

Socio-economic and Political Conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir

Riyaz Ahmad Bhat

Research scholar, Department of Political Science and Public administration
Vikram University, Ujjain M.P

Abstract

Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu And Kashmir State are mostly dependent on rearing of sheep and goat. Gujjar and Bakerwal is the third largest ethnic group of the state. The culture of the community varies from other communities of the state. People belonged to Gujjar and Bakerwal community are untouched with the pleasure of outside world. The political socialization of Gujjar and bakerwals in the state is not good as compared to other communities. The scheduled tribe of Jammu and Kashmir records the population of 1, 493, 299, comprising 11.90% of the total population.

Keywords: Gujjar, Bakerwal, upliftment, Jammu and Kashmir

Introduction

The history of various tribes and cultural groups settled in Jammu and Kashmir are immigrants from the north-west, east and south. Gujjar and Bakerwals are two ethnic groups living in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They are wandering peasantry living on grazing land near mountains and in high altitude valleys. The customs and traditions of Gujjar and Bakerwals and their economic activities are different from other ethnic groups of the state. The Gujjar and Bakerwals are usually tied to the flocks of sheep and goats and its products. The basic means of production of this tribal society (Gujjar and bakerwals) is the rearing of sheep and goats. Gujjar and Bakerwals fulfil their basic requirements from this production. The constitution of Jammu and Kashmir has notified twelve tribal communities as the scheduled tribes. Among them Bakerwals and Gujjars were notified as the scheduled tribes vide the constitution (scheduled tribes) order (amendment) Act, 1991. These scheduled tribes of Jammu and Kashmir records the population of 1, 493, 299, comprising 11.90% of the total population of Jammu And Kashmir State. Ladakh region of the Jammu and Kashmir state constitute the most of these tribes. The Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes are much greater number in Kashmir valley. However these tribes are distributed in almost all districts but the districts of Anantnag, Budgam, Pulwama and Kupwara are mostly concentrated.

The Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars have no reliable historical story of their migration. It is true that the main reason of their migration were relentless drought, non-availability of pastures, over population; they assembled in the areas where pleasing opportunities are available for them. The families of Gujjars are living in the areas of Kutha, Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi, Jammu and Udhampur. The Gujjars have migrated in those regions after a sudden violent spontaneous occurrence of a serious famine. They also settled in the Pir Panjal ranges of Kashmir. The occupations of the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir are arranged into classes as (1) cultivators; (2) the Dodhi Gujjars (milkman) and Bakerwal Gujjars (rearing of Sheep and Goats). The slopes and mountains of the Kashmir valley are dotted or adorned by the Gujjar settlements in the areas of Uri, Baramullah, Kupwara, Ganderbal, Kangan, Daksum, Kulgam, Pahalgam and Anantnag divisions. During the summers these people reaches the Pir Panchal and greater Himalayas of Kashmir. The houses are made of mud known as Kothas are different from Kashmir houses, are distributed on the slopes covered by maize fields. However all the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir teach or claim to be knowledgeable about Islam, still they keep the pastoral symbols, taboos and totems. Majority of Gujjar continue to believe in Pirs. The Gujjar holds on dead Pir than living Pir and believes upon will aid according to our aims and aspirations.

Bakerwals are nomadic people travelling from place to place for work and in search of pastoral land. Bakerwals wears the same dress as of Gujjars except those who speak Pashto. Most of the Bakerwals living under temporary settlements until the time of grazing is over. Majority of Bakerwals are dropouts from schools because of unavailability of educational and health facilities. The Bakerwals belong to the same ethnicity as the Gujjars, and inter-marriage take place among them. Although, Bakerwals have same gotra or clan like Gujjars, many local shepherds, who may not essentially belong to the community, are often termed as Bakerwal Economy and Society.

The basic unit of social structure among the Gujjar- Bakerwal is the dera unit. A dera usually comes when a person is married and wants to have independent upon five to six members according to their age and sex. There is division of labour among them. The women of this caste are busy in domestic tasks of cooking, washing, fetching of water, upbringing of children, collection of wood and spinning and making of woollen garments. The males are busy in rearing of cattle, collection of grass, ploughing and harvesting of crops. Several deras (households) constitute a lineage (dad- potra). The pastures are allotted to the lineage and not to the individuals. The lineage, thus, consists of several generations and includes cousins and distant relatives. The lineage unit is

quit powerful administrative unit. Each lineage consists of head who secures the socio- economic and political activities of his group.

Objectives of the study

To study the socio- economic conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir

To explore the level of participation of Gujjar and Bakerwals in Jammu and Kashmir politics

To study the livelihood pattern among Gujjar and Bakerwals

Methodology: This paper is mainly based on secondary data. No primary data has been collected as collection of primary data. For collection of secondary data, available literature in the form of Books, Newspapers, along with published and articles and research papers have been selected.

Socio-Economic and Political conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir

Social

Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir are socially much backward in comparison to other communities of state. The Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir state lives a simple life are settled in houses made of wood and mud with paddy and forest grass roof. The social life of Gujjar and Bakerwals are mostly linked to their religious life. They perform their important task such as marriage, death, etc. in simple manners on the basis of religion in service of Maulvi (priest). They are indeed colourful people and are free from evil or guilt. The community have faced all kinds of modifications of nature but the government of state have taken no step to amend their politico-economic and socio-culture life. The community revolve under the flagellum of poverty and backwardness. The Gujjar and Bakerwal people are tall with conservatic mind inhabited in the mountainous area. The Gujjar and Bakerwals are also called 'nature's own children' and 'lords of forest'.

The Gujjar and Bakerwal community are socially backward as compared to other communities of Jammu And Kashmir State. The Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir are still living in houses made of mud with paddy and forest grass roof. However some houses in villages are now made of bricks and stones. During winters they move towards the plain areas and in summers they reach the areas where pastures are available. In winters they are concerned with problems of food for cattle and their livelihood. The living conditions of bakerwals are different from those of Gujjars. They carry their baggage and other trade goods by horses and reach the mountains on foot with their sheep and goats

Culture

Before we touch the cultural aspects of Gujjar and Bakerwals, it is suitable to know the concept of culture. Taylor has defined as, "culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." The cultural aspects of Gujjar and Bakerwals are same as well as varies in many aspects of his life. The Bakerwals migrate to the high altitudes during summers but in Gujjars are not. It is required by the rule for Bakerwals to put on warm woollen clothes. But both the Gujjars and Bakerwals are wearing a typical head wear called "lungi," with shirt and shawlar. The Gujjars also wears a colourful turban with unique style of wrapping. The aged Gujjar man wears a top called as Afgani hat. Culturally Gujjar and Bakerwals are very much depicting able by dancing, religious rites and customs etc. The life style of Gujjar and Bakerwal community is quite different from other community of Jammu and Kashmir State, their requirements and problems are also different from others. The way of talking of the community is different from other community and is educationally, economically, politically and socially backward.

Language

The Gujjar and Bakerwal community of Jammu and Kashmir state speaks the Gujari (Gojri) language comes from the Rajasthan, having influence of other languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and Phari. The Gujjar and bakerwal people interacts with each other because of the language Gojri. The Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir State demanding inclusion of Gojri in the 8th scheduled of the Indian constitution because of widespread speaking language throughout the Indian sub continent. As a popular language (Gojri) ten radio and television stations of India and Pakistan broadcasts and telecasts programmes in Gojri language. The Jammu and Kashmir state constitute the Gojri speaking people as the third largest linguistic group after Kashmiri constitutes the first and Dogri constitutes the second position respectively.

Festivals

Festivals have special appearance among Gujjar and Bakerwals. Gujjar and Bakerwals have special faith on religion and celebrate their festivals with great faith, charm and prosperity. They praise all the celebrations with unbelievable celebration and energy. Gujjar and Bakerwals celebrate these festivals with unique songs and food, traditions and culture.

Customs and Rituals

Customs and ritual is another important element of Gujjar and Bakerwals. Custom has self-generated coming forth. 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 Gujjar and bakerwals follows these customs and rituals strictly.

Marriage Ceremonies

Different communities have different cultures of their marriage ceremonies. Marriage constitutes an important picture of the society. Marriages among the Gujjar and Bakerwals are fixed at an age of 17-18years among boys and 14-15 years among girls. The Gujjar and Bakerwals hold their marriages in simple manners with old traditions. The relatives and neighbours send curd as a mark of gift to the household celebrating the wedding. The wedding household uses a lot of curd i.e. Dahi and salt in their meals. The bride is decorated with silver ornaments like silver chain, silver earrings, bangles, silver rings and silver necklaces. The bridegroom wears head wear like lungi, waist coat, and shirt and shawlar besides red handkerchief in his hands and "SHERA" on forehead which adds to his grace and glory.

Folk Games

Gujjar and Bakerwals are mostly play the games according to their manners. They play numerous games like Stone lifting, Arm Holding, Pan Geet and so forth.

Dress Pattern

Even though the society has changed due to modernization and developments, the dress pattern of Gujjar and bakerwals have not changed and remain constant. Gujjar wear mostly their traditional customs and jewellery. Women folk wear shirt dotted with varieties of buttons and embroidery on it with black shawlar, duppata with multiple colours and round cap with a trial of course over thread. Women wear necklace with a triangular pendant, dotted with a beautiful stone in the centre. It has religious importance, represents evil eye and mainly uses to prevent bad luck.

Food Habits

Gujjar and bakerwals are mostly dependent on milk products, cereals, wheat and maize. They are vegetarians and non vegetarians. Maki ki roti, ganhar, sarsoon ka sag, lassi, kalari, etc are favourite dishes of Gujjars.

Occupation

Gujjar and Bakerwals herd animals like sheep, goats and buffalo. They migrated to upper parts of Himalayas with their cattle during summer season and came back to plains during the winters. There is a lack of skilled worker who practices some trade or handicraft. Gujjar and Bakerwal are mostly dependent on the rearing of cattle and their products. This community has preserved and maintained its originality from end-to-end.

Education

Education is regarded as one of the most important tool for the advancement of the country. Present society can't perform its effort of economic development, technological improvement and social movement without entirely manipulating the capacities of its nationals. Educationists are trying to pay special attention towards the levels of education to develop the standard of the scheduled tribe students. Education plays a significant role in the development of children, communities and countries. Free and compulsory education up to standard level to all children, especially girls, will help us to break the chains of poverty and discrimination. Education level among the Gujjar and Bakerwals is too low as compared to other communities of the state. The tribal communities are already backward in education. The Gujjar and Bakerwal parents are totally failed to motivate their children to send them to schools.

The literacy rate among Gujjar and Bakerwals is meaningless and insufficient. The non availability of schools, parental attitude towards education and migration makes it more difficult to send their children to schools. The government should take special care towards the education of Gujjar and Bakerwals with the establishment of mobile schools. These mobile schools are very important and are required when they move to their respective Dhokes. The overall literacy rate of the STs is 37.5 per cent at 2001 census. This is much lower than the national average of 47.1 per cent aggregated for all scheduled tribes. Male and female literacy rates (48.2 per cent and 25.5 per cent) are much below as compared to those recorded by all STs at the national level (59.2 per cent and 34.8 per cent). According to census report 2011 India constitutes of about 58.96 per cent scheduled tribe's literates of the total population of 72.99 per cent.

Economy

The Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu And Kashmir State also called roaming tribe is economically dependent upon cultivation and rearing of cattle. They herd animals like sheep, goats and buffalos. The Gujjar and bakerwals may use the buffalos for the purpose of cultivation. They rear cattle for commercial purpose and make it their livelihood. The community lives under the pastoral economy. The Gujjars and Bakerwals are not leading a permanent life due to climatic conditions, serve as nomadic life move with their cattle to plains during winters and migrates mountainous regions during hot spell of the year. The majority of Gujjar deals with milk production as their livestock. According to integrated sample survey (ISS) the production of milk in Jammu and Kashmir state for the year 2007-08 was estimated at 1515.29 thousands metric tonnes. Animal husbandry is the main source of Gujjar and bakerwal livelihood in lower, middle and the higher mountain regions. Animals like sheep, cow and goat are kept for commercial purposes. The economy of the state is heavily dependent upon the animal husbandry sector of state.

The government of India as well as government of Jammu And Kashmir State has established various income generating programmes for the rural and tribal people. These income generating programmes are meant to increase the income of these people. The programmes are made or performed with the purpose and intent that they provide an invariant source of income to the beneficiaries.

POLITICAL

Politically socialization of Gujjar and Bakerwals in Jammu And Kashmir State is not good as compared to other community of the state. One who involved in politics directly or indirectly is a political participant. The general level of involvement in a society is the extent to which the people as a whole are active in politics. Political participation results in greater stability of political culture and political system. In every political system participation in politics is an important element. In every society the political power is controlled by few office heads. The word politics is taken from Greek word 'polis' which means small city- states. Polis has been translated as city- states. So, politics means getting knowledge of city- state. Johnson defined as "politics is an art of governing the mankind by deceiving them."

The political participation of Gujjar and Bakerwal is concerned; they were patriotic towards Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir in pre 1947 period. Before independence Gujjar and Bakerwals were marked by a painfully slow manner, avoids sympathetic attitude by politicians. But after independence a hopeful and comfortable future of Gujjar and Bakerwal in India was visible. The Gujjar and Bakerwals hoped that post independence period will definitely come with hopes and aspirations and elimination of backwardness and poverty. With the act of beginning of free education in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, many Gujjar and Bakerwal got educated and connect closely in politics and administration. Some of them joined with congress, few Gujjar leaders brought into agreement with National conference and some joined Peoples Democratic Party and Bahartiya Janta Party etc. participation of Gujjar and Bakerwal is important feature of empowering the community of the state. But due to ignorance of government of Jammu and Kashmir State, there is no reservation of seats either in Lok Sabha or in the State Assembly for Gujjar and Bakerwals. Gujjar and Bakerwal community has also enlightened various campaigns to highlight its demands and political reservation. But the government assured to fulfil the demands of Gujjar and Bakerwals. Gujjar and Bakerwal community is generally nomadic in nature that influences the political participation of community. To improve the future of Gujjar and Bakerwal the government has started some schemes and programmes. All these schemes sponsored by the state government encouraged sedentarization of Gujjar and Bakerwals directly or indirectly.

Gujjar and Bakerwals now have their representation in the state legislative assembly as well. The Jammu and Kashmir state constitute six districts where Gujjar and Bakerwal population is in large. There are 23 Assembly Constituencies (8 in Jammu region and 15 in Kashmir) and two parliamentary constituencies (one is Kashmir Baramullah another is Jammu Poonch). These assemblies' constituencies constitute a majority of Gujjar and Bakerwal. There is also reservation in the state civil secretariat. There is also representation of Gujjar and Bakerwals in the state public service commission and the state subordinate selection and recruitment board. Lack of their socio- economic backwardness of Gujjar and Bakerwal in the state it is very tough for Gujjar to get the scheduled tribe status. On April 19, 1991 the president of India issued an ordinance where the Gujjar and Bakerwal were also included in the list of scheduled tribe with the respect of Jammu And Kashmir State. It was a remarkable time when Gujjar and Bakerwal recognized as scheduled tribe in the process of identity politics. With this achievement the Gujjar and Bakerwal were eligible to get advantage of reservation from government jobs as well as in education institutions.

Impact of state politics on Gujjar and Bakerwals

At first time Gujjar and Bakerwals were politicized in 1990s when the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi civilised them and suggest them up as the possible counter weight to the valley Muslims. It was the government of Chandra Shekhar in 1991 at the centre who pursuited for scheduled tribe's status to render some benefits and

privileges. It was also resolved by the state government under convention held at Jammu in the year 1998 that Gujjars should be given representations symmetrical to population in service, scholarships for education and loans. For the Gujjars separate colonies were established and in cultural academy of Radio Gojri language should be recognized. Gujjar Desh Charitable Trust at Jammu was another historical event in the development of the community was constituted in 1992. Gujjar and bakerwals are now eligible to represent in the state legislative assembly. The major accomplishment in the process of identity politics under Gujjar and Bakerwals was the acknowledgement of scheduled tribe. With this identification the community could get the advantage of reservation in government jobs and in education institutions as well. Jammu and Kashmir state is the only state of Indian union where political reservation for Gujjar and Bakerwal was provided.

Conclusion

Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir are mostly engaged with rearing of cattle. The economic conditions of the community are very poor and are dependent on cattle. Socially Gujjar and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir are very backward. They are serving their life uncomfortable due to the ignorance of governments. Governments should take necessary steps for the upliftment of Gujjar and Bakerwals.

References

- Sofi Umer Jan (2014), "Educational status of tribal's of Jammu and Kashmir: A case of Gujjar and Bakerwals" *international journal of social science* 3(3): 275-284
- Din Azahar (2015), "Socio-economic conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes of Kashmir" *International journal of recent research in social sciences and humanities*, Vol 2, ISSN NO2349-7831
- Tufail.M (2014), "An over view of the economic characteristics of the Gujjar and bakerwals: A case study of Jammu and Kashmir" *international journal of humanities and social science invention*, vol.3, issue-6, ISSN NO2319-7722
- Warikoo. K (2000), "Tribal Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir" *journal of Himalayan research and cultural foundation*, vol.4, ISSN NO0971-9318
- Rafaqi M (2015), "A study of school achievement among the Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes of Jammu and Kashmir" *Bangladesh e- journal of sociology*, vol.12
- Ahmad Israr et al (2015); "Socio-economic and educational status of tribal (Gujjar and Bakerwal) of Jammu and Kashmir: An over view" *international journal of humanities and social studies*, ISSN NO2321-9203
Op cit Pp. 3
<https://enim.wikipedia.org>wik>bakarwal.....>
- Shahbaz (2015), "social profile of Gujjar and Bakerwal of Jammu and Kashmir: An overview" *international journal of humanities and social studies*, ISSN NO2321-9203
- Din Azhar (2015)," Socio-economic conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes of Jammu and Kashmir" *international journal of recent research in social science and humanities*, vol.2, issue2, ISSN NO2349-7831
- Shamsher Hakla poonchi, Daily excelsior magazine, Sunday, March 2017pp-no3*
- Tufail.M (2014), "Demography, social and cultural characteristics of the Gujjar and Bakerwals: A case study of Jammu and Kashmir" *IOSR journal of humanities and social science*, vol.19, issue1, ISSN NO2279-0845
- Sofi.j.u (2013), "Paradox of tribal development; A case of Gujjar and bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir (india)" *journal of sociology and social work, Pp. (1-8)*
- Shahabaz (2015)' "Participation of Gujjar and Bakerwals in state politics: problems and prospects" *journal of business management and social science research*, vol.4, ISSN NO2319-5614