

Identity as Pakistani: A Study of College and Madrasah Students of Baltistan

Abstract

The research discusses the Pakistani identity of college and madrasah students in Baltistan. The study aims at understanding structures and significant components of Pakistani, identity in youth of Baltistan. It also identifies conflicts collisions and contradiction as well as convergence in Pakistani identity in college and madrasah students. It also explores political cultural and religious elite's views about identity issues and conflicts as well as their take on changes in these identities over time. The analysis of data produced during focused group discussions and in-depth interviews was conducted by reducing it into categories. The differences between identities of madrasah students and that of college students were explored besides observation that these identities have significant features in common.

Key Words: *Identity, College, Madrassah Students*

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The present research focuses on Pakistani identity of madrasah and college students in Baltistan region in north of Pakistan. The identity has been discussed in geo-political, cultural and religious context of the community and the region.

Contemporary societies were not the only ones to focus on the term identity as research topic it has also been focus of theorizing tradition in social sciences for a few decades now. Judith A. Howard., (2000) has reviewed the literature on social psychology of identities and has commented that in earlier more stable societies identity was not only a non-issue but it also was assigned rather than selected or

Salman Haider

Department of Gender Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University.

Dr. M. Aasir Ajmal

Department of Psychology, Government College University, Lahore.

adopted (Howard, 2000). Identifying the increase in the quality and the quantity of changes that are taking place due to a number of factor e.g. technological development of communication media etc. it has been claimed that the need of answering the identity questions has increased many times. Verkuyten (2004) also is in agreement with Howard when he says that questions of identity are profound and pressing in the postmodern and global eras.

There are a number of cognitive processes that come into play while these identities are constructed, maintained or changes. Attribution processes i.e. judgment of causality and responsibility are particularly important. One of the important questions that have been addressed by the researches is about the bias of attributional processes in favor of in-group identification and adherence. Numerous studies have shown a pattern of in-group favoritism i.e. the positive behavior of the in-groups members are internally attributed while the negative behaviors are attributed to the external factors. On the other hand fewer studies have supported out group discrimination. Islam & Hewstone (1993) for example has exhibited the opposite attributional pattern towards out-group members. The researches in consonance with social identity theory have reported that the salience of the social categorization intensifies these attributional patterns.

The cognition structures and processes are combined in Moscovici's (1981) theory of social representation. According to his viewpoint knowledge structures are shared by the groups. They originate and develop through social interaction and communication (Augoustinos & Innes, 1990). This approach has re-conceptualized the schema which till then have been seen as conservative resistance to change and cognitive in nature. Conceptualizing schema in social terms increases its flexibility and makes it more grounded in social interaction.

Laboratory experiments have been central to the establishment of these theories and it is crucial to validate these in sociologically meaningful contexts. A number of studies in this tradition have been conducted with members of real groups with real conflicts between them. Spears et al (1997a, b) have asserted that the categorization and identification processes need to be studied in real life contexts as cognitive perception is meaningfully ordered by groups and their collective life. Doosje & Ellemers (1997) have asserted that cognitive and interactional processes are entwined and that identity management strategies are often put to use for manipulating group comparisons for the function of social identification.

Early works by Tajfel and Turner (1994) has remained more focused on the psychological motivation of group membership yet the self-categorization theory presented by Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell (1987), has concentrated more on the cognitive foundations of social identity (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, 1994). As opposite to the binary distinction between personal and social identity established in the social identity theory, self-categorization theory theorizes self at personal, intergroup, and interspecies levels and presents a more noticeable fluidity in identity formation as individuals constantly shift between an individual and a social identity (Monroe, Hankins, & Van Vechten, 2000; Oakes et al., 1994). Individuals are theorized to be more likely to think of themselves as members of some social groups when the group membership maximizes the similarities between oneself and other group members and the differences with the members of other groups (Turner et al., 1987; see also Huddy, 2001; Kinnvall, 2003; Monroe et al., 2000)

Mainly based on psychological experiments, social identity theory and self-categorization theory have made some significant comments regarding the inclination among individuals to think more positive about themselves and their groups as opposed to other groups. Also important is the approach that these theories account for the psychological processes of redefining the self in terms of group norms and the related stereotypes about specific social groupings (Monroe et al., 2000). The strength of these theories has also been identified in Reicher & Hopkins work through observing the efforts made to elucidate the behavior of larger collectivities rather than the small groups studied in laboratory (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Symbolic interaction approach studies both the structure of the identities and the process of interaction through which these identities are constructed maintained and changed. The structural approach in this tradition emphasizes the concept of role identities, role being the whole of the character that a person develops when he or she occupies at certain social position. The approach explicitly links the social structures to the person (Stryker, 1980). The role identities of a person are hierarchically organized in accordance to their salience to the self and the degree of our commitment to them. This salience and commitment is described as dependent upon our relation to particular other people.

The second approach deals with the process of construction of identity and its

negotiation. Negotiation among the identities of people is fundamental to developing definition of the situations (Goffman, 1959). These negotiations result in self presentation and/or impression management (McCall & Simons 1978). These social constructions made through the symbolic interactions within the social space are with social and material consequences. This tradition also discusses the interactive mechanisms for identity formation (Cahill, 1998)

The constructionist literature on identity discusses language as the space where identities are constructed, negotiated and communicated in direct interactions as well as discourse creation through some media (McAdams 1995). The fundamental assertion of the approach is that people actively produce their identities through their talk. Many ethnographic studies have studied these constructions in everyday interactions. Identity talk revolves around two sets of norms. One of these sets concerns respect for situated identities and a pledge to basic moral percept. The other set of norms deals with the failure of people in following the basic moral principle through various attributional tactics (Hunt et al 1994). Hunt and Miller (1997) have examined the construction of identity in sorority women through interviews. They focused on their talk about personal appearances. The data revealed normative order shaping the dress and appearance in the women. These women communicate and maintain identities through rhetoric of review that offers the criteria for decisive judgment of appearance.

Many researches in the symbolic interactionist tradition have studied the identity struggles, especially the ones managing the stigma of social inequalities. Anderson et al (1994) identifies two of the stigma avoidance strategies used by the homeless population. In-group strategies used by within the peers include drinking, cheap entertainment, hanging out, and positive talk about identity. On the other hand the techniques used with the out group i.e. domiciled others, to reduce the impact of stigma includes, defiance, passing as the domiciled others by appearing like them, covering by minimizing the impact of stigma, and collective action, as in homeless movements. Cherry (1995) and Tewksbury (1994) have studied the AIDS patients and exhibited the way in which these patients perform identity and employ language to control the unwanted social consequences attached with their marginalized status.

METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the study were

- To understand the structures and significant components of Pakistani identity in college and madrassa, students of Baltistan.
- Identifying the points where Pakistani identity has conflict, collision, or contradiction as well as where it overlaps or converge with other identities in Balti youth.
- Studying the way cultural, political and religious elite looks into identity issues and conflicts.

Sample

Sample of the thirty five students from both formal and religious institutions Madrassas and college students with an age ranging from 16 to 22 years took part in the focus group discussion arranged to meet the objectives of study. Students from madrassas were usually of rural background while students of college were from urban back ground. Students from madrasa were having formal education in humanities as private candidates while college students were from humanities and sciences but were not getting religious education in any formal settings.

Sample also included cultural, political and religious elite of the community. Researcher tried to bring as many perspectives as possible in the debate to have a fuller picture. Seven in depth interviews were conducted with the local religious cultural and political elite of the community.

Instrument

Group discussion schedules were prepared after review of relevant literature and informal discussions with madrassa and college students and teachers. The discussion schedules included various topics that identified definitions structure and boundaries of identities. Points of conflict and overlap were also identified and were discussed by the participants. Guidelines for every interview varied according to the areas of specialization of the respondent for example literary figures and politicians clerics etc.

Procedure

Four focus groups discussions were carried out, two from madrassa and two from college students separately. Maximum number of participants in focus group

discussion was ten while minimum was 8. The discussion were moderated by the researcher himself. Discussion mostly took place in Urdu and in case a Balti term was used it was noted and clarified after or during the discussion. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in various settings of convenience for interviewees.

Analysis

Textual analysis was conducted using data reduction techniques and was used for theory building for structure of Shiite Muslim identity.

DISCUSSION

The community strongly believes that religion is inseparable from politics. State is accepted and the religious identity is not para or supra state.

“it is not possible to have one leader. There are 62 Muslim (majority) countries in the world. It is not possible to unite them all. But we believe that after the appearance of the Imam there will be one government in the world...but as far as state system is concerned the world is much dispersed. Some infallible Imam will govern the world, we believe in it and hope for it but it appears impossible.”

The role of state is instrumental in implementing the political and economic systems that find their roots in religious identity. It is identified that the religious order needs a state for its implementation and the efforts at individual level cannot implement the religion in full.

“Islam and politics are inseparable they go together. The government power is needed to implement the orders of Islam. For example we cannot abolish the interest with out government.”

The state in its current form is seen as Muslim state though not a true Islamic one. The community rationally analysis the demographic situation of the country and does not see any chances of a Shiite Islamic revolution. It prefers not to indulge into any adventure for installing a religio-political system identified as the system of demographic minority community among the Muslims i.e. Shiites.

“There are duties of Muslims (towards changing the system with an Islamic one) but

if the situation is like the one we have in Pakistan we don't think the religious scholars can do anything. If you have the people who can work you can get fruit of the efforts. And if you can get the fruit then it is all right. But if you will fight just for dying it is of no use. It depends on the situation...one should try his utmost to incline the people towards it (establishing Islamic system). He should try to tell people the reality and when they are inclined towards it he will get a chance to govern. ”

It prefers to restrain itself to safeguarding the religion and expresses resolve to resist the state only if it intrudes into the religious affairs of the community.

“We can preach though we can't fight. It is impossible to bring a revolution like Khomeini here. But if government starts pushing you to the wall you can fight for your rights. I don't think you can try for revolution it will be destructive for us.”

It is identified that chances of establishing a True Islamic system in a state where Shiites are a demographic minority are thin yet the community identified certain differences between a democracy and an Islamic system and suggested certain changes that can make the democracy more Islamic. These modifications are embedded in current religio-cultural order of the community that gives authority to its religious elite by giving them the power of interpreting the religious scripture and the injunctions contained in it.

“It (Islamic system) is a consultative system, different from the democracy. As in democracy you can do anything, make your own party group and organization. Islam has not given such a system. In Islam you can do this in a smaller circle. Because (in Islam) you have to believe in Allah and his Prophet and you are not allowed to believe in any other thing. In democracy you can do anything. Everything is controlled by people. The power of making a decision lies with the Mujtahids, and Koran.”

The content of collective identity as Pakistani in the madrassa and the college students of Gilgit-Baltistan chiefly consists of individual's role as a citizen especially his responsibility of obeying the rules and laws made by the state and the constitution of the country. Resisting the international pressure on the country was also considered a duty of the citizen by the madrassah students.

“acting completely according to laws. Paying taxes, Celebrating the (National) days, trying to safeguard against pressures of global powers.”

On the other hand the state is considered responsible for safeguarding religious freedom and providing the economic security. Celebrating the days of national importance with enthusiasm and respecting the national flag were also described as important parts of the identity. Another role associated with the state is that of the protector of religion against others at international level. Religion and not the constitution is described as the basic criteria according to which of rights for the religious minorities (Christians, Hindus, etc) living with in the state boundaries should be granted. The clause of the constitution that inhibits the religious minorities of the country from holding the key posts in the state machinery is described as a natural out come of Muslim majority in the state. Students reject the democracy where majority is the only authority for being the Western system. They say that the present system is neither western nor Islamic but is somewhere in between the both. This mix is accepted with grumble. The grumble signifies both the sense of loss for Islamic system (not the nostalgia but the System in Iran) and the disliked task of following the West.

The students from the colleges as well as from the madrasahs pointed out that they do not enjoy the equal status as Pakistani like the other citizens of the country though the economic security and religious freedom was available.

“yes we are (Pakistani). Some are full Pakistani others are half. We are half (Pakistanis). We are 30% to 40% Pakistani.”

The politics was described by the madrassah students as something dirty and loathsome for being synonymous with corruption and nepotism. The clerics were considered members of a holy subset within the community which should not disgrace itself by taking part in this politics. The students from the madrassas believed at the same time that one should not separate politics and religion.

There can be a disagreement about Pakistan (if they join politics). So they say that you should vote for a person who gives you your rights. According to Islam our political representative is the one who can give the rights to the society. Politics have been disfigured. America did this.

The state is seen as a benefactor though it is claimed that the constitutional status the region deserved, bringing the region at par with other parts of the country, has not been granted to Gilgit-Baltistan.

“It is a responsibility of the government to defend religious rights and to provide economic rights. We are enjoying religious rights. As far as economic rights are concerned, we are not down trodden. We are getting food. You get a flour bag for Rs 3000 in Punjab we are getting it for Rs 800. Some rights are being provided. Any ways we are deprived of basic constitutional rights. There is no one in Pakistani assembly to discuss our problems”.

At the time of division of subcontinent for creation of Pakistan the region was divided in various small princely states and a part of it was being controlled by the state of Kashmir. The local people and the Scouts won freedom from Dogra Raja of Kashmir and annexed Baltistan with Pakistan. The Rajas of the princely states also annexed their states with Pakistan. The annexure of the states and various parts of the region known as Gilgit-Baltistan today started on November 16, 1947 with the annexure of Gilgit with the newly established state of Pakistan and was completed in 1951 after the annexure of Tangir and Darail according to Mr. Qasim Naseem a political scholar and a prominent journalist of the region.

“The freedom movement of Gilgit-Baltistan started in 1947. Gilgit won freedom on November 1, 1947. Then a provisional government of Gilgit with the name of Islamic Republic of Gilgit was established. In the first cabinet meeting of the government, though it was already planned that the area would be annexed with Pakistan, a letter was drafted in which Government of Pakistan was told that we wanted to annex the region with them. (The message was sent) in the form of letters and telegrams. In response to that letter, the provisional government remained in power for fifteen days, Sardar Aalam Khan came here as the representative of Pakistan Government and took over the charge from the president of the provisional government. After that the story of freedom struggle moves further. Hunza and Nigar annexed themselves with Pakistan in the end of November. On 14th August 1948 Baltistan won its freedom and was annexed with Pakistan. Then the present Gilgit-Baltistan which has six no seven

districts now, the annexation was completed in 1951 When Darail and Tangair were annexed with Pakistan. ”

On the other hand Government of Pakistan claims that it took the control of the region through Karachi accord from the Government of Azad Kashmir (Pakistani administered Kashmir). The political elite of the community vehemently contested this claim and said that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan do not accept the accord for the region was annexed with Pakistan through various bilateral agreements and the state of Kashmir was never a party to these agreements of annexation. Mr. Qasim Naseem rejecting the Karachi Accord said,

“Karachi Accord, people of Gilgit-Baltistan do not recognize it...when after the war of freedom we got the region free a provisional government was established there. For sixteen days it worked as a free state. Show me if Kashmir was ever involved in it (at that time). Then all the annexation accords signed with Pakistan Hunza did it, Nigar did it, Gilgit did that, derail did, Tangair did it, show me if Kashmir was ever there. (Did they say) we are annexing it for now but will reconsider when Kashmir issue is resolved.”

The accord is also rejected for the non representative nature of the parties that signed it. The political elite of the community claim that no representative of the region was among those who signed the accord and the ones who signed also had reservations about it.

“The region (the accord was about) was not represented there. three people signed it. First one is Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas, president of Muslim Conference (a political party of Kashmir). He wrote a dissent note under the accord that his signature shows his consent for the clauses that are about Muslim conference. I have nothing to do with the clauses regarding Baltistan. Second is Sardar Ibrahim (former president of Azad Kashmir). As far as he is concerned there are a number of books of Kashmiri writers on record about him. Among there is Mohammad Saeed Asad who wrote in his book “Baltistan ki Aaeni Haysiyat” (Constitutional Status of Baltistan). There is M. R. Shahid. He is a journalist. He wrote a book “Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. It is clearly written in both the books that whenever the

journalist asked Sardar Ibrahim about Karachi Accord he said that he had not signed the accord and his fake signature were attached with the accord. Third one (who signed the Karachi Accord) was Mushtaq Gurmani he was minister without portfolio (in Government of Pakistan). Our annexation document was signed by Sikandar Mirza...Governor General and Karachi Accord was signed by a minister without portfolio. What is the legal status of the document (of Karachi Accord)?”

The political elite claimed that relationship of the regional political elite and civil body are stronger with Pakistani people and organizations and institutions than with Kashmiri's and they present it as an evidence of the regions political inclination,

“Sardar Atiq (Prominent political leader of Kashmir) visited us once otherwise nobody from Kashmir ever visited the region. It was a strange situation when we visited the region he was having a political office he and all the other political delegation who visited the region used to say that you are a part of Kashmir. I was in a member of a student organization than. When our delegation went to meet him he said that you had been knocking the wrong door (Pakistan) for last forty five forty six years. I remember I had a newspaper with me in which an advertisement by Azad Kashmir Public Service Commission had been published that certain posts were vacant in certain institution and only the domicile holders of Azad Kashmir could apply for the seats. I said if Gilgit-Baltistan is your part why only the Azad Kashmiri people are eligible and why the people of your part cannot apply for these posts. Then you have universities and good educational institution and we have a degree college only. Are the doors of your universities open for us? There they give admission to the domicile holders of Azad Kashmir only. On the other hand in Punjab University, Quaid-i-Azam University, Karachi University, Dera Ismail Khan University they have allocated seats for us. So how can you say we are knocking at the wrong door?... They are not in contact with the political leadership here. They are neither interested in the culture nor are interested in knowing the situation of the region.”

The political elite identified that the constitutional status of the region has been a hostage to the foreign policy of Pakistan especially the Kashmir dispute and the stance of Pakistani state on it. They do not identify the political actors responsible for depriving them of the constitutional status at par with other geographical regions of the state,

“We cannot say that certain people or government is responsible for our plight. The background (of the constitutional status of the region) is that when Pakistan was made Kashmir dispute became a problem. In 1948 there was a war there and India took the dispute to United Nations. After a debate India and Pakistan consented that local bodies of Kashmir should decide which country they wanted to join. It was decided at that time that Pakistan will withdraw its army and other forces (forces made up of tribal people of Pakistan). As India was holding the area it had to withdraw seventy percent of its forces and thirty percent had to remain in the region for maintaining law and order. Certain powerful people of Pakistan feared manipulation (of the plebiscite) in the presence of Indian army. So they presented the accord (Karachi Accord) in the United Nations Organization claiming that Gilgit-Baltistan is also a part of Kashmir so plebiscite should also be held in the region...as Kashmir is an important pillar of Pakistani foreign policy. This policy has been formed on these lines since Quaid-i-Azam said that Kashmir is the life line for Pakistan. All the governments, democratic or military, have focused Kashmir. So our national security has always been hindering and we cannot make it a clear cut province (of Pakistan). Because we have presented a demand and if we make it a province India will get a chance to say that it will keep the rest (of Kashmir)...it is the basic problem...we cannot blame a party or a specific group. It has been a part of our foreign policy.”

Though the political elite claimed that the constitutional status of the region is the most important political issue yet the electoral politic in the region has not focused upon it and the cultural identity of the region has not been translated into a political identity,

“I will say political identity was not focused (by the local

politicians)...it has been a big mistake...emotions, national security, or whatever had been the reason for taking the decision (of declaring Gilgit-Baltistan a part of Kashmir) we have been suffering through it for sixty two years now. Now we can say it was wrong. I would say it is the cause of almost all of our problems...but you will not find any movement for our rights. Demands are put forward when ever elections are held but after election everything is forgotten for five years...I would say our senior politicians will not be able to identify the real issue. Our core problem is constitutional but only a few people know about it...in 2004 we called an All Parties Conference in the press club here (on the issue). It was successful otherwise no political party or even Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly discussed it. Neither had they done their home work upon it. I agree that there is no thinking (about the issue) at political level.”

The elections for the local bodies of the region have remained non party based till 1994. The changes in Pakistani legislation introduced in 1994 initiated party based elections in the region. The political parties working in Pakistan also contest elections from the region though the local politics since now has revolved more around personalities and religious inclinations,

The elections till 1994 were non party based. As it is small region the people were nominated on and were voted for on the bases of their cast, clan or religious sect. prominent personalities were an important factor. Clerics also were important the vote bank of those supported by the clerics used to increase. The people who remained on good positions in past or who were related to or were close to the royal families, this factor was also important. After the reforms of 1994 party based votes were casted like the other parts of the country. Though the factors which played their from 1979 to 1994 are still important but now election is party based.

Other than the culture of the region and structural requirement of the system lack of representation at national level is also claimed to have played its role in encouraging personality based politics. Fida Nashad a prominent politician for member of legislative council and former deputy chief executive of the region said,

Voting is personality based in the region because voting for political party does not suit them. We have no representation in National assembly or Senate. If we vote for Peoples party it will not increase a single seat of the party in National Assembly. If we oppose the party it will also not matter. So the people here vote for honest capable and experienced candidate, the one who they think understands political matters.

The prominent personalities of the region contest the elections for local bodies on agendas of infrastructural development and the politics for the constitutional rights of the region is not a major election issue,

“Before the assembly, the Gilgit-Baltistan council was mandated with approving the local developmental schemes. Council had all the powers to identify and approve the schemes that were funded by the annual budget given to the Northern Areas by the federal government...mostly the region is underdeveloped so the agenda was to end this lack of development. It was a tool the candidates had. They used to give hundreds of thousand rupees for school electricity and roads and the people used to vote for them looking at the development they made in the constituency.”

In 1999 the role of the council was changed from development to legislation and development was handed over to lower level bodies of the region. The move was resisted by the local politicians fearing that they would loose political control and popularity,

After 1999 they were given the powers to legislate and development was taken back. They protested against it a lot...they said people vote for us in the name of the development. Law making was something new for them, secondly most of the subject they were handed over (for law making) were about taxation. They knew if they would legislate it would harm them...we can say that 50% of the times they (the politicians) use, especially the major parties Muslim League and PPP, the reforms in political process and judiciary etc for asking for votes while 50% of the times development is still used as a tool.

The political elite also identified that the voting trends in the region are changing and there is a gradual increase in party vote. Commenting upon the voting trends in the region the former deputy Chief executive said,

Yes it will change. They have given a setup that is closer to provinces. If a complete provincial setup is introduced it (the trend) will change. There are various political parties and I have observed that the graph of religious parties is very low. There is no candidate of religious parties in many constituencies. Peoples Party and Muslim League are contesting the elections on level grounds.

Commenting upon the role of religious clerics in politics the political elite identified that they had a prominent role in regional politics and were actively involved in it but the role is changing and religious elite has taken a back seat. The political elite described various reasons for the changing roles fear of increasing sectarian tension in the region was claimed to be a reason of changing role of clerics in politics,

In Past religious parties contested the elections with full fervor. It increased the sectarian tensions here. The people and the clerics in Baltistan are peaceful. That's why people want that election should be contested from the platform of national political parties and not from religious parties.

Intra-community tensions were also claimed to have played an important role in declining participation of clerics in politics, Qasim Naseem, a prominent political commentator discussing the only party based election contested by the clerics from the platform of a religious party said,

in past (when elected representatives were not there) they had a consultative role. Government used to consult our clerics and Rajas....so the clerics kept themselves in as an alternative leadership. But in 1994 the (first) party based elections of assembly council were contested with fervor by a religious party, Tehrik e Nifaz e Fiaqh e Jafira, along with other political parties. They fully used the mosques and religious pedestal in this election. The religious slogans were used in a manner that I would say that people were made to vote (for the religious party) by force though it is a democratic right that has to be used with free will. Religious values were brought in and the vote

was made the standard for (going to) hell or heavens. We can say that the clerics used their position in all the right and wrong ways. Negative effects of this election were clearly seen. The most important side effect of the election was that though their (religious party's) candidates won the election yet the others independent candidates, candidates from PPP and Muslim League also belonged to the same community, were from the same region, from what ever party they were they used to respect the clerics. So it was obvious that the candidates from PPP and Muslim League separated themselves (from the clerics). It created tension and disturbance in the community. then the clerics thought that they had taken a wrong decision and it created problems in the society. Now they try not to get involved directly.

The clerics commenting upon their refraining from direct involvement in electoral politics from the platform of a religious party in spite of the belief that religion is inseparable from politics said that not taking part in elections from the platform of a religious party is a considered political decision. Some of them identified that they had no distinctly different plan after winning the election in 1994 and it made them reconsider the decision.

A political commentator Qasim Nasim said that the rights for the region were demanded on the basis of religious cum sectarian identity of the people from Baltistan yet the trend has changed and now the cultural identity of the region is presented as the basis of the political demands i.e. constitutional status at par with other federating units of the country.

The religious dimension has there in past unfortunately a constitutional problem was raised on sectarian basis. The Shiite community used to demand five provinces here while the Sunni community used to demand annexing the region with Kashmir or with Hazara and Kohistan for making it a province. It was there in the past but now thanks God that things have changed. People think that these demands create problems instead of solving them. Gilgit-Baltistan has its own identity and geography and people keep the ground realities before putting their demands forward.

The political demands emerging from the perceived or real status as discriminated community in Pakistan and the strong bonding of the community have shaped the present role of the religious community. The failure in achieving the rights of the community while contesting for them as a religious group has pushed the elite to take a step back losing the leadership to present political elite which though is Shiite in their beliefs yet does not lead the community as religious one and presents the political demands as the demands of a community with distinct culture living in a distinct geographical unit.

The other important factor that pushed the religious elite to its present indirect role was the strong bonding among the community. The local elections in 1994 were contested by the religious elite from the platform of a religious party, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafria. These elections divided the community and weakened the control of the religious elite. The religious elite by contesting the election from a religious platform not only divided the community but also created a strong opposition, consisting of influential individuals of the community, for themselves in the community.

The clerics which make the religious elite of the community describe their indirect participation i.e, either participation as individual or from non-religious parties, in the electoral politics as a political strategy. The students from the madrassahs describe this indirect role of religious elite in terms of prejudice against the community in the country though they believe that politics and the religion should not be separated. Political elite says that the religious leaders avoided direct participation in the electoral politics to avoid sectarian confrontations in the region. The clerics have been, for at least a decade now, either taking part in election from main stream parties with no apparent religious agendas or restricting themselves to the role of a preacher and ask people to vote for honest and right candidates.

Pakistan, the state ruling the area, for almost sixty year has brought changes to the local government system bring more and more autonomy to the area and making the local government more and more representative of the people. These changes have been identified by the political elite of the region though the demand of constitutional status at par with other federating unit of the country has remained there,

After the annexation, as there was no access to the region, Frontier

Crimes Regulation (F.C.R) was implemented there. As you know with F.C.R. there was not freedom of speech or that of association till 1974. The Mr. Bhutto visited the region and introduced reforms. He abolished the F.C.R. and the feudal system, an oppressive system. then he established courts for the first time here. Before that one person was the head of police and the courts. We could not appeal against his powers or challenge him any where. After 1974 districts were made and reforms were introduced there...the Legal Framework Order and Local Government Orders were implemented and the system of local bodies was introduced. Though our Northern Areas Council was established in 1970 but before this (local Government Order) the members were nominated and not elected. Elections started in 1979. From 1979 to 1994 non party based elections were held. In 1994 the reforms were introduced by Benazir Government and the first party based elections were held...Since 1994 the Northern Areas Legal Framework Order (L.F.O.) was there. Gilgit-Baltistan is still no where in the constitutional framework of Pakistan. Neither it has been (declared as a part of Pakistan) in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan nor it is (declared) as a part of Azad Kashmir (Pakistani administered area of disputed territory of Kashmir). In 1999, it was the era of Mian Nawaz Sharif, L.F.O. was amended and a legislative council was made. Then Came General Musharaf in 2000 he gave the office of speaker to our legislative council. Before this (amendment) the (Pakistani) Minister of Kashmir used to chair the session of the council as he was the chairman. The in 2003 the office of deputy speaker was introduced. In 2007 the name of L.F.O. was changed to Northern Areas Good Governance Order...and our legislative council was declared as legislative assembly...besides this the basic rights given in (the constitution of) Pakistan were replicated there in the Good Governance Order and the courts were some what upgraded. Now a supreme appellate court has been established. Chief courts had two members and a chairman who has been re-designated as chief justice. So it is the current package known as Gilgit-Baltistan empowerment and Good Governance order. For the first time office of Chief Minister has been introduced. Who will have ministers in place of formerly taken advisors. Then a new forum known as Gilgit-

Baltistan Forum has been introduced. There will be fifteen members and the chief minister will head it. Six members will be nominated by the federal capital while six will be taken from Gilgit-Baltistan. A Gilgit-Baltistan consolidated fund has been established. We will have an election commissioner for the first time. Before this an officer with the rank of Assistant commissioner (Officer of junior level in Pakistani establishment) was the election commissioner here. For the first time they have sent him from Pakistani election commission. So these are the basic feature of (political) development since freedom.

Though local autonomy has been gradually been granted yet the people of the region are not represented at all on higher levels i.e. in Pakistani legislative bodies at national level where they can strive for the equal constitutional status and other political rights. The political elite identified that the people from the area have up till now ignored their rights and no movement for the rights of the people from Gilgit-Baltistan was launched.

The politicians see bureaucracy and the foreign policy as hurdles in changing of constitutional status of the region. They lament the exploitation of the resources of the region by the bureaucracy and the politicians of Pakistan who appoint these bureaucrats. They propose appointment of local people at key bureaucratic posts and demand representation in the national legislature.

The bureaucracy here considers itself as the rulers. Leave the common people aside they do not give the importance to their representatives as they do in other parts of the country. The representatives from here are elected the same way they are elected in other parts of the country. The (Federal) government sends some one from Punjab, Frontier (now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Sind, Baluchistan, as Minister to rule us. He has got all the powers. He brings deputy commissioner (highest administrative official of a district) Inspector General (Senior Most police official of region) and bureaucracy of his own choice. They rule Gilgit-Baltistan for their own benefit.

The politicians also claimed that the legislative rights given to the local assembly are also restricted by the powers of the federal minister that looks after the region on

behalf of Federal Government. They said that no law enacted by the local legislative assembly could be implemented without the ascent of the minister. They identified that not assenting to the laws passed by the local assembly is almost a trend in the federal ministers.

Another important aspect of the national identity of Gilgit-Baltistan is the absence of the enemy. This lack of enemy has its historical roots. The region at the time of partition was being ruled by the Dogra Raja of Kashmir. According to the political elite the people from the area fought and drove the forces of the state out of the areas to annex the region with Pakistan. The Dogra Raja of Kashmir annexed the Kashmir state with India and the state of Kashmir as Dorga run princely state lost its existence. With this annexure the Balti community lost their most important political other in the division saga of subcontinent.

The political elite also recognized that the constitutional status of the region has remained hostage to the foreign policy of Pakistan particularly the conflict between Pakistan and the neighboring country India on the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir yet they remain silent about the actors responsible for the situation. This silence is presented as the love of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan for Pakistani state.

Acceptance and popularity of Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, is also an important part of the national identity in Gilgit-Baltistan. Urdu is a language spoken in the far flung areas of the region. Urdu poetry is one of the passions of urban youth. Literary sitting where poetry is read and new works are presented are held at regular basis in the cities. A number of organizations that promote Urdu based literary activities are present in the cities. The acceptance of Urdu is presented as the evidence of the love of Balti community for Pakistan by the cultural elite of the region though a sublime pain of losing the cultural space to Urdu lurks some where beneath the words.

The relationship that exists is between the community and the state and not between the individual and the state. This history of the relationship between the state and the community has played an important role in forming the identity of people from Gilgit-Baltistan as Pakistani.

REFERENCES

- Augoustinos, M., Walker, I., & Donaghue, N. (2006). *Social Cognition: An Integrated Introduction* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Cote, J. (1996). Sociological perspectives on identity formation: the cultural-identity link and identity capital. *J. Adolesc.* 19, 417,-28
- Duckitt, J., & Mphuthing, T. (1998). Group Identification and intergroup attitudes: a longitudinal analysis in South Africa, *J. Pers, Soc. Psychol.* 74, 80-85.
- Deaux, K. (1993). Reconstructing social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19, 4-12.
- Fiske, S.T., & Taylor, S.E. (1991). *Social Cognition* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill
- Grossberg L. 1996. Identity and cultural studies-Is that all there is? As cited in Hall S, Du Gay P, eds. 1996. Questions of Cultural Identity. London: Sage, pp. 87-107
- Hall S, Du Gay P, eds. 1996. Questions of Cultural Identity. London: Sage, pp. 1-17
- Howard, J., A. 2000, Social Psychology of Identities. Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 26 (2000), pp. 367-393, Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223449> , on 09/10/2012
- Simon, Bernd, et al, 1997, When Self Categorization Makes Sense: The Role Of Meaningful Categorization In Minority And Majority Members' Self-Perception, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 73, no 2, 1997, pp. 310-320
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments In Intergroup Discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223, 96-102
- Tajfel, H. (1981). Human Groups And Social Categories. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Verkuyten, M. 2004, The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identity, Psychology Press. UK

