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Politics of Electoral Symbols in Pakistan

Abstract

Electoral symbols have a significant role in electoral campaigns. Political parties used stamps to propagate their political stance and to organize political behaviour around their programs. The political symbolism demonstrates different meanings to different people due to their socio-political orientations. Some political parties tried to use electoral symbols more proactively than others. These multi-layered meanings led to the articulate political interests of social groups. There are many questions unanswered regarding the impact and use of the political symbol. Can election symbols influence particular areas more than the rest of the country? Does electoral symbol matter in electoral victory? This paper is an attempt to explore the politics and use of symbols in electoral politics. In the electoral politics of Pakistan, the study of electoral symbols is unique due to its multiple uses in highly polarized electoral contexts. The study concludes that political parties use electoral symbols tactfully to maximize their vote bank. A qualitative approach has been used to investigate a core question.

Key Words: Electoral Symbols, Pakistan, Voting, Symbolism, Political Parties

Introduction

Elections can be termed as a mark of fascination for all and sundry. Whatever be the attraction, the prominent feature of the election is the election symbols. Regardless of its importance for illiterate individuals, the election symbol of all contesting candidates is recognized and associated rightly with the political party or candidates for casting the votes. Electoral symbols being a trademark of the electoral process is a unique study. The importance and role of election symbols vary as per situations, circumstances, people, and area. As a research point of view, the subject has remained comparatively neglected, even internationally (Brunn 1987). Brunn has explained that election symbols had been used and equally misused to manipulate public opinion, which makes it a very important subject to study. It is still to find the extent of its impact. The level to which it can increase the impact it can imprint on average voters' minds or decrease the misuse of election symbols. Except for the compulsion of electoral symbols to represent any political party, we don't find satisfactory literature to clarify through evidence the importance of election symbols and their role, if any, in electoral victory. The importance and superiority of a political party's symbol increase manifold in a country where the literacy rate is very low and where manifestoes of political parties are weak. In such a country, from time to time, an election symbol can persuade undecided and uninformed voters. The ballot is not possible without a symbol. It is an essential part of elections. A ballot paper in Pakistan normally contains three columns: a serial number, the name of the candidate, and his/her party's symbol. The election symbol is, for obvious reasons, taken on face value, both for contesting candidates and voters. What is the etymology of election symbols used by various political parties? A closer look shows that the symbols of some of the major parties reflect party ideology or turning points in the country's or the party's history that have shaped the way the symbol looked.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework consists of existing theories and concepts established on a certain subject. It relates theories and concepts relevant to the subject and connects to the broader field of information. The main subject of our research, "Election symbols," is a multidimensional subject, and there are not any direct theories or models on the subject. However, there have been many studies with analytical approach on the subject. As our research is not based on any existing theory and model on election symbols, a qualitative viewpoint on the subject is included. It provides rich insight into the subject

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and reveals how electoral symbols can shape electoral behavior. The relationship of election symbols and electoral behavior has been discussed with the help of a depth analysis of the literature of the scholars on the subject. Thurman Arnold (1935), Harold Lasswell (1951), Murray Edelman (1964, 1971, 1977, 1988) have established the fact that politics possesses a symbolic dimension in such a way that today only few would deny. Though its importance was acknowledged, the area still remained relatively understudied and underdeveloped. Burnier (1994) notes that it remained underdeveloped because earlier research failed to differentiate among symbolic theories and could not develop appropriate theories and methods for doing symbolic political research. Brunner (1987: 54) also mentioned that while the conceptual and theoretical advances of earlier symbolic research have been preserved to some extent, "they have remained largely underdeveloped for lack of systematic empirical methods" (Brunner, 1987:54). Klatch (1988: 154) examined the symbolic research tradition. It noted that it is required to analyze the political symbols with in the particular social and historical context in which they embed, i.e., empirical studies should be conducted on political symbols in their surroundings, for which a "multi-dimensional approach" is required. In Pakistan and particularly Bannu, the social context of electoral symbols was largely practiced during election campaigns. According to Edelman (1967:6) a symbol "stands for something other than itself" to which it corresponds. It is a referential definition that symbols carry meaning in relation to the events, objects, attitudes, values, or beliefs to which they refer. Edelman gives an example of George Bush claiming that he successfully exploited the American flag as a symbol in the presidential election campaign 1988. He used it to stand for notions like patriotism, pride in country, respect for the country's institutions, and republican values. This perspective implies that symbols can be a driving force to elicit responses, so in politics, symbols are used by candidates to provoke the desired response. Similarly, in Pakistan, it was claimed by political parties that religious sentiments had been exploited by using the election symbol 'book.' (ECP) This aspect of symbols is present in the 'behavioral tradition' within political science, which is rooted in the philosophy of 'logical positivism. March and Johan Olsen (1984) notes that one of the reasons that the symbolic dimension of politics remained understudied is its predisposition within behavioralism to frame politics. They have labeled this predisposition 'instrumentalism'. In terms of politics, the concept of instrumentalism is defined as how the desired end was achieved, so it tends towards decision making, which is the central concern of political life. (March and Johan Olsen, 1984). In this regard, electoral behavior is directly connected with choice-making, and choices are made by examining the consequences of each choice in relation to a given end (March and Johan Olsen, 1984). March and Olsen made a point that if symbols are examined at all, 'they tend to be understood as curtains that obscure the real politics,' or as artifacts of an effort to make decisions' (ibid). In that sense, it is claimed that symbols are used by political candidates to conceal some aspects of the truth to achieve what they want to be it personal, partisan, or policy-oriented. The point to note here is that, by March and Olsen, symbols are something separate from the "real" world of politics.

This perspective of symbols restricts the ways of symbolic inquiry that can be conducted, thus limiting the development of knowledge about symbolic politics. Leaving the areas like how symbolic meanings are created or whether political actions are linked with symbolic meanings. Scholars having this perspective find 'symbols' in politics as a number of times any particular symbol is used in speech or relating a symbol to a particular context. Emphasizing how symbols are used, it express symbolic inquiry in terms of 'functional analyses.' Two significant contributions having a functional analysis of symbolic inquiry highlight this view. One is "The Political Uses of Symbols" (Elder and Cobb, 1983), and the other is "The symbolic uses of politics (Edelman, 1964). The symbolic perspective of Edelman holds a central place in social sciences. His contribution on symbols and political language has developed a symbolic perspective. Charles Elder and Roger Cobb notes that among other theorists, it was Edelman's work that successfully showed the inescapable and deep importance of symbols in politics. Burnier (1994:7) states that political scientists are now comparatively more sensitive about the impact of symbols and language in generating political support and favorable responses towards the government or political candidate's actions because of his struggle.

Edelman one after another contributed four books on the mass media's representation of American politics and the political process. His books include the description of the two views of symbols, i.e., interpretative and behavioral approaches. His first two contributions, i.e., "The symbolic

uses of politics (1964) and "Politics as symbolic action (1971), revolve around behavioral approach to symbolic political analysis. His other two works naming "Words that Succeed and policies that fail" (1977) and constructing the Political spectacle (1988), tend more towards an interpretive approach. Edelman has maintained two important themes in his first three books that founded the base of his fourth contribution, "Constructing the Political Spectacle" (1988). First, he develops an argument that democratic governments do not mirror the wishes of the public but actually it itself form those wishes. This is done by the government with the help of symbols, rituals, political language, and myths. All of which is exploited to construct everyday activities of politics. In short, the 'wants of citizens' are shaped as much by the government as the government is shaped by it. His second argument is that symbols and language help in maintaining existing power and status. By using symbolic and linguistic tools, the government or elite pacify the conflict, manipulating citizens, and distract them from social inequalities. This view is highlighted throughout in Edelman's "Constructing the Political Spectacle" (1988) that news about politics is consciously organized as a chain of conflicting events with opposition and problems that divert the attention of the public from real concerns and conceal failed policies implemented by them. Hinckley's method of study was a systematic review of all speeches and remarks televised live as listed in *the public papers of the Presidents of the United States (1990:19)*. She examined the statements by observing the speeches, nature and timings, and the targeted audience. Her work provides separate chapters on the context of presidential speech writing, persons appearing in speeches, and the type of steps taken for the target citizens. The study comes up with seven elements, which combine produce "an institutionalized presidential self" or symbolic presidency as called by Hinckley. The first thing was that all the presidents represent themselves as they stand along the people of the state, and they are doing work of the people like the public. The second element was all presidents identify themselves as part of the nation and public, so much so that the three become indistinguishable. The third similarity is that all presidents portray to work all alone as if getting no assistance from administration, staff, or congress. Fourth, all the three presidents used interest groups "as stand-ins" for the American people as a whole. Fifth is that they all delude their political activities as if representing the nation. The sixth element is that all of them portray to be such a leader who is religious and cultural. Lastly, presidents want the public to believe that they are 'without peer' as they rarely take the point of view of other presidents or the event of previous governments. These views of Hinckley are important to be reviewed as it fills a gap of two type of symbolic political literature. It adds to the method of symbolic inquiry, i.e., systematic investigation of presidential symbolism, and as a study of institutional symbolism, it fills a gap in the literature of the presidency. Her work contributes to describing the method to conduct symbolic research. Before using the terms 'symbol' and 'symbolism,' she first provides definitions. In her view, 'symbolic meanings' are based on social interactions. She also clearly states that the term 'symbolic' may not be taken as opposed to 'real.' She claims that 'symbols have reality' (ibid: 5). this is the interpretive view of symbols presented by her that 'how presidents like to portray themselves to the public' (ibid: 16). If compared by Hinckley's work, Linenthal's symbolic analysis begins without discussion of symbolic theories or concepts of research. Even his analysis was not based on any theoretical framework. Also, there was no method of questioning or interviewing was described in his work. It was not defined why the people interviewed were selected. It was also not defined that with what pattern editorial cartoons were gathered for the analysis. According to Burnier, these were some 'serious drawbacks' in an otherwise insightful cultural analysis. The above-mentioned symbolic dimensions of politics present the wave and lengths that symbols can go into politics. Not just through election symbols but other compelling cultural, traditional, and religious symbols through rhetoric and various other means can be misused in elections. For example, in Bannu and various other Pashtun belts, religious rhetoric and symbols have been used again and again by politicians to gain political victory. Although these perspectives of scholars regarding politics and symbols provide very in-depth insight on the subject, they could not elaborate or specify a theory, model, or method for conducting research on symbols and politics. Major electoral models with the context of the socio-political orientation of electoral symbols; Michigan models, Columbia model, and Downsian model i.e., rational choice theory. All these models equally explain the politics of symbols.

History of Election Symbols

Origin of symbols trace back to 1870 when Thomas Nast gave his party a symbol "elephant". Nast used the symbol elephant to represent the republican vote in 1874. But it was also used by Lincoln earlier in 1860. Jay Monaghan states that 'Republican Party on August 9, 1860, announced a political rally with a careening elephant at the masthead' used banners such as "clear the track", "we are coming" with a picture of the elephant in the middle. Under the symbol of physical vigor, the caption screamed, "A political earthquake." According to Monaghan, this may be the first time with symbols were highlighted and used in such a capacity. By the opponents of Lincoln, they used the same symbol against him by depicting the elephant as a symbol of tyranny. The democratic symbol 'donkey' came up with the new US debate of the right of franchise for all. The animal was known as a poor man's friend. It was 1930's, the era of Jackson's democracy. He associated himself with the poor by being pictured usually as riding on a donkey.

The opponents of Jackson came up with other animal symbols like alligator horse. They hoped that their symbol would gain more popularity as compared to a donkey. For a decade, the donkey and the horse were as known to the voters as donkey and elephant today. They remained key political symbols till Lincoln's elephant appeared. These all animal symbols were mostly used in cartoon caricatures. The most used method was to fix candidates' head to the animal. In the subcontinent, direct use of political symbols was initiated after the independence. But relating Muslim symbols to political consciousness, Bruke (1988) describes a political dimension of symbols during the independence struggle in the subcontinent. He stated that there were incidents that led towards the shaping of Muslim consciousness of separate identity and invoked Muslim symbols of guarding Islam. It was the abolishment of a mosque that inflated Muslims and appeared as a symbol of the embattled Muslim community. Major electoral symbols of Pakistan areas:









ECP allots election symbols to parties			
<p>Kite</p>  <p>Muttahida Qaumi Movement</p>	<p>Arrow</p>  <p>Pakistan Peoples Party</p>	<p>Cycle</p>  <p>PML - Qaid</p>	<p>Tiger</p>  <p>PML - Nawaz</p>
<p>Bat</p>  <p>Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf</p>	<p>Book</p>  <p>Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl)</p>	<p>Scale</p>  <p>Jamaat-i-Islami</p>	<p>Rose</p>  <p>PML - Functional</p>

Figure 1

Later on, the very name of the separate country "Pakistan" itself became a symbol of Muslim unity and ideology. After independence in Pakistan, the politicization of symbols of Jihad during afghan war in Zia's era and Musharraf's enlightenment were also used as a symbolic course of actions and ideologies.

According to Jason, symbols or images have a very deep impact on us on a pre-verbal level. Symbols not only influence us but shape our values, our emotions, and the way we experience the world. Even in education, politics or advertising, images and symbols hold up the acceptance of right and wrong, ways to live our lives, and the criteria of success and happiness. "When we become more conscious of the power of symbols, we can choose what values we want to emphasize and what ideas we wish to fill our minds with. Of course, images work on a deeper level, and in modern society,

symbols are all around us."(Jason Espada) Symbols have the power to raise our emotions and to affect our actions and behaviors. "Unfortunately, images can also be used to deceive, or to negatively influence people, and that's when they are at their worst. Misused, symbols can be powerfully destructive things. In fact, I've come to think that the power of symbols is very greatly underestimated. Otherwise, why would there be so much carelessness in their use?" (Jason Espada) Jason describes that images can also be strongly negative, every that image which clash with human nature, for example violent images can leads towards indifference and numbness especially with their repeated viewing. Symbols can represent ideas and ideas can be life-affirming. They can also be misleading; for example, too much advertising of any product of a political party has nothing to do with real concern of public. Both in advertising and politics, they go to use any method to influence the people's choice. They are never actually concerned with the prosperity of humanity. Politicians wouldn't sustain if they expose their real motives, which is usually power and authority and representation of the elite. And they utilize symbols to the optimum level. Even when people are deceived to join war, it is mostly done through the power of symbols and not reason.

The political dimension of symbols from the history of formation of Pakistan and India has been described by (Bruke,1990). He relates Muslim symbols to their political consciousness. It notes that the very first incident which led towards shaping a separate identity of Muslims was the 'Kanpur mosque' demolition threat. According to Burke, it was this threat to the mosque which 'invoked Muslim symbols of martyrdom, mourning and defense of Islam'. (Bruke, 1990)

A study by Gilmartin about Muslim symbols and political consciousness in the Punjab also endorse the same point of view that it was the defense of a mosque was manipulated as the 'symbol of embattled Muslim community' to invoke Muslim political consciousness.

Gilmartin also observed that uniting the disjointed Muslim leadership in Lahore was 'an ideal Muslim community represented in symbolic terms by the Quran and the mosque'. And that Muhammad Iqbal's teachings surrounded the idea that 'Muslim umma was constituted simply by the allegiance of Muslims to the symbols of Islam. (Bruke, 1990). Burke in his book also included other examples of Islamic symbols including case of Palestine where he claims that 'need for political organization bear an uneasy relationship to meaningful symbols'.

Qualitative Analysis of Politics on Electoral Symbols

Akram Khan Durrani is a prominent member of JUI-F (Jamiat e Ulama e Islam Fazlur Rahman) and has been an important part of religio-political alliance MMA (Muttahida Majlis e Amal). He was as Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after gaining victory in the 2002 elections. He has spent a full five years tenure as a chief minister under the banner of MMA in KPK. He belongs to a political back ground. His was born in 1958 in Bannu.

He won provincial and national assembly seats several times from Bannu. In 2002 elections also, he was the one who won the national assembly seat from Bannu. As Bannu is our case study area, he was a very important person to be interviewed for our research.

The interviews revealed very interesting facts regarding the use of election symbol 'book' by MMA. Former CM KPK mostly remained neutral in his stance. But he did partially agree to the point that the symbol may have fetched some extra votes for the party. He provided strong arguments in favor of the party while declining the reports regarding exploitation of MMA through its political symbol 'book' in 2002. He was of the view that 'MMA's victory in 2002 has more to do with other factors than just the political symbol of the party. Actually, the symbol symbolizes 'book' i.e. source of knowledge, it does not only reflect religious books but it over all symbolizes 'knowledge'. He explained that, ' Election symbol 'book' reflects knowledge and so the ideology of the party. It was basically the symbol of Jamiat e Ulama e Islam. Word 'Ulema' is derived from the word 'ilm', which means 'knowledge' and the symbol book also reflects knowledge.' He was of the view that KPK is a province where religious inclination is comparatively higher. MMA was a party of religious alliance. Not just the symbol but the whole ideology of the party reflects religion. Including other factors, MMA's sudden popularity was also in reaction to Musharraf's 'enlightened moderation and anti-American sentiments in Pakhtun belts in the country due to US invasion in Afghanistan.

While talking about his popularity in the area, he informed, 'During my tenure as CM, I have

worked immensely for the betterment of my province and especially for my home town 'Bannu'. We have built medical college, university and hospitals. People of the area are happy with our performance. I have won provincial assembly seats several times from the same constituency.

When asked the reason of MMA opting for its election symbol 'Book', he informed that the symbol was not new, it had been used in the past by clergy political parties. He said, 'As you know the name of our party is JUI. Which means it is party of the Ulema. And you know Ulema means People of knowledge and book (Ahle Kitab). It is why the election symbol book has been opted.' While defending the accusations made on MMA for exploiting religious sentiments through its symbol, he said, 'everything is fair in love and war. Adding, he gave justification that every party tries to make its election symbol synonymous with the party background. Giving an example he said that recently PTI tried its level best for the election symbol of 'tarazu' which is a symbol of justice. As that symbol was already allotted to Jamat e Islami. Their second option was cricket bat. Now this symbol is again synonymous to the personal image of its party image of Imran Khan who brought home glory of world cup decades ago while with the same symbol he is trying to extract sympathy and to cultivate electoral popularity paving way for getting greater support of voters. He said that we can't term it morally incorrect or wrong that why he carries bat in every meeting. And he uses dictum of cricketing language. These are all ways and means to reach maximum number of people seeking their support.' He claimed that only symbol gain victory for any political party as the same party with the same symbol could not gain equally massive victory in any next elections. He said, 'I would rather say that MMA's manifesto was to enforce Shariah, if the book represents Shariah and people vote for it, there is no exploitation but people's love for Shariah. If it was any sort of exploitation, MMA would have again gained victory in 2013 elections which it didn't. 'Replying to a question that the symbol 'book' was being challenged by PPP he maintained, 'Yes, it was claimed that MMA misused the symbol as tool of religious exploitation but later the high court gave us stay on the matter which is evidence of the fact that the symbol was not an issue. The symbol was allotted to our party again. Also, it was the same symbol with some of the same faces, and they could not gain such victory again which proves that the symbol was not misused'. It can be concluded that although the former CM successfully defended the accusation against MMA, but still he partially agreed to the fact that the symbol can be considered among one of the minor factors that caused victory to the party. But he completely disagreed to the point of any deliberate exploitation of the symbol by MMA in manipulating the public's religious sentiments. In other three interviews comparatively, different information was received. Sayyad Ijaz Hussain Bukhari is a current MNA. He also won elections in 2002 under MMA's banner from Attock, a Punjabi/Pathan constituency. He has also won bar elections as well as remained vice chairman and chairman district council Attock. In 2013, he won elections from Attock again, but this time under the banner of PTI. Former MNA Sayyad Ijaz Hussain Bukhari was of the view that People of KPK and most Pakhtun belts are comparatively more inclined towards religion. When MMA appeared with the symbol 'book' people stood for the symbol as they thought it can actually bring change. He said that the impact of this symbol was far more than the impact of any other political party's symbol especially in 2002 elections.

He did not comment on the reason for choosing 'book' as a party symbol for MMA. Talking about the rumors of symbolizing the party symbol 'book' to Holy Qura'an during MMA's election campaign he said that it was true that MMA's vote bank was immensely increased due to the campaigning by highlighting the election symbol. Even in our area, irrespective of their casts, class and sects, people have voted for the symbol 'book' as they expected that MMA will come with the enforcement of 'Shariah'. He said that MMA did fetch extra votes with the help of highlighting its party symbol, he informed. He said that it can be considered one of the factors of MMA's victory but a minor one as candidate's personal and party vote bank also matters a lot. In our case, the party symbol did benefit us but still the main chunk of voters belonged to our personal vote bank mainly, he explained. Replying to a question regarding emotional exploitation he agreed that for gaining political victory, many political parties in our country have been using religious rhetoric and appearances. He informed that it was because of the importance of the symbol and its impact in previous elections on people's choices that MMA stressed upon getting the same symbol again. Talking about the symbol being challenged in ECP, he said informed that the symbol was being challenged by PPP. They claimed that

MMA misused the symbol by manipulating people's religious sentiments. But later the claim was dismissed, and the same symbol was being allotted to MMA.

Muhammad Afzal Khan is the Additional Secretary in Election Commission of Pakistan. He was second in command in ECP during Elections 2002 in Pakistan. The interview carries even more importance as Mr. Muhammad Afzal Khan belongs to the area of our case study i.e. Bannu.

During this interview Additional Secretary ECP revealed very important inside information. The interview was unstructured. The questions asked were different from the rest of the interviews. ECP informed that 'Election symbol' is an integral part of elections. Any political party must choose an election symbol for its party to contest the elections. A list of election symbols is being provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Political parties have to choose among the given list of symbols. If any party like to have a symbol not available in the list provided by ECP, it can request ECP for its desired election symbol to be included in the list. But it should be done within given time. Political parties chose all such election symbols that are somehow associated with their party's ideology. Talking about exploitation through election symbol, the additional secretary said that Election symbol is meant to be the trade mark of a political party and there is no harm in election campaigns using election symbols. Every party chooses an election symbol that is most relevant to its party's ideology. For example, PTI's ideology is based on justice. The very name of the party is 'Pakistan tehrak e insaaf' i.e. 'Pakistan movement for Justice'. The party initially wanted the election symbol 'tarazu'. They pressed hard to get this symbol. But as per the Election Commission of Pakistan's rule, if one party gets one symbol ahead of another party, it can ask for the symbol again in the next elections. But if another party wants the same symbol in another election, priority would be given to the party having the same symbol in prior elections. This caused a contest between JUI left-wing and PTI for the same symbol, but because of the rule of ECP, JUI got the symbol.

Yet PTI's current symbol is associated with the victory of the party's leader Imran Khan. Its symbol 'bat' symbolizes the successful cricket career of the leader. The party is using the symbol in its election campaign. What else is the election symbol for? Similarly, the other political symbols of the political parties symbolize their ideologies. Replying to a question regarding rumors of misusing election symbol 'book' by MMA he said that The political symbol "book" was initially chosen by JUI. The same symbol was used when the political alliance of all religious parties Muttahida Majlis e Amal was formed.

This initiated another contest for political symbol by various parties. After the unexpected victory of MMA, some of the parties being previously part of MMA wanted the election symbol 'book' in the next elections, specially the two broken wings of JUI. But the most interesting part was that some other parties challenged the election symbol 'book' by MMA in the ECP and requested that the symbol may not be allotted to any political parties. A letter from PPP (Annex attached) was sent to ECP claiming the political symbol book was being misused as a tool of religious exploitation. They claimed that the symbol was symbolized by Quran which increased their vote bank.

After being challenged, the symbol was changed in a way so that it does not resemble Quran. The previous symbol was a picture of the closed book having nothing written on it. ECP changed it into a new symbol 'book'. This time the picture of the book was not closed but an open one, having Urdu alphabets and mathematic numbers written on it. But MMA refused the symbol picture having changed in this manner. This gesture of MMA apparently reflects that they did symbolize the political symbol 'book' to Quran and it may have earned some extra votes to the party. But there is another inside story which many people do not know. MMA itself requested to change the symbol 'book's' picture earlier as it closely resembled some other pictures provided as election symbols i.e. briefcase. So there was a chance that people would have misjudged symbol 'book' to briefcase and votes could have been casted to other party mistakenly. ECP told that ECP was informed that there were strong rumors, stories and reports about misusing the election symbol "book" as a tool of religious exploitation by MMA in previous elections. ECP sources told that by the end of 2012 when all the political parties submitted their applications for allotment of election symbols, MMA again applied for the same controversial symbol "book". Taking notice of the matter, ECP allotted them the symbol "book" with a different picture. This time the book was not closed, instead it was open, and on its pages, Urdu alphabets were written on one side and numbers were written on the other side. A report by 'Election Commission's hearing quotes:

“Reference to page 8 of the Paper Book bearing No. F3(59)/2002-Confid. titled ‘Application of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan for change in the appearance of Election Symbol Book’, a note was prepared by Nazar Abbas, Deputy Director (Confid.), dated November 25, 2011 wherein it was stated that election symbol "book" at Serial No.10 of the list as suggested by the various segments of society can be misused by the party to whom it is allotted as per precedents in the previous elections the candidates referred the Election Symbol "Book" as to be the "Holy Quran" and tried to stir the religious emotions of the voters, which have an impact on the election results. To stop this practice in future it was proposed that picture of Symbol "Book", which at present is a Closed Book may be changed as an Open Book with printed Urdu alphabets (Alaf, Bay) on its one page and simple additional sum on the other, so as to differentiate it from the Holy Quran. It is further stated in the note that if approval is allowed summary to the President of Pakistan be sent by the Law Section for approval of the change in the appearance of the Election Symbol “Book” at Serial No. 10 in the Section 9(1) of the Representation of the People (Conduct of Election) Rules, 1977. Secretary ECP sought permission from Chief Election Commissioner to be allowed to place the matter before the Commission in its meeting to be held tomorrow (November 30, 2011) to which the former CEC agreed. After the meeting, its minutes was placed before the Commission on December 9, 2011 for confirmation by the Election Commission. Former CEC, in its capacity as Chairman and three members viz MEC’s (Punjab, Sindh and KPK) approved and signed. The concerned subject reproduced below; “The commission approved the change in the appearance/picture of the Election Symbol Book from its existing appearance as a “Closed Book” to an “Open book” with Urdu alphabets written on its One Page and 2+2 = 4 written on its other page in order to avoid the possible misuse of this symbol referring it as “Holy Quran” by candidates of an election during their election campaigns and thus influencing the voters.” ECP further informed and provided documented proof that Moulana Fazlur Rahman requested ECP not to change the appearance of the symbol “book” and allot them the previous picture of the very symbol.

The ECP quoted; "On September 28, 2012 Moulana Fazal-ur-Rahman, JUI(F) made an application that the change from Book to Open Book with numbers and alphabets inscribed on its pages may not be made and Closed Book, which has been used as an Election Symbol in number of elections, be allowed to be used in the next general elections as the change might lead astray the elector". Sayyad Hamad Bukhari has been an active campaigner of MMA in 2002 elections. He launched his successful campaign. Being a key person in a political campaign for MMA during the 2002 elections, Hamad informed us that people in Pakhtun belts are emotional and religious. They can be made fool off. He said that during the campaign in 2002 elections in Attock, the party successfully cashed the political symbol of MMA. Banners and posters were made having Pictures of khana ka'aba, and Masjid e Nabwi (SAW) and the party symbol was placed in the middle of them. Banners had emotional slogans like "Qura'an vo kitaab hai jo dars e inqilab hai" means Qura'an is the book which provides knowledge of revolution. At that point of time, he said, anti-Musharraf and anti-American sentiments were very high due to the Afghan war. "This is why many people, even our enemies voted for us, and both the sects joined hands against apparent anti-Islamic forces and voted for 'Book' in our area", he said.

Hamad agreed that MMA's party symbol 'book' had a greater impact than any other party symbol in the 2002 elections and accepted the charge of religious exploitation with the help of this symbol. He even told that rhetoric was used by him and other political activists such as 'you won't remain Muslim if did not vote for 'book''. He also agreed that the accusations against MMA for exploitation through its election symbol were to some extent true as he himself was part of it. People in Pakhtun belts are eager for the enforcement of 'Shariah' and due to MMA's campaign, their hopes were raised. He said that Moulana Fazl ur Rahman always used religious face and anti-American vote bank to gain votes. Using such slogans clearly indicates that there have been some deliberate manipulations of religious sentiments of public for gaining votes.

Conclusion

The election symbol has a very important place in elections. It can play an influencing role in election victory. We also came to know that in the 2002 elections, the election symbol 'book' was one of the prominent factors in influencing public opinion in favor of MMA. Evidence provided by ECP also

proves that rumors against misusing the symbol had traces of truth in it. It was noted that the popularity graph of MMA in that area was decreased in the last three elections significantly due to the increasing popularity of PTI and other factors. Key political figures of the area Molana Fazlur Rahman and Akram khan Durrani both faced a gradual downfall in number of their voters after their victory in 2002. The qualitative analysis of interviews revealed that the average voter was influenced by electoral symbol 'book' in the 2002 elections. Although the impact was not very lasting but it was one considerable factor in gaining political victory for MMA. The study showed that the sensitivity of the public towards religion and anything that is attributed towards religion was high in the area. People liked the election symbol 'book' very much. It was interesting to note that none of them disliked the symbol. Majority of them thought that people voted for the symbol 'book' because they respect The Book very much. This indicates that the symbol 'book' was associated with the Holy Book. Most of the people also thought that MMA's symbol book was one of the factors of MMA's victory. But again when it was asked, if they would vote for any other political party if they change their political symbol to 'book', the majority response was negative. It was also observed that the candidate contesting elections was of high importance in winning or losing the elections. Also, religious faces were more encouraged and liked. It was noted that PTI enjoyed increasing popularity in the region but couldn't fetch much votes. It was also noted that Moulana Fazl ur Rahman's popularity was declining. With the information provided by ECP and MMA's former MNAs, it was proved that there were some traces of truth in the rumors against MMA, that they exploited the election symbol book successfully and gained extra votes by associating the symbol to Qura'an. It was also found that the symbol alone could not have fetched extra votes if the circumstances and the religious face of the party was not there. It was also observed that in the wake of Afghan war which rose anti-American and Anti-Musharraf sentiments, and being an alliance of religious political parties, party's symbol was successfully used to invoke public's religious sentiments to gain political victory. The symbol book was associated to the Holy Book during the campaigns and emotional religious slogans were used.

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