

# Emerging Pattern of Gujjar and Bakerwal Leadership in State Politics of Jammu and Kashmir

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**Abstract:** Gujjar and bakerwal Leadership is not too good as compare to other communities in state of Jammu and Kashmir as they are not much aware about the social, economic, cultural and political developments taking place around the world. In this paper an attempt has been made to know various dimensions of Emerging Pattern of Gujjar and Bakerwal leadership in State Politics of Jammu and Kashmir. The seeds of Gujjar and Bakerwal leadership can be found in Darbar Baba Jee Sahab. However, the political and social role of the Darbar is inseparable from the history of Jammu and Kashmir. Offering the marginalised and excluded people an alternative platform to the first political party of Jammu and Kashmir way back in 1932 to representing people in all terms of legislative assembly including the Constituent Assembly in 1952 the Darbar of Baba Jee Sahab becomes an essential component of the political life of Jammu and Kashmir, significantly in both phases –pre-1947 as well as post-1947. This paper is conceptual in nature based on secondary sources i.e. Books, Journals, Articles, newspapers, Reports etc.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Politics, Gujjar and Bakerwal, Jammu and Kashmir.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is both a research area and a practical skill, regarding the ability of an individual or organization to "lead" or guide other individuals, teams, or entire organizations. Controversial viewpoints are present in the literature, among Eastern and Western approaches to Leadership, and also within the West, on US vs. European approaches. In US academic environments leadership is defined as "a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." Leadership seen from a European and non-academic perspective encompasses a viewpoint of a Leader that can be moved both by communitarian goals but also by the search for personal power, as the European Research Daniele Trevisani states: "Leadership is a holistic spectrum that can arise from: (1) higher levels of physical power, need to display power and control others, force superiority, ability to generate fear, or group-member's need for a powerful group protector (Primal Leadership), (2) superior mental energies, superior motivational forces, perceivable in communication and behaviors, lack of fear, courage, determination (Psycho energetic Leadership), (3) higher abilities in managing the overall picture (Macro-Leadership), (4) higher abilities in specialized tasks (Micro-Leadership), (5) higher ability in managing the execution of a task (Project Leadership), and (6) higher level of values, wisdom, and spirituality (Spiritual Leadership), where any Leader derives its Leadership from a unique mix of one or more of the former factors"

Leadership has many definitions. There is no clear cut agreement on the meaning of leadership to include all circumstances, particularly because the emergence of leaders is often situational, sometimes temporary and sometimes permanent (Spotts, 1976). Leadership was defined by Michener, De Lamater, and Schwartz (1990) as a process that takes place in groups in which one member influences and controls the behavior of the other members toward some common goal. Key elements for successful group performance include the leader's ability to plan, organize, and control the activities of the group (Michener et al., 1990). Others have stated that leaders possess certain innate personality traits or particular skills that make them leaders. Despite the many attempts at definition, all leadership theories have one element in common, that is, a leader is one who exerts.

As far as political Leadership of Gujjar and Bakerwal is concerned Darbar Babaji Sahib occupies a prominent position. The political and social role of the Darbar is inseparable from the history of Jammu and Kashmir. Offering the marginalised and excluded people an alternative platform to the first political party of Jammu and Kashmir way back in 1932 to representing people in all terms of legislative assembly including the Constituent Assembly in 1952 the Darbar of Baba Jee Sahab becomes an essential component of the political life of Jammu and Kashmir, significantly in both phases –pre-1947 as well as post-1947. Baba Jee Sahab passed away in 1926 and Darbar of Baba Jee Sahab has been a centre of spiritual activities, literary pursuits and social reforms. Since 1930s, political roles for next three generations have remained just natural outcome of the bonds this place has enjoyed with millions of people. Mian Nizamuddin Larvi Ameer al Qaum Hazrat Mian Nizamuddin Larvi inherited the spiritual legacy of Baba Jee Sahab as one of his two sons but he expanded the role of Darbar in response to the emerging social and political scenario. Mian Nizamuddin initially stayed away from active politics and campaigned for the rights of the people oppressed by the autocratic regime.

However, after mass uprising of 1931 and subsequent formation of Muslim Conference as a potent political platform of struggle against despotic regime he realised that poor and tribal people and particularly those inhabiting the hilly areas were not being adequately represented. In wake of influence of Muslim Conference limited to centre and south of Kashmir Valley and few urban areas of Jammu, the Mian was persuaded by his contemporaries to patronise an alternative political platform. Thus, Gujjar- Jat Conference took shape in 1932 as a political party representing people of all hues in the peripheral areas. This, however, was not to challenge but to substantiate the struggle already launched by Muslim Conference under leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah with whom Mian Nizamuddin shared close personal relations. Mian Nizam Din Larvi, Haji Mohd. Israil Khatana, Ch. Buland Khan Rasom and others were quite active at the socio-political level.

Some of the prominent Gujjar and Bakerwal leaders were opposite to maharaja while most of them were in favor of Maharaja. But at the later stage a political rivalry took place between Sheikh Abdullah and Choudhary Gulam Abass and Gujjar's participation within Muslim Conference remained negligible. At that movement, Gujjar's and Bakerwal of the State had none to guide them politically. When Sheikh Abdullah came into power in 1947- 48, he sent thousands of Gujjar's across the cease-fire line to Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Later Choudhary Gulam Abass was also released from jail and sent to Pakistan. This was because Gujjar's generally were dubbed as anti- Indian by Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference party.

Again when most of the Muslim army officers deserted the Maharaja's Army in the wake of Pakistan's aggression in Kashmir, the Gujjar's in the Maharaja's army stood loyally behind him. And this community suffered a lot in 1947 because of Pakistani aggression. The Gujjar's demonstrated their patriotic fervor during this aggression and afterwards. During the 1965 Indo-Pak war, the Gujjar's helped the Indian armed forces and worked for the territorial integrity of India. They have proved their loyalty to India at many occasions by their actions.

With the introduction of free education in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, many Gujjar's and Bakerwal's got educated and started involving in politics and administration. However, this era too produced some prominent figures among Gujjar's and Bakerwal's like Ch Ghulam Hussain Lasanvi, Mian Nizam Din Larvi, Haji Mohd Khatana, Ch. Buland Khan, and others who raised their voices for socio political rights of their people. During the Dogra period, the Gujjar's were by and large demoted to the background from the political scene in Jammu and Kashmir. Hari Singh provided few seats place to some leaders of the tribal community in the "Praja Sabha" in pre 1947 period. A small number of them also served in Maharaja's army. Choudhary Khuda Baksh and Chowdhary Bali Mohammed made progress to the rank of Brigadier and Colonel in his Army respectively. The Gujjars and Bakarwals were generally economically backward. However after independence in 1947 they worked firmly to raise their standard of living. They started organizing themselves in order to raise their voice to get more and more amenities and conveniences.

Gujjar-Jat conference was formed in 1948.it had its affiliation neither to National Conference nor with Congress or any other political party. It was a non-political group and people were closely associated with Maharaja Hari Singh. With Sheikh Abdulla's arrival in the political scene of Kashmir, the tribal community mostly supported the National Conference. A similar organization to All India Sudhar Sabha was established known as Gujjar Islahi Conference under the patronage of Mr. G.M Sadiq. Its important leaders were Abdul Nabi Bhagsi and Karam Din Chopra. Another organization of the Gujjars was the Gujjar Youth Federation, which mostly consisted of newly educated youth of the state. All these Organizations from time to time raised some basic issues relating to their community. A number of resolutions were passed demanding proportional representation in the legislative Assembly and that their ratio should be increased in the present Assembly.

When tribes received tribal status in 1991, many analysts had then described the constitutional recognition as a big step that would alter the political dynamics of the state. It was thought, that the decision would pave the way for the provision of political reservation for scheduled tribes in state constitution. Scheduled castes enjoy seat reservation in the legislative assembly as per article 47 of the state constitution enacted in 1957, but scheduled tribes have been denied this privilege by the political elite, the political elite reluctantly granted reservation for tribal people in the panchayats as per their proportion in the state population, it has refused to extend them the same facility in the state assembly. The leader of Gujjar united front, Shah Mohammad says, "it is a tactical move the political and economic elites, which have a vested interest in keeping the tribal population subjugated as they have done for centuries.

As per Indian constitution, tribal people are entitled for reservation as per their proportion in the total population of a state, if this provision is applied to Jammu and Kashmir, a minimum of 11 assembly segments will have to be reserved for scheduled tribes in 87 member assembly. The leadership of Gujjar's and Bakerwal's feel that denial of political reservation is great political loss of their community because being a third largest ethnic-group of state their representation at the political level is very low. As per estimates of their leadership they constitute a major chunk of electorate in various constituencies not only in Jammu but in Kashmir as well. In Kashmir they count the Gujjar dominated constituencies as Noorabad, Uri, Kangan, Shangus, Phalgam, Bandipore, Shopian and Karnah. They argue that they deserve 16 seats in State legislative assembly.

According to the Gujjar's leadership, they deserved political reservation because of various reasons. Firstly, they relate it to political marginalization of the community. Secondly, the political reservation is the prerequisite for overall social, economic and educational development of the community. It is generally argued that political representation in the democratic institutions is required for the empowerment of community. Without such representation, their problems have not attained the attention of authorities.

Gujjar's and Bakerwal's now have their representation in the State Legislative Assembly as well. There are six districts across Jammu and Kashmir, where the Gujjar's constitute substantial portion of populace. There are 23 Assembly Constituencies (8 in Jammu region and 15 in Kashmir) and two Parliamentary Constituencies (One is Kashmir-Baramullah another is Jammu Poonch) where the Gujjar's play a decisive role in elections. In a number of these assembly constituencies, the Gujjar's and Bakerwal's form a majority.

## 2. PARTICIPATION IN PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS

### **Jirga Councils or Tribal Councils:**

Gujjar and Bakerwal were having their own tribal Panchayats called Jirga. Jirga is a Persian word. It means a gathering, a public, a "Panchayat" or a consultation. According to Henry Maine (1946) except custom there is no written law in the world and it is an accepted truth and this truth is either good or bad and the custom is the traditional or indigenous system of the social control. 58 percent of the Gujjar's and Bakerwal's still practice Jirgas and settle their cases within their community while 42 percent have the views that jirgas do not exist now and they settle their cases with the help of police and modern courts.

Nowadays the institution of the panchayati raj is working in the tribal areas of the Jammu and Kashmir. The panchayat samitis were introduced in the Jammu and Kashmir. The traditional panchayats had lost its ground in some of the places. Based on this belief, the Gujjar and Bakarwal system of law is executed for the benefit and with the consent of the entire community. The administrative system is controlled by the clan chiefs or sardars. The Gujjar and Bakarwal are dispersed over a larger area, so each clan has its own chief. These are prominent men of the clan who are respected by all the clan members. They are chosen on the basis of their stature in the community, sense of the fair play and oratory skills. Sardars are the only recognized administrative heads in the Gujjar and Bakarwal community and even today, they resolve nearly all disputes among their clan members. Each sardar works with a couple of informally appointed salakars or advisors who are consulted, along with other elders and prominent men of the community. The control exercised by the sardar over his clan members is absolute, however clan is wielded in a humane manner and all effort is made to resolve conflicts and end pervading tensions.

In the past, the chosen sardars prevailed over all disputes in their respective bradris. At times, when solution could not be achieved by a sardar, the matter would be taken to another group of the prominent men, who were held in the high esteem.

The moulvai or the priest plays a significant role in the execution of the Gujjar and Bakarwal law. He is often summoned by the saradr to facilitate in the performance of the ritual of oath during prosecution. The centrality of the Quran and the faith vested in the oath should also be mentioned. The Gujjar and Bakarwal believe that anyone who commits perjury will be punished visibly within days of committing the sin and narrate the incidents on how perjures have suffered divine intervention.

The Gujjar's and Bakerwal's prefer to keep their disputes out of the courts. Being mostly illiterate, they shy away from paperwork and also seldom trust a system steeped in procedural requirements. Being a nomadic and reserved people, even today they seldom muster the courage to overrule the authority of their sardars to seek justice from the state administration, as breach of the norm may result in adverse social repercussions for the individual and his family. Maintaining the respect due to the sardar is essential even while approaching modern judiciary and administration. However, exceptions exist and are said to be on the rise, with instances of the people overruling the authority of the sardar in order to adopt modern legal procedures becoming more frequent. By way of conclusion it can be said that customary laws regulates social relations among the members of the society. It facilitates the social control in the Biradari of Gujjar and Bakarwals. A breach of the tribal laws forms the subject matter of dispute and may lead to the serious consequences.

### **Panchayats:**

The panchayati raj is an indigenous and time honored concept in our country. Its origin can be traced back to ancient ages where community spirit was the main force not only to keep village communities united but to help them manage local affairs independently. However, their formation and functional domain was socially exclusivist. The inspiration for panchayati raj is derived from the tradition of panch parmashwar where god speaks through the assembly of five. In Sanskrit, the word 'panch' stands for number five, and a body of five persons to decide upon a dispute, are called panch, 'ayat' stands for place or abode or house. In this sense, panchayat means 'an abode of panchayat members'.

Panchayati raj is capable of directly engaging people in the process of self government at the grass root level, as the unit of the government is small enough to engage the entire population of the area in the process of its governance. In India, panchayati raj has added relevance to the diversity of its society. Small units of administration under panchayati raj can by and large go in line with various social groups that constitute the Indian society. Thus, it can guarantee more harmonious relationship in the management of socio-political affairs.

It is in the view of all these advantages that not only had Indian Constitution recognized the adoption of the panchayati raj system in India but several experiments were also conducted in various States of India in this direction in the post-independence era. The panchayati raj system came into force in independent India in 1959 after Balwant Rai Mehta committee recommendations. Panchayati raj was introduced with a belief that people of rural India irrespective of caste, class, gender and age would participate actively in various political processes. Hence, most importantly, panchayati raj was aimed at democratising the system by decentralising the power structure.

Similarly, empowering grass root political institutions has been an old ideal of National Conference and is emphatically mentioned in the 'New Kashmir Manifesto'. This ideal was incorporated into the constitution of the State, which made it obligatory for the State to take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as a unit of self-government. The State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has introduced various Acts regarding rural local self-governing bodies, the most important being Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act of 1989. The Act provides for a three-tier system consisting of Halqa Panchayat, Block Development Council and District Planning and Development Board. In addition, the Act provides for a Panchayati Adalat for every halqa. It was also mentioned that if the prescribed authority is of the opinion that women are not adequately represented in the halqa panchayat, it may nominate such number of women to be members thereof, as it may deem fit (Provided further that their number does not exceed 33 per cent of the total number of panchayat members). As far as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SCs/STs) are concerned, there were no such special provisions kept in the Act.

Panchayat's have been in existence since long in the country. Weaker sections i.e., women and SCs/STs, however, have not been an integral part of this system before 73rd amendment. The Panchayati Raj Act, 1992-popularly known as 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment-was enacted in the country to revitalise the panchayati raj institutions besides providing for reservation to women and SCs/STs. The provisions of 73rd amendment were not extended to the State owing to the special status of

J&K under article 370. However, some of its provisions were incorporated, through amendments, in the State Act. Still these provisions do not bring the State Panchayat Act at par with the 73rd amendment.

The panchayat elections in Jammu and Kashmir are held after a gap of 10 years and process began in early 2001. The last panchayat elections were conducted in the State in 2001-02 after a gap of 23 years. The panchayat elections are held for the election of 4130 sarpanches and 29,719 panches. These panchayat elections create great enthusiasm among rural masses. Rural masses have shown great interest and participated vigorously in these panchayat elections. Over 79 percent of the electorate exercised their right to vote.

These panchayat elections are significant on the account of various factors:

1. First, these elections have great significance for women and SCs/STs because there is a provision of 33% reservation for women and for SCs/STs in accordance to their population in panch constituencies.
2. Secondly, the three tiers of panchayati raj institutions will be activated all over the State after panchayat elections for the first time.
3. Thirdly, although there are various loopholes in J&K Panchayati Raj Act but government has taken many steps to empower panchayati raj institutions. Civil society and various political parties have been demanding the extension of 73rd amendment to the State. Jammu and Kashmir government has recently constituted empowered committee under the chairmanship of chief secretary to deliberate on the transfer of subjects to panchayats. This committee gave wider recommendations and government has shown its keenness in implementing these recommendations in letter and spirit.

**Number Of SC/Sts Elected As Sarpanch & Panch (Jammu & Kashmir Division)**

District	No. of Sarpanch's Elected				No. of Panch's Elected			
	SC	ST	Others	Total	SC	ST	Others	Total
Srinagar	-	12	55	67	-	77	170	247
Kupwara	-	25	143	168	-	160	755	915
Baramulla	-	14	148	162	-	101	801	902
Leh	-	68	-	68	-	448	-	448
Kargil	-	65	-	65	-	451	2	453
Budgam	-	-	61	61	-	5	310	315
Anantnag	-	12	239	251	-	110	1081	1191
Pulwama	-	7	195	202	-	25	659	684
<b>Kashmir Division</b>	-	<b>203</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1044</b>	-	<b>1377</b>	<b>3778</b>	<b>5155</b>
Jammu	57	14	223	294	682	127	1634	2443
Kathua	11	03	168	182	181	83	1127	1391
Poonch	-	52	63	115	-	425	601	1026
Udhampur	17	24	171	212	270	268	1254	1792
Dooda	12	14	190	216	155	164	1379	1698
Rajouri	06	45	109	160	64	465	835	1364
<b>Jammu Division</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>1179</b>	<b>1352</b>	<b>1532</b>	<b>6830</b>	<b>9714</b>

Source : Directorates of Rural Development, Srinagar/Jammu.2001

Analysis of given information reveals in respect of Kashmir division reveals that the total number of candidates elected as Sarpanches are 1044 of which 203 are from Scheduled Tribe category which is 0.19% of the total number of candidates elected as Sarpanches. Among the total number of 5155 panches elected in Kashmir division, only 1377 candidates are elected from Scheduled Tribe category which is 26.71% of the total number of candidates elected as panches. In respect of Jammu division, the candidates elected as Sarpanches are 1179, of which 152 candidates are from Scheduled Tribe category which is 12.89%. The total number of candidates elected as panches in Jammu division are 9714, of which 1532 candidates are from Scheduled Tribe which is 15.77%.

### 3. GUJJAR AND BAKERWAL PARTICIPATION IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Jammu and Kashmir State has substantial portion of tribal population which plays a big role in political process and power formations. There are 21 Assembly constituencies where Gujjars constitute 20% to 50% of voting population. Besides this there are nine Assembly segments where Gujjar candidates won elections which includes, Haveli, Surnkote, Mendhar, Rajouri, Darhal, Gool, Arnas, Kangan and Uri. In other 13 Constituencies, where Gujjar are in substantial population are Kalakote, Kupwara, Karnah, Reasi, Nagrota, Inderwal, Noorabad, Uri, Shopian, Kokernag, Shang, Tangmarg, Pahalgam and Langate. Except Leh district of Jammu and Kashmir State, Gujjars live in every corner of the State. They constitute a bulk of voters in the Assembly as well as in Lok Sabha elections. Gujjar vote bank is a deciding factor in a number of Assembly segments in Jammu and Kashmir State, according to various commission and census reports both at the central and state level highlighted that Gujjars are the third largest linguistic and ethnic group in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir have been playing a laudable role in democratic process since 1947. Nine leaders of Gujjar Community have been elected to the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Jammu and Kashmir 2014. In this election they have made a massive participation in democratic process. The Gujjar and Bakkarwal community celebrated the victory of their nine leaders who were elected as MLA's in the elections. Those who were elected to the state Assembly this time included seven from Jammu province and two from Kashmir valley. This is for the first time five out of seven MLA's elected from Poonch and Rajouri districts are from tribal Gujjar ethnicity.

The Gujjar members who were elected includes Choudhary Javaid Rana of National Conference from Mehndhar (Poonch), Akram Chowdhary of Congress from Surankote (Poonch), Chowdhary Qammar Hussain of PDP from Rajouri, Zulafkar Chowdhary of PDP from Darhal (Rajouri) and Abdul Ghani Kohli of BJP ticket from Kalakote (Rajouri). The sons of veteran Gujjar leader late Haji Buland Khan Aijaz Ahmed Khan and Mumtaz Ahmad Khan also won with a massive victory from Gool Arnas and Gulab Ghar constituencies on Congress tickets respectively. The victory of Mian Altaf Ahmad from Kangan in Ganderbal district of Kashmir valley for fifth time is in itself a history apart from victory of Abdul Haq Khan from Kashmir valley. A number of Gujjar candidates remained runner up in the election and lost with a narrow margin.

In parliamentary elections Nomadic Gujjars or Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir have surpassed all previous records of their turnout by postponing their biannual migration to the upper reaches of the Pir Panchal of the Himalayas by a good 40 days. "In the last many elections, Bakerwals remained away from the electoral process. As compared to the 23 per cent tribal electoral participation in 2009, their turnout was reported at 81 per cent this time.

### 4. CONCLUSION

From the above conversation it can be concluded that Gujjar and Bakerwal leadership in politics is slightly increasing with the passage of time but not up to satisfactory level. Therefore it is the need of hour to make Gujjar and Bakerwal more conscious of the rights and responsibilities, the implications of the laws governing tribal status in society and developing and understanding about the various manifest and conceal ways which cause tribal oppression. Providing tribal access to knowledge in different areas like social, economic and political. Political parties should favor the nomination of tribal candidates. Preventing tribal migration at the time of election. Setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of Gujjar and Bakerwal in politics and Quota should be given to expand tribal's participation.

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