

A Politico-Cultural History of Gujjars in the District Bhimber, Azad Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

The tribal traits of the Gujjars make them unique. They live in many provinces of the Indian subcontinent. This article explains the politico-cultural history of the Gujjars of the Bhimber. They are abodes of Gujarat and Rajasthan and former Gurjistan (Georgia). It also explores the relations of the Gujjars with other tribes. Indian historians have proved that the origin and race of the Gujjar, Jatt and Rajput are one. It has been proven through DNA analysis. The current research article investigates whether the Gujjars and others have the same politico-cultural history or not. This research throws light on the political history of the Gujjars of the District Bhimber, who have been living there permanently for many centuries. They are the owners of several specific lands, wherein they play an important role in the politics and economy. This research article throws light on the politico-cultural conditions of the Bhimber in general, particularly, a tribe of Gujjar. It also explains that they are the remains of ancient kings such as Porus, Kanishka and Jaypala. They have been gaining a majority in the election of AJ&K since 1947. A large number of MLAs are selected among them. But they are not associated with the same political party; that is why they have not made their prime minister till now. This research discusses Gujjar's MLAs of AJ&K. From the Bhimber, they always elect an MLA. They also earn a name in the local politics of it. However, they are considering a strong community of it. They have a huge vote bank in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, specifically in the Bhimber.

Keywords: Gujjars, Bhimber, Politico-Cultural History

INTRODUCTION

The politico-cultural history of the Gujjars makes them unique. They have a subjugated status all over the Azad Jammu and Kashmir, especially in the District Bhimber. They ruled over the Indian subcontinent and other Central Asian countries by adopting titles of their caste or sub-caste. They ruled over Kashmir during Maharaja Porus, Kanishka Jaypala and other eras. These emperors and kings belonged to the Gujjars. Raja Dahir belonged to Brahmin Gujjar. Shah Miri rulers of Kashmir, who ruled over Kashmir from 1339 to 1556, belonged to the Gujjars. Bhimber is located in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K¹) and it is an important district of the region. It was known as Bhimber state till the 18th century. The Chibs ruled over it, and they claimed that they were descendants of the Chouhan (Gurjars) dynasty. It is considered that the Gujjars have played an important role in all departments, specifically politico-cultural developments of Bhimber. They have taken on the same role as other castes, such as Jatts, Chibs, Lohars, and Chamats, for the betterment of Bhimber. (Gujjar Gonj Gazette, 1991). They have a well-defined difference and maturity in the socio-cultural and politico-economic phases by all other tribes of Bhimber. They constitute a large tribe of the world. Therefore, it is transparently known as the main ethnic group in the world (Habib, 2008: 1-2). The Gurjars (Gujjars) had been ruling over India since the historical periods,

¹AJ&K is an abbreviation of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and it is an official name of Azad Kashmir.

and several families were called Rajputs after the British period. The Rajput, Maratha Jatts and Ahir are heirs of the Kshatriyas. They are not foreigners, and no community is known to call a Kshatriya except Gurjars (Gujjars). Rajpoots, Marathas, Ahirs and Jatts are the stars, whereas Gurjars (Gujjars) are the moon in the Kshatriya's sky. It is beyond human power to lessen the dignity of Gurjars/Gujjars (Rajput, 2020: 2).

The Bhimber is considered a district of AJ&K wherein the Gujjars constitute a major population rather than all other tribes. It is considered that they are the largest tribe of AJ&K. District Bhimber is divided into three tehsils. Tehsil Barnala has a vast area, and it has a large population. It is full of Gujjars. There are three constituencies in Bhimber, and LA-5 Barnala is one of them. Due to their majority, they win the election. From 1975 onwards, they won four times. In the political history of Barnala, they are known as a respectable Cols family because their first to last candidates had retired from the Pakistan Army as colonels (Ahmed, 2021: 1-8).

LA-5 Barnala is divided into seven union councils. Local elections had been held several times, and the Gujjars got a majority in it. In these UCs, their candidates participate in elections. They have been winning elections since 1975. Recently, an election was held, and they got a majority of more than four UCs. Dr. Yousif Chaudhary of Chammb Shamali was selected as the chairman of Bhimber in the local elections. In the first election of LA-5 Barnala, which was held in 1975, Col. Abdul Aziz participated. From Barnala, all participants of Gujjars were retired army officers. Economically, they are prosperous. In business, they earned fame over Bhimber. As well as their culture is also divided into two classes such as refugee and local (Ahmed, 2023: 1-4).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, the study goes back to the ancient political periods of the Gujjars of Bhimber. Although much has been written about the Gujjars, there is great potential to probe and produce some healthy academic work focusing on the political and economic history of the Gujjars in Bhimber. In this context, some of the literature has been given below:

Muhammad has produced valuable work on the people of history, especially about the Gujjar tribe. The study is based on the constructive and critical analysis of the political and economic history of the Gujjars. He has produced a valuable work on the history of Kashmir. He also discussed the Gujjars of Kashmir. His research work on Kashmir, especially about the kings of Poonch who were Gujjars and ruled over it till 1823, opened a new door of study for researchers (Ased, 1997: 121). However, he focused on the limited aspects of the political and economic history of the Gujjars. The book entitled "Jammu Kashmir Book of Knowledge" is based on the ancient history of Kashmir. He focused on the Bhimber state of Chibs, who were descendants of Chouhans. His study explained that Chouhan is a sub-caste of Gujjars. His statement is very helpful to the researcher that Bhimber is remained a gate way for the invaders to attack on the Kashmir valley. Saeed is a researcher and social activist. This book gives a general view of Kashmir, especially about Bhimber. He not only highlighted the history of Bhimber and its historical background but also the political events of it. He also explored the word Bhimber and how it came into being. He explored the forces which played a vital role at the interface of Gujjars and other tribes of Bhimber (Ased, 1997: 122). As a primary author, the researcher visited many places and *deras* (Urdu: social centres). Interviews have been conducted with many personalities to complete this research paper. The Gujjars MLAs have dominated status in both departments, such as politics and economy. During this work, it has proved that they are a prosperous and developed community of Bhimer (Ahmed, 2023).

The *Tarikh-e-Gujran* is a book which presents details about the importance of the study of people's culture and history. The author explained about the land of Gurjistan, which was found in the former

USSR. It was the motherland of the Gujjars. He explained seven authentic reasons to clarify that the Gujjar is not a small tribe as people usually think. In this book, he narrated in full detail that the Gujjars belonged to one of the ruling classes of the subcontinent. He also points out their braveries (Sialkoti, 2005). Khan explains in his book titled *Shahan-e-Gujran: Gujjars-From Plains to Himalayas-series-II* the political empowerment of the Gujjars in different eras and discusses their *Gotras*. He also discussed their political and economic aspects from history. His studies provide a detailed analysis of a broader motive in Pakistan that is critical in the historical and cultural attempts to fulfil the history of people. He thoroughly investigated their famous ruler (Khan, 2002). Chouhan's book *The Short History of Gujjars* analyzes the political and economic history of the Gujjars. It concluded that they were the forefathers of the Rajputs and they had brought significant improvements in the political developments (Chouhan, 1996). *The Gujjars: A Book on History and Culture of Gujjar Tribe* is a remarkable work of Rahi. In his book, he explores not only the lifestyle of the Gujjars but also their political and economic history in Jammu and Kashmir. Particularly, he focused on Jammu and Kashmir, but he did not discuss Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan (Rahi, 2016).

METHODS AND MATERIAL

In this research article, mostly the primary and secondary data is used to comprehend the political history of the Gujjars. Primary data of personal communication is also used for this study. The primary author has visited Gujjar's *deras* to conduct interviews or questionnaires. This is qualitative research to provide an in-depth historical and political analysis of the Gujjars. Quantitative methods of research are also used to clear the number of MLAs among them. The present research paper used descriptive and analytical methods in the completion of research work.

Politico-Cultural History of the Gujjars in AJ&K and Indian-Occupied Kashmir

The politico-cultural history of the Gujjars in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) and Indian- Occupied Kashmir (IOK) is a significant subject of study. They are considered the main power in both parts of Kashmir. They have a clear majority on both sides of Kashmir. Many personalities earned a great name in the politics of AJ&K, such as Javaid Rana and Zeshan Javid Rana. Both MLAs belonged to Mehnder (Poonch) Indian Occupied Kashmir. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas was born in Jammu, and he joined the Muslim Conference, which was considered the right arm of the Muslim League. Mian Bashir is also an MLA from JK. More than 15 MLAs are elected from JK if elections are held there free and fair. Shibzada Ashaq Zafar, Ashfaq Zafar, Ch. Latif Akbar and Ch Rasheed are also well-known MLAs of the Muzafarabad division (AJ&K). Ch. Lal Hussain Bannain, who is a student of Qazi Noor Ahmed Khan Ba-Bannain, has been selected as an MLA from Nakyal LA-9 Kotli-II. This constituency is currently represented by Ch. Javaid Iqbal Badhanavi. The Nakyal is a sub-caste of the Gujjars (Rana, 2022: 1-8). Matloob Inqalabi was elected from Khoiratta in 2011. Rafique Naeer has also been elected from the same constituency. Mumtaz Rathor, Faisal Rathor and Ch. Muhammad Aziz was also elected from Farward Khuhuta. Ch. Akbar Ibrahim and Haji Jaivid Iqbal have been elected many times from Gujrat Refugee seats. Chaudhary Ismail Gujjar and Maqbol Gujjar have been elected several times from the Gujranwala Refugee settlement in Pakistan. Chaudhary Riaz of Sialkot also remains the speaker of AJ&K.

Chaudhary Rakhsar of Khari-Chechian (Mirpur) has been elected many times. Col. Inam-ul-Haq and Col. Waqar Ahmed Noor have also been elected from Bhimber. From the Sialkot refugees, MLAs are Hafiz Ahmed Raza Qaderi, Akmal Sargala and Chaudhary Ashaq. They belong to the Gujjars (Rana, 2022: 1-8). The Great Gujjars are an ancient and historical tribe who are not living just in Pakistan but are found in many other countries of the world. They are called by various names in other countries. For example, Gujjars are called Qajjar in Turkey, Khizar and Jazaer in the Arabian countries, and Gurji in Central Asian countries, but in the Indian subcontinent, they are called Gurjar, Gujjar and Gojer, etc. It is said that

they are a mixture of Aryan or non-Aryan (Chouhan, 1992: 23). The Gujjars claimed that Iskandeross Gurji (who was a grandson of Alexander the Great) belonged to their forefather. Their ancestors were ruled from Georgia to the Indian subcontinent for many years. Their famous and foremost rulers were Porus, Kanishka, Huns, Gurjar Pratihar, Jaypal Khatana and Prithvi Raj Chouhan, Rana Sanga (Sango: a sub-caste of Gujjars), Qajjar Kings of Turkey and many others. In Turkey, they are regarded as Qajjars. That dynasty ruled over Turkey for many years. The word Gurjar means in Sanskrit to destroy the enemies. It has been considered for many centuries that the Gujjars are the forefathers of Rajputs (Maryam, 2017: 67). Shah Mir is considered among the Gujjars of Kashmir. He was from an abode of Swat. He belonged to the Gujjars. He was an important figure among the Gujjars of Kashmir. He ruled over Kashmir from 1339 to 1342.

During his era, Islam had spread all over Kashmir. His family ruled over Kashmir for more than two hundred and sixteen years (Pandit, 1990: 109). There was a state before Islam in Bhimber. During the Era of Chibs, there lived a large number of Gujjars with dominant status. Now, the Gujjars are considered a main tribe of Bhimber, and they are found in many areas of it, such as UC Baghsar and Bandala in LA-4 Samahni and LA-3 Bhimber and their majority is settled in LA-5 Barnala. The Gujjar MLAs were elected five times as a members of the legislature assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Col. Inaam-ul-Haq also remained a member of the Kashmir Council (Ased, M. 2018: 303). The Gujjars had a dominant position at that time, and a large number of villages were named after them. The Jatts and Gujjars are farmers, and they are doing agriculture in the Bhimber. They are alike by profession. Their culture and economic strength are also the same. It is a single plain area in Azad Jammu and Kashmir which is suitable for crops. It is estimated that the crop production of the Bhimber is more than entire districts of AJ&K. Raja Sultan Khan was considered the last ruler of Bhimber who was killed by Ghalab Singh in a deceiving invitation at Jammu (Ahmed, 2023: 1-8).

The Gujjar and Jatts of Bhimber always lived in unity and had a close relationship. The intermarriage among them was common. British divided them into two identifications for their benefit. In the Dogra Period, both were considered downtrodden communities of Kashmir because they were Muslims. In that period, a conference came into being, which was known as the Gujjar-Jatt Conference. Before the British, the Gujjars were in the majority, but due to bad dealings with the British, a large number converted into Jatts. Historians suppose the idea behind that factor is that the Gujjars were mostly involved in the mutiny of 1857 against the British, and that is why they made them landless. General Bakhit Khan Gujjar was the main personality of the mutiny of 1857. Kadam Singh Gurjar led the Gujjars against the British (Tishna, 2005: 171). The Gujjars of Indian-Occupied Kashmir are prosperous and developed. They work in all departments (Jammu and Kashmir Times, 2023).

Two types of Gujjars are living in Barnala Local and Refugee. Both play an important role in the economic and political development of LA-5 Barnala, AJ&K. Many persons among the Gujjars are serving in the Pakistan Army. A large number are doing agriculture in the fields of Bhimber; that is why they earned a name not only in politics but also in the economic developments of Bhimber (Ahmed, 2022: 5).

Politico-Cultural History of the Noor Family of the Tehsil Barnala, District Bhimber

There are many sub-castes of Gujjars who are living in the Barnala. It is located in District Bhimber to the North of Punjab. Awan Shareef, a village in Punjab, is situated to its south, and Kotjamel and Chamb (AJ&K) are situated to its east, as well as Thup Patni and Nali are situated to its north. The Bhimber town is situated to the northwest of it. There is a large number of Gujjars who are living in it. Among them, the Noor family or Cols group is very famous all over the District Bhimber. Most of the members have worked in the Pak Army. The Noor Family is also known as a colonel family of AJ&K. Major General Zia-ul-Haq was an important figure among them, and he served as a Major General in the Pakistan Army.

Recently, more than three Major Generals have presented them. Transitional changes have been seen from a cultural point of view. Therefore, these people are moderate and well-settled. Economically, they are developed and prosperous. In the past, they were considered among the landlords of the United Punjab. They became a brand in Tehsil Barnala of Bhimber. Col. Inam-ul-Haq Noor was the first minister of rehabilitation among them. He also remained a member of the Kashmir Council and his period 1985 to 1996. He won the election twice from the LA-5 Barnala. Firstly, he won the election in 1985 and remained minister till 1990. In 1990, he again participated in the election and won by a large margin. He was the ticket holder of the Muslim Conference. Muslim Conference is an important political party of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He served as a minister till 1996 (Qayyom, 2023: 1-2).

In the elections of 2016 and 2021, Col. Waqar Ahmed Noor won with a large margin. Now, he has become the most senior minister of Azad Kashmir. Col. Inam-ul-Haq's son Chaudhary Anwar-ul-Haq also participated in the election of 2021, but he got only 3000 votes, and he was the nominated candidate of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaaf. A son of Col. Inaam-ul-Haq is serving in the Pak Army as a Major General, and his name is Qammar-ul-Haq Noor. Ch. Ahsaan-ul-Haq Noor was a registrar in the Supreme Court of Azad Kashmir. Ikram-ul-Haq Noor is the son of Ahsan-ul-Haq Noor, and he is an Air Voice Martial in the Pakistan Air Force. Mudasser Khurshid Jindher is a brigadier in the Pakistan Army, and his father, Bahadur Khan, also served as a captain. Sajid Mehmood Meemla is also a brigadier in Pak Army. Major General Zia-ul-Haq's son is a colonel in the Pakistan Army, and his name is Muneeb-ul-Haq. Col. Abdul Qayyom Khan was a famous name among the Gujjars of Barnala. He had two sons; one of them is still serving in the Pakistan Army, and his name is Col. Qaiser Chaudhary. His second son is working as a professor of English in Govt. Degree College Barnala. A large number of teachers, professors and doctors in Barnala belong to them (Qayyom, 2023: 1-3). Dr. Farooq Ahmad Noor was appointed as the DG of Health of AJ&K. He is the son of Col. Abdul Ghani Noor. Before that, he was serving as an MS in the DHQ of Mirpur. Sajid Aziz Noor is a first cousin of Dr. Farooq Ahmad Noor, and he remained as a Chairman of the Mirpur Board, Secondary and Higher Secondary Education. He has already worked as a Deputy Secretary of Colleges in the AJ&K (Qayyom, 2023: 1-3).

Politico-Cultural History of Charr Gujjars in Tehsil Barnala, District Bhimber

There are 16 Gotras of Gujjar living in the Barnala, and they came to various places and settled therein 1st and 2nd centuries. These sub-castes are as follows:

Charr, Barget, Kisana/Kishan, Khatana, Munin, Meemla, Dahu Najik, Jindher, Chouhan, Lohser, Bajjar, Thikria/Thaker, Kalus, Jangal/Jagal, Gors, and Phanbra. The forefather of the Charr family was Ch. Mansib Dad Khan Charr. The Bargets were their maternal family. One group of the Charr lived in the District Gujrat (Punjab), and their village name was Mallowal. Ch. Sahib Dad Khan had two sons such as Subedar Sardar Khan Charr and Muhammad Shareef Khan Charr. Moreover, Sardar Khan Charr also had three sons such as Ch. Mushtaq Ahmed Charr, Haji Mumtaz Ahmed Charr and Chief Officer Ch. Zulfqar Ahmed Charr. The Charr Family has earned fame all over Barnala due to business and politics. Many people among them were linked to politics, such as Mushtaq Ahmed Charr. Ch. Muhammad Saqib Akram belongs to Tehseel Barnala, and he is the principal of Kashmir Model College, Mirpur. Ch. Pervaiz Ajmal Charr is a librarian at Major General Zia-ul-Haq Boys College Barnala. In the Charr Gujjar Family, more than 10 females are MBBS doctors, and they are serving in various hospitals in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan. The Charr Family has more than 10 stone crushers, and they sell these crushers to Pakistan. The ratio of education among the Charr Gujjar Family is more than 90%. Many people them are abroad, especially in Western countries (Ajmel, 2023).

Politico-Cultural History of Local and Refugee Gujjars in District Bhimber

The Gujjars of District Bhimber are quite different and mature from all other tribes. They are well settled in Bhimber, especially in Barnala. Several MLAs of Gujjars have been elected from LA-5 Barnala. They have won this contest more than four times because they constituted a majority in LA-5 Barnala. It has seven union councils. They constitute a majority among four such as Chamb Shamali, Chamb Janubi, Pangali and Barnala. In Barnala, they were divided into two groups; one of them migrated from Indian Occupied Kashmir in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1989. They are known as Refugee Gujjars. They know very well how to speak Gujari, which is considered a main source of Urdu. The others are locals of Barnala, and they are prosperous and well-settled because they have been living here since the first century CE. They are well educated, and many people among them joined the Pakistan Army as generals, brigadiers, colonels, majors and captains. There are two Degree Colleges in Barnala; one for boys and the other for girls. The Boys Degree College is located near the Barnala Bridge, and it is known as Government General Zia-ul-Haq College (Raja, 2019: 1-8).

In the Local Election of LA-5 Barnala in 2022, most district councillors who have won belong to Gujjars. From UC Baranala, Ch. Rashid Mehmood Advocate and Maqqader Abass Jindher have won the local election. Ch. Mubasher Rohaila won the local district councillor election in Pangali. Ch. Gul. Nawaz Porr has won the election from Chamb Janubi. Five district councilors belonged to the Gujjars in LA-5 Barnala. The Gujjars are quite separate from other castes except Jatts because both are doing agriculture. They are the same by profession. Therefore, they follow some old traditions and customs. Now they have become a brand in the Barnala. Both groups of Gujjars, refugees and locals of Barnala, have some same traditions. The locals of Barnala are keeping the Punjabi culture. They are landlords of Barnala. They have two houses, one for living and the other for pet animals (live stocks). They are very fond of poultry forms which are full of buffaloes, cows and other animals. They are very fond of horse riding therefore, they keep Turkey or Arabian horses in their *deras* (Urdu: livestock house or social centre). A fair was held in Dhuranwali, which was specifically for horse riding.

All the Gujjars used to participate in that competition that was held every year. In past, they maintained the peace of that area, a Sardar among them was very famous who said to his people especially guests, "Don't worry about your ride, I must provide you ride or safety in my area" (Porr, D. 1978: 12). When Refugee came, he provided aid by all means. The cultural dress of local Gujjars has *kameez*, *dhoti* and *pag* (Urdu: shirt, trousers and turban). They are very conscious about their *pages*. It is a belief among them that they put on *pag* to sustain the custom of self-respect. The Refugee Gujjars are somehow different from locals, and their mother language is Gujari, which is spoken by only the old. They migrated from the Jammu region; therefore, they follow their old customs and traditions. Dr. Muhammad Yousif Choudhary was appointed as the chairman of Bhimber in the local election of 2023. He is elected as a chairman through proper channels. He belonged to Phanbra, and his father Maulvi Dil Muhammad also participated in the local election of 1990. Eventually, Dr. Yousif was appointed as the chairman of the district local council of Bhimber. It is also an honor for the Refugee Gujjars of Chamb Shamali (Ahmed, 2023: 1-4).

Politico-Cultural History of the Gujjars of Pakistan

A large number of Gujjars played an important role in the Freedom Movement of Pakistan. Chaudhary Rehmat Ali Khan was one of them. He worked day and night for its independence, and he gave the idea of an Islamic country. He gave a name to a new Islamic Country-Pakistan. He also established the National Movement of Pakistan. He also gave an idea of Usmanistan in Haider Abad Dakin. He also gave the concept of a separate Muslim state in the Indian subcontinent. To make word of Pakistan, he was submitted to all the Muslims Provinces. He took their first or last alphabets and combined them into the word of Pakistan. He was born in Hoshiarpur of Indian Punjab (Baq, S. 2020: 41). Chaudhary Fazal

Elahi Bajjar was the fifth president of Pakistan. He remained president of Pakistan from 1973 to 1978. In the same Era, Imam Fakher Din was appointed an Indian President who also belonged to the Gujjar tribe. He also served as a deputy speaker of the National Assembly. He was born in Marala Kharian, District Gujarat. Qamar Zaman Kaira is considered a legend in the politics of Pakistan. He belonged to the Gujjar tribe. Ased Qaiser of Swabi, who was an ex-speaker of the National Assembly, belongs to the Gujjars. Shafqat Mahmood (a federal education minister of Pakistan), Sardar Yousif and Sardar Yaqub of Mansehra belong to Gujjars. Sardar Sana Ullah Khan Zehrvi, ex-senior minister of Baluchistan, belonged to the Gujjars. A large number of Gujjar served as the Generals of the Pakistan Army, such as Major General Muzaffar-ud-Din, Major General Zia-ul-Haq Noor, Major General Asif, Major General Bilal Akbar, Major General Afzal Chaudhary, etc. (Gujjar Gonj Gazet, 2008: 23).

The Gujjars are the largest tribe of AJ&K Pakistan, and their population is more than 20% of the total population of Pakistan. There are a large number of cities, towns and villages which are named after the Gurjar caste or sub-castes, including Gujranwala and Gujarat (both are district headquarters), Gujjar Khan and Gojra (tehsil headquarters). Kharian, Dinga, Rawat, and Rawal are also sub-castes of Gujjar. As well as Rawat, Rawalpindi was named due to Gujjar sub-castes. These cities and towns are also located on the Grand Trunk Road. A large number of Gujjars live in Islamabad, Gujarat, Gujranwala, Hafiz Abad, Mandi Bahwaldin, Sialkot, Lahore, Atik, Mansehra, Aibat Abad, Hazara, Swat, Deer, Chitral, Malakand, Sawabi, Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi, Hyderabad and Faisalabad. Among them, some are locals, and some are refugees whomigrated from India due to the partition of 1947. They speak all languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Kashmiri and Gojri/Gujari. The Great Gujjars those are living in Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Kashmir always adopt the title of Chaudhary, Malik, Rana, Nawab, Maher, Rajput, Sardar, and Nawabzada, Mian, Sahibzada, Miangul, and Khan (Gujjar Gonj Gazet: 2023: 23). It is considered that the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir came from the Gujarat. In the past, Gujarat was not a province; it was known as a country. Many provinces of the Indian subcontinent were included in it. In the present age, Gujarat is divided into Rajasthan or Rajputana (India). In ancient times, the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, Peshawar, Hazara (KPK, Pakistan) and Gujarat (India) were included in Gujjar Bhomi (Kapoor, 1994: 43-44). The word Gurjar has many meanings in various languages. But in Sanskrit, it is given meanings as follows: destroyer of the enemies. *Gur* means enemy, and *Jur* means destroyer. (Wariko, 2000: 6).



Figure-1.1: Map of Bhimber Regarded caste-wise (Ahmed, 2023)

The Gujjars represent each village of Bhimber. They are living in the majority in several villages of UC Barnala, UC Pangali, UCs of south and north Chamb even in Baghsar, Haripur. They are living in Bhimber. A large number of sub-castes of Gujjars are living in District Bhimber. In past, Bhimber was considered a state. Chibs ruled over it. First and foremost, Chib was a nomad when he arrived in Bhimber. They were descendants of Chouhan Gurjars. It was the Bihmber town, which was known as the capital of Bhimber state. The Bhimber as state administration was started in 1400 CE and ended in the year 1856 (Ram, 1878: 41). It is situated on the route which was built by the Mughals, and it was known as the main entrance of Kashmir valley. It is also recognized as a *Bab-e-Kashmir* (Urdu: a common word for door to enter in Kashmir Valley) because of its magnitude and geographical position, which gave a safe way for the Mughals to visit a paradise again and again. Historians believed that it was the gateway to enter Srinagar. Jahangir, a ruler among them, had mentioned the Bhimber attractive scenes in his book *Tuzk-e-Jahangiri* (Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Website, 2011).

The Bhimber is situated on both sides of Nala Bhimber. More than three communities are living in it such as Jatts, Chibs, Lohar Mughals and Gujjars. They are all Muslims. They are working in various departments. Before the partition, nine *Jagirdars* (Urdu: landlords) of Bhimber were very famous. Among them, five belonged to Gujjars (Ahmed, 2022: 5). Haji Mira Bakhish Numberdar Bannian of them, was a famous trader and landlord of Bhimber and his village name was Chineer. He had clothes and rice *deepest* (Urdu: stocks, factories, etc.), and it was sold all over Punjab and Kashmir. He had many sons, but Chaudhry Mian Khan Bannian Numberdar was a very wise and educated personality. Mian Khan has two sons, Ch. Ghulam Sarwar (settled in the USA) and Chaudhary Ghalam Safder (settled in Canada). One of them has retired from the department of custodian as a tehsildar. They both have many *deraes* in Chineer and Barnala (Bhimber) and even in Punjab. They are very fond of horse riding so they keep horses on their *deraes*. They also have cows, buffaloes, horses and other pet animals. Many servants look after them (Ahmed, 2022: 5).

The Gujjars of the Bhimber are very fond of traditional customs and culture. They are wearing simple dresses, but it is a reflection of Punjab. They put *Pags* on their heads, and they wear *kameez* (Urdu: shirt) and *dhuti* instead of trousers (Ajaz, 2022: 1-8). There are many village named after Gujjar's caste or sub-castes such as: Gojra Kasguma, Bara, Chineer, Dewa, Sardari, Banian, Mehlo, Kharian, Porr, Dewar, Dhar, Bhlot, Bannian, Dhela, Rohila, Jatlan, Khokhran Gujran, Gorsian, Chechian, Nandpur, Balawal Sakrana, Gujarat, Dinga, Chouhan, Kalus, Moil, Khirowal, Jhanda, Rana Mor, Bhosa, Khizra, Gagian, Burahjal, Budha, Rehana, Kharbuza, Hazari, Bahirwal, Munawar, Kotli Bajjar, Mendhar, Maraian, Nagrian, Nagar, Kisana, Kotli Bajjar, Bhojpur, Baro, Saryali, Khkhran Gujran, Buzurgwal, Doga, Sudh, Dinga, Chawrian, Chak-Sager, Bani, Dehnder, Kharan, Chak-Mehri, Pindi-Abdal, Dhoranwali, Jender, Majra, Dongi, Dhinga, Rathian, Sardhari, Sager and many others (Gazeteer of the Bombay Presidency, 1901: 491). The abodes who are still living in these villages are the Gujjars, and they are prosperous both in social-cultural and politico-economics. They are considered a landlord of Gujrat and Bhimber. They have a lot of land in which they grow crops and increase the Agricultural Ground Production of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2022: 5).

Some personalities belonged to the Gujjar tribe, such as Chaudhary Anwer Khan Porr and Chaudhary Delawar Khan. They both are brothers, and they play a vital role in the politics and economy of LA-5 AJ&K. Gul Nawaz Porr is a son of Ch. Delawar Khan, and he has won the election for District Councilor, which was held in the year 2022. Chaudhary Anwer Khan became chairman of Union Council Shamali in 1992, and his son Ch. Javaid Porr is a brigadier in the Pak Army. They have so many *Deraes* in which they keep animals such as horses, buffaloes, cows and all the pet animals. They keep horses of the Turkic race. They are very fond of horses because the custom of keeping horses among them is very old. They welcome their guests with open arms. They are known as the famous hospitable people of Chamb. They are also interconnected to the culture of Punjab. They speak Punjabi very well. They are regarded as

landlords of Barnala (Bhimber). They claim that they are the descendants of Maharaja Purus. The Purus was a great ruler who fought against Alexander the Great in the third century B.C. (Ahmed, 2021: 5-6).

Politico-cultural History of Gujjars in UC Chammb Shamali and Chammb Janubi

The Barnala is a Tehsil headquarters of Bhimber, which has a vast area. It had seven union councils. The Gujjars make a majority in four unions such as Barnala, Pangali, Iftikharabad Chammb Shamali and Iftikharabad Chammb Janubi. The Indian Army was defeated twice from the Chammb sector by Pakistan (Haq, 2015: 103). UC Chammb Shamali is a beautiful place where the Tavi River separated Pakistan (AJ&K) and Indian Occupied Kashmir through LOC till Working Boundary. Before 1971, Chammb was a tehsil headquarters of Indian Occupied Kashmir. Many temples and buildings share the war stories of Chammb. There was a bridge on the Tavi River which connected Chammb to Akhnor (Jammu), but it was damaged due to the war of 1971. The Jammu is not too far from Chammb. The Jorian is situated in Indian Occupied Kashmir. Before 1947, most of the population of Chammb (Jammu) belonged to the Gujjar tribe. All villages were named after the Gujjar tribe, especially the Gujjar clans. The mostly Gujjars were Muslims, and that is why they had to migrate to Punjab (Pakistan). Now, they have been settled in Gujarat, Sialkot, Mandibawaldin, Jehlum and Lahore. They became the landlords of Punjab. It is very difficult to recognize the Gujjars of Jammu Kashmir (Ahmed, 2019: 1-4). Bannian and Majeed Express Company (Newzarqa) is famous throughout the Punjab. It is a transport company which worked various cities of Punjab to Chammb. It is still running in all the big cities of Punjab (Pakistan). Bannain Gujjars lived in the village of Bannain, which was the largest village of Gujjars (Ajmal, 2023: 5)

Refugee Gujjars of Indian Occupied Kashmir also have settled in Chammb Shamali. Their elders knew how to speak Gojri, but their youths didn't. Their lifestyle is very simple. They put on shirts and trousers. They put on *Dhutito* to a large extent. They follow old customs during their marriage ceremonies. Over time, they have changed their lifestyles. They have seemed to act upon their cultural aspects as locals of Chammb. Their majority is still maintained in the Chammb. A large number of Gujjar Clans live in Chammb. Recently, Dr Muhammad Yousif Chaudhary was elected as a district councillor of Chammb Janubi. The Gujjars of UC Shamali are very gentle and intelligent. They are all fond of education (Ahmed, 2023: 2-3).

Politico-Cultural History of Gujjars in Union Council Pangali LA-5 Barnala, District Bhimber

There are living a large number of Gujjar sub-castes in the Union Council Pangali. They are considered very competent participants in the politics of Pangali due to the power of prosperity. They are living in a majority in UC Pangali. In the last local election, two main district councilors were nominated by PTI and the Muslim League, and Chaudhry Mubasher Rohila won the election against his rival. Ch. Adalat Khan had lost, and both belonged to Gujjars. The Gujjars of UC Pangali are a developed community of Bhimber. A large number of Gujjars went abroad such as the USA, Canada and the UK that's why they are prosperous. The favourite professions among them are landholding and agriculture. They do agriculture without any break, and they are proven to be better farmers than all other tribes. The Gujjars of UC Pangali are prominent in their culture and history. Their economic and political culture is linked to the Punjab. They are brave and bold. Since then, they have been following their old professional culture. Dr. Shabbir Azam is an educated personality of Pangali. He lives in Khokhran Gujran. He is working day and night for the development of Bengali. He is a pious man. Three UCs are impressed by his service, which he is doing for the welfare of society (Ahmed, 2022: 1-4).

Chaudhary Adalat Khan belongs to the Gujjar tribe. He also has some *deras* and factories. Chaudhary Mubasher Rohila Gujjar has won the District Council Elections. There is a *dera* system which has spread throughout Gujrat and Bhimber, and its producers are Gujjars. Mostly *deraes* are related to Jatts and Gujjars. The Gujjars of Pangali (Khokhran Gujran, Nandpur, Chineer, Rohila, Dhuranwali and Pungali) are also landlords. Chaudhary Mehndi Khan built a ground for horse riding, which became famous not

only in Azad Jammu and Kashmir but also all over the Punjab. The horse riders came here and participated in the race. Now, the same ground is present, but Horse-Race contests have been held here yearly. The Gujjars of Pangali are hospitable and openhanded. They welcome their guests with eager hearts. They are all very fond of horse riding and weapons. Whenever a fair horse race was held in Dhuranwali Ground, all the people of the surrounding areas participated in it (Ahmed, 2022: 1-4).

Politico-Cultural Status of Qazi Bannian Gujjars in Chamb Shamali Tehsil Barnala, District Bhimbr

Qazi Bannian and Ba-bannian Gujjars were the people of District Gujrat, Pakistan. They are landlords of Gujrat. They had been living in Gujrat since 1 BC. Due to the trading and politics of Gujrat, they earned great fame. There are found a large number of villages named after Bannian (a clan of Gujjars). One village is situated near the Kotla Arab Ali Khan, and the other is located in Chamb South, District Bhimer AJ&K. It is the largest village of Chamb. Before the partition, Bannian people lived on a large scale in it. They were doing agriculture and trade. They were regarded as owners of transport, which was known as Bannian transport. Many historians explained that they purchased that transport after the partition of British India (Butt, 2007: 5).

One group of Bannian has earned its name as a Pagganwala Group. They were worried and involved in many conflicts. People's Party decided to give the ticket to Samina Fakher she is the daughter-in-law of Mian Mushtaq Pagganwala in the NA-107 constituency. She won an election in 1996. Nawabzada Ghazenfer Gul won the legislative election twice against Ch. Wajahet Hussain from the constituency NA-106. They are close relatives of the Pagganwala. Now a day, the entire Nawabzada family is involved in the politics of Gujrat (Punjab) (Butt, 2007: 3). Qazi Muhammd Fateh Khan was the son of Ch. Alahi Bakhish, and he was the abode of District Gujrat. He was a landlord and kept many lands not only in Punjab but also in the Punch of Kashmir. They left Gujrat in the Sikh Era. Qazi Fateh Ahmed Khan had many lands in Punch. It said that he was the owner of seven lands, such as Senhsi, Salwa Punch, Dongi Gala, Najut Dabsi Kalgie, Jair and Kotli (Ahmed, 2023:1-2).

Chaudhary Fateh Ahmed Khan also built a house in the Kotli, which was popular as the Punch house. Economically, it is only a family of Gujjars which was developed, educated and prosperous. They were also known as Qazian of Punch. They also participated in the Resolution of Pakistan, which was held on 23rd March of 1940 in Lahore. Three prominent members of the Punch Gujjars such as Qazi Fateh Ahmed Khan, Qazi Noor-ul-Hassan and Qazi Noor Ahmed Khan, also attended that meeting. Qazi Fateh Ahmed Khan was the first and foremost person among the Gujjars of Kashmir who knew how to read and write. He graduated from Lahore and became the first graduate of Punch, Jammu and Kashmir. Qazi Noor-ul-Hassan was a great religious scholar as well as a graduate in Education from Lahore. Qazi Noor Ahmed Khan also worked as director of education in Jammu and Kashmir during the Hari Singh's Era and was the last Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir (Ahmed, 2023:1-4).

Qazi Khurshid Ahmed Khan migrated from Punch in 1989 and settled in the village of Sardhari Gujran Chamb, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He got married three times and had eight sons; one of them is a colonel in the Pakistan Army, and the other is a professor in Degree College Barnala. Among them, two are engineers, and the last one is an MBBS doctor. Qazi Khurshid Ahmed Khan Shaheed's family is an educated family of UC Chamb North. Qazi Shabbir Ahmed Khan Gujjar is a younger brother of Khurshid Ahmed, and he is chairman in the department of Zakat. He has settled in the USA with his family. Qazi Habib Ahmed Khan has also settled in the UK. Qazi Nazir Ahmed Khan was settled in Lahore with his 3 brothers, and he was the son of Qazi Noor Ahmed Khan. Qazi Nazir Ahmed Khan also remained a Mufti of the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore (Ajaz, 2023: 1-3).

CONCLUSION

The Gujjars are regarded as the main power and an ethnic group in the politics of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Mostly, MLAs are elected among them in AJ&K. As well, they are not only famous in the politico-cultural of Bhimber but also all over AJ&K. It is noticed that they kept a majority in every election. They also played an important role in the politics of Pakistan. Most MNAs and MPAs are elected in all the provinces of Pakistan. As well as they also played an important role in the politics of the Indian subcontinent, such as the Gurjara Dynasty. There had been seen several Gujjar-dynasties which later converted into their sub-casts due to the demise of their kingdoms. All the rulers of Punch were Gujjars, but over time, they have forgotten their dignity. The Shahmir dynasty of Kashmir, which ruled over Kashmir from 1339 to 1556 AD, were regarded as Gujjar warriors and rulers. Shahmir also ruled over Bhimber as well as the Gujjars of Punch. They can get a majority in the Indian-Occupied Kashmir if the election is held free and fair. Economically, they are prosperous and developed. They also played a vital role in the Department of Agriculture because they have a lot of land. They are owners of factories and industries. They are known as rich and mature in the ethnographic survey of Bhimber. It is said that they constitute a majority in Pakistan. There are many Gujjar MLAs who played an important role in the politico-cultural history of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. They are found in every district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The Gujjars of Barnala are very famous all over Azad Jammu and Kashmir due to their socio-cultural and politico-economic in which they are found prosperous and developed. They have a unique status in their lifestyle collection. Most of them become a part of the Pak Army, and they are serving as Generals, Brigadiers, Colonels and Majors. LA-5 Barnala is more important for the Gujjars because they selected their candidates five times from that constituency as a member of the legislative assembly of AJ&K. In LA-5 Barnala, they are in the majority, and they are also doing agriculture. By physique and personality, the status of Gujjars, Jatts and Rajputs are the same. The Gujjars and Jatts remained busy not only in fields but also played a role in the politics of Bhimber. The morale of the Gujjars, according to a politico-cultural point of view, is very high in LA-5 Barnala. Every department of AJ&K is full of them because they are intelligent and hardworking. In LA-5 Barnala, there are seven union councils, and four union councils belong to them. A large number of Gujjars live in District Bhimber, Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

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