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# Everyday Images and Practices of the State in Rural Pakistan

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# Abstract

In my thesis project, I provide an analysis of the way the image and the perception of the state is formed in the context of everyday social and political life in rural Pakistan. I demonstrate how people in a rural locality understand the Pakistani state and its laws and how these understandings shape the way the people carry out everyday engagement with the state authorities. This research undertaking is guided by three principal questions: 1) what is the common conception of Pakistani state at the local level; 2) how do people interact and experience the state institutions at the micro level; 3) what role do different non-state actors who act as 'intermediaries' between their fellow villagers and the wider political world play in shaping local embodiment of the state and people's experiences with it? My fieldwork in a village in Pakistani Punjab, which was reduced to six months from one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals that the images and perceptions of the Pakistani state are split between 'sublime' and 'profane' dimensions. On the one hand, the people imagine the state as a sublime entity that exists in far-off places. The state is somewhere else, geographically detached from their locality. It can only be seen on television sets, in major urban centres of the country, and it is a rich institute with enormous financial resources. On the other hand, the people also talk about the state as a profane entity associated with corruption, hierarchy, fraud, and lies. The state is where culture of corruption and mistreatment is deeply pervasive. Fearing of difficulties and complications, the state is something with which they want to have minimum interaction. They consider the state offices are full of lazy and biased employees who provide no service without *sifarish* (recommendation), *taaluq wasta* (relationship), or *rishwat* (bribery). I argue that the people at the local level attach sublime qualities to the national and provincial realm of the Pakistani state, while its local realm with which the

people engage on everyday basis is seen as profane. My ethnographic material also illustrates that since everyday state administration is perceived to be riddled with corrupt practices and abuse of authority, this condition creates favourable atmosphere in rural Pakistan for different actors of patronage system to operate – where different political intermediaries assume leading role in variety of political spaces and social relations, acting as a conduit between the state and residents, as well as at times performing certain roles at the local level as they are free from the state's control or at other times acting as helping hand of the state.

# Table of Contents

**Bibliography**

# List of Abbreviations

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|---|---|
| FIR | First Information Report |
| PTI | Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf |
| PML-N | Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz |
| PPP | Pakistan Peoples Party |
| MNA | Member of National Assembly |
| MPA | Member of Provincial Assembly |
| NADRA | National Database & Registration Authority |
| WAPDA | Water & Power Development Authority |

# Maps

# Glossary of Terms

*apney log:* Own people

*anguthy lagaye:* Putting thumb impression

*adda:* Nearby roadside place to pick and drop passengers

*baithak:* A room attached to one's house where men gather for socialization

*bajra:* millet

*barro or khawand ki tabedar:* Family custom of showing respect to husband and in-laws

*bartan*: Kitchen utensils

*baraat:* Groom's celebratory procession to bride's house

*biradri:* Kinship association (literal meaning: brotherhood)

*burqa:* A loose and long piece of cloth used outdoor by women to cover body and face

*bhabi:* Sister-in-Law

*daara:* A main gathering place for men, associated with a major landholder in the neighbourhood

*charpoy:* A traditional bed

*chalis-wey da khatum:* Holding prayers for a dead person on the 40$^{th}$ day.

*char dewari:* Fence

*chaye:* Tea

*chaye pani:* A reference for hospitality (literal meaning: tea and water)

*chowki:* A small police outpost

*chubtra:* A raised platform built in front of house

*dera:* Cattle shed built on cultivated land

*desi murgha:* Country chicken

*dukh such:* Reference for help through thick and thin (literal meaning: grief and joy)

*du boria:* Two sacks

*dupatta:* Element of woman clothing used to cover head and shoulder

*daka:* Robbery

*dandy:* Long and strong wooden stick

*dars:* Religious prayers and teaching circle

*deni taleem:* Religious education

*Gali:* Street

*Gandy:* Dirty

Gujjar: A landowning caste in various parts of Punjab

*Ghee:* Homemade butter

*Handi:* Cooking pot made of clay or copper

*Haveli:* Cattle shed in in a residential area

*Hookah:* Traditional instrument to smoke tobacco

*Hukumat:* Government

*issaiya da mohala:* Christian area/street

*issaiya da qabrastan:* Christian graveyard

*izzat:* Reputation or honour

*Jaghirdar:* Major landlord

*Jahil:* Illiterate

*jangli janwar:* Reference for illiterate and ill-mannered (literal meaning: wild animal)

*jhooty*: Liars

*jowar:* Sorghum

*kambal:* Blankets

*Kammis:* Landless caste in Punjab (literal meaning: worker)

*Kacherian:* Courts

*Kameez:* A loose sleeved shirt reaching to the knees

*Kath:* Meeting

*khatir tawaza kerna:* Offer drinks and food

*Khatam* Praying together for blessings or for deceased (literal meaning: something that comes at the end)

*Khala:* Aunt

*Khadim e Alaa:* Chief Servant

*Kothi* Multi storey house with towers and terraces

*kumhar biradri:* A caste traditionally associated with pottery making

*Kula da khatam:* Holding prayers for a dead person on the 3rd day.

*lohar biradri:* A caste traditionally associated with blacksmith work

*lutairy*: Robber

*ludo:* A board game played by two to four people

*mamu:* Maternal uncle

*mehdi:* A wedding tradition of applying reddish-brown dye on hands

*Milad*: A religious function for blessings or to celebrate the birth Prophet Mohammad

*Muhajirs :* Muslims who migrated from various parts of India to the newly formed state of Pakistan

*munafiq*: hypocrite

monji: rice crop

*nek* aurat: pious woman

na-pak: polluted

*nali:* open sewer

*naats:* poetry in praise of the Prophet Mohammad

*Numberdaar:* title given by the British a major landholder in a village

*nowey da khatam:* Holding prayers for a dead person on the 9th day.

*pakka makan:* Brick house

*paki gali:* Brick street

*paleet* Unclean

*panchayat*: A customary institution in rural Punjab consisted of men to discuss village-related matters

*pani di wari:* A farmer's turn for irrigation water

*parcha:* Making a formal complaint to police (first information report -FIR)

*praya dhan:* Literally means a kind of wealth that is not yours and you are just guarding it for someone else

*parolas:* Large metal containers in rural areas to store wheat and rice grains

*Patwari:* Local land revenue officer

*Purdah:* A social or religious custom of secluding women form public

observation

*rasoom e shadi:* Marriage function

*razaiya:* Quilt

*rishtydar:* Relatives

*rishta talash kerna:* Looking for marriage proposal

*rishta ho geya:* Engagement

*sar dardi:* Taking keen interest in solving someone's problem

*sarkari:* Official

*Shalwar:* Loose trouser

*Shanakhti:* Identity

*Shatala:* Berseem

*sulha safaai:* Mutual reconciliation

*Sifarish:* Recommendation

*Tabbar:* A word to refer to one's biradri

*taluq khatam karna:* Social boycott

*tash:* Playing cards

*thala:* Shoulder bag

*thana:* Police station

*veera:* Courtyard in a house

*walima:* Serving food to wedding guests

*Zamindar Quoms:* Landowning caste in Punjab

*Kammis Quoms:* Landless caste in Punjab


**Map of Pakistan**[1]

[1] Courtesy of https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/pakistan_map.htm

**Thesis introduction**

The dissertation in its focus on local level politics examines how citizens in everyday life interact with each other and with the state institution in rural Pakistan. Another central concern of this dissertation is to empirically demonstrate common understanding of the Pakistani state among its residents at the micro level. The idea about this project, in part, came from a month-long ethnographic field work that I had conducted in a village in Pakistan four years prior to starting the doctorate. I had done that fieldwork to write an essay on political participation to fulfil the requirement of a course in my last year of undergraduate degree. That fieldwork puzzled me when I saw how my informants equated state presence with material benefits. Almost for all the informants, the state was the primary target for material benefits – jobs, education, healthcare, improved infrastructure, prices for crops, etc – whilst other aspects of the state like 'system of compulsion', in the words of Mohammad Mamdani (Mamdani, 1996) – such as taxation and enforcement of legal infrastructure – were completely absent. Another thing that puzzled me was the presence of various political actors who, along with working as 'mediators' in everyday encounters between the villagers and the local state institutions, also occasionally performed state-like roles, such as providing justice and security. These fieldwork observations and subsequent thinking raised several questions: what is the common conception of Pakistani state at the local level? How do people interact and experience the state institutions at the micro level? What role do different non-state actors who act as 'intermediaries' between their fellow villagers and the wider political world play in shaping local embodiment of the state and people's experience with it? These are the questions that this thesis focuses on.

Through the above-mentioned questions, in another sense, it can also be argued that this thesis looks at governance at the lowest level, focusing particularly on various political actors in a village I call Bhi Nagar who facilitate 'everyday' encounters between inhabitants and the state authorities. In doing so, this thesis also set out to unpack subjective understanding and perception of the Pakistani state among residents of the village as they interact with it in the context of their everyday political and social realities. In this study, I academically engage with concepts like 'informal people' (Bayat, 1997), 'weapons of weak' (Scott,1985), 'patron and clients' (Gellner & Waterbury, 1977), 'political society' (Chatterjee, 2004), 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006), 'mediated states' (Menkhaus, 2008), 'institutions in the middle' (Krishna, 2009), and 'everyday mediation' (Berenschot, 2010) – that all have their fundamental theoretical underpinnings embedded in 'the anthropology of the state' (Gupta & Sharma, 2006; see also Das & Poole, 2004; Gupta, 1995; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001). Considering theoretical and empirical aspects of this study, I have employed ethnographic research approaches to investigate the research questions raised in this dissertation.

**Thesis summary and outline**

This study is divided into seven chapters. Here in the introduction of the thesis I have briefly described the main inspiration behind this project and the main queries which have provided the basis for this dissertation. Various theoretical concepts and methods applied in this study, discussed in detail in other chapters, are briefly mentioned here. Following is an overview of the remaining chapters of the thesis:

**Chapter one**

The focus of this chapter is on theoretical and empirical works that are relevant for this study. I have examined here appropriate ideas and research results to establish suitable guidance to inform my study. I do not intend in this study to start with rigid theoretical concepts, taking this work towards pre-drawn conclusions. Essentially, I have tried here to establish that my study is an exploratory investigation which aims to elicit general understanding of the participants about the Pakistani state, particularly their beliefs about its service delivery infrastructure, and the everyday strategies they utilize to extract material benefits from it.

Dealing with questions of images and perceptions of the 'state' and how everyday citizens-state encounters occur requires to look at theoretical perspectives and debates on the topic of the state and different ways to deal and study it. How to study and understand the state if it is not just bureaucratic apparatus or government? The way in which ‘state’ and ‘society’ interact with each other has been discussed in social sciences for a long time. Is it possible to treat ‘state’ as a cohesive and unified entity, separate from ‘society’? This chapter reflects on all these questions in the light of different theoretical perspectives on the state.

The discussion in this chapter moves from reflecting on the anthropological approaches and their suitability to studying images and perception of ‘the state’ to how concepts like ‘everyday mediation’ (Berenschot, 2010), ‘informal people’ (Bayat, 1997), ‘institutions in the middle’ (Krishna, 2009), ‘mediated states’ (Menkhaus, 2008), ‘political society’ (Chatterjee, 2004), ‘patron and clients’ (Gellner & Waterbury, 1977), and ‘weapons

of the weak' (Scott,1985) – that all have their theoretical foundations rooted in 'the everyday state' (Corbridge et al., 2005; see also Sardan, 2008; Bierschenk & Sardan, 2014; Obeid, 2010; Hunt, 2006; Hansen T. B., 2001; Verkaaik, 2001) and 'the anthropology of the state' (Gupta & Sharma, 2006; see also Das & Poole, 2004; Gupta, 1995; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001) – are crucial to understand daily interactions between the state and citizens in the global South.

**Chapter two**

Chapter two offers contextual background about the field work country, Pakistan, which is very important for the analysis in the following chapters. There are two sections in this chapter. First section explores economic, social, and geographical dimensions that underpin the Pakistani state and its political system. With the pursuit of an in-depth study of the complex dynamics of power that shape state-society relation in Pakistan, this section also deals with a range of questions, including: what historical and structural factors have shaped state consolidation and state formation in Pakistan? How does Pakistan's geo-strategic position impact the country's political and governance system as well as relationship of the state with society? This section also focuses on how the country's economic situation and persistent challenges of national integration and national identity characterize social system and state-society relations.

The second section of chapter two deals with mapping and understanding the country's formal and informal mechanisms and their likely connection with the strategies that

the citizens adopt to make claims on and engage with the state. I first examine the country's formal governance system which is at work, before studying bargaining between various actors in society and the state, and the potential competition and interplay between formal and informal institutions. Drawing on and contributing to the understandings of other researchers, this section offers insights into political competition among various societal actors and between societal actors and the state in Pakistan.

**Chapter three**

Chapter three attempts to explain methodological considerations undertaken and methods of data collection employed for this research. This research is placed within the framework of qualitative research in social science, and studies the social phenomenon from the point of constructivist/interpretivist paradigm. The arguments put forth in this work are based on the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, which describes that there is no objective reality outside our belief system. Instead of statistical correlations and strict laws, this paradigm focuses on meanings, experiences, and beliefs. Furthermore, this chapter looks at how the decisions concerning relevant research techniques for data collection are made – how and from where data is collected, how it is processed, analyzed, and finally presented. Qualitative data material, which includes personal communications and participant observation came from first-hand interaction with the participants during six months fieldwork in a Punjabi village. This chapter also delineates strategies to enter the study site and conduct field work in rural Pakistan. My position as a Pakistani and the choice of conducting fieldwork in my own country is also discussed here. Furthermore, field work learning experiences and challenges, fieldwork interruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and ethical considerations, all these topic are part of this chapter's discussions.

**Chapter four**

Studying access to state sanctioned services is important to understand state-society interaction precisely because it helps people to construct abstract ideals of the state and describe themselves as citizens of a particular state. It is essentially through such construction and description, and through everyday workings of service delivery apparatus of the state at the local level, that the state is conceived as separate and distinct entity from other social institutions. The construction of the entity called 'the state' and everything that is believed to be different from it, like society, family, or community, can adequately be understood by placing it in a specific context. Therefore, it is imperative to place the analysis of state construction and state-society interaction in a particular socio-political context.

Chapter four outlines socio-economic, political, cultural structures of Bhi Nagar, the site of my fieldwork. This chapter is more than a mere background. The chapter describes the setting of the field site. The village is located in the larger context of the province of Punjab. The data collected through personal communications and observations on the layout of Bhi Nagar – which caste groups live there, land distribution in the village, sources of livelihood etc., – is discussed here. The chapter takes into account all important aspects of social life in the village, explaining the significant factors that might play a role in shaping political and social relations among the residents as well as between the village residents and the 'outside' political world. Through ethnographic vignettes, everyday social life, religious life, and

ceremonial activities in the village are described here. More precisely, the chapter focuses on political practices emerging from existing socio-political structure and their link with much deeper terrain of cultural values and structures, like locally acceptable ways of political interaction, alliances, cooperation, and localized moral principles.

Furthermore, this chapter explains how the working relations between landowning castes ('*zamindar quoms'*) and landless castes ('*kammi quoms'*) exist in the village and shape everyday political and economic life in the village. Particularly, the chapter examines how political participation and access to the local state institutions involve castes and political affiliations in the village. Given the asymmetric nature of power relations between the landowning castes and the landless castes, the chapter discusses political and social marginalization of the landless poor in the village. The landowning castes in the village, on the other hand, are discussed as a dominant factor in the village's economic, social, and political affairs. Aspects of inter-caste relations are also detailed in this chapter.

The chapter also examines further split of a caste group in the village into a social subunit called *biradri* and argues that the way the villagers see their political and social role and the way they associate to one another in the community is mainly shaped by morals and values stemming from the domain of *biradri*. The chapter further suggests that *biradri* plays a significant role in the village when it comes to assistance, solidarity, and political and economic cooperation.

**Chapter five**

This chapter documents the ways in which the image of the Pakistani state is formed in the Bhi Nagar area. In other words, I document here the common perception of the Pakistani state. By common perception I mean how the rural residents in the context of everyday political and social life talk and construct ideas about the state as well as experience it. Following Akhil Gupta (Gupta, 1995) and Corbridge et al. (2005), I argue that the ideas and images of what the state is in Bhi Nagar, are nurtured firstly by micro level practices of the state authorities. The villagers in their day-to-day life interact with the local-level state authorities. In these interactions, the rural residents sometimes meet with officers responsible for law-and-order (e.g., police constables), public service provision (e.g., basic health unit doctor and village schoolteacher), and collecting land record and land revenue (e.g., patwari). The villagers sometimes also come into face-to-face contact with the government departments responsible to issue various documents, cards, and certificates (e.g., union council and NADRA). These quotidian encounters are one source of image formation on the state in the area. Secondly, television is another source in the village through which the people make sense of what the state is and what are its policies and laws.

I demonstrate in this chapter that the residents of Bhi Nagar hold contradictory understandings about 'the state' (*riyasat*). On the one hand, they see the state in paternalistic terms. The dominant view of the state among the residents is of care and generosity. They view the state in terms of provider and source of wealth. The state is associated with powerful hopes of listening to their problems and providing funds necessary to develop their village. On the other hand, they have also developed cynical ideas towards the state. For the village population. the state is an organization staffed with biased and corrupt employees for whom

the local people are easy prey to earn money. They see the state administration as 'wahan py *zalalat or ruswai ki siwa kuch nahi* (there is nothing but dishonour and shame )'. I have argued that the village residents hold positive views about the national and provincial realm of the Pakistani state, while its local and everyday realm is criticized and seen in a bad light.

The findings of this chapter are aligned with the theoretical reflections among social scientists who argue that the state as an entity exists not only in physical sense, as a collection of institutions, but it also exists as an idea (Abrams, 1988; Migda, 2001). Thomas Hansen (Hansen, 2001) further develops this analytical trend and distinguishes between a unified and coherent image of the state and its contradictory practices at local level that contradicts the image of unity and wholeness.

**Chapter six**

The main concern of this chapter is to frame an investigation into politics in general at the grassroots in Bhi Nagar. This chapter maintains that efforts to advance demands for better services is part of citizen activism and focusing on this type of activism can help to understand the micro-level modalities of interaction between the state and citizen (Houtzager & Acharya, 2001; Walle & Scott, 2011). This chapter further maintains that western understanding of terminologies like ‘political party’, ‘civil society’, ‘citizenship’, ‘interest groups’, ‘local government’ or ‘bureaucracy’, which are frequently used to understand state –

society interaction, are not very helpful in the context of countries in the global South, to capture the nature of dealings between citizens and the state (Kaviraj, 1997; Kaviraj, 2001; Chatterjee, 2004). Using data from the field setting, this chapter sets out to analyse what is functioning in the space between society and the state in the Bhi Nagar area, assessing political actors, dynamics, and intermediary institutions that are operating between villagers and the state. This chapter illustrates that where formal channels are absent or weak and where the majority of people lack access to reliable avenues for political interaction with the state, then which institutions do the people approach to have their voices heard and complaints addressed? The chapter goes on to discuss the question: what role do different non-state actors who act as 'intermediaries' between their fellow villagers and the wider political world play in shaping local embodiment of the state and people's experience with it?

Taking further what I argue in chapter five, I show in this chapter that the image of local realm of the Pakistani state as corrupt, biased, and ineffectual has produced conducive conditions for politics of intermediaries – where process of interaction between the villagers and outside political world is intensely mediated by the village-level political figures. These local intermediaries are active in a range of ways in the village: working 'between' villagers and the state, working as 'linkage' between villagers and the electoral regime, and sometimes working 'like' the state.

Throughout this chapter concepts like 'everyday mediation' (Berenschot, 2010), 'informal people' (Bayat, 1997), 'institutions in the middle'(Krishna, 2009), 'mediated states' (Menkhaus, 2008), 'political society' (Chatterjee, 2004), 'patron and clients' (Gellner & Waterbury, 1977), 'the grey zone of politics' (Auyero, 2006), 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006) and 'weapons of weak' (Scott,1985) have been used as the 'analytical lens' to

document indirect nature of interaction between the villagers and representatives of the electoral regime and state power. The chapter has also shown that the state in the Bhi Nagar has neither complete control over public monopoly nor can it be said that it functions there as a monolithic and unified institutions. The state exists in Bhi Nagar through a large number of local negotiations and mediatory practices. By addressing the complex nature of politics in the area, this chapter demonstrates how various political actors are involved in blurring boundary between ‘state’ and ‘society’. The chapter further observes how various political actors through various modalities remove significant acts of governance form the state.

**Chapter seven**

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter. In this chapter I present the main points of all chapters in the thesis. This chapter also analyses analytical themes and summaries on each research query of the dissertation. In addition, I also present here discussion about research contributions that my study makes.

# Chapter one

## Literature Review and conceptual framework

The conceptual guidance for this thesis and literature review went hand in hand. What is included in this chapter is a body of literature that guided me how the data had to be collected, analysed, and presented in this thesis. The discussion below moves from 'the anthropology of the state' literature to the literature on citizens interaction with 'the everyday state' (Corbridge et al., 2005; see also Sardan, 2008; Bierschenk & Sardan, 2014; Obeid, 2010; Hunt, 2006; Hansen T. B., 2001; Verkaaik, 2001) in the Global South. Both type of literature provided a suitable framework for the thesis.

## Studying 'the state': anthropological approaches

> 'The paradox of what we call the state is at once an incoherent, multifaceted ensemble of power relations and a vehicle of massive domination... despite the almost unavoidable tendency to speak of the state as an 'it' the domain we call the state is not a thing, system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules and practices cohabiting in limiting, tension ridden, often contradictory relation to each other' (Brown, 1995, p. 174).

There is little agreement in social sciences on how to conceptualize and analyse the state, making it 'a baffling phenomenon' (Berki, 1989, p 12), or a 'messy concept' (Mann, 1984, p 187). Many scholars theorize the concept of the state either by considering it a strategic site or by considering different functions it performs. For institutionalists, the state is what Max Weber says, 'a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use

of physical force within a given territory' (Weber, 1991 [1919], p 78). Institutionalists, following Weber's work, thus develop an argument about the state as a concrete structure equipped with physical force to make and implement laws within its jurisdiction. The functionalists, on the other hand, conceptualize the state in terms of the purpose it serves. For instance, scholars belonging to Marxist school of thought define the state as 'a political instrument, a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another' (Lenin, as cited in Obo & Coker, 2014).

Theoretical approaches proposed by Emile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1933/1960) and Max Weber (Weber,1978/1922) have long been used to examine the state. The central theme in these analyses is the demarcation of the boundary between 'state' and 'society'. Durkheim and Weber emphasize a division between institutions governing personal relationships and institutions regulating the broader society. They have marked those societies where boundaries between state and society are clearly demarcated as societies organized on legal and rational principles, and those societies where boundary is contested proposition as societies where political behaviour of inhabitants is largely influenced by traditional institutions.

According to 'the statist approach', influenced mainly by Max Weber, the states are 'organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes or society' (Skocpol, 1985, as cited in Cingolani, 2018, p. 93). This view assigns independent power to the state and regards it as a separate entity from the social forces. For them, the state is not just an arena of conflict or mere a tool in the hands of few to exploit and oppress

economically weaker segments of the society, but ‘a complex of institutions capable of structuring the character and outcomes of group conflict’ (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 937). The statists also criticize liberal conceptualizations of the state which view politics as a reflection of interests among competing groups and the state as ‘a neutral broker between competing interests’ (ibid.). Michael Mann, a statist, criticise functionalist, Marxist, and the liberal views about the state in the following words:

> ‘they have reduced the state to the pre-existing structures of civil society. This is obviously trure of the Marxist , the liberal and the functionalist traditions of state theory, each of which has seen the state predominantly as a place, an *arena,* in which the struggles of classes , interest groups and individuals are expressed and institutionalized, and - in functionalist versions - in the which the General Will ( or, to use modern terms, core values or normative consensus) is expressed and implemented. Though such theories disagree about many things , they are united in denying signficant autonomous power to the state’ (Mann,1984, p. 1-2).

However, reacting to the largely uncritical production of ‘the statist approach’ in the literature, scholars who look at the state through the prism of social forces demonstrate that the state does not appear or is being experienced in the same way everywhere; neither the idea of the state in different political contexts can be defined according to the Weberian logic of ‘rationality’ and ‘modernity’ (Abrams, 1988; Mitchell, 1991; Gupta, 1995; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Das & Poole, 2004; Krohn-Hansen & Nustad, 2005). States are not only the product of a system in which bureaucracy is tied to rationality; their formation is also influenced by social and economic realities of a particular place, culture, and history.

Moreover, according to this approach, it is very difficult to establish that the state can exercise its authority as a coherent and single institution. The evident factor in this regard is that the state appears to be nothing but only an idea, lacking any institutional coherence. In the presence of a multitude of branches, layers, organizations, competing components constituting the bureaucratic setup of the state, presenting the state as a unified entity would be misleading (Fuller & Harriss, 2001).

Indeed, for many scholars, the boundary between the state and society is a contested proposition (Gupta, 1995; Mitchell, 1991). Philip Abram, for instance, challenges Weberian concept of the state, arguing instead that the state is nothing but "an ideological project" (Abram 1988: 76):

> 'the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is ... It starts its life as an implicit construct; it is then reified; as the *res publica* ... and acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice. The ideological function is extended to a point where conservative and radicals alike believe that their practice is not directed at each other but at the state. The world of illusion prevails' (ibid., p 58).

In similar vein, along with emphasising the empirical and visible aspect of the state in the form of formal institutions, Mitchell also views the state as 'a common ideological and cultural construct' (Mitchell, 1991, p. 81). In this sense, it can be said that both aspects –

abstract as well as empirical – have to be taken into consideration to understand the state completely. Further explorations of the state reveal that the boundaries between society and the state are indistinct, ‘fluid and negotiable according to social context and position’(Fuller & Harriss, 2001, p. 15), boundaries separating state from society however exist, and citizen often feel the presence and make sense of the state through these ‘blurred boundary’. The realization of a ‘blurred boundary’ between state and society has led authors like Gupta (1995), Fuller & Harris (2001), and Bierschenk & Sardan (2014) to develop a sensitive approach to the social and economic realities of particular places in which the state is rooted. These authors encourage to study people’s attempt to build ideas about the state, translating those ideas into realities, and how they relate themselves to state institutions, policies, and practices.

To challenge the idea of the state advanced by political scientists and lawyers, anthropologists study interaction of the states with other sources of power, quite often referred to as ‘informal’ system of politico-legal practices rooted in institutions not sanctioned by the state. Authors who have taken up this approach are quite sensitive to the social and economic realities of a particular place in which the state is rooted. This leads to context-specific analysis of the state, which emphasises that the nature of the state changes according to economic, social, and political realities of the place. A significant progress in the application of ‘context-specific’ approach has been demonstrated by authors like Jhon Harriss (Harris, 2005) and Thomas Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (Bierschenk & Sardan, 2014). These authors argue in their studies that the dividing line which sets the state apart from society cannot be constructed in abstract. In fact, political authority exercised by the entity called ‘the state’ involves negotiation with other centres of powers in society, and therefore the separating line between the state and society can best be analysed in a particular social

and political economic context. To put it differently, in spite of the fact that the state and society have deep links with each other, there is however a split between these two entities – the nature of that split can only be studied contextually.

During the last three decades, scholars writing in reference to postcolonial/subaltern traditions have also revealed, along with blurriness between the state and society, pervasiveness of colonial legacies in the study of the state and its institutions (Kaviraj 1997; Guha 1997). They have rejected classical explanation of societal evolution from conventional to modern society. They draw attention to the fact that using western understanding of terminologies like 'state', 'society' 'bureaucracy', 'civil society', 'citizenship', etc., can be misleading to clarify citizen-state interaction in the postcolonial societies. For instance, Sudipta Kaviraj (1997) in his study of the Indian state argues,

> 'it is a tiresomely standard procedure in political analysis to investigate (relations) between the state and society. What this really means, or what this exercise will yield cognitively cannot be clear unless we know what exactly goes into these two concepts, and how their conceptual boundary is established' (cited in Kapila, 2003, p. 2)

According to postcolonial/subaltern scholars, these terminologies in the context of western societies conceptualize the state in Weberian terms – an independent and discrete organization with its own dynamics and agency. The major argument of postcolonial/subaltern scholars is not that we should drop these terms altogether, but they

want readers to be familiar with the histories and origins of these concepts and what their usage might reflect in a different context (Kapila, 2003).

Thus, for a unique and well-founded analysis of how citizen interact with the state and how they understand and perceive the state, this thesis, along with 'the anthropology of the state' approaches, also benefits from postcolonial/subaltern studies, chiefly from their critique of the idea of state/society binary when studying citizen and state interaction in the global South.

## Interaction between citizen and 'the everyday state': perspectives from the global South

> 'For many citizens in postcolonial states … the reality and experience of citizenship depend not just on the content of laws and regulations but also on the strength of their personal social network…. informality is not simply some cultural thing that citizens impose on the state. Rather, their use of personal connections is also a response to the informalized, particularistic character of the… state itself. In this context, the cultivation of personal connections constitutes an important form of political agency as it enables citizens to deal with unresponsive and unpredictable state institutions' (Berenschot & Klinken, 2018, p 95, 96, 107).

In the absence or weakness of formal channels of intermediation between citizens and the state, what could be other possible alternative ways for citizens for a meaningful interaction

with the state authorities and make demands on the state for economic resources? This question has been addressed by focussing on informal institutions, leaving aside formal centres of powers, such as principles and procedures established and sanctioned by the state. The informal citizen-state interactions have been examined in multiple ways, such as research on political and social actors with the ability to mediate between citizens and the representatives of the state, studies on economic and political transections happening outside state sanctioned sites, and scholarships on citizens' 'everyday' strategies and choices for interaction with the state.

The particular role of informal institutions is an important analytical tool that has been suggested to understand citizen-state interaction in countries of the global south. Informal institutions, in the words of Helmke and Levitsky, refers to 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels" (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 725). To put it another way, informal institutions take shape when common expectations, which lie outside the official 'rules of the game', influence political behaviour. If a particular behaviour exists with no particular pattern and order, or when political behaviour has its roots outside the state sanctioned rules in a given context, that political behaviour cannot be termed as formal or institutionalized. However, if political behaviour is influenced by the written 'rules of the game' and any deviation from those rules is considered a punishable act through legally prescribed channels, that behaviour-influencing institution can be considered a formal institution.

The term 'informality' started to appear in academic and policy research in the 1970s. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and anthropologist, Keith Hart (1973), are considered frequent contributors to the research on the informal activities during this period.

They noted that the informal sector encompassed a range of activities, ranging from minor survival activities to profitable businesses. In its early understandings, the informal sector was regarded as a feature of pre-capitalist traditions, which would disappear with the arrival of the capitalist economic traditions. The scholars from the Structuralist approach (advocated by scholars like Alejandro Portes) (Portes,1983) however argued that the formal and informal cannot be viewed as separate from each other; in fact, the informal sector is a distinctive feature of capitalist traditions. From this perspective, the concepts informality and formality can be understood more as a continuum than as two exclusive divisions.

On the other hand, the views of scholars like De Soto (Soto, 1989, 1996, 2000) from the Legalist traditions highlight the dynamic and vital nature of informality. For De Soto, the unregulated sector consisted of such entrepreneurs who wanted to circumvent complicated legal procedures. He went on to describe informality as unused energy that is hampered by official rules and regulations. From the Legalist point of view, utilizing this energy by addressing property rights and regulation hindrances can encourage economic growth. De Soto also stressed that the poor performance of the state causes the informal sector to flourish, and – once individuals find alternative ways to engage with the state other than formal ways, which are free from bureaucratic hurdles and complicated legal procedures – the entrepreneurs in the unregulated sector can enjoy liberty, albeit they bear costs for this liberty.

Citizen-state interactions are often also viewed through the dynamics of civil society-state lenses. Certain narratives project civil society as a residual realm created by ‘the state’: a

space which is rival to the state power, where all non-state, non-restrictive and free-of-coercion activities can take place. In other narratives, it is the other way around; the state is the residual realm of an idealized, romanticised, and perfect civil society, where heterogeneous and diverse elements in the society compete against each other to make claims on the state. The state in these accounts is presented as being responsive to citizens' demands, to change and share power, and can be held in check. And civil society in these accounts appears as a space of virtuous behaviour and a force of democratic influences (Howell & Pearce, 2001). Although the ideas that these narratives bring forth about civil society have been helpful in some contexts, they are less adequate in capturing complex dealings between citizens and the state in the context of Pakistan.

Further, in an effort to consider citizen-state interaction in the informal realm, it is important to pay attention to Chatterjee's (2004) theory of 'political society'. This theory is significant in terms of challenging assumptions about state-society interaction in much of the literature on the topic. According to Chatterjee, citizens living in precarious situations in 'most of the world' are often made to adopt such strategies to interact with the state that 'transgress the strict lines of legality' (Ibid., p. 40). He further states that vulnerable lives in India and in other parts of the global South grapple with harsh realities of the political society, where citizens of developing countries engage with the appendages of the state by applying 'strategic use of illegality and violence' (Ibid., p. 76).

Chatterjee maintains that 'civil society' in the postcolonial countries is basically an 'arena of institutions and practices inhabited by a relatively small section of the people whose

social locations can be identified with a fair degree of clarity' (Ibid., p. 38). Majority of the inhabitants of the global South, Chatterjee argues further, are acknowledged 'tenuously' and 'ambiguously' as right-bearing legal citizens, and therefore are not considered by the state institutions as real members of civil society (Ibid., p. 38). But this does not mean that they are out of reach of the state and denied access to the field of politics. As inhabitants of a place that falls within the territorial jurisdiction of a particular state, they cannot be left uncontrolled and ungoverned. Attempts to govern put these people into political interaction with state institutions. For Chatterjee, this political interaction, however, does not take place in the sense anticipated in the constitution. These people, as an individual or a group, explore this uncertain political field in search of connections – with people who are in similar situations, with influential and privileged people in the vicinity, with 'street-level bureaucracy', or perhaps with religious and ethnic groupings. Here, citizen-state interaction in 'political society' is more 'democratic' and better suitable to the political dynamics and the requirements of the majority in the global South. To illustrate his point further, Chatterjee argues that genuine political emancipation takes place in 'political society' where residents through informal activities object to the enforcement of the existing laws in an attempt to facilitate their survival and show what they are really longing for.

Certainly, the durability of 'political society' is controversial as informally negotiated citizen-state interactions tend to ignore neutrality in relation to accessing the state and its resources. As Matthew Nelson (Nelson, 2016, 2016a) highlights, another crucial issue with the informal arrangement in 'political society' is that it prevents genuine democratic involvement. In informal arrangements, it is more the patronage of a local politician than individual opinion that motivates citizens to vote. That is why, in elections, the choice is less about voting for a suitable candidate, but more a means for buying extra-legal public services

and arbitrary enforcement of law from a patron in exchange for votes. Further, while responding to Chatterjee (2004), who believes that 'political society' is a better alternative to democratic activity, Nelson asks, 'should "democratic" patterns of survival be encouraged within or outside of the law?' (Nelson, 2013). Nelson, while agreeing that informality might help citizens to defend their interests in the short term, either through the help of a patron or collective resistance, does not ignore the instability of politics associated with Chatterjee's theory. For Nelson, enforcement of rule of law is the core value of democracy. He emphasises discrediting and changing the existing laws rather than breaking them. Occasionally, it might appear that it is quite easy not to obey the law, however, according to Nelson, the implementation of the rule of law is fundamental for democratic activities.

Similarly, James Scott's (Scott, 1985) study of resistance and Joel Migdal's inquiry into the dynamics of state-society interaction are also very useful in understanding citizen-state interaction in the non-regulated spaces. James Scott, in his study of the relationship between influential and weaker segments of society, has explained how the powerless resists the powerful through their 'ordinary' and 'everyday' actions. According to him, politics does not only take place in the form of organized and continuous political actions, but also in the form of less visible and subtle actions. He identifies the 'weapons of the weak' that include 'gossip, slander, condemnation, theft, foot-dragging, desertion, evading paying taxes or inflicting damage to property' (Scott 1985, as cited in Ginzberg, 2014, p 4). These actions, according to Scott, involve low risk, and are very effective in informal spaces when it comes to challenge the status quo and for the distribution of public goods and services. Influenced by the concept of 'weapons of weak', Asef Bayat (Bayat, 2013) provides a convincing account about how people, through 'ordinary' efforts in informal spaces, overcome regulatory constraints. The ordinary acts help people to redefine their relationship with the

state and defend their interests. Through ‘everyday’ resistance, Bayat states, people at the margin display robustness as well as challenge the constant servitude and designation of passivity attributed to them. He further argues that very often citizen-state interaction in unregulated spaces is promoted by the state for its own benefits – such as encouraging economic and political stability through jobs, or strategically linking support of the citizens, who are active in the informal sector, with the support for the regime.

While Scott’s work is useful to understand the everyday forms of resistance that can be found at the margins and in the unregulated spaces, Migdal’s (1988) work provides important insight into state-society encounter, particularly how the functioning of states, mostly in the Third World, is compromised by existing institutions at the local level. He illustrates that, contrary to expectations, people’s political behaviours are predominantly influenced by informal institutions rather than formal ones. He further writes that the failure of the states to achieve desired goals also happens because of unrealistic standards associated with state behaviour. These shortcomings and the types of social institutions that are present in the Third World affect the capabilities and coherence of the states there.

Further, Migdal in his state-in-society perspective has devised a theory of ‘strong states’ and ‘weak states’. For him, an essential feature of any state involves its capacity to ‘penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways’ (Migdal 1988, p. 22-23, as cited in Lambach 2004, p. 6). Strong states have greater abilities to perform these tasks, while weak states are less capable in this capable regard. For critics, however, this binary framework, which assigns states one of these categories, seems very simple and uncomplicated. They regard the strong-

weak binary as context specific. For them, not all properties associated with weak states always have to be there. Some states (like Pakistan) look to be strong when it comes to launching state coercion and appropriating resources, but they fail in fulfilling other tasks such as making people malleable objects so that they can behave in officially desired ways.

Vand de Walle and Scott (Walle & Scott, 2011) contribute to the conceptualization of the provision of goods and services as acts that enable the state to become 'visible' to the people in its jurisdiction and, quoting Migdal who defines the state as an entity made up of 'image and practice' (Migdal 2001, p. 16), that play a pivotal role in shaping images and practices. Services can also be one of the means at the state's disposal to enact 'rules of the game', emphasising that it is the supreme 'de jure authority' within its jurisdiction. Apart from this, they further shed light on how public service provision helps the state to assert itself as a 'distinct' and 'visible' organization operating in a given territory. Therefore, Vand de Walle and Scott argues that construction of public infrastructures like town halls, hospitals, schools, tax offices, police posts and establishment of other de-concentrated offices helped states in the 19$^{th}$ century Europe in the process of 'boundary building', within which only one source of authority could exist. From this point of view, the operation of 'boundary building', according to Vand de Walle and Scott, points to 'a coercive process of penetration by attacking, eliminating and neutralising internal rivals'' (Walle & Scott, 2011, p 10).

As part of the symbolic and real aspect of strategies harnessed by citizens to make demands on the state, services can also be used as an effective tool to establish hegemonic authority. Vand de Walle and Scott further view citizen-state interaction for improved services as effective mechanism for state-building, whereby the sovereign state may utilize

public works like constructing highways and railroads to expand its reach to faraway areas in its territory (penetration), attempt at spreading common culture and standardizing citizen's interaction with the state ( standardization), and resolve disputes among warring parties in its territory, bind political loyalties of the citizen to the state and incorporate all factions in the society (accommodation ) (Walle & Scott, 2011).

A less investigated impact of service delivery is explored by James Ferguson and Larry Lohman (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994). In their influential work titled The Anti-Political Machine, they take anthropological analysis of development-projects into new terrain. By applying Michele Foucault's important thesis on discourse and power, they explain how the execution of development-projects produces the 'side effect' of expanding and empowering bureaucratic setup of state power. For Ferguson and Lohman, the expansion of the state to the peripheral areas in the form of tax collectors, police posts, courts, or local government is not a cause of celebration, for the extension of the state into the lives of citizen has also 'unintended consequences' in the form of exploitation and oppression. However, contrary to Ferguson's argument, there are many studies which are indicative of the fact that as opposed to complaining about the presence of the state, citizens quite often show annoyance at the absence of the state from their lives (Jones, 2005).

Another line of thinking concerning citizen-state encounters has been spurred by Boege et al., (2008), who argue that the Weberian model of public authority generally associated with the west is not present everywhere. They assert that in many countries in the global South the state does not enjoy an advantageous position to take care of governance in

a legal and rational way. Such states fall under a political framework they have called "hybrid political order", which they view as an order where:

> 'diverse and competing claims to power and logics of order co-exist, overlap and intertwine, namely the logic of the 'formal' state, of traditional 'informal' societal order, and of globalisation and associated social fragmentation (which is present in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious...). In such an environment, the 'state' does not have a privileged position as the political framework that provides security, welfare, and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy and capacity with other structures. In short, we are confronted with hybrid political orders, and these orders differ considerably from the western model state' (p. 10).

If this is the case, the question then arises how citizens experience and interact with the state in such a context. Here Christian Lund (2006) and Ken Menkhaus (2008) works can help us. Lund examines local governance arrangements in a context where multiple actors compete for authority. He introduces the concept of 'twilight institutions' defined as 'organizations and institutions that exercise legitimate public authority, but do not enjoy legal recognition as part of the state' (Lund, 2006a, p. 675). The focus of the concept of the twilight institutions is to make sense of where 'public authority in some contexts does not always fall within the exclusive realm of government institutions' (Lund, 2006b, p. 685). For Lund, the presence of the twilight institutions indicates the blurring nature of the boundary between what is 'state'authority and what is not. Such institutions also challenge ideas about the state as a fixed entity which is separate from society. Moreover, these institutions also make boundaries ambiguous between what is legal and illegal, formal and informal, lawful and unlawful, and so on. Thereby Lund further notes that 'while formalization is often propelled by

government institutions and reform, formal rules and regulations are also negotiated and undone by corruption, political networks and powerful alliances with, and indeed within, the very same institutions' (Lund, 2006b, p. 699-700). To Lund, these institutions do not engage in revolutionary or anti-state activities. They only project their presence as parallel to the public authority, helping those ordinary people who are in need, and working as a substitute where the state is not up to its assigned responsibilities.

Similarly, Ken Menkhaus (2008) introduces the concept of 'mediated states' to describe the interaction between citizens and the state in a context where formal and informal actors, institutions and norms coexist or even sometimes contradict. In many contexts, he suggests, formal political systems do not essentially compete with other centers of authority, but rather adopt a more prudent approach to work with informal institutions to achieve its administrative purposes. In order to gain access to the state institutions, citizens also put into practice mediating strategies, seeking out someone influential in their vicinity who can facilitate their access to the state officials and state resources. The mediated state model, defined by Menkhaus as a strategy used by the state to 'rely on a diverse range of local authorities to execute core functions of government and 'mediate' relations between local communities and the state' (Menkhaus, 2008, p. 30), also offers a way to overcome unsatisfactory dichotomy between formal and informal in the study of citizen of state interaction. As such, like 'twilight institutions', the concept of 'mediated state' also provides a useful model to study common conception of the state as well as citizen-state interaction in a context like Pakistan where domains of formal and informal actions, particularly at local level, quite often greatly overlap (Mohmand, 2016).

Along similar lines, Javier Auyero (2006) asserts the concept of 'the grey zone of politics', which he conceives as 'both an empirical object and an analytical lens that draws our attention towards a murky area where normative boundaries dissolve, where state actors and political elites promote and/or actively tolerate and/or participate in damage-making' (p. 245).

A number of interpretations of citizen-state interaction, especially those of anthropologists and political scientists, adhere to what might be called 'hierarchical' or 'patron-client' framework of action (Wolf, 2004). Certainly, these scholars approach the topic of citizen-state relation in different ways. Studied from this perspective, the 'patron-client' framework appears to be indispensable to Pakistani politics. Considerable work has empirically investigated the issue of citizen-state interaction in Pakistan by using this framework. The continuous theme in these studies has been that the landed gentry e.g., in Punjab continues playing a key role in matters related to resolving local disputes, negotiating access to the state functionaries, and delivering state mandated goods and services (Alavi, 1974; Chaudhry, 1999; Lyon, 2004; Martin, 2009; Nelson, 2011). These studies further show that the dominant classes can successfully manipulate local politics around land resources, informal village-level institutions, and kinship relations through tactics like intimidation, bribery, and influence, which enable landed elites to keep alive their economic and political superiority. By monopolizing the state at the local level, these landed elites gain privileged access to government contracts, jobs, and other benefits. The privileged position of these dominant groups enables them to act as 'intermediaries' between the poorer sections of the population and the state.

Substantial research from the perspective of patron-client actions suggests that the patron makes quid pro quo concessions, exchanging benefits and services for electoral advantages (Wilder 1999; Waseem, 1994a, 1994b). In order to gain access to the state, citizens pay rent to their patrons in the latter's role as doorkeepers of the state at the local level. The patrons persuade the state through political actions, influencing the state's pay out of rents (tax exemption, subsidies, licenses, permits, etc.) and preventing the state from attempting to reduce ineffective rents. It is also suggested that politicians manage citizen-state interaction and distribution of goods services through 'brokers', who possess necessary means to monitor political commitment and behaviour of their clients (Waseem, 2016).

Although the research produced by using patron-client model provides a convincing analysis at the both micro and macro level of factional and land-based politics in Punjab, it remains limited in scope, in particular because, firstly, citizens are more or less represented as permanently locked in patronage networks, with no choice, with no exit option, and so constantly relying on clientelist mode of interactions. Moreover, in this model, people in local politics show compliance and loyalty and are vertically attached to the landed gentry. Secondly, this patron-client model focuses insufficiently on how the concept of 'state' is perceived and frequently put to use by the individual citizen to make sure that the state authorities are accessible to them. However, this study proposes instead that citizens may have several options of alternative channels, and that they are at liberty to try different routes to access the state. Further, instead of presenting citizens as passive recipients, this study also asserts that citizens face the state close-up in their daily lives and are quite creative to make rights and entitlements accessible. Contrary to many other works, this study takes the position

that the people are not passive in their relationship with the state; in fact, they have a good understanding of how to extract benefits from the state sanctioned institution.

In addition, unlike scholarships that considers 'patron-client' framework as vital for the political process in Pakistan, this dissertation pays more attention to the everyday lobbying of citizens for accessing the state, and not just episodic demands on the state at the time of elections. Such focus involves paying considerable attention to day-to-day and quite often unanticipated political actions through which citizens chase their aspirations and face the practical realities of engagement with the state. One of the central points that sets this study apart from other existing discussions is that its underpinning research is meant to extend the literature on occasional citizen-state interaction at the time of elections to instead continue public engagement with the state. How do they interact with the state in order to have their issues resolved and demand fulfilled? While exploring this question, the focus of the research is on political actors, dynamics, and intermediary institutions that are working in informal spaces between villagers and the state. Studying this question, I purpose, is critical to enrich our understanding about the Pakistani state precisely because this question focuses more on citizens' daily encounter with it than on normative or abstract ideals of the state. In the same way, this study enhances our knowledge about citizenship praxis, especially what Dwyer (2010) calls 'substantive citizenship', which is understood as to what extent those who have legally been recognized as citizens can actually claim entitlements that they have legally been granted.

How the state visualizes it citizenry or population for management/governmentality, has been studied profoundly (Foucault, 1991). Instead exploring how the state sees its citizens, the topic that James Scott also pursues in Seeing Like a State (Scott, 1998), this study adopts a bottom-up perspective of the Pakistani state, documenting the different ways in which the state in rural Pakistan is seen and encountered by the people in pursuit of their benefits. Indeed, reflecting more closely on this aspect of the state provides an interesting opportunity to explore how interaction with state power influences citizens' thinking about the state as well as the way that they acquire importance in the eyes of officials and make demands on the state. Here we can also develop understanding of the strategies that the rural residents in Pakistan use to engage with the state which are appropriate to local political culture and local context of power and authority.

As such, for meaningful discussions on continued citizen-state engagement and how citizens experience and link up with ordinary official practices, another concept on which my study heavily relies is 'everyday mediation', which is provided by Ward Berenschot (2010). His ethnographic work provides the everyday routine of a local-level politician named Pravin Dalal in an Indian city, who works every morning from an office located at a roadside where the local residents come to seek his help to smoothen their interaction with the state authorities. For better understanding about the state appearances and its daily operation, Ward Berenschot emphasises that 'the (western) connotations that come with terms like "civil society", "political party", "citizenship" or "bureaucracy" do little to clarify the actual interactions that take place' at a micro level between citizen and the state. He is very explicit about studying variations and nuances of citizen-state interaction contextually. He further documents the role of different players of the patronage system, particularly different

measures and actions that they take to fill the 'gap' created by the poor presence of the governance infrastructure. He sees the informal role of political actors as central to the workings of the political systems in many countries in the 'global South':

> 'political mediation…cannot be seen as an aberration or an intrusion into the 'normal' operations of the state. On the contrary, I argue that political intermediaries — mediating between bureaucrats, citizens and service providers — are a constitutive part of the state in Gujarat. Political mediation is so deeply entrenched in the procedures, policies and habits that guide the daily functioning of state institutions that we can speak of a 'mediated state': the state is embedded in society in such a way that its interaction with citizens is, to a large extent, monopolized by networks whose political (and also often financial) success depends on their capacity to manipulate the implementation of the state's policies and legislation. For most of the citizens of Gujarat, the elements that constitute a state — its employees, its numerous laws and rules — are only experienced through the intervention of political intermediaries, and are thoroughly shaped by the operations of these intermediaries'(Berenschot, 2010, p. 884-902.

Such political mediation is not only important for citizens to access the state officials, but also for the state representatives to carry out its functions at the local level. Ward Berenschot further notes that the

> 'limited capacity of the Indian state to "read" society means that government officials are often forced to rely on political actors to provide the information needed to uphold the law and implement various schemes and policies. Welfare departments rely on

> Pravin Dalal to determine who qualifies for support; police officials rely on him for solving police cases;…hospitals rely on him to determine whether patients deserve discounts on their hospital bill' (Berenschot, 2010, p. 891).

In conclusion, as explained above, this research places emphasis on nonofficial spaces of actions, which citizens use to deal with, if not bypass, the state so as to extract something from it. The analyses in subsequent chapters answer many questions, including how citizens, in the face of improper functioning and quite often hostile nature of the formal institutions, influence the state for desired ends. I rely on the work of 'anthropologists of the state' to empirically unpack the subjective conception of the Pakistani state among the residents of Bhi Nagar village. While studying how inhabitants encounter the state authorities in their daily life, analytical concepts like 'political society' (Chatterjee, 2004), 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006), 'mediated states' (Menkhaus, 2008), and 'everyday mediation' (Berenschot, 2010) play a central role in my analysis. However, unlike Chatterjee (2004), this study does not consider informally negotiated citizen-state interaction as a panacea for the weakness of formal ways of interacting with the state. Taking inspiration from Nelson (2013), this study instead discusses the likely impact of citizen-state interaction in informal spaces on governance. Whereas informal citizen-state interaction may seem attractive to the citizen (as this can satisfy immediate material needs as well as reduce bureaucratic congestion), there are many 'negative' ramifications of this type of interaction: making it difficult to ensure that opportunities are available to all, fostering illegality, exploitation because of deregulation, and the undermining of the effectiveness and legitimacy of the state.

# Chapter two

## Context and Background: Fieldwork Country

This study investigates how people understand and negotiate with social, political, and economic order imposed by the state in Pakistan. To contextualize the interaction between citizen and state, it is important to highlight various aspects of Pakistan's political history. What we see in Pakistan is an institutional perplexity in which remnants of colonial past are covered by many layers of post-colonial institutional reforms. To understand the current encounter of citizens with the state requires that attention be paid to an individual's historical experiences with the state institutions. Understanding of past experiences is important as history guides how individuals see the state and vice versa. Mohamad Mamdani (1996), in his work Citizen and Subject, explores the effects of colonial heritage on post-colonial transformation in Africa and beyond. This work is very important here. In highlighting obstacles to democracy in Africa and other post-colonial societies, he provides a detailed account of the colonial past and its enduring effects. He says that while under direct colonial rule (French) rights and entitlements were decided on racial basis, under indirect rule (British) however the subjects were treated according to the indigenous and pre-existing political structure, with colonial-appointed individuals deciding the indigenous power relation. Indirect rule in Africa and in other parts was established by tapping into authoritative traditions in the existing political structure. Mamdani shows how post-colonial reforms and efforts are influenced by the colonial legacies and end up reproducing the same structure they are seeking to transform. Mamadani's work reminds us that thorough understanding of citizen-state interaction is not possible without paying sufficient attention to decades-old legacies.


**Administrative Map of Pakistan**[2]

[2] Courtesy of https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Pakistan_Administrative_Divisions.jpg


**Administrative Map of Punjab**[3]

[3] Courtesy of https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/administrative-map-pakistani-province-of-vector-34154034

Historical process of state evolution in Pakistan prevented impersonal and rule-bound conduct of bureaucracy. The sultanates and the kingdoms that reigned over the Indian Subcontinent before the colonial rule had maintained themselves through feudalistic power-relations. The rulers kept a small cadre of bureaucrats, but to greater extent were dependent on cultivating personalistic and clientelist relations to maintain their domination. Instead of challenging the existing power structures, the British opted to build on top of them (Habib, 1975). As Newbury (2000) points out, in many parts of the Indian Subcontinent, the colonialist chose to control the territory through native rulers, who had vast resources at their disposals and whose particularistic and despotic power over people was sanctioned as long as they supported the British, both financially and militarily. And even parts of India that the British controlled without an intermediary – such as Assam, Bengal, Bombay, Bihar, Madras, Punjab, United Province, Central Province – the colonial institutions continued existing as alien entities, largely associated with the system of power that flourished on exploitative and oppressive practices. Across India, the political control of the colonial state remained absent from the everyday practical world of the people. It made little effort to create a conducive environment for prosperity and well-being of the people. The Indians were left on their own, mainly dealing with problems like security, infectious disease, or poverty by relying on personal and social connections. Given this colonial past, unsurprisingly the colonial legacies taken over by the state of Pakistan from its predecessor at the time of independence in 1947 would produce different results in subsequent history (Alavi, 1972).

Pakistan came into being as result of partition of British India in 1947. When the two hundred years rule of the British in the Indian Subcontinent came to end, the region was carved up into Hindu and the Muslim majority areas, creating two independent states of India

and Pakistan, respectively. The basic administrative and governance setup that Pakistan inherited from the colonial rule was significantly substandard compared to India. The poor infrastructure along with the circumstances of independence and colonial legacies set Pakistan on a different trajectory than India in its post-partition history (Jalal, 1994). Over seven decades since its creation, Pakistani society has progressed from its original roots. It has lost its territory with the creation of Bangladesh, but its population has quadrupled. The state has been a major engine in national building based on ethnic and tribal consideration. It has shown great interest in state-led development through economic blueprint like five-year plans. The country today is equipped with hard infrastructure, such as roads, railways, bridges, etc., including a vast network of broadband internet connectivity. But still there are areas, especially rural areas that have not benefited enough from economic development, and consequently have poor external links and have no access to basic needs such as education and health facilities. Although the state presence seems effective in urban areas, militant organizations or 'feudal class', even if they are diminishing, have strong influence on rural society and politics. In those areas, the yawning gap between the state and society raises the political role of informal actors, such as kinship, as well as structures which act as state-like (Qadeer, 2006).

The focus of Pakistani state on inclusion and exclusion in history has shaped cultural and social aspects of the society. Since its inception, various understandings of the idea of Pakistan have characterized state-society relations, causing repeated political and ideological uncertainty. Pakistan is a diverse society with people holding different ethnic and linguistic identities, but the state mainly exhibits centrist and uniform tendencies while interacting with the society. The state resists removal of Islam from national narrative and wants to use it as a unifying thread in nation-building. This continuous tension between state ideology and

pluralistic nature of society in Pakistan has been one of major stumbling blocks in stable state-society interaction (Talbot 2015). For long the development of ethnic nationalism has been suppressed by the state; however regional inequalities are frequently used as a main instrument to mobilize people for armed conflict with the state. State-society relations in Pakistan have gone through periodic incidences of violent upheavals followed by periods that appear to be peaceful. The periodic military coups in the history of the country have seen state-society relation, swinging from ‘strong state’ and ‘weak society’ to a time period when it is the other way around, as implied by the toppling of three military regimes through months of agitation and protests (Qadeer, 2006).

There are convincing arguments in recent studies that, beneath the formal structures, the underlying political dynamics and interests in Pakistan are dominated by a small elite in which membership is based on favoritism rather than ideology (Martin, 2009; Zaidi, 2014). The national political outcomes are influenced by recurring alliances of top leaderships of armed, judicial, and administrative officers; industrial and landed elite; and members of provincial and national legislatures. The leadership of these bodies are strictly kept within the family dynasty. At the local level, there is an explicit consensus between local bureaucracy and informal power brokers such as businessmen, landowners, criminals, religious leaders on a narrow and exclusive political settlement. The influential groups in local politics focus on protecting and securing support for their national patrons in order to have access to state resources (Wilder, 1999; Waseem 1994a, 1994b).

Indeed, extensive interests of military and other government bodies in land possession shows that the state in Pakistan operates in the same way a feudal landlord does. According

to Asim Sajjad Akhtar, the unique way in which the state in Pakistan manages political affairs with the society when it comes to expanding its economic base are best described by the notion of 'state-as-landlord' (Akhtar, 2006). For him, 'politics of common sense' (Akhtar, 2018) better meets the needs of the people in Pakistan, an argument associated with Chatterjee (2004) in the context of South Asian politics. Research has also uncovered that social features such as caste, tribe, and clan have a historical role in providing workable structures to the Pakistani society. But the same social features hinder social and culture mobilization and keep centuries old power relations intact (Wilder, 1999; Javid, 2011; Chaudhary, 1999). Moreover, the same social structure disrupts the benefits of economic development to vulnerable people like poor people, women, and minorities (Nelson, 2011). Likewise, it has also been asserted that the way political patronage works on local level is among the root causes of political instability and violence in Pakistani society; and that patronage based political system in the country prevents citizens from making direct claims on the state, and how high-level political competition to control and shape local level state institutions in 'winner-takes-all political' game leads to strengthening, not weakening, elite's power. This takes place through private appropriation of state institutions in order to settle scores with opponents and reward clients. This kind of political competition, it is argued, is stopping the emergence of political coalition among rural masses that might be representative of either class-specific or caste-specific interests (Martin, 2009).

Similarly, the history of sudden overthrow of civilian regimes in Pakistan shows that the military governments in Pakistan have tried three times to strengthen their position by introducing a system of local government in order to deal with opponents and provide

patronage. In this way, like civilian rulers, the military was able to establish a class of politicians who could easily be persuaded through conditional provision of state patronage and funds. The same politicians were used for favorable election outcomes and to legitimize military regimes (Khwaja et al., 2006). At the same, to keep up illicit practices, the ruling elite strives to maintain a weak accountability mechanism intact by not disclosing administrative and policy related knowledge to the public. The description of efficient bureaucracy providing public services in an effective and equitable manner is not applicable in the case of Pakistan (Khan et al., 2013). The access to information on important policy matters is restricted to particular group of people, who are considered by the public at large as incompetent, illegitimate and corrupt (Niaz, 2010). The literature also discusses what needs to happen if Pakistan is to move from fragile to autonomous and strong state. In this respect, Anas Malik's work (2011) offers a unique way to study political culture of Pakistan, leading him to emphasize that narrow interests, unlike ideology, are the main motivations behind actions of politicians and their challengers. Malik goes into details of how the elite in Pakistan exploits and manipulates the vulnerabilities of the state either to maintain the status quo or expand their influence.

The legal history reveals that the constitution of Pakistan has often been abolished or suspended and the basic principles of the country's legal framework have been reviewed by successive governments in order to make them relevant to their needs. Following creation of Pakistan in 1947, the first constitution of the country, which took almost a decade of political deliberation, was repealed by the armed forces only two years after its promulgation. Since that time, the country has adopted two entirely new constitutional documents. Although two-thirds votes in the parliament are needed to introduce changes in

the constitution, the country's civilian or military leaderships on numerous occasions have found it easy to amend the constitution in accordance with their desire. For example, the country's last constitution, which was adopted in 1973, has been amended 24 times. The role of the country's judiciary has also remained controversial vis-à-vis these amendments. It gave consent to each of the army proposed amendments, including providing legitimacy to the military's decision to end the nascent democratic role in the country by relying on 'doctrine of necessity' (Khan, 2016). The country has a parliamentary form of government where the president being the head of the state holds ceremonial status and the Prime Minister along with the cabinet leads the executive branch of the government. Since the establishment of the country, the political system has often switched between elected civilian rules and undemocratic military-led regimes. In Pakistan, the most recent transition from undemocratic to democratic rule took place in 2008. The bicameral federal legislature of the country is composed of the upper house (called Senate) and the lower house (called National Assembly). The members of the latter house are chosen through a first-past-the-post electoral system under universal adult voting rights. The Electoral College for the former house consists of members of the National Assembly and the legislative assemblies of each of the provinces. The four provinces of the country with constitutionally protected autonomy and each having a directly elected unicameral legislative body play a significant role in the federal republic.

The division of powers between the center and provincial tiers of government are listed in the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In case conflict arises between the two tiers of the federal structure, the provincial tier is treated as subordinate to

the central tier. In terms of administration and functions, the central jurisdiction includes currency; foreign relations; defence; energy; national cooperation in planning and economy; administration of strategic roads and expressways; governing state capital; keeping geological and meteorological records; population surveys; exploitation of natural resources; and industrial development. All other subjects are reserved for the provincial jurisdiction. Article 140A of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan is about the establishment of local government, but it does not specify its structure and function. That is why this tier is at the mercy of the provincial governments which delegates some function to it through ordinance. As Rondinelli et al., (1983, p.10) observed 'local governments or administrative units, it is assumed, can be effective channels of communication between the national government and local communities', including opening spaces for interaction between citizens and the state, giving citizen opportunity to have a say in governance related matters at the local level, and consequently increasing their stake in various aspects of country's politics. There have been many attempts in Pakistan to create an autonomous tier at the local level which would be independent in taking decisions and bridge the gap between citizens and the state. Several studies however have commented that the scope of these efforts remained less successful than expected. The state as a bureaucratic organization at the local level in Pakistan, according to these studies, remains weak and uninvolved in the lives of ordinary citizens, providing no opportunity to citizens to voice their demands and concerns through the system of local government (Khwaja et al., 2006). At the time of fieldwork, with varying degrees, a system of administrative decentralization, directly controlled from the provincial capital through bureaucracy, was in practice across all districts in Pakistan (Riaz, 2019).

The extensive role of the military in the country's politics is an important part of the political history of Pakistan. Military has ruled the country directly during the following phases: 1958-1972; 1977-1987; 1999-2007. In each of the phases, the armed forces imposed martial law in the country using charges of rampant corruption and bad governance as a pretext. Even during civilian takeovers, the influence of the powerful army on the country's economic, political, security, legal and foreign policies was significant (Haqqani, 2005). Not only this, but substantial imprints of armed forces can also be found in the country's banking, services, financial, agricultural, and manufacturing sectors (Siddiqa, 2007). Even during civilian governments, the state in Pakistan has remained a distant phenomenon for its citizens. Two main political parties of the country, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have remained influential during civilian takeovers. Both these parties espouse modern ideas, with the PML-N mainly believing promoting neo-liberal economic reforms and the PPP presenting a platform for socialist and leftist ideas. However, both these parties are largely considered family affairs, being led by charismatic personalities and their children (Waseem, 2016).

Easterly asserts that Pakistan is 'an intriguing paradox' (Easterly, 2012) where international transfer of economic resources and various state-led initiatives may have played a role in overall economic progress, however there is a significant failure to address entrenched social and institutional concerns. Ending poverty and extending cost effective services to its citizens has been the guiding principle for public policy in Pakistan (Hasnain, 2008). Every successive government in Pakistan, be it central or provincial, launches new schemes related to health, education, housing, poverty, infrastructure, and unemployment. For instance, programs like Prime Minister National Health Program, Khidmat Card, Khidmat-e-Punjab Zaver-e-Taleem, Kissan Package, Police Khidmat Markaz, Khidmat-e-

Punjab Rural Roads, Punjab Education Endowment Fund, Sehat Insaf Card Program, Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme, Benazir Income Support Program, to name few programs that have been initiated by various government in the province of Punjab in the last eight years, have channelled huge resources in various parts of the province. Similarly, four major welfare schemes which include social insurance/ social protection (e.g. Government Servants' Pension-cum-Gratuity Scheme – GSPGS; Public Sector Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance – PSBF&GI; Workers' Welfare Fund – WWF; Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution – EOBI); Zakat; Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal – PBM; Citizen Damage Compensation Program), various subsidies (e.g. Food Subsidies; Ramzan Package and Commodity Subsidy via the Utility Stores Corporation – USC), and development projects (e.g. Public Sector Development Program – PSDP), are larger state-run services for citizens funded through money collected in the form of tax or other charitable contributions.

There is however no evidence to prove that the state has been successful in providing effective services to its citizens. This fact is strongly reflected in the miserable performance of the country on all indicators of human development. Pakistan's performance remains severely poor with regards to indicators that are designed to determine social and economic well-being of the people in a country. Looking at the findings of UNDP's 2018 Human Development Index, Pakistan is placed 150$^{th}$ in the list of 189 countries included in the report. Unsurprisingly, approximately 30 percent of the total population (55 million) was below poverty line in 2016[4]. For years average expenses by the state on education account for 2 % of the GDP. Student admission rates in school have gradually increased in Pakistan over

[4] The Ministry of Planning and Development quoted in Dawn newspaper. Retrieved from https://www.dawn.com/news/1300512 (Accessed June 20, 2019)

the years, but satisfactory results of students' educational attainment have remained poor. Major chunk of educational financial intervention in Pakistan is either focused on paying salaries or building physical hardware like school construction and improving existing facilities. The country has almost 25 million children who are not going to school (AlifAilaan, 2014). The saddest aspect is that millions of children who rely on public schooling do not learn anything. The results of a recent national survey of public primary schools show that half of grade three students are unable to read books which are meant for lower graders. Poor performance of students is accompanied by frequent teacher absence, poor physical structure, and high numbers of students per teacher. It is unsurprising then that the number of private schools have been on the rise, evident from the declining number of admissions in public schools (Naviwala, 2019). As is the case for education, annual financial share in the budget for health is stagnant at 2.4 % of the GDP. This is clearly reflected in poor quality or worse, the complete absence of health care services in many parts of the country. A recent study has revealed that in many areas, especially in rural areas where 60% of the country's population live, less qualified medical practitioners are the main healthcare provider (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). Unsurprisingly then, Pakistan ranks among those countries where child and maternal mortality rates are very high, and the country has one of the highest numbers of world's children facing severe malnutrition (Asim & Nawaz, 2018). Aside from poor quality and accessibility of education and health services, many people lack access to basic infrastructure like potable water, only available to 20 % population (Daud et al., 2017), 25 % population live without electricity (Samad & Zhang, 2018), and 34% population of the country living in areas which are not connected to all weather roads (Donnges et al., 2007).

In spite of that the Constitution of Pakistan in Chapter One continues to guarantee fundamental rights. The rights concerning, security, education, religion, private property, free trial, including safeguards to preserve culture, prevent slavery and forced labour are enshrined in the constitution from article 8 to 28. Moreover, the same part of the constitution protects various types of freedoms, such as freedom of speech, association, assembly, religious views, together with rights to own private property and have access to public infrastructure and services without any discrimination. Principles related to gender equality are also protected in the constitution, although there are laws that inhibit enforcement of progressive rights for minorities and women.

To conclude this brief literature review of existing relevant studies on Pakistan, it is important to make two points. First, given the fact that the history of state formation in Pakistan is relatively new, the country presents a unique case to study citizen-state engagement. In other words, Pakistan is a convincing case to examine state/society binary in a relatively young state. Second, Pakistan offers no doubt an interesting case for understanding how citizens have to deal with administrative practices when confronted with the state as a weak bureaucratic category. A closer look at relevant literature has accomplished identifying a body of work which is useful for this study as well as clarifying state-society dynamics in Pakistan dealt more extensively in this thesis. With the aim to explain the context of the field work country, this section has addressed a number of questions including, how have researchers studied the nature of Pakistani state, its political system and its link to the society? What do different studies say about Pakistan's economic well-being, welfare system, socio-economic and political changes in the country over the years? How has political engagement and competition among various societal actors aspiring for power been studied in Pakistan? Using research evidence from other studies, this chapter

has also attempted to examine the formal governance system of the country and its likely impact on political choices of the people to engage with the state for government-run services.

# Chapter three

## Research Methods

This chapter explains how the decision concerning relevant research paradigm and research techniques for data collection are made – how and from where the data is collected, how it is processed, analysed, and finally presented. My position as a student of Pakistan state and citizen-state interaction in the country is also discussed here. While delineating strategies to enter the study site and conduct field work, this section also attempts to explain methodological considerations undertaken and provide justification for methods of data collection and data analysis employed for this research. While focusing on doing an ethnographic project in Bhi Nagar village, I particularly reflect on field immersion experiences, and on how I negotiated my time and status as a student in the field. Furthermore, fieldwork interruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic, field work learning experiences and challenges, ethical considerations – all are discussed in this chapter.

## Paradigm/Worldview adopted in this research

One of the important aspects of qualitative research is taking a stance on *paradigm* or *worldview* within which researchers will locate research study. The general understanding about the word *paradigm* or *worldview* is that it is ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide action’ (Guba, 1990, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 19). Paradigm can also be considered as researcher’s claims about ‘the nature of reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology)’(Creswell, 2007, p. 16). Maxwell (2005, p. 36) has defined the term paradigm as ‘a set of very general

philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world and how we can understand it.' Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explain paradigm/worldview by synthesizing point of views of Thomas Kuhn (1962), Lather (1986), and Guba and Lincoln (1994). They arrive at a conclusion that:

> 'A research paradigm inherently reflects the researcher's beliefs about the world that s/he lives in and wants to live in. It constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how s/he interprets and acts within that world. When we say that it defines the researcher's worldview, we mean that a paradigm constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how s/he interprets and acts within that world. It is the lens through which a researcher looks at the world. It is the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 26).

The aforementioned explanation of paradigm/worldview is similar to the one given by Michael Hart (Hart, 2010, p. 2):

> 'Worldviews are cognitive, perceptual, and affective maps that people continuously use to make sense of the social landscape and to find their ways to whatever goals they seek. They are developed throughout a person's lifetime through socialization and social interaction. They are encompassing and pervasive in adherence and influence. Yet they are usually unconsciously and uncritically taken for granted as the way things are. While they rarely alter in any significant way, worldviews can change

> slowly over time. A worldview can hold discrepancies and inconsistencies between beliefs and values within the worldview. Hence, worldviews often contain incongruences.'

A paradigm or worldview is therefore the underlying foundation on which scientific investigation is constructed. This research is carried out under ontological and epistemological assumptions taken from the social constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, which implies that there is no unified reality beyond our belief system and that it is impossible to form objective views about reality. Rather, constructivist/interpretivist posits that there are different realities that have been built by individuals in the light of their unique experiences. People make efforts to give meaning to social reality; meaning of anything is embedded in thought process and depended on observer, not lies outside us; objects and social realities that touch our thought system are processed, modified, stored, or discarded on the basis of existing knowledge in the system; the resulting knowledge that take shape is peculiar and purposeful construction (Krauss 2005). Because each of us has a different perspective or worldview, each of us sees the social reality in a different way. Social constructivists suggest that reality can be experienced in many forms. Giving no consideration to similarities and dissimilarities between individuals is contrary to the fundamental principles of this world view. As a result, constructivists/interpretivists go against methods that imply all individuals are the same. They also claim that all researchers are distinctive and unique in their perspectives and that every social inquiry is biased according to the individual worldview of each researcher. They further emphasize that the role of context is inevitable for better understanding of any social phenomenon. For them quantification techniques are limited in scope, highlighting limited and narrow meaning of

reality. Better understanding of a social phenomenon, near them, can be achieved only by immersing oneself into it and experiencing it from inside (Creswell, 2007).

While exploring other available research paradigms, I found positivist ontological and epistemological stances the least suitable for this study. Broadly, positivist perspectives are considered 'reductionist, logical, an emphasis on empirical data collection, cause-and-effect oriented and deterministic based on a priori theories' (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). It is a view that states that the purpose of knowledge is to explicate the social reality that we observe and experience. Scientific inquiries can be performed only on those phenomena that are observable and quantifiable. Understanding of anything beyond what is not observable, for positivists, is not worth studying. As such, researchers who frame their inquiry under a positivist paradigm tend to distance themselves from the world they investigate. They regard reality to be independent of researchers and to be 'discovered'. As such, selecting this paradigm would have necessitated studying images and practices of the Pakistani state in an environment similar to a laboratory. It would also have necessitated relying on measurable and quantifiable variables, statistic measurements, and official archives to study everyday rural politics, which remains largely undocumented and hardly appear in official papers.

Another factor which made the positivist paradigm unsuitable was the fact that this study wanted to discover lived experiences and subjective meanings that the people attach to their political activities. I expected those meanings to be manifold, leading me to dig into complexity of ideas rather than confining to simplistic views. The aim of the study was to trust historically and socially negotiated perspectives of the participants. I wanted to focus on perspectives that the individuals had constructed through social and political engagement

with others, not simply imposed from above. Further, I did not want to use the positivist paradigm because I wanted theoretical constructs to take root inductively, rather than starting this research with rigid theoretical propositions. Using constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, this research was interesting to learn about the various strategies that the villagers use in order to have access to the state in Bhi Nagar. In other words, how rural people in Pakistan experience the state's service delivery infrastructure and give meaning to their experiences. To understand and illustrate villager-state interaction, or how people experience 'the state' on a daily basis, I attempted to understand it from the perspective of inhabitants living in a particular rural locality.

**Field site**

This thesis is based on my own fieldwork conducted in a village I have named Bhi Nagar[5] in Mandi Bahauddin (M B Din) district of the central Punjab, Pakistan[6]. As has been explained in the introduction part, this thesis focuses on everyday state governance practices as well as images of the Pakistani state in a rural area as opposed to an urban locality. That is why, selection of a village was essential. I took into consideration both methodological and practical aspects while deciding Bhi Nagar village for the fieldwork. The most important methodological consideration was to choose a village not far away from the city and where one could find state infrastructure designed to offer various services. The presence of school,

[5] 'Bhi Nagar' is a fictitious name for the village. This name has been chosen to hide the identity of the participants who shared with me intimate information about personal and larger social relationships in the village, as well as information related to corruption, bribery, village infighting, local electoral alliances, electoral fraud etc. For further details, see the Ethical Consideration section in this chapter.

[6] The field site is explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Here I only describe it to the extent needed to delineate research methods.

basic health unit, union council office, police post, etc., was important as they helped to study citizen-state encounter and state governance practices easier and more meaningful. After exploring many villages across M B Din, I decided on Bhi Nagar village as the main location for ethnographic data collection.

Bhi Nagar village was suitable for multiple reasons. Geographically this village was well positioned, around 20 km away from the outlying suburb of M B Din. In addition to the presence of small state infrastructure, this village was also home to characteristics like unplanned and unregulated settlements, small scale unregulated financial activities, accessing public utilities through illicit and informal means, and informal networks with members having strong affinity towards each other. It must be recognized here what this research discusses is one of many explainations to be found in the country. The questions that thesis address might have produced a different explainations if I had studied them in an urban setting, where state infrastructure is relatively more prevalent compared to a rural area. The analysis in this research is based only on data collected from one rural setting, and I would argue against extending this study's conclusions and findings to the larger population in Pakistan.

Jackman writes that 'to engage ethnographically is a highly personal experience, and therefore for the approach to meet the standards set by it – for it to have authority and credibility – a researcher has to feel some form of comfort, confidence or happiness there' (Jackman, 2017, p. 67). As such, site selection was also based on the type of unofficial referrals that could be obtained. From a practical point of view, my choice of Bhi Nagar village also derived from the fact that my family had connections in the district. My

grandparents were Muslim refugees from India, and they initially settled in a village of the same district, around 18 km away from the field site. When I shared my research plans with my family, they were of the view that a village in M B Din would be a good choice because of the ease with which I could make some initial contacts there. Another pragmatic factor that influenced my decision to choose this particular field site was a friend from college days who was an education officer in the area. In fact, my first 'entry' into Bhi Nagar village was arranged by this friend who put me in touch with Mohammad Nadeem, a local resident and primary school teacher in Bhi Nagar village. In the early days of my research, Mohammad Nadeem accompanied me to many neighbourhoods in the village. I consider myself fortunate to have met Mohammad Nadeem. He was very well known to the residents, had a large network of friends in the village, and was able to introduce me to many people at outdoor gathering places in the village.

My daily journey to Bhi Nagar village remained essentially unchanged during the whole fieldwork period. The village was accessible via a two-way road which was so full of deep potholes that drivers had to be extra attentive to avoid any damage to their vehicles' tire or rim. I would get a taxi from the suburb of M B Din, where I had rented a house, and in an hour, I would be in the village. I also tried less comfortable transportation options to go to the field site. Quite often I would board a local bus inside of which sometimes dust particles gathered to the extent that passengers would cover their openings involved in breathing with a piece of cloth. Whether I arrived by bus or a taxi, I always walked into the village from the bus/rickshaw stop located outside around 300-meter distance.

**Fieldwork timeline and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic**

To carry out a yearlong ethnographic field work I travelled in September 2019 to Pakistan from Italy. After overcoming the usual challenges of field research, I was in the field at the start of October 2019. My time in the field went well until the early weeks of April 2020. By this time, the corona outbreak had already taken many lives in China and Italy and was spreading rapidly in other parts of the world. In the village, I was fully immersed in the local life to collect data for my research. I would spend extended hours at different places in the village doing in-depth chats and observing people. It was a very intensive phase for my research that suddenly got hit by the Corona pandemic.

The virus news put me in a challenging situation where I had to make a decision about the continuation of my fieldwork. I was unprepared to cope with the pandemic crisis in the field. Research courses and training workshops that I took to prepare myself for the fieldwork did not cover research skills needed to tackle challenges of a global pandemic amidst ethnographic fieldwork. Usually, it is encouraged to abandon research activities when one sees that staying in the field site is becoming riskier and precarious. But the corona pandemic presented unprecedented circumstances. Given this disease was wreaking havoc across the globe, old methods of health and risk assessment for fieldwork were futile because the whole world was unsafe. The major response from the Punjab provincial government to contain the

virus came on 12th of March, when it decided to declare a province-wide health emergency. However, the topic of corona disease was rarely discussed in the village where I was doing fieldwork. The villagers were sure that this virus is only for cold places and would never hit Pakistan because of hot and dry weather. Sometimes it seemed as if Pakistan shared nothing with the rest of the world. Everyone in the country had a relatively relaxing approach, while the rest of the world was taking extreme measures to contain this virus. I too had a relaxing approach and decided to continue meeting people and making fieldwork observations.

There was something else too that kept me in the field. The emergency caused by the Corona pandemic was certainly a big challenge for everyone, but I thought it might turn out to be a good thing for my project as it would allow me to observe villagers-state interaction in a different light, which would not have been possible otherwise. Like everywhere else, the corona emergency responses had disturbed the village community too, introducing new practices, ideas, and actors. Before the pandemic, police and other government functionaries rarely visited the village. However now there were more official visits than usual, including regular announcements in the village from mosque loudspeakers regarding the coronavirus awareness. The country's health ministry had also directed all the telecom operators to turn caller tune into a message, telling users about the government's effort to tackle the pandemic every time they dial a number. Similarly, many workers were staying in the village due to lack of work with the pandemic. Taken together, all these aspects altered day-to-day life in the village, and I thought studying functioning and capacity of the state – issues which are to some extent central to my thesis – became even more important to understand

.

However, the decision to stay in the field and to continue data collection was full of practical and ethical challenges. This first challenge was how to undertake ethnographic fieldwork to understand a political and social phenomenon in a community which had a different understanding about corona pandemic? There was a general belief in the village that this is a distant phenomenon that would never take hold in Pakistan. There were people who would tell each other that this was just a rumour used by the government of Imran Khan to get aid packages from donors so that he and his affiliates could do corruption. One respondent said, 'this disease is for those regions where people do not use oil and spices to prepare food.' Some were confident that 'because of God's help, Muslims are protective from this deadly virus.' Hot weather theories were also circulating in the village. Except for lockdown and consequent economic hardships and loss of daily wage jobs, most of the villagers were unaware of the perils associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, there was no hiatus from offering hands or hugs while greeting each other. Basic preventive measures against coronavirus, like face mask and usage of soap, were unaffordable items for many dwellers. This situation put me in a challenging situation. In this context, every time I tried to ditch a handshake or tried talking with an interlocutor with a mask on, I felt as if I was insensitive and oblivious to the ground realities.

The above-described dilemma was not the only contextualized and unexpected challenge. I also struggled with most of the participants discussing something that was far from the present predicament. Topic of recent encounters with the state authorities, an important part of my study, was not interesting anymore for many participants. People wanted to talk about the impact of lockdown on their livelihood. Daily wage workers wanted to discuss their sufferings. During this early phase of pandemic, whenever I met rickshaw or taxi drivers in the village, instead of discussing my research, they would talk about the

adverse impact of lockdown on their earnings. This challenge weighed heavily on me. Should I ignore the conversation in which people want to talk about their current predicaments? Is it ethically right troubling people to participate in my research when their lives are immensely affected by the current pandemic? I grappled many times with these questions.

I was not ready how to behave in these challenging circumstances. The challenge of lacking skills and training to continue in-person fieldwork amidst global pandemic that is both viable and sensible put me in a difficult situation. Meanwhile, at the start of April, the number of corona patients in Pakistan started to rise exponentially. I was also following corona updates from places where my family and friends were living. I was also continuously in touch with my PhD mentors at the University of Milan and the Humboldt University, who emphatically encouraged me to stop my research activities in the field. This experience was like living multiple parallel lives. Towards the end of the second week of April 2020, I stopped visiting my research site. So, my time in the field did not go as I had planned. The analysis in this thesis is based on six months of fieldwork, instead of twelve months, as initially has been planned.

**Field Entry and Challenges**

During my early days in the field, whenever I met someone for the first time, I felt if I started a conversation by asking about government officials, domestic disputes, police, or other political matters, it might make the participant uneasy. So, I would start with a simple topic. For instance, I would tell them that I am doing research about everyday activities of the

people in Bhi Nagar village, and would ask questions about cultural, economic, and demographic aspects of the village to start a conversation. Hence, my attempt to make the study look less political by phrasing the aim of my research in a different, but still relevant, way had been a helpful strategy. As I progressed, I found it easier explaining my research in simpler terms to the participants as well as telling them why I am spending time in the village. This ease certainly came from the fact that I did not face common suspicions that I faced during my early days in the field. In the eyes of poorer residents in the village, however, I always remained a news reporter who investigated various issues faced by the residents. They wanted me to put pressure on the authorities through my journalism so that the government could do something to address their financial needs as well as take steps to solve issues like housing, damaged streets and poor health and educational infrastructure in the village.

Similarly, at the early stage, I was a strange character in the village who attracted a lot of head turning and comments. Because of my young appearance many people in the field associated me with the youth wing of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the ruling party. There were many who took me as a news reporter. In the beginning, almost every day I had to address common assumptions about my research and my visits to the village. The villagers were used to seeing census or health workers walking in the village with shoulder bag and holding registers and pens in hands. I had to repeat many times that I had no association with census or health department. There were also people who jokingly called me a ‘spy’ of Pakistan’s intelligence agency. Others inquired whether I would report about sufferings of the villagers to the government. Some parents were interested to get study in Europe advice for their kids from me as feelings to go abroad, especially to Europe, was common in the village.

As someone coming from the city who wore pants and shirt and spoke Punjabi in a different dialect than the people in the village, I paid particular attention to address this aspect of difference so I could smoothen familiarity and intimacy with the participants. I adopted the local dress code (*shalwar kameez*) and local Punjabi dialect as much as possible. And unlike many urbanites visiting the village, I avoided wearing sunglasses despite ever-present strong sunlight. Over the weeks people got used to my presence. Adopting a local dress code and dropping the idea of holding a diary in hand in the field proved major steps to remove common misconception about my presence and my project. The fact that I was a Pakistani and fluent both in Urdu and Punjabi largely smoothened interaction with the participants. Nonetheless, fundamental aspects of my identity as someone who was not from the village, who graduated from privileged institutions in the country and now studying abroad, never changed.

It is hard to say that all the suspicions surrounding my early visits to the village were addressed in a matter of days, but I felt that gradually I had gotten closer, and the residents started sharing about their political association and other intimate everyday social matters. I believe many factors were involved in my trust earning in the village. One of them was establishing connections with store/shop owners located in main parts of the village. The activity of spending time at these places and engaging in conversation with the shop owners and others present at the shop was visible to customers and passers-by. Gradually, I also adopted ways of greeting others that conformed to the norms of local appropriateness. Soon I started receiving invitations from the people I met at a shop or in a billiard club to have everyday local drinks with them. I started learning participants' names and would greet them

wherever and whenever I saw them. Overtime, my presence as an ‘outsider’ started to diminish, and among many I became a socially familiar face.

Some doors never opened for me during the fieldwork. I could not talk with any woman in the village. The social structures and social practices are broadly patriarchal in Pakistan. Clearly established gender roles and gender differences can be found everywhere in the country, but ‘villages in Pakistan present an extreme version of gender exclusion’ (Latif, 2013, p. 22). Outdoor spaces in the village were male-only places. In the village, I never saw a young woman in the streets unaccompanied. However, there were teaching staff members in the village all-girls school who would walk alone sometime, with body and face heavily covered. Otherwise, I only saw women accompanied by someone, mostly either by a child or some older male member of the family. The only exceptions were married or elderly women from certain households, who visited different grocery stores or vegetable and fruit stalls in the village. At these shops, these women would talk with other women, sometimes with men too. I also tried to talk with a few of them, but they never showed any interest. Their common response used to be that I should talk with their husband, son, or some other male relatives to know about politics and the state in the village.

**Positionality**

While assessing ethnographic methods, Shuamit Reinharz (2011) provides valuable lessons to those who are taking up an ethnographic study. At the heart of her work is the analysis of researcher’s personal aspects in a qualitative study. She emphasizes on knowing and

reflecting on how researcher's personal characteristics affect experiences of fieldwork. In her compelling study, she says her fieldwork has demonstrated a 'tripartite division among selves in the field and these are: research selves; personal selves; and situational selves' (Reinharz, 2011, as quoted in Troman, 2013, p. 376), and these selves, according to her, are essential to examine insofar as they affect the conduct of research, relationship between researcher and participants, and analysis and final outcomes of the phenomenon being studied.

The most important personal aspect that had an influence on my research was my identity as Pakistani. For a researcher choosing a site for fieldwork in his/her country of origin can be both interesting and challenging. The positioning of research in terms of applying appropriate methods for collecting and analysing data for effective research is a critical concern in ethnographic studies. The important part of wider discussion on positioning in research process is that whether researchers are 'insiders', meaning that they investigate people who belong to a group they have close connection with, or they study a group of people they have no connection at all and have enough distance that they can be considered 'outsiders' (Mandiyanike 2009; Mughal 2015; Bolak 1996). Similarly, many scholars have shown concerns regarding the authenticity of insider/outsider binary. For instance, Aguilar (1981) has presented a case against the binary model which sees researchers in absolute terms, either as 'insiders' or 'outsiders'. He argues that factors such as cultural heterogeneity in a country, society as a highly complex and differentiated system and influence of various identities like professional, gender or educational, can necessarily establish a distance between indigenous researchers and their subject of study. For this reason, he advocates against insider/outsider duality and emphasizes an alternative model in which native researchers, by carefully choosing the topic of study and site for field work, can gain enough distance from the people being researched that they can attain the status of

'outsiders'. Using this model, I reflect on my choice of studying citizen-state interaction with each other in my country of origin.

My position whether I was an 'insider' or 'outsider' researcher needs a critical evaluation. In some ways, I was an insider because I was a Pakistani and Punjabi. In other ways, I was an outsider. For instance, I was born and raised in a village near a city named Silanwali in the district of Sargodha, Punjab. I spent six years in Lahore as a higher secondary student and later as an undergraduate student. For the next three years I was in Islamabad for post graduate studies. Before moving to Italy in February 2018, I had spent three years in Peshawar and Faisalabad working as a lecturer in a university, a job that I started right after completing my master's degree. Despite being part of the same country and province, I had never been to this area where the site of my fieldwork was located. My maternal and paternal grandparents both were *Muhajirs* who migrated from Indian Punjab to Pakistani Punjab after partition in 1947, while the majority of the population in the village of my fieldwork consisted of natives, living there for generations. By virtue of resident of a different area, I also had to deal with cultural differences. Although the language of the people at the field site was Punjabi, the language I grew up with, their accent, pronunciation of different words, and vocabulary was new to me. The area also had a unique taste for food, dressing, and music, including social rituals, cultural and religious practices, and festivals. All these aspects challenged my position as an 'insider'.

At times, my informants made me feel as if I was an 'insider' by appreciating that I was trying to speak Punjabi like them. In certain situations however, the insider/outsider

binary appeared blurred. It is very difficult to evaluate how people perceived my presence amongst them. I wanted my informants to take me as a friend who enjoyed his time in the field and as someone who inquired about so many things because he was ignorant. Certainly, my informants' perceptions about me as someone who would someday go back to where he came from also challenged my position in the research process as an 'insider'.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

This is an ethnographic study, which is understood here as

> 'The objective of an ethnographic study is mainly to capture the insider's views, attitudes and interpretations about everything s/he practices and experiences in her/his everyday life… An ethnographer would carry out the additional task of observing, as a participant observer, the so-called trivial events and actions and interactions of the subject people and interpret them both through the subjective views of the insiders and of the ethnographer her/himself' (Roy, 2014, p. 18)

To carry out this research, I relied extensively on ethnographic methods derived from the study of the state in anthropology that looks at day-to-day citizen-state interaction as a starting point to comprehend state formation and state functioning. As Sharma and Gupta (2006) assert that paying attention to everyday routinized bureaucratic procedures to get identity or property related documents, pay taxes and bills, apply for various utility connections, or record a birth/death or wedlock in an official register, let anthropologists see how the idea of the state is produced, negotiated, and disputed. According to Gupta (1995),

these common and everyday bureaucratic functions are central to state and governance formation. Simultaneously, these everyday bureaucratic practices of documentation and record keeping reveal much to analyse how the state is encountered and imagined by its inhabitants – how, in everyday life, power is exercised, and inequalities are constituted.

The understanding I gained about political and social life in the village mostly came from everyday casual but lengthy conversation with the villagers at various chatting places which were scattered across the village. These were the spots, mostly located in front of someone's house or a shop, where the local people – always men and of the same age group – would sit on cots and chair and spend time chatting and smoking *hookha*. I remained regular visitors to these places throughout my time in the field. At each place, I engaged in face-to-face conversation with the group of villagers, asking questions and gathering relevant information. I attended around 50 such gatherings.

Insights into state-society relation, or more particularly the state governance practices, in Bhi Nagar village (the topic of chapter six) would have been incomplete had I not built association with two local political figures in the village. Their references made gaining trust and accessing many places in the village easier that otherwise would have been challenging and difficult. Important empirical data that I analyse in chapter six came from watching them in action. They allowed me to visit their *baithak* or *daara* any time. I spent hours at these places, where both villagers and the government officials would come for a number of reasons, including seeking help from these political figures to help mediate interaction between villagers and the state. I also followed these political figures to various engagements and meetings in the village, which used to be random and happening any time and at any place.

Central to the data collection process was a relationship that I formed with billiard table owner in the village. My visits to this outdoor business gave me the opportunity to establish rapport with many young people from the village. The billiard club was located in a favourable location, close to a rickshaw stand, a tea stall, an open-air fruit selling venue, an eatery place, an auto repair workshop, and a fuel station. I visited all these places quite frequently to interact with the residents. On many occasions at the early stages of the fieldwork, while I had causal chat with someone at these places, villagers or shopkeepers who happened to be nearby, would form a circle around me, watching and listening to my conversation, sometime confused and sometime keen to talk to me. This would put me and the person I was talking to in an uneasy situation. However, gradually this issue disappeared.

My fieldwork also included visits to institutions that were important in the lives of the residents such as the basic health unit, a number of schools, the union council, and mosques. These visits allowed me crucial insights into community life, in general, and especially into social interaction at the institutional level. Chatting and listening to the people at these official places provided deep insight into villager-state interaction and local state governance practices. My observation method was not limited to Bhi Nagar village. For example, I did not stop making observations about interaction between citizens and the state after a day of work at the field site. If I was travelling somewhere else in a taxi or in privately operated coaches and minibuses in the country, I engaged in conversation with passengers or a taxi driver, asking about their everyday experiences about dealing with different state officials. I heard interesting stories from drivers whenever a police officer pulled over the taxi I am travelling in. Such stories and conversations enhanced my understanding regarding

general views and perception about Pakistani state and its laws. Various lessons learned from these exchanges helped to extract meaningful information from the people in the village. Like qualitative research techniques employed by Akhil Gupta (1995), my research also profited a great deal from mass media like daily newspapers, magazines, television, internet, and radio. My particular focus used to be the important political events of the day in the country and other news that were making headlines. Discussing national and international news with the participants in casual conversations remained very informative, and it provided meaningful illustration about the state and its politics. At the time of fieldwork, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was leading an anti-corruption campaign in the country. Many influential political families belonging to the opposition parties were facing corruption related cases. This anti-corruption drive was a hot topic everywhere, including in Bhi Nagar village. Corruption was a repetitive topic in every conversation I had in the village. I sat for long hours with my informants discussing news about corruption scandals. This allowed me to explore the informants' perception about politics in the country, especially their understanding about the state institutions and its laws.

Qualitative researchers argue that interview is a convenient technique that can help 'in interpreting what is seen in…learning sites…Similarly, interviews can be used to try to understand what is going on during a period of observation' (Walford 2018, p.7). In addition to engaging in casual conversation at the chatting places, I also focused on one-on-one interview with the people in the village. This happened at a stage when I realized that I had become enough familiar in the village that the participants would not be reluctant now if I asked more specific questions or investigate personal political and social aspects of their everyday lives. The interviews were 'non-directive' in format, which is a 'form of unstructured interviews … aimed to gather in-depth information and usually do not have

pre-planned set of questions' (Jamshed 2014, p.87). All the interviews were conducted in Punjabi. Utmost important was drawn to age, education, and economic status of the interviewees. Some participants were contacted repeatedly and interviewed multiple times. With an average duration of 1 hour, 25 interviews were carried out in total during the fieldwork.

**Data recording**

I did not use audio or video taping in the field because the participants were not comfortable with it. Given the nature of my research, using any kind of machine to record research interaction with my informants would have affected informality and trust building that I wanted to establish. Since the topics of conversation were mainly related to rural political life, crime, corruption, and everyday interaction with the state officials, I did not want my informants to feel uncomfortable by seeing electronic recording instruments. As I explained above, if I had digital recorder with me, it would have been difficult to address the villagers' suspicions about me as if I was a news reporter or a political worker associated with the youth wing of the governing party, investigating everyday issues and challenges to report back to the higher-ups in the government or to a news agency.

I also realized that taking lengthy notes amidst verbal conversation was putting the participants in an uneasy situation. Emerson et. al., (2011, p. 20) suggest, 'a word or two written at the moment or soon afterward will jog the memory later in the day and enable the fieldworker to catch significant actions and to construct descriptions of the scene'. Following this suggestion, during casual conversation, I trained myself for taking mental notes. At the

end of each conversation, I would write a short description in my field diary using mental notes. Once back in my accommodation after a day in the field, those short notes from the field were used to write field notes in detail. In some informal discussions, however, I took detailed hand-written notes. Using those hand-written notes, the important parts of the discussions were written and transcribed on the same day in the evening. The voices of my informants in the form of direct quotations in this work are taken from the transcribed part of the discussions.

## Data Analysis

Analysing data in qualitative research involves 'preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion' (Creswell, 2007, p. 148). I started analysing the data while I was in the field. This exercise was helpful to figure out where follow-up was needed. The in-field evaluation also helped to determine whether or not my time in the field was generating appropriate data relevant to addressing the core questions of my project. The data was reviewed multiple times during the data collection phase in order to stay on track and make further decisions about data collection and spending time in the field. When I finally returned from the fieldwork, I started a serious process of organizing and understanding the data. I began by reading my field notes to see what broader themes were present in the data. Simultaneously I worked on arranging the data according to its usage in different sections and chapters of my dissertation. Due to computer illiteracy, I could not use qualitative data analysis software like MAXQDA or NVivo. The whole data analysis process was done manually, using paper, pencil, and highlighters of different colours.

**Ethical Consideration**

Before starting fieldwork, I had extensively discussed my research methods and fieldwork plan with my PhD mentors and colleagues. This exercise was necessary to make certain that my project would not expose my interlocutors to any kind of risk. However, ethical issues involve more than merely seeking approval of university's ethical board or research supervisors. It is extremely important to address ethical issues 'as we negotiate entry to the field site of the research; involve participants in our study; gather personal, emotional data that reveal the details of life; and ask participants to give considerable time to our projects' (Creswell, 2007, p. 44).

I made sure to every possible extent that I had an effective data collection plan in order to stay away from taking unnecessary time of the research participants. All the people in the village voluntarily sat with me for discussions. Before the start of conversation, I would explain to the informants that they have every right not to answer an uncomfortable question from me. Additionally, maintaining the anonymity of those with whom I interacted in the field for this research was my primary concern. That is why, while writing this thesis, I decided to conceal identities and change other important details about the informants. I also anonymized participants' names and other personal information that they had shared with me. I hope this would not undermine in any way the richness and accuracy of the data collected for this research. Using image cropping/blurring technique, I have also veiled identities of the informants whose photos appear in this thesis.

# Chapter four

## Everyday life in the village

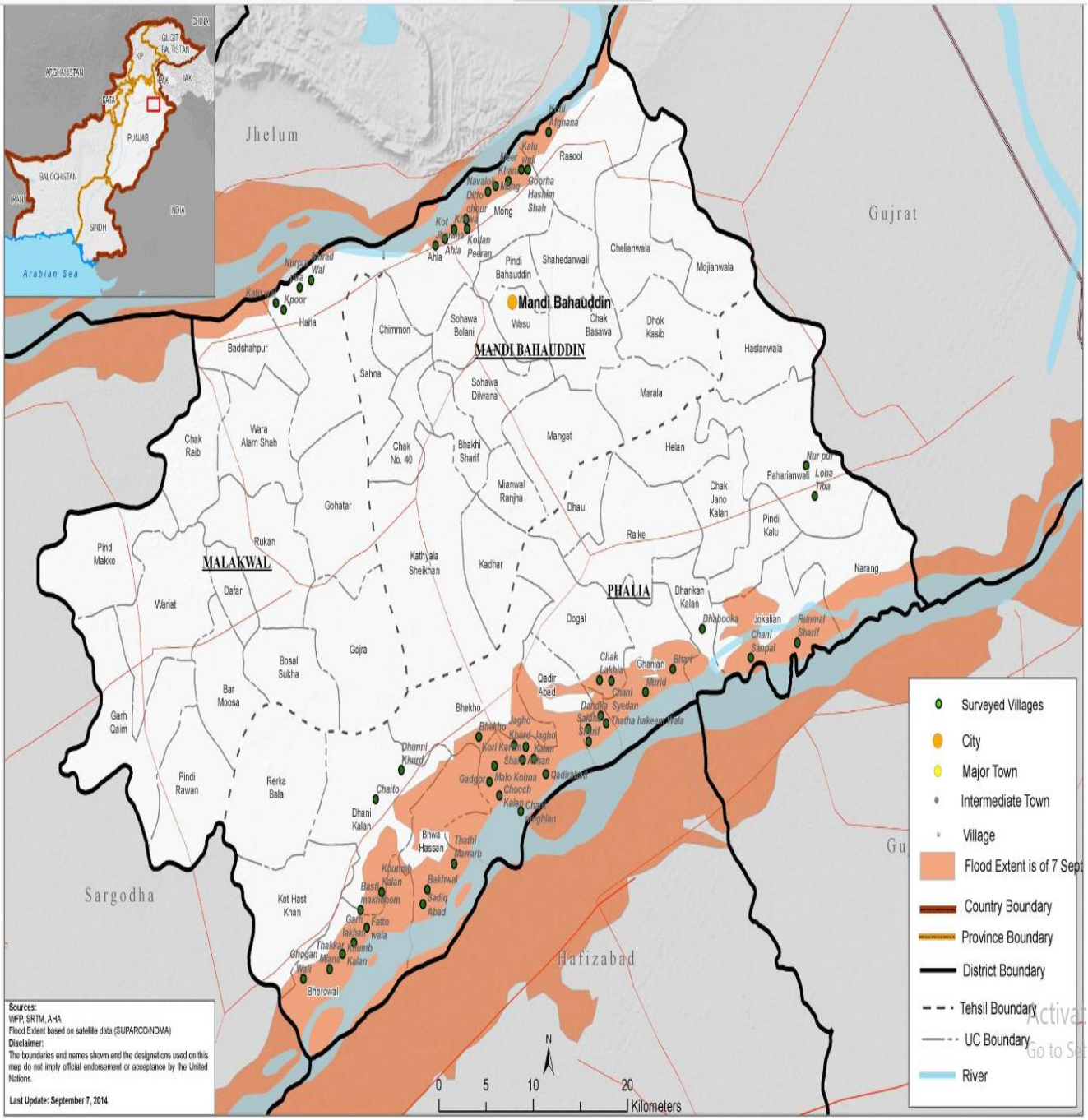
The ethnographic data about everyday life in Bhi Nagar – village layout, outdoor life, livelihood, religious events, family ties, caste relationships, *biradri* networks – is discussed in this chapter. In the course of analysis in this chapter, I endeavour to show how social institutions like family, caste, and *biradri* are of critical significance for the villagers. These institutions, I argue, do not lie on a separate course; they are very much affiliated with political and economic dynamics of the village.

## Village layout and outdoor life

As one starts his journey from the city of Mandi Bahauddin towards Bhi Nagar village, one is very much aware of leaving behind haphazard urbanization and traffic congestion. In the city, the noise of traffic is deafening. One can easily detect vehicles emitting massive amounts of black smoke into the air. There are no traffic signals nor traffic warden. Hardly anyone among motorcyclists and rickshaw drivers wear a helmet or have a driving licence. Underage children driving motorcycles are also common. Scores of cars, motorcycles, rickshaws, donkey/horse carts, and vendor carts can be seen parked on the roads. At the major intersections, traffic is coming from all sides at the same time, causing long traffic jams. Drivers driving motorcycles or rickshaws make aggressive moves, zipping their vehicles between traffic lanes, attempting to cut off other vehicles without any signal or

having enough safe space – at the same time swearing and criticizing each other for haphazard and dangerous driving. If one sits in a rickshaw, one can hear passengers pushing the driver to drive fast, all the while criticizing the traffic system in the city.

As one steps out of the city and takes the road that heads towards Bhi Nagar village, one finds sugar cane and unripe green fields of wheat lined on both sides of the road. Occasionally there are small residential settlements and shops along the road. The walls of these settlements are either covered with colourful advertisement messages or sometimes with cow dung cakes. One also randomly spots cows and buffaloes, warming up in the sun, tied to a small wooden pole anchored in empty spaces along the road. On the road, private cars, mini vans, and busses are gradually replaced by tractor trolleys, motorbikes, and ox/donkey carts. At the point where the main road meets the path that leads into Bhi Nagar village, an informal space, called *adda* (bus stop), is created where rickshaws, vans, buses stop to pick up and drop passengers. Around the *adda*, business activities like tea stall, fruit stall, grocery shop, welding shop, motor bike repairing, car wash, fuel pump, etc., take place. While walking from the *adda* on the narrow concrete road that leads into the village, I often saw traffic like rickshaws, mini vans, ox/donkey carts and tractor trolleys heading towards and from the village.




**Map of District Mnadi Bahauddin with different Tehsils** [7]

[7] Courtesy of https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Flood_Assessment_Punjab_Mandi%20Bahauddin.pdf

The villagers use ox/donkey carts to bring fodder from fields for their animals. I also often saw men and women from the same household sitting on ox/donkey carts or sometimes walking along the road. These men and women, because of hard work in the fields, had developed weather-beaten faces and hard skin on their hands and feet. Some of them also looked poorly nourished. From their clothes and appearance, they looked part of a poorer household in the village. My field experience suggested that these poor working women performed many daily tasks outside the home or sometimes even outside the village. This made them once in a while visible on the street (*gali*) or on the road which was not typical for well off families where women observe *purdah* (veil) and mostly stay inside the house.

Once inside the village, one is aware of leaving city infrastructure behind. The houses in the village differed in size and construction quality. Majority of the houses were privately owned and built without any kind of licence form the government. The house construction cost was usually managed by borrowing from relatives, selling a piece of land, family members contributing their wages and savings, or sometimes by money sent back home by a migrant worker. There was no concept of taking a loan from a bank or the government. Since it is hard for many inhabitants to arrange house construction costs at once, that is why the construction process continues for many months, in some cases many years. Few houses were very large, multi-storey, and with all terraces and towers (*kothi*). They were either owned by a wealthy landlord household or by a household who had one or more family members settled in Europe. However, the majority of the houses in the village were built without any input from an engineer, and they typically range from one-storey (most common) to two-storey buildings. In every street, there were long lines of adjacent houses with shared boundary

walls and joined roofs. The dominant materials used in walls in the majority of houses in the village were bricks, sand and cement. For roofs, the majority of the households used iron girders, iron beams, bricks, and mud. House directions were decided by taking into account the movement of the sun and hot wind direction in summer. One of my informants, Muzaffar, told me that mud used to be a prominent building material in the village in his childhood in the 1980s. Muzaffar had seen her mother and aunts plastering the house courtyard and walls with a mixture of buffalo's dung and clay. In the past, Muzaffar's family also had domestic animals like buffalo, goat, and hen in their house. According to Muzaffar, house construction in the village got transformed during the last forty years. Cement and sand had replaced mud as the main building material.

Muzaffar with his wife and four children now lives in a brick house (*pakka makan*) that he has built from the money he earned as a migrant worker in Saudi Arabia. He also shares his house with his parents and two brothers, one of whom is married and has two kids. Muzaffar has used a quarter of the house land for construction, the rest of the area is left empty for an open-air courtyard (*veera*). The *veera* in his house is used for multiple purposes including sitting, sleeping, cooking, eating, family socializing area, playground for children etc. The main entrance door into Muzaffar's house provides entry into *veera*, from where one can access doors of veranda, living room, outdoor cooking area, male guest room (*baithak*), and latrine. From one corner of the verra, a staircase (made of bricks) goes to the roof. The doors of multiple private rooms, where the family members sleep at night in winter, open into the veranda. In summer, Muzaffar, like most inhabitants in the village, sleeps with his family in his *veera* on cots (*charpai*), using mosquito nets and pedestal fans. However, during sweltering summer nights when power cuts increase, Muzaffar explained that many

villagers place *charpais* on their roofs for rest. With minor variations, the majority of houses in the village in terms of usage and design are similar to Muzaffar's house.

Inside the village, one also sees a network of pathways. To me, the arrangements of buildings and streets appeared irregular. There was a main street in the village with many narrow and rough pathways attached to it. The main street was wide enough to ride along with a tractor trolley. But most of the pathways were not wide enough. Some pathways were so small that if you walked along and met a motorcyclist coming from the opposite side, you had to create space so that the motorcyclist could pass. All these pathways are lined on both sides with houses. Some houses along these pathways owned small informal businesses such as grocery, tailor shops, shoemaker shops, fruit and vegetable stalls, electronic accessories etc. Bhi Nagar village is famous in the vicinity for economic activities where people from neighbouring villages come to buy everyday consumption products. People from surrounding villages also come to this village for health and education as it houses schools and a basic health unit. A small police station (police *chowki*) is also operational near this village.

I noticed that most of the villagers were happy to have health and education facilities in the village. But at the same time, I found them speaking dejectedly about the quality of services that were available to them in the school and health unit. I visited all-boys primary school in the village on multiple occasions. The school is located in a single-story brick building painted white and red. For extra security, the school had put barbed wire on top of the boundary wall. On many occasions, I saw kids setting up rugs in the school courtyard to take lessons while enjoying the winter sun. All the classrooms had blackboards but were not fully equipped with chairs and tables. The walls of the classrooms were adorned with posters

of national heroes and their sayings. Some posters had Quranic verses written on them. Most of the parents I spoke with hardly knew about the facilities in the school and what teachers were teaching to their kids. These parents told me that they would prefer sending their kids to a private school if it was affordable. One college student who studied in this school told me that the teachers were either inept or did not want to do their job. He further explained that since the teachers enjoyed support of wealthier *Gujjars*[8] in the village, they never faced any scrutiny from the government for poor teaching and absence from the school.

Surrounding the village is agricultural land owned by the residents, where men and women from some households go to work and return in the evening. When men are not working, they are usually sitting in outdoor spaces in the village. Doorsteps of a shop or someone's house, *baithek*, *daara*, village sports ground or billiard club are the most common places for men in Bhi Nagar village to socialize with friends and acquaintances. I observed that the people of Bhi Nagar take hospitality seriously at the outdoor spaces. Whenever I interacted with someone at these spaces, I was always offered to drink or eat something. I also observed that if young villagers were meeting outside someone's house, they usually sat on their hips on doorsteps to pass time and enjoy street life. Married and older residents would also come out to keep up with their friends and neighbours, but they did not sit on doorsteps like male young people, they usually sat on chairs or cot (*charpai*) placed in front of someone's house. Cigarette and hookah smoking is common among married and older residents. However, male young adults of school and college going age do not smoke openly, and if they do, their character is generally brought into question. While spending time like this, young friends play board games (*ludo*) and cards (*tash*) with Punjabi music playing in

[8] *Gujjar* is a principal caste group in the village. For further details, see the Castes in the Village section in this chapter .

the background. Occasionally they also congregate to watch a game of cricket live on television, or to watch a Bollywood or Hollywood movie on a rented or borrowed DVD or VCR player. The young adults also organize sports like cricket, kabaddi, or volleyball.

I also witnessed the active role of the male young members in the village in organizing the religious event of twelfth Rabi-ul-Awal, the day when the Muslims celebrate the birth of the Prophet Mohammad. I observed that, with the start of the Arabic month of Rabi-ul-Awal, outdoor loudspeakers of mosques in the village, which were placed on tall minarets and could be heard from long distance, were used by groups of young people to sing *naats* (poetry in praise of the Prophet) along with announcements for donations to fund various activities related to the birthday of the Prophet. At times I felt as if there was a contest among young people in different mosques – loudspeakers would start playing as early as six in the morning and, with temporary cessations, would continue till late in the evening. As the month progressed, other preparations for the event started to spring up, including banners bearing the teachings of the Prophet and schedules for various *milad* activities were on display in many streets. The young residents also made their expressions of religiosity known by decorating their homes and streets with colourful buntings, lights, and green flags. It was entirely impossible to walk through the village without noticing excessive public display of religion, unless one entered an area inhabited by the poor *Kammis* and the non-Muslims. The religious enthusiasm among youth, which was out there for days, gained spontaneity on the twelfth day of Rabi-ul-Awal, with hundreds of male devotees taking control of streets to use them as theatre for religious activities. All day long, the male youth from the village, amid religious slogans and devotional songs, kept patrolling the village streets.

Many elders remarked that certainly celebrating Rabi-ul-Awal is an old custom in the village, but the religious zeal and fervour with which people in the village have been celebrating it over the last few years is a recent innovation. They further added that If they reflect back and think of the eight-years-old religious landscape of the village, they could hardly remember the sort of activities they see now to mark the Prophet's birth. Some of them also pointed out a general surge in daily religious observances. They mentioned those days when only a small number of people, mostly from advanced age groups, used to go to mosques regularly. But now regular mosque-goers are predominantly youngsters. Men of all ages in Bhi Nagar as well as in the neighbouring villages who wear green religious turbans and keep long beards are easy to spot on in the streets. Equally easy, they mentioned, is to see the rising number of burqa-clad women in the streets in the area. Women's *dars* (religious sessions), which were unknown a few years back, has also become a popular and regular affair now.

As an outsider in Bhi Nagar village one cannot help but notice that everyday social life outside home is largely male dominated. Only men can leave the house at any time and gather spontaneously at an outdoor place for socialization. Whereas it is acceptable for married women to come out and visit a nearby grocery shop, but even they cannot stay outside unnecessarily and interact with other women like their male counterparts. The women I had a chance to observe at small grocery or vegetable shops never wore a *burqa* (an outer garment worn to cover the whole body). However, they were strictly following locally acceptable norms related to female dress code and demeanour. Their way of following *purdah* was to carry a piece of cloth (*dupatta*) with which they covered their head, neck, back

and chest. In some cases, those mothers who strictly follow *purdah* shifted the responsibility of buying things from a shop onto their kids. No woman in the village is exempted from general notion of 'appropriate' conduct, not even those who belong to the poorer household who generally come out to work in the field. The restrictions on younger women in day-to-day outdoor villages are even stricter. All household chores like cleaning, laundry and taking care of kids are the responsibility of women, giving men enough time to come out and organize various activities at the outdoor spaces.

Though women in the village do not meet and interact with each other in the manner men do, they do engage with each other in their own way, I was told. It is common for women to visit their friends and relatives in the village. They also leave home to take part in *Khatam* at a friend's or relative's place, where women from the neighbourhood jointly recite Quran, and pray and thank God which is then followed by a joint meal. Such neighbourhood rituals are organized for different purposes, including safe journey, childbirth, moving into a new house, recovery of a family member or livestock from sickness. Women also take part in women-only religious ceremonies as well as other all-female functions in the village related to birth, marriage, and funerals. Many informants highlighted that since women are restricted from going to mosques, they decorate and convert a house into a temporary sacred place where they gather to celebrate a religious event, like the birth of the Prophet Mohammad (called Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi or simply *Milad*). To mark the birth of the Prophet, women gather for salutations (*durud*) and praises dedicated to the Prophet of Islam. *Milad* celebrations also involve singing poetry (*naat*) and listening to a woman religious leader who shares stories from the life of the Prophet as well as his teachings. At the end, participants are served with food. Such events are mainly organized by women with no interference from

men. The decisions related to the timing of the event, food, and invitation are all decided by women from the household which organizes the event.

**Castes in the village**

Most of the research on functioning of Punjabi society see 'caste', rather than 'class', as an appropriate lens to look at the subject of political and social dynamics in rural Punjab (Eglar, 1960; Alavi, 1972; Ahmad, 1972; Chaudhary, 1999). These studies highlight division between two mutually exclusive groups in rural Punjab: landowning castes ('*Zamindar Quoms*') and landless castes ('*Kammis Quoms*') (Ahmad, 1972, p. 61). Various castes who own land and are traditionally associated with agricultural occupations fall under a broader group labelled as '*zamindar*' (literally, landowner). The *zamindars* in rural Punjab are further subdivided into wealthier landowners, usually addressed as *chaudhris*[9], nawabs, *jaghirdars*, and small landowners, tenant farmers, and sharecropper farmers. Almost all members who belong to *zamindar* castes privately own land of different sizes. Some members from this group make further investments and rent more agricultural land from other *zamindars* for crop cultivation, becoming landholder and land tenants/ sharecropper at the same time. Land ownership is dominated by different *zamindar* castes in different parts of Punjab. The main *zamindar* castes which dominate land ownership structures in the district of Mandi Bahauddin are Jats (Bhatti, Gondal, Rnajha, Sahi, Tarar, Warraich, Virk) Araeen and Gujjar.

[9] The term *chaudhary* has some other usages too. It is also used locally to be polite or respectful to someone in different social circumstances. See also Nicolas Martin, who observed members of *zamindar* castes using the term *chaudhary* to ridicule a person 'because he was wearing brand new clothes and therefore putting himself above what they considered to be his true station in life' (Martin, 2009, p. 46).

The other important group in structural circles of villages in Punjab is artisan and landless population which is broadly referred as ‘Kammis’ (literally, workers). The important castes belonging to *Kammi* category in rural areas of the Punjab are barbers (*Nai*), weavers (*Julaha*) carpenters (*Tarkhan*), blacksmiths (*Lohar*), potters (*Kumhar*), cobblers (*Mochi*), bards (*Mirasi*), leather workers (*Chamars*), washers (d*hobi*) and sweepers (*Mussalli*). Traditionally, members of *Kammi* castes provided various services to landholders under a transaction setup in rural areas referred to as ‘*seyp* system’. Under the *seyp* arrangements, *Kammis* were paid yearly with small amounts of wheat to work for zamindar households all year round. *Kammi’s* work expertise comes from accumulated knowledge, passed down from one generation to the next. In rural Punjab, occupation-based identities of *Kammi* castes are permanent. In *Kammi* castes, individuals with various material possessions and education qualifications can be found; they can also change the nature of their work, but their social identity remains fixed. For example, a member from a barber household in a village setting is always recognized as *Nai*, no matter if the person is rich or poor, educated, or uneducated, is associated with his ancestral occupation or not.

As is the case in other rural areas of Punjab, the principal groups in Bhi Nagar village are *zamindars* and *kammis*. The dominant *zamindars* of the village are members belonging to the *Gujjar* caste. This caste is at the top of the social ladder in the village. Both numerically and politically, their domination is also significant. Almost all of the agricultural land in the village is owned by various households belonging to this caste. Majority of landholders from the *Gujjar* caste resemble what Hamza Alavi calls ‘independent small landholder’, owning land between two and fifteen acres of land, and they ‘cultivate their own land; (ideally) they

neither work for others nor do they have a retinue of economic dependents whom they employ' (Alavi, 1972, p.19). However, most of the landholders from this group find land income insufficient to live on. They supplement their income by other means, most often by sending a family member overseas for employment or by working as a government employee at the local level. Other small holders, for an independent living, increase the size of their agricultural land by renting a few more acres from other landholders in the village.

There were few *Gujjar* households in the village who can be labelled as 'landlords', who, as Hamza Alavi notes, 'own substantial amounts of land and employ sharecroppers and/or wage labourers' (ibid.). One of my informants, Fida Gujjar, belonged to an influential *Gujjar* landlord household in the village. According to him, his extended family living in Bhi Nagar own a major portion of agricultural land in the village. Members from Fida Gujjar *biradri* also owned large swaths of land in neighbouring villages including in some other parts of Punjab. When I asked Fida Gujjar about the size of land he and his relatives owned, his answer was 'I do not exactly know. Together it must be several hundreds of acres'. He also mentioned that some members of his family use prefix like '*chaudhri*', 'landlord' and 'nawab' in their names.

The Gujjars in Bhi Nagar village, as the biggest and influential caste, are also the main beneficiary of government jobs. Many members from this caste are employed in different departments of the state at the local level. Many members, especially from wealthier households, are also settled and running successful businesses in various countries in the Middle East and Europe, indicating the advantage that they enjoy when it comes to exploring economic opportunities overseas. Wealthier Gujjar households feel proud of their businesses,

land ownership, and public employment opportunities. They also portray themselves superior and '*khandaani*'. Explaining the meaning of *khandanni*, Fida Gujjar once emphatically said that, 'a *khandanni* person is always trusted. He does not deviate from his words. He gets a lot of respect and people look up to him in times of need.'

The influence of the *Gujjar* caste is also evident in the politics of the village. At the time of fieldwork, the village politics was divided into two groups (locally known as *dhara*[10]), both led by the wealthier *Gujjars*. Two individuals were striving to increase their political influence and achieve dominant position in the village. One individual belonged to a family of wealthy landholders, while the leader of the other group belonged to a small landholder family which also owned a business in the Middle East. The households of these two individuals maintain a large *daara* or *bhiathak*, where men from the village were welcomed anytime to spend free time to gossip and exchanging important stories of the day as well as enjoy *hookah*. In the village both these individuals were named as the leading figure – those who were called upon to act as arbiters in the neighbourhood disputes and as advisors in family and communal matters. The villagers also seek help from them when it comes to dealing with the state officials. Quite often these individuals and their affiliates are also approached by the state in matters of governance concerning the village (the politics of intermediaries in the village is discussed in chapter six).

On the other hand of the caste composition in the village, there are *Kammis*, who, I was told, roughly make 30 percent of Bhi Nagar's population. Typical castes of *Kammis* in the village include barbers (*Nai*), weavers (*Julaha*) carpenters (*Tarkhan*), blacksmiths

[10] In literal sense, *dhara* means 'grouping' or 'faction'. Further details about this term are provided on the following pages in this chapter.

(*Lohar*), potters (*Kumhar*), cobblers (*Mochi*), washers (*Dhobi*) and sweepers (*Mussalli*). These castes have been living and practicing family occupations in the village for generations. They do not own any agricultural land. However, they own small plots of land on which they have built houses for residence. Some households from this group also work as tenants and sharecroppers. I also heard from many informants about bonded labour in the village. There are few *Mussalli* (Muslim sweeper) households whose men, women, and children are forced to work at kilns or on land owned by wealthier Gujjars. These poor *Mussallis* are paid very little and most of their labour goes into paying off money borrowed by a family member years ago from a landlord or kiln owner. They are also dependent on land or kiln owners for housing. Wealthy landowners construct cattle sheds (*dera*) which are used for different purposes including as residential sites for their servants i.e., the poor *Mussallis*. In the village, the word *Mussali* is also synonymous with different derogatory terms like '*jahil*' (illiterate), '*gandy*' (dirty), '*paleet*' (unclean), or '*nikammy*' (worthless).

Like Musils, another group which was subjected to degrading treatment in the village were *Churas* (Christian sweepers). Christian *Chuhras*, like their Muslim-sweeper counterpart in the village, speak Punjabi and eat similar food. I also observed that Christian men and women outside home looked and behaved like Muslim men and women in the village. However, despite similarities, they were, along with the members from *Mussalli* caste, illiterate and the poorest and the most vulnerable segment of the society. It was reported to me by many informants that *Chuhras* in the village are treated as 'untouchables', particularly when it comes to sharing food and eating utensils. Christian houses are located in one corner of the village. There is an open dumping site parallel to the street that leads to the area where

Christian and some poor Muslim *Kammis* are living. In the village, Christian area is famous as *issaiya da mohala* (Christian street) and their graveyard is called *issaiya da qabrastan* (Christian graveyard). Some *Chuhra* men are low paid workers who are hired in Bhi Nagar and other neighbouring villages to unclog open sewers (*nali*) and gutters. Often, they are paid with wheat flour or rice for their cleaning services. The villagers view sanitation work 'polluting' (*na-pak*); hence they degrade those who carry out this work.

As explained above, despite of low social and economic status, majority of the households from Christian *Chuhras, Mussallis*, or *Kammi* castes in the village are not anymore dependent on *zamindars* for sustenance, like they used to in the past. However, according to many informants, some members from *Kammi* castes like barber (*Nai*), carpenter (*Tarkhan*) and blacksmiths (*Lohar*) still provide services to the landowning castes under a traditional mechanism called '*seypdari* arrangement'. For instance, Mohammad Shafi, who owns a barber shop in the village where he cuts hair for cash, also works as a *seypi* for multiple *zamindar* households. The relation between Mohammad Shafi's household and various *zamindars* have been going on for generations. Fortnightly, Mohammad Shafi with his toolbox visits *zamindars* to give them a haircut at their homes. He explained to me that he does not charge on a daily basis for his services that he provides to his *zamindar* customers. Instead, he gets paid with a fixed amount of wheat at the end of harvesting season. Mohammad Shafi also receives gifts (money, clothes, food) from influential *zamindars* whenever they celebrate life events like childbirth or marriage.

Like many other villages in Punjab, my field observations also suggest that despite the fact that people consider themselves part of different castes this phenomenon however does

not create any social barrier or situation in which it is difficult for the inhabitants to interact with each other. Inter-caste friendship and interaction are common in the village. Contrary to the caste system in India (see Barth, 1959, p. 16-22)[11], among Muslim's castes in Bhi Nagar village there are no rules based on 'purity' and 'impurity'. Similar to what Zakia Eglar noted in her ethnography, I also observed members from different castes spending time together at different outdoor places.

> 'the fact of belonging to different castes does not create social barriers among the people, all of whom are Muslims. Kammis and zamindars sit together and may eat together, accept food from one another's houses, smoke a common *huka*, draw water from a common well, and pray side by side' (Eglar, 1960, p. 29).

It is true that inter-caste mixing and socialization can be observed in the village, but it does not mean that the villagers consider themselves equal and part of one same category. Certainly, it is not hard as an outsider arriving for the first time in the village and to think that there is a great intimacy and solidarity among all the villagers. 'We are very good people', 'we treat both insiders and outsiders well', 'there is a great intimacy and solidarity amongst us.' These were the common answers I received at the start of my fieldwork from the residents to my queries about the village and its people. In many conversations I also observed that the informants emphasised that the caste system had no salience in the village because they followed the same religion and went to the same mosque. Quite often the

[11] According to many ethnographers, the system of social stratification in Pakistan and India is different. For instance, Fredrik Barth (1960) viewed the caste system in Pakistan in which people were hierarchically classified according to their occupation. He elaborated in his ethnographic work in Swat, a region in the north of Pakistan, that 'Swat *quom* are...not castes in the Hindu sense of the word' (Barth, 1960, p. 115).

informants also mentioned inter-caste cooperation and commensality at important events like marriage and death. Over time however, I found out that this assertion of 'intimacy and solidarity' was contrary to the everyday ground realities. Cooperation and mixing in mosques and at lifecycle events never led to change one's social status in the established hierarchical caste system, or empowered individuals enough to defy caste norms and establish intimate inter-caste relationship like marriage[12].

Inter-caste mixing and collaboration in the village can also be observed at the time of elections. I was recurrently told that voting dynamics in the village revolve around *dhara bandi*, which literally means 'grouping' or 'faction'. The formation of *dhara bandi* is different from other groups like *biradri* or caste, which are characterized by bloodline or occupation. In the case of *dhara bandi*, different *biradris* and castes collaborate with each other to enhance their political importance. In other words, the organization of *dhara bandi* cut across *biradri* and caste groupings. Such a view of *dhara bandi* is also given by Wilder (1999) who says that it is 'a secondary group superimposed on other primary groups [of kinship, family, and caste]' (cited in Latif, 2013, p. 68). Javed & Rehman (2016) see *dhara bandi* as a 'voting block' and consider it an important concept to understand voting behaviours in rural areas of the Punjab. It is interesting that various *biradri* groups which generally contain within them elements of solidarity can split up along different *dhara bandi* lines. Perhaps that was the reason that 'politics of grouping or faction (*dhara bandi ki siyasat)*' was a common assertion in the village, and at the time of field work, the village politics was split into two *dharas*, each led by a patron from the Gujjar caste. The

[12] See also the work of Anjum Alvi who says 'It is true that people are considered equal when praying in the mosque, but this is only in relation to God and constitutes a reversal of the normal social situation. It is by and large only in this context that the notion of equality among Muslims as all brothers is referred to; it is otherwise of little importance in the Pakistani Punjab' (Alvi, 2001, p. 56).

phenomenon of grouping or factionalism also demonstrates that *Zamindars* and *Kammis* do collaborate and at times even join the same political *dharas*, they do not however defy inter-caste hierarchies and establish marital contract.

**Family structure**

In Bhi Nagar village, 'family' is understood as a setup in which male line dominates when it comes to deciding about names, titles, privileges, and inheritance matters. Most households in the village consisted of parents, their single daughters and sons, and their married sons with wife and children. The informants also reported that an ancestral household is also responsible to accommodate divorced or widowed relatives like daughter or sister. In the village, there was no concept of a single young male or female individual living separately from their parents. The informants also explained that if there are multiple sons in a family, upon father's death, each son moves to a separate household to repeat social relations and life cycle similar to his father. But if there is only one son, he will continue living in his father's house, inheriting everything including social ties established by his father. The daughters, on the other hand, who are locally considered as '*praya dhan'* (literally translates as a kind of wealth which is not yours and you are merely guarding it for someone else) move to their in-laws. In general, daughters even after marriage remain connected with the house and village of their parents and brothers and frequently visit their natal family on important occasions including to take part in important matters related to birth, marriage, and funeral.

I found it difficult to find one definition of 'family' in the village. Locally, the word family has different meanings for different people. There is no modern concept of family as an independent conjugal unit comprising children and their two parents. In fact, the villagers discourage independent conjugal units and view it as bad for the family's social reputation. For some villagers, a family can be a household under one roof comprising husband, wife, and their children, but strongly affiliated with the husband's parents and their relatives. However, for the majority, separate households linked through common ancestral roots, having independent source of income and kitchen, sharing street or neighbourhood and interdependent on each other through thick and thin, is a family.

The desired household though among all the villagers I interacted with is a 'joint family'. The villagers praise a family setup where a senior male member of the household acts as a leader, taking care of not only his wife and children but also his grandchildren. This is how villagers view a joint family living and behaving. Giving description of a joint household, some informants said that it is a setup in which parents and their single and married sons not only share common residence, but also hold joint ownership of household items like furniture and kitchen utensils, and if it is a *zamindar* household, in that case a joint ownership of cattle farm (*dera*) and agricultural land. Such a household also works as a united corporate unit where father or an elder brother manages all financial matters, including the productive abilities of male members of the family. Shared kitchen and open-air courtyard (*veera*) are other two significant features of a joint family. Members of a joint household are also expected to eat from commonly cooked *handi* (food prepared in a cooking pot). The villagers talk about such a set up as an 'ideal household' in their day-to-day narratives. The lived reality however of the primary social unit in the village is different than the imagined one. Very few individuals are part of the 'joint family' setup. Majority of

people in the village live in interconnected houses sharing the same street (*gali*) or neighbourhood with whom they share common ancestry.

### ***Biradri*** **system in the village**

The most important thing that appeared to me at the centre of the social world of inhabitants of Bhi Nagar, more important even family and caste, is *biradri*, which is a further split of a caste group into a social subunit which has relatively smaller membership. It is not necessary that smaller subunits within a caste see themselves in hierarchical terms, they just see themselves 'different' from each other. It is hard to examine every day social life in the village without taking into account the concept of *biradri* and the impact it has on day-to-day choices that the social actors make. The importance of this social group for the Punjabi society is also evident in the work of Hamza Alvi, who says that 'the basic institution of the kinship system of Muslims of West Punjab is the *biradri*…. kinship, rather caste, is the primary factor amongst the primordial localities which govern social organization in West Punjab villages' (Alavi, 1972, p. 1, 27). This term literally can be translated as 'brotherhood'[13], and according to the most basic understanding of the term *bridari,* as Hamza Alvi has explained, it simply means a descent group, including, in essence 'all those between whom actual links common descent can be traced in the paternal line, regardless of the number of generations that have elapsed' (ibid., p.2). The way the term *biradri* was explained to me by my informants in many conversations is closely related to how Anjum Alvi (2001) has put it:

[13] Frank Spaulding (1994) argues that 'the idea of [*biradri*] "brotherhood" should not be confused with the various institutionalized Muslim brotherhoods' (Spaulding, 1994, p. 130)

> ‘Among its many meanings, it may refer to people of one caste living anywhere in the world, or may mean people of one lineage or one kind of occupation. Women often use this term for only those relatives with whom they entertain one particular kind of gift exchange. If it is used to describe relations between different castes – which mostly exist to meet certain ends, like help in the harvest – it is generally just a polite way to describe a loose friendship with only a few commitments by implying the same status’ (Alvi, 2001, p.53).

Like many scholars of the Punjab society, there was not one particular explanation in the village as to what constitute a *biradri*. Nevertheless, almost all participants reported that its *biradri* that owed their primary loyalty. The villagers referred to their *biradri* members as ‘*apney log*’ (own people) or simply ‘*apney*’ (own), ‘*tabbar*’ (family) or ‘*rishtydar*’ (relatives), hinting at the importance of this social group. Within the limits of immediate *biradri*, several informants described a sense of support, protection, and a feeling of worthy commitment. The informants saw less intimacy and proximity in relationships which were outside one’s *biradri*. The villagers also talked about how interaction with outsiders mostly lacks the obligation of care and commitment. Several informants particular talked about *biradri* as a sub caste group which is locally accessible in times of grief and joy (*dukh sukh*), and with whom they maintained social ties through a tradition what many scholars of the Punjab society call ‘*len den*’, which involves in Bhi Nagar, among other things, sharing joy with the *biradri* members by sending sweet on occasion of a child birth, especially a baby boy, or sending milk on purchasing a buffalo/cow or when buffalo/cow starts producing milk. In local rituals like marriage and circumcision where gifts are given and

meals are served, I was told that *biradri* members cannot be ignored. The core celebrations of festivals like Eid-ul-Fitar (falling at the end of Arabic month of Ramzan) and Eid-ul-Adha (celebrated on the 10$^{th}$ day of Arabic month Zu al Hijjah) are also *biradri* bound. Similarly, food is also cooked and distributed among neighbours and *biradri* members when a household organizes *khatam sharif* (prayers for a deceased relative or religious saint). The people in Bhi Nagar also attaches great importance to the size of one's *biradri*. They believe that having numerically strong *bridari* is a major source of prestige, respect, and social standing. A large and well connected *biradr*i provides them with all types of benefits, from economic and moral help, to supporting each other in the event of conflicts with other groups in the village. A close bonding among *bridari* members a blessing, I heard quite often. The villagers often boast about large *biradri* with more male members and considered it an effective source of security in case of hostilities. There is a general view in the village that *Baba Ditto Ke*, *Baba Moujo Ke*, *Baba Yadey Ke*, and *Mohaijir Gujjar group* are the important *biradris* of *Gujjar* caste in the village. These *biradris* because of their numerical strength and general unity are regarded as 'influential' by the villagers, including by the local politicians.

Several informants also referred to the culture of help from *biradri*-based arrangements. It is common in the village that *biradri* members extensively engage in helping each other in all types of circumstances. The villagers are always optimistic about kinship support and care. In times of financial stress, or when one is looking for money to build a house, or start a business, or to cover medical or marriage bills, the villagers without hesitation always turn to the members of their *biradri*. One informant, Sameer, described his reliance on his *biradri* in following words:

> 'If I need money, the first place I will turn to is my *biradri*. Not just for money, I will turn to them for any kind of assistance. Conflict with someone in the village, help in dealing with the police or any other government office, advice in financial and family affairs, all these matters are resolved with *biradris's* input.'

Similarly, a respondent belonging to a *Lohaar* family in the village told me that recently his *biradri* had a meeting (*kath*) to decide about helping a household in the neighbourhood. *Lohaar* family lost a member to tuberculosis and due to poverty, they had no money to organize and prepare food for condolence gatherings for the deceased on 3rd day (*Kula da khatam*), 9th day (*nowey da khatam*), and 40th day (*chalis-wey da khatum*) of the death. The *biradri* in the meeting discussed that their unity as well as respect (*izzat*) would be at stake if condolences gatherings were not carried out. Everybody in the *kath* was asked for contribution.

Many villagers iterated to me that *biradri* resources are also mobilized in the event of inter-*biradri* tensions. In the village, some households are entangled in a persistent cycle of killings. Animal trespassing, land disputes and issues of honour that generally involve sister or wife are the main causes behind triggering this cycle of violence. During my time in the field, numerous *biradri*-related fights occurred. The villagers also told me about two recent revenge killings in the village. Most of the conflicts in the village invokes broader confrontation between *biradris*, and the whole *biradris* then acts collectively to restore the damage. The villagers think that the lack of action on their part in such important issues is a sign of weakness of a *biradris*. Our inaction will bring bad reputation for the family and,

more broadly, for the whole baradari, I was often told. The villagers think that the swifter they act in such circumstances, the better it is for their *biradri's* reputation. For villagers, unit of action is not a solitary man, it is the whole *biradri*. All *biradris* members of the individual who fell victim take upon them the responsibility to take revenge. That is why, response is always collective in conflicts related to honour, killing or land. The revenge involves planning among male members of the aggrieved family – father, uncles, brothers and, sometimes, even close friends. The aggrieved group will look for the culprit everywhere. In case they remained unsuccessful in finding the main culprit, they will not hesitate in inflicting harm on culprit's close relatives, for 'reputation of the whole *biradris* of the aggrieved person is at stake, so the whole *biradris* of the culprit is responsible for the wrongdoing', one informant commented.

It is important to note here that though the whole *biradri* associates itself with the *biradri's* superior standing in the village, all the aspects of this superiority are evident only in a few male members of that *biradri*. Few male members of a *bridari* occupy dominant positions, not all the members of that *biradri*. A *biradri* expresses its political and economic interests through a meeting of its 'important' members, locally known as *biradri kath (literally, biradri meeting)*. Each *biradri* in the village has its own group of men who decide important intra-*biradri* matters. In some instances, these men also regulate private and public conduct of members of their respective *biradri* in the neighbourhood. *Biradri kath* is the first forum available to the residents to resolve inra-*biradri* disputes, inheritance matters, issues related to marriage and divorce, dowry disputes, children fight etc. *Biradri* elders in most cases encourage compromise and conciliation (*sulah safai kerwana*). *Biradri* elders also have authority to punish an offender with a fine which is either paid through money or animal. In extreme cases, *biradri kath* can also take a measure of complete boycott (*taluq khatam*

*karna*), which involves stopping *biradri* members from attending joyous (*sukh*) or grief (*dukh*) events at the offender's home.

A biradri *kath* is also called at the time of election activities in the village in which *biradri* elders decide about which political *dhara*[14] in the village to whom the *biradri*'s men and women will support this time. Like in most other matters, *biradri* in the village also act as an integrated group when it comes to politics. It is important for a village-level politician to maintain individual ties with all the voters, but to be on better terms with *biradri* leaders matters more. According to Chaudary Suleman, a politician as well as head of a political *dhara* in the village, 'biradri elders can deliver you the votes of a whole *biradri'.* Because a *biradri* in Bhi Nagar extend its political support in block, with *biradri* elders influencing the voting decision of all the members of a *biradri*, and because political interests of *biradri* elders and *biradri* members intersect, *biradris* in the village vividly appear politically aligned groups. *Biradri* elders are naturally interested in the well-being of kin members and close relatives, and that is why they attempt to extract maximum benefits from a patron of a political *dhara* in the village. The general benefits for which different *biradris* vie for include provision of funds for maintenance of street (*gali*) and open sewer (*nali*), help at the time of interaction with the state authorities, or economic assistance in case a *biradri* is poor. In effect, in many conversations the villagers noted that cohesion of a *biradri at* the time of elections is a reliable source to check the unity among a *biradri* members. The villagers think that if there is no voting unity in a *biradri* due to internal conflicts, it indicates *biradri* disintegration and decline.

[14] The Punjabi word *dhara* can literally be translated as faction or group. It is basically an election alliance that cuts across all *biradris* and castes divisions in a village. It can also be called a 'vote bloc' in which 'all the voters of a particular village within that constituency are organised under one vote bloc and leader' (Mohmand, 2011, p. 14).

**Marriage Practices**

The aspect of social life in Bhi Nagar where caste separation is maintained strictly is marriage. It is considered a taboo to marry outside of one's caste. The villagers strongly emphasized in conversation that they would not establish marital relationship with someone with whom they did not share familial ties. In the village, as there was no concept of female and male interaction, preferences for marriage partners are not shaped by attraction, intimacy, or friendship, but by the ideals of kinship relationships. Whether it is a *Zamindar* or someone from *Kammi* castes, they all promote endogamous marriages. The villagers often remarked that there is no societal acceptance of cross-caste marital unions. On different occasions I asked informants to tell me what would happen if someone had married outside of his/her caste. Generally, their answers were that it would damage the social status of the families involved. In some cases, I was told, defying social norms related to marriage could also lead to boycott from the relatives.

Marriage patterns in Bhi Nagar village are deeply rooted in cultural ideas of protecting close kin ties and economic interests. Marriage bonds in Bhi Nagar village are primarily endogamous in nature, strictly arranged within one's own *biradri* or caste. I learned from the informant that cousin marriage is a general norm, and the proportion of such marriages is high in the village. The usual preference followed in the village when it comes to choosing a potential partner is cousin, fellow *biradri* member, extended kin member, outside *biradri* but strictly within the same caste and religion. Such practices of match making strongly strengthens the solidarity and exclusivity of one's *biradri* and caste. Wealthier and

political families in the village, among other things, also prioritize wealth, social status, and social network in match making. Some villagers explained that matches occasionally do take place outside the non-kin boundary, but they have never heard of anyone crossing the caste boundary. The kind of conjugal relations I found in Bhi Nagar are common in other parts of Punjab too (see Hussain & Bittles, 1998). Occasionally, people from all castes in Bhi Nagar also exchange wives in a marriage called *watta satta*, a type of marriage in which a pair of brother-sisters from one family forms a marriage bond with a pair of brother-sisters from another family. It is generally believed in the village that since *watta satta* marriage carries a threat of reprisal, their daughter remains safe from physical abuse from in-laws and she stays married for life (for more details about *watta satta* marriages in Pakistan, see Alvi, 2007; Jacoby & Mansuri, 2010)

I was often told that intermarrying has some pragmatic social and economic advantages. For instance, many residents were of the view that cross-cousin conjugal relationships are easier to establish than those with unrelated people. People in the village explained that since sex-segregation is a predominant tradition, marrying within one's own group provides a certain degree of understanding between families and potential partners. It was described that understanding between families is essential to decide matters related to dowry. The respondents were also of the view that endogamous marriages also save families from unreasonable demands of dowry. One man said, ‘you never know what “unrelated” in-laws can demand in dowery’. Financial stability, respect for *biradri*, and kin solidarity also make cousin marriage more desirable in the village. Many respondents also raised a point that marriage with relatives prevents property and other assets from going out of the family.

Sajjad Akhter, one of my informants, told me that his parents laboured a lot to find a wife for him because they were very poor. He was however happy and confident about his son. He said it would not be a problem for him to find a girl for his son who has a good reputation and reasonable earning potential. When I met Sajjad Akhter, he was looking for a daughter-in-law. For him, 'someone from his *biradri* or caste who is virtuous (*nek aurat*), have gained religious education (*deni taleem*), family custom and respectful to his husband and in-laws (*barro or khawand ki tabedar*)' would be a 'suitable' bride for his son. Sajjad Akhter also talked about dowry, which is an essential part of marriages in the village. Sajjad Akhter wanted to establish marital relation with a family which is fortune enough to give at least basic household items to their daughter in dowery, like quilts (*razaiya*), blankets (*kambal*), kitchen utensils (*bartan*), cots (*charpaiya*) etc.

Like Sajjad Akhter's household, other boys and girls in the village are also dependent on their parents for choosing a potential partner. Parents are open to marriage proposals (*rishta talash kerna*) as soon as they realize that their children have become mature enough to enter a marriage relationship. In the case of girls, the biological clock is considered significant, and parents start preparing for their daughter's wedding from the early age. It is generally believed that it is hard to find a 'suitable' boy with the passage of time. Across all *biradris* in the village, girls and boys know their future partner as they are from the same kin group, but they do not meet until the wedding day. However, things are changing with the spread of technology like mobile phones. Many young respondents said that engaged couples these days talk over the cell phone. Younger generation, particularly boys, is gradually becoming vocal when it comes to marrying someone, I was often told. Many respondents said that in recent years there had been cases in the village where boys reached their family with a particular girl in mind and got married through 'arranged marriage'. The older generation in

the village, however, relied completely on their parents for matchmaking. The observation about older generation in Bhi Nagar is in line with Mohammad Qadeer's illustration that 'traditionally parents or guardians of boys and girls selected partners for them, while those eligible for marriage were consulted either perfunctorily or not at all… compatibility or liking of partners was a secondary consideration' (Qadeer, 2006, p. 193). Whether in the past or present, however, there was and is a deep involvement in the village of family and *biradri* in marriages.

Explaining marriage traditions in the village, Mohammad told me that the process of match making begins with a close relative like *khala* (mother's sister), *mamu* (mother's bother), *bhabi* (sister-in-law), or some other elders from *biradri* playing an intermediary role between the families of potential partners. If both families agree upon taking things forward, it is customary that parents and relatives of the boy (without boy) visit the girl's house. After a few days, a visit from the girl's relatives (without the girl) follows. During these visits, rings and some other gifts are exchanged between prospective husband and wife. Following these visits, boy and girl are considered engaged (*rishta ho geya*). Next, the elders of both families hold another meeting to discuss what is the right date to tie the knot of their children. Since all marriage functions (*rasoom e shadi*) like henna party (*mehdi*), wedding procession (*baraat*), wedding food (*walima*) are self-organized, the availability of male members of *biradri* is essential. The elders also avoid extreme hot and cold weather as marriage functions are mostly held at home, in a street, on road, or in a nearby open space. If the families are farmers, they also avoid planting and harvesting season. The locals also oppose having a marriage function organized in certain sacred Islamic months like *Muharram, Ramazan,* and *Safar.* After fixing the wedding date, both families involved in marriage assign their respective *nais* (barbers) to carry out a task of informing relatives living inside or outside the

village. The *nai*, carrying a list of invitees, go door to door to deliver verbal invitations about the wedding. According to many respondents, the tradition of *nai* carrying a list and delivering verbal marriage invitations is in decline. Many families these days give printed wedding cards to *nai* to deliver (see also Fricke, Syed, & Smith, 1986; Hina & Malik, 2015).

**Livelihood**

Most of the informants explained that the majority of the villagers earn income from working as a labourer in nearby cities or overseas. Very small number of people from the village work outside of the agriculture linked economy, namely working in the public or private sector as a low-ranked officer, teacher, or security guard. Male members from *biradris* like *Tarkhan* (carpenter), *Nai* (barber), *Mochi* (shoemaker), *Lohar* (ironsmith), *Julalah*a (weavers) do not work anymore as they used to in the past. Now they either work as wage labourers or have opened shops where they use their inherited skills and knowledge to make money. However, agriculture is still central to the village economy. For instance, small farmers sometimes take a break or leave from other employment to provide labour on their own land. Similarly, landless households who otherwise work as wage labourers or shopkeepers are being hired to grow or harvest crops like rice, wheat, or sugarcane. Farming techniques in the village are still predominantly traditional, with little use of modern machinery. Cultivation of rice and wheat, like other major crops grown in the village, still involve substantial manual labour. For instance, the main task in rice crop includes plucking and transplanting rice seedlings with hands. This work is mainly done by male and female from landless households in the village who work in a group of five or six members belonging to the same household or from the same neighbourhood.  Those farm labourers who are hired to harvest rice and wheat

prefer their wages to be paid in kind rather than cash so that they do not have to rely on the market to buy food grains like wheat and rice. Wheat and rice products are the main staple foods in the village. The rural households store wheat and rice in homes in large containers called *parolas.* For consumption, rice and wheat are taken from these containers throughout the year.

While talking about livelihood and agriculture, the informants quite frequently mentioned a sugar mill and different rice mills (and employment opportunities they provide) located in different parts of the district. Another thing that they quite frequently mentioned was the well-established canal irrigation system in the district. For example, Saleem, whose family owns eight acres in the village, explained to me how water availability from a nearby canal and engine-run tube well helps his family grow crops during both *kaharif* season (May-October) and rabi season (November-April). During *kharif* season, Saleem's household grows rice as food and cash crop, and crops like millet (*bajra*), sorghum (*jowar*), maize (*makai*) to feed their animals. While in rabi season, wheat is the most important food and cash crop for Saleem's household, and berseem (*shatala*) to feed their animals. On one or two acres, they also plant sugarcane which takes a whole year to grow.  I was told that small farmers are partly connected with urban based markets and mainly sell their agricultural products within the village. Only wealthier farmers consider various crops as major money earning enterprises and are fully engaged with the market.

In the village, crop production is closely linked with livestock production. Substantial number of households in the village, whether landless or landowner, own livestock.

Buffaloes, cows, goats, and hens are the main livestock animal in the village[15]. The villagers keep their animals in small cattle shed built outside the village (*dera*) or a shed built inside the village (*haveli*). Many households rear animals at home. Country hen (*desi murghi*) scavenging for food can easily be spotted in streets in the village. In many conversations I learned that the primary purpose to keep a buffalo or a cow is to get fresh milk for the family. However, many households also earn income by selling extra milk from their animals. For instance, Saleem explained to me how milk and butter selling supplements his family's income. Saleem's household keeps some milk for home consumption and sells the rest. Everyday people from the village carrying their milk can visit Saleem's house to purchase milk. Similarly, the villagers, especially from poorer households, also pointed out other tangible benefits of keeping animals, such as their waste is a good source of fuel (dung cake). Others viewed animals as an asset to convert into cash to meet expenses related to marriage, house construction and other family emergencies. In many conversations the local community also highlighted intangible benefits associated with keeping livestock. Large numbers of buffaloes or cows contribute to a family's social status and reputation. In a *biradri*, a household with livestock is considered prosperous, and is given special importance at the time of taking collective decisions.

[15] Other animals that some households in the village keep as companions are dogs, pigeons, and cocks. These animals are usually for leisure activities like dogfighting, cockfighting, and pigeon flying. There were some villagers who highly admired their cocks and dogs. These villagers were inseparable from their dogs and cocks, and I always saw them with their pets. I often heard from these animal keepers a statement similar to what Muhammad Kavish (2019) notes in his study which is about dog fighting in south Punjab: 'keeping dog/pigeon/cock is my predilection (*shauq*) and love (muhabat)'. The motivation behind keeping fighting dogs, fighting cocks, and flying pigeons in Bhi Nagar village is similar to what Kavish describes that they represent "masculine qualities of their keepers. They [dogs, cocks, pigeons] are praised for displaying toughness and ferocity and admired for not surrendering in difficult situations. These traits of masculinity then translate into the symbolic capital of the… keeper[s], who [accumulate] honour and prestige, and publicly [display] them to the crowd of thousands of men' (Kavesh, 2019, p. 17)

# Chapter five

## Images of the State in the village

This chapter is dedicated to examining the way in which residents of Bhi Nagar talk about Pakistani state in the context of their day-to-day political and social life. In other words, I attempt here to capture a common perception about Pakistani state among the residents of Bhi Nagar village. By common perception I mean how Pakistani state is 'seen' and 'imagined' by its inhabitants, or in the words of Akhil Gupta 'the local-level or grassroots conception of the state' (Gupta, 1995, p. 377). I have theorized 'state' here using insights from Monique Nuijten (2004). For Nuijten, who follows Abrams (1988) line of argument, it is possible to untangle three deeply related dimensions when it comes investigating 'state': 'the idea of the state, the state machine and the culture of the state' (Nuijten, 2004, p. 211). According to her, 'the idea of the state' is related to 'the belief in the existence of a coherent state system' (ibid. p. 211), a theoretical construction that attributes 'unity, morality and independence to the disunited, amoral and dependent workings of the practice of government' (Abrams, 1988 as quoted in Nuijten, 2004, p. 211). The second dimension, 'the state machine', she also calls it 'hope generating machine', refers to 'governmental institutions, made up of diverse sets of practices linked to the political system' (Ibid., p. 211). By 'the culture of the state' she means 'the practices of representation and interpretation which characterize the relation between people and the state bureaucracy and through which the idea of the state is constructed' (Ibid., p. 211). It may be mentioned here that 'the culture of the state' does not mean a specific culture related to the various institutions of the state. For Nuijten, it means 'the way in which this 'mighty actor' or 'neutral arbiter' is imagined through administrative procedures, stamps, maps, theories about

power and the belief in the 'right connection'" (Ibid., p. 228). I focus in this chapter on the third dimension of the state as proposed by Monique Nuijten.

I start this chapter by discussing 'anthropological novelties' (Strønen 2017, p. 10) in giving a new perspective to examine the topic of 'state'. One of the significant contributions of the discipline of anthropology in the research on state is to consider day-to-day execution of state officials. Numerous anthropological studies have emphasized how the state through its everyday actions makes itself visible and manifests its power. At the same time, the inhabitants of the state through their ordinary encounters with the state familiarize and imagine what the state is and is not. Next, I examine the presence of the Pakistani state in Bhi Nagar. Looking at what is happening in the village, it can be said that the state is partially visible with limited physical presence, and it centres somewhere in the distance, from where ideas, orders, powers, and rituals emanate. In other words, the Pakistani state in Bhi Nagar was both a present and missing phenomenon. It existed vaguely in the form of school, roads, police station or healthcare centre, and lacked a democratic and meaningful arm of the state responsible to levy and collect taxes. After locating the research within the space of Bhi Nagar, next I turn to how the villagers see and imagine the state in the context of bureaucratic infrastructure which they encounter on a daily basis. Using ethnographic vignettes, I demonstrate that the residents of Bhi Nagar imagine the state in a dual way which are contrary to each other. The residents make a clear distinction between the local realm of the Pakistani state and its national realm. I suggest here that the interaction people have with the state officials at the local level does not live up to their expectations. They expect local state institutions to be governed in accordance with legal and rational principles. However, in reality, they find that the personal relations play a significant role in interacting with the local state actors. The dynamics inherent in the interaction between citizens and the local state are

certainly not peculiar to Bhi Nagar. Akil Gupta (1995) has found similar kinds of dynamics in his research conducted in northern India. He points out that there is a great difference between expectations and everyday experiences with the state at the local level, a difference, I argue, underlies the perception of the local realm of the Pakistani state as biased and corrupt. Moving forward, I introduce the idea of the national realm of Pakistani state and how and why the rural residents see and imagine it in a positive light. Here I also explain how the rural residents associate 'the ideal' image of Pakistani state with top ranked politicians and officials. The villagers 'see' and 'imagine' as if the Pakistani state exists only in capitals or major cities. For the rural residents, the state has close association with ideas and characteristics of the person who holds high public office located in capitals or other major cities of the country.

**Understanding 'the state': Benefiting from anthropological perspectives**

Scholars who are using Weberian lenses to defines 'the state' as 'a discrete organization that has its own agency separate from society' have been challenged (Obeid 2010, p. 332; see also Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005; Migdal and Schlichte 2005; Hansen and Stepputat 2001). As more attention has been paid to ethnographic methods, new theoretical assumptions about the state have become apparent. Here one of the running themes is that the state is a 'disaggregated and multi-layered institution'(Gupta 1995, p. 391), brought into life through 'images and practices' (Migdal and Schlichte 2005, p. 22). As enormous and coherent as the state imagines itself, empirically grounded analysis shows that the real field of power is very different than the imagined one (Hunt, 2006). Clearly, the image that the state portrays about itself and the reality of this image at the ground level are different and yet closely related. Looking at the nature of everyday interaction of citizens

with the state can help us to produce an empirically rooted account about views and images of the state among common people at the local level. Akhil Gupta (1995) rightly emphasizes:

> ‘state officials… -the village-level workers, land record keepers, elementary school teachers, agricultural extension agents, the staff of the civil hospital, and others….. is the site where the majority of people in a rural and agricultural country…. come into contact with "the state," and this is where many of their images of the state are forged’ (p. 376).

The key component of above-mentioned views about the state is the lack of any sort of coherence between state images and state local practices. In fact, these two dimensions of the state may move in opposite directions with no possibility of meeting each other. To get a more authentic picture of the state, it is important to focus on continuous interplay between state images and state practices and probe whether these two strengthen or weaken each other (Migdal & Schlichte, Rethinking the state, 2005). Certainly, constant tension between idealized image of the state and state local level practices can offer possible avenues for research which can enhance our understanding about the state. Focusing on such contradictions, argues Akhil Gupta (2005), is critical to study how the state is understood and explained in the contest of local level politics. Paying attention to how citizens carry out engagements with the state in daily events can provide clues about the true nature of the state in a given country (Gupta, 1995).

In order to understand how ordinary people explain and define what ‘the state’ is in Bhi Nagar, I look at people’s ‘everyday interactions with state bureaucracies’ (Gupta 1995, p. 378). Through everyday political modalities which are critical in shaping citizen-state

interaction, 'people construct ideas about the state, attempt to make such ideas "come true", and relate to state practices, policies, and institutions' (Obeid 2010, p. 332). Much of citizens' day-to-day relation with the state, in the words of Akhil Gupta, 'give a concrete shape and form to what would otherwise be an abstraction "the state"' (Gupta, 1995, p. 378). Yet a considerably small number of studies have taken advantage of this bottom-up approach to study the topic of the state; particularly this is true in the case of Pakistan. Most of the research on the topic of the state in Pakistan tends to uncover design of higher levels of the state institutions and their strengths and weaknesses (Faiz, 2015; Jalal, 1999; Shafqat, 1999; Husain, 2018). This research with focus on larger structures and policies do not reveal much about how the Pakistani state is 'seen' at the local level. Neither do they reveal anything about the 'tension between the image of the state and actual practices' (Migdal and Schlichte, 2005, p. 32). Even scholarships particularly aimed at studying the state institutions at the local level limit their analysis to different decentralization reforms in Pakistan (Cheema et al., 2005; Cheema et al., 2015). Yet in other places research on the state has taken the level of analysis to a more micro level, seeing the state from the bottom up in ethnographic and local light (Gupta, 1995; Hunt, 2006; Nuijten, 2003; Obeid, 2010).

## Absent or present? Locating 'the state' in Bhi-Nagar Village

> This street used to be uneven. It had not been repaired for years. Whenever there was rain, it would get filled with water. In the dry season, it would get dusty. We informed Fida Gujjar (a neighbourhood politician) multiple times, but he did not do anything. One day we decided to take care of it ourselves. We repaired the damaged part of the street. During the dry season we keep the street wet to avoid dust. (Personal Communication, Ihsan Ali, Fieldnote, December 2020)

Bhi Nagar village, which is home to 15000 residents, is one of the biggest villages in the district of Mandi Bahauddin. Relatively more populated than the surrounding villages, it acts as a centre of small state infrastructure which is designed to offer services to the neighbouring villages too. State funded primary and high schools (separate for girls and boys) and a basic health unit are present in the village. The union council (the lowest administrative tier) has its head office in the village. There is also a small police post located at some distance from the village. The office of the union council is responsible for various functions. For instance, it maintains the record of birth and deaths of all the areas under its domain. It also furnishes marriage certificates and documents of residency. But due to poor public services, the main contact for education and health for the majority, especially for those who can afford in the village, is the private sector in the nearby urban areas. For the residents of the village, the fact of some aspects of the state in the village apparently had no importance due to unavailability of a mechanism through which they can hold those institutions accountable. The office of the union council has no importance for the villagers because it has no meaningful role to play at the local level. There was no evidence that the union council was playing any role in making and implementing the state policies. The state role as supervising public projects, collecting taxes and enforcing law was scantily present. Many residents, especially older and middle-aged, quite often showed mild scorn for the state law, and they would talk about ending of the old conflict resolution mechanism with some nostalgia.

Surprisingly, various decentralization reforms in the country have not proved effective to bring the state infrastructure closer to the rural residents (for history and challenges of local government reforms in Pakistan, see Cheema et al., 2005). While

decentralization can be seen as a type of reform that shifts power to lower levels, facilitating citizens' engagements with the state, however the local state bureaucracy seems less interested in Bhi Nagar development. In Bhi Nagar, scant presence of the state may be having to do with the economic aspect of the village. Bhi Nagar village does not attract government attention because the majority of the people are low-income subsistence farmers. I also think that the limited presence of the state in Bhi Nagar should not be overstated, the insufficient administrative setup is even evident in neighbouring villages too. Moreover, part of the reason for the limited presence of the state in Bhi Nagar is the outward nature of sub-district and district level bureaucracy. Theoretically, Pakistan is a federal state with three levels of governance – the federal, the provincial and the local. At the time of fieldwork, there were no elected councils for the local tier of governance. All the local tiers of governance like district, sub-district, and union council were controlled by provincially appointed and provincially supervised bureaucracy. The local bureaucratic setup almost entirely relied for its income on the provincial government, which meant that they had no incentive to have meaningful interaction with the inhabitants of Bhi Nagar.

Like other villages in Pakistan, no household in Bhi-Nagar was integrated with public utilities like sewerage and water. These utilities were mainly managed through self-help with very little help in some instances from the state. All the streets in the village were without any maintenance and sidewalks. The households would eliminate their waste and sewerage water outside of their homes that would run along both sides of the street and finally ended up in a nearby open dumping place, a fertile place for mosquitoes. During my time in the field, no community or government involvement was seen for the village sanitation. Mostly what villagers would do was to clean the area right in front of their houses and throw the waste in an open area in the neighbourhood. Blocked sewage lines that cause filth and foul smell in

streets would occasionally get villagers attention. In the poor neighborhood, I also saw kids doing defecation in open spaces, which were right in front of their houses.

The clear invisibility of the state influences daily life in Bhi-Nagar. However, I did not find it difficult to talk about politics with the ordinary people. Most of the people were willing to engage in a detailed discussion on the topic of the Pakistani state. I noticed on many occasions that political discussion among villagers would go on for hours. In many discussions in the village, I inquired about the state officials' intervention in village life with questions like, 'Did you seek permission to open your shop?' 'Do the villagers require prior approval to construct a house?' 'Do the villagers get any kind of permit from the local state authorities before setting up tents for funerals or weddings on a street in the neighbourhoods?' 'Do villagers ever face any challenge from the authorities regarding raised platforms (*chubtra*) and gutters built illegally on the public ways?' 'Have the authorities ever punished anyone in the village for using public streets to rear livestock?' The answer to all these questions was emphatic 'no'. While questioning the state's responsibility to maintain law and order and provide security, the usual response of participants was 'whether we die or live, the state does not care. We have only God's help and protection" (Personal Communication, Shah Sb, Fieldnote, November 2019).

Government job holders enjoy a good reputation in Bhi Nagar, who are generally believed to be socially connected and influential. The people who are state employees in Bhi Nagar are not recognized as agents representing the state. Instead, they are seen by the rural residents as one of them, as acquaintances, friends, neighbours, or relatives. Usually, government employees in Bhi Nagar are known with the first name followed by the government departments they are working for. If a person works for the police or electricity

department, his name would be followed by the word police or WAPDA, for instance, Hanif police *wala* or Hanif WAPDA *wala*. Through them and other intermediaries, people at the local level engage with the state (see chapter six). The ordinary people in Bhi Nagar are in awe of these officials mainly because of their wealth and proximity to the state, not because of their education or technical knowledge. These officials are often invited for important performances, like inauguration and prize distribution. These local state officials either hail from privileged sections of the village or the local privileged groups wield strong influence on them. Consequently, the street-level employees of the state often find themselves in difficult situation, thinking both about their social commitments, especially towards family or *biradari*, as well as their job's requirements.

Like the state, members of provincial assembly and member of national assembly, as political representatives from the village, were not present in the village either. They never arranged local visits or meetings during the time of field work, and there was no evidence that they had represented political and economic interest of their respective constituencies at the provincial and national level in any meaningful way.

Just as there were restraints on the appropriate presence of the state infrastructure, there were also restrictions on the state's efforts to survey the people through data collection and vaccination practices. The rule of the state is challenged by the indifference of the inhabitants to the state authority, as is evident when the state's surveillance apparatus enters the town. Despite good intentions of the state to gather population statistics and carry out mass vaccination, the residents often oppose these efforts. Sagheer, a schoolteacher as well as a polio worker for many years, told me that about the challenges he and his colleagues

counter every year while on the job: 'we often come across parents who show reluctance to get their kids vaccinated, and inquire whether or not polio drops safe for their kids. We will explain to them, if they are still reluctant, we seek help from the neighborhood politicians to convince them' (Personal Communication, Fieldnote, November 2019). This type of resistance is more common in other parts of Pakistan. Religion is often invoked to legitimize resistance to the state surveillance technique. In some parts of the country, polio workers were denied access to the areas by saying that the 'the vaccine is an un-Islamic Western plot to harm children'[16].

As such, we can say that the Pakistani state in Bhi Nagar was both absent and present. It was scantily there in the workings of a hospital, schools, police station, and a union council. However, the state as an overseer of public works, tax collector, law enforcement agent or representative institution with meaningful participation was absent. Despite the limited presence of the state, the rural residents however know that causing any damage to the interests of any well-connected person will expose them to state oppression and injustice. They also know that the role of the state is essential in terms of sharing wealth and giving access to public water, sewerage, streets, or road projects. They are also aware how important everyday interaction with the state is, especially to get identity or property related documents. That is why it is safer to use Philip Abram's (1988) differentiation between the 'state' as an 'idea' and the state as a complicated 'system' to argue that Pakistani state as an idea permeates the local political landscape of Bhi Nagar, even if the state institutions are weak or missing.

[16] "Winning the War on Polio in Pakistan" International Crisis Group. Accessed November, 2019 https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/winning-war-polio-pakistan

**Images of the local realm of Pakistani state**

> I do not know anything about politics. I am a poor peasant, and I only know about my work. Politics is a work of *Chaudhris* and rich people. Only they can tell you about the state and its polices. (Personal communication, Javaid Iqbal, Fieldnote, February 2020)

> I am a daily wager. I am not a suitable person to talk about things like politics and the state (*riyasat*). (Personal communication, Furqan, Fieldnote, March 2020)

> We hear news which party wins the elections, nothing more than that. The state never fulfils its obligations toward its people. (Personal communication, Fieldnote, Ihsan Ali, December 2020)

> We are nothing for the state. The state treats us like *jangli janwar* (wild animals), who do not rely on others for basic necessities. (Personal communication, Mohammad Rafique, Fieldnote, March 2020)

In this section I concentrate on dynamics of engagement between the villagers and the state authorities as was shared with me by the informants at various gathering places in Bhi Nagar. These are the spots, mostly located in front of someone's house or a shop, where local people – always men and of the same age group – quite often come together and spend time chatting. At such spots, I argue, the villagers engage in talks that ultimately shape their views and images about the Pakistani state[17]. Across the village, every day the residents gather at these

[17] Indeed, the word '*riysat*' means different things to different people in the village. While the respondents share the core meaning of the word, there are variations in application of the word. During the early days of my fieldwork, I realized that the villagers were struggling to answer my question about 'the state' in the village. I would ask them 'kya aap bata sakte hai ki riyasat kya hai? (Could you elaborate what is "the state"?)'. Majority of the participants would say that they did not get my question. Others would search their memory and reply 'no one has ever asked them such questions before'. For Khaleeq Ahmed, a fruit and vegetable vendor in the village, "it is something he hears about when he turns on TV" (personal communication, fieldnote, December 2020). I

outdoor spots and talk about diverse issues and problems of local concern in relation to the local and national state. The villagers here in their own way talk about working condition in different government departments; share stories whether their recent visit to a particular state office was successful or not; tell each other the process and expenses involved in gaining various property or identity related documents; and discuss other issues concerning village life like disputes, agriculture, weddings, funerals, or development etc. I found out here that the villagers drew a distinction between the local realm and national realm of the Pakistani state. The image of the local realm of the Pakistani state one finds while talking to the villagers is not an ideal type in which actions of bureaucrats are guided and consistent with a clear set of rules. The residents of the village talk about the local state as informal and personal. In a sense, the local state, and its officials – abstract and rule-based authority – as projected in studies of politics is absent.

Before moving forward to discussing villagers' experiences with the state authorities in the Bhi Nagar area, I would like to share my first-hand account of interacting with the state officials in Pakistan. Before starting my PhD, I had to visit different offices in Pakistan to acquire relevant documents which were required to get Italian study visa. This involved obtaining a passport, police clearance certificate, polio vaccination certificate, and authorization and translation of all educational documents into Italian language. As a first step, I consulted different friends to understand what to do and how to complete this process. Due to insufficient clarity and disclosure about the procedure, much of the discussion with

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was a bit confused at first for getting very little information from the participants about the state and its policies. However, when I started spending time with the participants, hearing about their day-to-day activities, I discovered that they would refer to the state and its policies quite often. Whether discussions surround education, health, development, jobs or other needs of the residents, conversation of access, or more commonly, no-access to the state services is bound to take place. I found out that the respondents were more willing to engage in a detailed discussion about their daily encounters with the state officials and unavailability of public services in their village and how the state is ignoring them than the question 'what "state" (*riyasat*) is'.

friends involved asking about which office I should visit first and which one later, including guidance about form filling, how much money I should arrange, and the right day and time to visit an office. After obtaining useful information from my friends, I started my journey. I had to visit government offices and ministries not only in federal and provincial capitals but also in district, tehsil and municipal levels. While preparing documents, I met many people, some a number of times in different offices, trying hard to get things done. We would wait for hours for an office to open, or for a relevant government official to arrive. When encountering each other while dealing with different bureaucratic layers, we would share experiences. There were people who had started the process six months ago; they told me how their file was being transferred from one office to another.

It took me three months to complete this process and finally had my student visa ready. Like most Pakistanis, it would not have been possible to complete this process on time without seeking intervention from relatives and friends who had connections in various governmental departments. It was quite a stressful and frustrating time, it however provided first-hand experience of encountering the state for basic services like documentation. Certainly, my personal experiences cannot reflect dynamics of a larger group, either because I was based in a city and interacting with the state in an urban environment, or because my interaction with the state was made easy by a well-connected group of family and friends. However, my first-hand account of interacting with the state and the experiences of my informants in Bhi-Nagar share a common theme of using a reference to complete a work in a government office on time. The informants shared experiences of how state employees are highly biased, less eager, and unwilling to cooperate and help the people. But the moment you offer them money or mobilize a reference, they would spring into action and complete your work on time. All my informants in Bhi-Nagar shared the view of unpleasant

experiences when it came to encountering the state officials. ‘Prolonged’, ‘difficult’, ‘mistreatment’, ‘dishonest’, ‘tedious’ were common words the villagers used while sharing their experiences.

Returning to the main focus of this section, I argue here the state’s lack of interest towards the lives of the villagers in Bhi Nagar strongly impacts the way the residents ‘see’ and ‘imagine’ the local state. Useful perspectives about villagers-state interaction in Bhi-Nagar can be gained by paying attention to the villagers’ sporadic encounters with officers from the local land revenue department (e.g., *patwari*), law-and-order department (e.g., police constables) and from those offices which are responsible for issuing documents like birth certificate, domicile, marriage certificate, identity card or passport. The villagers’ accounts are full of examples about how state employees in these offices use different excuses to misbehave and extract money from them. Most of the interaction of the people in Bhi-Nagar with the state authorities is not about obtaining services but rather about gaining legal recognition of themselves or their property or approaching the state to diffuse a conflict that cannot be managed at the village level.

Through their day-to-day encounter, the residents of Bhi Nagar regard corruption, humiliation, and indifference as standard norms of the state officials. Consequently, instead of relying on official channels to make a demand on the state, informal channels are activated and utilized to engage with the state. To get things done in a government office, ‘it is better to go with someone's reference’, people in the village would tell each other. Villagers-state interaction, for the informants, is difficult and it involves a great deal of effort. Money, favouritism, and unfairness are significant elements of this interaction. My informants were

of the view that favouritism is not limited only to the offices where they go for paper works, but it is viewed and used in positive terms in every department – local, district, provincial or federal – even by people working in private sector display different attitudes to familiar customers compared to unfamiliar customers. Because of unpleasant and time-consuming bureaucratization of the processes, minor works such as paying utility bills or cashing a cheque are also completed using someone's reference. As one participant puts it: ‘I am a teacher, and I cannot afford waiting the whole day queuing up in a bank. To pay my bills or withdraw my salary, I always arrange a “reference” before visiting a bank’ (Personal communication, Mohammad Nadeem, Fieldnote, December 2019).

For villagers in Bhi Nagar, procurement of authorized documents such as birth certificates or marriage certificates involve considerable time and negotiation. In an attempt to get these documents, the villagers come into direct contact with the office of the union council in the village. No one among my informants could explain to me the exact procedure to get a birth certificate, its fee and where it was to be paid. They told me that the officer would charge them according to their economic condition. For most of them, the fee ranges from 200 to 1000 rupees. Because the villagers are unaware of the technicalities involved in availing various authorized documents form the state, they look for mediators or pay bribe in the form of ‘fee’ which is arbitrarily decided by the officer at the union council, which, for the residents of Bhi Nagar, is one of the chief local state institutions that is corrupt. The stories of villagers were full of references of how the union council officials would mistreat them and use 'missing documents' as a pretext to demand bribes. For instance, Nisar Iqbal, who runs a small tea stall in the village, told me about his recent interaction with the office of union council like this:

> Recently I visited the municipal office to register the birth of my son. I took some basic documents with me, but the union council secretary refused to accept them. The secretary gave me a long list of documents to produce, even though he knew I could not manage all the documents he was asking for. I tried to convince him, but he remained adamant and showed no flexibility. After some time, he started shouting at me and said to leave his office. On the way out, I met his peon who took my documents and extra money in addition to the required fee. After one week, I received a receipt confirming the registration of my son. (Personal communication, Fieldnote, February 2020)

The process of paying the 'fee' to the state official for services like obtaining property documents, identity cards, or passport is widely talked about in the village. The villagers exchange with each other everyday information and experiences of encountering the state official for basic services like documents. For instance, one day I was with Zia at his TV repair shop when a friend of his came to see him. His friend wanted to know the procedure of getting a passport for his wife. Particularly, he was interested to know the procedure Zia followed to receive his own passport. He asked Zia about the time duration needed to get a passport, the money he had to pay, and who had received the money to make sure that the procedure of receiving the passport was smooth. This conversation between Zia and his friend shows that people search for effective information before engaging with the state officials, and people like Zia who have already followed the procedure are crucial in providing that information. This also shows that in their day-to-day dealings with the subjective application of laws, the villagers regard the development of trusted links as essential.

Certainly, the fear of abuse, delay, or rough behaviour for not offering bribe runs like a common thread in villagers' stories of everyday encounter with the local state: ‘if you go without bribe or reference, public officials will ignore you’ (Personal communication, Sageer, Fieldnote, November 2019). ‘*Sarkari mulazim ty wady log ne, ty asi mehnt mazdoor* (state employees have higher status and we are mere laborers)*’ (*Personal communication, Abdul Hameed, Fieldnote, November 2019). ‘State employees are “begharit” (without self-respect)’ (Personal communication, Kamran, Fieldnote, February 2020). ‘Everybody is on his own; nobody will bother even if you get killed. Here the most important thing is money’ (Personal communication, Ghazenfar Hussain, Fieldnote, March 2020). ‘If you do not offer bribes, public officials treat you in a way that it hurts. You feel as if you do not have any respect or importance’ (Personal communication, Wali Azhar, Fieldnote, Feb 2020). ‘If you go to a government office and you try to argue with a public official, they will throw away your file and say: “Don't you have manners? How come you can raise your voice in my office?"’ (Personal communication, Fiaz, Fieldnote, January 2020). ‘I needed a polio certificate. At the start I spent hours to locate the right department, and then three hours in a queue. When it was finally my turn, the officer told me to come tomorrow as they cannot turn on the computer due to the electricity cut’ (Personal communication, Junaid, Fieldnote, January 2020). Some of my respondents were migrant workers working in Dubai. They told how corruption and favouritism is rampant in Pakistani consulate in Dubai too. ‘Pakistani government officers would never change no matter wherever you send them’, this is how they ridiculed state officials while sharing their experiences of encountering Pakistani state abroad (Personal communication, Fieldnote, January 2020).

In particular, the police at the local level is the most important institution that creates an everyday image of the local state as biased and corrupt. For successful communication and negotiation, the villagers approach the police through the local-level figures of authority (see chapter six). It is well known in the village that they cannot achieve anything in *thana* on their own. The villagers think that the police respond well if you have the support of someone influential from the village. For instance, if there is an issue that villagers think that it cannot be resolved locally and they want to take it to the police, both parties will approach the police with the help of their political patron. The patron of the injured party sits with the police and implicitly negotiates bribes to enforce the right and get some justice. While the patron of the guilty party discusses with the police the size of the bribe to make the law look other way. For the residents, approaching the police means giving them an opportunity to make money. During my time in the field, hardly a day went by without a verbal story from someone in the field that the police were extracting money or taking bribes from the customer for the state services. Regardless of the authenticity, such stories are significant in shaping up the everyday image of the local state. For the village dwellers, public servants, especially the police, always show disdain for them; they are always in a 'superior' state of mind. In the day-to-day language, the behavior of the police employees is described as 'rude' and 'unkind'.

On asking interaction with the police, the more general answer emphasized meaninglessness and fear:

> 'I fear police presence in our village. I cannot speak confidently in front of them because of fear.' (Personal communication, Allah Nawaz, Fieldnote, January 2020)

‘If we see the police in our street a fear would set on all of us. We would fear that they might take us for no reason.’ (Personal communication, Mohammad Shareef, Fieldnote, December 2020)

‘Police do not listen to us. They only listen to the wealthy people. If you are rich and in a position to offer them money, they will listen to you.’ (Personal communication, Ashraf, Fieldnote, December 2020).

‘Police use different tactics to ask for bribes. If they find someone travelling alone in the evening on that road, they will stop him and ask for money. If a person does not give them money, they will beat or abuse him and sometimes even put him in jail on false charges.’ (Personal communication, Hussain Khaled, Fieldnote, January 2020)

‘If we go to the police, the first thing they will ask you, do you have a political reference or not? There are no chances that the police will listen to you unless you have a reference of an influential person.’ (Personal communication, Fieldnote, January 2020)

‘Do not ask me about police officers, please! They do not have heart; they do not have manners; they do not respect anyone; they beat people and use abusive language; who would want to go to them?’ (Personal communication, Sameer Shehzad, Fieldnote, February 2020)

‘When I am on the road driving my car, I always carry all the mandatory documents with me. Even then my heart sinks whenever I see the police.’ (Personal communication, Masood, Fieldnote, January 2020)

Approaching state authorities for conflict resolution is disliked in the village. Disputes like minor fights in streets or between neighbours, land rights, divorce and animal trespassing are usually dealt with locally. Their solutions mostly involve self-care. Sometimes these disputes are resolved through local mediation (see chapter six). The residents speak against approaching the police, even when necessary. As such, many conflicts do not appear in the official record. The residents are of the view that the state authorities do not want to intervene, but rather let people decide their affairs on their own.

> We do not go to the police. We try to resolve our issues internally in the village. The police would call both involved parties to the police station, and the party which can offer more money, the police would side with them. The other party would be locked up and beaten. (Personal communication, Mohammad Afzal, Fieldnote, February 2020)

With police station nearby, the villagers, particularly the poor residents, avoid going out of the village unnecessarily. If the police see someone outside the village late in the evening, there are high chances that he will be convicted for a crime he has not even committed. Especially, if the person is poor and has no bribe to offer, he is an easy target for them. Abdullah, a college student who helps his family in running a mini grocery shop in the village, told me about his recent interaction with the police like this:

> Let me tell you about a recent encounter that I and some of my friends had with the police. As you know power outages are a major issue here. It was a hot dry evening and due to unavailability of electricity we could not turn on the fan to cool ourselves. We decided to go out for a walk. We were on the road outside our village when two

> policemen approached us. They were holding guns. We became very much scared. They started shouting abusive words at us. We raised our hands in the air. They searched our pockets but found nothing. Maybe they were looking for money. Then they violently kicked us and angrily ordered us to go back to the village (Personal communication, Fieldnote, January 2020).

I noticed in many discussions people talking about how they saved their motor bikes from police checking. In such encounters where they had been stopped by the police, participants mentioned frequently that they would rescue themselves either by boasting about their wealth or presenting themselves as an educated person who was aware of his right, or simply pretending to be someone related to a powerful figure from the village. The coping mechanisms with the state officials express that the residents of the village show mistrust and question legitimacy of the state. Ultimately, each coping mechanism with the state official is guided by previous experiences and local knowledge.

> It was Eid's Day. I and some of my friends were coming back on motorcycles from a neighbouring village. It was 7 or 8 pm. We saw from a distance three policemen standing on the main road outside our village. We knew they would stop us and not let us go until we gave them money. I told my friends to let me do the talking; I know how to deal with them. To protect ourselves from unnecessary questions and humiliation, all I needed was confidence to tell the police that I am from an influential family. It was Eid's day, and I was already wearing new and clean clothes. I took my phone in my hand, for I knew it would make a good impression on the police. As expected, the police signalled us to stop. The police started asking usual questions. I remained confident and polite. But my answers could not satisfy them. Then I told

> them I am a student of law and a relative of Chaudharys of the village. It was a lie, but I knew it would work. Upon hearing this, the attitude of the police changed, and they let us go (Personal communication, Abid, Fieldnote, January 2020)

Another important figure that creates an everyday image of the local state as biased and corrupt is of that *patwari*, who is an official from the local Land Revenue Department. Patwari has an important responsibility of land demarcation and keeping land record, including conducting field surveys to determine and collect taxes on various crops. Speaking with disgust, one villager commented:

> *Patwari* is like a chief minister for us. No one can raise his voice in front of him. What makes him such an important figure is his authority to do whatever he wants with our property. With a simple signature, he can change the ownership of our land. (Personal communication, Mohammad Saleem, Fieldnote, February 2020)

Whenever the *patwari* visits the village to perform his job, the influential residents will host him. Mohammad Khaliq, a subsistence farmer from the village, described: 'The patwari visits once in a month and spends the whole day in the village. The family which is hosting the patwari has to cook food for him,' He continued: 'it is common for patwari to ask a local farmer to give him milk and *ghee*' (Personal communication, Fieldnote, February 2020)

The stories of encountering the state narrated above are the realities of villagers-state daily interaction in Bhi-Nagar. Through these everyday encounters with the state, the

villagers form their opinion about the local realm of the Pakistani state and the sense of attachment to it.

**Images of the provincial and national realm of Pakistani state**

> We have been backward and poor for decades. Nobody cares about us. Every government wants to spend money in cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi, or Faisalabad. The previous government started projects like Orange Line Train and Metro bus in mega cities of Punjab. What is the benefit of all these projects for people like us who are living in rural areas? (Personal communication, Islam Iftikhar, Fieldnote, March 2020)

Despite sceptical tendencies towards the state institutions, people in Bhi Nagar at the same time believe in the existence of a state that understands and takes steps to address their problems. The pre-eminence of this type of understanding about the state is a result of political rhetoric and practices in the country. The Pakistani state promises many things to its citizens, such as education, healthcare, better infrastructure, jobs, reducing poverty and inequality, housing and sanitation and food subsidies. Even though the state performance on all these promises is miserable, it has been successful to present itself in the imagination of its citizens as a project that can be trusted for working for common good. Particularly, the patrimonial nature of Pakistani state with prominent role of high ranked politicians and officials within the power structure plays an important role the way the villagers think and imagine the state.

‘The state’ is also being imagined in Bhi-Nagar as an entity that is present in far-off places. The residents consider the state is not nearby, but somewhere else, at distance, geographically separate from their hometown. It can only be spotted in capitals and main urban centres of the country, and it is a rich institute having immense resources at its disposal. People make demands on it and take advantage of the political and economic sources that it has to offer. The state sources are not for everyone; they are mainly for influential people or their clients. To quote Finn Stepputat who has presented a similar argument in the case of Guatemala, the idea that the state’s presence is restricted to the main urban centres ‘points toward a broader perception of the modern state as located in cities and towns, while the population in the rest of the national territory is represented as living under a different set of conditions’ (Stepputat, 2001, p. 284).

Similarly, in Bhi Nagar, ‘the state’ from capitals is responsible for initiating and implementing development projects across Pakistan. For the villagers, the state functions well and lives to the expectation of the citizens in the presence of individuals like Nawaz Sharif (former prime minister), Shahbaz Sharif (former chief minister), or Imran Khan (incumbent prime minister). Such individuals, according to the villagers, using arbitrary and personalized powers work selflessly to make sure that the state works for the benefit of the people. According to the understanding of the villagers, commands and guidelines originate from the centres which are passed down to the local level through hierarchical administrative structure. However, the state officials at the local level do not share the vision of the leader at the top. That is why the local officials only work when they have fear of informal and surprise involvement from leaders like Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, or Imran Khan.

During my time in the field, I found it surprising how frequently the incumbent or former high ranked politicians or officials were being discussed in everyday conversation surrounding issues faced by the villagers. In such discussions, names of local politicians or local state officials were rarely mentioned. This phenomenon points towards another interesting aspect of the way the Pakistani state is being imagined in the village. The fieldwork revealed that the residents express their dissatisfaction with the local level state. The residents consider the local state officials, with whom they interact on a day-to-day basis, responsible for their miseries and other issues in the village. Quite often when I tried to engage with the villagers about the role of officials at the local level in terms of helping the citizens and responding to their demands, respondents had nothing appreciative to say. 'Wahan py *zalalat or* ruswai *ki siwa kuch nahi* (There is nothing but dishonor and shame)', said many respondents in the village. On the other hand, higher politicians and officials quite often enjoy favourable image. The statement of Waqas, a school headmaster in the village, demonstrates this:

> I am a fan of Imran khan and I support his political views. He is a sincere politician, who is trying his best to do good for the poor. He knows that the real problem for a common person is fraud and corruption at the local level. Our system is corrupt to the core. But Imran khan is fighting on so many fronts. I do not know how long he can fight (Personal communication, Fieldnote, November 2019).

Imran Khan, the incumbent Prime Minister, is more popular for his anti-corruption stance than anything else. His party won the election on the promise of eliminating corruption from the country. With great advertisement in the media, the country's anti-corruption institution,

the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), is running a campaign to retrieve allegedly stolen public money. A number of high-profile opposition party leaders have been facing corruption inquiries. The former Prime Minister, Nawaz Shairf, was removed from office on corruption charges and later prisoned for seven years. The former president, Asif Ali Zardari, is also facing a number of corruption related inquiries. The above statement of Waqas illustrates the rural belief in national figures, while the local politicians and officials are considered obstacles.

The fieldwork in Bhi Nagar also reveals that the current anti-corruption narrative in the country has not inflicted any harm to the image of the Pakistani state which operates from the capitals. However, it seems it has seriously exacerbated mistrust towards local politicians and local government official, who are widely believed in Bhi Nagar as *munafiq* (hypocrites), *jhooty* (liars), and *lutairy* (looters), with fake promises of development and prosperity. The villagers see the military as the only 'effective' institution of the state. The rural residents regard the military as different from 'coward' and 'corrupt' police force, 'lazy' employees in other state institutions, and 'corrupt' and 'unpatriotic' political class in the country. The local dwellers in Bhi Nagar shared with me many stories about how 'brave', 'strong', and 'true savior' is the army.

Mohammad Adnan, while waiting for customer at his open-air vegetable stall:

> I was happy when Saqib Nisar was Chief Justice. During his tenure, the media was highlighting issues of common people. Everyday there was news on TV in which people were requesting the CJ to take action against police officers who are treating them badly. Another reason I liked Saqib Nisar was that he had brought the prices of

> sugar and petrol down. Saqib Nisar was also worried about worsening situation of hospitals, railway, and electricity in the country. (Personal communication, field note, November 2019)

He then mentioned the incumbent Chief Justice who, according to him, is doing nothing: 'I do not even know his name. Poor people do not seem his priority. To me he is like other officials, busy in giving benefits to his family and friends.'

The name of Shahbaz Sharif, former chief minister of the province of Punjab, was also ubiquitous in day-to-day conversation in the village. During Shahbaz Sharif's time, 'we felt for the first-time that *hukumat* is doing something for us' (Personal communication Mohammad Hakim, Fieldnote, January 2020). Many villagers were praising him for the development works in the village. For the villagers, during Shahbaz Sharif's eight years tenure as chief minister he tried to make sure that people in rural areas too had access to better health, education, and road infrastructures. Whatever development initiatives the village had, they were seen as signs of hard work of Shahbaz Sharif. The stories about Shahbaz Sharif as a 'strict' administrator were common among many villagers.

> Shahbaz Sharif ordered the construction of a water filtration plant in the village. Shahbaz Sharif also took interest in education. He upgraded many schools across the province, including the schools in our village. Due to extra funding provided by Shahbaz Sharif, our basic health unit has relatively better infrastructure now. (Personal communication, Chaudary Suleman, Fieldnote, December 2019)

How did the myth of higher politicians and higher state officials as good deliverers come to the fore in contemporary Pakistan? The reasons for this phenomenon can be found in the country's politics. In Pakistan, political branding is personality-driven, and it mainly involves top party leaderships, mostly those who are vying to be country's President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Members, Governors or Chief Minister. Giving a brand image to key party leaders and projecting them using platforms like electronic/print media, social media websites and through banners, posters, and billboards ads is an important electoral campaign strategy. The first interaction one will have while leaving from any major airport in the country would be with either former or incumbent Prime Minister/Chief Minister. One would find them in abundance. In about ten minutes or so, one has seen them waving and smiling on many banners and billboards. In order to convince the voters about government performance, each city uses giant hoardings of Prime/Chief Minister at vintage spots and roadsides. One cannot drive on any major road in the country without having them waving and smiling down at passer-by. In every major city of the country, one would be amazed to see banners and posters of incumbent or former Chief/Prime Minister as if they are running for the city council.

Shahbaz Sharif, who was Chief Mintsr of Punjab from 2008-2018, cleverly promoted his image and built his own cult of personality. He named himself '*khadim e Alaa'*, meaning Chief Servant – a strong impression in a country where culture of having servants is deeply rooted.[18] In many towns and villages in Pakistan, I saw inaugural plaques and foundation stones featuring his photo and a message that this street/school/road/hospital/water filtration plant had been built by Shahbaz Sharif.

[18] "Satire: Diary of Shahbaz Sharif." Herald Magazine, August 18, 2016. https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153275. Accessed May 1, 2020

Similarly, the people in the country have high expectations from superior judiciary for law and justice, as if it can provide miracle cure to all national grievances.[19] The supreme court has frequently taken suo motu actions to enhance its assertiveness and interfere in governance and economic related matters, including ousting bureaucrats, cabinet ministers and Prime Ministers. One day the Supreme Court orders cleaning of sewers in mega cities, the next day it demands that the child violence in the country be stopped immediately. If one week it passes judgments regarding facilities in the state hospitals, the next week the education system in the country gets its imagination. The next the court wants to regulate price of essential commodities and build dams in the country.[20]

The ongoing trend in Pakistan to do everything from the capitals undermines the state at the local level, as well as generates a powerful image of the state which is distant and remote. By neglecting proper procedure and restricting the dispensation of justice to higher courts undermines the importance of the lower courts. The autonomy of local institutions of the state is undermined, not by bringing changes in the constitution, but through inadequate and informal methods. As a result, the local state gets weakened and discredited. This explains why the villagers do not use formal channels to make demands on the local state, instead seek informal channels or hope for direct protection from the high ranked politicians and officials.

[19] Prateek Gupta, "Under Mian Saqib Nisar, the Pakistani Judiciary Has an Overstepping Problem," The Print, July 7, 2018. https://theprint.in/opinion/under-mian-saqib-nisar-the-pakistani-judiciary-has-an-overstepping-problem/80156/. Accessed April 20,2020.

[20] "Pakistan's Top Court Is Eager to Take on Any Brief." The Economist. The Economist Newspaper, March 28, 2018. https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/03/28/pakistans-top-court-is-eager-to-take-on-any-brief. Accessed April 20, 2020.

I would also like to highlight that the news reporting also plays an important role in shaping popular perception about the Pakistani state and the way people discuss and imagine it in Bhi Nagar. Matters which are important to the local dwellers in their daily lives – such as roads, school, employment, security, or justice – remain unheard. The state at the local level is not being questioned or called to account for its responsibilities. During the fieldwork, I did not find or see anyone reading the newspaper in the village. The electronic media, which is the only source of information about political and economic development in the country, mainly focuses on national and provincial news. The absence of reporting about the local realm of state also contributes to the image of the Pakistani state as if it is only present in the capitals. To sum up the discussion, I think the conception of the state in Bhi Nagr can best be summarized using the words of Thomas Hansen:

> The imagination of the state as marked by a deep and constitutive split. On the one hand its 'profane' dimensions: the incoherence, brutality, partiality, and banality of the technical sides of government, as rough-and-tumble of negotiation, compromise, and naked self-interest displayed in local politics. On the other hand, the 'sublime' qualities imputed to a more distant state: the opacity of the secrets and knowledge of the higher echelons of the state, its hidden resources, designs and immense power, and the illusions of higher forms of rationality or justice believed to prevail there (Hansen, 2001, p. 5-6).

**Conclusion**

Having in mind discrepancies between the way things are and the way things should be, the residents of Bhi-Nagar talk about their day-to-day business with the local state authorities.

The residents regard the local state institutions as biased and corrupt, permeable only through wealth and personal connection. The above discussion reveals that on looking closer a complicated picture appears in which the Pakistani state is viewed having two distinct aspects. The patrimonial nature of the Pakistani state and the tendency to operate from the capitals has given birth to a clear division between the local realm and the national realm of the state. The detached and distant national state realm is seen as sensitive to local needs and development ("sublime" dimension, following Thomas Hansen), while the local state institutions are seen as full of malpractices like favouritism, corruption, and nepotism ("profane" dimension). In such conception, top ranked politicians and officials are seen as operating fairly and without undue influence from the local vested interests. These top officials have an image of remedying any local problems and issues and taking measures to protect the unprivileged people. On the other hand, the local administrative and political infrastructure of the state has a bad reputation among the residents of Bhi Nagar. Everyday interaction of the villagers with the local state officials, as has been described above, is viewed as corrupt, partial and abuse of authority. In other words, the residents of Bhi-Nagar experience 'the state' as an external power, a source of local fascination and/or disdain, capricious, dangerous but nevertheless with a promise of transformational possibility, efficacious should it want to be. Despite scepticism towards the state, residents of Bhi Nagar have high hopes and expectations from it and consider it as a project responsible to fulfil demands of its citizens. Part of this understanding, I argue, stems from the notion that 'the state' has what Michelle Obeid (2010) calls 'different faces', which appear differently to its citizens at different times.

It is widely recognized at the local level in the Bhi Nagar area that the true power resides in few influential individuals who can break laws for their own benefits. The

Pakistani constitution, however, projects an ideal state, working impartially and professionally. This contradiction leads to an interesting phenomenon in the society where money and influence are the most important factor affecting local and national politics. It is a widespread belief in Bhi Nagar that the state structure is full of corrupt practices. However, the state maintains its image and projects itself as a civilized and organized machine working on a range of projects to stymie corruption. This leads to a clear paradoxical situation between ideals and reality: the state is celebrating itself for upholding the ideals of civility and professionalism, but for people at the local level, the state power only serves the interests of the influential.

## Chapter six

## Politics of intermediaries in the village

As has been argued in chapter five, the state institutions at the local level are viewed by the residents of Bhi Nagar as biased and full of corrupt practices. The villagers regard norms and practices of the local state officials doubtful. The words like ‘neglectful’, ‘corrupt’ or ‘irresponsible’ are commonly used to describe the local state officials. Given such an image of the local state, how do people of Bhi Nagar then interact with the state officials in their daily life, and vice versa? How do the villagers interact with the state in order to have their issues resolved and demand fulfilled? While exploring these questions, the focus in this chapter is on the political actors, dynamics, and ‘intermediary institutions’ that are working in informal spaces between the state and the villagers.

In seeking to analyse how the residents of Bhi Nagar and the state engage with each other, I have used theoretical insights offered by Anirudha Krishna (2011) and Ward Berenschot (2010) (see also chapter one). Many other studies also draw our attention to the fact that in the developing world, instead of thinking that the state, through democratic and accountability principles, is directly accessible to its ‘citizen’, we should unpack citizen and the state everyday engagement in those context ‘in terms of the term “state-intermediary-citizen” relations’ (Lieres & Piper 2014, p.1). The western influenced understandings of citizen and the state engagement has growingly been contested (Berenschota & Klinken, 2018). An increasing number of research studies underscore the importance of informal mechanisms in framing governance and how the state and citizen interact with each other at the local level. There are burgeoning anthropological studies guiding us how to think and

study day to day activities between the state and its citizens in the global South. For instance, Christian Lund highlights the role of groups manoeuvring between the representatives of the state and citizens. He calls these groups 'twilight institutions', which he sees as 'institutions operate in the twilight between state and society, between public and private' (Lund, p. 686). Christian Lund urges to study the phenomenon of citizen-state interaction, particularly in the Global South, by paying attention to how matters involving policing, taxation, development, security, or justice are sorted out through the participation of multiple actors, rather than seeing them as governed by only one actor called the state. Similarly, Partha Chatterjee (2004) emphasises that to capture a better picture of political negotiation and encounter between the state and citizens, 'political society' is a suitable domain of politics which exists between the state and its inhabitants. The political society, which is populated by a great variety of political mediators, Chatterjee reckons, helps to bridge the gulf between the governor and the governed. Along similar lines, Javier Auyero asserts the concept of 'the grey zone of politics', which he conceives as 'both an empirical object and an analytical lens that draws our attention towards a murky area where normative boundaries dissolve, where state actors and political elites promote and/or actively tolerate and/or participate in damage-making' (Auyero, 2006, p. 245). I acknowledge here the relevance of Anirudha Krishna's 'intermediaries', Ward Berenschot's 'everyday mediation', Christian Lund's 'twilight institutions', Partha Chatterjee's 'political society', and Javier Auyero's 'the grey zone of politics' to examine active negotiate and mediation between the state and villagers in Bhi Nagar[21].

**Key Intermediaries in Bhi Nagar**

[21] For a detailed discussion on these concepts, see chapter one.

Fieldnote, December 2019:

> Fida Gujjar: We do not have any official position, yet we work more than the state in the village. I know everyone in the village. I also know which household owns how much land in the village. Through day-to-day engagement in the village, we get to know about births, deaths, marriages, and divorces in the village. All this information helps the state in their everyday activities. The local state officials have my personal contact number. Very often, I get calls or get visited by different offices about matters related to this village. The police visit my *daara* first in case a murder or any other big crime happens in the neighbourhood. Without people like me, it is challenging for the state to administer immunization and census activities in the village. My assistant accompanies census and health officials from door to door in this neighbourhood (Personal communication, December 2019).

Fieldnote, December 2019:

> While recounting his role in everyday life in the village, Chaudary Suleman said he also heads a customary institution called *panchayat*. This traditional body has no formal status or any association with the state. The functional domain of *panchayat* is limited to the village, governing mainly a number of local-level judicial affairs. He spoke further that the villagers also approach him to seek advice for a health care unit where they can get affordable treatment, advice for a shop from where they can get inexpensive and quality construction materials, or simply to collect information about suitable intercity transportation means. His views were that when it comes to services like education, health, development or security, the villagers do not go to the state, they come to us (Personal communication, Chaudary Suleman, December 2019).

Both Fida Gujjar and Chaudary Suleman are the key intermediaries[22] in Bhi Nagar village. Two other important politicians who are the first port of call for the residents are Faisal Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar. All these political actors play a significant role in helping the villagers to negotiate with the state, as well as helping the state officials to interact with the villagers. Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar belong to rich *Gujjar zamindar* families of the village. Both are relatives, and the political history of both their families go back to the pre-

[22] All intermediary positions in the Bhi Nagar area are monopolized by the neighbourhood politicians. I use the terms ‘intermediaries’, ‘political actors’, ‘political figures’, and ‘mediators’ interchangeably in this thesis.

independence era. They were political rivals in the past but formed a political alliance in 2016 to contest the union council election together. At the time of field work, Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar had close family members in the federal cabinet and provincial bureaucracy. Through their close relatives, both are well connected in the local-level politics, bureaucracy, and businesses. On the other hand, Chaudary Suleman and Faisal Gujjar do not own as much land, but both are from financially well-off *Gujjar* families, and before 2005, their families were rather less extensively involved in the village politics. Both had moderate lifestyles compared to the other group. Chaudary Suleman and Faisal Gujjar are relatively new to politics. Their political history can be traced back to the early 2000s, but politically they became more popular from 2013 onwards. Together they won the union council election[23] in 2016 against Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar and became chairman and vice chairman respectively. As village-level political figures are expected to be well connected, both horizontally and vertically, all the political figures who act as intermediaries are closely tied to the influential political parties in the province. Village-level patron-client dynamics are connected to constituency-level patron-client relationships, which are further connected to similar arrangements at the provincial and federal level. With broader political split in the village between Chaudary Suleman's faction (*dhara*) and Fida Gujjar's faction, the village politics resembles provincial politics of Punjab, with Fida Gujjar in Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI), the ruling party in Punjab, and Chaudary Suleman in Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N), the largest opposition party in the province.

[23] In Pakistan, there are three tiers of governance: federal, provincial, and local. The local tier of governance is further divided into three levels: district, tehsil, and union council. A union council, which is a collection of few villages, forms the basic administrative unit in the country. Since the return of democratic rule in the country in 2008, the elections for the federal and provincial tier are held after every five years, but the elections for the local tier have never been consistent. At the time of fieldwork, the elected institutions of the local government were ineffective.

People like Chaudary Suleman, Faisal Gujjar, Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar are described in the literature as ‘patron’ (Martin, 2009), ‘fixers’ (Reddy & Haragopal, 1985), ‘brokers’ (Witsoe, 2012), ‘intermediaries’ (Krishna, 2009), or ‘mediators’(Berenschot, 2010), engaged in close relationships with the state and society and making the boundary between the two blurred. However, political figures in Bhi Nagar are more than what literature depicts. Two particular arguments are made in this chapter: First, I argue here that villager-state interaction in Bhi Nagar must be understood against the backdrop of images of Pakistani state at the local level. Second, the analysis of politicians in Bhi Nagar highlights that while in some cases the political actors interact and negotiate with the state on behalf of the villager, in other instances they facilitate state functionaries to interact and negotiate with the villagers. The ability of political actors to act as a conduit between the state and villagers, as well as at times perform certain roles in the village as they are free from state's control or at other times act as helping hand of the state, are the interesting aspects of politics of intermediation in Bhi Nagar. Through ethnographic exploration in Bhi Nagar, this chapter brings to light three important functions that the political actors at the local level perform. These actors work in different capacities in relation to the state and villagers: 1) working 'between' villagers and the state; 2) working 'like' the state; and 3) ‘linkage’ between villagers and the electoral regime.

**Intermediaries: working 'between' villagers and the state**

By looking at everyday activities of political actors like Chaudary Suleman, Faisal Gujjar, Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar, one can argue that these political actors act as ‘representatives’ or ‘face’ of Bhi Nagar from the point of view of the state officials. These politicians often told me that the local state officials prefer keeping regular contact with them instead of having direct contact with the villagers. On the other hand, for the residents of Bhi

Nagar, these actors were the 'face' of the state. For the villagers, these actors were the first contact to get anything from the state. These political actors are actively involved in bringing the state apparatus close to the lives of the residents of Bhi Nagar. Such outcomes result from a range of everyday activities that they perform in the village, from dealing with the government officials and extracting benefits from the state to settling disputes. In this sense, mediation makes the state and villagers close aquatinted to each other, prompting local mediators to encourage cold and slow-moving bureaucracy to display sympathy and caring attitude at the local level of governance. Like the routine of a local-level politician described by Ward Berenschot in Ahmedabad (Berenschot, 2010), political actors of Bhi Nagar play an important role in making the villagers legible to the state authorities. They interact with many people in their *baithak* or *daara* to help them in getting identity or property related documents. They all told me that identity card and passport are the most common requests that they receive. Other quite frequent requests they deal with are related to birth, death, or property ownership certificates. They also told that in rural areas approval of a local politician or *Numberdaar* is essential for many documents, especially for income certificate or birth and death registration. Similar endorsement is required to receive identity card as well as residency document like domicile. The role of a local politician or *Numberdaar* becomes more important if one wants to remove name, address, or age discrepancies from the official record. The local mediators are also important to certify poor villagers claim to the state administered support initiatives like Benzari Income Support Program and Zakat.

In order to understand how mediators in Bhi Nagar play a role in helping the villagers to negotiate with the state, as well as helping the state officials to interact with the villager, I studied in detail Chaudary Suleman, who is an educated person with academic qualifications

to practice law in the lower courts of the country. Although he does not practice law, he is however popular and maintains an extensive network with the body of lawyers in the local court (*kacherian*). I had a chance to spend more time at his *baithak* or with him than other local political figures, and I owe a large part of the insights in this section to seeing him in action. In the neighbourhood, he is colloquially known as *Chairman Sahib*. The stories the villagers told me show that, of the political actors in Bhi Nagar, Chaudary Suleman and his political *dhara* is the most dominant in the village politics. Chaudary Suleman, a robust man in his forties with a kind and welcoming manners, holds a particular political importance among the local *kammi biradri*. He is a former chairman of the union council. He had been associated with different political parties in the past, at the time of fieldwork however, he had close connections with the district leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) who were vying for MNA (Member of the National Assembly) or MPA (Member of the Provincial Assembly) seats. Among the villagers he enjoys a reputation of being 'available' all the time for any kind of advice, help, or intervention. The villagers think that Chaudary Suleman establishes political bonding with his supporters in which elements of trust and obligation are quite visible. The supporters of Chaudary Suleman described to me on many occasions that they trust him because he pays attention and devotes time to solve their problems. Even though he is not elected representative anymore from the village for the office of the union council, his reputation however is such that his support is considered an important asset both by the state officials and his supporters to have a meaningful interaction with each other.

Now consider Chaudary Suleman's typical workday. Chaudary Suleman is a frequent visitor to Mnadi Bahauddin, which is a tehsil and district level city around twenty kilometres from the village. Government departments like Land Revenue, Land Records Authority,

National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA), Passport Office, Education, Health, Police Station (*thana*) Lower Courts, Municipal Office all are located in the city. The villagers think that Chaudary Suleman wields substantial influence within these government departments, influence that makes the government officials work for the villagers. Initially I was perplexed by the claims I heard about Chaudary Suleman' influence. He was not as rich as were Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar, and the political party and politicians he was supporting were in opposition. Upon meeting Chaudary Suleman I found out that his reputation was largely based on the extent of his network of contacts. During many conversations with him I realized that he knew prominent officers in every local government department. He even knew about those officers' family members, castes, home addresses, postings and so forth. Oftentimes, he even mentioned the names of former local government officials. The biographical data of the government officers he kept was a sign of a rather good memory. Wearing *shalwar* (loose trousers) and *kameez* (long shirt), he regularly visits the offices in the city on his car or motorbike. He goes there to submit or receive various official documents, cards, and paperwork on behalf of the people in the village whom he assists in his capacity as a head of political *dhara.*

Later in the day Chaudary Suleman can be found in his *baithak.* His *baithak* is made of concrete, and both underside of the roof and walls are lightly whitewashed. Across the *baithak,* a large couch and multiple cots (*charpoys)* are placed. Several pillows are scattered on the cots for visitors to sit comfortably. A big LED TV is attached to the wall facing the couch. In front of the couch, there is a four-legged table. Government officials and other guests like me are made to sit on the couch and served with *chaye* (tea) and biscuits. Chaudary Suleman's *baithak* remains open round the clock. Whether Chaudary Suleman is at home or not, the villagers come and go in his *baithak* from early in the morning to late night.

Here villagers gather to listen to news, talk about matters pertaining to day-to-day life in the village. Or simply they come to smoke tobacco from *hookah* and take part in conversation going on among already present participants. For the ordinary villagers, the *baithak* is also an important site to gather information on a wide range of matters, including agricultural policies, crops prices, and politics, disputes and sports events in their own village and the neighbouring villages.

The *baithak* is also a space where Chaudary Suleman interacts with his political allies from the village who are dependent on him for many things, from accessing basic public services like health and security, obtaining official papers, cards, and documents, to acquiring development projects for the village. It was Chaudary Suleman's *baithak* where I witnessed many practices of mediation, seeing Chaudary Suleman smoothing the process of interaction between the villagers and the state officials. For instance, one morning in December 2019 I was sitting with Chaudary Suleman in his *baithak*, having a casual conversation. At one-point Chaudary Suleman excused himself from the conversation with me to talk to a villager, named Mohammad Safi, who had been waiting for a while. Mohammad Safi was continuously looking at us, probably thinking when he would get a chance to discuss his matter with Chaudary Suleman. Mohammad Safi had come to seek help regarding his son's birth certificate[24]. Mohammad Safi's son had just turned five and he needed a birth certificate

[24] In Pakistan, a birth certificate is required for school admission, age verification, name verification and obtaining domicile. The missing birth certificate can create many critical obstacles for a child later in life. However, the majority of the parents in the village leave their children unregistered at the time of birth. I found out that birth registration was a low priority among low-income villagers. I also met people who reasoned that birth registration remains annoying and frustrating no matter whether it is on time or late. Because of this complexity, the majority of the people complete paperwork of birth registration if and when they want to send their kids to a school, or at a time when they are applying for a national identity card. It is widely believed in the village that it is better to bribe an officer for late registration and have your birth certificate ready in a day than persistently visiting various offices for registration at the time of your child's birth. And the sole authority in the village to issue birth certificates is the union council secretary. Another important document that only the office of the union council can issue is the death certificate, a crucial document for many things including

to make his son eligible for a school admission. Mohammad Safi was receiving messages from the school about his child's expulsion for not submitting the required document. Mohammad Safi told Chaudary Suleman that he had paid multiple visits to the office of the union council during the last two weeks for his son's birth certificate. Because of inability to bribe and lack of ties, Mohammad Safi's visits to the office of the union council secretary had been unsuccessful so far. As Mohammad Safi was speaking, Chaudary Suleman's phone rang, and he went out of the *baithak* to receive the phone call. Mohammad Safi continued sharing his ordeal with me. 'Every time I go to the union council the peon tells me to come tomorrow. Next day I get the same answer', he added. He added further, 'if he had money or had sought a reference of someone influential, he would not have to sit unnecessarily on the steps of the union council'. One day Mohammad Safi decided to go to the union council early in the morning. He was sitting outside on the steps of the office when the secretary of the union council arrived. The secretary did not even look at Mohammad Safi when he tried to speak to him on the steps. The secretary however later agreed to talk to Mohammad Safi when his peon explained to him about his multiple visits. The secretary asked his peon to bring a register. After checking multiple pages of the register, the secretary told Mohammad Safi that he did not register his son's birth in the union council so he would not get the birth certificate. The secretary further told him that he needed first to submit, with extra fee, an application for his son's late birth registration. Mohammad Safi had been told that the birth certificate was only possible upon completing birth registration first. Several minutes later Chaudary Suleman retuned to the *baithak*. Chaudary Suleman took documents from Mohammad Safi that he was carrying with him and promised him that his application would

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distribution of assets among heirs of a deceased person. At the time of fieldwork, it was locally known that Fida Gujjar had a great influence on the functioning of the union council including who gets a certificate on time and who faces delay. Fida Gujjar was a self-proclaimed worker of the ruling party and had a close association with the ruling party's MNA in the area. It was in the interest of the secretary of the union council to maintain good ties with Fida Gujjar as it may decide his next promotion and posting.

get a positive outcome very soon. After two weeks I learned from Mohammad Safi that his application for the birth certificate had indeed received a positive outcome.

Another villagers who was sitting that day in Chaudary Suleman's *baithak* remarked:

> Chairman Sahib (Chaudary Suleman) does a lot for people in the village. He does not make any distinction between poor and rich. He has a good reputation in this neighbourhood; no one feels hesitant approaching him in times of need. Few months back he helped me get my *shanakhti* card (identity card). He contacted me on the day NADRA truck[25] was in the village. There were other people too from the village who had come with Chairman Sahib for *shanakhti* card. It was the Chairman who did the talking with NADRA officers. We all just stood there and did nothing. The officers were asking about so many documents, which we did not have. I do not know how Chairman Sahib satisfied the officers. It was Chairman Sahib who provided all the information which was required to fill out the forms. In the end the officer accepted our applications. Then one by one we put thumbs (*anguthy lagaye)* on the forms[26]. Chairman Sahib then told us to visit his *baithak* to collect the identity cards (Personal Communication, Field Note, December 2019).

[25] The National Database & Registration Authority (*NADRA*) sends its truck to far-flung areas to process applications for ID cards. These trucks are equipped with essential systems like computers, internet facilities and electric generators which are needed to process identity card applications. The people in Bhi Nagar think that the local politicians arrange these NADRA trucks. There is a general view in the village that in the absence of influence from the politicians, the NDRA truck would never visit their village.

[26] Those who cannot write their names are asked by the NADRA officers to sign their ID card application by providing a thumbprint.

Similarly, on another occasion in January 2020 I witnessed a man, named Khawer, in scruffy *shlwar kameez* arriving in Chaudary Suleman's *baithak.* Khawer sat down on a cot after individually shaking hands with everybody sitting in the *baithak.* After some time Chaudary Suleman also arrived in the *baithak.* Using '*Chairman Sahib'*, Chaudary Suleman's colloquial name, Khawer went on to explain his issue. He was a tailor in the village and for a few days he was without electricity at his shop. A truck in his street had damaged a low hanging electricity cable. Khawer wanted Chaudary Suleman to call a WAPDA official to fix the cable. Khawer also told Chaudary Suleman how unavailability of electricity was affecting his business. Chaudary Suleman carefully listened to Khawer and assured him that in the evening he would phone Arshad, a WAPDA employee living in the village, and ask him to fix the broken cable. When Khawer left, Chaudary Suleman explained to me usual defects in the workings of the state at the local level, from corruption to favouritism and nepotism. Chaudary Suleman was of the view the government officials do not have pro-poor attitude. A villager who visits a government office on his own demeaning treatment. Chaudary Suleman further said that villagers like Khawer do not even know who to call for an electricity cable and how electricity supply works. So, they come to him, asking for my help.

In many instances, the state institutions also seek mediation from the local political actors to interact with the villagers. The picture of governance becomes more complicated when village-level practices of mediation blend with the official practices, such as when police are dependent on political actors in matters of security and disputes in the village or when the political actors are acting as the state assistant in many governance related matters concerning the village. The weak reach of the state in Bhi Nagar means that the state itself relies on these mediators to carry out its functions, like taxation, law and order, census,

immunization, and development. As a result, formal ways and procedures become more unreliable for the villagers. The usage of informal methods by the state to maintain itself and carry out its important functions further normalizes the culture of mediation.

Fieldnote, January 2019:

> There were two important visitors in Chaudary Suleman's *baithak*: local-level health workers Atiya and Javaid. Both are well trained and have many years of experience of providing basic health services at the local level. In addition to raising awareness of hygiene and child development matters among mothers, another important job they carry out is vaccinating children against multiple diseases. Today they arrived in the village as part of a nationwide polio vaccination campaign. Health workers were in Chaudary Suleman's *baithak* to solicit his help so that they could access every child to immunize against polio in the village. Chaudary Suleman sent his peon to a nearby mosque for a public announcement. After five minutes, loudspeakers of the mosque which were fitted on a tall iron pipe spread a message in the neighbourhood. Those who heard the announcement now knew the arrival of the polio team in the village, as well as benefits of polio immunization. After the announcement, Chaudary Suleman also sent his peon to walk with the health workers to facilitate their door-to-door visits in the neighbourhood.

On one of the occasions I heard from the informants about a *patwari* with his heavy register book in a *thala* (bag) arriving in the village from the city. The *patwari* was greeted and

served with food by Imtiaz Numberdaar and his affiliates[27]. One of the important jobs of a *patwari* in Pakistan is to manually collect taxes, imposed by the provincial government on crops. *Patwari* visits villages; he gets no assistance from his department to perform his job for tax collection. Officially, patwari alone is responsible for assessing, levying, and receiving taxes from farmers. However, the process in practice is different. The procedure of tax collection in a village like Bhi Nagar takes place through mediation and negotiation. Working as intermediaries between a *patwari* and the villagers, Imtiaz Numberdaar and his affiliates have an important role in helping the tax authority to collect taxes. The *patwari* completes the process of tax collection in multiple visits to the village. Those farmers who fail to pay taxes during the first round, the *patwari* handovers their names and amount of tax levied on them to Imtiaz Numberdaar and his affiliates. With the help of his affiliates and servants, Imtiaz Numberdaar approaches the farmers and asks them to clear their tax dues. Imtiaz Numberdaar and his affiliates keep the record of payment and tax money and submit it to the *patwari* on his arrival in the village. Sometimes the process of tax negotiation and payment takes place through the elders of a family. These elders are asked to collect taxes from their family and submit it to the *patwari* or Imtiaz Numberdaar.

Another key part that the local politicians like Chaudary Suleman and Fida Gujjar play is helping and facilitating the local state officials in their corrupt practices. In many exchanges the villagers mentioned that the local political figures play an important role in mediating additional charges that the officials of different local state departments extract from the rural residents in the form of 'fee'. For instance, the residents struggle a lot when it

[27]The informant who narrated the story of the *patwari*'s visit to the village also mentioned that it is common for the local politicians to offer drinks and food (*khatir tawaza kerna*) to government officers who visit the village. The villagers believe that through *khatir tawaza* they can make official work easier - eating and drinking with the representatives of the state establish a right context for making and negating requests, and possibly a long-term friendly association.

comes to having access to public utility like electricity. Services like new electricity connections, electricity wires and electricity poles are not fairly provided in the village. In some part of the village these services were either missing partially or completely. Procuring electricity connection involves considerable financial involvement and power negotiation. To obtain electricity, the residents contact the local electricity authorities through a mediator. It is widely believed in the village that giving bribes is essential for a request to be successful. The size of expenses is discussed and negotiated by the mediator with the relevant officials. Once an agreement is reached on the size of both formal and informal expenses, the mediator communicates to the concerned villager how and when the money is to be paid. Talking about getting new electricity connection, a villager gave a following account:

> We depend on Chaudary Suleman to access the local state authorities. For instance, when I applied for a new electricity connection, I did it through the help of Chaudary Suleman. The 'fee' that the electricity officer told me for the connection was huge. I am grateful to Chaudary Suleman that he took everything upon himself. It was due to Chaudary Suleman intervention that the size of expenses got reduced to half. Once a settlement was reached, I gave money to Chaudary Suleman. I do not know how much money went into the formal payment and how much the officer charged as a bribe (Personal Communication, Fieldnote, February 2019).

At the outskirts of Bhi Nagar, there is a large Afghan squatter settlement. Due to their status as refugees, Afghan nationals cannot own immoveable assets in Pakistan. It is almost impossible for them to fulfil official requirements to rent a house or establish a business in Pakistan. But through informal processes and bribery, mainly mediated by Chaudary

Suleman, they have achieved some semblance of humanized life in Bhi Nagar. Raheem, an Afghan refugee in the village, once told me:

> We had nothing when we came to Bhi Nagar. We do not live in the squatter settlement anymore. Now we live in a double storey house located in the village. We own five tractor trolleys that we use to transport mud, sand, and other construction materials. We have also established a shop in the village. This all has happened because of Chaudary Suleman who makes the state 'accessible' to us. If any official document or permission is desirable, we pay money to him and he takes care of everything for us… He uses that money to bribe government officers. Here the state officials are ready to do anything for money.

Many businesses in the village work without any interference from the state. The structure of shops/fruit stalls and the products they sell meet no legal standard set by the state. One such business is owned by Mohammad Nadeem, who illegally refills LPG cylinder and sells in the village. Mohammad Nadeem thinks that his businesses thrives because he has 'protection' of Fida Gujjar who, according to him, 'can make the state officials look away through his political connections or sometime through bribe'.

**Intermediaries: working 'like' the state**

There were many informants who particularly emphasised that they see *biradri* and the village political actors as a good alternative platform for dispute resolution. For many

informants, making a formal complaint against a fellow villager is an ill-intentioned step on their part. Alerting the police or registering FIR (First Information Report) means inviting the state to the village. This results in police investigation and report preparation, which will then lead to exploitation by the police and judiciary of both the parties involved in the conflict. It is generally believed that the police visit brings disrepute to the whole neighbourhood, and the individual who discredits the neighbourhood should face societal consequences. That is why, actions of directly involving the state authorities in a dispute before discussing it with *biradri* or the political mediators, risk being criticized in the neighbourhood. Thus, the political actors provide some sort of institutional mechanism to address a range of local issues concerning villagers. In a way, mediators' presence can be seen as a substitute to the state authorities as they provide, in addition to other roles, a judicial mechanism that works outside the purview of the state. While explaining local disputes and the role of different mediators like him play in them, Chaudary Suleman once made the following comment:

> Chaudary Suleman in a discussion mentioned that except cases related to big robbery (*daka*) or murder in the village, the villagers rarely involve the police. According to him, even revenge murders are usually dealt with within the village, with the injured family taking violent action against the killer and his relatives. He further added that there are small fights and quarrels in the village every day. Disputes related to crop water, animal trespassing, land, street fights, marriage, dowry, or inheritance take place here on an everyday basis… Courts and the police are full of corruption (*weha per corruption he corruption han*), he emphasised … He was of the view that the police lack local understanding which is necessary to address local disputes. He also thinks that since he and other mediators live here and know everything better in the

> village, people come to them for adjudication (Personal Communication, Fieldnote, December 2019).

This comment from Chaudary Suleman highlights that mediators in the Bhi Nagar put themselves in place of the state authorities, in lieu of the police and judiciary, which are largely inaccessible to the residents. In the last section we saw how the mediators assist the local state administration in various matters, but here they are presenting themselves as an alternative, in that they are present where the local state officials are either unwilling or incapable to go.

While Pakistan has a well-established judicial system with a Supreme Court at the top followed by Higher courts in the provinces and trial courts at the district levels, a substantial number of disputes end up being resolved out of courts. There is no data available on the efficiency and access to the informal judicial mechanism in the country. However, like other research work (Shinwari, 2015), my research also suggests that the majority of residents in rural areas of Pakistan prefer to use informal mediation setup that has roots in the neighbourhood to adjudicate their conflicts and disputes. Even those cases in which individuals sue others in legal courts return to the informal mediation process at some point. There are studies that argue that excessive case backlogs on formal adjudicative setup in the country is the main reason that the people rely on the informal dispute mediation mechanism. Equally important factor, I argue here, behind the presence of informal means to settle disputes is the way the people conceptualise and imagine the local legal bureaucracy. Like the other state institutions, the local judiciary is also seen as corrupt with little commitment to free and fair trial.

As a result of corrupt image of the judicial system, in addition to matters discussed in the last section, other significant matters that the villagers bring to the political actors involved everyday disputes: street fights, disagreements among heirs on assets division, water disputes among farmers, fence or wall disputes among neighbours, disputes over divorce and dowry, street cleanliness, clogged sewer, or construction of open sewer (*nali*) are some of the common disputes in which the political actors intervene. It is important to mention here that the involvement of political actors is not the only way that the residents of Bhi Nagar manage their disputes. The first resort to manage a dispute, I was told, is always *biradri* elders, especially in matters where secrecy is significant i.e., intra-*biradri* matters. However, in inter-*biradri* disputes, political actors are asked to intervene to put an end to a dispute.

How mediators in Bhi Nagar settle inter-*birardri* disputes can be gained from the following conflict illustration, the details of which were gathered from several informants. Arshad alias Guddu, a wage labourer belonging to *lohar biradri* (ironsmith), was fond of raising pigeons on his rooftop. One day one of Arshad's pigeons accidently landed on a neighbouring roof belonging to Saleem alias Seema, a member of poor *kumhar biradri* (potter) and fond of keeping cocks and pigeons. When Saleem refused to give the pigeon back to Arshad, it led to physical confrontation between the two. In this fight Slaeem hit Arshad harder, causing injuries to his face and head. Later in the day, male members of Arshad's *biradri*[28], armed with large sticks (*dandy*) and bricks, went to Saleem's house to seek revenge. Anticipating a possible attack, Saleem and his *biradri* members had also made

[28] It is a common belief in Bhi Nagar village that if an individual does not respond to an insult or is unable to defend his reputation, he not only undermines his honour but of his whole *biradri*. That is why if a person is physically harmed in front of relatives, the latter cannot simply sit idle. The relative male members come to each other's help, starting a collective fight where violent blows and kicks are exchanged.

preparations. A violent fight broke out between the two groups. The fight was so severe that, following the clash, many members from both sides were taken to a hospital. The conflict did not end here. Both parties decided to take the matter to the police and register a complaint (*parcha*). As going to the police required connections and financial resources, the next day both disputing parties separately approached Chaudary Suleman thinking that he would help them with the police because they had been voting after him for many years. This put Chaudary Suleman in a difficult situation; he did not want to alienate one *biradri* by taking a side and losing votes. That is why he strongly encouraged conflicting parties not to go to the police and resolve this matter locally. The discussions between Chaudary Suleman and the conflicting groups continued over the next two days. Chaudary Suleman also took extra steps to keep himself updated about the daily developments in the village. He was especially interested to know what kind of messages are circulating in gossip circles about his politics and his authority to deal with this conflict. These updates helped him survey wider public opinion. From the narratives that I collected from the informants, Chaudary Suleman used following arguments to persuade both the parties not to press legal charges against each other: (1) he told his voters from both sides that they would not achieve anything by involving the police and court because both are corrupt; (2) the legal route is costly in terms of money and time and there is no justice in the end; (3) visiting police station and court everyday will bring bad reputation for both conflicting *biradris* as well as for fellow villagers; (4) he also applied religious angle and told his supporters how Islam makes all us brothers and teaches us to live with peace with your neighbour. He eventually succeeded in convincing both the parties to stay away from the police. For *sulha safaai* (mutual reconciliation), Chaudary Suleman then called a meeting of the disputing groups in his *baithek*. To put moral pressure and hold sway on the conflicting households, Chaudary Suleman had also asked other elders from the neighbourhood to attend the *sulha safaai*

meeting. At the reconciliation meeting, no discussion happened about what one party did to the other in the past. Saleem simply returned the pigeon to Arshad and hugged him in the presence of everyone. The meeting then ended with advice from Chaudary Suleman and other elders for the disputants to forget the past and start over.

The above account of a conflict illustrates the working of informal arbitration in the Bhi Nagar area and the role different mediators play in them. It is like mediators in the village are providing an alternative to the state-run judicial system. It also illustrates how people view local law and order bureaucracy. The conflict in question also underscores how the structure of power within the village is one of major contributing factors in determining who can take a dispute to the official security and judicial agents. Majority of the villagers consider that they lack financial and social capital to access the state to resolve their disputes. Such views are not only expressed by those who were at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, but even by those of higher socio-economic standings in the village. This case also represents what Mehr Latif calls 'strategy of local gatekeepers to cultivate capital and resist the state' (Latif, 2013, p. 92). The mediator in this case is telling everyone that the state is a corrupt and exploitative monolith, and the villagers should stay away from it. The conflicting parties believe what they hear from Chaudary Suleman and feel a need to seek protection from the state and they entrust Chaudary Suleman with this responsibility. Such practices further reinforce among the residents the idea that there cannot ever be a legal rational authority which works in the interest of public good.

The above discussion illustrates how a mediator encourages his supporters to abstain from the police and judiciary and settle their dispute locally. However, in some instances, the

informants recounted that mediators implicated the state authorities to settle a case brought to them.

Fieldnote, March 2019:

> Mohammad Rafique, a billiard table owner, narrated a case of theft from last year. He said that Hikmat, a poor farmer from the village, approached Fida Gujjar to seek his help to find culprits involved in stealing his rice crop (*monji*). Mohammad Rafique noted that Hikmat had harvested rice lying in his field because he was waiting for a buyer. One night, when Hikmat was not guarding his field, around two sacks (*du boria*) of rice grain got stolen. Hikmat and his *biradri* easily found the culprit following some 'investigation'; It was Raja from the neighbouring village. Raja is a known thief for this type of crime. However, Raja refused to accept the charge. The case went to Fida Gujjar, who summoned both the parties. Raja denied charges of theft in front of Fida Gujjar too. Fida Gujjar then decided to informally involve the police from the nearby police *chowki* with whom he had friendly relations. After police beating, Raja admitted his crime and agreed to return the rice.

The picture that emerges from the above example indicates that state-society relationships in Bhi Nagar are very complex. It looks as if the police act sometimes as an auxiliary to the mediators to solve a crime. Quite often it looks as if the local realm Pakistani state has been 'captured' or 'hijacked' by the influentials and their associates and they order the public servants to function within the system established by them.

I also came across cases where, instead of relying on the police, the mediators used their own gun-wielding bodyguards to coerce a party involved in a dispute brought to them for their intervention. The following explanation of a dispute will elucidate this point. The dispute in question involves a man named Shah Sahib from Bhi Nagar and another man named Nabeel from Chak No 1, a neighbouring village. Shah Sahib is a retired teacher, and he owns two acres of land in Chak No 1. Both Shah Sahib and Nabeel are distantly related to each other. Because of the distance from the house and busy work schedule as a teacher, Shah Sahib allowed his relatives to use land for crops without charging anything. After retirement, Shah Sahib decided to take his land back. But he found out that his relatives, with the involvement of land record officers, sold out his land. Since Shah Sahib was certain about the land ownership, he went ahead to plough his field with a tractor. As Shah Sahib arrived at his land he was confronted by the 'new buyer', who was already there with his kin holding guns and sticks. Eventually a dispute emerged. Shah Sahib tried to take his land back with the help of his family, but he failed. He even tried to seek help from the police, who refused to intervene by saying that it was a legal matter, and he should approach the court. Reluctantly, Shah Sahib decided to start a legal process to vacate his land. The case progressed slowly in the lower court. The court took more than one year to conclude the case. The court found out that Shah Sahib's property documents were genuine so ultimately the rightful owner of the land. But the 'new buyer' refused to vacate the land and decided to contest the decision in the High Court. Another year and half passed before the Higher Court could conclude the case. Once again, Shah Sahib won the case. Even the decision of the High Court did not change anything on the ground. The 'new buyer', who was rich and an influential figure at the local level, continued growing crops with the backing of functionaries in the department of police and land revenue. When the land matter was being judged by the court, Shah Sahib was approached many times by the defendant and warned of severe consequences if he

continued going to the authorities and challenging his ownership. Shah Sahib was obviously left with no option now, except surrendering or taking the law into his own hands. However, before taking any extreme step, Shah Sahib started searching for someone from his village who could intervene and some of his friends advised him to discuss the matter with Fida Gujjar, who is famous among villagers to deploy different means to help his supporters, including violence. Fida Gujjar sent a jeep carrying his affiliates and personal bodyguards to recover the land. Later Fida Gujjar also used his connections with the members of the law enforcement and local land revenue department to complete the required paperwork to fully register the land in Shah Sahib's name.

This case can be seen as a typical example of fraudulent practices, illegality, and subversion of law. This case also highlights the loopholes in the country's governance and judicial system. We also see here the importance of legal documents, but also how easy it is to change entries regarding ownership in property documents. Above all, this case illustrates how the people move between formal and informal centres of powers to claim their legal rights.

Other disputes where these mediators have state-like impact are related to land and irrigation water infrastructure and distribution. Despite so much importance, the state authorities have very little control and have largely ineffective responses to issues of management of irrigation water in the village, construction of water ditches (*khala*) and their cleaning. All these matters continue to be organized through mediators.

Fieldnote, February 2019:

> Mohammad Khaliq recounted a recent incident of irrigation dispute that he had with his neighbour. Mohammad Khaliq's land is at the tail end of an irrigation ditch. He had a constant issue over assigned irrigation time (*pani di wari)* with the former whose land was before him. Mohammad Khaliq tried to solve the issue on his own, but the neighbouring farmer refused to listen to him. There was even a fight between the two. When nothing worked, Mohammad Khaliq took the matter to Fida Gujjar, who reprimanded the neighbouring farmer for stealing the water. Since then, Mohammad Khaliq's water had never been stolen again (Personal communication).

Along with water theft, the mediators also deal with everyday farming disputes including disputes over boundaries of plots and fields. Many informants told me that it is common in the village that the people veer off course and add some neighbour's property into theirs. Since the formal land registration system is administered poorly, all such cases are brought to the mediators. The traditional village headman's household – the *numberdar* – has a crucial role to play in such matters. The *numberdaar's* household owe their privileged position in the village to the local administrative setup of the colonial era (see also Talbot, 1991). The colonial administration used to appoint in rural areas a local landlord as *numberdar* who would assist *patwari* in managing land records and collecting revenue from the farmers. Today, *numberdar* no longer serves as a government servant in a formal sense, but nonetheless retain significant influence in villages due to their historical proximity to the apparatus of power and wealth. Compared to other mediators, members of Imtiaz Numberdaar household enjoy persistent significance in land disputes in the village as well as mediating between the villagers and the state to resolve matters related to land and revenue.

The involvement of Imtiaz Numberdaar in farming and boundary disputes indicate the relevance of local knowledge, which the state authorities lack[29].

**Intermediaries: 'linkage' between the villagers and the electoral regime**

Fieldnote, January 2019:

> Today, through my discussions with many informants in the village, I tried to gain insight into the position of neighbourhood intermediaries in the village. The villagers' accounts were useful to build a profile of intermediaries' personalities and their working methods. The crucial aspect of these discussions was that they revealed the necessary sources an intermediary needed to build his political profile in the village. These include amassing wealth and using a part of this wealth for patronage, as well as projecting himself as someone having close ties with the state officials. A political leader can also develop a good reputation among his followers by adhering to a social behaviour that does not run counter to the expectations of the villagers. What is most important in village politics is the ability of a political figure to stay engaged in day-to-day matters of their supporters. These political personalities are expected to go to every possible extent to assist their supporters in all sorts of matters. The villagers are happy from their patron as long as he takes '*sar dardi* (keen interests)' in their legal and illegal matters. Essentially, opening avenues to the state sources is an important

[29] Imtiaz Numberdaar 's role is also significant in aiding the local state extortion. Most of the time meetings between the villagers and officers of revenue department (e.g., *patwari* or *tehsildaar*) takes place at the house of *numberdaar*. I was told that the house of *numberdaar* hosts officials of the revenue department whenever they are in the village. *Numberdaar*, through the village's chowkidar, spread the message across the village about the arrival of officers. All the estimations and negotiations related to crop-related taxes are carried out at the residence of *numberdaar*. Quite often the villagers take the benefit of the presence of *numberdaar* to negotiate 'fee' with the officials for property and land documentation.

quality that the villagers want to see in their leader. The villagers expect their political leader to be available all the time for any kind of advice, help, or intervention. All the neighbourhood intermediaries enjoy good reputations among their supporters. The basis of this good image – as was shared with me by many in the village, from motorcycle repairer and street vendor to barber – include their wealth, good behaviour towards fellow villagers, and 'good connections' with the state officials. For villagers, all these neighbourhood politicians because of their good connections are expected to bring extra funding for the development of the village. From different parts of the village, I heard about development schemes led by different local-level political figures. These schemes sometimes were seen as personal favour, as if funded by the politicians from their own assets. One informant said, 'this street used to be in a deplorable condition. The condition would be so pathetic after rain. We are grateful to Chaudary Suleman that he gave us this brick-paved (*paki gali*) street. Chaudary Suleman also installed a water filtration plant in our village. God bless him (Allah uska bhala kery)'. Another man said, 'Fida Gujjar built fencing (*char dewari*) around the cemetery'. For a successful political image in Bhi Nagar, the significant factor is to establish political alliances with the larger *biradris* in the village, for *biradri* members, due to common concerns and issues, largely act as a voting bloc. The informants think that the local representatives direct public schemes and public funds towards their supporting voters. The informants do not see these public resources as directly linked to the participation in the political system as citizens but linked to the personal connection with the local representatives, or material compensation for political support offered to the local politician at the time of elections.

The above field note indicates that the local political figure also engages with another view of the state among the residents of Bhi Nagar – that is how to access *sarkari* (official) benefits and perks. I noticed on many occasions how villagers equated the state presence with material benefits. These expectations are based on the idea that the state is a major source of wealth. There is a general belief that there is a lot of money with the state and the residents of Bhi Nagar should get a share out of it. Tapping into the state wealth and bringing in development schemes, I was often told, is the responsibility of the person who affects the residents' voting conduct i.e., the local political figures.

The above field note also illustrates that the primary affiliation to *biradri* in Bhi Nagar compromises objectives of 'common good'. Socially, the town is fragmented into well recognized *biradri* groups (see also Chapter four) having different interests and competing for access to the state resources. This social stratification limits the concept of common good and impedes the development of consensus for defending certain common interests and relational obligations. Consequently, any political affiliation at the village is predicated on according to the local understandings of social relationships. This leads to the village dwellers not perceiving politicians as representative of the whole village. Conversely, the residents tend to establish personal relation with the political figure who has grown politically, and who is expected to enhance and protect specific interests of the people who rally behind him. The residents do not regard access to the state resources as their legal right by virtue of their contractual agreement with the state, an important aspect of citizenship, but as a prize or favour owed to them by the politicians for supporting him. The scenario of expecting favours from politicians in exchange for political support is very common in Bhi

Nagar village. With inadequate presence of the state and in an environment full of legal uncertainties, there is a strong belief in the society to seek indirect access to the public resources through influential individuals in the vicinity. In such a scenario, despite the fact that the state resources are guaranteed by the constitutions, provision of the public resources and services is experienced as privilege, mediated by some local influencers rather than the state bureaucratic setup. The state services are thus not seen in Bhi Nagar as legal entitlements by virtue of social contract with the state, but as conditional benefits granted to selected individuals by politicians and social actors, who value obedience and personal connection.

Another point that emerges from the above field note is that the political figures in the village have to deal with so many expectations that surround them. These political figures are being evaluated according to the local social and moral standards. People expect them to be caring, hospitable, generous, and friendly. The politicians are considered to be aware of problems of the villagers and always ready to extend help in different situations, ranging from offering space in a car or on motorbike to going to the city for work or medical reasons. In many conversations I observed that the villagers see the position of a local political figure as someone who is wealthy and generous. The people also expect a local political figure to offer *chaye pani* (tea water) as well as have his *bahiatk* or *daara* opened for his supporters all the time. The reference here is to material wealth and hospitality. The villagers also expect from the local political figures to be in a better economic position so that they can generously contribute to various religious, and sports events being organized in the village. To get generous funds, the event organizers print the names and faces of the local political figures on posters and advertise them across the village. Such posters are commonly seen on electric poles and walls in the village. Volleyball, kabaddi, and cricket are the main sports activities

for which the organizers approach the local political actors for funds on a regular basis. Similarly, the local politicians are quite frequently approached for contributions to construct or renovate a mosque, as well as to organize religious events like Rabi-ul-Awal, Shab E Meraj or Shab E Barat.

Therefore, to have access to the state resources which are necessary to maintain their patronage status in the village, the local political figures make efforts to establish links with the prominent parties in the province, particularly political parties' candidates from the local constituency who are attempting to become members of the provincial assembly (MPA) or members of the national assembly (MNA). Both MPAs and MNAs are largely viewed at the local level as in charge of every aspect of the state resources. I was told the party association among the local political figures in Bhi Nagar is temporary. The local figures, along with their voting *dhara,* switch parties quite easily and quite often. At the time of fieldwork, the local political figures Fida Gujjar and Imtiaz Numberdaar were self-proclaimed members of the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI), the governing party both in the province and the federation, while Chaudary Suleman and Faisal Gujjar had informally been associated with the Pakistan Muslim League (N), the largest party of opposition both in the provincial assembly and national assembly. While aligning with an MPA or MNA, it is generally assumed that if the supporting contestant wins, he/she will make *sarkari* perks and privileges accessible to those village-level politicians who have supported them (through their voting *dhara,* for instance) to win an election. By supporting a candidate of a political party for the post of MPA or MNA, the local level politicians also boost their chances of getting a party ticket to contest

the union council level elections whenever the central authorities decide to ‘restructure’ the local government system to make it ‘democratic’[30].

The local political figures in Bhi Nagar are also a good source for political parties and their MPAs and MNAs to communicate and interact downward. Crucially, the local political figures provide a useful mechanism to political parties to interact with the villagers. To consolidate and expand their electoral influence, political parties seek help from these political figures as much as they seek help from political parties and their ticket holders to maintain their patronage in the village. In Bhi Nagar village, party organizations are weak; the parties are patrimonial and personalistic in character, lack organization, are not present effectively in the village and do not have party memberships to perform various functions of political parties such as mobilization, representation, and interest articulation. That is why local MPAs and MNAs belonging to different parties target influential individuals in the village to gain votes. The stories that villagers told me show that Fida Gujjar, Imtiaz Numberdaar Chaudary Suleman and Faisal Gujjar, who are thickly present in the village’s political and social life, provide an informal platform through which different political parties permeate Bhi Nagar’s politics.

[30] There have been multiple attempts at decentralization in Pakistan. But attempts towards institutionalized devolution in Pakistan have generally been criticized as moves to centralize more power under the guise of decentralization, entrench patron- client relation and subdue local level politics (Cheema et al., 2005; Malik & Rana, 2019).

## Chapter seven

## Conclusion

This dissertation began with highlighting limitations of a strand of literature which uses Weberian ideas and concepts while discussing the topic of 'the state' in the global South. This strand of literature describes a disparity of power in the relationship between 'state' and 'society', portraying the state as a combination of complex and powerful institutions which are stuffed with bureaucrats who work according to predefined rules. 'The state' is viewed as a separate entity from society and its inhabitants, acting out in a unified and cohesive way. Whereas 'the citizens' are portrayed as passive, subject to the state, with little room to manoeuvre. Moving forward, I argued in favour of theoretical perspectives from 'the anthropology of the state' as a better analytical tool in order to understand the topic of state in the global South. In current anthropological scholarships, I argued that the state is viewed as practices that have been created, maintained, and challenged by inhabitants who live and experience the state. The monopoly of state power has been questioned by orienting the focus of research on 'everyday' strategies of people to encounter and challenge the state. Here it is considered unnecessary to reify the state and is emphasised on blurriness of the boundary between 'state' and 'society'. The anthropological perspectives try to move beyond an understanding in which the state is presented as a monolithic entity, coherently controlling and shaping everything at the local level. Instead, it is argued that the state formal structures and powers are inconsistent, scattered, contradictory, and dispersed across several social relations and domains.

Despite better explanatory power, as has explained in detail in chapter one and chapter five of this thesis, anthropological approaches to deal with the topic of the state are

not prevalent, particularly this is true about discussions in the literature on Pakistani state. In most of the studies on the state in Pakistan, there is a focus on how colonial legacies influence state structures and functions (Alvi, 1972; Jalal, 1999; Rizvi , 2000). There are also studies that focus on structures and functions of higher level of state institutions in Pakistan where the state is presented as a dominant actor in the political field, both discrete and isolated from the society it governs (Waseem,1994; Faiz, 2015). Many scholars study Pakistani state through the analysis of governance patterns in the country, leading to academic literature that has more to do with governments and their policies than Pakistani state (Hasnain, 2008; Husain, 2018). Even those studies that attempt to examine the state at local level limit their analysis to successes and failures of various decentralization reforms in Pakistan (Cheema et al., 2015; Cheema et al., 2005; Akhtar et al., 2007). There are a number of studies which, using a theoretical lens of resistance and social movement, zoom in on people's struggle against state oppression and injustices (Akhtar, 2006; Rizvi, 2013). The local level studies certainly highlight important aspects of Pakistani state but do not include analysis about the workings of the state at the micro level and how people encounter and imagine it in their local settings. My study departs from the existing research studies. This thesis set out to answer the following questions: what is the common conception of Pakistani state at the local level? How do people interact and experience the state institutions at the micro level? What role do different non-state actors who act as intermediaries between their fellow villagers and the wider political world play in shaping local embodiment of the state and people's experience with it?

With research questions raised in this study, I have analysed how Pakistani state is imagined in rural areas and how these images influence the way the inhabitants carry out everyday engagement with the state authorities. I was not interested in what Pakistani state wants to do at the local level, but in how the state authorities and villagers interact with each other. Particularly I was interested in everyday indirect engagement between 'state' and 'society' and the intermediary role of different actors in these interactions. The conceptual guidance, devised to answer the questions raised in this research, and how data collected, discussed, and presented in this dissertation, came from 'the anthropology of the state' (Gupta & Sharma, 2006; see also Das & Poole, 2004; Gupta, 1995; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001) and how 'people' interact with 'the everyday state' (Corbridge et al., 2005; see also Sardan, 2008; Bierschenk & Sardan, 2014; Obeid, 2010; Hunt, 2006; Hansen T. B., 2001; Verkaaik, 2001) in the Global South. To understand ordinary indirect interactions between Pakistani state and villagers, I utilized theoretical insights provided by concepts like 'informal people' (Bayat, 1997), 'weapons of weak' (Scott,1985), 'patron and clients' (Gellner & Waterbury, 1977), 'political society' (Chatterjee, 2004), 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006), 'mediated states' (Menkhaus, 2008), 'institutions in the middle' (Krishna, 2009), and 'everyday mediation' (Berenschot, 2010). Considering theoretical and empirical aspects of the research questions that this study wanted to answer, I employed ethnographic research methods. A village I call Bhi Nagar in Pakistan was used as a field site. I collected my data through informal conversations with my informants as well as through watching a range of daily activities inside the village. I had planned one-year fieldwork, starting from September 2019, but it got shortened to six months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic affected my research in many ways, with impacts on data collection, fieldwork outputs, and personal productivity. I could not achieve the academic rigour on the nature of the fieldwork data as I had initially planned. The arguments presented in this thesis

are based on the data I managed to collect during my time in the field. It is also important to note here that this research advanced one of many explanations present in the country of the phenomenon under study. The fieldwork data has been collected from one rural setting. That is why, I would argue for a cautious approach while applying this study's analyses to other parts of Pakistan.

The main ideas and arguments of this study are presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. To explain how the people of Bhi Nagar make sense of 'the state' and devise strategies to interact with it, I began by exploring the sources through which the population in Bhi Nagar makes sense and create an image about the Pakistani state. I have argued that the residents of Bhi Nagar 'see' the state and construct an idea about it through, firstly, sporadic interaction with it, in the form of its ground level practices and actions. The interaction with the local bureaucracies is the key to the realization and dissemination of state power in day-to-day village life. I have demonstrated that the common conception of the Pakistani state at the local level, as well as the useful perspectives about villagers and state interaction in Bhi Nagar, can be gained by paying attention to the villagers' encounters with the local-level state institutions, like the local courts (*kacherian*), the local land revenue department (e.g., *patwari*), the law and order department (e.g., police constables), and with the offices which are responsible for issuing documents like birth certificate, domicile, marriage and divorce certificates, identity card or passport.

In addition to the ordinary encounters with the state authorities, another major source, I have argued, to form subjective opinions about the Pakistani state in the rural area is associated with what the people see on television sets. While listening to the local radio

stations or reading newspapers that cover local issues is uncommon, the majority of households in the village have access to the national cable and satellite TV channels. Beyond providing entertainment, the cable and satellite TV channels run 24-hour news cycles. Viewing news channels dominate in Bhi Nagar. The news channels give special coverage to press releases and statements coming from the high-ranking officials like president, prime minister, governors, chief ministers, cabinet members, chief judges, or chief military officers. Long press conferences from the senior bureaucrats as well as the members of both governing parties and opposition parties are considered worthy of live coverage. Of special interest for these news channels are sudden and unexpected visits from the high-ranking officials to public institutions and markets. One day these officials can be seen distributing food and aid packages, the next day they are busy inaugurating a bridge, road, hospital, or an educational institution. In the evening, the news channel air panel discussions on the government and politics which revolve around a few individuals. I argue that the villagers also form an image about the Pakistani state through what is being broadcasted on the news channels. The villagers watch these news channels and later discuss them at the places of social gatherings in the village.

My ethnography depicts that the people in Bhi Nagar discuss the Pakistani state in contradictory terms. In other words, following Thomas Blom Hansen (Hansen, 2001), I have argued that the Pakistani state in the rural area is understood and imagined as having 'sublime' ('a more distant state… its hidden resources, designs and immense power, and the illusions of higher forms of rationality or justice) and 'profane' ('the incoherence, brutality, partiality, and banality of the technical sides of government, as rough-and-tumble of negotiation, compromise, and naked self-interest') faces. The local sphere of the Pakistani state with which the villagers interact in their everyday life is regarded as 'profane'. The

residents tend to associate difficulties, corruption, and humiliation to the local sphere of the state. While the national and provincial sphere of the state, the sphere that they see on television sets, is considered 'sublime'. I have shown that the colonial legacy in the country of running administrative setup from the capitals is responsible for this split. The colonial assumption that top level officials are fair and honest and officials at the local level are steeped in partiality and corruption continues to shape the country's administrative culture.

I have suggested that, on the one hand, the villagers imagine 'the state' as an entity with corrupt and inefficient employees for whom poor and marginalized are easy prey to make money. For the villagers, the state is the union council secretary who humiliates them and does not issue a certificate without *sifarish*, or the *patwari* who can easily tamper someone's land or property ownership, or the public-school teacher and the public health unit doctor who do not turn up to their job because they have backing of the influential Gujjar households from the village, or the local courts (*kacherian*) where according to the villagers "wahan py *zalalat or* ruswai *ki siwa kuch nahi* (there is nothing but dishonour and shame ), or the police constables from the nearby police *chowki* who are famous for abuse and rough behaviour. For the residents of Bhi Nagar, direct encounter with the state authorities is a scary and intimidating experience, especially for illiterate and poor. Even for literate and economically well-off people in the village, visiting a government office independently is quite an alienating and frustrating event. At social gatherings in front of shops, in *baithaks* or *daaras*, men from the village discuss a range of issues that shape the idea of the local realm of the Pakistani state as corrupt. In these outdoor gatherings, the villagers occasionally belittle and gossip about the local state employees, share stories about bribery and corruption and about the success or failure of their recent encounter with the state. They exchange information about successful applications for new electricity connections. Information about

getting a birth certificate, identity card or passport are also exchanged here. Within such informal gatherings, the villagers also evaluate the role of various political intermediaries from the village in obtaining official papers, cards, and documents.

On the other hand, the Pakistani state is also imagined by the villagers as an entity present in distant places. The rural inhabitants consider that the state is not near, but elsewhere, at a distance, geographically separated from their village. It can only be spotted on television sets, in the capitals and major city centers of the country, and it is a wealthy institute with immense resources. The state is explained and perceived in terms of actions and style of governance of the top officials and politicians. The top officials and politicians appear on TV and in a paternalistic tone constantly remind everyone that they are doing a lot for the people. As a consequence, the villagers remain fond of the current and former top-level government officials and politicians. All the development works in the village, like road building, water filtration plant, school upgradation, basic health unit etc., are associated with the prime minister/chief minister and other senior government ministers. In common discussions, the villagers refer to actions and speeches of the top officials and politicians that they have seen on television. As such, the villagers see the provincial and national realm of the Pakistani state as committed to development and anti-corruption initiatives, while the local realm of the state is blamed for their everyday troubles and difficulties.

My enquiry has also shown that mistrust among the villagers towards the lower levels of the Pakistani state is not based on some form of imagination, but it is a result of the villagers' interaction with the state in its everyday form. For the villagers, processes and politics of acquiring official certificates, documents and cards are full of frustration and

challenges. The uncertainties and humiliation in day-to-day bureaucratic encounters have engendered feelings of helplessness and disempowerment among the majority in the village. There is a general belief among the residents that fair treatment in everyday bureaucratic encounters is not possible. Mistrust towards the state is bolstered, I have argued, when the villagers in everyday conversation share stories with each other of predatory encounters in which the low-ranking officers impose corrupt demands on them. I have suggested that ordinary conversations about the local-level officials strengthen the view of the villagers that the local realm of the Pakistani state cannot deliver the public good. Furthermore, assuming that the state in everyday form is exploitative and biased, I have shown that the villagers encourage each other to stay away from it as much as possible. As a result, the villagers rarely make efforts to learn about the details of official procedures and workings at the local level.

In the Bhi Nagar area, my study also highlights that the political landscape is characterized by diverse forms of political practices and relations. The picture that emerges from my study is one of scattered and diffused state governance. My analysis has shown that with regard to modes of governance, interaction between the villagers and state officials is asymmetric, irregular and indirect in nature. The state in Bhi Nagar has neither complete monopoly over legitimate use of force nor can it be said that it operates as a homogeneous monolith institute. Observed empirically in the village, the decentralized state officials do not necessarily function in harmonious and official ways.

The profane realities and circumstances of the Pakistani state at the local level have widened the gap between the villagers and the governments. The residents of Bhi Nagar have

neither resources nor skills to directly interact with the state. Inevitably, this context of inefficient institutional functioning of the state, I have suggested, have created favourable conditions for the politics of intermediaries in the village – where village-level politicians act as the main channel through which interaction between the villagers and the 'external' political world – e.g., state officials and political parties – take place. I have argued that the village-level politicians make state-society interaction in Bhi Nagar somewhat intimate, prompting the state officials at the lower levels to embody the better image of the state of respect and care. Through many examples, my research has revealed how the villagers actively rely on the neighbourhood politicians to deal with the cold and exclusionary apparatus of the everyday state. I have suggested that the local politicians, whose political and social lives are closely linked with the villagers, shape and facilitate state-society interaction in Bhi Nagar. I have also recognized that the significance of the neighbourhood politicians in Bhi Nagar go beyond helping fellow villagers. They also help the state at the local level, acting as auxiliaries to the local government agencies in matters related to governance, as they help the state in administering vaccination and census activities, or to determine the villagers' claim to the state-run support programmes like Benazir Income Support Program and Zakat, or help the state to determine the authenticity of supporting documents to issue electricity connections, various certificates, and cards to the villagers. By looking at episodes of local government administration in the village, I have argued that departure from the formal to the informal is a common feature of local government in the Bhi Nagar area, causing the boundary between 'state' and 'society' to become blurred. I also suggest that, by virtue of their performance and work as intermediaries, the village-level politicians in Bhi Nagar have come to represent a 'lens' through which the villagers and the local realm of the Pakistani state 'see' each other.

Examining the role of political intermediaries in Bhi Nagar, my inquiry has also suggested that they sometimes act 'like' the state. Given the corrupt image of the local realm of the Pakistani state, the police and state courts are seen as not providing security and justice in the area. This 'vacuum', I have argued, is then filled by the village-level political figures. The political intermediaries in the village put themselves in place of state authorities, in lieu of the police and judiciary, which are largely inaccessible to the residents. They provide informal institutions in the village to deal internally with a wide range of issues, problems, and needs. I have also looked at how the village-level politicians talk about state corruption and exploitation. By doing so I have argued that the local politicians reinforce further the villagers' perception about the local state in Pakistan as corrupt and inefficient. Through such exaggeration and reinforcement, the local politicians successfully keep the villagers away from directly approaching the state officials and continue to rely on them. In a sense, my analysis suggests that the role of the village-level political figures is more critical than mere a link between the residents and the outside political world. They could be seen as an alternative to formal government structures since they allow the fellow villagers to evade the state authorities in matters related to security and dispute resolution.

In conclusion, my work is a small addition to a growing number of ethnographic and other studies on state-society interaction in Pakistan. The fundamental changes are taking place in scholarships on state and society in Pakistan. Recent research attempts on Pakistan's politics and other aspects provide fresh ideas and understandings (Akhtar, 2018; Akhter, 2015; Javed, 2018; Suhail, 2015; Zaidi, 2014). A small effort has been made on my part to contribute to debates on how the state is understood and experienced in rural Pakistan. This research endeavour also shed light on the role different actors of 'political society' (Chatterjee, 2004) play where state is scantily present and where inclusive civic and political

groupings are largely absent. This dissertation project also engages and make a small addition to literature on how Pakistani state maintains itself and how informality is a major factor that shapes government scope and actions at the local level (Alimia, 2013; Farooqui, 2020; Gazdar & Mallah, 2013; Latif, 2013).

Moreover, this research fits well with recent trends in anthropology that argue that the topic of 'the state' is better understood through examination of its physical presence and practices (Bierschenk & Sardan, 2014; Corbridge et al., 2005; Das & Poole, 2004; Gupta, 1995; Gupta & Sharma, 2006; Hansen T. B., 2001; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Hunt, 2006; Obeid, 2010; Sardan, 2008; Verkaaik, 2001). These relatively newer anthropological approaches to the study of the state emphasises on complexity and diversity. Understandings about the state have been changed from a single separate actor working in a consistent manner. Instead, the local reality of the state is seen as deeply entangled with a large number of economic and social processes. I have shown in this study that the picture of state-society relation at the local level becomes complicated when we see how power and social dynamics intermingle with official governance practices, such as when different local political figures in the village are asked to act as the state's assistant. The reliance on intermediaries, I suggest, is a part of the governance regime in which the boundary between 'state' and 'society' is blurred. In analysing such blurred boundaries, Akhil Gupta (Gupta,1995) makes a similar point. Like Akhil Gupta, I also underline the issue associated with conceiving the interaction between the state and society as happening across divides. The non-fixity and fluctuation of space where official policies and practices are planned and put into practice must be recognized for better understanding of the workings of the state.

Another strand of research with which I believe my ethnographic material fits well is the literature that argues ‘we should take more seriously the role of intermediaries in relationships between states and citizens in the global south’ (Pipera & Lieres, 2015, p. 696; see also Lieres & Piper, 2014; Chatterjee, 2004; Berenschot, 2010). My research has empirically shown that unlike countries with strong rule of law ideals where citizen-state interaction is a straightforward process, taking place as outlined in the constitution, in rural Pakistan however, citizen-state interaction is rarely that much simpler and straightforward process. In an environment that complies with the rules, one simply has to have information about the right office and the procedure of application; for instance, information about office location, working hours, required documents, and so on. However, in an environment where government offices are marked by a high level of partiality and subjective application of law, information about formal ways of visiting a government office has limited value. The residents of rural Pakistan have little hope that using formal channels to interact with the state will produce any desired outcome. Consequently, citizen-state interaction arrangements in villages become complicated and informal. The villagers seek mediation with the expectations that their efforts will produce some results. In the absence of secure and certain channels, there is a strong tendency in the rural parts to rely on the village-level politicians to carry out daily interaction with the local state. Though the constitution guarantees equal and timely access to the state institutions and state services but for the rural residents, successful interaction with the state officials is only possible through a reference of a local political figure. The emphasis on emotional and personal ties with friends and acquaintances is a peculiar quality of social life in the Bhi Nagar area. That is why, liberal-individualist conception of citizens, which promotes a legal and rational community where individuals coexist and interact with each other and with the state on equal terms, appears absent from the social fabric of Bhi Nagar. The formal methods of citizen-state interaction described in

the constitution appear to have no significance in Bhi Nagar village. That is why, the villagers think that visiting a government office with the help of a politician is more effective and fruitful. Located at the crossroads of formal/informal power, neighbourhood politicians are an important ‘connection’ to link the state and villagers with each other in Bhi Nagar.

# Appendix

## Illustrative materials

**Photo one: The village of Bhi Nagar in the distance**

**Photo two: A marketplace in city Mandi Bahauddin**

**Photo three: A marketplace in city Mandi Bahauddin**

**Photo four:  Meeting with a neighbourhood politician and his affiliates**

**Photo five:  Meeting with a neighbourhood politician and his affiliates**

**Photo six: With male teenager outside a shop in the village**

**Photo seven: A volleyball match in the village**

**Photo eight: With the schoolteachers**

**Photo nine: With the schoolteachers at a lunchtime**


**Photo ten: A small marketplace in the village to repair bikes, motorbikes, and auto rickshaws.**


**Photo eleven: meeting with the villagers at a marketplace**


**Photo twelve: Talking to the villagers at an outdoor billiard club.**

**Photo thirteen: A TV repair shop in the village**

**Photo fourteen: The villagers offering funeral prayers in the village school.**

**Photo fifteen: Streets (*gali*) in the village**

**Photo sixteen: Under construction *Kothi* in the village**

**Photo seventeen: open air stall in the village selling fruits and vegetables.**

**Photo eighteen: With the male villagers**


**Photo nineteen: Talking to *golgappa* (street food) seller in the village**

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