

Struggle For Identity And Rights: A Case Study Of Pahari People In J&K State

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Abstract: The Pahari speaking people of the Jammu and Kashmir state are mainly concentrated in remote border areas and are put to considerable economics distress as which is very much visible from their socio-economic backwardness. On one side they would not able to compete with high strata of the society because they have access to better facilities in respect of education, health etc. their children are also not able to get the benefits of any policies of state as well centre because they are living in the mountaneous areas which are very far away as well not accessible to the roads and other facilities so cannot attain the proper education which is minimum requirement for any benefit from any agency whether its governmental or any other non-governmental organizations.

Keywords: Paharies, Socio-economic backwardness, Economic distress, Mountaneous, Non-governmental organization.

I. INTRODUCTION

The word Pahari is derived from the word Pahar which means mountain. It's an adjective in Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi and it literally means of the mountain when used in a linguistic context it means 'Language of the Mountain People'. It is a generic term for a range of languages dialects spoken across the Himalayan range not limited to a single region of the subcontinent. The Pahari language is being written in *Nastalique* (Persio-Arabic) script in Jammu and Kashmir and POK also whereas in other parts of India it is being written in other scripts eg, 'Tankri script' in Himachal Pradesh. It is rich in literature and poetry although people generally use it as a spoken language but a keen look into its literature proves that it has the potential to develop and prosper.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A language is just like any other living organism is dynamic. It changes absorbs, sheds, grows and develops. Pahari language is enriched and evolved over many years and enhanced our literature and poetry. Pahari language is also known as northern zone languages are a group of related Indo-

Aryan languages or dialects spoken in the lower ranges from Nepal in the east to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir in the west. These languages fall into three groups eastern, consisting of the various dialects of Nepali also known as Gorkhali, Gurkhali, Khaskura or Parbatiya; Central, spoken mainly in Uttrakhand state and consisting of Garwahi spoken in Gharwal and Kumaoni spoken in Kumaon and far eastern region of Nepal and a western; spoken in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and in POK also.

Different ethnic groups of Paharies of the state of Jammu and Kashmir are spoken different dialects like for eg. Gujjars speak Gojri, Bakkarwar- Bakkerwali, other different dialects also i.e. Bhaderwahi, Kishtwari, Siraji, Padderi, Wattali, Bhalesi, Marwi, Bulandpuri, Pogali, Pothohari, Chibbali, Mirpuri, Punchhi, Karnahi, Kaghani, Chitrali etc. Paharies generally speak Pahari dialect and many Gujjars speak pahari as link language. The dialects changes from one place to other place as in the case with almost all regional languages which in fact are only dialects. They change their accent, tone and tense after a small hilly range or we can say a distance of 15-20 kms. It is note worthy that pahari and gojri languages have common nouns and verbs. It is spoken mainly in Rajouri, Poonch, Baramullah, Kupwara and Kulgam, because of the partition of India in 1947 a large area of pahari speaking

people fell into the hands of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK). It includes Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Rawalkote, Bagh, Rawalpindi etc. and these dialects are quite similar to the Pahari Language which is spoken in the side of Jammu and Kashmir.

The highest concentration of pahari speaking people in J&K is in Rajouri with 80 percent of the population speaks it followed by 70 percent in Poonch. The Pahari speaking areas are in the valley i.e. Baramulla, Kulgham and Kupwara. They are generally poor people who had remained deprived of their socio political and economic rights for a long period. It is being written in nastalique i.e. Perso-Arabic script in Jammu and Kashmir. It is very enrich in literature and poetry although people generally use it as a spoken language but a keen look into its literature proves that it has the potential to develop and prosper. In the process of setting of the region the Dards are in the north-west, the Ladakhies are in the north-east, the Gujjars and Rajputs are in the south and the Paharies are in the south-east and they are closely influenced the existing ethnicity of the people of the region.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GUJJARS AND PAHARIS

Pahari speaking people are an ethnic group just like Gujjars. Gujjars form an ethnic group on the basis of certain criterion and conditions. They tame cattles like buffaloes, cows, horse along with sheeps and goats but in very less numbers and same do the Paharies. Gujjars go to the high altitudes pastures for grazing their cattles from April to October and same do the Paharies. The Gujjars used to grind their maze and still do just to turn it into flour and this whole process takes place at water-mill or atta chakki popularly known as 'Gharat' in local language and this is same case of Paharies they also do the same. Gujjars and Paharies until now used to and still reside in mud-huts popularly known as 'Kothas' and 'Dharas' during their migration to meadows and vice versa. Gujjars are scattered all over the country and speak different dialects, such as Haryanavi, Rajasthani etc and Paharies are also scattered same in all over the country. In Jammu and Kashmir State, pahari speaking people are spread over and reside on hilly tracks and border areas; they speak one and the same dialect although with minor regional and grammatical differences. The rites and customs of the Gujjars and Paharies are not much different, from cradle to grave all the customs of these groups are the same rather to some extent quite common.

III. IMPORTANT WORKS AND THEIR WRITERS

The major works in the language include *Saif-ul-Malook* written by Mian Muhamad Baksh which is a masnavi about *safar-ul-ishq* means 'a journey of love' about the philosophy of love firstly published in 1906; *Siraj-ul-Qasas* is a poetic commentry of *Saura-e-Yousaf* (14Th Chapter) of The holy Quran written by Syed Habib-Ullah-Shah Bukhari it includes 7120(seven thousand one hundred and twenty)stanzas; *Zia-ul-Qammar* and *Ramooz-Ul Ganj* are two other Pahari massnavis written by Sain Faqar Din.

The major classical writers of Pahari language were Sain

Qadar Baksh, Sain Faqar Din, Hakam Shah, Mian Zaman chand, Qammar Shah, Syed Haider Ali Shah, Sain Wallidad, Syed Muhamad. The contemporary writers includes, Mohd. Bashir Qureshi, Iftkhar Kayani, Ali Adalat, Nisar Rahi, Iqbal Nazash, Iqbal Shawl, Mirza Abdul Rashid, Shahbaz Rajourvi, Zaffar Iqbal Manhas, khalil Khan Johar, Dr Mirza, M R Qureshi etc.

IV. MAJOR ORGANIZATIONS

The J&K Pahari Advisory board for Pahari speaking people's development is publishing a number of books along with the J&K academy of Art Culture and Languages. The Academy had established a separate department for Pahari language. The department is publishing, translating, and a number of books along with monthly and annual journals. The major publications of the academy includes,

- ✓ *Chitti Chadar Payar Ni* - A novel by Zeenat Firdous Zeenat.
- ✓ *Neela Ashman* - A novel by Ali Adalat.
- ✓ *Farah Ni Tee* (under publishing) A novel by Malak Ram Anand.

Besides these publications, the department of Pahari language of the academy has undertaken a project to translate the major classical books from department is also working on a dictionary of Pahari language to be published very soon.

The most important governmental organizations are the Jammu and Kashmir Advisory Board For Pahari Speaking People's Welfare, established in 1989. Its chairman is Chief Minister however the Vice Chairman is nominated by the CM from amongst the Pahari speaking people. Presently its Vice Chairman is Syed Mushtaq Bukhari (Ex MLA from Poonch).

The Pahari Cultural and Welfare Forum is an NGO Working for the preservation of Pahari culture and welfare of the Pahari community. Some of the other Pahari organizations are: All Pahari Employees Federation, The Pahari Students Welfare Forum etc. The Jammu and Kashmir Pahari Culture and Welfare a non-governmental Forum was established after 1975 to propagate Pahari language and literature. The Pahari movement spread over the various areas of the valley from Karnah and Malangam, Bandipora to other places like Laar, Wliwar, Dara, Liri, Doora, Uri Zoorah Manloo, Shopian and Kandi illaqas of Anantnag viz. Saliya, Badhar, Drawa etc. The members of the forum took the poets and singers to the villages of Rajouri and Poonch districts to attract the Pahari people and incite inspiration for creating Pahari literature. In the year 1992 Governor, G.C.Saxena established the Pahari Advisory Board comprising of about 25 members out of which 14-15 non-official members. The Radio and Television besides the Cultural Academy, Literary and Cultural organizations are also playing a vital role for popularizing and expansion of Pahari literature.

Pahari identity has been constructed on the basis of Pahari language. The habitational areas of Gujjars and Paharis are generally common. Both these groups are the most important competing ethnic groups in Rajouri and Poonch districts. They are also present in the peripheral region of Kashmir valley. All Gujjars in the State are Muslims and the dominant portion of the Pahari people are also Muslims. Anthropologically Gujjars

are tribe counting of two sections Gujjars and Bakarwals who speak Gojri but Paharis are a linguistic group consisting of all non-Gojri speaking peoples. They consists of all castes of Muslims and Hindus whose mother tongue is Pahari.

V. STRUGGLE OF PAHARIES

Historically the Paharis have been economically, socially and educationally better in comparison to the Gujjars. Though there are hardly any vertical difference except language and ethnicity between Gujjars and Paharis. Both the identities consider themselves as their competitor. The process of formation, assertion and popular consciousness of the two identities began in 1970s when the state government some welfare measures for Gujjars. The Paharis also asserted their demands and were given the benefits. Gojri and Pahari sections were opened in cultural academy together in 1978. These sections have worked for developing these dialects into standard languages. The academy has encouraged the literatures of these languages which is the basis of these identities.

The conferring of Scheduled tribe status to Gujjars by the central government in 1991 when militancy was on peak and state was under governor rule created resentment among the Paharis. We view it on the patronage of the government to Gujjars in education and employment which will radically improve their position. The Pahari without ST status would lose their trend in different walks of life to the Gujjars in future. Due to opposition of the Paharis the ST avail reservation in proportion to their population in education and employment but they do not get political reservation in form of reservation seats in assembly and parliament.

Since 1990 onwards the Paharis are struggling to get recognition as ST. all the major political parties in the state support their demand of the Paharis in Public. The state assembly has passed resolution on issue but the central government has recognized Paharis as ST. The Pahari leadership has shifted in struggle from State to central government to getting ST status.

The Gujjar leadership openly opposes demand of the Paharis. Their leadership dissuades the state leadership and the central leadership against conferring of ST status to the Paharis. The ST status politics has created difference and chasm between the two groups. All public forms and institutions i.e., social, cultural, religion, economic, political and educational have been infected by their sectarianism. Both the group seeks and gives support to the persons of their respective ethnicity vis-à-vis the other ethnic group in Rajouri, Poonch districts.

The Paharis have not got ST status and it is difficult for them to get because they are not one single tribe but a linguistic group consisting of different castes of Muslims and Hindus. They may even get it because recognizing a community as tribe is an administrative and political decision not an anthropological decision. All the tribes in India have not been included into the ST list because of the political nature of the decision.

The Paharis also get reservation benefits in the Resident of Backward Area (RBA) category. The Paharis who are from rural areas generally got reservation benefits in education and employment because their habitations have been declared as backward areas on the basis of their remoteness and lack of facilitation.

The policy of the state government to promote important dialects into standard language and encourage their speakers to construct their respective identity has created unhealthy competition and hostility among these ethnic groups and it has Balkanized the state polity. The policy of the state government to support the dominant regional languages at the cost of the official languages will further fragment the polity when the lesser mother tongue speakers will become conscious about their deprivation because of the discriminator regional language policy of the state. It is only a matter of time when these movements will start when a middle class will emerge in these mother tongues. The silence of these small linguistic groups is because of their educational and social backwardness. J&K is one of the lowest ranking States just above Bihar and Jharkhand in literacy

Pahari language like Gojri also cuts across district and regional boundaries. The Paharis are generally poor people who had remain deprived of their socio-political and economic rights for a long period, the politically continuous middle class of the pahari speakers are now demanding ST(Schedule Tribe) status for the pahari speaking people.

Pahari peoples are demanding the time of pahari programmes should increase, even they want news bulletin in their own language like Dogri, Urdu etc., socially upliftment of their own people, there major demand i.e., ST Status (Schedule Tribe), also demanding for inclusion of pahari language in the 8th schedule, inclusion in Sahitya Academy, now they are demanding their own separate region, inclusion in civil services, universities, schools etc.

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