

# Socio-Economic Conditions of tribal Gujjar-Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir: A Geographical Analysis

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**Abstract:** The concentration of Gujjar and Bakarwals lives in the state that has performed by the large numbers instead of other sub-groups of community. In fact there are major numbers of Muslim tribal groups mostly in the districts of Rajouri, paunch, khistawar, Doda, Kupwara and Baramulla. Gujjar and Bakarwal are the third largest ethnic group in Jammu and Kashmir constitutes more than 11.9% of the total population of the state (Census, 2011). These tribes are the only community in the state that maintains its culture and heritage throughout the age and lives in the rich forest areas of the state. However,

they are backward as well but they are residents in the areas of forest cover whose materials are more economically forward in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This paper contains from the conceptual work that tries to upliftment of socio-economic condition of Gujjar and Bakarwals.

**Keywords:** Nomadic life, Gujjar, Bakarwals, Upliftment, Jammu and Kashmir.

## Introduction

The word 'Gujjar' is debatable itself. Some scholars believe that Gujjar is a Persian word 'Gujjar' which means body builder; some believe that it is a Sanskrit word which has been explained as Gur + Ujjar. Gur means enemy and Ujjar means destroyer. The word means "destroyer of the enemy." There are two types of Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir, Zamindari- Gujjars and Dodhi Gujjars. Zamindar Gujjars are those whose primary occupation is agriculture and animal husbandry. While as Dodhi Gujjars are those whose main function is shifting from high to low altitude or hilly areas to plain areas or inverse.

The first explicit mention of the term Bakarwal a nomadic tribe was made in 1899 (M.C. Donnel 1899:15) the next references found date from the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Census of India 1911:181; Bryant 1913; 3.cs 1914). Bakarwal is a Pastoral nomadic community of Jammu and Kashmir. The term Bakarwal is derived from the word Bakriwala, meaning goat and sheep herders and rearers. It is said that they originally belonged to the Gujjar stock, which are divided into three groups, namely settled Gujjar, Dodhi Gujjar and Bakarwal. Though they have permanent settlements, they often move from one altitude to another in search of pasture for their flock. The Jammu region is considered to be their original homeland and they are highly concentrated in Doda, Rajouri, Poonch and parts of Udhampur. Their mother tongue is Gujjari but they are also conversant in Kashmiri, Pahari, Urdu and others spoken language

Gujjar and Bakarwals are the two sub-ethnic groups of tribes that have maintain their cultural tradition as long. They are the unique and significant ethnic group of tribes that are maintaining their cultural tradition not only the state of Jammu and Kashmir but throughout the world. Gujjar and Bakarwals which comprise a special race of community and third largest ethnic group in the state of Jammu and Kashmir who got the Schedule Tribe status

in 1991 have since long time opted to live on these envious peaks. More or less dependent on the primary activities i.e. rearing of animals (sheep, goat, etc.). Gujjar and Bakarwals are living in the state of Jammu and Kashmir that is called Asia of Switzerland, where the season fluctuates throughout the year and the respective tribes shifted from the low latitude to high latitude or vice versa accordingly season. These seasonal movements of tribes called as transhumance or any shifting from one area to other often called as transhumance. Thus, the variation from the area to other area sustains their life accordingly.

### Review of Literature

There have been various Authors and Scholars that has mentioned about the conditions of Gujjar and Bakarwals such analyzing and ideas are as fallow, **Dr. Mohd. Tufail (Jan. 2014)** “Demography, Social and Cultural Characteristics of the Gujjars and Bakarwals, A Case Study of Jammu and Kashmir” analyzing in this paper through census 2001 their variation and demographic, social and cultural change, **Azhar Ud Din (April, 2015)**, “Socio-Economic Conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwal Tribes of Kashmir” examine in this paper tries to study the social and economic upliftment of Gujjar and Bakerwals. **Dr. Javaid Rahi (2016)**, “Tribal education system in Jammu and Kashmir” enlighten to this article that amendment passes the constitution of India in 1989 and 1991 twelve tribal groups of Jammu and Kashmir that constitute 11.9% of total tribal population of state (census 2011). **S.M. Rafiullah** “The Geography of Transhumance” in this book he mentioned the origin and distribution of transhumance throughout the world. Although he mentioned their types and significance of the transhumant. **Zaheer Abass (2015)** “Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Tribal (Gujjar and Bakarwal) of Jammu and Kashmir: An Overview” analysed in this paper with his friends that status of tribal people of Jammu and Kashmir. **Vivek Sharma (July, 2017)**, “A study of educational status of tribal Gujjar children of Vijaypur Block in Samba District of Jammu and Kashmir” examine in this paper status of only Gujjar children that shows there are dominate Gujjar tribal group in the district of Samba, Jammu Division. **Santosh S. Dharanaik (March, 2019)** “Health Status of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Karnataka, India: A Critical outlook, Said that Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in particular are considered most vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged groups both in terms of socioeconomic, education and health development. They are also more prone to ill-health conditions and diseases. The historical neglect of the tribal groups is considered a major cause behind the marginalisation of many tribal communities in India both within colonial regimes and after.

### Origin and Significance

The first and foremost to find out the origin of tribal people especially Gujjar and Bakarwals, Actually Gujjar and Bakarwals are the tribe of Jammu and Kashmir state that has spread out to whole State. The word Gujjar in the literature of India is maintained to have occurred in the 7th century A.D. The word “Gujjar” is believed to be the derivation of Gur + Ujjar. Gur means enemy and Ujjar means destroyer, in combine word means destroyer of the enemy. While as Bakarwals is derived from the Indic language terms, bakara meaning goat or sheep, and wal meaning "one who takes care of". Essentially, the name "Bakarwal" implies "high-altitude goatherds/shepherds". These tribes are rich in cultural heritage and they are interacting to each other easily on the behalf of their traditions. Literally both are spread from north Himalaya of Pir Panjal region. However, shifting from the hilly area to lower area or vice-versa in search of pasture, rearing of animals and to carry out the people of reared according to season.

### Significance

Nature seems to have set certain limitations and exacting circumstance (through accentuated relief seasonal rhythms of climate and shifting luxuriance of pasture) to the free exercise of human will. The best thing is that man can do is to adjust his life and the mode of resources-creation within the outlines of the plan in a way that

would maximum rewards for his efforts. The rich forest covers of the transhumance seasonally, they change their distance but most of the time they are settling the forest areas rather than plain areas.

Sheep and goat are the predominant animals of transhumance. Cattle occupy only a secondary place. In transhumance feeding of animals is one of the basic problems which is not always easy to solve. Cattle rising are essentially restricted to areas of such especially to arrangement because of its very heavy food requirements per head. It may also be noted that the transhumance environment not only restricts the stock to sheep and goats but also imposes restriction on the quality and breed.

**Economy:** Gujjar and Bakerwals are the tribes of Jammu and Kashmir whose main economy from animal rearing and some percent involve in the Handicraft activities. But the main occupation of these tribes is rearing of animals, sheep, goat and buffalo etc. To fluctuate from the summer to winter their occupation never changes as the parts of respective region. Therefore, the main economy of these tribes is animals in fact that is the asset of these tribes.

**Culture:** Nomadic tribes Gujjar and Bakerwals are the most famous in their traditional culture heritage. They maintain their life with rich culture heritage, in fact they are very unique in culture heritage not only India rather throughout the world.

**Language:** They are mainly spoken Gojri in their traditional system. Parhi is the language of Parhi people. The other type of Gojri spoken people are Parhi, even they are also spoken Urdu, Hindi language but the main and the mother tongue of these tribal nomads are Gojri and Parhi.

**Festivals:** festival is culturally celebrated by any person whether they are from any religious belief. Gujjar and Bakerwals are celebrating all festivals like Eid, Holi, Diwali and Lohri. All festivals are good to joy the whole nation; similarly Gujjar Bakerwals nomads are those tribal ethical groups that are participating all festivals in their vicinity area.

**Dress and Food:** All these tribal groups are very much unique dress code and food habits. They wear long blouse woolen and long hear rings and their dress are very aside along the other world. But their food habits are very much some similar to other people.

**Marriage Ceremony:** This sector is very important for all society labels. All Marriage ceremony of Gujjar and Bakarwals are uniquely represented and to participate every community group. They all are interact and celebrate the whole ceremony within the group of community. In fact their marriages are mutually to each other.

## **Socio-economic conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwals of various districts of Jammu and Kashmir**

**Anantnag:** According to Geographical feature, this district lies in some elevated areas that covered with the beautiful tourist spots like Pahalgam- tehsil, Kokernag tehsil- where all tourists visit there during the summer season as well as winter seasons. These nomads setup their local business there in the form of horse riding or in the form of local shops, even though some tribals are working in restaurants or hotels. Therefore, the tribal nomads of the district has settle due to the tourist spots, otherwise they all are migrates like other tribal nomads from the different areas.

There are more than 20% of tribal nomads living in the district and majority are settle in the tourist spots rest other areas in the district have meager population of tribal nomads and have a lot of problems that are facing

them since very beginning- less job opportunities, education facilities, health facilities, and other basic facilities admitted in the district .

**Kulgam:** Despite all tribal community, Gujjar and Bakerwals are two tribal nomads where the majority of these tribals are found in the Jammu and Kashmir union territory. District Kulgam having a much concentration of tribal Gujjar and Bakerwals that constitutes more than 15% but they have lackness of basic necessities and also they are not well aware about the living status of life.

The district has lie in the south of Kashmir valley where the tribal people have less migration and settlement. Therefore, the Kulgam district of Kashmir valley has a meager figure of tribal Gujjar and Bakerwals because the area has no terrain field where the tribals feed to their livestock.

**Pulwama:** This is the another district in Kashmir valley that lies in the south of the valley where the tribal Gujjar and Bakerwals found meagerly, usually the area has simple lifestyle and the tribals are minutely mixing their culture.

**Shopian:** This district also found in the south of the valley, where tribals distributed outer corner of the district and their lifestyle has totally changed with the other communities. Although the people of Shopian district have wellbeing and the fields have full of orchards. Indeed their apples are most famous throughout the valley and the tribals are more engagement to them.

**Badgam:** this area is the hub of tribal shifting people where majority of the seasonal migrants Gujjar and Bakerwals are stay for time being. Their huts are permanently settle on the side of the area, this is the area where tribal Gujjar and Bakerwals access easily to road connectivity and the other accessibility that they need during the winter season.

**Srinagar:** This is the main city of Kashmir valley where all connectivity from the area of Srinagar. Therefore, most of the tribes are migrated there. Transhumance main hubs shifting from the high latitude to low areas most of the tribes (Gujjar and Bakerwals) are migrated in winter season are there. This is the central place of all districts of Kashmir valley that is why most probably tribal peoples are shift there.

**Ganderbal:** Genuinely, tribal community is the isolated community in terms of their cultural heritage or their lifestyle. District Ganderbal has lies in the center of the valley where usually tribal community has shifts in the winter season because of their easy accessibility in all necessities.

**Baramulla:** Baramulla just below the Kupwara district of north state, where the Uri area has most highly concentrated of Gujjar and Bakerwals. Uri is the area of Baramulla district which is located from North West part of the district. In fact this area is the extreme side of LOC.

**Kupwara:** Kupwara district leis in the north part of Jammu and Kashmir State. It covers the large part of tribal regions such regions are, Machal, Kalarous, Bangus and Doban Verna. These are some major areas where the prominent tribal Gujjar and Bakerwals are live there. This is the area where inaccessible of road ways, water facilities and the most daily problem electricity. There are more difficulties of basic facilities in fact their main roadways are not construct to easily travel from respective areas

**Pouch:** This district has the highest concentration of Gujjar and Bakerwals. There are very dominate tribal Muslims of Gujjar and Bakerwals in such a way the Pir Panjal area is most dominated of Gujjar and Bakerwals. The majority of the tribal groups are Muslims rather than any other religious. In this district there are some areas where the Gujjar and Bakerwals are more concentrated like Sarounkot, Baltha, etc.

**Rajouri:** Rajouri is another district part of Pir Panjal area, where most the tribal nomads come from the area. Therefore, there are a large majority of nomad tribes from the Pir Panjal area and some distractive parts are from Jammu division.

This district shows in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the most of the tribal people dependent on livestock while as the rest of ratio are dependent on other sector of activities. They are highly backward in educational and other sector of fields and more or less depend on livestock.

**Doda:** In this District of Jammu Division, there are sliding movements in the area of some sectors are grown up with their variations. However, Gujjar and Bakerwals have less availability of facilities such as, drinking water, electricity, and housing conditions are very poor throughout the whole Gujjar and Bakerwals community.

**Kishtwar:** Another less facility region in the district of Jammu division in comparison to other areas of the respective district. So, there are large discrimination areas to other surrounding areas. All Gujjar and Bakerwals are minutely ill sounded and unhealthy because their facilities are not easily available to sustain their happy life.

**Ramban:** Ramban district lies in the division of Jammu, where the Gujjar and Bakerwals are also shifted from Ramban district to Jammu district because of harsh climate season. Actually the Pir Panjal areas are more dominated of Gujjar and Bakerwals that leads to maintain the cultural heritage and to perform the shifting of seasonal movements.

**Jammu:** Jammu district is the main part of the Jammu Division where the Gujjar and Bakerwals are migrants during the winter season, because the season of winter in Kashmir are very harsh cold rather than Jammu District. Therefore, Jammu district is

### Conclusion:

Despite tribal Gujjar and Bakerwals is the second ethnic group in the state of Jammu and Kashmir that constitutes more than 10% of tribal nomads. Gujjar and Bakerwals have not public awareness and the plans that are uplifted by the state and central govt. their basic facilities are not satisfactory even though they sustain their life on the basis of their livestock and to change their location according to seasons

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