villagers unknowledgeable and innocent of the need to go outside the village and explore the world. The traditional leader who was the educated and having access to the out world was believed to be guiding the others in case if they required. In older times the literacy was not common among the people therefore, in the circumstances mentioned above, there was a need for a person having know how of learning and being capable of guiding the lay men in the village

49 R. Bhargava, and A. Acharya, *Political Theory: An Introduction* (Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2008), p.89.

50 Religious education institutions.

in their daily chores. Similarly, the same person should be knowledgeable in order to understand the legal procedures of the courts, *Patwar*⁵¹ and *Thana*,⁵² etc. Interestingly, the role of such person was advisory not a dictator telling style. The villagers were confident of same person as becoming their spokesman in matters of collective importance. The same person's *dera* was available for people in case during ceremonies, if large number of guests would have arrived. The place was open on behalf of *deraydar* for guests who were treated as the village guests.

The traditional respect of the *deraydar* was deeply embedded because he was supposed to talk to police to save the villagers from threats, often consolidating village consultations, acting as mediator in village feuds between or among the muddling parties, etc. It was since the British rule when traditional leaders were used for the sake of increasing control over masses when the traditional and respected role of traditional leaders was badly demolished and turned into a villain's outlook. More interestingly Lyon in his doctoral thesis observed and noted that:

I often wondered why anyone would be willing to work for a rural landlord. In general they do not pay generously. They can be remarkably demanding of other people's time. They frequently use harsh and insulting language. I understood why the Afghan migrants might want any opportunity for a chance to earn some food but I could not understand why villagers continue to provide corvée labour for landlords, nor why anyone would willingly accept to be a home servant for a rural landlord. The liaising that landlords do between villagers and the state seemed an important but inadequate explanation. Surely other employers might also be persuaded to carry out these functions. I had seen in Lahore employers who protected their servants from the police and who helped them make sense of legal documents, so I knew that these services might be provided elsewhere. When I discovered that landlords were significantly subsidizing villagers' food supplies, in many cases in exchange for what amounted to a few weeks labor, I began to understand a little better.⁵³

The modern dynamics of *deraydari* were totally different, new generation was unaware of this cultural institution whereas most of the young age group did not know real utility of *deraydar*. They just

51 Office of Land Clerk.

52 Police Station.

53 S. M. Lyon, "Power and Patronage in Pakistan", Ph.D. dissertation, (Canterbury: University of Kent, Canterbury, 2002).

thought that he was somebody with a traditional acceptance due to his position to settle down the problems in village. The main reason was that they did not have any experience of dealing directly with him. Some of them even reported that they would prefer to go to police station as compared to *deraydar*. The current form of *deraydari* which existed there was not the one people used to know and respect. Respondents insisted that new form of *deraydari* system is new to cultural norms because new *deraydars* were exploiting people in their problems. Their role was more like power broker or a middleman between national and provincial level politician to win votes and social acceptance for them. In return, they demanded support to safeguard their vested interests. According to the modern view on power a *dera* owner should have obstructive power to impose his decision upon people as Menon has stressed while discussing the model⁵⁴ of Robert Dahl.⁵⁵ The *deraydars* expected more from people under their influence and returned them less. The newly emerged system was based on political basis in which support is extended to the contestants of national or provincial level politicians and in return support and other benefits were claimed.

Structure of *Deraydari* System

In Sacha Soda, *deraydari* exists and is recognized by the most of the village people. It had an effective role in all the matter specially the social lives of local people. It was a basic unit of informal government, which plays an arbitrary role in any particular social problem. *Deraydar* had an informal authoritative role and generally people socially approve his authority like formal government system, *deraydar* acted as head and other members as a governing body elected by the different *Biraderi* members. In village Sacha Soda, *deraydar's dera* had five members excluding head. These five members selected the head of *dera* through

54 According to Robert Dahl – A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something which B would not otherwise do. This definition involves two aspects of power; (a) power is an attribute of individual which is exercised over other individuals, and (b) power is domination over others, that is, power is used to make others do what one wants, against their own will.

55 R. Dahl, *A Preface to Demonstrate Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p.148.

consensus but based on certain speculations like support in political issues; links with politicians, district administration and new district governments; must be a big landowner with announced numerical superiority and a huge kitchen for social feasting, etc. These members generally belonged to upper class and enjoyed prestige and approval among people.

Commonly the head of *dera* had an authority of decision making and is considered a very respectable person having deep influence over other members of *dera* and the villagers as well. In *deraydari* leadership, there were certain factors, which determined the status of *Chaudhry* or head and the other members. These factors had been significant in their lives as the whole social structure was based upon it. During research, it was also observed that these leadership qualities which were pre-requisite for power elite were existent among local leaders or power brokers. In the *deraydari*, age played an important role. More power and numerical strength was associated with more experience and maturity. It was noted that in village all members including head of *dera* were supposed to hold described criteria. In *deraydari* leadership, decision making and execution upon the decisions is the most magnificent component. This phenomenon is also discussed by Menon cited in edited works of Bhargava and Acharya.⁵⁶

Functions performed by *Deraydar*

A *Deraydar*'s functions were of high importance for local government. It was also backbone of local democracy as far as development planning was concerned. In addition the village *deraydar* also performed the political role of inducting local leaders to take charge of local development projects. In rural society, ownership of big land is reflected as a source of greater power in terms of political authority and economic dominance. That's why the *deraydar*'s leadership consists of big landlords exerting social status with effective control over the masses and thus exerting social influence over people.

56 R. Bhargava, and A. Acharya, *Political Theory: An Introduction* (Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2008), p.89.

If a dispute or problem aroused between two parties then according to functional proceeding, *deraydar* used to send *sada*⁵⁷ to both the conflicting parties at different times so that direct exposure of both parties was avoided. Both parties were heard by *dera* members then *deraydar* suggested the possible solutions to disputant parties. Most of the time cases were resolved at the *dera* failing to which proceeded for formal legal system. In fact, this leadership was all together different from the traditional view of leadership among the older generation.

As I stated earlier, the power groups in the village manipulated to get access to the seats in election so that their candidates continue to support them and provide back-ups in their disputes and other issues. These winning candidates knew very well that if they intended to win the elections then they had to support the power groups so that their own seats were ensured. I have already discussed the division of national, provincial, district, tehsil, and union council seats among these pressure groups due to which the group only manipulated the new system according to the previous norms in which they decrepit the developmental projects. In the similar way, this devolution plan also became a new battle field for the pressure groups in which they tried to win the most of it.

Role in Local Development

Local development depended upon the local leadership of the village. It was the *deraydar* who was approached by the people for justice or for solving their problems. Therefore people expected that *Chaudhry* as a person wiser and with knowledge of traditional norms and values. In Sacha Soda, it was observed that local development like basic infrastructure of roads, electricity, educational institutions, agricultural product market etc, all were to be decided by village *deraydar* and his group members before it was sent to government.

Role in Local Government

In the structure of local village or tehsil level government, *deraydar* again imparted his role. In the village, majorities of councillors were selected under the consideration of *deraydars*.

57 Invitation.

When elections were held in the village then *biraderi* system was considered as a major factor since elections contested by the candidates on *biraderi* bases. *Biraderi* not only supports a particular member for local government elections but also develops a full-fledge strategy to win the election by all means.

Role in Local Elections

Dera members had also enjoyed political authority because of the similar features as contained in the *deraydar*. The members favoured different members in the election because politically they had their own vested interests and whenever in the village different *deraydars* differed on the issue of favouring a specific party, there were always risks of armed conflict and loss of lives. Though this event happened but for a few times because all power holders realized the power of their opponents as well. In the village Sacha Soda, *deraydars* were not totally illiterate. Rather there is a hope that the future leadership will be more educated because the sitting leaders were found taking keen interest in education of the male members of their family. This traditional institution had significant role to decide the disputes of land, water theft, animal theft and family affairs like divorce and elopement etc. This traditional leader had to be very vigilant while deciding the issues among the villagers because as leader he was also supposed to be the one who could make other respect and execute the decisions. Similarly, the leader preferred an amicable decision in which both parties agreed with the decision made and fewer rifts were created. This was also done in order to save group solidarity for on-coming elections.

Role in Youth Issues

In the village, youth council was also supported by the local leader to win their loyalty therefore they kept on encouraging them in different sports by giving them awards and cash prizes. The youth was also found to be zealous supporters of the local leaders and returned the reward of support in form of working for the leaders during the election days or other activity in which they were called upon.

Political Affiliations of the People with Pressure Groups

Masses of the village join any group on *qaum*⁵⁸ basis i.e. Gujar wants to join the Gujar group, in which he feels himself secure and finds space to his say and worth for his words in different matters. The case is different in the case of *Mazarey*⁵⁹ and *Kammis*⁶⁰ because usually these people have the affiliations where their patron directs them. Though affiliation to specific *dera* is not a rule, yet usually is expected on the part of people in the village that a person who shares a *dera* of any specific group would not attend other's *dera*. Yet, there are people in the village who attend more than one *dera* and in this way they usually try to make benefits from both sides. On the other hand, pressure groups also try to attract more and more people in the *dera*. As a rule in the village for a successful *deraydar*, it is must that he should be more resourceful, he should have powerful links in the politics, civil bureaucracy, police and even Judiciary. He should have more armed people around himself. Above all, he could help a person who visits him for helping in any matter.

Manipulation of Power Holders through Caste Based Politics

The local government elections⁶¹ really mobilized public especially the politicians in order to bring forth the candidates of their own choice which were supposed to strengthen the influence of these already powerful politicians. The prevailing myth among the power holders was:

It is foolish to vacate any position for your opponents. If you want to survive then fix your opponents so that they may not be able to raise their heads even in hundred years.

Although this view might be understood as a proverbial while reading but when it was actually operationalised in the village life, it brought horrible results and consequences for the village life. As mentioned in above lines, that the village local power holders were

58 Caste.

59 Tenants.

60 Occupational castes.

61 The elections in 2005 were eye witnessed by the researcher in three different places; firstly, Lahore (as invited by an NGO which was monitoring the electoral process), Secondly, Sheikhpura district level and thirdly, village Sacha Soda. In fact the city represented typical Punjabi culture that surrounded by the caste and determined by the local power holders in line with the national level politicians.

very much concerned about supporting their candidates to come in the scenes as the elected candidates to add on strength and indispensability in the village life.

According to the view of the general public that the local level elections were always very violent and bloody as the public overtly support and oppose their candidates and this support and opposition was very much articulated in their daily life which could not be concealed for many reasons like in the local body elections, one had to clearly distinguish the *dharra* with which one was going to attach otherwise the issues of fixing the daily problems remained in question. Local level elections were also point of contention because one could see divisions even in the *biraderi* and extended families. The local level power holders very artistically used the mutual misunderstanding of village community for their own purposes. It was essential for the villagers that with whatever *dera* they were affiliated, they had to accept supported candidate in oncoming elections.

The major force that decided the supported candidate was the person from one's own caste or the caste with which there were relations based on reciprocity basis. It was observed that during national and provincial elections, the two most powerful groups of village that were Ranas and Gujars worked for success of their respective candidates and they were successful in achieving their desired goals. For instance, Ranas canvassed for candidate who was from Rajput origin and manipulated elections in strengthening the position of their candidate in village. Similarly, Gujars worked for the candidate from their caste and also managed to get the desired results. The exercise of both groups was successful as they got their candidates won from village. The strategy opted by the candidates contesting elections for National Assembly or Provincial Assembly was also to a greater extent taking benefits from existing sense of affiliations among villagers and thus moulding into their favour. Many villagers also knew that it was always difficult to meet their candidates after winning elections for their problems but it was again a psychological satisfaction that lied with villagers as somebody from their own caste was occupying seat.

The same caste bond was more than functional during 2005 local elections as Dogars worked for their candidate throughout

district to get their candidate elected. The case was different in local elections as electoral votes for positions of district *Nazim* and *Naib Nazim* were cast by elected members of local bodies but it was taken as a matter of prestige as one's own candidate was elected. Therefore, Dogars worked for promotion of their candidate as district *Naib Nazim*. Ranas were very active during elections for seat of district *Nazim* as Head of Rana group's younger brother was successful in winning elections of UC. Ranas voted for sitting *Nazim* who supported Rana group in the UC elections thus making the case on reciprocity basis. Ranas really manipulated the local elections as they managed their candidate elected as *Nazim* and their supported candidate on the seat of *Naib Nazim* in UC.

Similarly, Virak group was also active in local level election as they worked for tehsil level. The Virak group remained successful in getting elected both of their supported candidates on premier seats of tehsil from their own caste. The sitting *Nazim* for tehsil Sheikhpura and *Naib Nazim* were from same caste group as that of Viraks. In fact it was important to note that situation in village was not only replicated at union, tehsil, and district councils but also at National and Provincial assemblies. The villagers compared a case within and outside village in a very interesting way by stating that "*Kam Howey na Howey, Member Saada Ay*".⁶² It was imperative for the villagers that somebody whom they knew personally was representing them and may be asked for help in time of need especially during any inter caste conflict within village.

Development Work during the Local Bodies' Election in 2001

The villagers reported that no considerable developmental work was carried out in the last local governments. They were of the view that we had accepted that no body after election fulfils the promises often made during the elections under many excuses. The community viewed that it was always influential land owners who demanded support from lay men in village as recognition of their services offered to them. The question that why villagers usually casted their votes after their *deraydar's* decision was simply because villagers easily approached them during their problems and

62 We are not concerned with the developmental work, we are happy that person from our caste is occupying the seat.

thus used their influence in fixing their issues. The *deraydars* on the other hand, acted as middlemen between the contesting candidate during elections and voter community to cash their vested interests.

Manipulation of Devolution Plan by the Influential

The startling thing in devolution plan was that it increased the influence of power holders to a considerable extent. Before that the federal government introduced minimum educational qualifications (i.e. graduation) for candidates who were contesting national assembly elections. The conviction for doing same was that these old politicians were corrupt and looted assets of country therefore there should be some yardstick which could help in debarring them to join the new assembly. The candidates who were disqualified in new criteria made their minds to indulge in newly evolved district government system in which power and authority was more than that of MNAs or MPAs while preparing their sons and nephews for new “graduate assembly”. These two reasons that made elders of families going after district or tehsil elections and their younger ones for national or provincial assemblies.

Before I talk about Sacha Soda, an example is worth quoting from tehsil of Kharian as speaking of the case of two opponent groups as former sitting and occupying district assembly and later in tehsil. The case⁶³ presents a gloomy picture of no work done in tehsil because of the opponents. Even one road was witnessed by me that was classical picture of conflict between opponent parties. The said road was under jurisdiction of tehsil Kharian of Gujrat district. There was an issue of a road construction under consideration of Tehsil Administration who expressed their helplessness as having no developmental budgets. The district *nazim* wanted voters of

63 The road mentioned was important from defence point of view that linked the road from Sargodha to Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Not being the main road from Sargodha to Sarai Alamghir (Gujrat district), this road was mainly used in the war times when most of the heavy war equipment was deemed to move to the close border areas. The road also provided a link to the surrounding villages to Lala Musa city of Gujrat district. Due to bad and demolished patch of more than ten kilometers, the road became a best looting spot for criminal groups that occupied road from 6pm in the evening till 7am in the morning. Similarly in case of medical emergencies, so many precious human lives were lost due to this bone of contention. The last end of road which was in the Gujrat tehsil was constructed while leaving that portion of the road which came under jurisdiction of tehsil Kharian.

tehsil learn from it and to refrain from voting his opponent party in the next elections. In this mess, rural masses were facing a deal great of problems.

In village Sacha Soda, where political and *dera* based conflict was deeply rooted in the social life of people. A link road from Sacha Soda to Phularwaan (a town at a distance of 15 kilometers) was also a bone of contention between power groups of the village. The road was requiring major repair works as it was not repaired once it was constructed. Regarding the local transport, people and general public were really concerned about the road as it became notorious for looting even in day times. Due to damaged road, it was impossible for public vehicles and other local transport to move swiftly due to which it was so easy for local bandits and other wanted criminals to loot and plunder there. The evidences led to loss of many lives, rape of the passenger women, and kidnapping of young girls who travelled from there. Though road was not a main road as it merely linked Farooqabad city to Sangla Hills (another town at a distance of 28 Kilometers). The presence of main Sargodha Lahore road and railway track from Sargodha to Sheikhupura really made the road comparatively unimportant as town of Sangla Hills was accessible by train and the said road became a mere link road connecting villages to agricultural market of Farooqabad city. The transport load was also lessened therefore the road was even desolated and deserted in day times. There was only one Police check post in Sacha Soda village where the patrolling police was supposed to search criminals and other matters. From the check post up to Sangla Hills, there was no single check post or Police station therefore the area served as a paradise of bandits where there was no concept of law, only local *Deraydars* along with their bandits ruled the area and made decisions that suited them and their groups.

Functions of Union Monitoring Committees (UMCs) in Sacha Soda

Devolution Plan devised the establishment of monitoring committees to look into the functions of government at all tiers. For a long period of time the UMCs were not enacted as per fears of council about role of the monitoring committees. There was a strong sense of feeling among the people of village that these monitoring

committees were to oversee local development process and stop leakages in village. It took them so long to understand that the functions of UMCs were only to look into the matters of UC with a consultative role to play while based on three principles of Mutual respect and patience, participation and mutual cooperation.

The positive role of UMCs was made like that of an ombudsman who had right to ask anyone about anything at any time. The provincial district offices were often threatened about bad consequences in order of disobedience of any order. The Executive District Officer (EDO) of works and services department was mostly threatened because his office was supposed to look into the roads and related matters. EDO education was threatened to transfer teachers in the school of Sacha Soda by the *Dera* allies of Rana group. The office of EDO in law department was only supposed to provide the required information to MCs and to act upon the advices of MCs.

The powerful Nazims from all three tiers were successful in horrifying the provincial government officials in doing and taking up things in accordance with their directives. One of the EDOs in Sheikhpura was harassed by stating that your provincial government will take two days to reach the district and ask about case whereas in district you will be a past story in just two hours. This statement seemed to me true as I during the last eleven years' had been in contact with village and power groups. Mostly, it was found that people especially the government officials used to avoid developing controversies with district, tehsil or union councils because of the factor that they were working in government set up introduced by the Devolution Plan. It was often recommended by government officials to accept demands of newly evolved devolution system to save one's own skin.

The Village Development Process

The local power holders usually conflicted with other power holders over the development work in village. If one-power holder worked for development of village, he merely worked for votes during elections for their candidates for winning support from people. It was therefore opponent parties who resisted the same work in area and also approached to stop the developmental work. During research, it was observed that no development work was

executed. The development work was usually resisted by power holders as they felt that it would hamper their position and status. They also felt that through change, the common people would ask more and demand their rights thus affecting their supremacy. These local *deraydars* wanted to resist change because they did not want to get their people united. They thought that their status would be decreased to a lower quartile and rural people would question their political status. Some respondents thought that since powerful *deraydars* were uneducated and thus were not playing any remarkable role in development of rural area. They resisted development work of rural area because they had narrow thinking merely surrounding their power quest. Power based politics played a crucial role in experiencing, inflicting, and repulsing poverty. Power's effects can be discerned when we examine the various facets of existing poverty among peasants. The power structure of the village as discussed played a major role in manipulation of developmental works.

Conclusion

Power holders very successfully anticipated devolution plan and manipulated it in their benefits. Mostly, before devolution plan, the political scene was a bit different. The power holders were powerful in terms of their links with National and Provincial level politicians, district administration and police department. Whereas devolution enabled them to occupy a public place where they absorbed themselves in district, tehsil and union council level politics. The devolution thus provided them a platform to institutionalize their power through government recognized local government bodies. On other hand, general public was under various tiers of rulers and a process of social inequality and injustice went more severe. The power holders while holding new chain of offices with legal authorities to influence people's lives more adversely. The direct involvement of power holders in politics acted as an instrument to break cultural solidarity among rural population. The power holders found new channels of paying off old scores with their opponents under umbrella of Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001. Seeing the picture on ground, one could have said that devolution plan segregated rural populations and strengthened conflict elements in the lives of people living in rural Punjab. The

manipulation of LGO 2001 in hands of local power holders put them in a more effective place where they overtly negotiated governments and bureaucracy to bestow upon them benefits in order to work for their vested interests. It can be concluded that status of power holders which was previously non-conventional and mostly manipulative through bringing favours to the government and its representatives is now institutionalized. The power holders occupied lower positions at the levels of union, tehsil and district councils. They thus enjoyed legal powers and access to financial resources to maximize their personal and group interests. This development even complicated life in rural areas with more evidences of violence and disputes.