Participation of Gujjar and Bakerwal in State Politics: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract
Politically socialization of Gujjar and bakerwal in Jammu and Kashmir state is not good as compare to others community of the state they are least aware about the participatory political culture. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand and compare the position of this community in pre and post 1947 period. A detailed record has been made that how this community loyal to Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and became sidelined when National Conference came into being in pre Independence era. This paper also highlights how in post independence period, different leaders of this community initiated various campaigns to highlight its demands through different organizations like All Jammu and Kashmir Gujjar Islahi Sudhar Sabha and Gujjar Islahi Conference but every time after they were assured of considerations were sidelined by different state authorities. This paper is based on secondary sources i.e. population census of India 2001 and 2011, various Journals, Articles, Books and Reports etc.

Keywords: Political participation, Problems, Prospects

Introduction
Getting involved in politics is generally known as political participation. This includes all those who influence the politics in a society such as voters, pressure groups, different political parties and their candidates. But a question arises here that is mere voting is political participation too? If mere voting is political participation than not voting also influences politics. But that cannot be called as Political participation at all. Not at least active political participation.

The general level of involvement in a society is the extent to which the people as a whole are active in politics. But the question again arises here that what it is to take part in politics actively and significantly. It raises the question of what constitutes politics. We would, for example assume that activity within a political party or an organization which regarded itself as a pressure group should count as political participation. Although not overtly political, these organizations set the context of politics, give their active members administrative experience and are capable of explicit political action if their interests or principles are in jeopardy. There is an opposite problem about political losers: if people act, but ineffectively, perhaps because they are pan of a permanent minority in a political system, can we say they have participated in the making of decisions? One implication of this doubt is that possessing power and exercising it is a necessary condition or logical equivalent of true political participation. If one is merely consulted by a person or a group of people who wants just his opinions and votes, can that person be supposed to change anything in the political scenario? If one is mobilized or re-educated rather indoctrinated within the control of another person or a group of people, what political change can one expect of that participation? That kind of participation is simply subtle and is not worth mentioning.

Political participation is a necessary element in every political system. The political power in every society is monopolized by few incumbents and it is this political authority in every system which ensures some amount of political participation by the people. By involving them in the matters of the State, political participation fosters stability and order by forcing the legitimacy of political authority.

Aristotle defined ‘Politics’ as ‘the science of state’. It corresponds to that part of the affairs of the State which revolves around the concept of Government and that kind or part of Government which speaks about law. The word 'Politics is derived from' Greek word ‘polis’ meaning small city-states. Polis has been translated as city-states. So, Politics means getting knowledge of city-states. Johnson defined politics as “Politics is an art of governing the mankind by deceiving them”.

Political participation is also related to the participation of a ruler and the ruled in the political scenario and is conditioned by psychological, political and social variables. These social variables differ in different countries. Political participation also legitimizes political power and is an essential means of making elite rule acceptable to modern society as well as in different societies. Political participation results in greater stability of political culture and political system.

Although political participation is a necessary element in every political system. The political power in every society is monopolized by few incumbents and it is this political authority in every system which ensures some amount of political participation by the people. By involving them in the matters of the State, political participation fosters stability and order by forcing the legitimacy of political authority.

Society in which a considerable part of population is being deprived of any political participation then there is a possibility of revolt within the society against the established political authority. That is why even in the non-democratic political systems, the idea of political participation seems to be well taken care of. A fascist or a dictator, in spite of whatever power he is free to exercise, will certainly not try to follow an authoritarian course of action and instead he will consistently try to cloak his
arbitrary decisions with the veil of a mass approval secured through some form of political participation by the people.

As far as political participation of Gujjar and Bakerwal is concerned, they were loyal towards Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir in pre 1947 period. Before 1947 Gujjars and Bakerwals generally took the pro-Maharaja stand with few exceptions like a prominent Gujjar leader of Jammu- Choudhary Gulam Abass who stood against the Maharaja regime. Choudhary Gulam Abass was a close companion of Sheikh Mohd Abdullah and was also one of the founding members of Muslim Conference party. But at the later stage a political rivalry took place between Sheikh Abdullah and Choudhary Gulam Abass and Gujjars participation within Muslim Conference remained negligible. At that movement, Gujjars and Bakerwals of the State had none to guide them politically. When Sheikh Abdullah came into power in 1947-48, he sent thousands of Gujjars 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 Gujjars generally were dubbed as anti-Indian by Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference party.

After independence, Gujjars and Bakarwals too had dreamt of a bright and well-off future in India. They had hoped that post independence period will definitely see an end to their poverty and backwardness. They were sure that their unparalleled sacrifices during the freedom movement made by their community members will be a benefit for them. They were of view that it would carry due weightage with the Constitution makers and had envisaged that special constitutional provision will be made for them and special plans and programs for their speedy upliftment will be launched.

With the introduction of free education in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, many Gujjars and Bakerwals got educated and started involving in politics and administration. Some of them aligned with Congress, few Gujjars leaders in National Conference, and some of the Gujjars leaders joined People Democratic Party and Bhartiya Janta Party etc. Therefore it is this political participation of the Gujjar and Bakerwal community which is a significant aspect of empowering the tribal communities in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian Constitution under the provision of Articles-330 and 332 provides political reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislature for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community. All the States of Indian Union have such provisions according to the population of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which provides 46 Parliament seats and 529 Assembly seats respectively except for Jammu and Kashmir State.

However, within the State of Jammu and Kashmir, there is no reservation either in the Lok Sabha seat or in the State Assembly to Schedule Tribes community among which Gujjars and Bakerwal form a sizeable population. This is due to ignorance of Government of the State or due to deliberate efforts of some dominant sections of the society to maintain status quo. Perhaps Jammu and Kashmir is the only State of India which has not followed this significant policy of political reservation of seats. According to a local survey Gujjar voters are over-riding in 26 Assembly constituencies. The census of India 2001 data show that tribes are distributed all over the twenty-two districts of Jammu and Kashmir State. Kargil and Leh have more than 80 percent concentration of tribal population. Such tribal policy is widening social inequality among tribes and dominant section of the State and such discrimination also creates alienation among the deprived groups, While some social and political associations are emerging within this community and is playing a significant role to bring them with the mainstream politics, such as Gujar United Front, Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation, Gujjar Desh Charitable trust etc. These institutions are of the view that their present day sufferings are due to various reason:

a) Lack of adequate representation in the democratic institutions
b) Insufficient representation in different institutions of the government
c) Lack of platforms to channelize their problems and issues
d) The authorities have not implemented so for the policies and programs framed by central and state government effectively.

Gujjar and Bakerwal community has also initiated various campaigns to highlight its demands and political reservation is one of the important demand amongst others. The Gujjars drew attention to this demand in various seminars, conferences, press meet and also in the different meetings. But every time they were assured of sympathetic consideration of their socio-economic and political demands by the Government.

Gujjars and Bakarwals leadership has time and again proclaimed that political reservation is a pre-requisite for their overall educational and economic progress. They had many meetings with different political leaders and asserted vigorously their long awaiting demands of declaring political reservations for Gujjars and Bakarwals.

It was only in 1996 when elections were announced for Jammu and Kashmir after militant insurgency for few years that Gujjars and Bakerwals expected some new
Gujjar and Bakerwal community is generally nomadic in nature so the sedentarization of community is also an important aspect that influences the political participation of community. To sedentarize the Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir State recently the government of Jammu and Kashmir has made few efforts. Some Welfare schemes for them were also taken up during the last three five years plans. All these schemes sponsored by the state government encouraged sedentarization of Gujjars and Bakerwals directly or indirectly. The growing emphasis of government to engage the Gujjars and Bakerwals more and more in agriculture, in electricity project as the labours is influencing them culturally for sedentarization. In the project areas, there are facilities for the education for children and there is also the possibility of their getting job thereafter. The State government is allocating funds from time to time for the betterment of the Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir and for their sedentarization. Moreover various departments in State like social welfare’s department, department of education, health, Animal husbandry and the forest have taken up various schemes for their welfare with a view to sedentarize them.

Impact Of State Politics On Gujjars And Bakerwals

During the Dogra period, the Gujjars were by and large demoted to the background from the political scene in Jammu and Kashmir. However, this era too produced some prominent figures among Gujjars and Bakerwals 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.

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 Mahraja’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 Bakerwals 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.

Meanwhile, a 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.

However, they remained relatively unorganized till 1955 when a new organization “All Jammu and Kashmir Gujjar Islahi Sudhar Sabha” was formed under the Presidentship of Haji Mohammed Israil. In order to highlight their problems, the Sabha started a weekly entitled “Nawa-i-Kaum” which was edited by Shri Fateh Ali Sarwarn. It was published from Jammu.

Subsequently a number of organizations were established during 1950-1960. All India Gujjar Sudhar Sabha was established in 1950. A Branch of this organization was established in Jammu and Kashmir under the Presidentship of Ch. Gulzar Ahmed. This organization worked from 1960-71. In the beginning, this organization had no affiliation with any political party but later on it got affiliated to the Congress.

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.
In 1962, All India Gujjar Maha Sabha under the Presidentship of Mohammed Shafi M.L.C (J&K) convened a conference at Srinagar. About 3000, delegates Participated in conference where as fifty delegates from each of the States i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Gujarart, Rajasthan attended the conference. A number of resolutions were passed demanding proportional representation in the legislative Assembly and that their ratio should be increased in the present Assembly.

Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir state were first politicized in 1970s when the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi cultivated them and proposed them up as the possible counter weight to the valley Muslims. The recognition of Gojri language and allocation of time on Jammu and Kashmir radio for its program was the first step in this direction. Though it was genuine demand of the community but came as the political concession from the government of India. The Gujjars and Bakerwals quest for scheduled tribe status under the Indian constitution which provides some privileges and benefits to community took a long time to achieve and it was the Chandra Shekhar government at centre provided the status finally in 1991. But it is also fact that Gujjars were provided with scheduled tribe status in the neighboring State of Himachal Pradesh in 1950 but even after the two decades of having scheduled tribe status the socio-economic status of Gujjars and Bakerwals are miserable, the literacy rate among the Gujjars and Bakerwals is lowest in the State while the infant ant and mortality rate is highest. Majority of the community live the nomadic life without any permanent settlement and those who are settled make their livelihood out of casual labour, domestic service etc. similarly, the picture of Gujjars and Bakerwals in administration is very bleak. All these issue raised by community at various level. From time to time conventions used to be held in order to highlight Gujjars problems and pressurize the Government for their acceptance. A Gujjar Convention was held at Jammu in the year 1998 where it was proposed that Gujjars should be recruited in large numbers in Defense Services and Border Security Force.

It was also resolved that Gujjars should be given representation proportionate to population in service, scholarships for education, loans and Legislative Assembly. Gojri Language should be recognized on Radio in Cultural Academy and separate colonies should be set up for the Gujjars.

Another similar conference was held in Rajouri district in the year 1998 under the patronage of Gulzar Ahmed, a former MLC of Jammu and Kashmir, where it was resolved that there should be recognition of status and rights of Gujjars the third largest community in the state. The conference wanted the inclusion of Gujjars in the list of Scheduled Tribes and reservation for them in services. It was also insisted that Gojri should be included in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution. With time and with the introduction of free education in the State of Jammu and Kashmir many Gujjars and Bakerwals too got educated and subsequently started entering into politics and administration.

Foundation Gujjar Desh Charitable Trust at Jammu was another landmark for the development of the community. It was established on July 17, 1992, The Trust is working not only as a center for their socio-cultural activities but it is also providing to their political aspirations. On the hand the trust has established a modern school in the memory of Brigadier Khuda Baksh. A well-established Library and a Gojri Research Institute has been established within its premises. It has also been seeking to put pressure on the authorities of both State and center to reflect their demands.

The imbalance in the level of development when compared to the state among Gujjars has always been attracting the attention of Government for some time. But it was during the Fifth Five year Plan that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for the first time, for the balanced development of this community has paid considerable attention and a Sub-plan was especially formulated for the advancement of the community.

Gujjars and Bakerwals now have their representation in the State Legislative Assembly as well. There are six districts across Jammu and Kashmir, where the Gujjars 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 Gujjars play a decisive role in elections. In a number of these assembly constituencies, the Gujjars and Bakerwals form a majority.

Gujjars and Bakerwals also have their representation in the State Civil Secretariat. They have a small representation in the vital State Public Service Commission and the State Subordinate Selection and Recruitment Board, which fill all the gazetted and non-gazetted positions. There are very small of Gujjars in these recruitment agencies.

Similarly, they have their representation in the Judiciary as well. But the representation is very less when compared to the other communities. There is same level of representation in the forest, horticulture, sericulture, agriculture, irrigation, public health engineering, electric, education, excise and other department as well as in the State corporations, local-self governing institutions like District Boards and Municipalities, corporate sector units.
and Banks. The total number of Gujjars holding somewhat high positions in these departments, corporations and other economic institutions is very few.

Had educational programs been prioritized for them there would have been an appreciable improvement in their educational development and in their economic situations and they would have been able to avail most of the benefits and enticements available to them because of Scheduled Tribe status.

In the process of identity formation certain voluntary organization and institution of Gujjars and Bakerwals are trying to promote their identity. The Gujjars and Bakerwals community of state have taken some steps to found certain premier political and social organisations like ‘Jammu and Kashmir united front,” and “Gurjar Desh Charitable Trust,”. These organisations and institution were established to improve the socio-cultural life of Gujjars and Bakerwals and preserve their culture, tradition, custom etc. from long time charitable trust had been seeking to put pressure on the authorities to consider their rational demands and redress their genuine grievances.

In addition to this, some other organizations and establishments including Anjuman Tarqi Gojri Adab district level branches, Adabi Sangat Kashmir, and Gojri Adabi Board besides dramatic and cultural clubs were involved in promoting Gojri language and literature. Gojri journals and magazines such as AI India, Nawa-i-Kaum, Gujar Desh and Gujar Goonj, published from Jammu, not only enriched their literature but also focused on political and economic issues affecting the community. At the political level there is a prevailing feeling of being exploited among the Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir state by the politically articulated leaders of other communities. The Gujar and Bakerwal began to raise their voice against the discrimination and the resistance started surfacing by 1975 and agitated over the under-representations in the government, administration and in other bodies.

The presidential order of April 19, 1991 can be consider as a major breakthrough for the Gujjars and Bakerwals which include this community in the list of scheduled tribes. This order conferred them all the rights and privileges which were enjoying the other schedule tribes of India. This order also entitled the Gujjars and Bakerwals candidates to share of 10% reservation in direct recruitment and 5% reservations in promotions in the State services beside a share in 11% reservation in admission to state professional colleges.

The Gujjars and Bakerwal of Jammu and Kashmir State, achieved a major leap forward on April 19, 1991, when the President of India at the instance of the Chandra Shekhar’s caretaker government took a significant decision and conferred on the Gujjars and Bakerwals the status of Scheduled Tribe. The April 19 decision, intervalia, entitled the reservation to the Gujjars and Bakarwals of State.

Despite of their socio-economic backwardness of Gujjar and Bakerwal in the State it was not an easy task for Gujjars to get the scheduled tribe status. There was a constitutional and legal hurdle which took them along time to cross. Due to the limit provided by the article 370, the provision underlying the article 342 related to the status of scheduled tribes and privileges emanating thereby were not extending to this state. it was 1989 that president of India acting under article 342 of the constitution of India promulgated the constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) scheduled tribe order 1989. Consequently, government of Jammu and Kashmir issued SRO 8 of 1981 which came into effect on January 03, 1991 and under which the benefits of reservation in service was extended to the scheduled tribes specified in the above mentioned order. Thereafter, the president of India issued an ordinance on April 19, 1991 where the Gujjar and Bakerwal were also included in the list of scheduled tribe with the respect of Jammu And Kashmir State. On august 20, 1991 by the parliament of India converted that ordinance into act and further included Gaddis and Sippis in the list of scheduled tribes.

The recognition of Gujjars and Bakerwal as scheduled tribe was one of the major achievement in the process of identity politics. with the achievement of this status, the community got the benefits of being considered for affirmative action of state in their favour. The scheduled tribe status enables them that they could get the advantage of reservation in government jobs as well as in education institutions, including the technical and professional institutions. However, there is a growing discontentment and grievances among the Gujjars and Bakerwal community of the state that they are politically discriminated despite of having ST status. This is due to the reason that the provisions of the article 342 of Indian constitution as incorporated in section 50, sub-section 6 of the Jammu and Kashmir constitution have not been fully applied to this state till date. These provisions contain for reservation of seats for scheduled tribe in the Lok Sabha, the state legislative assembly and the State legislative council. There is provision for political reservation of seats in the parliament and state legislature for scheduled tribe and scheduled caste as per the article 330 and 332. All the state of Indian union except the state of Jammu and Kashmir, have the provision for political reservation according to the population of scheduled tribe and scheduled caste.
The leadership of Gujjars and Bakerwals 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 Karnaah. They argue that they deserve 16 seats in State legislative assembly.

According to the Gujjars 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 over all 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.

The Gujjar leadership of Jammu and Kashmir also asserts that in present political setup of State, the members of this community will never become able to occupy power and position because they are not represented as per proportion to their population and political parties are not interested in giving them the due representation. Mostly they have never been given ticket during elections to seek mandate by any political party from these constituencies. Despite the fact that they are concentrated in many constituencies and form a decided vote bank in many constituencies. In this regard number of campaigned have been launched by Gujjar and Bakerwal leaders to highlight the demand of political reservation. Though the certain political parties and their leader have often assured the Gujjar and Bakerwal of state that their demand of political reservation would met. In fact, during every assembly election, the election manifesto of almost all political parties contains for providing the political reservation to Gujjar and the leaders of various political parties do support the demand in their political campaign. Thus not only in 1996 assembly election, but also during 2002 election, this demand for political reservation was a key issue raised by political parties and the candidates in constituencies which have dominated by of Gujjar and Bakerwal vote bank. The Gujjar and Bakerwal leadership put sufficient pressure upon the coalition government after 2002, election, to extend the provision for reservation in the matter of political representation. Throughout the period of coalition government and, especially during Chief Ministership period of Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Congress party has been professing its commitment to extend political reservation.

The Congress party also claims to provide largest space to Gujjar candidates. As per one of statement of Ghulam Nabi Azad, during the 2002 assembly election, the congress was the only party to have given nomination to Gujjar leaders in seven constituencies. This number is much larger than that of any single political parties provided ticket to the Gujjar and Bakerwal leaders to contest election in the State. But the failure of congress party not to extended political reservation to Gujjar during six years of coalition regime can be explained as the politically hoax.

During the last elections in 2008, N.C–Congress coalition came victory and during the last six years political reservation and other political demands of Gujjars and Bakerwals were given negligible importance. Despite this, different leaders of these communities are of view that it was mainly because of neglecting attitude of N.C. party that their aspirations are not ensured.

**Future Aspirations And Challenges**

In general, Gujjar and Bakerwal politics revolves around two major claims. First, they project themselves as their community forms the third largest ethnic group in Jammu and Kashmir State after Kashmiris and Dogras having the population of 15 lakhs and secondly that they are one of the most backward and vulnerable community of the State and they deserved special attention of both central and state governments. For pursuing these two claims, the Gujjar politics was initiated and organized around the demand for scheduled tribe status for the Gujjar and Bakerwal community. The Gujjar elite approached the power-holders for this purpose, at both centre and state level and also agitated for this demand at various forums and channelizes it through various platforms. For a long time, the Gujjar politics revolve around this demand and they campaigned for it through various means and channels.

However Gujjar and Bakerwal community within Jammu and Kashmir State is one of the most deprived sections of the society which continuous to suffer from poverty, backwardness, illiteracy, and ignorance. The community has not progress at the desired level and the local political party members remained somewhat away from actual problem facing by the community itself. On the onset of every year during the last six decades they have been hoping that different government at center and state will lunching some special measure and provisions which will help them to overcome from their backwardness and bring them at par to other communities. But time for them has remained stagnant. They continued to be subject to exploitation and deep rooted poverty although the promised made to them from time to time by the government have not been fulfilled. Nothing worth mentioning has been done for their upliftment.
by all means are going through the unending suffering and are battling for their existence and survival.

It is worth mentioning that though the Gujjars and Bakarwals of State succeeded in getting scheduled tribe status in 1991, but due to vested interests by few elites within the community had prevented from getting any worthwhile benefits and it had resulted that only small number of elite are able to take its benefit. It is the need of time that the government through survey and through criteria identified the deserving section of the community and takes all remedial measures.

At the present Gujjar and Bakerwals community of Jammu and Kashmir State is facing many problems and challenges. Some are:

The demand for political reservation is the major demand of this community as they want the implementation of article 330 and 332 of Indian constitution which means reservation of seats in house of people and state legislature respectively. by all means are going through the unending suffering and are battling for their existence and survival.

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The demand for political reservation is the major demand of this community as they want the implementation of article 330 and 332 of Indian constitution which means reservation of seats in house of people and state legislature respectively. Keeping in view the announcement made by the Chief Minister, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad Jammu and Kashmir in a function to bring a Bill in the State Legislature for political reservation of Scheduled tribes and to amend the Constitution in this regard showed a new ray of hope among tribal communities of the State which include Boto, Beda, Mon, Ghara, Changpa, Purigpa, Shina-Dard of Ladakh region besides Gujjars and Bakarwals, Gaddis and Sippis of the State. The tribal community which comprises a chief group among tribes of Jammu and Kashmir is politically very important. This is third largest ethnic group of State has welcomed and hailed this announcement.

After delimitation, when Assembly segments were re-constituted in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, this tribal community emerged as a significant political force. Knowing this, the tribal ethnic group was united beyond imagination. Therefore it constituted an important vote bank which was very difficult to ignore or surpass by the political parties of the State. In short, the role being played by Muslim minority vote at national level politics, the same role is being played by Gujjar and Bakarwal votes in Jammu and Kashmir State.

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, Kokarnag, 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. On the basis of language after Kashmiri and Dogri there is maximum population of Gujjars and Bakarwals in the State. “Ethnically, they have second largest population after Kashmiri where as Rajputs both Hindu and Muslim form third largest ethnic entity of the state. This fact is also relevant even in today’s politics of Jammu and Kashmir. As far as the history is concerned, Jammu and its surrounding districts were covered by Gujjars and had emerged as a significant political, social and cultural force even before 1947. There were many habitations of Gujjars in main towns and cities besides the surrounding areas of Jammu region. It can be analyzed that the S.P. Pura alone, near 85 villages were inhabited by the Gujjars and their names were after the name of Gujjars clans like Kohlyan, Gaiyan, Phalisran, Makhanpur Gujran etc. But the partition of the state saw massacre and migration of this community which changed the demographic character of Jammu”.

In the light of above mentioned challenges and problems it is grave need of time to provide the community with such solutions which can contribute in its development and prosperity. All the provisions of Indian constitution which are provided for the protection of the interest of weaker section shall implement in their gist and spirit. Both central and state governments initiated some special programs and schemes for the development of Gujjar and Bakerwal community. Also special economic provisions and educational programs and employment generating schemes need to be launched by both state and central governments. As education is the most important thing which need much attention because expansion of the education is the only source to help them to get most of the benefits to understand their rights and will help them to come out from their miseries.

**Proposed Reforms**

a) Political reservation in State Assembly to the Gujjar and Bakerwal community as provided by the Constitution of India.

b) Representation of Gujjars and Bakerwal in all level of administration.

c) Reservation in local bodies and Panchayats.

d) Proper registration of nomadic Gujjars in voter lists.
Conclusion and Suggestion
From the proceeding conversation it can be concluded that political participation of Gujjar and Bakerwal in the state politics is very low as in 26 constituencies Gujjar and Bakerwal have a major chunk of population. From the historical point of view their participation is always remained low though with the passage of time it increase but not up to satisfactory level. Therefore, political empowerment of Gujjar and Bakerwal community is need of the hour. They have to be given their due share in the administrative structure and in the political set up. The full participation of this large community in the democratic process of state they must find due place in legislature, in government and administration for ensuring positive result. Thus they can be made real partner in moving forward of state on the path of peace, progress and prosperity.

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