



Evaluation Of Government Policies For Empowerment And Welfare Of Pahari Community In Jammu And Kashmir: A Case Study Of Rajouri District

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Abstract:

India hosts the large number of tribal ethnic groups with assorted socio-cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is also inhabited by such communities; the most prominent among them are pastoral Gujjars and Paharis. The Pahari community lives in disgusting conditions and is socially and economically backward in comparison to the mainstream population of J&K. The Jammu and Kashmir government has introduced a number of socioeconomic schemes and programmes to benefit the pahari communities. The present study specifically focuses on evaluation of various schemes implemented by government of India for the welfare pahari community in Jammu and Kashmir. The study finds that the government fails in implementation of various schemes for the welfare of pahari communities at ground level.

Keywords: pahari community; government policies; evaluation; Rajouri district.

INTRODUCTION

India hosts the large number of tribal ethnic groups with assorted socio-cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is also inhabited by such communities; the most prominent among them are pastoral Gujjars and Paharis. Both of them are residing in the remote, hilly and mountainous areas deprived of the basic necessities of life (Rahi, 2014). To promote, and protect the educational and economic interests of these weaker sections of the society is one of the basic responsibilities of the government. To alleviate their sufferings, the border regions were declared 'Bad Pocket Areas'. For them various schemes have been enforced but the benefits of which are equally

shared by all the sections of the people. Reservation for recruitments, border allowances for the government employees, and scholarship is meant for such communities. From the time of partition till 1990, the people in these areas were jointly identified as a single unit with all the benefits accruing equally to Paharis, Gujjars, Bakarwals, Sheenas and Ladakhis, without any discrimination on the basis of name, caste or creed (Khan, 2008) It was in the year 1991 that some of the communities were declared Scheduled Tribe on the basis of their culture, language, geographical location, and poor living conditions, excluding Paharis by the government. It has been since then that the Pahari people intensified their demand for ST Status that the Gujjars, and Bakarwals enjoy however the Paharis who reside in the same areas; face equal hardships and disadvantages are denied from such benefits.

As a result, various inclusive programmes in education, health, and employment have been implemented in order to end their marginalisation. The government of India has a crucial role to play in promoting the welfare of marginalised communities in India. Marginalised communities in India often face several social, economic, and political challenges such as poverty, lack of education, health care facilities, and basic amenities, displacement from their ancestral land, and exploitation. By implementing policies and programs that address the social, economic, and political challenges faced by tribal communities, the government can help ensure that they have equal opportunities to progress and prosper. The purpose of this article is to investigate different policies and schemes and assess their influence on the pahari population of Jammu and Kashmir in general, and the pahari group in Rajouri in particular.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

THE PAHARIS

The word "Pahari" is derived from an Urdu word 'Pahaad' which means mountains or hills and thus pahadi means people who are inhabitants of hilly areas. They speak a distinct language (pahadi) and identify themselves as the pahadi speaking people (PSP). The Pahari speaking people of Jammu and Kashmir are one of the ancient races, born prior to the Buddhist period in Kashmir. Most of the Paharis belong to the Aryan race which had once invaded India. The Pahari speaking people are living in the areas of southern upper hills of Pir-panchal particularly from western Banihal to Muzaffarabad, Drawa and Nanga Parbat adjoining areas. Literarily, the word 'Pahari' refers to the people who are settled on the mountain ranges of Jammu and Kashmir. According to Motilal Saqi, "The unique historical, linguistic, social and political characteristics has given a new meaning to the word Pahari, once we speak out the word, we refer to particular community of people whose mother tongue is Pahari and who are inhabiting in the Pir-panchal range from the middle ages from river Jehlum to river Chenab (Maini, 2006). The Paharis are the people from diverse races, castes, and religions whose distinct cultural heritage, lifestyle and mother tongue has ascribed them a composite cultural identity. Amongst them are Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs

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who have been cohabiting together from many decades. The commonly found are Sayed, Qureshi, Dhand, Sadan, Khakad, Ferozal, Dhomal, Jeral, Chib, Chadak, Manhas, Pathan, Turk, Dowi, Brahman and Khatri, Kashmiri etc. (Vaid.2004). These people have maintained their unique identity, because of the simplicity, interesting and sweet language, unique characteristics, beautiful physique, and traditional dress, glorious and rich cultural heritage. There are also the Gujjar-Bakerwal settlements in these hilly areas but Pahari speaking people are in majority almost comprises of 57 per cent who speak Pahari language (Shah, 2016). Despite some local lingual variations from the Badel to Karna hills, people have maintained a common identity and culture. Some of them are living in the villages falling near the Actual Line of Control where the life is very miserable and the economy of the area is based on agricultural, exclusively depending on the changing climate or locally made tools. The establishment of industries and business are not possible in these Pahari dominated areas due to unavailability of modern means of transport, electricity and other facilities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been conducted to discuss and analyse the different dimensions of the tribal life in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Gul and Ganai (2016) studied Pahari community and stated that their level of education is very low, due to low rate of enrolment and high dropout rate at elementary and higher levels. Dar and Khaki (2012) discussed in their study the socio-economic, literacy and health status of Gujjars and Paharis in various districts and finds that Gujjars and Paharis are living in miserable conditions. The lack of infrastructures, inaccessibility to health institutions, nomadic tribal environment and inaccessibility and unaffordability to health care facilities are some of the main problems contributing to their poor health. Kavita Suri (2015) in her study analyzed that the impact of armed conflict has greatly affected the livelihood as the presence of militants in upper reaches leads to frequent cross firing. This armed conflict forced them to remain restricted to plain low lying areas. Azhar Ud Din (2015) in his study focused upon the socio-economic condition of Paharis living in various districts of Kashmir region and concluded that their condition is very pathetic as compared to Paharis of Jammu province. Warikoo (2009) explores the history, customs, and traditions of various tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir, including the Gujjars, Bakarwals, and Gaddis. The Gujjars are one of the largest and most widely dispersed tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir, known for their nomadic way of life and distinctive culture. Qureshi (2003) provides an in-depth study of the Gujjar community in Jammu and Kashmir, including their history, social organization, and cultural practices. The author also examines the challenges faced by the community in the wake of modernization and development. Malik (2019) providing a comprehensive study of the Bakarwal community, focusing on their unique way of life and the challenges they face. The author explores the social, economic, and political issues that have affected the community over the years. Arya (2012) in his study focused on language, religion, and social customs of

Gujjar and Bakarwal communities and also explores the historical background of the communities and their interactions with neighboring communities. The present study is unique because it focuses on the role of government in promoting welfare of Pahari community of Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Objective of the study

The focus of the present study is to examine the schemes implemented by government of India for the welfare pahari community in Jammu and Kashmir.

Methodology of the study

The researcher in the present study used secondary data. The secondary data were collected from the official website of deputy commissioner Rajouri, citizen charter social welfare department, J&K advisory board for development of pahari speaking people and research papers, books and articles etc.

Government schemes for welfare of pahari community

- 1. State Marriage Assistance Scheme:** State Marriage Assistance **SCHEME FOR POOR GIRLS** is a social assistance scheme meant for those unmarried identified girls of the State living below the poverty line, who may not find themselves in a position to solemnize the marriage due to financial constraints. 18015 eligible beneficiaries have been provided with marriage assistance under State 107 Marriage Assistance Scheme (SMAS), with financial assistance of Rs 71.30 crores, across the State till 31-03-2019. Out of the total 18015 beneficiaries, 1580 beneficiaries from Rajouri district received the benefits with estimated cost of Rs. 626.86 lakh.
- 2. Bal Ashrams & Nari Niketans:** With the aim to provide free boarding, lodging, education, health care facilities, etc. to male and female orphans and destitute children, the social welfare department has established Bal Ashrams and Nari Niketans almost in all districts of J&K. There are 24 Bal Ashrams and 12 Nari Niketans having a total intake capacity of 1504 functioning in J&K. In Rajouri district there are 3 Bal Ashrams highest than other districts of Jammu and Kashmir having the intake capacity of 160 students.
- 3. Bal Ashrams & Nari Niketans:** The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) is expected to significantly contribute to the realization of government/state responsibility for creating a system that will efficiently and effectively protect children in each district of Jammu and Kashmir. It is based on cardinal principles of "Protection of Child Rights" and "Best Interest of Child" the objective of the scheme is to contribute to improvements in the well-being of children in difficult circumstances,

as well as to the reduction of vulnerabilities to situations and actions that lead to abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment and separation of children.

4. **J&K State Advisory Board for Development of Pahari Speaking People:** The Government of Jammu & Kashmir constituted State Advisory Board for Development of Pahari Speaking People in the year 1989. The major objective of the Advisory Board is raising the educational standard of the students of Pahari Speaking Community.

For achieving this objective two schemes

(a) Management of Boys/Girls hostels: The Government is running hostels for students belonging to Pahari Speaking People at various locations in the State including Rajouri district. These hostels have been constructed with the assistance from GOI on sharing basis. Inmates are provided free boarding and lodging and coaching facilities. The first Boys Pahari Hostel in Rajouri district established in 1997 with intake capacity of 150 students. The

(b) Hostel facilities for pahari girls: pahari girls hostel also established separately in 2013 in Rajouri with intake capacity of 100 students.

(c) Grant of Pre-matric/Post-matric scholarships: the financial help provided by the government belonging to the weaker and marginalised communities including Pahari people. About 1, 11,472 students are covered under Pre and Post-Matric Scholarship by the J&K State Advisory Board for Development of Pahari Speaking People and Rs. 10.02 Crores stand released in favour of Chief Education Officers/Degree Colleges by ending January, 2015.

5. **Integrated Child Development Services Scheme:** Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) launched in 1975, is a unique early childhood development programme addressing health, nutrition and the development needs of young children, pregnant and nursing mothers. It is designed to promote holistic development of children under 06 years, through strengthening capacity of care givers and communities and improve access to basic services at the community level. The flagship scheme of Ministry of Women and Child Development, GOI under which Anganwadi Centres are established in villages/hamlets in rural as well as in urban areas for the target groups. The Scheme aims to provide nutrition to the children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years, pregnant/ lactating mothers and adolescent girls. Besides this, immunization and referral services are also provided. There are 141 ICDS Projects and 29599 Anganwadi Centres functioning in the State. Anganwadi centers also provide non-formal pre-school education and get periodic health checkups of the beneficiaries. In Rajouri district there are 1672 Anganwadi centres functional presently second highest after Jammu district.

6. **Integrated Social Security Scheme (ISSS):** This is a state-sponsored scheme that is entirely supported by the government's personal funds by debiting expenditures from the plan and non-plan budgets. The eligibility criteria of this scheme are male

above the age of 60 and female above the age of 55 get Rs 1000 per month. Widow and differently abled persons also include in this scheme whose income is low or no income they also get benefits through this scheme. This scheme is not only for any specific community or persons but all over the communities included pahari community.

7. Major Schemes under implementation in the Pahari Advisory Board and at present following schemes are being implemented by the board:

- ✓ Grant of scholarship Post/Pre-matric to school going pahari speaking students from (ist-12th class).
- ✓ Management of Hostels Construction of new hostels for Pahari students.
- ✓ Implementation of Pahari Sub-Plan on the pattern of Tribal Sub Plan.
- ✓ Promotion of Pahari Language, Literature and Culture.

Under all these schemes which is implemented by pahari advisory board is special for pahari community students and the main motive of these schemes is to upgrade the community from backwardness.

8. Pahari Speaking People get 4% in J&K Reservation Rules 2005: After a long time of trying, the Indian government finally agreed to give the UT a 4% reservation to pahari community. Governor G C Murmu authorised the change to the J&K Reservation Rules, 2005 after forming a committee through Government Order No. 250-JK (GAD) of 2020 dated 18.02.2020 in order to offer reservation advantages to Pahari Speaking People of Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir. Owing to the people of the Pahari Speaking community, it is seen in the backdrop of the reorganisation of the Jammu and Kashmir UT. After scrapping of Article 370 it is definitely a step taken forward in the right direction. The amendment to Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2005 came into effect on 20th April 2020. The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004 now gives 4% reservation to Paharis of J&K after this amendment. Those students who have low capability to compete the higher class student or those who pursuing study in high standard schools, colleges through this reservation policy they take benefit and compete the higher standard students. The government provide 4% reservation in government jobs and educational institution in Jammu and Kashmir.

9. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) J&k Sehat health insurance scheme: The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Sh. Narendra Modi, introduced the SEHAT Health Insurance Plan on December 26, 2020. Home Minister Amit Shah and J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha were there for the whole thing. In Rajouri, of the total 637312 eligible beneficiaries, 397523 have registered for the scheme in the district and the pahari community people also get benefit through this scheme.

Findings:

- ✓ The major schemes introduced by Indian government for promotion of pahari community in Jammu and Kashmir was; 4% reservation to pahari community, Grant of Pre-matric/Post-matric scholarships, Management of Boys/Girls hostels.
- ✓ The year 2020 has been best period for all the schemes in Jammu and Kashmir for pahari community specially.
- ✓ State Marriage Assistance Scheme, Bal Ashrams & Nari Niketans, Bal Ashrams & Nari Niketans show a better scheme in both at the country level as well as in Jammu and Kashmir while rest of schemes show low performance.

Suggestions:

The overall debate shows that the state's reserve policies and schemes is in shambles, and it's long past time to take a look at it again. The following ideas have been proposed to make the reservation schemes more appropriate, reasonable, and purposeful.

- ✓ The government should take strong steps to keep the educational sector of the communities from feeling prejudiced, and there should be a focus on doing studies/research and recording their activities and living patterns.
- ✓ On (April 2020), the government of India provides 4% reservation in jobs and educational institutions only in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, but does not provide a better opportunity to community students at the central level, such as the Gujjar community. As a result, the government should take decisive action to grant pahari community the long-desired schedule tribe status.
- ✓ The government creates new programmes for the pahari community to help students who are unable to read and write due to financial constraints.
- ✓ The gap must be understood; Paharis have children who attend the same schools as Gujjars and face the same challenges in their daily lives. Still, because of these similarities, they have slowly been called Gujjars, which is not what they are.
- ✓ The entire issue of reservation requires a thorough discussion at every level of government in the state. Promoting reservation politics in the state would destroy meritocracy and foster hostility among diverse segments of society.

Conclusion:

The Jammu and Kashmir government has introduced a number of socioeconomic schemes and programmes to benefit the remote and pahari communities. These programmes were designed to improve the beneficiaries' income and social standing. These schemes are designed with the recipients' current income levels in mind. These schemes are constructed in such a way that they give a continuous source of income to the recipients. The goal of these inclusive initiatives is to provide job possibilities for pahari community members and give them an alternative to ancient growing methods. Yet, the numbers from the research have painted a dismal image of Jammu and Kashmir's pahari people. The Pahari community lives

in disgusting conditions and is socially and economically backward in comparison to the mainstream population of J&K. Thus, there is a need to establish a process and a comprehensive strategy to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the pahari community, and the government should take additional steps to implement central-level schemes.

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