

## **Relative Deprivation in Pakistan: An Analysis of the Seraiki Movement**

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### **Abstract**

This paper deals with the phenomenon of relative deprivation with reference to Seraiki Movement. This movement has generated the national discourse on the division of Punjab, the largest province in Pakistan in terms of population. The ethnic elite, active in southern Punjab, views Punjab as an ethnically heterogeneous province. Therefore, it believes that, it should be divided on administrative lines for the solidarity of the Federation. It would provide opportunities to the marginalized ethnic groups to participate in main-stream politics. The study is an effort to analyze and comprehend the ethnic conflict and sense of deprivation in southern Punjab. It brings into focus the fact if the political system fails to develop sense of accommodation to promote inter-ethnic harmony, ethnic conflicts would reassert themselves vehemently.

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### **Relative deprivation—A contextual analysis**

Relative deprivation refers to one's level of dissatisfaction relative to others. Davis<sup>1</sup> interprets relative deprivation, when an individual perceives that he has inadequate opportunities as compared to others and if this situation persists for a longer period of time, then the individual feels himself as unjustly treated by the society. Gurr (1970)<sup>2</sup> explains the phenomenon of relative deprivation as a discrepancy between 'what we have and what ought to be'. These two above-mentioned interpretations are based on expectation-achievement model. Davis and Gurr do not delineate the different aspects of relative deprivation.

Geschwender<sup>3</sup> explains that in a multi-ethnic society, when one group is in disadvantageous position then it asserts to demand an equal

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<sup>1</sup> James Davis, 'A formal interpretation of the theory of relative deprivation', *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 25:1 (1989), pp.82-88.

<sup>2</sup> C.M. Abraham, 'Preconditions of relative deprivation – An empirical validation', *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 25:1 (1989), pp.82-8.

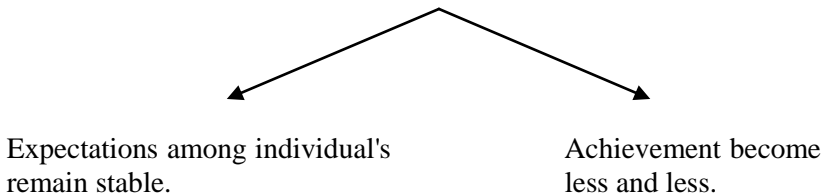
<sup>3</sup> J.A. Geschwender, 'Social structure and the negro revolt: an examination of some hypothesis', *Social Forces*, 43 (1964), pp.248-65.

status either by the redistribution of resources or power sharing.<sup>4</sup> However, according to the proponents of resource-mobilization theory the phenomenon of relative deprivation results in the emergence of social movements. While the frustration aggression theory develops a link between relative deprivation and civil unrest or political violence. Pederson quotes Runciman<sup>5</sup> that social discontent is determined by the differences among social groups. Under-privileged groups compare themselves with relatively more privileged strata. He further describes that socio-economic injustice generates social and political conflicts.

Neripesh<sup>6</sup> suggested another index to evaluate the phenomenon of relative deprivation. According to this index, a gap between 'very rich' and 'very poor' engenders the sense of discontent among people. Moreover, Converse envisages that relative deprivation refers to a wide gap between normative expectations and actual achievements among the potential participants.<sup>7</sup> In this, situation deprived group claims for certain privileges and if these claims are resisted, then the conflict arises in the political process. This type of conflict creates bargaining situations, including various punishments and rewards. In fact, the phenomenon of relative deprivation manifests an interaction between the dissident groups in terms of incompatible interests.

There are three aspects of relative deprivation i.e. decremental, aspirational and progressive deprivation in terms of expectations and achievement levels.

#### (i) Decremental Deprivation

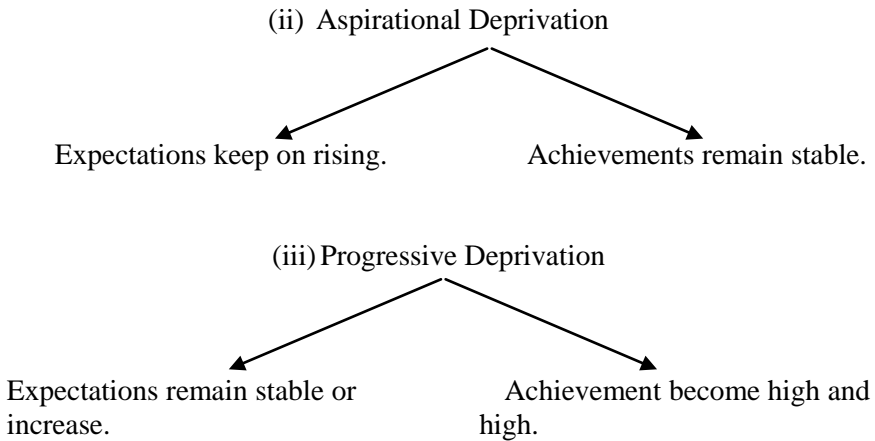


<sup>4</sup> J.N. Gurney, & K.J. Tierney, 'Relative deprivation and social movement: A critical look at twenty years of theory and research', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 23:1 (1982), pp.33-47.

<sup>5</sup> W.G. Runciman, *Relative deprivation and social justice: A study of attributes to social inequality in Twentieth century* (England: California Press, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> S. Chatterjee and P. Nripesh, *Economic inequality in colour: some ethnic dimensions of income distribution in Newzealand 1984-96*, 1966.

<sup>7</sup> A.W. Pedersen, 'Inequality as relative deprivation: A sociological approach to inequality measurement', *Acta Sociologica*, 47:1 (2004), pp.31-49.



In this perspective, decremental deprivation increases the difference in power resources between actors. While aspirational deprivation leads towards the mobilization of an actor, but it has fewer probabilities of conflict. Thus progressive deprivation refers to the improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the lower class.<sup>8</sup> On one hand, it is a positive deprivation which manifests the decreasing gap between lower and higher classes and fair distribution of power resources in the society. But on the other hand, this type of deprivation has the probability of conflict because decreasing gap between the over-privileged and under-privileged classes create a sense of deprivation among the over-privileged ones.

In addition to it, political and economic inequalities cause to prop up discontent among people. When the legitimate aspirations of people are not fulfilled then they feel sense of repression among themselves. These feelings of disappointment engender revolutionary consequences. Deprived individuals actualize that violence is the only way to vent their grievances and to obtain scarce resources. In fact, the sense of marginalization becomes a catalyst for protest and violent demonstrations in a society.

Relative deprivation is also conditioned by some other variables, first factor being coercion. Although violence can be controlled through coercion, but most of the time it tends to increase deprivation. Second important factor is social institutionalization, which is significant to stabilize the political system. Social and political structures not only

<sup>8</sup> W. Korpi, 'Conflict, power and relative deprivation', *The American Political Science Review*, 68:4 (1974), pp.1569-578.

provide opportunities to the people but also constitutional means to express their grievances through political parties, trade unions, labour unions, etc. These organizations become a forum for interest articulation.<sup>9</sup> Third factor is social facilitation, which creates conducive conditions for the discontented strata to normatively justify their demands. Last factor is the legitimacy of the regime which ensures that people have trust in the government to get their grievances redressed.

Moreover, persistent sense of deprivation creates ethnic self-awareness in a deprived ethnic group which adopts different strategies to deal with the situation. Either it demands for equality or the redistribution of resources to ensure the separate existence of a particular ethnic group. Demand for equality can also be strived for the preservation of cultural heritage, language, right to use economic resources, job opportunities, etc. The ethnic group also endeavors to strengthen itself to articulate its demands. Along with it the role of ethnic elite also becomes significant. It mobilizes the ethnic group to achieve its set targets. Ethnic elite may demand more autonomy, changes in constitution or to establish new legal and political construct.

The response of a state depends upon the nature of the political system. If it is democratic pluralistic, then it accommodates all ethnic diversities. It negotiates or bargains with the ethnic elite for their compensation. The ruling elite may conduct the referendum to resolve the issue. But if the political system is authoritarian in nature, then it suppresses the ethnic aspirations which lead towards chaos or violence in the society.

### **An analysis of Seraiki movement**

Seraiki is the widely spoken language in the districts of Bhawalpur, Lodhran, Vehari, Pakpattan, Multan, Khanewal, Sahiwal, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Sargodha, Khushab, Layyah, Bhakkar, Mianwali, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Tank, Rajanpur, Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar. These districts are located in southern Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Therefore, the Seraiki nationalists have used language as a symbol to mobilize the local population. There are various issues, which have been raised by the Seraiki nationalists like the issue of low level of economic development, preservation of cultural heritage and a lack of infrastructure.

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<sup>9</sup> A. Majeed, 'Relative deprivation and political behavior', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 40:2 (1979), pp.140-55.



Source: Ahmad, S. Boundaries of Seraiki Province. Retrieved 14 April 2012, from <http://www.wasaib.com/english-article/boundaries-of-seraiki-province.html>

### Economic deprivation

The nationalist parties claimed that the areas like Bhawalpur generate more revenue than it is spent on it. It is the biggest producer of Pakistan's most important cash crop 'cotton'. Successive governments, however, have not been able to come up to the normative expectations of the Seraiki population which has been economically exploited.<sup>10</sup> South Punjab districts rank low in terms of development indicators, i.e. employment, per capita income, the literacy ratio. There is about 50.58% population live below the poverty line in Dera Ghazi Khan, 39.86% in Bhawalpur and 38.91% in Multan. Seraiki nationalists not only demand raise in the job quotas for the local population,<sup>11</sup> but also the formation of a separate province, which would ensure resource mobilization required for the satisfaction of the discontented people of this region.

During the 1950s under the 'Thal Irrigation Scheme' thousands of acres of land were allotted to Punjabi speaking migrants for cultivation. It created a sense of alienation among the Seraiki people, especially in the areas of Muzzaffargarh, Layyah and Bhakkar. Moreover, there are sharp disparities between the Seraiki belt and the central and northern Punjab in terms of infrastructure and educational and economic opportunities. For example there are only two medical colleges in seventeen Seraiki districts as compared to the eight in the areas of upper Punjab. Similarly, there are no agricultural, medical, engineering and women universities in this region.<sup>12</sup>

The following figure shows the unfair distribution of resources within Punjab.<sup>13</sup>

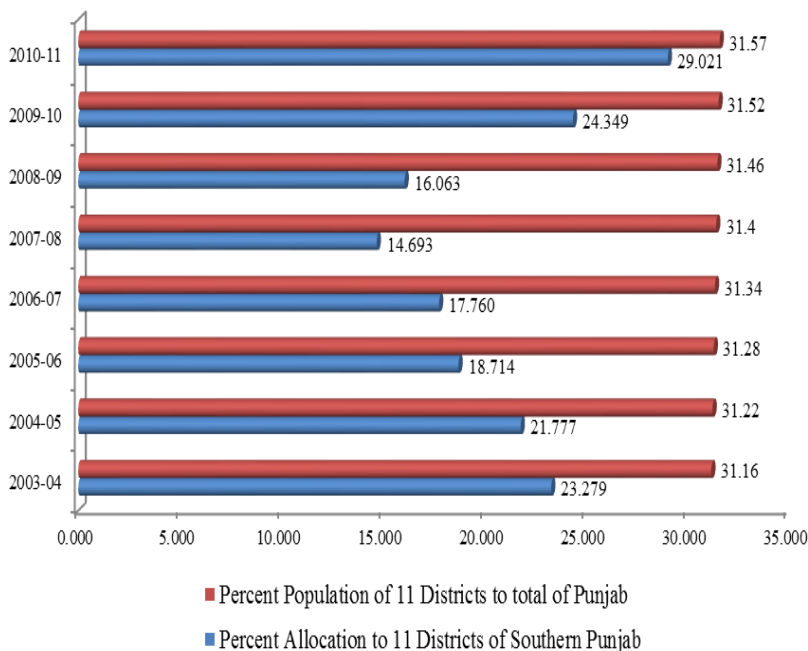
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<sup>10</sup> Umbreen Javaid, Movement for Bhawalpur Province, <http://www.pu.edu.pk/polsc/jops/Currentissue-pdf/Movement%20for%20Bhawalpur%20Province.pdf>, accessed 8 February 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Gohar Zaman, *Report on Southern Punjab*, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Umbreen Javaid, *op.cit.*

<sup>13</sup> D.M.S. Shafique, *New Provinces in Punjab: Division and Devolution?* Retrieved 10-04-2014, from <http://apnaorg.com/articles/punjab-division-1/>

**Figure 1****Unfair Distribution of Resources within Punjab**

The case of health facilities is worsening in south Punjab. Out of 362 public health facilities of Punjab only 86 are located in south Punjab. Unfortunately, south Punjabis are deprived of much of industrialization. Out of 20 industrial zones only 5 are there in South Punjab. According to the statistical data 2008 out of 6712 industrial units of Punjab only 1837 are located in south Punjab.

In response to the type of injustices mentioned above the Seraiki movement started during 1960s (Riaz Hashmi at that time was a prominent Seraiki leader), it gained momentum, after the dissolution of the One-Unit. In 1975, a conference was held in Multan to promote Seraiki language. Until 1990s, the impact of this movement on Pakistani politics was not pronounced. Nevertheless, this issue re-emerged during the Musharraf era. In December 2003, a Seraiki conference was held in Multan and various demands regarding the development of Seraiki people were articulated including the demand for a separate Seraiki province. Various political groups have emerged to raise the demand for a Seraiki province, including Pakistan Seraiki Party led by Muhammad Khan Langah, Seraiki National Party led by Abdul Majeed Kanjo,

Seraikistan Quomi Movement led by Hameed Asghar Shaheen, etc. Since then they are working for the separate province of Seraikistan.

### **The issue of linguistic identity**

Seraiki speaking are also concerned about their language as language is the most important indicator of cultural heritage. They perceive that their language was deliberately merged with Punjabi language by the Punjabi-dominated ruling elite. Historically, partition of India brought multifarious demographical changes in this region as the Seraiki population was replaced by the non-Seraikies.

S.No.	Language	1951 Census	1961 Census	1981 Census	1998 Census
1	Punjabi	67.08%	66.39%	48.17%	44.15%
2	Seraiki*	—	—	9.54%	10.53%

\* Seraiki was included with Punjabi in the 1951 and 1961 censuses.

Since the 1960s, regional, social and political leaders have been trying to promote ethnic consciousness on the basis of Seraiki language among the Seraiki people. The origin of Seraiki language can be traced back to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization. Although some intellectuals perceive Seraiki just as an accent of Punjabi language, Seraiki writers claimed that Seraiki language had a rich collection of poetry, folk music and literature. The Seraiki region remained deprived during the colonial era. Various colonial settlement policies created racial discrimination among the people. For example the Punjabi Jats were considered superior and were allocated lands for irrigation. The discriminatory policies continued even after the partition of India.<sup>14</sup> The successive governments in Pakistan focused on the area of northern and central Punjab, while south Punjab remained under developed.

The nationalist leaders of the Seraiki region used language as an identity marker to create ethnic consciousness among the Seraiki population. They mobilized the people to aspire for redistribution of resources. The ethnic cognizance kept on increasing due to depleting socio-economic conditions of this region.<sup>15</sup> The Seraiki nationalists perceived threat to their cultural and linguistic identity. They wanted

<sup>14</sup> Rasul Baksh Rais, 'Analysis: Southern Punjab Troubles', *Daily Times*, 16 June 2009.

<sup>15</sup> K. Alqama, 'Ethnic dilemma in Pakistan and division of Punjab: End or beginning of the new era of conflict', *Journal of Politics and Law*, 6:1 (2013), pp.156-62.

Seraiki to be recognized as a separate language which could be used for official purposes. The politically conscious intellectuals contributed to promote Seraiki language. They started printing of Seraiki literature and poetry for the promotion of their language. Efforts were also made for the standardization of Seraiki script and diction.

In fact, the strong assimilationist policies by the state are perceived by the smaller ethnic groups as an endeavor to submerge their identity. In a heterogeneous state with a centralized and authoritarian political system, the ethnic groups compete each other to pursue their interests. It further maximizes their dissatisfaction with the system.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the ethnic movements defy the process of national integration in these states. On the other hand, if the political system is based upon democratic values and encourages participatory political culture to accommodate the political aspirations of the people, then the task of the political development and integration among diverse ethnic groups becomes easier.

### Statistical analysis

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.0 (Microsoft, 2007). The issue of relative deprivation in south Punjab and the opinions of various ethnic groups (Seraiki, Punjabi and Pushtuns) were calculated by descriptive statistics. The hypothesis to be tested was denoted by 'H<sub>1</sub>' alternative hypothesis and 'H<sub>0</sub>' as null hypothesis. 'N' is the population size. The 'df' shows degree of freedom. The significance of political and ethnic factors was tested by using Chi-Square Analysis at  $p < .01$ . The cross – tabulation of ethnic issues and opinions of ethnic groups is given below where columns show the ethnic groups, and rows show the ethnic issues.

**Table 1: Demand for Seraiki Province**

H<sub>0</sub> : Demand for Seraiki province should not be on ethnic lines.

H<sub>1</sub> : Demand for Seraiki province should be on ethnic lines.

Opinions	Ethnic Groups		
	Punjabi	Seraiki	Pushtuns
No	33	30	30
Yes	17	20	20

$p < .01$ .

<sup>16</sup> S. Zulfikar, 'Politics of New Provinces in Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges', *IPRI*, 12:2 (2012), pp.20-25.

The results of (N=150) focus that people of south Punjab do not want the formation of new province on ethnic basis. The result is significant with  $df(2)$ ,  $p>.01$ .

**Table 2: Referendum in South Punjab**

$H_0$  : Referendum should not be held in South Punjab.

$H_1$  : Referendum should be held in South Punjab.

Opinions	Ethnic Groups		
	Punjabi	Seraiki	Pushtuns
No	18	15	20
Yes	32	35	30

$p<.01$ .

The results of (N=150) focus that people of south Punjab needs referendum to decide the future of their region. The result is significant with  $df(2)$ ,  $p<.01$ .

**Table 3: Formation of New Province**

$H_0$  : The formation of new province will not redress the economic grievances of the people.

$H_1$  : The formation of new province will redress the economic grievances of the people.

Opinions	Ethnic Groups		
	Punjabi	Seraiki	Pushtuns
No	17	13	20
Yes	33	37	30

$p<.01$ .

The results of (N=150) focus that people of south Punjab perceive that the formation of new province will redress the economic grievances of the people. The result is significant with  $df(2)$ ,  $p<.01$ .

**Table 4: Preservation of Seraiki Culture**

$H_0$  : The new province will not ensure the preservation of Seraiki cultural heritage.

$H_1$  : The new province will ensure the preservation of Seraiki cultural heritage.

Opinions	Ethnic Groups		
	Punjabi	Seraiki	Pushtuns
No	20	14	20
Yes	30	36	30

$p<.01$ .

The results of (N=150) focus that people of south Punjab perceive that the formation of new province will ensure the preservation of their cultural heritage. The result is significant with  $df(2)$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 5: Formation of New Province put Financial Burden**

$H_0$  : The formation of a new province will not put financial burden on the state.

$H_1$  : The formation of a new province will put financial burden on the state.

Opinions	Ethnic Groups		
	Punjabi	Seraiki	Pushtuns
No	30	30	40
Yes	20	20	10

$p < 0.01$ .

The results of (N=150) focus that people of South Punjab perceive that the formation of new province will not put financial burden on the state. The result is significant with  $df(2)$ ,  $p > 0.01$ .

The data was also analyzed through structured interviews by academia in south Punjab. In this perspective the professors of departments of Political Science and International Relations, Bahauddin Zakaria University, Multan and Islamia University, Bhawalpur were interviewed.

Questions	Answers / Analysis
Is Seraiki movement a political movement or purely an ethnic movement?	Movement for a separate province of south Punjab and Seraiki movement, both are distinct phenomena. Seraiki nationalist movement was launched by Seraiki nationalist leaders, i.e. Taj Muhammad Langha belonging to a down – trodden class to articulate the cultural, economic and political rights of the Seraiki population. While the movement for a separate province of south Punjab became a political card in the hands of some political parties to secure their vested interest.
Has Seraiki movement any relevance with Bhawalpur province movement?	It has relevance with Bhawalpur province movement because politically motivated people of

	Bhawalpur demand that the provincial status of Bhawalpur should be restored as it was given in 1951 under an agreement signed between the ruler of princely state of Bhawalpur and government of Pakistan.
Do you think that the formation of a separate province would contribute towards the economic uplift of the local people?	Formation of a separate province of South Punjab would contribute towards economic uplift of the local people. It would bring more harmony among different ethnic groups. It is also significant because south Punjab is strategically an important area and if the government does not redress their issues then the foreign powers can intervene to manipulate the situation.
Do you think that coal power projects in southern Punjab can affect the underground water table and ecological balance in this region?	Coal power project would definitely affect the underground water table in this region which is already facing the problems of water shortage. It would increase the environmental pollution. The government should go for alternate energy source.

*Source:* Personal Communication, 20 May 2014.

### **Concluding remarks and recommendations**

While concluding we can say that there are mainly two opinions regarding the reconfiguration of boundaries of Punjab. One is, that bifurcation of Punjab will create a degree of balance inter-provincially; the dilemma of big brother and smaller provinces would disappear from the political discourse, and the federation would be more stable. But, on the other hand, it is perceived that the creation of new provinces would put more burdens on the economy of Pakistan.

Although after 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, it was expected that the issue of Seraikistan would be addressed on a priority basis, various resolutions were initiated by PML (Q) and PML (N) during Musharraf regime (1999-2008) and the PPP government (2008–2013) in favor of the establishment of new provinces, but nothing has been done so far

practically. Only the name of NWFP has been replaced by KPK. It is obligatory to acknowledge ethnic and linguistic identities for smooth functioning of the Federation. National consensus should be built up regarding the creation of new federating units because the ethnic conflicts get momentum due to the discrepancies between the privileged and under privileged groups.

This situation leads to a sense of relative deprivation among the under privileged ethnic groups which they vent through agitation. Their demand for fair distribution of resources not only increases their alienation from the political system of the state but also from the rest of the ethnic groups. Moreover, political turbulence starts when all the ethnic groups do not get their due share in the power structure of the state. The ethnic elites also mobilize people to pursue their political and economic agendas; sometimes, external influences also escalate such internal ethnic conflicts which threatens ultimately the national solidarity. In fact, there is a need to promote participatory and democratic culture to accommodate all the ethnic groups.

Although an alternative solution to establish a separate Seraiki province to address the grievances of disadvantaged segments of south Punjab is substantial but there is need to ensure the diffusion of power. The existing power structure in south Punjab (land-owning elite, ethnic elite and religious elite) must not be let to perpetuate their vested interests. In this backdrop there is a need on the part of the federal government to devise a mechanism of distributive justice based on pluralism and mass participation. There are numerous examples of pluralism; in our neighboring state India provinces were restructured in order to satisfy the masses. Federation was consolidated through the sense of accommodation and ethnic pluralism. Then the representation of the masses at the grass root level is significant to ensure the devolution of power and participatory political culture.