

**POLITICAL ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY IN KHAIRPUR (1950-1980)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*During the colonial period (1843-1947) Khaipur was one of the princely states of British India. In Khaipur state the administration was so effective that the crime rate was lowest in Khaipur state in comparison with other parts of India. The system of crime prevention and detection was very effective in the state. Peaceful conditions and improved law and order during the state times were a result of efficient administrative system of Khaipur state. However, when the state joined Pakistan and it was converted merely into a division under the One-unit policy in 1955, the bureaucracy began to dominate the administrative affairs of state and played political role in Khaipur. The aim of this paper is to analyze the role of bureaucracy in Khaipur during the post-Colonial period.*

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**Keywords:** Colonial Bureaucracy, Administration, Policing System, One-Unit Policy

**INTRODUCTION**

The one-unit scheme was appeared to be of an administrative nature but it prognosticated future politics of country. According to the popular view of nationalist politics, the smaller provinces under the scheme not only lost their provincial statuses but they were also treated by the Lahore administration in a similar way the colonial powers dealt with their colonies. This argument further states that the bureaucracy was used as a tool to control over the populations and to exploit the resources of these smaller provinces and states. However, this scheme created a huge political movement against the one-unit scheme and it led to the rise of ethnic-based nationalism in Pakistan. For example the rise of Bengali nationalism and consequently the separation of the East Pakistan was a direct political outcome of the political role played by bureaucracy during the One-Unit period.

**ADMINISTRATION IN KHAIRPUR**

In the 1950s Khairpur, the administrative structure was based on colonial patterns. The district administration under the Colonial rule included law and order, revenue and supervision of all government departments working in the district. In order to control crime and maintain order, district administration was empowered to use police. Thus, during the British rule over India, the district was the hub of administration and continued to be so even after independence of India and Pakistan (Sayeed, 1958:140).

The post-colonial district bureaucracy played mainly a political role. Cooperation from district bureaucracy became an important factor for electoral success. Callard thus, argued that the powers of a district magistrate could either aid or hinder the candidacy of a politician (Callard, 1957:297). This was one of the reasons why most of the politicians wanted bureaucracy to play a political role. Thus, the political pressure was employed to persuade or compel public servants to intervene in party politics (Callard, 1957:297).

In the 1960s the country had been divided into 124 districts for the purpose of its administration. Each district in country had been the basic unit of administration and the focal point of all social, cultural, economic, administrative and developmental activities (Government of Pakistan, 1961). During this period Khairpur was an administrative division which was consisting of the districts including Sukkur, Khairpur, Larkana and Nawabshah. Khairpur was one of the most important administrative divisions of West Pakistan.

However, the administration in Khairpur began to be politicized, and the local bureaucracy lost its image as a non-political organization in the eyes of public. Thus, the theoretical concept of neutrality became irrelevant to local level bureaucracy. The district chief executive behaved in an arrogant manner. His way of dealing with lower and lower middle-classes indicates that the administrative culture was no different from the 19<sup>th</sup> century culture of colonial bureaucracy. The post-partition political changes could not decrease the vast political power enjoyed by these officers. Unlike politicians, bureaucrats enjoyed the administrative and judicial powers on permanent basis.

The positions of bureaucrats were more secure and powerful. The district officer was able to control and use his political influence to get things done according to his own wishes. He played a political

role in district under his control. The local political leaders also accepted his legal authority. He managed the dynamics of local power politics. Thus, it was not difficult for him to get support from feudal lords to achieve desired outcomes of government policy to be implemented in the areas where the local leaders had great influence. The district officer also used techniques of political influence to improve law and order in his district. He was able to mediate the local disputes ranging from family feuds to tribal conflicts and from water distribution to land revenue settlement. However, in these matters, the district officer over stepped his boundaries of power. It reinforced the beliefs of people in local custom of decision-making. This role of district officer was not resisted by politicians. Thus, the district officer began to get involved in local politics.

Bureaucrats also acquired skills of influencing people. Thus, political activities pleased them and satisfied their desires to become popular persons among the masses. Their activities indicated clearly their desire for popularity, when they came into contact with public. Like politicians traditional bureaucrats liked to address the people's gatherings. They also enjoyed the honour to preside conferences, meetings and other forms of people's gatherings. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Khairpur addressed public at a number of occasions. They not only addressed basic democrats and their supporters in their union councils but also addressed large public meetings. For instance, the commissioner of Khairpur was reported, addressing to a large gathering of people in Khairpur (Ahmed, 1968:122).

In the field of public dealing, the administrative style of working in Khairpur had great deal of similarities with landlord's style of doing things. The district officers took pride in activities in a same way the landlords did. However, in some cases the landlords and politicians were far behind the bureaucrats in a publicity campaign. They were trying to prove that they possessed political and leadership skills. These bureaucratic attitudes were an outcome of desire for more powers. Conscious or unconscious attempts made by the successive governments to decrease the powers of bureaucrats which triggered the emotions of bureaucracy and it behaved like fish out of water. In every activity and action, the bureaucrats just promoted themselves and their social positions. Their looks indicate that they did not waste a single moment to capture the attention of

masses. Consider a heroic image which was taken in the late 1960s to show the bravery and adventurous nature of Deputy Commissioner Sahib. This image was described as an image of 'lucky hunter' who hunted a crocodile near the Nara Canal in Khairpur (Ahmed, 1968:163).

In the 1970s and 1980s Khairpur district was being considered one of the sensitive parts of Pakistan because of its recent history of tribal conflicts and sectarian violence. The rise in crime posed a great challenge for administration. This created a serious problem of law and order in Khairpur. The high incidence of crime, particularly kidnapping, pushed hundreds of villagers to migrate to cities. However, civil administration along with police failed to control over criminals in Khairpur. People believed that there were political reasons for the failure of administration to respond to criminal activities. In the 1980s it was generally agreed by people that they were being punished for their support for democracy against military dictatorship of Zia. Thus, bureaucracy was being used by military-government as a tool to achieve political objectives in Sindh including Khairpur.

However, it can be argued that district managers became so powerful and proud that they did not feel guilty and responsible for their failures. They were not able to contain the wave of crime in an effective manner. The administration was not able to manage the law and order situation because they lacked the skills required for controlling crime. In fact, district bureaucracy did not work as a team to achieve objectives of law and order. Even if we believe that they worked as a team, it could be hard to expect a success of a team which was led by a person who did not know much about the geography and physical conditions of the district. Most of the Deputy Commissioners appointed by central government in Khairpur came from the other provinces of country including the Punjab province. They were not familiar with geographical and political conditions of the districts of Sindh. These officers spent time in their majestic offices more than they spent in field trips. The new appointees had not enough experience in the field of management. In addition, the district officers appointed by federal government were not directly responsible to provincial governments.

The provincial government did not dare to take action against them for their failures. Moreover, lack of interest in the district

stranger to them also caused inability of district administration to handle crime. The lack of public pressure in the form of protest against administrative red tape and inefficiency created a comfort zone for the district administration. Thus, the Deputy Commissioners were reluctant to risk their lives in chasing criminals. They did not screw up their courage to fight with criminals and accomplices i.e. feudalism. The fight against the accomplices could jeopardize their political interests in the district.

Another dilemma was of frequent transfers of honest officers who tried to reform administration and improve delivery of services. Thus, before they took action against the culprits they were transferred from the district by their political bosses. Therefore, their tasks remained unaccomplished and discouraged new entrants in the district to follow the same path. It was expected from the new appointed officer that he would eradicate corruption in all its manifestations in the district. But soon he joined his duties he succumbed to political pressures and just tried to concentrate on his political activities in order to secure his personal benefits. However, the honest officers did not accept political interference in the district administration. These officers faced serious troubles. It was difficult for them to fight against the corrupt system without the help of people. There were three reasons for the lack of public support for the honest officers. First the media was not yet able to highlight the work of efficient officers in order to procure support from masses. The second was the issue of ethnicity. Local people did not offer support to the officer who did not belong to their community. The third reason was that the district officers' prioritized local elites over communities when it came to establish relations. Thus, like colonial officers, they failed to establish direct contact with local people. In addition, the language created a communication barrier. These officers did not speak and understand the language of communities. They did not know much about local culture and traditions. Thus, in dealing with these communities, the district officers depended on their assistants and the landlords who gave impression that they exercised control over these communities.

The ethnic-based politics also affected the performance of bureaucracy. Pakistan's federal level bureaucracy was dominated by Punjabi ethnic groups. Sindhis and Balochi were marginalized in both higher and lower level bureaucracies of Pakistan. Thus, the

unrepresentative nature of bureaucracy affected its professionalism and it generated a feeling of deprivation among people of smaller provinces. This situation made the role of bureaucracy doubtful in the eyes of general public. They had no clear idea about the role of bureaucracy. They feared that if there was no meaningful change in the attitudes of bureaucracy, the country could be further dismembered. These social and political factors caused institutional haplessness.

#### **NATURE OF DISTRICT LEADERSHIP**

In Khairpur and Sindh there were two sources of district leadership: Federal bureaucracy and Provincial bureaucracy. Their relationship could be delineated in social and psychological terms. Both branches of administration have superiority and inferiority complexes which could be seen from their style of work and interaction with public. In addition, their professional jealousies prevented them to work as a team. In a situation where political pressure was employed, the responses of CSP and PCS officers were clearly different. However, those officers belonging to either federal or provincial branch of bureaucracy who gave up, formed alliances with political elites and remained in power as long as they pleased their political bosses. These officers remained kind to those subordinate officers who were able to grease their palms. The transfers and postings done by ministers was a technique of controlling power of a bureaucracy. Nevertheless, those officers fewer in number, who resisted pressures, were transferred from one place to another and sometime waited long for new postings. These officers were either inexperienced in the field of politics or inadapted to the culture of corruption. Thus, the inexperience of officers and frequency of their transfers also became one of the causes of administrative corruption (Goodnow, 1964:232).

Motivation was another determinant of bureaucratic performance. The administrative leaders came to control administration rather than to motivate the members of the administrative teams to improve the services in Khairpur. The district teams lacked the spirit of cooperation and they did not work on the principle of a team work. Their leaders had no vision and lacked the ability to inspire people to work together to achieve the common objectives of law and order. The leadership deficiencies affected the

social and administrative dynamics of district administration. Social relationships within the teams were also affected by the bureaucratic norms and hierarchy. They did not let the team work to develop in the district administration. Thus, the leaders of district promoted hierarchy and passing of orders to their subordinates without delegating authority to them. Their conservative approach to work reduced the possibilities of change.

### CONCLUSION

This research paper concludes that the members of district bureaucracy did not innovate the way of work in the district. Their efficiency was measured by their bosses from their obedience rather than competence or compassion for public. They were expected to be promoted not on the basis of performance but on the basis of how obedient they were to their bosses. These standards of measuring performance promoted feudal culture. Change in the structure and working culture of institution was not tolerated by the leaders of bureaucracy. Therefore, the habit of doing same thing and developing concept of routine work prevented district officers from providing effective leadership (Ahmed, 1964).

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