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**Unveiling Social Exploitation of Labor by Local Feudal Lords in Maamu Kanjan,  
Faisalabad**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis delves into the enduring social oppression of workers by feudal lords in Maamu Kanjan, a rural locality in district Faisalabad. It sheds light on the intricate power dynamics, mechanisms, and historical factors contributing to this exploitation. The focus is on how feudal lords wield authority over land ownership and resources, perpetuating their control through violence, economic bondage, and exploitative land tenure systems. Furthermore, it analyzes various forms of worker dependency, such as debt bondage, manipulative agreements, meager salary, and the complex dynamics of patron-client relationships. Additionally, this thesis underscores the implications of feudal exploitation of laborers by analyzing the harsh working conditions workers endure, including long hours, low wages, and lack of basic benefits, drawn from interviews with laborers. This is a qualitative thesis with the analysis of interviews conducted with laborers working in the agricultural fields of Maamu Kanjan. Utilizing the dependency theory, it analyzes the social ramifications of labor exploitation, linking them to rural poverty, inequality, and social marginalization, where the wealth of the rich feudal lords is drawn from the work of the poor. The thesis provides an important insight into the socio-economic landscape of rural Punjab using Mamu Kaanjan as a microcosm.

*Keywords: Laborers' exploitation, Laborers' rights, feudalism, economic inequality, SDGs.*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Feudalism exercises significant power over the socio-economic system of Punjab and Sindh in Pakistan. Feudal lords have historically inherited large areas of fertile lands across Punjab. While mostly having influence on agricultural fields, feudal lords also have developed small industries where laborers work under harsh conditions. Since the major sources of employment are these feudal lords across villages, they are in a position to have an impact on the lives of individuals who labor on their estates. The interaction between laborers and feudal lords presents an exploitative and dependent relation.

Feudal lords come from a rich historical background. Mostly, they have inherited this structure of power and wealth dynamics from their grandparents, before, when the Indian subcontinent was undivided. Along the lines, the partition of Pakistan was a major event that placed power in the hands of a minority who exercised social, political, and economic power over the mostly illiterate masses. Dealing with the foremost turmoil of a new state, the state failed to distribute resources equally. Decades later, today feudal lords maintain close relationships with the nexus of political leaders and law-enforcement institutions. Consequently, they are a major economic and political force, possessing both wealth and uninterrupted power.

When feudal lords, with control over land and other resources, recruit laborers, they do so in unjust circumstances. They are in the position to set terms and conditions, including work hours, salary, and punishment for any negligence. Without other means of support, agricultural laborers and landless peasants are forced to work in exploitative conditions for less pay with limited access to basic needs like healthcare and education. The feudal elite treats their laborers

as instruments through which they sustain their financial luxuries. Furthermore, caste, class, and ethnicity-based societal injustices are maintained by the feudal system. Feudal lords, who are usually members of powerful castes or tribes, use discriminatory tactics to uphold their dominance and push underprivileged groups to the bottom of society. Because of this social structure, the working class is more vulnerable to exploitation and has fewer options for questioning the status quo.

Workers organizing to claim their rights and demand better working conditions frequently result in grassroots movements and collective action as resistance to feudal exploitation (Martin, 2009). However, established power structures, such as the landowning classes and political elites, frequently oppose these initiatives in an effort to hold onto their hold on resources and power. Mostly, because landowners are politicians or are in closer relations to politicians who foster working ties with police. This complex dynamics of feudalism and its effects on workers' lives and work has long been a subject of academic research in Pakistan. In this regard, Maamu Kanjan, which is located in Punjab, Pakistan's Faisalabad area, serves as an example of the feudal systems' persistent hold over socioeconomic ties and labor abuse. No research has looked into the laborers' exploitation in Mamu Kanjan, therefore it is a specific area under research.

Feudalism is a historical phenomenon that existed in the past and has impacts on today. It has exerted more influence on rural Punjab in today's modern agrarian communities. Similar to this, in Maamu Kanjan, feudal lords exercise immense power over land holdings and the workforce it employs. The inequality of inherited wealth perpetuates inequality. Landowners force laborers into an unequal cycle of exploitation marked by low wages, unstable working conditions, and little agency (Anwar, 2015). The large swathes of land over which feudal lords exercise power in

Maamu Kaanjan, are not tamed by the police for breaking laws (including those of laborer's rights). With the absence of such authority, they exercise unrestrained power. Majority of workers are first recruited verbally through an unstated contract that permits them to make the workers do whatever they (the feudal lords) desire. Workers then face physical hardships of their jobs and the humiliation of their feudal masters. They are ignored, their work is undervalued, and they are rarely given time for physical mobility, even in case of medical emergencies. That is how their socioeconomic mobility is stunted, furthering the cycle of poverty and generational dependency.

In addition, inequalities based on caste, class, and familial relationships are deeply ingrained in Maamu Kanjan's social structure, making the already-existing power imbalances worse. The caste system impacts who is given what job. Owing to this prejudice, this thesis explores laborers from which castes are deemed worthy to work at the homes of feudal lords while which castes are asked to work under harsh weather conditions in the fields. Hence various forms of social exploitation, including different kinds of injustices such as economic subjugation, social marginalization, and cultural disempowerment, are central to this research. However, despite many challenges like these, laborers in Maamu Kanjan show a spirit of resiliency on their own (Anwar, 2015). Despite being frequently disregarded, their small struggles try to fight against the power structure elite.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

The following research questions are discussed in this study:

1. Which types of labor exploitation are most commonly carried out by feudal lords in Maamu Kaanjan?

2. How do socio-economic variables like caste, class, and ethnicity interact with labor exploitation within the feudal system?
3. What are the means by which Maamu Kaanjan rural feudal lords hold onto their authority and dominance over labor, resources, and land?

## **1.2 Objectives**

The goals of this study include a comprehensive analysis of the complex dynamics to labor exploitation and feudalism in Pakistan's rural area. By employing an apt methodology, this research aims to clarify multiple factors of the problem, providing perspectives on the mechanisms of exploitation, socio-economic reasons and cultural settings. Firstly, this study focuses on the practices of labor exploitation that are commonly used by feudal lords. In this step, factors like salary, treatment, and working conditions of laborers inside the village of Mamu Kanjan are focused on. Additionally, this study provides a nuanced image of the problem under research by noting and analyzing the firsthand stories of laborers exploited, in an effort to identify the fundamental processes that underline the exploitation and commodification of labor in this context. Lastly, the study discusses the commonality of exploitation of laborers across Punjab by noting that Mamu Kanjan is a microcosm example of it.

## **1.3 Significance**

This holistic research considers several socioeconomic variables in order to understand how labor exploitation in Mamu Kanjaan interacts with variables like caste, class, ethnicity, and religion. Considering dependency theory, this thesis investigates how wealth and power in the hands of a few feudal lords maintain social hierarchies to sustain vulnerability and inequality



among rural laborers and the different effects of exploitation on vulnerable populations. This approach towards the subject offers an interesting perspective into how feudal lords remain rich and powerful through their dependency on the labor of the working class. Conversely, laborers are dependent on the feudal lords to sustain their basic home expenses. Hence, another important goal of this research is to understand the power dynamics present in the feudal system and how they relate to worker exploitation. This means looking at the systems feudal lords use to establish and preserve their control over labor, resources, and territory.

Furthermore, this study is also important because it takes into account factors like cultural norms, traditions, prejudices and behaviors that sustain labor exploitation and feudalism in rural communities. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it also studies caste, ethnicity, and religion and also other cultural elements that influence how exploitation and resistance are perceived through the use of qualitative research. Eventually, this research seeks to give an insight into the problem which is instrumental to understand in order to give solution and advance social justice, equal access to resources, and sustainable livelihoods. It attempts to inform advocacy and policy initiatives targeted at resolving structural injustices and promoting positive change by drawing on the knowledge and insights obtained from the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Feudalism, a socioeconomic system characterized by hierarchical power structures and land ownership that is especially common in areas like Punjab and Sindh, is firmly ingrained in rural Pakistan (Weiss, 1989). In this arrangement, the lives of individuals who labor on their estates are influenced by the powerful authority that feudal lords have over large tracts of land. The dynamic of exploitation and reliance, where labor is commoditized and regarded as a

disposable resource for the convenience and profit of the elite, is highlighted by the interaction between laborers and feudal lords (Ewing, 1990). Using a variety of academic sources, this thesis highlights old reviews and new ones to examine the complex aspects of labor exploitation and feudalism in rural Pakistan as a long historical progression.

The historical origins of feudalism in Pakistan are traced back to the colonial land tenure arrangements enforced by British monarchs, as explained by Hamza Alavi (1972) and Akbar S. Ahmed (1976). They demonstrate how colonial policies let a tiny elite control a large portion of the land, creating the basis for the long-lasting feudal power structures in rural Pakistan. Alavi and Ahmed suggest the importance of understanding colonial legacies in order to understand the socio economic landscape of rural Pakistan, hence putting current economic and social problems of rural areas in the historical context. Along the same lines, research conducted by Hussain and Ali (2018), "Gender Dimensions of Labor Exploitation in Rural Punjab", demonstrates that economic inequality is gender wise in the villages across Punjab. Through its qualitative data approach, the study pointed out the immense differences between male and female workers' salaries and working conditions including well-being and leisure time. In this regard, since those women are further one step in disadvantage to obtain access to property ownership and other economic needs, they are also susceptible to exploitation, and even sexual exploitation. In addition, these jobs are unstable. A study suggests that people with unstable employment who are subjected to harsh working conditions had higher rates of diseases including physical like malnutrition and mental like depression compared to those employees who had stable jobs (Ahmed & Malik, 2019). This research suggests that in order to alleviate the health inequalities that rural laborers suffer, social welfare programs and comprehensive healthcare are essential.

On the other hand, a comparatively recent study that uses dependency and neoliberal theories, conducted in the rural areas of Sindh suggests that those areas are affected by neoliberal economic policies (Khattak et al., 2020). Economic steps like privatization, deregulation, and land market liberalization on rural laborers, had overall adverse effects. The research findings suggest that under neoliberal economic conditions, rural laborers are further exposed to exploitation, hence underscoring the significance of policy initiatives aimed at safeguarding the rights of rural laborers.

In short, nearly all the research conducted in the rural areas of Sindh and Punjab to study the effects of the policies or attitudes of feudal on the labor exploitation in those areas, may they be qualitative or quantitative, suggest similar results. This similar trend can be demonstrated through the statistics obtained from a single study titled "Labor Exploitation and Socioeconomic Conditions in Rural Punjab" (Khan et al. 2017). The above-mentioned study conducted an extensive and comprehensive research to measure the consequences of labor exploitation by feudal lords in the rural districts of Punjab. Through quantitative analysis, the research discovered that a significant number of workers are paid less, they work long hours, and have insufficient access to basic education and healthcare needs. Further in detail, the research distinguished the differences in income. According to this survey, 83% of workers in rural areas said their average daily pay was less than 700 Rupees, placing them below the poverty line (Khan et al., 2017). Since further development depends on economic well being, the data suggests that with wages as low as 700 Rupees that can hardly sustain daily expenses, these people think from day to day. Such economic exploitation compels them to give up planning for a better future. In addition, workers are exhausted physically as well as mentally, with no break. They are physically beaten in case they lag in their work. Furthermore, the research also pointed

out the difference in the wealth of the workers and the feudal lords. While feudal landowners, comprising less than 5% of the rural population, controlled over 70% of agricultural land and resources. Laborers earning less have limited opportunities for upward mobility. As mentioned above, this inequality is perpetuated through the nexus of political influence and marriages of influence, leaving little space for progress in the area. Lastly, participants in the study were also the children of laborers who mentioned that obstacles, such as travel time to medical facilities and budgetary limitations, prevented them from receiving healthcare services. The parents of children stated that in 55% cases their children worked along with them during their primary education while 97% of the children worked by the time they reached high school (Khan et al. 2017). The parents also mentioned that their kids could not pay for transportation or school fees. In conclusion, various researches conducted across the rural areas of Sindh and Punjab suggest that there is an immense difference in the income between feudal lords who are a minority and the workers who toil under harsh working conditions.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

Andre Gunder Frank's Dependency Theory (1971) is employed as the theoretical foundation for this research on the social exploitation of laborers in Maamu Kanjan, Pakistan.

Andre's theory focuses on the economic exploitation of developing countries by the developed countries, as in his terms core countries exploit peripheral countries. The significant part of his theory that is utilized in this research is that a minority of elite depend economically on a majority that produces economic wealth may it be in the form of labor or minerals. Secondly, according to his theory "colonialism and imperialism established economic structures that continue to disadvantage peripheral countries, trapping them in a cycle of dependency." (1971). This is the case of feudal lords who perpetuate the cycle of inequality in Maamu Kanjan. Hence. This theory is used to analyze the power socioeconomic disparities and structural dynamics present in Maamu Kanjan's feudal agricultural culture.

Gunder Frank's theory is used to examine how the feudal system in Maamu Kanjan maintains the dependent connections between the landowner feudal lords and the laborers who lack land. Through it, uneven power relations between the working class and the feudal aristocracy is analyzed using Frank's theories. Moreover, this theory is used to look at the ways the powerful political, social, and economic feudal lords take advantage of workers through informal agreements, debt bondage, and patron-client relationships. Additionally, it also focuses on how the feudal system keeps access to resources, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. By examining these socioeconomic differences, this thesis draws attention to the structural impediments that limit the working class's ability to move up the socioeconomic ladder and sustain cycles of reliance and poverty.

### 3.1 Methodology

For this research, the non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed in order to specifically focus on the exploitation of laborers working in the agricultural fields. The reason for selecting this sample was to focus mainly on laborers in the agricultural fields since Mamu

Kanjan is a village where laborers working in factories and homes are only a small number. Additionally, among the ten selected candidates for this research two of them are women. In-depth interviews were conducted with these selected candidates, ensuring their consent without any influence or pressure. In order to ensure their safety, participants were asked to attend the interview during the timeframe when they were free. While it is important to prioritize safety and security for both the interviewer and the interviewee, therefore a location where interruptions are minimal was chosen to ensure a focused and confidential environment, so that workers' privacy was not disturbed. Moreover, interviews were conducted outside of workers' duty hours.

The purpose of these interviews was to extract in-depth accounts, and stories about topics pertaining to social justice, labor exploitation, resistance, and feudalism. Questions were asked to delve into the experiences, viewpoints, and interpretations of the participants on power dynamics, social hierarchies, and cultural practices in rural communities. By offering contextual insights and boosting the validity and depth of the qualitative findings, observations have supplemented interview data.

## 3.2 Conceptualization

In the research on the social exploitation of laborers in Maamu Kanjan, Pakistan, several key terms require conceptualization to ensure clarity and precision in their usage:

**3.2.1 Social Exploitation:** The word "social exploitation" describes the systematic and unfair use of power by powerful social groups, like feudal lords, to oppress and take advantage of marginalized people or groups, such laborers, for their labor or resources. It includes a range of subjugation techniques that uphold dominant power systems and sustain economic, social, and cultural disparities.

**3.2.2 Feudalism:** Feudalism is a socio-economic system typified by the concentration of power and landownership in the hands of a privileged elite, usually feudal lords or landowners, who use patronage, debt bondage, and uneven land tenure structures to extract surplus value from laborers or tenants. Feudalism frequently results in inflexible class divisions and hierarchical social relationships, which sustain exploitation and dependence among lower groups.

**3.2.3 Structural Inequalities:** These are long-term, structural differences in opportunities, resources, and power that are ingrained in political, social, and economic systems. Structural inequalities include a system in which some groups of people are marginalized and systematically oppressed in the form of institutionalized discrimination and hurdles to accessing healthcare and education.

**3.2.4 Labor exploitation:** This term is used to describe the unfair and abusive use of laborers by employers. It includes a range of abuses, including low pay, lengthy

workdays, hazardous working conditions, and denial of fundamental benefits and rights.

### **3.3 Research Ethics**

According to the study's ethical framework, all participants in this study, entitled "Unveiling Social Exploitation of Labor by Local Feudal Lords in Maamu Kanjan, Faisalabad," were treated with respect and their confidentiality was maintained. In order to ensure their consent to interviews, all laborers were told about the purpose and method of this research. Their rights from the questionnaire were read to them, for instance that they were free to leave at any time without penalties, as participant autonomy is a core principle that was to be rigorously maintained. The study was carried out in Punjabi language carefully, considering the laborers' cultural norms, beliefs, and religious background, ensuring that it was polite, respectful, and suitable for the context. They were asked to sign or leave a thumb impression in order to ensure their willingness. Such information was also recorded in each interview recording in order to make sure that they also give their verbal consent for the ethical conduct of this study.



## Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

The research conducted with laborers yielded significant results, providing a novel insight into the topic under discussion. In this research, ten laborers including two females were interviewed from diverse castes, including Bhatti, Mochi, Sheikh, Qureshi, and Bhojwan. Their ages ranged from twenty-eight to fifty-five. While most of them were uneducated, one had studied till matric and the other till class five. Except one, all others did not own their own accommodation and lived in a space provided by their feudal lord. Two of them preferred to work on a monthly basis, being paid twelve thousand and twenty thousand, whereas others worked for daily wages, ranging from as low as 300 rupees to 800 rupees. They worked on average for twelve hours a day and beyond in some cases. The eldest among the interviewees was 55 years of age with 35 years of experience, working in the fields, animal husbandry, and other manual works. The youngest among them was a twenty-eight-year-old man who had completed his matriculation and was paid the highest, a sum of twenty thousand per month.

All the participants shared a common experience of exploitation at the hands of feudal lords. In the first place, they discussed systematic inequalities between them and their feudal lords, who deprived them of their resources and stunted the education of their children, therefore affecting their future generations. In the second place, dependency and control mechanism like resource control, accommodation, debt bondage, and wages were discussed, which ensured the economic dependency of laborers on feudal lords. Whereas in the third place, the illegitimate nexus of feudal lords with corrupt government officials and the lack of laborer's welfare programs were discussed. The results can be categorized into the following three themes.

#### **4.1 Structural Inequity in Labor Relations**

Since every social system is socially constructed and, in this context, the structure that supports a systematic subjugation, may it be economic or social, is constructed by feudal lords. This system perpetuates inequality. For instance, nine out of ten participants stated that they did not have accommodation of their own. They live with feudal lords in shabby old rooms that are extremely cold in winter and hot in summer. Thus, they are made dependent upon the landlord, ensuring that the landlord can enforce illegitimate demands including the sexual harassment of their women or threatening to throw them out of the house. A male worker said that his wife was verbally insulted regularly by the feudal lord and over the time he had learned to suppress his rage. Another male laborer reported an incident that with them working in the fields, they are not sure what happens with their women at home. He also said that women are silent since they are helpless. A female worker reported being abused verbally on a regular basis. She also reported being treated as an inferior for belonging to the Mochi caste.

In Maamu Kanjan, the castes that are considered inferior are Mochi, Shiekh, Bhojwan and generations of them have participated in manual labor only. They have a low literacy rate. Otherwise, castes like Kathia and Syed are considered superior. The so-called inferior castes are vilified and even their caste names are used as euphemisms for insults. For instance, a child with poor eating manners is called out for eating “like a Mochi.” Therefore, laborers reported being treated poorly based on their ethnic and cultural identity.

Additionally, the daily quarrels at the homes of laborers create an environment in which children suffer emotionally and mentally and their educational growth is stunted due to their parents being busy working. But that is not the only concern. Parents cannot afford to pay the educational expenses of their children. A female reported that she could not support the

education of her eight children because her family was in debt and the children had to work alongside to pay the debt back on time. Furthermore, these laborers are kept subjugated through dependency and control mechanisms like debt bondage and resource control.

#### **4.2 Dependency and Control Mechanisms**

Debt bondage is the most prominent tactic used by feudal lords to trap workers into generational slavery. When laborers face a major problem like a health emergency in the family, they are compelled to take loan from the feudal lords. In return they have to work for decades to be able to pay the debt back. Many feudal lords put on a heavy interest rate on loans, making sure that the debt is a perpetual burden on the laborers. “Because our livelihood is difficult, we borrow from them and become indebted to the owners. Then we have to endure everything. Even if we do not want to work due to some personal compulsion, the landlords even demolish our houses.” Said one of the male laborers who worked twelve hours a day for a meager payment of 500 Rupees. In one case the house of a worker was demolished for not returning the debt amount on time. According to another interviewee, mostly laborers working in kilns were in debt. Similarly, a male worker who was paid a wage of only 300 narrated, “My friend has a debt of 10 lakh rupees. He can only pay it off with his salary, but his salary is low, so he's forced to work extra to pay off the debt.” Such were the examples of dependency and control mechanisms.

Another way of keeping the workers dependent was to not let them have independent accommodation. Nine laborers mentioned that they lacked the means to purchase land and build their own house. On the other hand, feudal lords possessed ancestral land that had been passed down generations. As mentioned in the previous theme, the predicament of living in the house of their feudal lords made workers vulnerable, making them susceptible to being taken extra

advantage of. A male worker, mentioning the verbal harassment of his wife by their feudal lord said, “women can't speak up or protest because of their poverty and helplessness.”

Lastly, the daily wages these laborers were being paid were extremely low. The mean daily wage of eight workers was only 500 Rupees. In this rising inflation, workers mentioned they could not afford basic household expenses. They had to take loans from time to time. Those who did not take loans were compelled to work without any break throughout the year. Additionally, all workers mentioned that their feudal lords at some point either suppressed their wages for irrational excuses or paid them late. Therefore, feudal lords maintained a mechanism of inequality and dependency by controlling the resources like land accommodation, paid unfair wages to workers, and trapped them in debt bondage, ensuring that their children were prone to the same lifestyle of dependency.

#### **4.3 Perpetuation of Power and Exploitation**

The cycle of exploitation of laborers continues in many forms, including absurd. Their economic freedom is curbed, their social status is vilified, their working conditions are made harsh, and their future prospects are outrightly stunted. A worker mentioned that they were prone to accidents due to the low-quality rusty tools given to them, lacking any protection standards. On the other hand, false cases were initiated through the Police against the workers perceived to be lazy and complacent in order to coerce them into committing fully to their work, beyond their working hours.

Nine workers worked in the field and one of them worked in animal husbandry (along with agricultural work), taking care of livestock including cattle and buffaloes. He narrated, “I'm an animal handler, and when my wife got ill, I had to rush home to be with her. I had requested my employer for some time off, but he was furious and lashed out at me, both verbally and

physically.” Regarding their low wages, two workers mentioned that they even worked under sickness to earn in order to be able to eat. One worker who had completed his matriculation (the most educated among the research participants) was paid twenty thousand Rupees as salary on a monthly basis. However, he also reported not being paid on time and the basic excuse of the feudal lord was that if he worked harder, he would be paid.

These workers were asked if there was any laborer’s welfare organization in their area. All of them reported that there was none, except that a small portion of the women population in the village got Benazir Income Support of rupees 8000 to 10000 every three months. A senior worker said that he had worked for thirty five, each year before elections, politicians came and made promises, however they did not fulfill their promises. He said the villagers were coerced by the feudal lord to vote for the candidate with whom he had made an alliance. Feudal lords made alliances based on their interests. Which is why their illegitimate coordination with the local police station made them powerful in the eyes of laborers. The laborers also mentioned that feudal lords were beyond law and order, and they were never held accountable for the exploitation of many rights and abuses. Since feudal lords were wealthy, they could easily afford to bribe the officials. The lack of accountability was a major source of discontent among the workers.

Lastly, the laborers gave their suggestions to improve their working and socio-economic conditions. All of them supported the foundation of a Labor welfare organization and urged legislative support and its implementation through law enforcement agencies. They suggested the concerned authorities increase their wages, give them freedom to excuse themselves from work when needed. A female worker suggested that migrating to urban areas was an important step to improve financial and social prospects. Furthermore, their demands were summed up by a

worker who said, “Treat workers with respect, pay them on time, assign tasks according to their abilities, don't oppress them, don't misbehave with their wives, and let their children get an education.”

#### **4.4 Limitation**

Despite having considered several variables into this research, it was still not as feasible to conduct interviews with laborers from homes and industries or from the children of laborers in agricultural fields, therefore purposive sampling technique was employed. Hence, the data collected may not represent the exploitation of laborers from all the mentioned sectors i.e. industries and homes. Moreover, conducting interviews with laborers working in homes and factories was difficult because of their constant presence on the field and the fear for their safety. Therefore, this research ignores workers from those sectors who work in Maamu Kaanjan. Which is why this exclusion provides a limited picture, possibly not including further extreme exploitation that workers are subjected to at homes and in factories. Yet, they are still in minority since Maamu Kaanjan is an agricultural village.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

Dependency theory helps examine the ways in which informal agreements, debt bondage, and patron-client relationships are used by the powerful political, social, and economic feudal lords to exploit workers, as discussed previously in the thesis. The research conducted with laborers has sharpened the previously held insights into the matter of exploitation of laborers by feudal lords. Firstly, the exploitation is based in a social setting that curbs the freedom of villagers. Villages across Punjab have historically been agrarian fields with very little industries. In such a case, villagers try to find ways to take care of their finances through jobs that are apt to their circumstances. The most obvious way to get a job is to contact a local businessman, who

happens to be a landlord. With no other option left in the village, the laborers are bound to commit to the informal unstated verbal agreement with the feudal lord. Firstly, the terms and conditions of the job and its benefits are rarely discussed in detail, except the salary or wage. Since these laborers are compelled to take a job with minimal questioning, they thus commit to hard labor that results in their exploitation.

As stated in the findings section, the most problematic aspect of the laborers' job is debt trap. Laborers, who work hand to mouth, have no savings. When a problem like major illness occurs in the family, they are compelled to take out a loan, and in that case, the most obvious or apt person is deemed their feudal lord who happens to have the wealth to give loans to people. Suppose a laborer takes a loan of five lakh for a major surgery of any of the family members, he would have to work for decades to pay the debt, since he cannot have a savings account to gather the amount and pay the loan back. Worse are cases when feudal lords impose unstated interest rate annually on the loan, trapping laborers into lifetime labor.

According to the dependency theory, powerful or developed countries exploit the economic and social circumstances of developing countries in order to benefit from them economically. In a book called, *The Economic Hitman (2002)*, the author discusses that the United States pursues its economic interests throughout the globe through reckless methods. At first, they offer a business deal to a company or industry in the developing world, with terms and conditions, that largely benefit the US economy only. When their offer is turned down, they use several methods to coerce that country into signing on the deal. These methods include diplomatic pressure, assassinations, political engineering in that country, and in some cases destabilizing those countries through internal forces. The dependency theory of the theorist considered for this thesis also considers the implications of this theory on an individual level.

Mamu Kanjan is a microcosm of the economic and social exploitation that the dependency theory explains.

Feudal lords make the laborers dependent on them economically and then exploit their labor, harass their women, and threaten to cast out their families from the village. With as little as 300 Rupees wage, feudal lords control the economic market of jobs in the village. Workers generally work twelve hours a day and in some cases more than that. The children of workers cannot afford to go to school due to their weak financial status. Besides that, they work along with their parents in order to help the family. Workers are regularly abused physically and verbally. Further social dynamics like caste-based discrimination highlights the deep social stigmatization of people based on their backgrounds. Women workers are also abused sexually. With these strands of social exploitation, the feudal lords maintain the dependency of laborers on them and such is the face of exploitation.

The research findings bore similar results to that of (Khan et al., 2017). And Khatak et al., 2020) discussed in the literature review of this thesis. Their research shed light on lower wages, low literacy rates of laborers, no health benefits, and more. The research also succinctly answered the research questions of this thesis.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion & Implications

The systematic exploitation of the resources and labor of the working class in rural areas of Punjab is a well-documented socio-economic problem. This problem is rooted in its colonial legacy. In order to appease the well-off families of Punjab, the colonial masters let them own large swaths of land which bore them generational wealth. However, after the partition of Pakistan and the post-partition challenges of settlement brought along challenges of the distribution of resources. Already weakened by the complex problems of international diplomacy, recognition, and settlement, the state was not just in appropriating the land to people. Similarly, Mamu Kanjan village shares the same history.

Among the castes who migrated from Indian Punjab and came to Pakistan, those tribes that had no influence were tasked to settle down in the outskirts of cities and towns. Over time, after inculcating influential relations with the state and its machinery, some people benefited from such relations by settling on agricultural lands that were yet to be allotted and classified by the government. Since many castes in Mamu Kanjan were illiterate and their elders who remember the initial developments after partition recount that they were illiterate and one day a feudal lord would come with paper and ask them to leave the land. The land thus belonged to the new landlord who had registered with the government through his influence.

Therefore, the topic discussed in this paper cannot be seen in isolation, it is a problem that is rooted in centuries old history of colonialism. Proceeding from that, castes like Mochi, Sheikh, Bojwan have familial legacies of working in certain sectors of economy. Mochi and Bojwan work manual labor in agricultural fields and small factories. Sheikh and Kasid have set up small shops across the village and they are also barbers and smiths. Whereas Kathia and Syed castes are the two major dominant socio-economic forces. In local words, they were the

*'Chaoudries'* of the area.

As the results of this research demonstrated, the researches conducted across Sindh and Punjab rural areas to determine the exploitation of laborers, share the same trends. The working class laborers are not provided basic necessities like independent housing, health and school facilities. In order to attain these basic necessities they had to labor under harsh conditions set up by feudal lords, without any government mediator. An average person, in search of labor, visits the local influential businessman who happens to control economic resources, and thus he is in control of deciding the nature of job and the pay. Since those poor villagers have no other option or awareness of earning through other sources, they compromise to be employed by the feudal lord. In this study the laborers who worked under extreme heat in the field shared their experiences of how low their wages are. They also narrated their ordeals of being threatened and abused by feudal lords. They told stories of the physical abuse like beatings and sexual abuse of females by the feudal lords' family members. This sets up many challenges for the laborers and their generations. Typically, the laborers told that they inherited their work culture from their parents who toiled for generation under the sun and yet they could not liberate themselves and their future generations from the cycle of exploitation.

This cycle of dependency and exploitation has such serious implications for the upcoming generations of laborers. Their children remain illiterate and work with their parents in the fields and factories and lose the opportunity of getting better paying government or private jobs. They also are trapped in debt bondage and are unable to make homes. Other than that, the government has failed to save them from this exploitation. The feudal lords win elections and influence the law enforcement bureaucratic structure. They foster working relationships with the local police station and courts. Due to which, even the funds allocated for the development of the

villages' education and health services are eaten by the feudal lords. Therefore, the working class laborers continue to face the system of exploitation.

To include, this research is significant to understand the exploitation of laborers in Mamu Kanjan. It provides important insights for governmental and non-governmental organizations and helps them plan their public policy. Several NGOs working across Pakistan are striving to alleviate the status of lower-class and middle-class citizens in different spheres, from giving free education to their children to giving teaching women technical skills for free. Similarly, this research also suggests the rule of law in the rural areas of Punjab so that this cycle of exploitation stops someday.

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## Appendix A

### The Informed Consent Letter

Researcher: Awais Nasir, BSc. Honors Student, Department of Sociology, Forman Christian College

Contact Information: 231522156@formanite.fccollege.edu.pk

**Note:** The research participants in this research are mostly illiterate and therefore they will be contacted directly and asked for their permission to conduct the interview. I will read the ethics of research to them in Punjabi and ask for their permission. They would not be required to sign this form.

#### **To safeguard the respondents, I will:**

- Ensure confidentiality by assigning unique identifiers to each participant and storing data securely.
- Maintain privacy by conducting interviews in a quiet, private space.
- Provide clear information about the study's purpose, risks, and benefits.

#### **For Illiterate Participants:**

Thumb Impression:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Invitation to Participate:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without any penalty or effect on your future or existing relationships with any stakeholders.

**Objectives of the Study:**

- To analyze how feudal lords in Pakistani rural areas exert and maintain power through unequal resource distribution, coercive practices, and entrenched land tenure structures.
- To identify common practices of labor exploitation perpetuated by rural feudal lords.
- To explore the interconnections between labor exploitation and socio-economic factors such as caste, class, and ethnicity.
- To examine the cultural norms, traditions, and behaviors that support the persistence of labor exploitation and feudalism in rural communities.

**Procedure:**

The study will involve a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 15-20 minutes. You will be asked questions related to the aforementioned objectives. Participation is voluntary.

**Confidentiality:**

All information disclosed in this interview will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. Your information will be anonymized, and no personal data will be shared publicly or with third parties. The data will solely be used for academic purposes.

**Rights of Participants:**

Your participation in this study is not mandatory, and you are free to decide not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. Choosing to withdraw from this study will not affect any of your existing or future interactions or relationships.

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

#### 1. Demographic Information:

- a. Gender:
- b. Age:
- c. Education Level:
- d. Occupation:
- e. Length of time working in Maamu Kanjan:
- f. Income:
- g. Cast:
- h. Ethnicity:

#### 2. Labor Exploitation Experience:

- . Have you faced any type of labor exploitation or abuse while working in Mamu Kaanjan?

کیا آپ کو مامو کانجن میں کام کرتے ہوئے کسی قسم کے زیادتی یا جبر کا سامنا کرنا پڑا ہے؟

- . Who oppresses laborers in this area?



اس علاقے میں مزدوروں پر کون ظلم یا زیادتی کرتا ہے؟

- . What types of labor exploitation have you encountered or observed being carried out by feudal lords in this area?

آپ کو اس علاقے میں جاگیرداروں کے ہاتھوں کس قسم کی مزدوری کے ساتھ زیادتی یا جبر کا سامنا کرنا پڑا

یا دیکھا گیا ہے؟

- . What type of labour exploitation have you experienced?

آپ کو کس قسم کی مزدوری کی زیادتی کا سامنا کرنا پڑا ہے؟

How do you perceive the working conditions in terms of hours and pay?

گھنٹوں اور تنخواہ کے لحاظ سے آپ کام کے حالات کو کیسے دیکھتے ہیں؟

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Have you or anyone you know experienced any forms of coercion or debt bondage related to labor in Maamu Kanjan?

کیا آپ یا آپ کا کوئی جاننے والا ماموں کانجن میں مزدوری سے متعلق کسی بھی قسم کے جبر یا قرض کی غلامی کا تجربہ کیا ہے

### 3. Social Factors and Labor Exploitation:

. How do you think caste or ethnicity influence labor exploitation in Maamu Kanjan?

آپ کے خیال میں ذات یا نسل مامو کانجن میں مزدوروں کے جبر کو کیسے متاثر کرتی ہے؟

. Have you observed any discrimination with laborers based on their ethnicity?

کیا آپ نے مزدوروں کے ساتھ ان کی نسل کی بنیاد پر کوئی غلط سلوک دیکھا ہے؟

. In your opinion, how societal conditions contribute to the exploitation of laborers by feudal lords in rural areas?

آپ کی رائے میں دیہی علاقوں میں جاگیرداروں کے ہاتھوں مزدوروں کے جبر میں معاشرتی حالات

کس طرح حصہ لیتے ہیں؟

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#### 4. Feudal Authority and Dominance:

. Do you think feudal lords oppress laborers in Maamu Kaanjan for personal benefits?

کیا آپ کے خیال میں جاگیردار ذاتی فائدے کے لیے مامو کانجن میں مزدوروں پر ظلم کرتے ہیں؟

- . How do feudal lords in Maamu Kanjan maintain their authority over labor, resources, and land?

مامو كانجن ميں جاگيردار مزدور، وسائل اور زمين پر اپنا اختيار كيسے برقرار ركھتے هيں

- . Can you provide examples of the methods used by feudal lords to exert control over laborers and maintain their power?

کیا آپ ان طریقوں کی مثالیں دے سکتے ہیں جو جاگیردار مزدوروں کو کنٹرول کرنے اور اپنی طاقت کو برقرار رکھنے کے لیے استعمال کرتے ہیں؟

## 5. Impact and Consequences:

What are the effects of feudal oppression on the lives of laborers in Maamu Kanjan?

مامو کانجن کے مزدوروں کی زندگیوں پر جاگیردارانہ جبر کے کیا اثرات ہیں؟

How does oppression on laborers contribute to poverty in rural areas?

مزدوروں پر ظلم دیہی علاقوں میں غربت میں کیسے اضافہ کرتا ہے؟

Have you received any help from any organization regarding labor rights?

کیا آپ کو مزدوروں کے حقوق کے حوالے سے کسی تنظیم سے کوئی مدد ملی ہے؟

How did that organization help you or other laborers?

اس تنظیم نے آپ کی یا دوسرے مزدوروں کی کیسے مدد کی؟

## Suggestions for Change:

- Based on your experience, what do you think could be done to address labor exploitation and improve the working conditions of laborers?

آپ کے تجربے کی بنیاد پر، آپ کے خیال میں مزدوروں کے ساتھ بدسلوکی سے نمٹنے اور مزدوروں کے کام کے حالات کو بہتر بنانے کے لیے کیا کیا جا سکتا ہے؟

- Do you think any government institution or NGO can help laborers like you in rural Pakistan, like this village?

کیا آپ کو لگتا ہے کہ اس گاؤں کی طرح پاکستان کے دیہی علاقوں میں کوئی سرکاری ادارہ یا این جی او آپ جیسے مزدوروں کی مدد کر سکتا ہے؟

#### **Additional Comments:**

4.4 Is there anything else you would like to share relevant to labor abuse and oppression in Maamu Kanjan?

کیا آپ مامو کانجن میں مزدوروں کے ساتھ ہونے والی زیادتیوں اور جبر سے متعلق کچھ اور شیئر کرنا چاہیں گے؟

## Appendix C: IRB Certificate



**FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

IRB Ref: IRB-640/03-2024

Date: 12-03-2024

Project Title: Unveiling Social Exploitation of Labor by Local Feudal Lords in Maamu Kanjan,  
Faisalabad

Principal Investigator: Awais Nasir

Supervisor: Dr. Shamaila Athar

The Institutional Review Board has examined your project in the IRB meeting held on 12-03-2024 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research, any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent, or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include the IRB reference number in all correspondence.

Dr. Sharoon Hanook  
Convener-IRB  
Chairperson Department of Statistics  
Forman Christian College  
(A Chartered University)  
Lahore

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