

MAJOR CONSEQUENCES OF THE SECTARIAN MILITANCY IN JHANG, PAKISTAN*

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ABSTRACT

Present research paper is based on the fieldwork conducted in 2005-2006 in Jhang. Present research mainly try to explore the magnitude of sectarian clashes occurred between Shi'as and Deobandis in Jhang starting in early 1979. There are some researchers who consider that early divide between Shi'a and Sunnis paid us with the sectarian clash. The penetration and magnitude of this conflict remained at its peak even in colonial period in Indian Subcontinent. But soon after the creation of Pakistan it was not evident in the case of Pakistan. Further, Jhang faced multifold waves of sectarian militancy during last three decades. It produced peril, disharmony, distrust, fear, killings and subsequent emigration. People lost their livelihoods during this frenzy of sectarianism. Present study on the one hand focuses on the emergence and evolution of the sectarianism in Muslim society while on the other hand it also discusses the major consequences of sectarianism in Jhang during last three decades including: i) disharmony in social structure; ii) disruption in economic structure; iii) emigration; iv) robbery; v) fears in performing religious ceremonies; and vi) target killings.

Keywords: Sectarianism. Major consequences. Socio-economic instability. Target killings

INTRODUCTION

Sectarianism is not limited to the Muslim society alone; we can observe its emergence in the other faiths like, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Present study focuses mainly on two parts of sectarianism. Firstly, we will look into the major reasons for the emergence of sectarianism in Muslim society in Arab world and its expansion over a period of time to the remaining Muslim world, like Indian Subcontinent. Secondly, this research paper tries to explore the major consequences of sectarianism in case of Jhang. It has remained an epicenter of sectarian militancy for the last three decades. This sectarianism has produced, disruption in social structure, caused economic instability, emigration, fear in performance of the religious rituals. Besides drugs, smuggling, robbing, and looting and above all target killings have increased manifolds. Before looking into the emergence of the sectarianism, we will conceptualize sect and sectarianism.

Conceptualizing Sect and Sectarianism

The term sect stands for a small religious or political group that has branched itself off from a larger established group. Sects have many beliefs and practices in common with the religion

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or party that they have broken off from, but are differentiated by a number of doctrinal differences. In contrast, a denomination is a large, well established religious group. According to Sills (1968) the term sect is used in sociology of religion to designate a particular kind of religious group. This usage is more precise and more technical than the usage of word in everyday speech. It is part of a typology of religious grouping which has been found useful in the study of religious movements and bodies. In general the term sectarianism refers to hatred or discrimination within the same group due to certain ideological differences. Sectarianism has meditated upon by the various scholars worldwide. Nasr (2002) defined the of current sectarianism in case of Pakistan, sectarianism is a form of religio-political nationalism and as such, our examination of its root causes are directly identity mobilization and ethnic conflict.... It has metamorphosed form religious schism into political conflict around mobilization of communal identity.

Origin and Development of Sectarianism in Muslim Society

The sectarian clash within the Muslim communities is based on the historic divide set by the partisanship of Hazrat Ali and Hazrat Abu Baker, soon after the death of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Different historians have documented this event of Muslim divide. Since the very beginning, the *Shi'a-Sunni* conflict has been one of the major characteristics of Muslim history. Different factions in Muslim societies have also closely linked it to the struggle for acquisition of political power. Madlung (1997) argued about the origin of sectarianism in Islam, no event in history has divided Islam more profoundly durably than the succession to Muhammad (PBUH). The right to occupy Prophet's place at the head of the Muslim community, after his death, became a question of great religious significance which has separated Sunnites and Shiites till the present day. The issue of right and wrong in the matter has long been settled in their minds.

Sectarian conflicts in the Subcontinent

By the influence of *Ummayeds* and later *Abbasides*, some of the *Shi'as* had moved to distinct parts to Muslim Empire. Sizeable *Shi'a* communities had been established in Punjab and Sindh after the conquest by Muhammad Bin Qasim. Under the early *Abbasids*, the Governor of Jhang, Umer bin Hafas clandestinely supported Fatmid's movement and it was under him that the Batinya influence spread into the areas between Shorkot and Sindh. Later one of the *Shi'a* Branch, Karamat, was able to setup his independent dynasty in Multan. Ali (1999) stated that in Southern India, the Bahmani and Adil Shahi dynasties which ruled for quite some time and acted as bulwark against Marhathas, professed *Shi'a* doctrines. These dynasties were brought under the control of Mughals under Aurangzeb (d.17107) which opened, the way for the rise of Marahattas. Aurangzeb was allegedly hostile to the *Shi'a* dynasties, largely because he considered them heretical. As the *Shi'a* dynasties were receiving support from the Safavides of Iran, who were hostile to the Mughals, he had made an offer of alliance to Bukhara on the principle of Sunni solidarity as the basis of Mughal-Uzbek relations.

Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan

Sectarian conflicts started soon after the emergence of Pakistan, but the major sectarian conflict started in Zia regime. In Pakistan Sunnis, who constitute the majority (80 %) of Muslims in Pakistan and *Shi'as* who have a small but influential minority (20%) are major parties of the sectarian divide. Zahab (2002) quoted about the influence of Zia government

towards the *Shi'a-Sunni* riots, sectarianism is often seen as the consequence of Zia-ul-Haq Islamization policy which meant state monopoly religion and dominance of the particular sect, and which brought theological differences to the fore. Religion without sectarian denomination has little meaning for a common man in Pakistan. In line with the above mentioned state policy to flourish religious identities, many social thinkers have contributed their point of view. It is argued that menace of sectarianism was produced in Pakistan soon after Iranian Revolution, and expedited with Zia's Islamization project. It generally caused disharmony in the area. People emigrated, lost their livelihood and even their lives. According to Ahmar (2008) the sectarian conflict in Pakistan is unique in the sense that it has both internal and external dimensions. For more than a quarter of a century of Pakistan's existence, both *Shi'as* and Sunnis have lived in peace and harmony. There were small frictions between the two communities, yet the level of tolerance was maintained by the two sides. Things however began to take an ugly turn when violence and terrorism was inducted in the sectarian conflict in Pakistan resulting in the deaths and injuries of thousands of people.

Sectarianism in Jhang

Kamran (2009) mentioned regarding the first incident of the sectarian conflict in Jhang. SSP's ability to institutionalise sectarianism in Jhang occurred to a backdrop of increasing Sunni-*Shi'a* tension. We have seen earlier how this was partly rooted in the factional rivalries of elite *Shi'a* families. It also owed much to a series of incidents, the first of which took place in *Hassu Balail*, a village at Bhakkar Road in Shorkot Tehsil in October 1957. The sequel of killing and like incidents made Jhang a place of peril and timidly. The entire development process in Jhang was affected during the crisis period. Religious leaders invoked their followers to demolish the other faction; conflict was started at different levels i.e. *Shia-Sunni*; native-migrant; rural-urban; among other ethnic groups. Migrated people were being targeted by the *Shi'a Jats* and *Rajputs*. *Pirs* lost the grip over rural inhabitants. Political hierarchies changed, and new competitors have come to the scene. Before this wave of sectarianism people were living in harmony, equally participating in one another's religious and cultural ceremonies. Although ideological differences were there but these difference were not highlighted by the local communities. These were the religious leaders who aiming at religio-political leadership fueled sectarian clashes. The formation of sectarian organization in 1980s and early 1990s paid the scenario with sequel of tensions. The riots split out and damaged the entire social, economic and political milieu in Jhang. Zahab (2004) mentioned that, it shows that in the context of Jhang the conflict cannot be explained in religions and ideological terms alone and that it is primarily the result of socio-economic tensions among different classes of society. In the following section, we will discuss major consequences of sectarianism in district Jhang i.e. a) disharmony in social structure; b) disruption of economic organization; c) emigration; d) drugs trafficking, robbing and looting; e) target killing and suicidal attacks; and f) fears to attend the religious ceremonies.

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Disharmony in Social Structure

One of the biggest outcomes of sectarian conflict is social disharmony; persons who were previously living in cohesion were disorientated by sectarian riots. Due to sectarian clashes people were disengaged from their existing social networks. Behura (2004) asserts that during the 1980s, some urban centres in Punjab like Sargodha, Muzaffargarh, Multan,

Bahawalnagar, Chakwal and Jhang, emerged as potential areas for sectarian conflicts in Pakistan. Out of them the district of Jhang emerged as the nerve centre of sectarian conflict in Pakistan. One of the main aims of sectarian organizations was to disengage people from their networks. Keeping in view such aspirations, they started denigrating the faiths beliefs and rituals of each opponent group. *Deobandi* religious leaders targeted not only *Shi'as* but the Brelvi Sunni for having a faith in the visiting the shrines. The feudal system was also challenged and a space for the participation was also created by the religious leaders from both sides. *Maulana* Jhangvi stepped forward to participate in the general elections as self-styled representative of the oppressed masses. On the other hand *Shi'a* leaders were not far behind in indentifying *Deobandis* as their enemies. Thus, this competition to keep others down and to accomplish the specific goals perpetuated social disharmony in society. As a result of sectarian organizations' policies, social networking was disrupted. People started dubbing one another as *kafir* (infidel). One of the popular slogans used by *Maulana* Jhangvi in his fifteen monumental speeches was '*kafir, kafir, Shi'a kafir.*' What he was trying to incriminate were the *Shi'a* Muharram rituals and their belief in the visitation to the shrines. Majority of the *Shi'a* religious leaders reacted on such fiery slogans and counterpoised equally reprehensive outbursts. But the ultimate result of all this bigotry was nothing less than target killings and socio-economic anarchy in the society.

Impact on the Economic Institutions

The consequences of sectarianism were multifaceted. On the one hand it tears apart the social fabric while on the other hand it produced economic turmoil in the city. People lost their business and those who wholly depend on the business lost their earnings. So, it created a crunch situation for the middle classes and the working classes. While the owners did face some problems but later due to perpetual crisis they shifted their businesses to other towns. The business centers became the killing courtyards as main bazaar and rail bazaar were near to *Deobandi*' populated areas. Whenever the SSP strikes traders union too follows the same because majority of the members of that trade union consists of *Deobandi*. *Maulana* Jhangvi's death played a decisive role in the future of the business of the city. During the crisis period majority of the shopping centers were closed for weeks and some of these were set on fire by the activists.

Out-migration

As we have already mentioned in the above section that sectarianism's main affect was on the middle class from both sides. Many people sold their property and running business on low rates and migrated to the other places. In 1990 over 50 families migrated from one *Mohalla Purani Eidgah* and more than 40 families migrated from Jhang city. These were not the only places from where people migrated, but other *Mohallas* of Jhang city and *Saddar* also witnessed major proportion of out-migration. Main proportion of the out migration was of labor class which was majorly due to the damage of the economic institution in Jhang. They tend to do so because they have no other choice. The factories were not properly working, labor activities were stopped and people who were totally dependent on the daily labor could not afford to be out of work. They have families to support. The laborers migrated to other cities like Lahore, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Sing, Multan and some also migrated to Karachi. Further there are some other reasons for out-migration. Firstly, people were fed up form the uncertain and crisis situation, they want a peaceful environment to live in. Secondly, people don't want their children to be involved in the activity of sectarian clashes. Thirdly, people who were the main target groups left the city to hide in other places.

Fourthly, businessmen shifted their business to other towns and migrated with their business.

Case Study No. 1 Out-migration form Jhang

One of respondents, told about his uncle's family, which migrated in the crisis period and settled in Faisalabad. He told that his uncle was living with them in the same dwelling when *Maulana* Jhangvi was assassinated in Jhang and it was the period of crisis for everyone living in the city. The respondent told that his younger brother was killed in that period and his family was much depressed due to that incident. His uncle decided to leave the town, his father and all other close relatives tried their best to stop him but he was not convinced. He argued that "*I want to leave the city because I want to provide safer environment to my children.*" Within a month he shifted all of his business to the Faisalabad city. Now he is living in Faisalabad. He is running a cloth business in Faisalabad and he occasionally visits the town and motivates other family members to migrate to Faisalabad.

Drug Smuggling, Robbing, and Looting

In post *Maulana* Jhangvi killing, Jhang became the hub of drug smuggling, robbing and looting. During crisis situations in Jhang, only the drugs suppliers reported to move without any difficulty. According to Zahab (2004) the sectarian situation was also manipulated by the drug mafia-Jhang which is at the cross-roads of drug and arms distribution network, the drug mafia had an interest of maintaining a certain level of tension and resorted to provocations whenever the situation was clam for activities. Heroin smuggling becomes a main commercial activity in Jhang after the onset of sectarian violence and electoral campaigns were financed by the profits of the drug business. Both sides were involved; a *Shi'a* feudal who is an ex-MNA is regularly denounced as one of the drug mafia bosses and the SSP apparently controlled the retail sales with connivance of police. When Jhang experienced the worst violence in 1992, drug dealers and drug users were the only persons who could move more freely between the different parts of the city.

Fears in Performing Religious Ceremonies

Sectarianism not only affected the lives of the people but created uncertainty in the minds of the performers of daily prayers and Muharram rituals. Majority of the respondents identified that they have been facing difficulty in performance of Muharram ritual, like *majales*, *matam*, and processions due to these brutal forms of the sectarian clashes. Although security was provided by the police department during the crisis periods but the intensity and magnitude of the fear was so high that it ultimately stopped people to enter in the worship places. One of the *Imam Masjid* in Jhang city opined that in the crisis period, the number of people was reduced in mosques. He further told that it was difficult for us to attend religious ceremonies because in doing so many of our known people were already killed or injured.

From the emergence of the sectarian clashes in Jhang, Muharram remained an epicenter of the clashes. One of the main reasons of this *Deobandi-Shi'a* divide was due to the performance of the Muharram rituals. So, the Deobandis sect targeted the *Shi'a Imambargahs* during their ritual performance sessions which produced uncertainty among the performers to attend these rituals. But at the same time we can observe a growth in the gatherings of *Shi'a* masses on the eve of seventh Muharram procession in Jhang City.

Case Study No. 2 Fears in Performance of Religious Rituals

A clergy and principal at *Jamia-ul-Abbas* in Jhang city opined about the uncertain situation of the ritual performers that in this kind of uncertain condition no one takes a risk to attend the religious ceremonies. He further added that people do think that '*Jan hai tu Jahan hai*' (life is the condition of existence). He commented on people's perceptions that we shouldn't have to think like that. We are bounded by some religious duties and we have to perform the rituals either in the safe and sound environment or during the crisis situations.

Target Killing and Suicide Attacks

Sectarianism from its emergence in the case of Pakistan paid its price with large scale killing. Sectarianism has affected the life of many people in Pakistan from its emergence till now. The first major victim of sectarian killing was *Maulana Jhangvi* who was killed in February 1990 in Jhang. After that *Maulana Qasmi* was selected as leader and he was also killed in January 1991. *Zia-ur-Rehman Faruqi* was the head of SSP after the death of *Maulana Qasmi*. He and *Maulana Azam Tariq* worked for SSP and he declared *Shi'as* as infidels. *Maulana Faruqi* was assassinated in 1997 in Lahore High Court Courtyard. *Maulana Azam Tariq* escaped in that bomb attack. Later the master mind of that attack was arrested. He was also selected as a member of National Assembly more than once and also presented a bill called '*Namoos-e-Sahaba*'. He was also killed in 2005 in Islamabad. Sectarian killing ignited from Jhang and gripped the whole country.

Post *Maulana Jhangvi* murder, sectarian violence flared up in Jhang. The methodologies tailored by the two groups changed in this period. Both became more proactive in achieving their goals. *Kriesberg (1973)* mentioned that a full cycle of social conflict consists of five stages; First, in the objective or underlying social conflict relationship. Second, when two or more parties believe they have incompatible goals, a social conflict has emerges. Third, there is an initial way in which the adversaries pursue their contradictory aims. Fourth, in intensity and scope struggle escalates and de-escalates and then finally, the struggle comes to some kind of end, there is an outcome.

In first stage, the objectives of *Shi'as* and *Deobandis* were different which indicates that this was a conflicting situation. They also have defined goals, as both sides' leaders indicated several time through their speeches and through the media to demolish opposite sect's motives, this can be called the second stage of *Kriesberg's* conflict model. Both factions adopted a violent attitude towards each other in the process of gaining their objectives and they fought each other and targeted the religions places, and also killed the key personalities on both sides to decrease the growth of opposite sect, is the third stage of *Kriesberg's* conflict model. The ambition to demolish the other sect was helpful in escalating sectarianism. Both factions took the steps which helped to increase the tension and helped to gain the specified goals which clearly targeted the other faction. Both factions escalated the conflict situation by using the arms and implementing the harsh strategies. They were totally against the steps which reduced the tension is the fourth stage according to conflict model of *Kriesberg*. The end product of the sectarian conflict was disharmony in social structure by larger number of killing all over the country by producing tension in specified areas and also unstable economic situation of the district, can be considered as a final stage.

Such killings have produced social unrest in Jhang since the killings of *Maulana Jhangvi*. Suicidal attacks became a fashioned methodology to accommodate the sectarian objectives.

Although in case of Jhang until now we do not observe suicidal attacks but these have been occurring in the various parts of the country by these two factions. Some of the suicidal attacks have been observed in the 2004 and 2005 in Multan, Sialkot and Islamabad. These suicidal attacks became a fashion in the last decade, as we have observed that many of the religious spots are being targeted either of the Sunnis or *Shi'as*. Jhang district did not witness any suicidal attack but sectarian target killing is at its worst in Jhang. According to District Police Department statistics 76 sectarian riots were registered which produced killing of 123 people from 14 June 1989 to 4 February 2002. Among these 123 killing 66 were *Shi'a*, 45 were Sunni and 12 were police officials.

Table No. 01 Sectarian Clashes in Jhang (form June 14, 1989 to February 4 2002)

Victims	Police Stations								Total
	Jhang City	Kotwali	Jhang Saddar	Shorkot City	Ahmed Pur Sial	G.M. Raja	Athra Hazari	Chiniot	
Shiite victims	15 (12.2%)	16 (13.0%)	05 (4.1%)	18 (14.6%)	03 (2.4%)	05 (4.1%)	00	04 (3.3%)	66 (53.7%)
Sunni victims	14 (11.4%)	05 (4.1%)	07 (5.7%)	12 (9.8%)	02 (1.6%)	00	05 (4.1%)	00	45 (36.6%)
Police official' victims	03 (2.4%)	09 (7.3%)	00	00	00	00	00	00	12 (9.8%)
Total	32 (26.0%)	30 (24.4%)	12 (9.8%)	30 (24.4%)	05 (4.1%)	05 (4.1%)	05 (4.1%)	04 (3.3%)	123 (100%)
	Police Stations								
	Jhang City	Kotwali	Jhang Saddar	Shorkot City	Ahmed Pur Sial	G.M. Raja	Athra Hazari	Chiniot	Total
First Information Reports	25 (32.1%)	19 (24.4%)	9 (11.5%)	13 (16.7%)	5 (6.4%)	5 (6.4%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.3%)	78 (100%)

To see the impact of the different incidents in the worst sectarian killing we have presented two sectarian incidents which aggravated the tension at peak level. These case studies might be helpful in understanding the evolution of sectarian killings in Jhang which further lead to the national level.

Case Study No. 3 Murder of Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi

Maulana Jhangvi was born in 1952 in rural settings of Jhang district. He belonged to a poor family and got education in the rural area of *Massan* between the Chenab and Jhelum rivers, about 40 kilometers from Jhang. Later, he was enrolled in a *Madrassa* for religious education. In 1973 he started his career as preacher (*Khateeb*) and *Imam Masjid* in a *Deobandis* Mosque in Jhang until 1990. The mosque is now known by his name, as the Mohalla in which he lived. SSP was founded in the same mosque. *Maulana* Jhangvi started a movement against the *Shi'a* ideology. He declared *Shi'a* as an infidel. He also started a movement against the *Shi'a* feudal of the district. Main aims of that movement were to unite Sunnis against the *Shi'a* landlords and to eliminate the support of Sunni middle class to *Shi'a* leadership in the election.

According to one of key informants, that was a night of 28 to 29 February, 1990, when *Maulana* Jhangvi was just leaving home for some engagement outside the city. He with his wife was in house and it was very noisy atmosphere because of their neighbor's marriage. Suddenly some person called on the door step of *Maulana* Jhangvi and he came out to see him, according to his wife the voice was known to *Maulana* Jhangvi. When he came out and opened the door to see the visitor. The visitor opened the fire on *Maulana* Jhangvi and he was dead on the spot.

Case Study No. 4 Murder of Shi'as in a Majles in Jhang City

After the death of *Maulana* Jhangvi, the situation was totally changed; sectarian organizations came into action and started implantation of the worst killing strategies in Jhang. Muharram observances were crucial event for both factions. Soon after the death of *Maulana* Jhangvi, Deobandis started planning to avenge of the assassination although they were divided in their opinion as to who were the murderers. On the one hand they nominated four *Shi'as* but at the same time they also considered Sheikh Iqbal as murderer. To accommodate their revenge instincts they started planning to harm both parties. On one side they attacked *Shi'a* Majlis, where they killed four *Shi'as*.

On the evening of sixth Muharram in 1990 more than 1000 people were attending a Majlis at the residence of one of the *Sials* in Jhang city between 18:00 PST to 19:00 PST in the evening. After the Majlis when people started to depart from the courtyard towards the main bazaar of Jhang city via street of *Lal Masjid*. When people reached at the corner of *Lal Masjid* some activists started firing on the participants of *majles*. One of the Sunni participants of *majles* was the front to depart when a gang of activists starts firing; he takes more than 50 bullets on his body and was assassinated on the spot. Including this four people were Sheikh Imam Bilu, Syed Intizar Haider and Syed Qasim Ali Shah of Jahahia Shah. Syed Qasim Ali Shah was a child of only eight month and he was with his mother when the activist opened the fire and was struck with bullets and was assassinated on the spot. This was one of major attack from SSP on *Shi'a* after the assassination of *Mualana* Jhangvi. Some other target killings were reported as the killing of Syed Younas Shah, nephew of Syed Sanaullah Shah (the *Muhajir* Syed and member of *Taherik-e-Jaferia*).

CONCLUSION

In its evolutionary phases, sectarianism not only subdivided Muslims but also paid the brutal disputes lasting even today. The partisans of Hazrat Ali and followers of Hazrat Abu Bakar had a difference of opinion regarding the righteous successor to the Prophet. This notion regarding the succession further divided both the factions. These factions gave birth to the never ending sequel of conflict to achieve their goals. From its initial level to the present day sectarianism is a process of continuous conflict which expanded to the worldly Muslim population. It also expanded to the present day Pakistan many years back. Zia regime played a pivotal role in the expansion of the *Shi'a-Sunni* divide. During that time sectarian differences were widened at national level but in the case of Jhang as Kamran (2009) mentioned first sectarian incident happened in Jhang in 1959. The sequel of brutal conflict started soon after the death of *Maulana* Jhangvi. Majority of the sectarian incidents happened to avenge the murder of *Maulana* Jhanvi and then the target killing started which paid the local community with immense life damages, out-migration, economic recession, damage in social networking, and fears to attend the religious ceremonies like Muharram rituals, *milad*, etc. Sectarianism had some infectious consequences in the case of Jhang. Although previously these masses

were living in harmony but soon after the national Islamization project and later *Maulana Jhangvi* murder intensified the situation. This sequel of target killing in the name of revenge of the specific religious leaders made the situation worst. Kriesberg's five stages model fits well to the situation of Jhang.

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