

Hitherto neglected Gujjar, Bakerwal & Pahari communities

When on the one hand, the country and its states and UTs are consistently, though steadily, developing fast in almost every sphere, it is a natural corollary that all sections of the society should be partakers, on the basis of equity, of the fruits of such development. In case, certain sections remain behind, it is incumbent upon the governments in power from time to time both at the centre and at state (and UT levels) to find out the reasons thereof. If it is not done either intentionally or even innocently, may be due to sheer recklessness, in that case - the claims of our democratic and socialist order wherein the fruits of and participative role in development in respect of the last person standing in the queue is feared to be reduced to mere rhetoric. Heterogeneity in and scattering of a vast population in "difficult", remote, and virtually poorly connected mountainous areas by road and other modes should, in no way, be any sort of a ground in denial of the rightful due to such sections of our population in Jammu and Kashmir. Instead, are they not entitled to preferred treatment and a status granted as a special case to fight economic, educational, infrastructural and even social backwardness?

In this connexion, the moot point is not only about knowing a discrepancy or anomalies galore that exist but the same needing first to be identified and diagnosed followed by devising a cogent solution. Gujjars, Bakerwals and Paharis - to be more modest - those living in and around hilly and mountainous difficult terrains-in Jammu and Kashmir, have for decades, been demanding justice for them looking to the most difficult topographies they live in. Their main activity of agriculture which has its own problems in such areas followed by certain communities among them like Bakerwals taking to traditional sheep and goat rearing, even in certain cases horses, and transhumance as the very nature of such a traditional occupation and mode of livelihood, have been demanding justice and redressing of their problems.

These communities, especially Bakerwals alternate with the seasons between high and low altitudes in Jammu and Kashmir and can be seen doing this on the eve of the onset of winter and summer seasons moving from higher reaches to plains and vice versa along with their entire live stocks of sheep and goats. These communities, in fact, in totality, have been voicing their concern and expressing even dismay over promises having been made by successive governments and much less done on the ground to ameliorate their lot and giving them their due rights. Now, such a trend is poised to be reversed as promised publicly by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah much to the overwhelming response of joy and vindication of the stand of the people.

These communities are, therefore, slated to get benefits of reservation strictly in accordance with the findings of and recommendations by the Justice Sharma Commission which was set up by the Lieutenant Governor to look into various issues and problems confronted by the communities under reference living in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir particularly examining the issue of quota. It may be reiterated that the Commission has, in its report, recommended reservation for these communities. In other words the Commission has unambiguously recommended these communities, viz Gujjars, Bakerwals and Paharis to be included for ST quota benefits. Very importantly, with reference to it, the Union Home Minister made a public announcement in Rajouri that "it will be given soon", however, there will be no decline of any sort in ST quota of these communities and that "everyone will get their share" much to the thumping applause and cheer by a "historic" gathering of the public with dominance of the communities under reference who had assembled at the venue to hear the Union Minister's speech.

Reports are that such a huge gathering of people who had travelled miles and hailing from far flung areas could not find the venue with enough space and many had therefore to climb trees and house-tops to hear the Union Home Minister. Police had tough time to manage the huge gathering and regulate smooth movement to and fro the venue. Not only are the people of the particular region known for their hard work, industry and facing challenges of various hues bravely but are duly known for their patriotism and having resisted militancy and allied ills. Noting this eloquently, the Union Home Minister termed the valour and love of the people of Rajouri and Poonch "standing like rocks for security of India" and further said that "the entire country salutes them". Analysing that the announcement by the country's Home Minister about reservation of these communities based on recommendation of the Justice Sharma Commission and the gathering of people both were historic and shall now pave the way for smooth and fast development of the neglected areas which remained behind due to constraints of topography or geographical humps.

To call a spade a spade, the reversal of sheer injustice to these deprived and hitherto neglected communities of Jammu and Kashmir would have not been possible had Articles 370 and 35 A not been abrogated. Taking a jibe at those who opposed such an abrogation, the Union Home Minister asked them what had those in power for decades done for neglected sections of the society. Delimitation Commission about redrawing constituencies of the Assembly seats about which the Union Home Minister made a mention, could result in increase of seats in hilly areas like Rajouri, Poonch, Doda and Kishtwar and, therefore, people of these areas shall have added representation and hence their voices heard properly.

Technological advancement in online education

Dr Tasaduk Hussain Itoo

Online education has seen significant growth in today's world of technological advancement and internet revolution. Forming one of the most important aspects in today's education domain, it has taken away the limitations of sitting in a classroom for learning; hindrances such as transportation, location, accessibility and cost.

With more than 500 million internet users and hundreds of local as well as global business tycoons willing to invest in the future of education -- online education in India has picked up pace since last few years. In fact, the e-learning market in the country is estimated to be worth more than \$3.5 billion.

While many top class universities now offer distant online courses bringing the best instructors and professors into the homes of students, online education has revolutionised the way we look at education in current era. In terms of online enrolments, India ranks second only behind the United States -- comprising of over fifteen percent of students worldwide -- the students get access to some of the best courses around the world and get skilled in various domains.

Years back, I conducted a series of live interview sessions with some India's top educators and You Tubers to lay practical emphasis on online education. Various educators from many states of India, including Jammu and Kashmir joined the sessions, put their views about online education and shared their experiences being online educators on largest educational platforms of India.

The educators stressed upon benefits of online education for both teaching and student community, its role in empowerment and edupreneurship and the revolution it has brought about in the overall learning and educational scenario in the world during current times of technological advancement.

While talking about the benefits of online education, one of the best and foremost benefits is EASY ACCESSIBILITY. A student need not to visit to a particular location to attend a course, rather he can pick up a course from any country and successfully complete it in the comfort of his home.

Having said that, since last few years the information and communication technologies have revolutionized the education system by introducing

MOOC have emerged as a strong weapon to combat employability skills challenge by providing cost-effective access to customised courses from best of the teachers and universities across the globe. Moreover, many top universities are now designing customised lectures and curriculum for MOOC platforms.

virtual classrooms and online tutorials to make quality education affordable and accessible to all. With regard to this development, the Government of India launched various projects such as National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) and National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT). Moreover, the NEP 2020 by streamlining the education system, also focuses on technological advancement in online education.

Second important benefit of online education is cost effectiveness and affordability. Since these courses do not require students to physically attend the class, it is mostly a cheaper alternative that

enables people to learn at lower costs. While some believe that online education is not as effective as traditional education systems, however it can be said that these courses enable students to understand and learn the course at comparatively lower costs than offline education.

Moreover, students from various backgrounds can opt for such courses provided they have a smart phone. A student gets an opportunity to learn from the best teachers around the world without a limi-

ted space, time or money and definitely it gives an edge factor over the traditional system of education.

More to say, online education courses are flexible -- a student gets to choose what, when, how much to study empowers him beyond measure, and the variety of courses available on online platforms offers a huge canvas to the learner's community. While some people believe that an online degree does not hold as much value as a traditional degree, however this is not true. The degree holds just as much value and how you perform on the online course helps to shape your career.

In the current scenario, massive open online

courses (MOOCs) are seen as a powerful technology-enriched tool to address the challenges of learners in underdeveloped countries like India. According to experts in the education sector, MOOC have emerged as a strong weapon to combat employability skills challenge by providing cost-effective access to customised courses from best of the teachers and universities across the globe. Moreover, many top universities are now designing customised lectures and curriculum for MOOC platforms.

Easy accessibility to the high-speed internet on mobile phones and an increase in demand for skilled workforce have acted as the prime factors. To exemplify it, Coursera and edX are among the top global MOOC providers -- with edX offering over thousand courses from over hundred global institutions, and from over ten million global learners at edX, around one million are from India; while as Coursera has partnership with over hundred of the world's universities and offers around two thousand courses and around hundred specialisations - having more than twenty-five million global learners, of which around two million are from India. However, India has always been a priority market for edX, because of its strong partnerships with Indian Institutions like IIT Bombay, IIM Bangalore, and BITS Pilani, and blended learning partners like NIIT and Pearson to impart job-ready skills to learners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the future belongs to blended education/learning model or largely online. MOOCs (online education) though can't replace universities in actual sense, rather may help in enhancing the quality of education by incorporating blended learning. This model would create better efficiencies and can foster a better quality of education as a whole.

Dr C M Seth

International Geodiversity Day is being celebrated on 6th October, this year for the first time, by UNSECO realizing the importance of Geodiversity for the sustainable development of human environment. United Nations has been celebrating many environmental and Climate Change days to create awareness about burning issues of environmental degradation, pollution, green house gases and Global warming. United Nation and its other wings like UNEP and UNSECO are engaged in making human environment sustainable on this planet Earth. Geodiversity and Geoheritage sites was one area which did not receive much attention in the past by the international body for its conservation. To make world community aware about its importance and policy interventions by different countries, UNSECO decided to celebrate geodiversity day from this year onwards. Governments of different countries have been directed to make Policy, Acts, rules and regulations for identification of Geo-heritage sites, Geo-Parks, Geo Museums, Geo-heritage trails, Fossil Parks, etc. Many countries have already set up Geo Parks and Geo Heritage sites. In India, too, many states have started establishing these Parks with unique Geological characters. Geological Survey of India have established Fossil Parks in HP, MP, Gujarat, TN, UP, WB and Rajasthan states.

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh have rare geological features like Krakoram mountain ranges, Himalayan mountain ranges and Shiwalik mountain ranges. All these mountain ranges contain unique and rare geological features which need to be identified and preserved for posterity. At present, uncontrolled extraction of minerals is being carried out from these mountains which endangers these landscapes. In Ladakh, we have natural Geysers in Puga valley, Tatpani Kalakote.

Jammu Fossil Park

In Kashmir we have high quality limestone deposits at Khrew and Baramulla. Marble and Granite of Kupwara district. In Jammu, we have Gypsum deposits at Assar and Par Lanka. Lamayuru moonland is unique geological landscape. Kashmir valley and its Karewa deposits have rich treasure of plant and animal fossils which helps GEO scientists to know about the climate and vegetation of prehistoric times. Earlier scientific studies of Prof. Birbal Sahni, Prof. Midlemis and Prof. D.N. Wadia have contributed in discovery of Plant and animal fossils in J&K.

fossils. Geologists have discovered in Shiwaliks of Jammu and Samba districts, fossils of earlier ancestors of Elephant and many animals and plants which have become extinct in these areas. One such discovery was of Stegodon ganesa tusk from Jagti Nagrota Shiwalik. One tusk is lying in museum of Geology department of science college and other two tusks are lying in the museum of Geological Survey of India, Jammu. Other discovery was from Nangal village of Samba district of Elephas planifrons. Fossils of earlier species of elephants have also been discovered from

Kashmir valley which are now lying in Wadia natural history museum of Jammu University. These discoveries recognise the significance of Jammu Shiwaliks as a rich heritage of fossils.

This heritage needs further explorations and its preservation by establishing JAMMU FOSSIL PARK near or within Jammu ZOO located near Jagti Nagrota. This Fossil Park will not only have fossils of plants and animals but can also include models of Dinosaurs in Dinosaur Park. This Fossil Park can also have one section dedicated to rare minerals, rocks and other precious stones found in the mountain ranges of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. I have not discussed here about listing of Geo Parks and Geosites which also need immediate attention of the state/UT government.

Jammu Fossil Park, once established will be another attraction for the tourists visiting the state, in addition to Jammu Zoo, Tawi Lake, Aquarium, Tawi river front park and Mubarak Mandi Dogra Heritage site. All these development projects will help the UT to increase the footfall of tourists and economy of Jammu city. Besides its educational and awareness value, addition of Fossil Park will enhance the preferred tourist sites of India. I request civil society of Jammu, political leadership of Jammu and Chamber of Commerce Jammu to support this dream project. I also appeal to Dr. Jatindra Singh Minister for Earth Sciences and Lt. Governor of J&K and its administration to direct concerned to prepare a DPR of this project and approve the same for setting up Fossil Park near Jammu Zoo with adequate provision of funds. Geological Survey of India, Geology and mineral department of J&K, Geology departments of Science College and Jammu University can collaborate for establishing Fossil Park in Jammu.

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Mohd Amin Mir

Revenue department is the oldest one and very important. Land records are maintained by this department. Categories of land-agriculture, non agriculture, Banjri jaded, Bangri Qadeem, etc is looked after by this department. The department maintains all the relevant records viz. Jamabandies, Girdawaries, Mutation registers, records of rights, Fardi Portal, etc and so many other records. Revenue department's basic solidier patwari having the hectic schedule always keeps and maintains these essential records ready for reference to the government in particular and the public in general.

Jamabandi as an essential document contains all the information of different types of land mentioned with different survey numbers. A survey number is a fixed number given to a fixed piece of land during settlement in an estate. There are twelve columns in a Jamabandi form. It is believed that reading of Jamabandi is a very specialised task of revenue officials and far away from the knowledge of general masses. But in the present scenario everybody should have a basic knowledge of revenue records. Having 12 columns each columns depicts unique information. Jamabandi is also called "char sala" meaning it is written after an interval of four years. The mutations attested from the preparation of previous Jamabandi of an estate needs to be incorporated in the remarks column of that Jamabandi with red ink as these entries become visible and entries in the Khanakast should be tallied with the current Girdawari.

Maximum Jamabandies of all the estate were prepared in year 1969-70 and 1970-71 before the commencement of Agrarian Reforms Act

After a gap of twenty years new Jamabandies were prepared in all estates of the erstwhile state i.e. 1992-93, 1993-1994, 1994, 1995 till 1999. The then officials prepared this essential document but maximum Jamabandies were not checked and are without signature of the attesting officials and officers. This unattested record gave birth to

Revenue Department Digitalization of new Jamabandies

many embezzlements and many litigations, suits are yet to be decided that are languishing in many competent courts (revenue and civil) for judgments, and resulted in many poor people of the society face hardships. Someone has lost ownership rights and another one has his ternary rights. On the other hand this non-seriousness gave rise to land-mafias.

Again after a gap of almost 30 years land records information system was launched in the year 2017 in UT in the name of Aap Ki Zameen Aap Ki Nigrani under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme. All the land records of the country have been made available online. Our union territory has also launched this programme. All the previous available records have been scanned by the revenue department in collaboration with Ram Tech company. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have used this online system to check the records of their land. For this purpose people visit Common Service Centres to check their land records and status of land. As a result, rush has decreased in Central and District Record Rooms and also Tehsil Offices, because it is a single window that handles the land records like Jamabandi, Girdawari extracts, mutation copies, information about other miscellaneous works of revenue department etc. This online system of revenue land records has so many benefits. Such as, the transparency in maintaining land records is enhanced thereby reducing property disputes, saves one's time, fuel and efforts, speedup the process of land acquisition.

For home buyers and donor, the complete details of the ownership of the property he/she wants to buy or sell and it will help him/her to check for transparent market based pricing before buying a plot of land. It also shows clarity over ownership status, easier online

approval of plans and occupancy certificates, Court cases will be reduced implies litigations will come down and land mafia system will be checked. By digitalizing of revenue records manipulation will be curbed and improvement in functioning of revenue officials and officers will be mentioned effectively. The Revenue Department in collaboration with Ram Tech have already

already developed a software for it. Meanwhile settlement commissioner ordered that it is mandatory on the part of revenue department that once the scanning is complete, the entries of these Jamabandies should be read before the Zamindars in front of Lumberdars and Chowkidars for their genuineness.

Instead reading these essential doc-

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scanned the records. Writing of new Jamabandies took place from year 2016. It is mentioned that a patwari has many villages in his charge and almost all 6912 villages got completed till 15th August 2021. These Jamabandies either prepared by retired persons of the Revenue Department or hurriedly by a patwari himself were not cross checked properly and were deposited in Regional Director Land Records (RDRL) for scanning. But this wing of the department took the best initiative for the first time by thoroughly verifying these written documents and called patwaris for cross check and correction. Once it was done, these Jamabandies were scanned by the Ram Tech company that had

ments, the department engaged all the field functionaries as computer operators from other departments in digitalizing these Jamabandies. Insiders believe that once digitalization is complete and the record of these newly prepared Jamabandies becomes available for the public domain, its impact on society will be dangerous. Fresh disputes and litigations will arise and somewhere the department will be on the toes. It is suggested that once the digitalization that runs on far footing basis is complete, these Jamabandies should be read before zamindars and mistakes found (if any and it is believed these are many) shall be rectified before making it an online document. I salute to these

brave patwaries who are working day and night in digitalization.

The information of land records especially recent prepared Jamabandies are made available to the global audience there by access is not restricted to those who visit the physical location, saving time. Before digitalization, manual processing was delaying work. By digitalizing new Jamabandies, we can expect reliable outcomes every time and related work will help Revenue Department to achieve greater transparency and fairness. It will reduce the time to complete a task. By digitalization, as the manual job ends the employees of the department can focus keenly towards difficult work ahead i.e settlement. The work will be done faster and mistakes will be fewer. But a patwari can make better use of his/her time at work. Transparency is critical for a long term success of Revenue Department. Recently prepared Jamabandies is a well documented process and it will boost revenue departments visibility. Human is prone to error than computers. So digitalization process can minimize errors.

Jamabandi is updated after every four years. However same pattern was not followed in past, resulting into a good number of these Jamabandies are without any updation from last five decades. Truly saying it is the failure on the part of our colleagues over the last five decades that has put my colleagues in a tight spot. The patwaries were directed to update these Jamabandies on war footing basis.

It is expected that all changes in title and interests of the estate coming into the notice of revenue department were not reflected in these Jamabandies as was found visible when these Jamabandies were re-verified at Regional Director Land Records Offices. Even few patwaries hired retired revenue officials at the fixed re-numeration that ranged from Rs 2500 to one lakh. At Regional Director Land Records Offices these Jamabandies got re-verified and later checked by patwaries for error.

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