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***Biradari* System: A Dominating Factor in the Politics of Punjab
Province**

Master's Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

The postcolonial period brought along a plethora of changes in socio-political lives of inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. Two nations but the same story of social hierarchy, class, status, gender segregations, and new trends in political culture were the core issues in the region of Punjab before the partition of Indo-Pak. In 1947, after the partition, Punjab was divided between India and Pakistan. Eastern Punjab remained in India, and the western part of Punjab became part of Pakistan, and this thesis focuses on Pakistan's Punjab. Punjab means "the land of five rivers". According to the Punjabi historian Ganda Singh, "it is now established by all competent scholars of history and also by geologists and archaeologists that earliest traces of human habitation in India were found in Punjab in Soan Valley between Indus and Jhelum rivers" (Singh, 1989, p. 1).

A Britannica article on Punjab explains that the population of Punjab is divided into "(t)he major ethnic groups that are the Jat, Arain, Rajput, Gujar, and Awan. The caste system is gradually becoming blurred as a result of increasing social mobility, intercaste marriages and changing public opinion" (Tesch, 2021). The ethnic groups – or biradaris – mentioned in this encyclopaedia entry have been the most influential factor in the governing structure of the province of Punjab, before and after the partition of India-Pakistan. After 74 years of partition, despite the social mobility and other changes in Punjab, these ethnic groups still hold the strings of Punjab's socio-political structure. The relationship between an ethnic group and a caste is very complicated in many ways. An ethnic group is synonymous with biradari. According to Abid Ghafoor Choudhary and Aftab Ahmad, biradari is "an association, attachment, emotional linkage and sharing common characteristics by an individual being a part of a particular group descended of the same ancestor" (Choudhary & Ahmed, 2014, p. 1863). Since biradari is based on the ancestral linkage and the blood line, one caste can be comprised of many biradaris or it is possible that one caste can be a whole biradari. For instance, the Jutt caste can be a single biradari if the members of this caste descend from the common ancestor. And it is also possible that Jutt caste has several biradaris, but they all will be addressed as Jutt, irrespective of whether they share an ancestor or not.

Objectives of the Research

The idea of this Master's thesis, *Biradari System: A dominating Factor in the Politics of Province Punjab*, is to explore the relationships between politics and the people of the Pakistani province Punjab via the concept of biradari. Biradari establishes a social hierarchy and relationships among its members, which influence the political culture by leading people to rationalize a political candidate as a representative of their group. This thesis aims to develop a general understanding of the biradari system and the significance of kinship and other relationships in Punjabi society. A related objective is to throw light on the role of the biradari system in Pakistani politics, especially in voter behaviour, and on where it receives its aura of legitimacy from. Lastly, this thesis explores the lives of Pakistani Punjabi students living in Estonia and how they experience the Estonian society based on them being socialised into the biradari system. The curiosity to examine the lives of Pakistani students in Estonia provoked me to ask how Pakistani students experience the differences and similarities between two cultures while living in Estonia: how Pakistani students are experiencing the absence of social status and hierarchic relationships, which a biradari provides them with back in Pakistan.

Novelty and Relevance

I want to note that when I started working on this topic, I was determined to locate those aspects, which earlier researchers had ignored due to laying excessive emphasis on the broader spectrum of political culture in the province of Punjab. A few significant and eloquent works on this topic revolve around voting behaviour, political parties, their nature, the political culture of Punjab province, etc. Thus the extensive study *Biradarism: Caste Politics* (Ahmed M. , 2012) by the Pakistani political scientist Mughees Ahmed focuses on the electoral process, the historical background of castes, and definitions of concepts related to the caste system. However, he misses the point of why a member of a biradari feels compelled to follow the larger group. His research revolves around the biradari as a whole, and the individual is not visible. My work acts as a bridge between biradari and individuals to make their relationship visible.

Similarly, Abid Ghafoor Choudhary, an anthropologist, has exhaustively worked on biradari's function and role in the social system. He recently collaborated with Aftab Ahmad on biradari's function and significance, collecting data from both males and females. They conclude that

alongside the males, females also consider biradari an influential factor in the political culture of the province of Punjab. Their work was conducted in one district of the Punjab province and mainly focused on the function of biradari in social structure and political culture (Choudhary & Ahmed, 2014).

The present work, however, includes more comprehensive opinions from different parts of the province. Similarly, a variety of aspects related to honour, prestige, reasoning, and rationale behind the emotional linkage are included in my work along with questions about its impact on personal preferences when it comes to the electoral process. Thus, the novelty of my work lies in the fact that it investigates the relationships of biradaris, the nature of alliances, factors that change voters' behaviours, and obligations for their allegiance.

Besides, the idea to learn about the Pakistani students living in Estonia was enthralling and is new in Estonian context. The majority of Pakistani students in Estonia could be described as newly-arrived immigrants who have lived here for less than five years (Lõimuv Eesti, 2020, p. 17). Currently, there are around 150 Pakistani students in Estonia (Statistics: Over 5,500 foreign students study in Estonia, 2020). Ethnographic research on this group is virtually non-existent.

This MA thesis is based on first-hand data that I collected through interviews with Pakistani students in Estonia. A questionnaire was developed and used to conduct interviews in Urdu and Punjabi languages. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, while Punjabi is a regional language. Later, the interviews were carefully transcribed, translated from Urdu/Punjabi to English. I conducted 20 interviews with the Pakistani students and average duration of an interview is 35 minutes, which makes approximately 12 hours of data. The terms used during the interviews were interpreted on mutual agreements (personal and interviewee's understanding). Coming from Punjabi society myself, I was able to draw on my own experiences of being socialised into a biradari and, moreover, encountering the Estonian society. Consequently, to a degree, this work is also autoethnographic (Adams, Ellis, & Holman Jones, 2015). In addition, this Master's thesis introduces the political culture of province Punjab to the broader Estonian readership.

The structure of the thesis

I have divided this Master's Thesis into five chapters. In Chapter One, I discuss biradari, kinship orientation, social groups, and of voting behaviour in the Pakistani province of Punjab. This chapter also elaborates on theoretical considerations, methodological approaches, and research questions, besides reviewing some of the relevant studies.

In Chapter Two, I provide a brief overview of the data collection process, and of the interview guide, which can be found in the appendix. Also, ethical issues and the rationale behind the structure of the interviews are part of this chapter.

In Chapter Three, I outline the different aspects of biradari through the field data. This chapter has separate sections that describe the emic perspectives collected through the fieldwork. In this chapter, I also try to capture the ongoing gradual shift in the attitudes and behaviours of the members of the Punjabi society, where certain values and norms related to the kinship system and social configuration are changing. The main ideas I highlight in this chapter are the preferences and support for political parties, connection with one's biradari, pride/honour, life with/without biradari, and marriage preferences.

Chapter Four describes the crafting of alliances between biradaris. I present the patterns of alliances and vested interests, which stimulate members of a biradari. Moreover, I elaborate on mutual relationships, treating each other based on the social positions and principles necessary to stand united during the elections. Similarly, women's role, representation, and participation in the electoral campaigns, the role of biradari in local body elections (union council) are among the significant perspectives that are part of the discussion in this chapter. I have chosen different parameters of alliances, interests, participation, representations, and roles to understand these dynamics of politics in Punjab.

In Chapter Five, I seek to understand the life of Pakistani students living in Estonia, drawing attention to different variables, including how Pakistani students view pride, prestige, and honour while living in Estonia. Subsequently, the impact of biradarism on their lives in Estonia is part of this chapter. Similarly, in what ways do they assimilate into Estonian culture and differentiate between two cultures. Also, living in Estonia as a minority is another aspect discussed in detail in this chapter.

CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE BIRADARI

1.1 Biradarism and Its Structure

Pakistan comprises four provinces – Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) – and the federally administered Islamabad capital territory. These provinces are administrative units that play a role in the country’s governance. Provinces have their legislative assemblies and elected members. The Chief Minister is the leader of the legislative assembly. The main functions of the provinces are the making of laws and their execution at the district level. Health, education, and development sectors are the main areas of their governance. However, the federal government has the authority to interfere without affecting the autonomy of the provincial governance structure. Additionally, there are two other autonomous territories under the administration of Pakistan. These territories are Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu, and Kashmir (AJK).

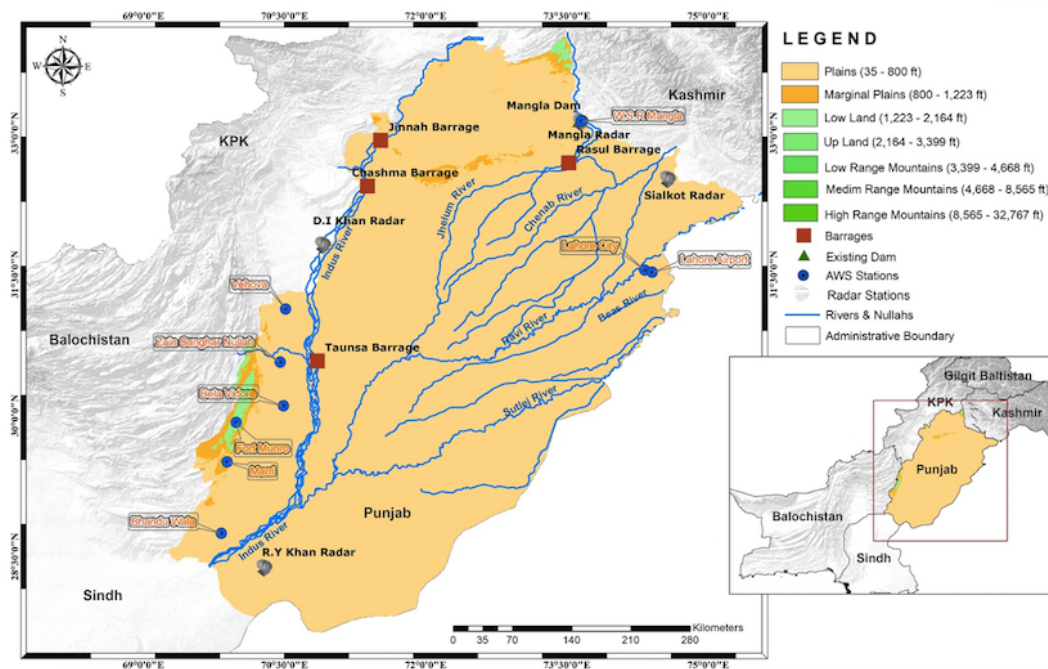


Figure 1: Map of Punjab (FAWS, 2015)

There are several castes within the social structure of the Punjab province. To understand this social structure in a broader sense, here are some basic ideas and understandings about the caste system and biradari. Abid Ghafoor Chaudhry and Aftab Ahmad explain that the word biradari

originates from the Persian word *baradar* meaning “Brother” (Choudhary & Ahmed, 2014, p. 1863). Similarly of relevance in the complex cultural structure of Punjab is *Quam*, which is generally used in the sense of brotherhood and caste and is said to have the “strongest binding force to establish the group alliances” in the province of Punjab (Chaudhry, 2013, p. 154). According to a 1972 article by the renowned Pakistani sociologist Hamza Alavi, “as a descent group, biradari includes all those whom actual links of common descent somebody can trace in the paternal line” (Alavi, 1972, p. 2). As such, it is the most considerable kinship system in Punjab province. Scholars have found the biradari system to be an influential factor in decision-making in Pakistan in general and Punjab in particular. There could be many biradaris residing in different places in one caste, but they support each other with their collaborations regardless of their geographical distant location.

There are two basic ways to trace and understand the structure of biradari in the province of Punjab. Biradaris have two sides: the horizontal fraternal line and the vertical line. The horizontal side of the biradari is defined as interconnectedness, interdependence, relationships, exchanges, rules, and norms. On the contrary, the vertical is related to the lineage of a biradari, which Alavi calls the patrilineage, referring to the common male ancestor (Alavi, 1972, p. 2). This lineage or genealogical depth extends to four or five generations (Ibid.). The residential structure of the biradari is also essential in terms of the depth of the relationships. More often, a biradari lives in a single village, and their relationships, norms, and values are more robust than of those segments of the same biradari living at a different place. The depth (vertical line) of the relationship has a secondary value. The primary value is the sense of belonging, and this intuitive feeling does not allow the distant location of the members to create any flaw or weakness between them. The social relationships and the establishment of these relationships are based on marriages. The biradaris are endogamous, and their members marry within their biradari. Marrying a person who belongs to a different biradari is strictly not allowed. Exchange marriages are common in a biradari and serve to keep their members closely linked, and these relationships ensure their vested interests and social bonding. Therefore, the exchange of women is commonly practiced throughout the province within biradaris, known as *Watta Satta* (this term means exchanging the women). According to Alavi, this constitutes the matrix of relations (Alvi, 2001, p. 49). Women can also be exchanged between biradaris and clans. There is no restriction on these marriages from the respective biradari, yet, marriages out of the biradari are generally discouraged.

In connecting and holding biradaris together, besides the matrix of relations, customary laws of a biradari play an important role. Within the framework of customary laws, there are several methods for resolving issues through an unanimous decision made by seniors who hold the top position. One good example of this is the Panchayet system: a board of five to ten men (generally those aged 50 years or more, but there is no age restriction) selected by male members of a biradari through consensus. These men hold meetings to resolve internal issues and disputes concerning, for example, land disputes and inheritance-related issues among the members of biradari. Females do not participate in this process.

Similarly, there are a number of rituals the aim of which is to establish the membership of a biradari. Participation in marriage ceremonies, death rituals, and other gatherings has a significant role. According to Hamza Alavi, the concept of *Vartan Bhanji* is an important tradition, where at the time of the marriage ceremony, families bring sweets and other traditional dishes (Alavi, 1972, p. 8). The *Vartan* means “dealing,” and *bhanji* means “sweet.” A member of the biradari gives gifts (sweets, money, goods) to the other member of their biradari at marriage or death ceremony. When this member, who is giving this gift, has a similar ceremony, s/he will also receive gifts and the value of the gift will be either equal to the initial gift or exceed it. For instance, I give 2 kg of sugar at a marriage ceremony, I will receive more than 2 kg or at least the value of actual gift which I gave them. According to Aftab Nasir and Katja Mielke, the primary function of *Vartan bhanji* is “the obligation to reciprocation.” They further explain that reciprocation means “the mutual obligation and rights towards services rendered in an exchange between groups and individual(s)” (Nasir & Mielke, 2015, p. 5).

Prestige and honour are conveyed in numerous ways in Punjabi society. Social relationships and landholding are the basic yardsticks to measure one’s honour and prestige in the society and one of the bedrocks of biradari. Speaking of prestige, the landlords who have a poor relative in their biradari have authoritative standings and celebrate their authority by making decisions related to the affairs of a biradari. Since they are rich in terms of land, their social status is also higher, and, in this way, their opinion is considered essential. Engaging these landlords in personal matters (generally finding a marriage match, resolving family issues), the poor relatives feel obliged and express their excitement in public spheres that they have strong ties with their landlord (who is their relative but economically, he is strong). Decisions made by landlords are not limited to personal issues and affairs, but include inter-biradari and intra-biradari political negotiations over supporting a given political party or a particular candidate.

The value of the individual and the value of the social unit is measured according to the individual's status, whether it is ascribed or achieved. India and Pakistan share common values in many ways. The caste system is one of the shared phenomena. However, the exercise of the phenomena varies. The caste system of Pakistani society has the same abstract idea, yet, it differs from the Indian caste system because the four castes in Hindu tradition are based on religious ideology. According to the Indian sociologist Yogesh Atal (Atal, 1967, p. 20), "Hindu society in India is highly caste-structured." In this system, members of other religious groups are also treated as "caste," which makes it understandable that the notion of hierarchy in Hindu tradition sees the "others" as lesser or inferior. Unlike the Indian caste system, where religion is the fundamental source of the ideology behind the social hierarchy, the caste system in Punjab province in Pakistan is based on fraternity. Anjum Alvi describes that "In a society with individualistic ideologies, the members are defined by their relation to that society. On the contrary, in societies with holistic ideologies, the members are defined with respect to that society" (Alvi, 2001, p. 46). Thus, it could be argued that Punjabi society is based on such a holistic ideology.

Nonetheless, with the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, a lot has changed, and a new shift in relationships can be observed in the kinship system. Referring to the works I have cited above would help find the missing links that have emerged over time and between their works. Historically, as Javid (Javid, 2011, p. 345) states, control over lands and kinship ties of biradaris formed the political mobilization in Punjab. These biradaris were the primary instruments in power and rule. Biradaris use their economic power and social status to undertake decisions related to politics and their interests. Since a biradari belongs to a particular caste, the notion of hierarchy and the sense of identity matter. According to Dipankar Gupta, "we find competitive assertions of caste identity" because caste order is characterised by notions of hierarchy (Gupta, 2005, p. 411). In the next section, based on the theoretical framework, I will seek to connect and find this relationship of biradari and politics through the behavioural approach.

1.2 Theoretical Considerations

Especially at its early stages, the current research work was greatly inspired by the behavioural approach, which is why I present a brief explanation of the historical development of this approach, its application in different fields, and discuss its relevance in the context of this thesis.

If we look into the historical development of behaviourism in various disciplines, it appears that political thinkers have adopted the behavioural approach to analyse political phenomena. According to Robert A. Dahl (1961), this approach emerged as a “political behavioural approach” and was first referred to by a journalist to define “the newspaperman behaviour”. Robert A. Dahl explains that a newspaperman reports the way things really happen instead of reporting the way in which they are supposed to happen. According to Dahl, in the 1930s European academics brought sociological approaches to politics when they arrived in American universities to occupy positions at sociology and political science schools. The behavioural approach was considered narrow compared to Weber, Marx, Freud, and Durkheim, who analysed human behaviour. Many fellow anthropologists and sociologists debunked the narrowness of this approach; however, it started making its way to social sciences (Dahl, 1961, p. 764). After WWII, political scientists were provoked to describe the realities, while sociologists were more interested in predicting (Ibid). In the 1930s, the beginning era of this approach, the behavioural approach focused on the ability of the groups, but later in the 1960’s it shifted its focus to the individual (the voter) to bargain for the anticipated activities in the field of politics.

Behaviourism is ridden with many challenges. The Indian political scientist George T. Hoakip (2021, p. 4) points out that it “set itself against ‘mere’ descriptions, raw (barefoot) empiricism”, meaning that it is theory driven. One popular criticism of this approach argued that human behaviour is fruitless and problematic as an object of study. All aspects of human behaviour cannot be observed and, especially, that behaviouralism makes political science dependent on other social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology. It was criticized for its “mad craze” for scientism; however, since its emergence, it has remained an effective method for examining political issues and acquiring empirical knowledge from politics (Hoakip, 2021, p. 4). According to Indian academicians S. Chakravorty and D. P. Sharma, behavioural approach enabled political science to bring human behaviour into the discipline and predict political

events based on individuals' behaviour (Chakravorty, Sharma, & Konwer, 2011, p. 33). An article by H. Sharma provides an overview of criticisms directed towards the behavioural approach from different perspectives. Quoting Christian Bay, he describes that behavioural approach was evaluated as Pseudo-politics and discusses Bay's distinction between politics and pseudo-politics. Politics is the activity which aims to improve or project the conditions to meet the human needs", while pseudo-politics is "the activity resembled politics but concerned with the private interest group without no adequate conception of what is fair and just. H. Sharma further refers to the German political scientist Arnold Brecht who in his book *Political Theory* (1959) outlined the value aspect, stressing that the value of something can be understood by correlating it with the purposes and goals (Sharma, 2019).

The behavioural approach tends to focus on understanding the behaviour, individual actions, and the reasons of the social groups for cooperation and can be thus used to analyse the political behaviour of social groups. The behaviourists assume that we cannot see what is happening inside the human brain or we cannot read the mind, but at least we can see how individuals act and behave in a social milieu (Bustamante, Howe-Tennant, & Ramo, 1996). Also worth mentioning is the renown political scientist and politician Samuel J. Eldersveld, whose 1951 article "Theory and Method in voting behaviour research" is significant in the context of my research. His work is based on analysis of methodological relationship between theory and voting behaviour research. He proposes that "(t)he family, the group, the social and economic class of the voter, as well as the individual's perceptions or motivations or his value system or his integration into the community, all these have appeared on the scene recently as possible determinants of voting behaviour" (Eldersveld, 1951, p. 73).

Ikedinachi Ayodele Power Wogu argues in his article "Behaviouralism as an approach to contemporary political analysis: an appraisal": "the new psychology tells us that Man is not a rational creature and his political actions are not guided by the reasons and self-interests" (Wogu, 2013, p. 3). For Ikedinachi Ayodele Power Wogu, behavioural approach is a method of analysis and he discusses that it produces empirical knowledge without relying on the theoretical parts of the proposed theory. The observation of individual and group behaviours adds new information to the analysis of political phenomena. Aimed at explaining and understanding the behaviour of social groups, their political intentions as well as complex structures of kinship systems, behaviourism is a relevant approach for studying biradarism.

There are numerous other concepts of social control/orders, which deal with individual and group behaviour. Pressure groups and social control elaborate on how and in what ways members of the society influence each other. According to P.W Facey, each individual and person pressures the other person and vice versa. He suggests that groups endeavour to control others (Facey, 1945, p. 230). In the context of this thesis, the relationships between social groups (*biradaris*) and political parties are bilateral. Another classic work worth mentioning here is Arthur F. Bentley's *The Process of Government* (1908), developed to analyse group interests. He believed that group interests are the primary dictators for government decisions. His work was also cherished by using natural scientific methods in social sciences. R. E. Dowling draws a parallel between Bentley and Newton, relating Bentley's historical work on the behavioural approach with Newtonian physics laws to understand the behaviour of social groups. More particularly, Dowling relates physicists' concepts of body, equilibrium, and force with Bentley's concept of groups/individuals pressing each other for their intended interests (Dowling, 1960, p. 944).

The relevance of the behavioural approach in contemporary studies is questionable. This approach has travelled through more than a century, and why still it fits adequately? From the 1950s to contemporary times, political scientists urged to find ways to ensure democratic governments across the globe. Deepika Gahatraj, an Indian academician, in her article on behaviouralism argues that Geoffrey K. Robert gave a proper definition of this approach. According to her, "(p)olitical behaviour, as an area of study within political science, is concerned with those aspects of human behaviour that take place within a state or other political community, for political purposes or with political motivation" (Gahatraj, p. 2). Nitisha argues that what keeps this approach relevant to present time is its tendency to collect data from individuals and to carry out a careful analysis of the facts (Nitisha)

For the purpose of this thesis, to link behavioural approach with my research aimed at understanding the relationships between biradari and politics, I formulated some sample questions as yardsticks to measure the respondents' preferences regarding supporting a particular candidate. I created some variables like power, honour, prestige and interdependence to produce empirical data. The behavioural approach finds an appropriate explanation for the choices someone makes during the elections and in other affairs. The behavioural approach could facilitate a better understanding of this phenomenon.

1.3 Review of the relevant literature

Caste, a driving force in the politics of the Indian Subcontinent, played a vital role in shaping the course of colonial rule and vice versa. There have been many assertions in caste system studies that explain, explore, and dig out this system. A few recent studies include “Some Theoretical Considerations on Caste” by Madhusudan Subedi (Subedi, 2013), *Caste and Biradarism* by Devi Prasad (Prasad, 2014), and “Caste: Understanding the Nuances from Ambedkar’s Expositions” by Anup Hiwrale (Hiwrale, 2020). All these studies share the theme of caste and explore its impact on socio-political phenomena. In a brief historical overview of the caste system in Indian society and overall political structure, Georges Kristoffel Lieten states that the caste system shapes social stratification and can be traced back to five to ten centuries BC. Quoting Marx, he explains that the kinship system produces relationships and influences political ideologies (Lieten, 1979, pp. 314,315).

Divya Vaid explains that the word caste originated from the Portuguese word “casta,” which means race or breed. In the Indian context it has two meanings: caste as varna and caste as a jati (Vaid, 2014, p. 393). The word *Jati (Zat/quom)* is synonymous with biradari, and it has similar meanings. Ahmed Usman, who is an associate professor of sociology at the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies at Punjab University, describes the usage of these terms, saying that “biradari is a contested term conceptually that has been used differently in different contexts. Some studies suggest that the terms biradari, zat and quom can be used interchangeably” (Usman, 2016, p. 608). However, the main objective of this research is to study the impact of biradari in the politics of Province Punjab. In this regard, it would be essential to integrate some points from Mughees Ahmed’s, a political scientist, scholarly work “Voting Behaviour in rural and urban areas of Punjab”. He explains the political alignments in Punjab and the strengths of this system, arguing that the people living in rural areas are connected through the biradaris and see the world in terms of tribes and clans (Ahmed D. M., 2012). The relationships are determined based on endogamy and interdependence. Ahmed infers that the results of elections and political activities are dependent on these relationships between the biradaris (Ibid.). Ahmed’s work can be criticized on the following two questions. First, his work is centred around one district (Faisalabad), which prompted me to include representatives of other districts of the province in my work to observe the changing political culture and behaviour. Second, since my work also revolves around biradarism, the time period of my work and his work is quite essential in this context. Ahmed’s study was conducted in

2012 and I started working on my thesis in 2019/20. During this time period, two democratic governments changed, and a new political party became popular, supported by youth in particular, and successfully formed the government. Therefore, this decade has left a significant mark on the political culture.

Another political scientist Michael G. Roskin states that social class along with ethnic identity, regional affiliations, and many other factors has a profound impact on the behaviour of voters (Roskin, 1998, p. 49). The voters see the kinship system as a binding force not only for the social configuration but also for the political dynamics in the region of the Indian subcontinent in general and the province of Punjab in particular. Overall, studies related to the caste system and the biradari system provide an overview of the inherent force and impact of this system on society and the political system.

A Sociologist, Haris Gazdar, explains the dynamic nature of Pakistani society in his research on social oppression in Pakistan. He states that the analysis of public dealings and political activities is based on the very idea of Biradari, *Zaat*, or *Quom*. He argues that Pakistanis, apparently, are obsessed with patriarchy and ingrained prejudices against women, but they also tend to practice collective action and solidarity based on kinship ties and relationships (Gazdar, 2007, p. 87). Biradari system also operates in the political system of province Punjab as a political culture. It does so by providing specific attitudes and sentiments to control and govern the behaviour of the members participating in political activities—assuming that the biradari system, despite its socio-cultural ideology, works as an institution like other political, economic, religious institutes. Saifullah Khan, a scholar in the field of International Relations, establishes that every state has its specific political environment, which shapes and affects political activities in a certain way. He claims that historians and social scientists call the political culture an approach or sometimes a theory (Khan, pp. 5,6), and it could be argued that the biradari system, too, has also worked as a theory of sorts throughout the Indian-subcontinent's political history. For instance, as Saifullah Khan also describes, the British colonizers controlled the Indian rural and urban masses through biradaris/castes for political gains. District and subdistrict administrations were made based on biradaris where landowners contested elections (Khan, pp. 7,8).

While discussing the Indo-Pak partition and the dynamics of politics, David Gilmartin, in his article “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative,” also refers to

local identities based on the caste/biradari. He says that local identities remained in the focus of the Muslim League, a political party representing the Muslims. He describes how the social structure of Sindh and Punjab changed the course of political activities during the independence movement by getting rid of foreign powers and focusing more on the rights of ethnic groups (Gilmartin D. , 1998). Another piece of research by David Gilmartin on kinship solidarity and kinship ties sheds light on the characteristics of the biradari and its place in the society of Punjab, not only in Pakistan but also in India. He explains the reciprocal relationships, working boundaries, and patterns of exchanges that make the bonds strong and keep them united. Unlike other social institutions, backed by an ideology, he calls this model or pattern “ideology of solidarity”, which is based on marriage connections, descent, and bonds of reciprocal obligations. He incorporates the ideas of *vartan bhanji*, marriages and landlords, discussed in subchapter 1.1, and marks that the working boundaries of biradaris and the emergence of leaders depend on these reciprocal obligations (Gilmartin D. , 1994, pp. 2,3).

In the light of this scholarly work, this Master’s thesis aims to evaluate and redefine the “ideology of solidarity” in the settings of Pakistani Punjab. After many decades, the local political networks still work under biradari bonds and alliances. However, following the British departure, the forms of the role of biradari changed markedly in Punjab (Gilmartin, 1994, pp. 22, Ibid.). I will examine the responses of Punjabi students living in Estonia, their experiences of biradari affiliations and interpretations of the sense of belonging, and the understandings of the political culture drawing on the studies reviewed and discussed in this section.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALIZING FIELDWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Interview Guide and Fieldwork

This thesis revolves around multiple questions, such as: what is the impact of biradari system on the political culture of Punjab province? How does it respond to the political interests and the social statuses in the multitude of diverse social identities? The answers to these research questions come from first-hand interactions with the Pakistani students living in Estonia but coming originally from different parts of the Punjab province.

The interviews were conducted with Pakistani students living in two major cities, Tallinn and Tartu. All respondents were males and fell in the 25-32 years of age group. I approached them through mutual contacts. To reach out to Pakistani students residing in Tartu city, I consulted my close friends and they helped me to establish contacts. Regarding students living in Tallinn city, I used the Facebook page “Study & Life in Estonia (For Pakistanis)”, which has more than 16 thousand members as of January 2022. However, a large number of the group members is those who joined this group to collect information and planning to pursue their studies in coming years or have completed studies and moved to somewhere else. Similarly, there is considerable number of Estonians, Bengalis and Indians who joined this group to exchange information and expand their friend zone. Thus, I had already some information about Pakistani students in Tallinn through mutual friends and on the basis of this information, I reached out to these students through Facebook messenger. I then shortlisted those students who only come from the Punjab Province of Pakistan to avoid persons from other provinces like Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. I also approached female students; however, they refused to participate for personal reasons.

The respondents had been living in Estonia from six months to five years. The longest interview was one hour and ten minutes, and the shortest was twenty-one minutes. The average duration of an interview was roughly 35 minutes. I started my data collection process in December 2020 and finished in March 2021. Urdu is Pakistan’s national language, and it is also a co-official

language along with English. However, Punjabi is a regional language and widely spoken across the country. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in two languages, Punjabi and Urdu, and later I translated these interviews into English. The rationale behind choosing these languages was to avoid language barriers and to ensure that respondents would feel comfortable because conversing in a foreign language could cause difficulties explaining some scenarios and phenomena that call for local, emic terms and vocabulary. There are 20 interviews altogether and interviewees belong to various biradaris. Interviews with the students living in Tallinn were conducted via zoom/skype. I met in person with the students residing in Tartu, and interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings.

As part of preparing for the interviews, I developed an interview guide (see Appendix), which is built around four different themes. The first theme aimed at developing a rapport, while including also precursory questions about political interests and basic understanding of the biradari/caste system. In the second theme, the centre of attention was the role of biradari in politics, and the third theme explored the life of Pakistanis living in Estonia. The fourth theme is dedicated to the behavioural approach, aiming to measure the preferences of interviewees through the variables of power, prestige, honour and interdependence.

One of the precursory questions asks which political party does the interviewee's biradari support. This question aims to understand the preferences of a biradari and its relationship with the political culture. On a similar theme, another important question is related to the sense of belonging to a particular biradari/caste of its member/individual. In this theme, I also aim to explore and dig out the understandings of the member of a biradari about pride and prestige; there is a question which aims to find out the sense of connectivity which helps to shape or form honour, prestige, and pride while being a member of a sub-category of/or biradari. The questions regarding the endogamous nature of biradari help to open a debate about inter- and intra-caste marriages, their purpose, and importance, and the participants of this research are expected to narrate their understandings related to this theme.

Subsequently, in the second theme or set of questions, the focus shifts to the role of biradari in local politics while also discussing the influences and attitudes towards opposite biradari/caste groups. In this theme, I aim to explore inter- and intra-biradari alliances based on the participant's personal experiences; also the significance of these alliances and their impact on political activities. For instance, why do biradaris join hands to support a candidate, even if this

candidate is from a different biradari/caste? Similarly, the principles which are followed by the biradaris for their unity or points of differences are also part of this theme, helping to unveil the role of biradaris in the politics of Punjab province.

The third theme, which is about the students currently residing in Estonia, aims to map some of the general understandings related to prestige and pride while living in a different social setup. This theme aims to correlate Pakistan's and Estonia's two different social configurations and their impact on behaviour. This theme includes questions related to perceived differences between Punjabi society and Estonian society and the compatibility of a person coming from a very different social configuration. For instance, a very significant question of this theme is: what is the impact of *biradarism* among Pakistanis living in Estonia?

Last but not least, in the fourth theme, there are a few questions related to the behavioural approach adopted for this research in order to explore voting behaviour and their preferences. For instance, a very significant question aims to distinguish between different biradaris' differing notions of power/prestige of, asking what is power and prestige according to the norms and values of any given baradari? My assumption was that this question would bring different but possibly similar responses. Similarly, I was interested in how biradaris deal with each other. This question would help to construct the ideational boundary of political activities. My further assumption was that all the corresponding questions followed by adequate and necessary probing would assist in understanding the phenomena of baradari in the Pakistani province of Punjab.

2.1.1 Rationale of the Questions

The precursory questions gave the respondent and me a smooth start, which along with our shared background helped to develop a strong rapport and to build the respondent's understanding of the research. From there, it took us both to forthcoming themes. The questions about behavioural approach were used to measure the inclination of one's attitude towards certain events/scenarios. For instance, I asked a question about alienation from a biradari in the precursory theme, and I got a response. Then I asked this question in the context of elections, and I got a rather opposite response compared to the earlier answer. I used this strategy to avoid short answers and to make the interview even more interactive. Furthermore, it provided me an opportunity to ask about these two opposite responses from the same person. Subsequently,

the interview guide focused on the emic perspective, seeking to find out the personal and direct experiences of the members of these biradaris.

2.1.2 Ethical Issues

Considering the ethical issues, it was carefully noticed that no one could be quoted in analysis without their prior consent of inclusion/seclusion. Before starting each interview, I took their permission for participation and recording of the interview. I asked them whether their personal information, i.e., names, city of origin, current city, any scenario narrated in the interview with their names, or any other private details, would be included or not. No personal information, names, or associated cases have been used in the data analysis. To give anonymity and to ensure confidentiality of my research participants, I have assigned a pseudonym to each interviewee when quoting them and analysing their responses in the following chapters.

2.2 Methodology

This research project used in-depth interviewing to create qualitative data to formulate and research problems. Besides conducting interviews, I have organized random discussions with Pakistani students in Estonia who are members of different biradaris. Being a member of a baradari myself, I have drawn on autoethnography to include and situate personal experiences. Similarly, I have taken field notes and interactional recordings (audio) that have assisted the data collection.

This data collection method has revealed the inside view of biradarism and its structure, where participants come from varying biradaris. As the research is primarily concerned with face-to-face interactions rather than close-ended questionnaires or indirect data collection methods, it could be argued that it has employed the *purposive sampling* technique in case of which “you [i.e. the researcher] decide the purpose you want informants (or communities) to serve, and you go out to find some...[T]here is no overall sampling design that tells you how many of each type of informant you need for a study. You take what you can get.” (Bernard, 2006, pp. 189,190). Furthermore, “really in-depth research requires informed informants, not just responsive respondents—that is, people whom you choose on purpose, not randomly (Bernard, 2006, pp. 186,187).” Thus, the kind of informants upon whom this research is based are specialized informants, specifically because this is an inquiry of the people who form a very specialized strata of society.

CHAPTER THREE: ENVISIONING THE KINSHIP

3.1 Kinship beyond the social organization

The anthropologist Doug Jones has described two types of associations and attachments. He names these types as phenotype matching and associational cues. The phenotype matching concerns genetically similar individuals, and the associational cues rely on humans based on their associations. These approaches define relations between humans and their preferences as well. For example, to whom one should be inclined more and what will intrigue them. Here, Jones stresses the mechanism of *kin recognition*, the importance of “be[ing] extra nice to those who resemble you.” He argues furthermore that “humans rely more on their associational cues” (Jones, 2018, pp. 344-345). Doug Jones presents the psychological and cognitive side of human kinship. In this regard, different viewpoints supported associational cues in quite interesting ways during the data collection. Sometimes, interviewees’ perspectives contrasted with this theory, and sometimes they strongly supported this mechanism. Following associational cues, one of my respondents narrated in this way:

I deeply feel connected with my biradari, and there are specific reasons which make me feel this way. Since my childhood, my grandparents and other senior members of our biradari used to propagate the importance of blood relations, interdependence, the sense of belonging, and all other connected ideas with the kinship system. They told us that your survival would be difficult without your lineage and bonding. Stay connected to your kin group, and you will be strong, safe, and dynamic in society. (Interview with Yousaf on 14th December 2020)

The associational cues are tricky, and they keep the members of a particular group to stick together. Similarly, the associational cues act under personal relations/connections to blood relations. For instance, another respondent commented on the need for connection with their social group:

These links (blood relations/lineage) are based on protection, and all cultural relationships prefer this connection. (Interview with Farman on 16th December 2020)

3.1.1 Behavioural Reciprocity

Within the social group, some sort of behavioural reaction compels the group members to act according to the customs of their kin group. These customs are also known as the culture of a family, group (biradari), etc.; members of a particular group try to stick to the norms and customs of their respective group. This culture controls their behaviour, where they reciprocate in similar ways. One of the respondents gave his remarks in the following way:

I come from the Jutt caste. My father was the leading figure in our biradari and was the most influential person in our area. Due to this reason, I feel compelled to keep myself connected with my biradari because my father's social status demands us to stay connected with people. My brothers are bureaucrats, and our family's position is strong in the area, and that's why I feel that my relationship should be friendly with all relatives within our biradari. Now, there is a new shift in relationships about economic benefits. (Interview with Ahsan on 5th February 2021)

Growing out of folkloristic and anthropological curiosity, the field-derived data draws on the varying elements of kinship structure. The behaviour of the members of a biradari comply within certain situations. Referring to this statement, another respondent elaborated this situation in this way:

Many people feel proud about their entitlement with the caste, and they write the title [Malik, Choudhary, etc.] against their names. They indeed feel connected with their caste. I don't write the title of my caste not because it is bad or good; however, I think that it's not the caste that establishes our standards in the society; it's our dealings and interdependent relationships with other people. (Skype interview with Faraz on 3rd January 2021)

To capture the feel for people's connection with their kin-group, I venture the in-depth conversations with the respondents to analyse further the way they think of their connectivity. The responses I got through these conversations were quite pervasive. According to one opinion of connectivity, the respondent described his understandings of the need for reciprocity in this way:

There are specific reasons which I think that people feel the need to be identified in the society through them,
a: Identity,
b: to keep their identity alive through connecting with the vital [upper class] group of people in the society,
c: economic and political interests play a significant role in keeping the people connected in society.

He further explains these three types in the following way:

Let me explain this in another way. First of all, people feel that they need a unique identity in the society which gives them special status in the society. Secondly, they always try to be around people with prestigious status or identity in society. These interests always require staying connected with the broader group. People think that individually you cannot survive in society. For this reason, people feel the need for a group of people where they can feel safe, protected, and connect with respective biradari, is the best way to survive in the society. (Interview with Ahsan on 5th February 2021)

When asked about the shift and associated change in the social status, the respondent narrated:

I think the economic shift has changed the nature of the relationships. Not only in terms of finances but also in some way people feel the need for each other and for this purpose they stay connected through different sources. They exchange women, and marriages become the source of connections. I don't see any other reason. However, to maintain the legacy of their biradari, they are bound to keep themselves connected with their concerned group. (Interview with Jameel on 9th December 2020)

This description of reciprocal behavioural understanding led me to another aspect of honour and pride which I will discuss in the next section.

3.2 Personification of Honour

This section begins with inquiries into honour. While we explore the understandings of honour and pride, a question arises about what do we acquire through this? To answer the question, there are heteronormative understandings that I collected through the interviews. One of the respondents narrated that:

Physical appearance “moustache” is considered the symbol of honour among many biradaris and castes. For instance, “Muchh Nae Te Kuch Nae” [Without the moustache, there is no honour] and “Jutt Di Pehchan Mucch Naal Ae” [A farmer is identified in the society by his moustache], etc. In another example, “Choudhary” used to be a title for a prestigious person in the society who had special duties to resolve the issues or summons the order for particular cases. Now, it has become the symbol of honour, and people address every person with this title, saying, “O Choudhary Sahib” [a way of addressing someone showing respect]. Similarly, at some places, Jewellery also presents some sort of social status of a particular person, directly related to economic well-off. The Pug [turban] is also associated with a prestigious or high status. The head of the family used to wear Pug, but now it has changed. (Interview with Saqib on 6th February 2021)

To maintain one's social status, one is required to comply with the set rules of the respective biradari. This is what Marshal Sahlins calls "mutuality of being." Although this relational aspect of honour is not directly taken from Sahlins' work, it corresponds to behaviour expected from the member of a kin-group, which he has demonstrated in his scholarly work (Sahlins, 2011, pp. 2-3).

Subsequently, another respondent explained the scenario of pride and honour among the members of his biradari in the following way:

Self-projection of our status in society compels us to look differently. In my opinion, certain elements connect us with the biradari and define honour and prestige. Every group member [biradari] tries to present their group as a significant role player and influential in society. So, blood relationships and, at least, the language make us feel proud about our biradari. Like, the norms and values of one's biradari bind the members together and make them think that they are unique. If someone stands against them or violates them, they might be criticized within that group. People regard each other and help all those who belong to the same clan or biradari. (Interview with Rafeeq on 13th February 2021)

In the grid of adoption to the kinship norms, several dominant elements play their role in this process. Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart describe a similar case in their article "Action, Metaphor and Extensions in Kinship", arguing that norms and customary functions of kinship oblige its members to act accordingly to maintain the set rules. Kinship in its social sense can be composed of several elements including the practice of norms, embodiment, emplacement and political solidarity (Strathern & Stewart, 2018, p. 121). Nonetheless, they mainly emphasize the genealogical grid of kinship relationships and the terms of representing kin members' relatedness. Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart intend to bring the actions and metaphors into the main analytical debate to dwell on the significance of these actions and metaphors used by the kin groups. These actions could be related to decision making, analytical capability and representation of a kin group. One's action decides their status within a kin group. For instance, drawing on the kin-groups' actions, another viewpoint might be best suited to this discourse. One of the respondents during the interview responded to the case of honour and pride in this way:

The loyalty and judgmental approach make an impression on the member of a biradari. Then other people in the area decide that such a person is capable of such things. So, overall, decision-making power and analytical capability [wisdom] establish one's honour and prestige in an area. (Interview with Rehmat on 14th February 2021)

In the light of this viewpoint, it becomes easier to say that the actions taken by the members of a biradari are considered an earnest contribution to its social status and impact others. The respondent chose the actions to explain the honour associated with them. When asked further about honour and pride, another viewpoint on a similar note came up:

The idea of honour and pride within a caste or biradari is defined based on biradari and its traditional norms and values. The lineage of that group of people emotionally forces them to maintain their status in society. In my opinion, I would say that the expected behaviour according to the norms of that clan is their honour or pride. Spending their life in a particular way that does not affect the norms of that group is their honour. For instance, an older person in the group decides everything, which is the group's tradition. If someone refuses to accept that decision, they might deviate from that group's norms/biradari, and people would say that they have disgraced their biradari. Their honour and pride have been ruined in the eyes of other biradari. To conclude, I must say that living a life according to specific values is pride and honour. (Interview with Tahir on 16th February 2021)

The actions and symbolism attached to them play a pivotal role in maintaining the social status of the biradari in a particular area. These viewpoints are based on the detailed knowledge of the social life of the respondents who took part in the data collection process. By bringing to bear the views, we can situate the arguments about the social status of honour and pride and its importance for the members of a kin group. The further instances of inspecting these arguments and looking into their usage within a kin-group can also perpetually lead us to another extension of the emic viewpoint regarding honour and pride. Another respondent during the interview called this honour and pride a tool that controls the behaviour of the members of a biradari. He postulated in this manner:

People want to control others through their set rules. Honour and pride are tools for associating things with human behaviour. (Skype interview with Haseeb on 21st February 2021)

The actions portraying social status have symbolic power to affect the collective identity of the kin groups.

3.3. Resituating the Relationships

In this section, I focus on a topic that was overlooked in previous studies on this topic: alienation from one's biradari, and the subsequent behaviour of the members of the biradari towards the one who has become alienated. Thus, I explore a person's survival after being cut

off from the biradari and establishing new relationships. I am drawing on one interview in particular that included an example of a folk singer who belongs to a biradari with higher status in the society. Singing is usually associated with the lower caste called *Meeraasi*. Before coming to this debate, let us first take a look at the respondent's viewpoint:

Alienation is possible these days. If someone is not interested in following castes' norms due to their preferences, they can alienate from their caste. Like, Atta u Allah Esakhelvi was a folk singer, and, in his caste, people disliked this profession. Due to peer pressure, his own family disowned him. It would be difficult for the person who is alienating to survive in the society. (Skype interview with Ahmad on 1st March 2021)

As we can see that if someone is dedicated to their profession, they can alienate and resituate their social standings. Giving the example of Attaullah Khan Esakhelvi, the respondent stresses that alienation is possible in the pursuit of achieving one's life goal.



Figure 2: Attaullah Khan Esakhelvi (Ijaz, 2017)

Meeraasi or doom is a profession that became a caste. The word *Meeraasi* originates from the Arabic word *Meeraas* meaning “heritage”. The keepers of stories, histories, genealogies and poetry in Northern India were called *Meeraasi* (Azhar, 2013). Later, they got connected with the singing profession, and because of their affiliation with lower caste, singing became derogatory in Punjab. Until the beginning of the 21st century, this profession remained disrespectful. For this reason, Attaullah Khan Esakhelvi faced turmoil and, since he loved his profession, he got himself abandoned.

Sidney Joe Jackson, whose doctoral thesis was on alienation of the individual from society, remarks on the objectification of subjective identity. He focuses on the process of identification and alienation to develop a basic framework for understanding the social standings of an individual. He discusses the linkage and merging of an individual with others, which he calls “collateral psychological states.” He describes how the states of attachments, identity, and

psychological traits (cognitive attachments) interact in the process of alienation (Jackson, 1983, pp. 13-14).

Melvin Seeman has drawn attention to the varieties of alienation. He suggests that alienation occurs at different levels in the society where the dominant factors (social class relations, social actions, and interests) are the major determinants of this phenomenon (Seeman, 1975, pp. 92-93). Considering the above-given outline of the alienation process, one of the respondents explained the significance of one's identity in the society and within the kin-group in this way:

He can survive in their society, but it is not possible among their kin-group. One has to be very humble and obedient. Taking a strong stand against one's social group is difficult. Everyone needs a consoling relationship where he can express his viewpoints, and this is why someone needs a connection in society to maintain his identity. (Skype Interview with Aslam on 10th January 2021)

When further probed about the reasons for one's obedience and avoiding the alienation from the kin-group, the respondent said:

If someone alienates for certain reasons, they would still live their lives, but there would be no way back. Even after a certain number of generations, they would be considered traitors, dishonourable and untrustworthy. Their relationship with that group or biradari is not irreparable; even after generations, people would remind them about what their ancestors had done to the biradari. So, I think that is why people avoid going against the values of biradari and stay obedient. (Skype interview with Raheel on 16th January 2021)

Taking into account the aspect of social class relationships, the interviewee expressed his views in the following way:

There are two essential points which I want to mention here. One is related to economic status, and the other is political affiliation. If someone is economically strong and has political affiliations, then he/she can create his/her own identity and doesn't have to follow the larger/broader group of people. Such people can live on their own without following their biradari. However, if the case is the opposite, somehow, they have to be connected with their respective biradari. One's life is based on mutual interests in society, and if someone is economically or politically weak, then survival becomes problematic. Identity is not a free thing, and one has to earn it through reciprocal actions if he/she wants to be part of that group. Alone, they don't have any identity, honour, and pride in society unless they have strong economic status or political affiliation. In a nutshell, survival is interdependent by all means. (Interview with Adnan on 13th March 2021)

The high expectancies from the kin group, the normlessness, and feelings of incompatibility can lead to isolation or self-alienation from the social group. The sense of exclusion, rejection, and social acceptance also stimulates the individual to take a stand for his/her own sake. For instance, an argument brought forward by the respondent while quoting an example of marriage explains this scenario where members can willingly alienate if they feel that their action/interest is unacceptable in society:

There was a man in my village who wanted to marry a girl from another caste. His family didn't accept this and asked him to leave the village. Ultimately, he left the house forever and settled in the city. (Interview with Adnan on 13th March 2021)

The estrangement refers to one's place in the social group, and the member(s) can themselves realize their self-esteem in the social group. These approaches highlight the significance of alienation and the social actions that stimulate the individual's behaviour in society.

3.3.1. Marital Networking: Repositioning the Social Status

Marriages are a critical factor in making alliances for different purposes in the society where females are exchanged to revitalize relationships between families and biradaris. This bilateral exchange shifts the social status of the members of society. Sai Thakur, in his article, "Gender, Kinship and Marriage Practices," explicitly claims that "the structure of the relationships between wife-givers and wife-takers is the entry point to examine the nature of gender relations in caste communities" (Thakur, 2019, p. 2). Regarding a shift in social status, the following viewpoint seems significant here:

Each social group has a power struggle and, almost all marriages are a source of connection with those members who have a higher status within the biradari or intra-biradari. Similarly, marriages also play their role in maintaining the power within a certain group if they cannot change their status through power. Then they try to keep that power through marriages. Secondly, another important fact about the marriages among the biradaris is to feel connected with their group/caste/biradari. Each biradari has certain values, norms and even though a small culture within the biradari exists and marriages are considered the source to keep that culture or values alive. In short, keeping the legacy alive of a particular social group through marriages is also significant. (Skype interview with Raheel on 16th January 2021)

Three main points can be distinguished in Raheel's response. Firstly, he discussed marriages as a means of connecting with other people in a general sense. Secondly, he described the role of marriage as a power craft. Thirdly, he remarked that marriage is considered the sole source of keeping traditional values alive. Regarding this viewpoint, Abha Chauhan's ethnographic

work on kinship principles and the pattern of marriage alliance in India described similar principles and purposes of marriages. However, while analysing the alliances, the author writes that economic conditions, the pursuit of changing one's social status, and creating new connections through marriages are the basic principles of alliances. Creating new alliances with powerful groups in a particular place helps the members of that group secure themselves in society (Chauhan, 2003, p. 74). Also, another work on the phenomenon of relinking through marriages elaborates on the significance of marital relationships. Lilyan A. Brudner and Douglas R. White have explored European villages where alliances and marital linking with the ancestral lines were established through exchanging females. The main argument they give is about the marital relinking meaning alliances between the families through marriages. They try to formulate a series of relationships they term as consanguineal ties. This creates a circuit of connections through marriages (Brudner & White, 1997, p. 164).

However, families can also exchange their women to change their social status and resolve their issues, and this can take place regardless of endogamous or exogamous restrictions. One respondent brought this up during the interview:

Within or outside of a biradari, typically, marriages are the sole source of conflict resolution among the members of a baradari. (Interview with Fakhar 14th March 2021)

On a similar theme, another viewpoint came up during the discussion about the marriage preferences in different biradaris:

Most biradaris prefer to exchange their women for protecting lands and properties. (Interview with Fakhar 14th March 2021)

Conflict suppression and sometimes getting rid of disputes with the help of marriage or what Stephan M. Lyon calls “marital alliances” is not unique to South Asia, especially in the Indian subcontinent. The peace agreements between the parties are made with the help of giving or taking women (sometimes the bilateral exchange of women). Stephen M. Lyon argues in his book *Political Kinship in Pakistan: Descent, Marriage, and Government Stability* that marriages do not eliminate conflicts and disputes; instead, they provide an opportunity to control them or to make them manageable. Whether endogamous or exogamous, marriages are pretty challenging. The correct combination of marriages provides robustness, creates bridges between biradaris, and infuses resilience (Lyon, 2019, pp. 74,77).

The disputes emerging out of land and property, among others, are resolved with the help of exchanging women. While examining the appropriateness of marriages and the inheritance, Stephen M. Lyon explores in his book *Networks and Kinship: Formal Models of Alliance, Descent, and Inheritance in a Pakistani Punjabi Village* attitudes, behaviours, patterns of relationships, obligations, transitions and networking, focusing on the Malik family that had dispute within their family and exchanged their women for resolving the issues related to land. In this case, a marriage successfully eradicated the rift between the members of the *biradari* (Stephen, 2013, p. 49).

Another frequent feature of marriages in Punjab, which I would like to point out, is keeping the bloodline (lineage) pure within *biradari*, or at least, within caste marriages. To keep the bloodline pure, cousin marriages are widely practiced in Punjab. Corresponding to this notion, a respondent stated that:

In our family, we don't practice this trend of "within biradari marriage." However, in my biradari, people strongly believe in this fashion that they should marry within their biradari or at least their caste. It depends on the norms established by a biradari that, in what ways they have told their members that their biradari holds high status in the society, and we shouldn't be mixing with other castes or biradaris. (Interview with Rashid on 20th March 2021)

Though the first and second cousin marriages cannot be regarded as conclusive for the purification of bloodline, these marriages stand at the top. Another similar viewpoint came up, which endorses the above-given description of the cousin marriages:

Cousin marriages avoid property division. Within caste, marriages are also intended to maintain the relationships and purity of blood, the legacy, and the social status of a biradari. (Interview with Rashid on 20th March 2021)

Overall collected through interviews, these viewpoints present the picture of marital networking, and describe the social status in Punjab. The marriage preferences in Punjabi society play a significant role not only in relationships but also this control the behaviour of the members of a *biradari*.

3.4. Remapping the Politics: Preferences and Prospects

In a study on kinship ties, blood relations, and social contract in Somali politics, Jama Mohamed stresses the importance of the social contract that holds things together and is

dependent on kinship ties. The principles of ties discussed by Mohamed seem similar to my case in Punjabi society. Mohamed (2007) explains that members trace themselves from the same ancestral lineage, which binds them to stick to the norms and values of their particular kin group. The other principle is the social contract which, if we assiduously reinterpret, is the informal association with the members of the society (the peer pressure, which binds the members together) (Mohamed, 2007, pp. 226-227).

Pertinent to this research on politics and its relationship with kinship, the following statement corresponds precisely to the notion of “kinship and contract”:

Politics work based on personal relations. However, we follow the political elites in my region, and we are closer to them than our blood relations/kinship-based politics. In my village, Pir/Syeds are the influential figures, and they have control over all political activities due to the large followership of their Mureeds [disciples]. They have influenced the larger population of the area. Nonetheless, personal terms also play their role and cannot be neglected/overlooked in this regard. (Interview with Arsalan on 16th March 2021)

Here, two things are essential to notice. First, in some cases, religious affiliations override kinship ties. *Pir* is a religious/spiritual leader from whom people usually get spiritual guidance, and this has a central position among the Sunni Muslim sect, meaning that kinship ties become secondary. Where these affiliations fail, the second important factor, blood ties, take over and control the behaviour of the kin group members.

The political preferences and the outcome of the decisions made by the members of the biradari never cease to agree on the importance of blood ties. The socio-political viewpoints outlined above, despite their heterogeneity, surmise the political environment in Punjab. Their relationship with biradaris and its promulgation in the Punjabi society is deemed essential to discern them appropriately. For this purpose, the next chapter is solely dedicated to the role of biradari in the local and national politics of Pakistan. The expository contour, which I have outlined, discussed, and described to reach the case's core, would help us move on to the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: DYNAMICS OF BIRADARI POLITICS: FIELD REALITY

4.1 Patterns of Alliances

In Punjabi society, where clanship (biradari) is the key to stimulating and initiating various political actions, alliances are made within the biradari as well as between biradaris. Regarding the alliances, I discussed with respondents: how are intra- and inter-biradari alliances made, and what are the significant factors in this process? As one respondent answered, based on his personal experiences and observations:

All relationships, alliances, and interdependences are the by-product of interests/benefits. However, identity and social status also trigger the social groups to play their role actively in society which shapes different relationships. Since I have been living in the city, alliances typically revolve around economic interests (or development). However, in general, I have observed that the main reason behind the alliances within or intra-biradaris is sending a message to their rivals that we are united, powerful, and influential. To influence their rivals/enemies, these social groups can join their hands regardless of their differences. (Interview with Yousaf on 14th December 2020)

The show of power through politics is common in the rural and urban areas of the Punjab province. There is an interesting relationship between political culture and folklore in this whole process. The folklore produced by this culture is not a new phenomenon; rather, the wisdom and, so to say, ideology associated with this process are quite old. In this context, William Westerman's encyclopaedic entry about political folklore helps to understand the relationship between folklore and politics. He first introduces folklore politics and its impact on people's lives. People use traditional values to control the members of their respective social group and these values and traditions work as power. Secondly, he says that politics becomes the "political belief as folklore," referring to the study of ideology from a belief centred-perspective. He further states that when folklorists use these terms, they refer to the relationship between political life and folk expressions. According to Westerman, American folklorists tend to see political belief as an aspect of folklife (Westerman, 1998, pp. 570-571,574). He emphasizes that most politicians use material culture and folklore as bait to convince people.

Overall, he examines political belief and folklore as an interdependent phenomenon that creates an ideology of certain people regardless of their direct or indirect participation in the political process.

To contextualise Westerman's approaches of political folklore and political belief as folklore, the significance of relationships between biradaris for making alliances cannot be ignored. Regarding the political folk belief behind the making of alliances between biradaris, the following example helps to understand. For instance, among the biradaris, the relationships work as a power to steer the respective clan. If someone representing a clan wins in an election, the whole clan feels proud and expresses that the clan has become influential in that area. The following statement by the interviewee illustrates this perspective:

When a candidate asks for our support during the election, s/he would say, our families have been on good terms for generations, and we both are caretakers of our biradaris' values. Your support would not only help us win the election, but this would also ensure our pride in this area. (Skype interview with Raheel on 16th January 2021)

The dome of alliances provides many other reasons for clan members to offer their support and allegiance to their respective biradari. Adnan Rasool, a journalist, once published an article explaining a development funds' allocations to the Members of National Assembly (MNA) and Provincial Assembly (MPA). He described that the federal government issues funds for the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP). The funds are allocated to different projects like schools, universities, hospitals, skill training institutes, and infrastructure-related activities. These projects are assigned to MNA's and MPA's, aiming to uplift their constituency (Rasool, 2018). Since these projects/initiatives are under MNA's and MPA's, they can be shown working for the betterment of their constituency and the people of their area. Because of these development works, biradaris join their hands for a particular contestant during the election. Dwelling on this perspective, one respondent presented another argument:

Alliances are made based on development work done in the area by the candidate. They see that how they [the pronoun used "they" represents the whole biradari and the candidate who is contesting becomes a "whole] performed during previous times and what was their influence in the area, and this is how they follow or make an alliance with another baradari. (Skype interview with Faraz on 3rd January 2021)

On the same note, another viewpoint appears to be supporting this idea:

The reputation of the clanship and the developmental work done by the candidate originating from that biradari gives the reason for alliances. (Skype interview with Raheel on 16th January 2021)

Given the above focus, two similar viewpoints reflect a new change in the nature of priorities and relationships between the biradaris. Economic well-being has replaced the significance of relations. This also hints that the western political approach, which is based on democracy and the well-being of the people, suggesting that it increasingly shapes the alliances of the political parties. However, Punjabi society is not moving towards the western approach of democracy, and the idea of democracy hardly exists. Mughees Ahmad argues that power and security influence the political system. The provision of power and security to the members of a biradari, which he calls “political socialization,” is also a kind of democracy where biradari attains the central status and subsidizes the political party (Ahmad, 2011, p. 10).

Similarly, the alliances made during elections are not solely based on the development-related work, but include kin ties. A respondent argued that regardless of differences between the members of a biradari, they support and make alliances that are triggered by the relationships:

There is a famous saying about the caste of Cheema and chhatha, “Kha’n nu wakhu wakh, larran nu ikathay” [They have a difference of opinions, but when it comes to protecting their legacy and reputation in the area, they unite]. This unity during the hard times is egoistic behavior towards the status of their concerned caste/baradari. (Interview with Adnan on 13th March 2021)

These local variations of preferences and the priorities related to the alliances give an idea of the phenomenon as a whole. These nuances bring forward the changing trends in the political culture of the province of Punjab among the biradaris.

4.1.1 Dome of Interests and Non-party Elections

This section explores the interests of the clans through political activities. The interests decide how to maintain the honour and pride along with keeping norms and values of their biradari alive through changing their allegiances. The social status in society is maintained in various ways. Concerning this, one respondent presented the following argument:

Union Council¹ elections are baradari-centred. They can kill or die for these elections. Helping someone get bail from a local police station and road/sewerage construction

¹ Union Council is the lowest level of government in Pakistan. Union Councils are also known as “village councils” in rural areas where one Union Council is comprised of one village and the surrounding areas. It is governed by a Nazim (similar to Mayor) who has 13 elected members called “Councillors” who work under Union Nazim (Union councils of Pakistan, 2021). The mayor reports to the civil servant appointed by the state in the district. The main function of the Union Councils is to facilitate in community development and delivery of municipal services through this governing body.

in the village are the vested interests apart from maintaining their social status in the area through creating an influence. (Interview with Adnan on 13th March 2021)

It is a truism that sustaining one's social status in society is a top priority. Viewing interests in this perspective, Shiviah dwells on the behavioural approach, its meanings, and orientation. He refers to the political scientist Graham Wallas' work *Human Nature in Politics* (1908), summarising that a "Political Man is not nearly such a rational animal as he has been thought to be" (Shiviah, 1969, p. 54).

Following the above-given understandings, a new paradigm of interests comes forward. I asked a question to inquire about the factors involved in non-party elections, i.e. elections for local governing bodies, where members of the biradari or *biradari* as a whole stand united. The question "Why *biradari* tends to follow a particular contestant or what are the principles that intrigue the members?" brought this response, among others:

There is only one considerable principle, which members of a biradari or biradari as a whole follow for their unity, is fear of losing their affiliation. Social life is impossible without affiliation with a biradari or the concerned group. This interdependence and sense of affiliation pressurize the whole group to behave according to the expected behaviour. For instance, there is a famous Punjabi proverb, "Apna maray te chhavein suttey" [Blood is thicker than water]. (Interview with Ahsan on 5th February 2021)

This proverb emphasizes the importance of allegiance and unity, specifically during the elections. Relatives care about you even if they kill you, so stand by them through thick and thin. The collective identity comes at the cost of an individual's efforts. These elections provide an opportunity for the *biradaris* to meet their immediate needs, especially development issues in their area. They feel closer to the contesting candidate as compared to the Minister of National Assembly (Ministers are the members of National and Provincial Assembly). The composition of Pakistan's National assembly is as follows:

Composition

EXISTING COMPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN

Province / Area	General Seats	Women Seats	Non-Muslim	Total Seats
Balochistan	14	03		17
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	35	08		43
Punjab	148	35		183
Sindh	61	14		75
Federal Capital	02	-		02
FATA	12	-		12
	-	-	10	10
Total	272	60	10	342

Figure 3: National Assembly (Pakistan, 2021)

The political party who wins most seats in the election, forms the government. The Prime Minister of Pakistan is the leader of the house and enjoys exclusive power. Population-wise, Punjab is the largest province; therefore, it has 183 (53.51%) seats compared to other provinces who have 159 in total. Women can participate in elections and become a member of the National assembly directly without any discrimination. They can freely exercise their right to vote. For the encouragement of women in politics, there are separate reserved seats for women in both assemblies (National and Provincial) of Pakistan. The elections take place after every five years across the country.

The union council elections are not where development-related issues are at the core for the clans. However, it is more of a symbolic power that gets demonstrated during union council elections. The biradaris try to influence other social groups, and, in this way, the struggle for winning the election escalates. Since the mayor of union council is responsible for reporting to the civil servant, there is no direct relationship between union council and national assembly. However, the members of national assembly, who come from their respective region's union council, have considerable influence over the administrative body.

Sian Lazar is an anthropologist who has worked on politics and kinship in the context of Argentinean unions. She uses the term "notion of enlightened self-interest," meaning that a man fulfils self-interests as a result of working for the interests of others. Lazar dwells on political motivation and focuses on the interest-based understandings of politics linked to

capitalism and assumptions of motivation. She stresses that political parties rely on the networks of kin groups. Also, she urges researchers to focus on the cultural elements that are necessary for the solidarity of a particular group. For instance, while analysing language, she asserts that nationalism could not be adequately examined without understanding the significance of the language (Lazar, 2016, pp. 2-3).

4.2 Role of Women

The gender distinction in Punjabi society is visible in the electoral process and daily life. So far as political participation is concerned, women's participation as voters and candidates in Punjab is still a goal to be aspired to. Although women are taking part in political representation and are playing their role to balance it, these numbers are relatively low. During previous national elections, the total number of voters registered for the election was 105 million. Women comprised 46 million or 44% of all the voters (Pakistani women make history as some vote for the first time, 2018). There is huge difference between women's participation in national elections and non-party elections. In the non-party elections, women cast their vote, but are less likely to stand up as a candidate.

During the interviews, a question was raised about women's participation in elections, their role, influence, and visibility in this process. Speaking of their role and active participation, another respondent argued:

In Punjabi society, men's direct interaction with women is [usually] not allowed. Therefore, women participate in the campaign to influence women in the area. They approach women from household to household. Women have the right to vote and participate in the election equally. (Interview with Arsalan on 16th March 2021).

On the contrary, a few more responses collected from the interviewees speak about the marginalization of women and about the constraints they face in society from both sides, from their families and the community. For instance, while explaining the social position of women in Punjab, he further discussed in detail:

Though this seems quite the opposite of my previous statement, the role of women in biradari politics is generally discouraged. Truthfully speaking, women are treated as a commodity in this whole process. For instance, mostly, families exchange their women for making relationships for specific reasons, and politics is also one of those reasons. Although the ratio is low, exchanging women for personal ties, making relationships,

and using them as a commodity is a bitter truth. (Interview with Fakhar 14th March 2021)

Scholars, too, have drawn attention to the marginalization of women in political participation and male politicians' control over the system in Punjab. Jyoti and Durga Rao have pointed out that the patriarchal system of Indian Punjab gives more importance to males as compared to females. In the research findings, the authors present the role of women in politics in the form of different variables like psychological, economic, and social (Jyoti, 2020). One of the respondents shared similar observations:

Women are treated really in a wrong way. They are oppressed and suppressed in the Punjab province. They don't have free will. Nowadays, the trend has changed, and the new generation [girls] are educating themselves, but they are struggling hard to come out of their shells, and breaking the shell is considered a threat to the social organization. Here, families again start oppressing them. Overall, women in Punjab have a long way to go. (Skype Interview with Aslam on 10th January 2021)

The contemporary time is changing the environment for women in Punjab. The increase in their interests related to awareness and education ensures their active participation, at least in years to come. They are coming out of four walls and trying hard to empower themselves. However, it is also evident that patriarchal culture of Punjabi society has a profound impact on women, leaving a mark on their personality. None of the female students I approached agreed to participate in my study. I am relatively sure that it is hard to get rid of submissive attitude, but to learn about this in more detail, the next chapter describes the life of Pakistani students living in Estonia. Their reaction towards a different socio-cultural reality is one of the core parameters of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING THE UNDERSTANDINGS OF PAKISTANI STUDENTS' LIVES

5.1 Conceptualizing the values and value differences

In 2017, in a meeting with Enn Eesmaa, at the time the Vice President of the Estonian Parliament, Yar Muhammad Mughal, the Chairman of the Pakistan-Estonia Association (PEA), said that to strengthen the relationships between two countries, the exchange of highly skilled people is important. Pakistanis residing in Estonia constitute highly skilled and qualified people in Information Technology sector, among others. At that time, 200 Pakistanis were living in Estonia, and most of them were students of Bachelors, Masters, and Ph.D. programs (Shah, 2017). According to statistics from 2020, 149 Pakistani students were enrolled in Estonian universities (Statistics: Over 5,500 foreign students study in Estonia, 2020), and the majority of them were living in Tallinn and Tartu. Yet, the interest in studying in Estonia is increasing. Several possible factors attract Pakistani students, including quality education, professional work environment, and affordable educational expenses. However, getting acquainted with a new culture is not as easy as it looks from a distance.

The process of acculturation is slow and steady. The acculturation model by John Schumann proposes that when individuals from different cultural groups meet, they start learning about the culture they are interacting with. He used various variables, terming them as two categories of “factors”: “social variables” and “affective variables” (Schumann, 1986). The social variables are those involved in the relationship of two social groups. The learning strategies like assimilation, adaptation, and integration are the factors that are part of social variables. On the other hand, the affective variables are language learning, cultural shock, and motivation.

In the light of this description of acculturation, it is pretty interesting to notice that people from other countries learn about the host culture and, to some extent, unlearn their own culture to make room for new information. John Berry’s framework of acculturation (Berry, 2010, p. 473) describes the understanding of members of two cultures about each other, making the links and contacts between them even more visible. In Berry’s viewpoint, acculturation is a

process of cultural and psychological change that results in meeting between cultures (Berry, 2010, Ibid). In defining acculturation, Rina S. Fox et al. comment that Berry's definition “was originally conceptualized as a group phenomenon, as it commonly leads to a shift in social structures and normative practices at macro-level” (Fox, Merz, Solorzano, & Roesch, 2013, p. 270).

According to L.D. Worthy et al., Berry has distinguished between different adaptation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. These seem relevant and valuable in the context of the current work about Pakistani students' lives in Estonia. Berry has defined assimilation as adopting the host or dominant culture's norms and values and thus the host culture. Integration is similar to assimilation, but the only difference is that newcomers hold their original culture together during the assimilation. However, separation entails rejecting the host culture. In this context, Berry introduces the fourth category, marginalization, related to the rejection of both cultures of an individual: the host culture, and the culture of origin in which s/he was born (Worthy, Lavigne, & Romero, 2021, p. 167). Due to the limited scope of a master's thesis, the following discussion focusses on acculturation.

To habituate in a host or dominant cultural setting, an individual acclimatizes through the four categories mentioned earlier. Yet, these four stages are not always present. Adapting to the norms of host culture is not an easy process for an individual of a foreign culture. Therefore, individuals try to correlate their cultural values with those of the host culture. Of vital importance in this process are the cultural values of an individual. A comparative cross-cultural study (Hanel, et al., 2018, p. 2) reveals a considerable similarity between the human values in more than 80 countries involved in the research. People were asked to rate the diverse values that are important as guiding principles in their lives. These groups of values were categorized into ten types: “power, benevolence, tradition, security, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, and conformity.”

Tradition and security were the keywords mentioned by my interlocutors and were at the core of my discussions with the participants. Tradition means that the respondents were deeply concerned about the cultural norms and values while living in Estonia and back in their home country. They also made comparisons with Pakistan when discussing the Estonian social structure. For instance, regarding valuing traditions, one of the respondents expressed his understandings of the Estonian language in its social fabric:

Language has so much power in it, regardless of any particular language. All languages are similar when it comes to their power. It keeps connected the members of that particular society. However, the Estonian language and the love for this language from Estonians is interesting. They strictly prefer speaking their language at every level. The possessive attitude towards their language promises its sustenance, promotion, keeping it alive, and passing it on to the next generation. The language has transformed into the traditional value in Estonian society. (Skype interview with Raheel on 16th January 2021)

To contextualize the values of Pakistani society in the Estonian society, another interviewee brought forward the role of language in Estonian culture during the discussion about how it is binding the Estonian society together. Similarly, the interviewees discussed and tried to compare (at least a little) the two different cultures and their experience of living in Estonia. For instance, when I asked one interviewee about differences between Pakistani and Estonian society, he compared the political culture and the electoral process. While elucidating the electoral process in Estonia, the interviewee replied in the following way:

There are some clusters in Tallinn city where ethnic and linguistic groups tend to support the candidates. Estonians and Russians, based on their language-based identity, support their candidate. Overall, they follow the Party's agenda where along with democracy, the promotion of cultural elements is also essential. In contrast, in Pakistan, especially in Punjab province, the candidates rely on Biradari's support. (Interview with Adnan on 13th March 2021)

Besides this statement, the understanding of gender and its place in Estonian society draws attention towards the topic of gender equality, which is significant for upholding the very foundations of society. Gender equality, its role in nation-building, and picturing its scholarship in the Estonian society are deemed essential for my discussion.

5.1.1 Gender Positioning

While discussing gender equality, females' status, and class difference with respondents, a common response was that "females are more influential, visible and active in Estonian society than males". However, I noticed one thing common in two different viewpoints. One of the respondents said that "Males in Estonia [due to the patriarchal nature] want to control their women and want to see them obedient. They require a submissive attitude from their women". Interestingly, a study by the political scientist Edgar Kaskla about constructing gender roles in Estonia reveals a pretty similar case. According to Kaskla, "In Estonia, nationalism may have played

a vital role in regaining independence from the Soviet Union, but the liberation of a nation did not necessarily liberate women from a society that remains patriarchal” (Kaskla, 2003, p. 298).

In contrast, another interviewee shared his observation that “women might face troubles if they are interacting with foreigners.” This statement was given in the context of honour and pride, observing that Estonian males do not like to have their women interact with foreigners. Nonetheless, the hypothesis of socialization and attitude development discussed by Leeni Hansson reveals that cultural environments change over time, as do attitudes and socialization patterns. The cultural context shapes the behaviours and attitudes towards society (Hansson, 2011, p. 184). Concerning this, one of the respondents states that:

“Estonian women don’t care about other’s [their men] honour. They have self-pride, a social status, and prestige”. (Interview with Ahsan on 5th February 2021)

In my view, these comprehensive viewpoints from the interviewees present a colourful picture of Estonian society where males and females accept the differences and are working together

5.2 Cultural Learning: A perspective of adaptation

The overview on immigrants’ integration by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) discusses immigrants’ social cohesion, among others. The main argument here is not the assessment or comparison of immigrants in different countries; instead, this study highlights how a foreign-born person becomes part of the host country and looks at social acceptance towards foreigners. The report defines integration as the ability of immigrants to achieve same social and economic outcomes as natives (OECD, 2019, p. 17).

Integration is a multi-layered process that faces challenges regarding gender, age, reasons and duration of the stay, etc. When the MA thesis research participants were asked to “discuss their compatibility with Estonian culture or do they feel misfit in Estonian society,” they repeatedly brought the integration aspect forward during the data collection. Though their main motivation was to share their experiences, the majority was interested in comparing the two societies, Pakistan and Estonia. Being a member of a biradari, they focused on their social positioning in Estonian society to analyse how do they feel about living in a different culture, their social cohesion and compatibility with Estonian society.

C.D. Schaefer's and B. Simon's study conducted in Germany on immigrants' opportunities of acculturation and integration reveals that immigrants blend into the host culture. Schaefer and Simon use the term "blended integration" and highlight the immigrants' like-mindedness and affiliated troubles. Here, the term "blended" refers to individuals who see themselves as living in an area of intercultural overlap. The troubles, this article indicates, possibly include that minority groups attempt to increase their worth and try to be seen or want to become visible based on the qualities they hold. If their qualities are not appreciated, they feel discouraged or left behind (Schaefer & Simon, 2017, p. 961). Adapting to the host culture and unconscious resistance towards accepting the change of self-image is thus a significant perspective. Adapting to cuisines, dress patterns, mentality is a difficult process and the authors term this "intercultural conflict" (Schaefer & Simon, 2017, p. 967).

In the case of Pakistani students' life in Estonia, the question "do you feel misfit or incompatible in Estonian society" and the probing brought exciting nuances during the discussion. Due to the non-existence of biradari system in Estonian society, this question was of particular importance. As one of the interviewees replied:

I don't feel misfit in Estonian society as much. We live in a different culture, but it did not change anything so much through which I can feel that I am at the wrong place. Compared with Pakistani culture, I have observed a few things that family values seem similar to some extent. For instance, living in a nuclear family system, people in Estonia still respect the elders and the family structure. The best thing here is people do not judge anyone based on their appearance or personality. (Skype Interview with Aslam on 10th January 2021)

The viewpoints of respondents on the question of compatibility show that they feel integrated in Estonian society. Nonetheless, the language barrier has a profound impact on Pakistani students. Similarly, the cultural preferences also remain topical. While inquiring about the idea of self-identification and cultural background, most of the respondents brought forward the biradarism and the absence of a way of identifying each other based on their biradari. It is prevalent in Pakistan to introduce someone starting with their biradari and caste. However, the participants agreed that they do not do this here while living among Estonians and other international student communities. As one interviewee put it, "first we are Pakistani, then Jutt and Choudhary, etc.". Similarly to this, another observation came into focus:

Just like in Pakistan when someone greets the other person addressing him with the title of his Biradari. For instance, Choudhary, Jutt, Malik, etc., and then that person feels

respect in this gesture. The same happens with the Estonians if you greet them saying, Tere! (Interview with Fakhar 14th March 2021)

Despite this, questioning the minority/majority, the Pakistani students, a minority group, and many other nationalities in Estonian society do not have compatibility issues. During the interviews, one participant expressed his views in the following way:

There is no issue being a minority group here in Estonia. I feel safe, protected, and have equal rights. However, integration is a slow process, and social acceptance in the host culture is time-consuming. Once someone has found its place in a particular society, then the minority-tag slips down and dwindles. (Interview with Arsalan on 16th March 2021)

Adhering to the above statement, another respondent explained being a minority group in different cultures and countries. The respondent added:

When you move from majority to minority, then obviously you feel a severe shock. Within minority groups, there are certain pockets of minority concentration. The province, region, city, area, and language define your status as the minority as well. For instance, if there are 100 Pakistani living in Estonia, I will try to blend in with that group of Pakistanis from my province. It is further divided into groups based on city, area, and language. (Interview with Adnan on 13th March 2021)

The self-identification and the process of adaptation merge, and they might impact the external factors that affect the members of a foreign culture relocating themselves. Though all the themes discussed in this chapter have a link with the central idea of biradarism, to avoid distraction, biradarism was not addressed directly here. Notwithstanding, I implied the conscience of biradarism and then dwelled on the life of students in Estonian culture.

CONCLUSION

This work has demonstrated the various aspects of the biradari system and cultural, historical and political roots that have developed over the centuries on this ancient land of five rivers, Punjab. The main aim of this thesis was to explore the biradari system and its relationship with the political culture of Punjab province. In addition, the life experiences of Pakistani students in Estonia were part of this study. This thesis presented a brief understanding of the biradari system in Punjab province and observed the relationships of this system with political activities. Drawing on interview data generated as part of this research, I have argued throughout this work that biradari works as a significant factor influencing socio-political relationships. In particular, I demonstrated that biradari establishes social hierarchy among its members, which influence the political culture of Punjab province.

Greatly inspired by the behavioural approach, I explored the changing voting behaviours and reciprocity of behaviours among members of biradari. I have explored that the blood ties bind the members of biradari together and act as a collective conscience for achieving intended goals. I looked into the understandings and role of honour and prestige among the members of biradari and in the repositioning of social status. This thesis has shown that social status is established through an individual's relationship with its biradari. This thesis elaborated on the conventional ideas of interests and the role of women in political activities. In doing so, this thesis explores how marital networks act as a bridge between biradaris for the intended socio-political interests.

This thesis shows that kinship ties impact not only the political culture but also the lives of the members of a social group. As a result, the political elites exercise control over individuals and social groups and their political activities. At the same time, this research explores Pakistani students' lives living in Estonia and focuses on the perspectives of adaptation and acculturation. The data revealed that respondents were deeply concerned about cultural norms and values while living in Estonia, comparing them to those in their home country. A comparison by the research participant between Pakistan's and Estonia's two different societies showed that contextualisation of the values of Pakistani society in Estonia bring forward the similarity of

binding force. For instance, language-based identity influences voters in Estonia similarly to blood ties that oblige voters in Punjab to act in particular ways.

Thus, the biradari system has demonstrated the reciprocity of relationships between various socio-political aspects. Due to increasing socio-economic mobility, the concept of the biradari system and its impact on social configuration should be expanded to folkloristics studies.

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Resüme

Käesolev magistritöö „*Biradari* süsteem: valitsev tegur Pandžabi provintsi poliitikas“ uurib hõimusuhteid ja nende seoseid poliitikaga Pakistani Pandžabi provintsis. *Biradari* (pärsiakeelsest sõnast *baradar*, mis tähendab „venda“) moodustavad need, kes põlvnevad isapoolset liini pidi ühistest esivanemetest. Tegemist on Pakistani Pandžabi olulisima sugulussüsteemiga, mis on sajandeid mõjutanud otsustusprotsesse kohalikul ja regionaalsel tasandil ning Pakistanis tervikuna, kuivõrd Pandžabi näol on tegemist 1947. aastal iseseisvunud riigi suurima administratiivse üksusega. Kuulumine *biradari*'sse määrab ära indiviidi staatuse ühiskonnas ning ka *biradari* liikmete ja *biradaride* vahel valitsevad hierarhilised suhted, mis liigendavad ühiskondlikke vahekordi laiemalt.

Magistritöö selgitab *biradari* süsteemi olemust ja sugulussuhete olulisust Pakistani Pandžabi provintsis. Erilise tähelepanu all on *biradaride* roll poliitikas ja valimiskäitumise suunajana ning *biradaride* legitiimsuse allikad: põhjused, mis panevad indiviide ja peresid *biradari* reeglite kohaselt käituma ja kokku hoidma. Samuti uuritakse Pakistani Pandžabi päritolu üliõpilaste kogemusi elust Eestis, kus *biradari* nende seisundit ei määra.

Magistritöö põhineb töö autori 20. intervjuul Pakistani Pandžabi päritolu üliõpilasega, kes õpivad Tallinna ja Tartu kõrgkoolides. Nelja temaatilisse gruppi jagatud intervjuuküsimused käsitlesid vastajate arusaamu *biradarist* ja sellega seotud isiklike kogemusi, *biradaride* rolli kohalikus poliitikas ja üliõpilaste elu Eestis. Intervjueeritavate valikust lähtuvalt viidi intervjuud läbi kas urdu või pandžabi keeles ning tõlgiti litereerimise käigus inglise keelde. Kõik vastajad olid meessoost; naissoost üliõpilased keeldusid uurimistöös osalemast. Intervjueeritavad värvati lumepallimeetodil ja Eestis õppivate Pakistani päritolu üliõpilaste Facebook'i grupi vahendusel. Tegemist on esimese katsega mõtestada Eestis õppivate Pakistani noorte kogemusi. Magistritöö on ka autoetnograafiline, kuivõrd selle autor on Pakistani Pandžabi päritolu, *biradari* süsteemi sotsialiseeritud ning õpib Eestis.

Magistritöö koosneb viiest peatükist. Esimene peatükk tutvustab *biradari* süsteemi ajaloolist ja kultuurilist tausta ning annab ülevaate teemakohastest uurimusest. Teine peatükk tutvustab välitööde protsessi, küsitluskava koostamise aluseid ja uurimistöõ eetilisi lähtekohti. Järgnevad kolm peatükki analüüsivad intervjuuainest. Kolmandas peatükis on fookuses indiviidi ja *biradari* suhted mh läbi au ja uhkuse prisma ning selliste juhtumite läbi, mille puhul isik on oma *biradarist* lahti öelnud või sellest välja heidetud. Vaatluse alla tuleb ka abielude funktsioon *biradaride* jätkusuutlikkuse tagamisel ning grupisiseste ja gruppide vaheliste pingete maandamisel ja konfliktide lahendamisel. Neljas peatükk käsitleb *biradaride* kaudu liitlussuhete loomist ja *biradaride* mõju valimiskäitumisele eriti kohalikel valimistel, kus poliitilised parteid mängivad teisejärgulist rolli. Eraldi alapeatükk on pühendatud naiste seni madalale, kuid kasvavale osalusele Pakistani poliitikas. Viendas peatükis keskendutakse Pakistani Pandžabi üliõpilaste kogemustele ja tähelepanekutele elust Eestis.

Magistritööst koorub välja identiteedi ja kuulumise suhtelisus – sõltumine süsteemidest, mis eelnevad indiviidile, ning samuti kontekstist. Kodumaal *biradari* süsteemi sotsialiseeritud noored leiavad end Eestis uuest olukorrast, kus varasemad staatused ei kehti, kuid moodustavad jätkuvalt olulise taustsüsteemi.

Appendix

Interview Guide

Theme 1: Precursory questions for rapport

1. Which political party do you support personally?
2. Which political party your *Biradari* supports/or did support in the previous election?
3. To which *Biradari* do you belong? How deep do you think you are connected with your *Biradari* and why?
4. In your opinion, what is the difference between caste and *Biradari*?
5. Why do people feel connected with each other through *Biradarism*?
6. How do you describe the pride and honour of a *Biradari*? (ask for examples)
7. How do you define the sense of belonging?
8. What happens if someone alienates himself from a *Biradari*? How his social status is described? Or how he will survive? (why people hesitate to Surrender/submit)
9. Could you please speak a little bit about the marriages among the *Biradaris*? What are their preferences, and why? (why people prefer to marry within their baradari)

Theme 2: Role of *Biradari* in Local Politics

Each question will follow further probing for the appropriate responses and answers without making the responder uncomfortable.

1. How many *Biradaris* are in your village/city, and which one is the most influential and why? How do they treat each other in terms of superiority/inferiority?
2. How inter-*Biradari* and Intra-*Biradari* alliances are made? What are your experiences and observations? And what is the significance of these alliances?
3. Why do *Biradaris* join hands to support a candidate, even if the candidate is from a different *Biradari*/caste?
4. What are the main principles that *Biradaris* follow for their unity?
5. How or what kind of roles do *Biradaris* play in local politics (Union council elections etc.)?

6. What kind of roles do women play in *Biradari* politics? Do they have the right to vote?
7. Do women have any representation?
8. Are there any *Biradaris* or caste where women are influential?
9. How do the males in Punjabi society treat women?

Theme 3: Living in Estonia

1. What is your perception of the sense of prestige, honour and pride among Estonians?
2. How do you see the role of language in Estonian society?
3. Did your concept of pride of honour change after moving to Estonia?
4. Experiences as minority
5. Do you feel misfit or incompatible in Estonian society? (Probing will be followed accordingly to avoid Yes/No response) could you please explain while comparing them?
6. What is the difference between your society and Estonian society? And why?
7. According to your personal experience, what is the impact of *Biradarism* among Pakistanis living in Estonia?

Theme 4: Behavioural Approach; a yardstick to measure the preferences

1. Why is it important to support one's own *Biradari* or caste?
2. When a *Biradari* decides to support another *Biradari* during the elections, what are the reasons behind their support?
3. Who has the decision power in a *Biradari* and why?
4. According to your *Biradari*/caste's norms, what is power/prestige?
5. While deciding the support for a political party/candidate, what are the main considerable points which a *Biradari* follows? (if needed, these points will be explained to the interviewee)
6. How *Biradaris* deal with each other (an extra question)

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