



## A Review

# Cultural, economic and educational, status of Gujjar and Bakarwal tribal of Jammu and Kashmir

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**ABSTRACT :** Gujjar and Bakarwal are the third largest ethnic group in Jammu and Kashmir constitute more than 11.9 per cent of the total population of the state (Census, 2011); scheduled tribe is the only community in the state which maintain its culture and heritage throughout the ages. Various studies and reports indicate that socio-economic and educational status of Gujjar and Bakarwal in Jammu and Kashmir is not at all satisfactory. In this paper an attempt was made to examine the socio-economic and educational life of tribal in general and Gujjar and Bakarwal in particular. This paper has been reviewed on the bases of secondary data received from population census of India 2001 and 2011, journals, articles, books and reports etc. Results exhibited that literacy rate among the Gujjars was 31.65 per cent and Bakarwals was 22.51 per cent with a total 55.52 per cent of the General population of the state as per 2001 census.

**KEY WORDS:** Tribe, Gujjar, Bakarwal, Culture, Education, Economy

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## INTRODUCTION :

The term 'tribe' is nowhere clearly defined in the constitution and in fact there is no perfect or full proof definition anywhere (Kachroo and Kachroo, 1997). Different Anthropologists, Sociologists, economists and administrators defined the term tribe in their own particular way. Bardhan defined the tribes as a "course of socio-cultural entity at a definite historical stage of development. It is a single, endogamous community, with a cultural and psychological makeup going back into a distinct historical past. Mujumdar (1986) defines the tribe as "a collection of families or common groups bearing a common name, the members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain

taboos regarding marriage, profession/occupation and have developed a well assured system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations". In the constitution of India, the term tribe has not been defined clearly, only the term 'Scheduled Tribe' is explained as "the tribe or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities" which the President may specify by public notification (Article 342). According to ILO convention 107 (1957) the tribals or aboriginals have been defined as the tribals or semi-tribal groups of the Independent countries deprived socially or economically and having their own customary laws/conventions.

## Gujjar :

The Gujjars are additionally called as Goojar, Gujar

and Gurjara. The beginning of this tribe is very fascinating it was said that amid the time of attack of Hunas the Gurjara tribes moved into northern India and the Himachal Pradesh. It is expected the Khazar tribes are the precursors of the Gujjar tribe. The term Gujjar has touched base from Khazar. In India, Gujjar populaces are found generally in Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. The semi-nomadic Gujjar are found in the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and north-western Uttar Pradesh. The name for the state of Gujarat has gotten from "Gurjar". Gujjar are rich regarding Cultural Heritage. They have their own dialect GOJRI which is a branch of Indo-Aryan dialect and have their own particular customs, nourishment propensities, living propensities and workmanship, and specialty.

#### **Bakarwal:**

The term "Bakarwal" is derived from the combination of two terms "Bakri" meaning goat/sheep and wal" meaning "one who takes care of". Essentially the name "Bakarwal" implies "high-altitude goat and sheep herders". Bakarwals are primarily pastoral nomads rearing goat and sheep in high-altitudes of Greater-Himalayas during summer and spend their winter in plains and foot hills of Shwaliks. They are special nomadic tribes mainly found in the Pirpanjal range of mountains located between the two states of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Bakarwals are also found in every corner of Northern provinces of the Himalayan range, namely the states of Utrakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. In Jammu and Kashmir Bakarwals are stretched out in all the three regions of the state Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh (Sofi, 2013).

#### **Jammu and Kashmir:**

The state has special autonomy under article 370 of the constitution of India. The total population of Jammu and Kashmir has 1, 25, 41,302 (1.25 cr.) with a territory of 2, 22,236 sq.km representing about 3.20 per cent of total area of the country. The Gujjars and bakerwals are the third biggest ethnic groups in Jammu and Kashmir constitutes more than 11.9 per cent of the total population of the state (Census, 2011); scheduled tribe is the only community, which maintain its culture and heritage throughout ages. In the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, the concentration of Gujjars is observed in the districts of Rajouri and Poonch, followed by, Ananatanag,

Udhampur and Doda districts. It is believed that Gujjars migrated to Jammu and Kashmir from Gujarat (via Rajasthan) and Hazara district of NWFP. And the Bakarwal has a place with the same ethnic stock as the Gujjars, and intermarriages openly happen among them. There are 10 classifications of tribes in the state as Balti, Shin, Changpa, Garra, Mon, Purigpa, Gujjar, Bakerwals, Gaddi and Sippi. Gujjars and bakerwals constitute the greater part of them with 69 per cent of tribal population. Scheduled tribes are socially all that much depictable by moving, religious customs and traditions and so forth. They entirely take after their old traditions and conventions. The tribals herd animals like sheeps, goats and buffalo. Semi-nomadic people of Gujjar community are in the habit of migrating to upper parts of Himalayas along with their cattle during the summer season and back to the plains with the onset of chilly winter.

Available literature on tribal's socio-economic education status in Jammu and Kashmir reiterates that their status is not satisfactory as compared to others section of the society. Suri (2014) shows in her study that socio-economic and educational status of Gujjar and Bakarwal is not satisfactory as compare to other sections of society. She further states that educational backwardness amongst Gujjars and Bakarwals which is one of the key factors for their poverty, ignorance and overall backwardness. Ambasht (1970) mention in his study that the main cause of illiteracy among Gujjar and Bakarwal is social distance between the teacher and the pupil in the tribal areas. Dubey (1972) conducted a study on education, social change and political consciousness among tribal community of north east India and concluded that tribes are backward, illiterate and there is a need of creating political consciousness among them. Khatana (1976) studied on marriages and kinship among Gujjar and Bakerwals in Jammu and Kashmir and concluded that these scheduled tribes marriages within the community and within the clan strictly and also studied some aspects of transhumance in mountainous traits during the year 1976. Chalam (1993) studied on educational policy for human resource development, and concluded that there is a need of educational reforms for the development of scheduled tribes. Mehta (2000) presents an overall review of the tribal development measures adopted in 20<sup>th</sup> century. He further states that their socio-economic and educational status is not satisfactory; they are lagging behind in each and every aspects of social life.

**Education:**

Education is viewed as a standout amongst the most essential and potential instrument for the advancement of a country. Contemporary society can't perform its attempt of economic development, technological improvement and social movement without completely exploiting the capacities of its nationals. Educationists thus make every effort to develop fully the intellectual potential of the students and make efforts to see that their potentialities are fully acknowledged and channelized for the benefit of the individual in general and that of the society in particular (Sameena and Jameel, 2015). Education is a basic human right and an important factor in the development of children, communities and countries. Opening classroom doors to all children, especially girls, will help break the intergenerational chains of poverty because education is intrinsically linked to all development goals, such as supporting gender empowerment, improving child health and maternal health, reducing hunger, fighting the spread of HIV and diseases of poverty, spurring economic growth, and building peace. Educational level among the Gujjars and Bakarwals is too low as compared to other inhabitants of the state. These tribal communities are already lagging behind the rest of the tribes and population of the trouble region. Some of the challenges in the provision of educational services to transhumants areas are similar to those faced by other rural and marginalized households in the region, although often more severe. These include nomadism, militancy, lack of teachers willing to work in the conflict situations found in these areas, poor infrastructure as well as poorly motivated teachers, a household economy dependant on livestock, with children spending long periods away from their homes and schools and transhumant mobility (Suri, 2014). District wise distribution of literacy among Gujjar and Bakarwal presented in Table 1 showed that high literacy is found among the Bakarwals population in the districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Jammu which has 30.8, 20.5 and 23.5 per cent education, respectively. Whereas among the Gujjars Jammu has 39.00, Poonch 34.60 and Rajouri 32.94 per cent literate population in Jammu division. Among the General population all the districts have more number of educated peoples than the Gujjars and Bakarwals. Gujjar and Bakarwals are highly marginalized and illiterate in comparison to general population of the state. Gujjars and Bakarwals are a tribe which has the lowest enrolment in school education in Jammu and Kashmir. In many

Gujjar and Bakarwal areas, there is no school available at all, and in other areas, enrolment is only 20 to 30 per cent. Education is the myth to sedentarisation or the permanent settlement of the nomads, their education problem is due to the transhumance practice and these problems will disappear in the near future when they will be settled permanently (Tufail, 2014). It is evident from the data given in Table 1 that educational level among the Gujjars and Bakarwals is not satisfactory. The analysis shows that the majority of the population is illiterate, in the total 31.65 per cent of the population is literate in the Gujjars community, 22.51 per cent were literate among the Bakarwals. If we compare it to the General population, the general population has 55.52 per cent of the literacy rate. In all the district's General population has the highest literacy rate in comparison to the Gujjars and Bakarwals, because Gujjars and Bakarwals do not have a fixed place and they keep moving all around the year so they get less opportunity of educating their children as compare to the settled general population (Tufail, 2014). The level of literacy among the Gujjar is low particularly for young Girls. The Gujjar in the prosperous conditions of Punjab and Haryana and Delhi have entry to government advancement plans for better wellbeing, power, watering system, drinking water and bank credits. A few segments of the Gujjar are receptive to family welfare and family arranging projects. Be that as it may, the nomadic Gujjar of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir don't have fundamental offices. The Jammu and Kashmir government had opened mobile schools in 1970 and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan under which education is being provided to the children of nomadic ST communities by setting up of educational facility in the form of "Seasonal schooling camps" in the upper reaches of the Pir Panjal range of mountains. The main purpose of these schemes was to fulfil the educational needs of the nomadic population (Suri, 2014). In spite of good constitutional provisions, policies and programmes their educational level still low when compared to other sections of the society, because they are not fully aware from the policies and programmes initiated by the Government.

**Economy:**

The Gujjars and Bakarwals who have been a roaming tribe of J&K state, their economy is generally focused around cultivation. They herd animals like sheep, goats and buffaloes. However, few of them get to be

inactive and own cultivable grounds yet have a couple of buffaloes and other animals. Bulk of the Gujjars and Bakarwals rear cattle for a variety of purposes but when people breed and rear cattle for commercial purpose and makes it the source of livelihood, they may be said to be living under pastoral economy. The pastoralists usually do not lead a settled life and become wanderers and nomads only under the pressure of changing weather. The pastoral tribes who inhabits mountainous region migrate to the plains along with their cattle during severe winters but go back to their permanent abode at the advent of summer (Ruhi, 2014). The Gujjars deals in milk production, residing mostly in Subtropical zone (Jammu region). As per the estimates of Integrated Sample Survey (ISS) of major livestock products, the production of milk in Jammu and Kashmir state for the year 2007-08 was estimated at 1515.29 thousand metric tonnes. Presently the per capita availability of milk is about 341 g per day. In Jammu region the major milk producer are Gujjars, a major proportion of the Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir depend on animal husbandry for their livelihood in lower, middle and the higher mountain regions. Animals like sheep, cow, and goat are kept for commercial purposes. The Jammu and Kashmir economy is heavily dependent on animal husbandry. One of the prominent economic sectors of the state, Jammu and Kashmir animal husbandry has contributed immensely to the financial improvement of the state.

Barring a few exceptions, the share of each district in livestock has shown a significant change during the years of 1992, 2003 and 2007, though variation in concentration of livestock across various districts is clearly visible in Table 2 (Tufail, 2014).

Both central and state government launched various income generating programmes for the progress of rural and Tribal people. The programmes are designed in such a manner that they provide a constant source of income to the beneficiaries in following categories (Ruhi, 2014).

Integrated Rural Development Programme, Economic Rehabilitation of the Rural Poor, Integrated Tribal Development Programme, Programme for Small and Marginal Farmers, Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Programme, Self-help Scheme, Jawahar Rojgar Yojna, Indira Awas Yojna, Self-employment for Educated Unemployed Youth, Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment, Programme of Execution of Lift Irrigation, Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana.

### Culture:

Before we touch upon the cultural aspects of the Gujjars and Bakarwals, it will be appropriate to understand the concept of culture. The most widely acceptable definition of culture is given by E.B Taylor, as he defined "culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and

**Table 1: Literacy rate among Gujjars and Bakarwals and General population in Jammu and Kashmir (Both in number and Percentage)**

Sr. No.	Districts	Total lit. population	Gujjars	Bakarwals
1.	Poonch	156,398	34.6	30.8
2.	Rajouri	234,228	32.9	20.5
3.	Jammu	1,070,574	39.0	23.5
4.	Kathua	307,370	19.3	18.8
5.	Kupwara	232,557	16.9	20.4
6.	Baramulla	447,075	19.7	19.3
7.	Srinagar	641,267	16.3	15.6
8.	Badgam	226,167	21.7	18.3
9.	Pulwama	281,518	17.4	20.1
10.	Anantnag	463,197	15.5	14.6
11.	Leh	68,278	88.2	100.0
12.	Kargil	60,803	50.7	17.4
13.	Doda	274,425	16.8	15.6
14.	Udhampur	343,429	21.3	19.3
	Total	48,07,286	31.65	22.51

Source: 2001 Census

habits acquired by man as a member of society". (Haralambos and Holborm, 2014) As far as the culture of Gujjar and Bakarwals is concerned most of them follow the folk culture. Gujjars and Bakarwals are culturally very much depictable by dancing, religious rites and customs etc. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir majority of the tribal are the follower of Islam. They are the tribes who strictly follow old traditions and customs. They follow the custom of child marriages, where girls are married at an age of 14 - 15 years and boys at 17-18 years.

### Language:

The Gujjar and Bakarwal community has the beautiful language of Gujari also called as Gojri. The language belongs to the Rajasthani language group. They have also developed fluency in other languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and Pahari languages like Kangri and Dogri. As regards language of the Gujjar and Bakarwals, except tehsil Mendhar where Bakarwals have a bit different pronunciation, the rest of the community speaks the same language. Another noticeable matter is that Gujjar and Bakarwals normally interact amongst themselves or even with the people of other communities like Pahari through Gojridialect, that is why Gojri language is still very vibrant. Languages as such survive and progress when the speakers of such languages appreciate and accord due regard to their language (Rahi, 2011).

### Festivals :

Celebrations are of an integral part for Tribal Group. They participate in all the festival of national significant like Eid, Holi, Lohdi (Sagraand) and so on. Aside from these tribal excessively have consolidated their religious convictions and traditions. They praise all the celebrations with incredible celebration and energy. They went with extraordinary tunes and nourishment, customs and society. These events give a gathering spot to individuals from distinctive shades of supposition. The Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir celebrates pretty much all the celebrations.

### Customs and rituals:

Customs and rituals is another important element of Gujjars and Bakarwals. Custom has spontaneous emergence. Davis defines it as practices that have been off repeated by a multitude of generation. These practices are followed simply because they have been followed in past. Majority of the Gujjars and Bakarwals strictly adhered to the Customs and rituals of the community. From birth of a child to a death ceremony certain customs are prevail in the community. This community is Muslim by faith and one can easily see the influence of Islamic customs and rituals over their life. Some important Islamic customs are Circumcision of male child, marriage ceremony and funeral rites. During condolences, they carry meals and food from their own house to the house of aggrieved. They also offer other small items as aid to

**Table 2 : The distribution of livestock across the district wise in Jammu and Kashmir**

Districts	1992	2003	2007
Punch	15.1	16.2	15.9
Rajouri	20.6	18.3	19.6
Jammu	7.4	7.4	6.7
Kathua	13.1	14.2	12.3
Anantnag	8.6	7.4	6.3
Srinagar	1.4	1.7	2.9
Kupwara	1.3	1.9	2.1
Baramulla	6.3	5.5	5.1
Budgam	1.6	1.6	1.5
Pulwama	3.8	4.1	4.3
Kargil	1.2	2.1	3.1
Leh	3.2	4.1	4.3
Doda	7.3	6.8	7.1
Udhampur	9.1	8.7	8.8
Total	36,87,937	39,76,328	32,08,734

the family (Khatana, 1976).

### Marriage ceremonies:

Marriage is one of the most important institutions of society which can have very different implication in different cultures. Broadly speaking, marriage may be defined as “a socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of the opposite sex, whose relationship is expected to endure behind the time required for gestation and the birth of children”. Marriages among Gujjars and Bakarwals are fixed in adulthood by negotiation and by the elder members of the family. A distinctive feature of their marriage is that consanguineous marriages take place.

Marriage is usually a set of ceremonies that are conducted both at the groom and bride's place. The inheritance of the property is from father to sons, who equally share it (Khatana, 1976). In their weddings they use in their meals lot of curd *i.e.* Dahi and salt. The curd is presented by the relatives and neighbourhood people as a mark of gift to the household celebrating the wedding. In their local dialect, this practice is called “Bhaaji”. This is deemed as a duty by each one to present the same in the house of persons organizing wedding. This is common among the Bakarwal fraternity. The bride is decorated with silver ornaments like silver chains like silver Dolara, silver sargast, silver mahail, silvergani, silver earrings, silver bangles, silver rings and silver necklaces called “HASEERI” etc. The bridegroom wears headwear like lungi, waistcoat, shirt and shalwaar besides red handkerchief in his hands and “SEHRA” on forehead which adds to his grace and glory. On the occasion of celebration of marriages they recite poetic recitations from the books like c-harfi, Soni-Mahiwal, Saif-ul-Maluk which enthral the audience (Rahi, 2011).

### Folk games:

Notwithstanding having an intense life of the populace of Gujjar and Bakarwal sets aside out time for relaxation and diversion in their own particular manner. They play numerous games like Stone Lifting (Bughdar), Arm Holding (BeeniPanjo), Chitto (played generally by girls), Panjeet (indoor amusement with five little bit of stone) and so forth.

### Dress pattern and food habits:

Owing to their transhumant nature, topography and society the Gujjar and Bakarwal group of the area has

embraced a special dress example and have created distinctive sustenance propensities. For the most part rely on upon milk items as their staple sustenance other than cereals, wheat and maize. Their staple nourishment embodies milk items and maize. (“Maki ki Roti” Ganhar, Sarsoonka Droop, Lassi, Kalari, Karan and so forth). As the majority of them, particularly the individuals who are not stationary rely on their creatures and cows. The extent that their dress example is concerned men wear a turban of remarkable shape and structure by regional standards called as Safa, Pag and Lungi. They wear Shalwar Kameez and Waist layer all as the year progressed. Women excessively wear Shalwar Kameez and keep Gojri/Bakarwali Top or Topi on their head separated from Chipri or Head Sheet (Rahi, 2011).

The literature with respect to cultural, economic and educational status of Gujjar and Bakarwals in terms of language, festivals, customs and rituals, marriage ceremonies, folkgames, dress pattern and food habits have been described by different authors and touched almost all the aspect of their life in an appropriate manner Which had been reviewed systematically by Sofi, 2014. It is essential to mention that these tribes have suffered in a lot since beginning. Now, there is an urgent need to establish all kind of infrastructure including education for their children, permanent structure in terms of houses, recreation, ethics and values related to their customs and rituals, so that they can live their life comfortably at par with general people of the society.

### Conclusion:

It may be concluded from aforesaid study that cultural, economic and educational status of Gujjars and Bakarwals in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is not satisfactory. Only few families have good achievement in education but majority of tribal still suffer due to their illiteracy and poverty. It has been observed that, there is a wide spread poverty, illiteracy and backwardness among the tribal people which is evident from the census report of 2001 that 31.65 per cent literacy among Gujjar community and 22.51 per cent literacy among Bakarwal community. If we compare it to the General population, General population has 55.52 per cent of the literacy rate. Majority of the Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir depend on their agricultural productivities and cattle for their livelihood in lower, middle and the higher mountain regions. Some of the challenges in the provision

of educational services to transhumant's areas are similar to those faced by other rural and marginalized households in the region, although often more severe. These include nomadism, poor infrastructure as well as poorly motivated teachers. Thus, there is a lack of awareness among the tribal community. To make effort to generate educational awareness and attitudinal changes among the masses regarding tribal, the role of tribal's families, community leaders and media deserves special attention here. Little has been achieved in the area of tribal development by the efforts of both government and civil society but more efforts are required to enhance their cultural, economic and educational status.

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