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Historical Background of Gujjar Tribe in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

India is considered as a home land of multiple tribes and communities population in the world. In India, mostly among tribal, there are still large sections of population who subsist on pastoralism. Gujjar, decalred as tribal in some states, also continue with pastoral life. Tribal populations currently reside in thirty Indian states and union territories, and they are broken down into 705 distinct ethnic groups. Tribal Groups have specific privileges under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. With 11.9% and 14.7%, respectively, of the population of scheduled tribes, Jammu & Kashmir is second only to Madhya Pradesh. Twelve tribes make up the 14.9 lakh schedule tribal residents of Jammu & Kashmir (community). After Kashmiris and Ladakhi, Gujjars are the third largest community in terms of population. The Gujjar community was originally found in Gurjistan (Georgia), but later they began migrating towards east Iran, Afghanistan crossed Suleiman, and eventually entered the Indus valley. With time passing, they once again began migrating towards the south and reached Gujarat, eventually spreading in different places of India such as Kathiawar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The primary goal of this essay is a detailed investigation of the historical context, and origins of the Gujjar people in J&K. Based on secondary data sources; this study was undertaken in Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: Tribes, Scheduled Tribe, Ethnic group, Migration, Gujjar.

Introduction

The tribal population of the globe resides in India. It contains 705 distinct ethnic tribal groups that reside in more than thirty states or union territories. Article 342 of the Indian constitution defines tribal communities. Since time immemorial, tribal societies have been a mostly isolated and separated segment of society; their way of life, culture, and traditions are vastly apart from those of other social grouping. One of these is the Gujjar community, which currently resides in northwest India, primarily in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. It is the third most populous community in Jammu & Kashmir, after the Kashmiri and Ladakhi communities. They make up 69.1 percent of the entire population of schedule tribes in Jammu and Kashmir and 8.1 percent of the total population of Jammu and Kashmir. (Census 2011) ^[4].

India is a large country with many different languages, cultures, beliefs, and religions. The natural geography of this

country has had a big effect on the people of this country in many different ways. The high peaks of the Himalayas, Karakoram, and Hindu kash mountains have kept out foreign invaders who tried to set foot on Indian soil. These peaks make it hard for foreigners to move around and stop trade, communication, and cultural integration between people of different races and communities who live in different parts of the country.

Jammu and Kashmir is one of these states that is located at a higher altitude and is surrounded by mountains that are difficult to negotiate. Despite these impediments, the people of Kashmir have endured a wide range of climatic and geographical dangers and have scaled the most enviable communication corridors. There are various races and communities. Gujjars, a distinct race and community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, have chosen to dwell on these enviable hills since ancient times. The dangers of which frequently elude the common man's comprehension. Gujjars,

who make up a sizable portion of the nomadic population, relocate on a regular basis in quest of livelihood. Both are pastoral and agricultural nomads. The Gujjar live a unique way of life. They have their own set of standards, culture, habits, and beliefs.

The state of Jammu & Kashmir is strategically placed in the north-west region of India. It borders China to the east, Pakistan to the west, Afghanistan and Russia to the north, and the plains of Punjab and Himachal to the south and southeast. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is located between 32° 17' N and 37° 05' N latitude and 72° 31' E and 80° 20' E longitude. It is 640 kilometres long from north to south and 480 kilometres wide from east to west. The overall area of the state is 2, 22,236 square kilometres. However, the area under actual control is just 1,01,387 square kilometres, as a large portion of the land is illegally occupied by Pakistan and China. The state of Jammu and Kashmir was established on October 26, 1947, in the country's far north. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution grants the state unique status. It has its

own Constitution as well as many Acts. Government of India laws and regulations are only applied in the state when they have been ratified by the state legislature. The state's most recent administrative structure includes twenty-two districts, eighty-two tehsils, one hundred forty-two blocks, four thousand one hundred twenty-eight panchayats, and seven urban agglomerations.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into several ethnic and cultural regions: the Hindu majority in Jammu province, the predominantly Buddhist in Ladakh province, and the Muslim majority in Kashmir Province. The state was established in 1846 with the Treaty of Amritsar, in which the British surrendered the Kashmir valley and its bordering regions to Dogra king Maharaja Gulab Singh. Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, Poonch, Rajouri, Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Reasi, and Samba in Jammu Division; Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, Pulwama, Baramulla, Kupwara, Bandipora, Ganderbal, Kulgam, and Shopian in Srinagar Division; and Kargil and Leh in Ladakh Region.



Fig 1: Map of Jammu and Kashmir

Tribal People

The term tribe has no universally accepted definition and has been defined in various ways by different people. The Indian constitution makes no mention of scheduled tribes save to say that they are "the tribes or tribal communities or sections of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which the president of the republic may identify by public announcement" (constitution of India, article 342). The most acceptable definition in the Indian context is propounded by Majumdar, D.N. (1958) as "A tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations. A tribe is initially an endogamous unit, the members of which confine their marriage inside the tribe. A tribe is made up of several clans, each of which claims kinship between its members, based on totemistic division, territorial contiguity, or common domicile. A tribe is a political entity in the sense that the tribal society has a political organisation; either recognises hereditary tribal chiefs or webbed into a territorial group ruled by clan chiefs or hereditary kings. Each division of a tribe, clan, or sect has a council of elders to help the hereditary headman in tribal affairs, and members' attitudes towards tribal authority are characterised by absolute solidarity and group loyalty" (Majumdar, D.N. 1958).

Scheduled Tribes of Jammu and Kashmir

There are a lot of tribal communities living in Jammu and Kashmir. They have moved into every corner of this hilly countryside. The tribes of Jammu and Kashmir stand out from the rest of the Indian tribes because of their people, their places, their customs, their cultures, their ways of communicating, and even their food. In Jammu and Kashmir, there are 12 tribes that are protected by the government. These tribes are the Balti, Bot, Beda, Changpa, Garra, Mon, Purigpa, Gujjar, Bakarwal, Gaddi, and Sippi. Scheduled tribe people live in places like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, etc. that are not very good for growing crops. Jammu and Kashmir has a total population of 1,25,41,302, which includes 66,40,662 men and 59,00,640 women. The Scheduled Tribes make up 11.9% of the State's total population, according to the 2011 Census. The 2011 Census shows that there are 14,93,299 people living in ST. In 2001, there were only 11,05,979 people living there. The majority of these ST people lived in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir. They made up 95.3% of the total ST population. In Kargil, 88.3 percent of the population is from a scheduled tribe. In Leh, 82 percent of the population is from a scheduled tribe. Poonch has 40 percent, and Rajouri has 33.1 percent. With a population of 763,806, Gujjar is the most populous of Jammu and Kashmir's twelve scheduled tribes (ST). This means that 69.1% of the ST population is made up of Gujjar people. Balti, Purigpa, and Gaddi make up 10.2% of the ST

population as a whole. The remaining proportion is made up of the Sippi, Changpa, Mon, Garra, and Beda tribes, as well as five generic tribes. With only 128 people, the Beda tribe is the smallest of all the groups. Gujjars live in many different districts, including Srinagar, Anantnag, Pulwama, Doda, Jammu, and others. District wise, majority of Gujjar population in Rajouri and Poonch districts followed by Udhampur, Anantnag, and Doda districts.

Research Objective

- 1, Understanding Origins and Migration
- 2, Cultural Heritage
- 3, Socio –Economic Dynamics
- 4, Political and Legal Status
5. Contemporary Relevance

The Objective of Studying the Historical Background of the Gujjar tribe in Jammu and Kashmir can Include Several Key Aspects

1. Understanding Origins and Migration: Exploring the historical roots of the Gujjar tribe helps in understanding their migration patterns, origins in the region, and their contributions to the cultural and social fabric of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Cultural Heritage: Documenting their cultural practices, traditions, language, folklore, and customary laws provides insights into their unique identity within the broader context of the region's cultural diversity.
3. Socio-Economic Dynamics: Analyzing the socio-economic roles of the Gujjar tribe historically helps in understanding their traditional occupations, economic activities, and their interactions with other communities in Jammu and Kashmir.
4. Political and Legal Status: Examining their historical interactions with ruling powers, their political organization, and legal status within historical frameworks helps in understanding their societal position and evolution over time.
5. Contemporary Relevance: Understanding the historical background also sheds light on the contemporary issues faced by the Gujjar tribe, such as land rights, socio-economic development, education, and political representation.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on secondary data source, which is collected from books, journals, government offices, census of India report 2001 and 2011.

Historical Perspective

The term 'Gujjar' first appears in Indian literature around the seventh century AD. In the words of great poet "Ban Bhat" in his book "Harshacharita," and Chinese explorer Huentasang. As believed, word, 'Gujjar' is derivative of 'Gurujar' which is a sanskrit word meaning "a gallant out to defeat the adversaries". After repeated use, the word became 'Gojjar' and later Gujjar, which is said to be derived from Gauchar, a cow, and char (Charana), to graze.

Gujjars are possibly the ancestors of a variety of Eurasian people, including the Scythians, Georgians, and Khazars of the Caspian Sea, who took part in the Scythian invasions of South Asia from the 5th to the 1st centuries BC, settling mostly in Gujarat, Punjab, and Kashmir. These sun-worshipping tribes ruled kingdoms that included parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir,

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh.

Jammu and Kashmir is lucky to be a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, and multi-ethnic state. One of them is the Gujjar people, which is an essential component of Jammu and Kashmir's composite culture. Gujjars have a long history in Jammu and Kashmir, and various tribes and ethnic groups have moved from all over the world. When a series of serious droughts and plagues disease spread in Gujarat in the 5th and 6th centuries, and a spell of dryness occurs in Rajasthan in the 6th and 7th centuries, the Gujjar community began to migrate from their habitat towards the Shivaliks and Sun-Himalayas, eventually settling in Jammu and Kashmir permanently because this area was suitable for their cattle grazing. (Warikoo. K).

Schedule Status of Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir

In Jammu and Kashmir, the constitution (J&K) schedule tribe order 1989 introduced eight groups to the schedule tribe category; in 1991, four more tribes were added to the schedule tribe category via the constitution (schedule tribe) order (Amendment) act 1991. These tribes are the Gujjars, Bakarwal, Gaddi, and Sippi. Jammu & Kashmir now has twelve scheduled tribes. All schedule tribes are formally counted for the first time in the 2001 census, accounting for 10.9% of the total population of the state and 1.3% of the overall population of the country.

Distribution of Schedule Tribe Population and Their Size

Gujjars are the most numerous of the twelve Schedule Tribes, accounting for 69.1% of the overall schedule tribal population. With 96,698 members, the bot community was ranked second. Bakarwal is ranked third with 60,724 people, and Brokpa is ranked fourth with 51,957 people. These four settlements together account for 88% of the overall schedule tribal population. Balti, Purigpa, and Gaddi have a combined population of 35,765 to 38188 people, accounting for 10.2% of the overall schedule tribal population. The remaining five settlements, Sippi, Changpa, Mon, Garra, and Beda, together account for 1.9% of the overall schedule tribe population. Beda tribe has the smallest population of any schedule tribes.

Table 1.1: Distribution of Schedule Tribes and Their Population Size in Jammu and Kashmir

Names of Tribes	Total Population	Percentage of population out of total tribal population	Percentage of population out of total state population
Gujjar	980654	65.67	7.81
Bakarwal	113198	7.58	0.90
Bot	91495	6.12	0.72
Balti	51918	3.47	0.41
Brokpa	48439	3.24	0.38
Gaddi	46486	3.11	0.37
Purigpa	39101	2.61	0.31
Sippi	5966	0.39	0.04
Changpa	2661	0.17	0.02
Mon	829	0.055	0.006
Garra	504	0.033	0.004
Beda	420	0.028	0.003

Source 2011 India Census

Ethnicity

The Gujjars were originally Hindus, but during the reign of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, the majority of them converted

to Islam while retaining their Hindu gotras or subcastes. Bhati, Chandel, Chauhan, Baniya, Lodha, Bhensi, Chopra, Chechi, and Khatana are the most prevalent gotras. The Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir have kept these gotras as well, and marriage within the same gotra is strictly forbidden. They speak a dialect distinct from the state's main languages, Dogri and Kashmiri.

Family Setup

To some extent, the Gujjars traditionally believed in patriarchal family structures. As patriarchal dominance persists, the extended family system has begun to decline. Nucleus families are not prevalent these days. According to the report, 51.9 percent of families are still extended, while 48 percent are nucleus.

Population Structure

The occupational opportunities in India have changed dramatically since independence. The old occupational structure has changed dramatically as education and other modern conveniences have spread. The Gujjars, a nomadic group, are gradually becoming sedentary and settled. Although animal husbandry is still performed, arable agriculture has gained prominence in the Gujjars' occupation. The Gujjars in the research region are classified into three major occupational groups.

Conclusion

"In conclusion, this paper has provided a comprehensive exploration of the historical background of the Gujjar tribe in Jammu and Kashmir. Through a detailed examination of their origins, cultural practices, socio-economic structures, and political interactions, we have gained insights into the rich tapestry of Gujjar history. This study underscores the importance of preserving and understanding the cultural heritage of the Gujjars, not only for academic purposes but also for fostering greater social cohesion and equity in the region. Moving forward, addressing the challenges faced by the Gujjar community requires concerted efforts in policy reform, community empowerment, and cultural preservation initiatives. By continuing to study and support the Gujjar tribe, we can contribute to a more inclusive and resilient society in Jammu and Kashmir."

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