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The Impact of Religion on the Politics of District Attock, Punjab: A Case Study of Tehsil Jand

Abstract

The religious politics have significantly influenced the nature and direction of political system in Pakistan since the Islamization drive of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq in 1980s. The rise of religious political parties and the influence of their militant organizations had a deep impacts on the policy-making in Pakistan. Much has been written about the Islamization of Pakistan and the necessary steps taken by successive governments to implement Islamic laws (Sharia) in the country. However, there is no account of the study to understand the impact of religion on the politics of Tehsil Jand of District Attock. District Attock, being close to Rawalpindi-Islamabad, which connects the southern Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the capital territory, is strategically important in the national politics of Pakistan. Therefore, this research seeks to not only explore the links between religion and politics in Tehsil Jand but also highlight the influence of Islamic political parties in the electoral politics as well as their performance in General Elections in Pakistan.

Keywords: Barailvi, Islamization, Electoral Politics, Religious, and Jand Tehsil

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Abstract

The religious politics has significantly influenced the nature and direction of political system in Pakistan since the Islamization drive of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq in 1980s. The rise of religious political parties and the influence of their militant organizations had deep impacts on the policy-making in Pakistan. Much has been written about the Islamization of Pakistan and the necessary steps taken by successive governments to implement Islamic laws (Sharia) in the country. However, there is no account of the study to understand the impact of religion on the politics of Tehsil Jand of District Attock. District Attock, being close to Rawalpindi-Islamabad, which connects the southern Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the capital territory, is strategically important in the national politics of Pakistan. Therefore, this research seeks to not only explore the links between religion and politics in Tehsil Jand but also highlight the influence of Islamic political parties in the electoral politics as well as their performance in General Elections in Pakistan.

Keywords:

[Barailvi](#), [Islamization](#), [Electoral Politics](#), [Religious](#), and [Jand Tehsil](#)

Introduction

Historically, religion plays a prominent role in the politics of Pakistan, especially after the military coup of 1977. Islam as religion played significant role in the Pakistan's freedom movement, which was based on the Islamic identity of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent for a separate homeland (Binder, 1963). The ideology of Pakistan as emphasized by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Allama Mohammad Iqbal was based on Islam. Thus, Islam and Pakistan were viewed as

interconnected terms, completely inseparable from one another. In presently-day Pakistan the power of religious political parties is significantly dominant in influencing state policies and political discourse (Rauf, 2011).

Although Pakistan has a democratic framework, politics in the country have been susceptible to the ideological pressure of clerics, religious political parties, and sectarian groups. These religious forces became much stronger in the 1980s when the government of General Zia-ul-Haq advocated



Islamic legislation, fostered the growth of madrassas and empowering religious groups, including Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) (Ziring, 1988). However, in more recent days, a new force has surfaced, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), further showing the topicality of religious identity in politics.

The historical role of religion in the politics of Pakistan has been examined at national and provincial level by many authors; however, less research work is done on the micro-level of political dynamics. This study highlights the role of religion in the politics of District Attock with special focus on Tehsil Jand, which is comparatively a neglected place in history. Tehsil Jand is populated by largely Sunni Muslim with high influences of *Barailvi* and *Deobandi* school of thought (Haroon, 2008).

Religion does not only dictate individual faith, but also community affiliation, political movement, and voting behavior in electoral politics. It is the mosques and local *madrassas* (religious seminary) under the control of *Ulema* (clerics) which regulate much of the core of social and political life by influencing the formation of public opinion and the choice of voters in electoral politics. The Friday's sermons, and *Milads* (being most cherished Islamic festival throughout Pakistan) provide ample control to *Ulema* to spread political messages and grab control of public spheres (Reetz, 1997).

The legitimacy of religious politics often relates to the sectarian rifts, sentiments of anti-Islam, and hatred-news provided by religious leaders. Within these contexts, religion becomes a vital aspect of the sociopolitical system which is further reinforced by tribal customs and patriarchal nature of society.

This research also determines how religious leaders, their institutions, and texts shape voter behavior in Tehsil Jand by using qualitative research techniques, which included interviews and focus groups. The localized insight concerning the larger relationship of religion and politics in Pakistan make this study pertinent to the democratic process of Pakistan. Although, constitution of Pakistan grant permission to profess and practice any religion, however, the use of religion is often taken as catalyst of political violence by targeting minority groups in Pakistan.

Finally, the study of Tehsil Jand shows that religion is so ingrained in rural Pakistani politics that it impacts the decision-making process at all

levels of socio-economic, and political structures. The overlapping influence of religion not shaping local politics, but also depict the picture of broader national trends. The proposed study addresses these aspects and research gaps, particularly by examining the ways in which religious influences have a direct impact on political participation, campaigns, and Tehsil-level decision-making.

In the following pages an attempt is made to create an understanding of how such dynamics work at grassroots level and to critically evaluate the religion-politics nexus by exploring valuable lessons on the development of a policy focused towards creating social harmony and inclusive democracy. Before going into details, it is customary to discuss the Geographical location of Tehsil Jand, and its land and people.

Geographical Location Ant Topography of Jand

Tehsil Jand of District Attock, Punjab lies on the eastern bank of Indus River with lush green fertile agriculture land. Geographically it is located on 33° N latitude, and 73° E longitude. Strategically, it is a political and economic hub on a trade route connecting the federal capital of Islamabad with other parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This integration strengthens the position of Jand tehsil in the flows of regional mobility and trade. It is situated nearly 80 kilometers distant of Islamabad, the federal capital thus falling within the bigger sociopolitical circle and being prone to the effect of national political judgments and trends.

The fast development and settlement patterns of Tehsil Jand can be explained by its varied terrain that has a considerable effect on the topography of the area. The geographic formation of the region consists of an amalgamation of agricultural land, the foothills, and minor topography, which is characterized by the Indus River through which it appeals as its geographical border to the west (Wahab & Ali, 2018). Wheat, rice and sugarcane production are the most popular crops in the region, which plays significant role in its economy. Animal farming farms has a major influence on the living arrangements of rural manifestation. (Shah & Khan, 2017).

The majorities of People live in rural areas and work mostly in agriculture and associated fields. Access to isolated communities is difficult in several

areas of Tehsil Jand due to the existence of hills and other natural barriers, especially during the monsoon season (Government of Pakistan, 2021). The sociopolitical landscape is shaped by these geographic factors, which also have an impact on economic activity.

Climate and Weather Patterns

The climate of Tehsil Jand has a clear seasonal difference, like typical northern Punjab. Winters are generally pleasant, with average temperatures dropping to about 10°C, but summers are usually hot and dry, with temperatures often rising above 40°C (Shah & Khan, 2017). The area depends largely on irrigation, mostly from neighboring rivers, to maintain crop production throughout the dry summer months; these climatic conditions have a direct impact on agricultural operations.

Restoring water supplies and boosting agricultural output are two important functions of the monsoon season, which lasts from June to September (Wahab & Ali, 2018). Because agriculture is the main source of income and therefore, seasonal variations in rainfall and temperature have a big effect on the local economy. The variability in weather patterns, e.g. prolonged droughts and unforeseen floods considerably affect the crop production and subsequently the economic sustainability of the local communities.

In Tehsil Jand, where climate adaptation, water resource management, and irrigation infrastructure have been on the political agendas regularly, climate adaptation is considered a solution to water resource management and irrigation infrastructure issues. Parties and candidates, this climate dependency also influences political rhetoric (Government of Pakistan, 2021).

Proximity to Major Cities and Transportation Routes

One of the major geographic advantages of Tehsil Jand is that it is close to the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad. Due to its closeness, the region has political and economic influence and falls within the administrative and policymaking center of the country. The political climate of Tehsil Jand is considerably impacted by the growth and governance structures of Islamabad, whereby most of the local politicians maintain connections with federal-level institutions and actors (Shah & Khan,

2017). Even though the proximity to the services facilitates the access of healthcare and educational facilities, the quality of services offered in rural and urban sectors of the tehsil differ significantly. Tehsil Jand is perfectly located in major trade routes which link it to other parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, besides being near to the capital. The road network within the region, connecting it to bigger towns such as Rawalpindi and Attock, is vital to the enhancement of the economy in the area. These networks of transportation facilitate the movement of agricultural products to larger markets in cities such as Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Also, the availability of these routes encourages the propagation of political ideas and campaigning. Political parties and religious organizations have extensively utilized these networks in organizing outreach programs and mobilizing people, especially during election periods (Wahab & Ali, 2018).

Strategic Importance in Regional Politics

Due to its location Tehsil Jand is located at the crossroads of several political and ethnic processes in Punjab and the greater northern region of Pakistan. Being in close proximity to the provincial and federal capitals makes the region open to more general national political trends and discourses. Owing to this, the local population has become more politically aware and most of them are actively engaged in the national politics and party systems (Government of Pakistan, 2021). The fact that leaders often travel through the region to attend rallies in the region and meet voters also means that Tehsil Jand is strategically placed and is a center of political and religious groups that want to expand their sphere of influence. The topography of Tehsil Jand plays a significant role in shaping the political environment of this region besides affecting its social and economic development. Its obvious advantages are the fertile agricultural fields and the easy connection with the major cities such as Rawalpindi and Islamabad. However, continued issues with rural underdevelopment, poor infrastructure in some places, and susceptibility to weather variations. In order to interpret the politics of the region, particularly the way the dynamics of politics in the area interacts with religious variables which influence the political conduct and the outcome of elections in Tehsil Jand, it is essential to interpret these geographical traits.

Major Religious Political Parties in Tehsil Jand

Religious political parties have also had a great influence on the political and social setup of Pakistan. There are many religious parties which are very influential in Tehsil Jand particularly among the traditional and rural people. These parties use mass mobilization, madrasa networks, and religious doctrine to develop political wings in society. The most famous religious political parties in Tehsil Jand are Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and Sunni Tehreek (ST). All these parties reflect an ideological and sectarian heritage that is distinctive and that has a bearing on diverse geographical populations. Before discussing details of major religious political parties, it is important to highlight the background of religious movements in undivided India.

Emergence of the Islamic Reform Movements in British Colonial India

The emergence of Islamic reforms movements in British colonial India during the 18th and 19th centuries was an important development in the history of South Asian Islam. The most notable political, social and theological developments that led to the emergence of these movements were the decline of the Mughal Empire, the extension of British colonial power, and the loss of Muslim religious authority. In this uncertain and deteriorating environment, some of the Islamic scholars and leaders of revival movements began the reform movements aimed at purifying the Islamic practice, restoring spiritual discipline and the moral integrity of the Muslim ummah (community). The aim of these reform groups was to restore Islamic life in South Asia against perceived internal decadence and external threats although the organizational structures and emphases of doctrine differed greatly.

The Barailvi School of Thought and its Associated Parties

The history of South Asia and especially the undivided India is full of Islamic doctrine and practices, with theological disputes, jurisprudential opinion, and spiritual heritage. The Barailvi movement broadly falls in Sunni Islam and adheres to Hanafi Imam Abū Ḥanīfa (699-767) was a Muslim Jurist and scholar who is the founder of Ḥanīfi School of thought. Jurisprudence, which is widely practiced

in South Asia, Central Asia, Turkey, Balkans, Russia, and Africa. In *Hanafi* School the Barailvi follows a *Sufi* tradition (Mysticism) which is further classified into four orders; Qadari, Naqshbandi, Chishti, and Suhrawardy. Historically, the Barailvi movement was founded in British India to counter the influence of *Deobandi*, and *Wahabi* Islam. This is one of the most famous religious sects in *Sunni* Islam in the region named after its founder, Ahmed Raza Khan Barailvi (1856-1921). The Barelvi movement began in British India when religious and sociopolitical circumstances were in a state of crisis (Ijaz, 2025).

Unlike the ever-strengthening reformist trends such as the *Deobandi*, *Ahl-e-Hadith*, and modernist Islamic movements, the basic aim of the movement was to preserve the traditional Sunni Islamic traditions founded on the Hanafi juristic tradition and Sufi spiritual culture. Barelvi school of thought did not come out of the blue. It was closely associated in the imperial context of control and rapid social transformation with the colonial experience, domestic debates of Muslim reform, and a broader struggle of religious and cultural identity.

The Mughal Empire started to degenerate in the late 18th and early 19th centuries due to its internal rifts, weak governance and lose administrative control. The dominance of the British colonial rule caused growing Muslim problem in South Asia. Several Islamic movements tried to restore what they considered the lost purity of Islam in this context. Like the *Deobandi*, *Barailvi* and other Islamic reformist movements sought to preserve traditions that long had affected the religious and cultural lives of the mass of the people (Akhtar, Amirali, & Raza, 2006).

The *Barailvi* movement was a conservative theological reaction to the perceived anti-Sufi tendencies, over-rationalism and spiritual barrenness of rival reformist philosophies. The organization established itself as the guardians of the honor of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the legitimacy of saintly intercession, and the maintenance of practices and celebrations relating to popular Sufi Islam in the intellectual and spiritual leadership of Ahmed Raza Khan. The Barelvis argued that these rituals were deeply rooted in the Quran, Hadith and centuries of Islamic tradition as opposed to the reformists who regarded them as innovations (*bid'a*).

The prominent philosopher and jurist Ahmed Raza Khan, the founder of *Barailvi* came up with a theology where the respect to the Prophet (PBUH) was given an extraordinary attention. The Prophet according to his beliefs was composed of divine light (nur), possessed insight of the invisible world (*ilm al-ghayb*) and remained spiritually present among his followers even after his death. These concepts became core to the Bareilvi understanding of Islam and were diametrically opposed to the *Deobandi* and *Wahhabi* interpretation, which, according to the Bareilvi, had overlooked the mystical nature of Islam and diminished the spiritual role of the Prophet. There are several parties and organizations associated with Barailvi School of thought; like Dawat-i-Islami International, Jumat Ahl-i-Sunnat, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahl-i-Sunnat, Jamiat Ulama-i-Pakistan (JUP), Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) and Sunni Ithehad Council, etc. At present Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan is one of the prominent political parties associated with Barailvi School of Thought (Ahmad, 2015).

Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP)

The *Barailvi* school of thought is represented by Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP), a modern Pakistani religious-political party. The party was established in 2015 by Khadim Hussain Rizvi and advocates the protection of the law on blasphemy and also enforcement of the *Sharia* law. The TLP got prominence after the assassination of Mumtaz Qadri in 2016 who had assassinated the former Punjab Governor Salman Taseer on alleged accusation of blasphemy. The emergence of the party signified a shift of the activism by the *Barailvi* as religious quietism to more Peronist political rhetoric (Basit, 2020).

The TLP has a strong influence in urban as well as in rural Punjab with its followers in the villages and towns. The message of TLP drives its orientation on the slogans of *Namoos-e-Risalat* (defending honor of the Prophet), and anti-secularist notions which demands rigid application of the Section 295-C of the Pakistani Penal Code. The party with its mobilized followers and large political groups demonstrated its power show in 2017 Faizabad sit-in, during which the party blocked a highway for three weeks. The large network of TLP as organization depends on the mosques, *madrassas*, and the religious scholars.

Influence in Tehsil Jand and Electoral Performance

The Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) has become very powerful in Tehsil Jand, a rural and semi-urban locality of District Attock. This has been due to religiosity factor and people attachment with mosques, and *Madrassa*, which find an appeal to the local population, especially followers of *Barailvi* school of thoughts. The people of the lower middle classes especially *madrassa*-educated youth of Tehsil Jand are influenced from the vision of TLP (that is protection the honor of Prophet Muhammad) and this has been reflected in the political landscape.

Although, the influence of the TLP in political and street power is comparatively high but proportionately not translated that much in electoral politics. For instance, the TLP secured third position in District Attock in the 2018 elections. The candidate running for NA-50 Attock-II Syed Faisal Mehmood Shah, although lost his seat but nevertheless received 62257 votes which is substantially a big number and thus ranked third in the constituency.

Irrespective of electoral performance, the influence of the TLP grew in protest movements and street demonstration throughout the Punjab. Being new in electoral politics the TLP did not translate itself in electoral politics, however it has been successful in pulling the establishment and ruling alliance to negotiate power politics in the country. The activists of TLP at Tehsil Jand arrange religious meetings and demonstrations on several burning matters and usually find supporters, who are disappointed with the performance of mainstream political parties. Unlike in other districts of Punjab which have less socioeconomic issues and conservative ideologies, the populist anti-western, and anti-establishment ideals of the party are popular in Rawalpindi, and especially in District Attock.

Deoband School of Thought and its Affiliated Parties

The *Deoband* School of Thought owes its existence to historical religious seminary named Darul Uloom Deoband which was established in 1867 in Uttar Pradesh. After the unsuccessful war of independence, it has become the epicenter of the *Deobandi* movement, and it has given birth to several religious political parties. Jamiat Ulma-i-

Hind (JUH) was established in 1919 and after the creation of Pakistan the party was split into two and thus Jamiat Ulma-i-Islam Pakistan had emerged in post-colonial Pakistan. Maulana Mufti Mehmood Maulana Mufti Mehmood was the Chief Minister in N.W.F.P (present day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in 1971 whose government was later dismissed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto., the father of Maulana Fazal Rehman was its founder in Pakistan. The Deobandi madrasa system played a central role in preserving Islamic learning during the colonial period (Metcalf, 1982). There are several religious political parties associated with *Deoband* School of thought, like JUI-F, JUI-S, JUI-Hazarvi, etc., but Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan is one of the prominent religious political parties (Islam, 2015).

Jamiat Ulema-E-Islam (JUI)

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) is an offshoot of former Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH) which had opposed the partitioning of India. The party became interested in advancing *Deobandi* ideologies and reforming with Islamic law, mostly by way of its comprehensive system of *madrassas* after 1947.

There was a major group division that took place in the 1980s where two major groups came into view namely JUI-Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) and JUI-Sami-ul-Haq (JUI-S). JUI-F with the more politically minded Maulana Fazlur Rehman on the helm, also shifted into electoral politics and coalitions in order to become an important factor in Pakistani mainstream politics. However, JUI-S, again under the steady leadership of the late Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, adopted a more conservative, doctrinaire approach, still retaining strong connections to Taliban thought connections, especially its seminary, Darul Uloom Haqqania, which has produced many of the leaders of the Taliban (Haqqani, 2005).

Political Influence in Tehsil Jand

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, JUI-F, has a presence in the staunchly conservative Tehsil Jand of District Attock. It has not a strong electoral influence, but the party has a strong ideological and organizational power. *Deobandi* Madrasa Network in the area makes JUI have a ready-made organizational and intellectual foundation. These organizations are the hubs used to recruit the followers, where the message of the party is disseminated and the conservative characteristics of Islam maintained.

JUI-F finds favor in selected groups such as religious scholars, madrasa graduates as well as old age male voters. Its strength is that it heavily criticizes the un-Islamic laws, anti-secularist programs, and liberal reforms agenda in national and provincial Assemblies (Bashir & Khalid, 2020).

JUI-F is being broadcasted with the help of local religious events like *Milads* and sermons at religious seminaries. Its clericalization efforts inside the developing Sunni conservative Islam permits it to influence constitutional making process mostly related to the blasphemy laws. Although the electoral results of the JUI-F in Tehsil Jand are small compared to mainstream political parties, however it has well established organizational support in staging big rallies. By making seat adjustment and electoral alliances as it did with religious political parties in October 2002 Elections, it has the capacity to grab electoral victory in few constituencies.

Electoral Performance

The electoral performance in last three General Elections in Pakistan is not satisfactory except in 2002 Geneal Elections when it made electoral alliance with other religious political parties named *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA) where it received considerable votes. In 2018 Elections, it received 5201 votes, and in 2013 Elections it gained 4707 votes (ECP, 2024).

Jamaat-E-Islami (JI)

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) was established in the year 1941 and set up at that time is one of the oldest as well as the most ideologically inclined religious-political parties across South Asia, which was formed by an Islamic scholar known as Syed Abul A'la Maududi. The JI originally rejected the formation of Pakistan as a result of nationalists' considerations but later came out to be the major most influential group in transforming this new nation into an Islamic state through the use of the Sharia law. The Party is notorious because of its cadre's emphasis and moral and ideological indoctrination. In its history, JI has remained a very strong intellectual force and has continued to impact constitutional and political debates of the Pakistani government, especially the issue of Islamization (Mumtaz, 1994). Although it has occasionally cooperated with military regimes, notably government under General Zia- ul Haq it has been repressed against its own people due to the stand it has taken against the secular governments.

Influence in Tehsil Jand

Because Jamaat-e-Islami has more influence in Tehsil Jand, its influence is not electoral; rather it is more ideological and social. The party has comparatively meager yet committed base of following with conservatively and religiously minded persons and some of them are bedrock of the middle classes, teachers and madrassa graduates. The relevance of JI consists in the fact that it is based on the principles of Islamic law and anti-corruption discourse as well as criticism of western secular ideas.

The party continues to exist between elections by its disciplined cadres organization, youth organizations such as the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (IJT), religious lectures and study circles. The Al-Khidmat Foundation is the humanitarian wing of JI that is important to not only create a goodwill and influence among the community but also through social services and disasters relief. Although JI has never won electoral races in the region, its unvarying emphasis on moral and ideological brainwashing gives it an opportunity to influence the political and religious principles of the local educated elite to ensure that it has an influential role in the local conversations on religious matters and movement activism.

Electoral Performance

The electoral performance of JI in Tehsil Jand in 2024 General Elections is very poor as its candidate Mohammad Junaid secured 2834 votes from PP-3 Attock-III and on PP-1 Attock-I, Jabbir Ali Khan got 2278 votes. In all constituencies of District Attock the overall performance of JI is relatively poor. The analysis of General Elections of 2013, 2018, and 2024 shows that JI secured 5000 to 8000 votes in Tehsil Jand individually without making alliance with other religious parties but has considerably strong organizational strength particularly when making alliances with other religious political parties. In alliance with MMA coalition its candidate secured 8,126 votes (ECP, [2024](#)).

The Impact of Religion on the Politics of District Attock: A Critical Analysis of Tehsil Jand

The impact of religious political parties on the politics of District Attock as individually not so strong but however the combined votes of all religious political parties put together can win

several seats in National and Provincial Assembly. Although, none of the religious political parties win any seats in the General Elections 2024 but TLP grabbed second and third position in several constituencies of District Attock. It seems from the individual performances of religious political parties that put together all their votes in an alliance or seat adjustment, they can win several National and Provincial Assemblies seats in District Attock (Kamil, [2024b](#)).

Besides electoral influence, the role of religious political parties in terms of street power and staging rallies on case-to-case base is considerably impactful. For instance, the *Khatm-i-Nabowat* rally and any other gathering related to Anti-Americanism attracts multitude of followers and supporters. Due to the presence of religious organizations and political parties in Tehsil Jand with its mass mobilization, it has also impact on the policy making and legislative measures (Kamil, [2024a](#)).

Conclusion

The history, culture, as well as identity of Pakistan play a crucial role in the interaction between religion and politics in Pakistan. The nature of such relationship in the specific situation of Tehsil Jand is exceptional due to the rural setting of the place, the influence of religious system, and the deep-seated influences of religious leaders. Findings of the study suggest that religion and politics are intertwined in Tehsil Jand, and they mutually support each other as opposed to being two separate entities. This has been concluded by a keen examination of the political behavior of the voters of the area, the political behavior of the leaders, and the politics of election in the area. The analysis found out that the religious institutions and leaders have great influence on the political discourse in Tehsil Jand. They are particularly felt during elections, when candidates are seen to be at their feet, wooing them to support their candidacies.

Although they are entirely symbolic in nature, those endorsements still have a bearing on the results of the elections. The implication of having a religious leader on the side of a candidate is perceived by most voters in the region as a sign of the validity of a candidate and his/her spiritual character. This dynamism illustrates how religious leaders continue to be credible in filling the gap

between the people and the political regime in areas where the literacy level is low and most people lack information.

Also, one cannot overvalue the political role of religious festivals, rallies, and Friday sermons. Such places are normally employed to wrap political stories around religion and to garner political movements. The rhetoric employed in such events often blends faith and governance and asks the voters to vote in such candidates as perceived to be in line with their religious convictions besides policies or performances. The tendency hampers the possibility of purely secular political rhetoric, as well as confirming the role of religion in politics. At Tehsil Jand, the aspect of religious identification plays a vital role in political behavior of people either collectively or individually. It was also established that people have the habit of aligning their political orientation in line with their sect track, religious relations, or even belonging to a religious facility. This relationship of religion and politics constitutes a criterion upon which religion can be politically represented.

It is known that voters trust the candidates more when they are perceived to be extremely religious or when they are part of the religious groups openly. The standard of political capital employed in such situations is reduced to the dimension of how religious the candidate is and how near he will be to the spiritual heads as compared to the provision or supply of services and development programs. The interdependence of politics and the religious identity has been realized to bring social binding together in certain communities and at the same time being highly polarizing. In majority of cases, minority groups and those who may not agree with the religion are largely marginalized politically because of religious exclusiveness and sectarian tendencies. Political acceptance or vote may be difficult when one or the candidatures do not belong to the laid down religious beliefs. This exclusivism endorses the domination of religious orthodoxy and depletion of the versatility of representation in local politics.

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