

# **The Socio-Economic and Educational Status among Gujjar and Bakarwals: An Analytical Study**

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## **Abstract:**

*Within Jammu and Kashmir According to its cultural values, the Gujjar and Bakarwal are the only community in the state that has preserved its cultural ethos since the dawn of time. They are the third largest ethnic group among other ethnic groups and make up more than 12 percent of the total population of the state (Census, 2011). According to several experts, scheduled tribes in the state lag behind other communities in the state in a variety of social indicators, including socioeconomic status, education, and the like. In this analytical study, the researcher has attempted to summaries, using secondary sources, the socioeconomic and educational state of Jammu and Kashmir's Schedule Tribes, particularly the Gujjar and Bakrwals tribes.*

**Keywords:** Bakarwal, Culture, Education, Gujjar, Socio-Economic Status, Trib

## Introduction

The term 'tribe' is nowhere clearly defined in the constitution and in fact, there is no perfect or foolproof definition anywhere. To the ordinary man, the word suggests simple folk living in hills and forests with their 'exotic' customs and practices; to people who are little better informed, it signifies 'colourful' folks for their dance, songs and folk medicine; to administrator, it means a group of citizens who are the special responsibility of the president of India; to an anthropologist, it indicates a special field for the study of social phenomenon. In their way, all these impressions are correct (kachroo, 1997). A tribe, according to Oxford Dictionary, is a collection of people who are in a primitive or barbaric stage of development and who recognise the authority of a chief while typically believing they share a common progenitor. According to Verrier Elwin, the word "tribe" has a Latin basis, and the middle English word "Tribuz," which referred to the three divisions that the early Romans were divided into, eventually developed into the present English word "tribe" (Singh, 1959). Tribes were classified differently by various anthropologists, sociologists, economics, and administrators. The tribes were described by Bardhan as "a series of socio-cultural entities at a specific historical stage of development." It is a singular, endogamous community, with a psychological makeup and cultural composition that date back to a certain historical period. The tribe is described by Mujumdar as "a collection of families or common groups bearing a common name, the members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language, observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession/occupation, and have developed a well-assured system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations". The term "tribe" is not explicitly defined in the Indian Constitution; instead, the term "Scheduled Tribe" is defined as "the tribe or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities" (Article 342). The ILO Convention 107 (1957) defines the term "tribals" or "aboriginals" as "tribals or semi-tribal groups of the independent countries having their customary laws or conventions" (Majumdar, 1958). In the analytical study we would like to describe each in a detailed manner:

- *Gujjar*

The Gujjars also go by the names Goojar, Gujar, and Gurjara. The history of this tribe is highly intriguing; it is believed that during the Hunas' invasion, the Gurjara tribes travelled into Himachal Pradesh and northern India. The Gujjar tribe is thought to have descended from the Khazar tribes. Gujjar is a term that has Khazar roots. Gujjar populations can be found primarily in Delhi, western Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Haryana in India. In the states of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and northwest Uttar Pradesh, there are semi-nomadic Gujjar people. Gujarat derives its name from the word "Gurjar." Gujjar's cultural heritage is extensive. They speak GOJRI, a branch of the Indo-Aryan language, and have unique rituals, eating and living habits, as well as specialties in their craft and workmanship (Farhat, 2012).

- *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 goats and sheep in high-altitudes of the Greater Himalayas during summer and spend their winter in the plains and foothills 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 the Northern provinces of the Himalayan range, namely the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. In Jammu and Kashmir, Bakarwals are stretched out in all three regions of the state Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh (Sofi,2013).

The research that is now available on the socioeconomic education condition of tribal people in Jammu and Kashmir confirms that their situation is not suitable when compared to that of other societal groups. Suri (2014) demonstrates in her research that Gujjar and Bakarwal's socioeconomic and educational standing is subpar in comparison to other societal groups. She adds that one of the main causes of Gujjars and Bakarwals' poverty, ignorance, and general backwardness is their educational backwardness. In his study, N. K. Ambasht (1970) notes that social distance between the teacher and the student in tribal areas is the primary factor contributing to the illiteracy of Gujjar and Bakarwal people. S. M. Dubey (1972) studied education, social transformation, and political consciousness among northeast Indian tribal communities and came to the conclusion that these communities need to develop political consciousness because they are illiterate and backward. In Jammu and Kashmir, R. P. Khatana (1976) investigated marriages and kinship among the Gujjar and Bakerwals and came to the conclusion that these scheduled tribes rigorously practised intracommunity and intraclan marriages. He also looked into various aspects of transhumance in mountainous features in 1976. After researching educational strategy for human resource development, K. S. Chalam (1993) came to the conclusion that educational changes are necessary for the development of scheduled tribes. An overview of the 20th-century tribal development policies is provided by Mehta (2000). Additionally, he claims that their socioeconomic and educational standing is inadequate and that they are falling behind in every sphere of social life.

- *Education*

Educationists are thought to be among the most important and potent tools for a nation's growth. Without fully using the abilities of its citizens, modern society cannot carry out its attempts at economic expansion, technical advancement, and social activity. Thus, educators go above and beyond to help students reach their intellectual potential and work to ensure that it is properly recognized and channeled for the good of the person in general and the good of society in particular (Sameena, 2015). A fundamental human right, education plays a significant role in the growth of children, communities, and nations. Because education is intrinsically linked to all development goals, including supporting gender empowerment, improving child and maternal health, reducing hunger, combating the spread of HIV and diseases of poverty, stimulating

economic growth, and fostering peace, opening classroom doors to all children, especially girls, will aid in breaking the intergenerational chains of poverty. In comparison to other state residents, the Gujjar and Bakarwal educational levels are too low. These tribal groups already fall behind the other tribes and inhabitants of the troubled area. Even though they are frequently more severe, some of the difficulties in providing educational services to transhumanist communities are similar to those faced by other rural and underprivileged homes in the area. These include transhumant mobility, nomadism, militancy, a lack of teachers willing to work in the unstable environments found in these regions, poor infrastructure, underappreciated teachers, a household economy based on livestock, and children spending extended periods of time away from their homes and schools (Suri, 2014).

**Table 1: Literacy Rate among Gujjars and Bakarwals and General Population in Jammu and Kashmir (Both in Number and Percentage)**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>Districts</b>	<b>Total lit. population</b>	<b>Gujjars</b>	<b>Bakarwals</b>
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:2001Census*

According to the above table's district-by-district distribution of Gujjar and Bakarwal literacy rates, the Bakarwal population is highly literate in the districts of Poonch, Rajouri, and Jammu, which have 30.8, 20.5, and 23.5 percent education, respectively. The percentage of literate Gujjars is 39.00 in Jammu, 34.60 in Poonch, and 32.94 in Rajouri. As far as the Gujjars are concerned, these are the districts with the highest literacy rates. All of the districts' general populations are better educated than the Gujjars and Bakarwals are.

In comparison to the state's general population, the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities are severely marginalized and illiterate. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Gujjars and Bakarwals are the tribe with the lowest enrollment rates. Many Gujjar and Bakarwal communities have no schools at all, while enrollment rates in other communities are only between 20 and 30 percent. Since their problems with education are a result of their practise of transhumance, decentralization or the permanent settling of nomads is a myth (Tufail, 2014). These issues will quickly go away once they are permanently situated. The table above makes clear that the Gujjar and Bakarwal populations' educational levels are not sufficient. According to the data, the majority of people are illiterate. Of the whole population, just 22.51 percent of Bakarwals and 31.65 percent of Gujjars are literate. The general population's literacy rate is 55.52 percent when compared to that of the population as a whole. The general population of the district, as opposed to the Gujjars and Bakarwals, has the highest literacy rate overall. This is because the Gujjars and Bakarwals do not have a fixed location and move around the year, giving them fewer opportunities to provide for the education of their children than the general population who has settled down (Tufail, 2014). Particularly for young girls, the Gujjar have poor literacy rates. The Gujjar have access to government advancement plans for better health, power, watering systems, and bank credits in the rich states of Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi. Several Gujjar groups are open to family welfare and family planning initiatives. However, the nomadic Gujjar people of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir lack access to basic services. In the upper reaches of the Pir Panjal Mountain range, the Jammu and Kashmir government established educational facilities in the form of "Seasonal schooling camps" to provide education to the children of nomadic ST communities. In 1970, mobile schools were established in the region, and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan was launched. These programmes' primary goal was to meet the nomad population's educational demands (Suri, 2014). Because they are not completely aware of the policies and activities launched by the government, their educational level is still poor when compared to other parts of society, despite sound constitutional laws, policies, and programmes.

- *Economy*

The economy of the Gujjars and Bakarwals, two wandering tribes in the J&K state, is typically based on agriculture. Animals like sheep, goats, and buffalo are herded by them. Few of them, meanwhile, manage to acquire cultivable land and a few buffaloes and other animals while remaining passive (Virender, 2014). The majority of Gujjars and Bakarwals raise cattle for a variety of reasons, but when people breed and raise cattle for profit and use it as their main source of income, it can be argued that they are living in a pastoral economy. The pastoralists typically don't have a permanent lifestyle and only become nomads and wanderers as a result of weather changes. When the winters are harsh, the pastoral tribes that live in mountainous areas move to the plains with their cattle, but they return to their permanent homes as soon as summer arrives (Ruhi, 2014). The majority of the Gujjar population, who produce milk, lives in the subtropical region of Jammu. The state of Jammu and Kashmir produced 1515.29 thousand metric tonnes of milk in 2007–08, according to estimates from the Integrated Sample Survey (ISS) of main livestock products. Currently, 341 grammes of milk are

available per person per day (Anonymous, 2009). Gujjars are the main milk producers in the Jammu region (Singh, 2012). In lower, middle, and upper mountain regions, a sizable section of the Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir rely on animal husbandry as their primary source of income. For commercial purposes, animals including sheep, cows, and goats are kept. The raising of animals is a major component of the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. Animal husbandry in Jammu and Kashmir, one of the state's key economic sectors, has significantly improved the state's financial situation. The table below displays the distribution of livestock by district in Jammu and Kashmir:

**Table 2: District-wise Concentration of the Livestock (sheep & Goats) of Gujjar & Bakarwal in Jammu and Kashmir (in Percent) Source: Livestock Census of Jammu and Kashmir, 1992, 2003 and 2007**

<b>Districts</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2007</b>
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

**Source: Livestock Census of Jammu and Kashmir, 1992, 2003 and 2007**

With a few notable exceptions, each district's percentage of livestock has significantly changed between 1992, 2003, and 2007, while there is heterogeneity in the concentration of cattle among different districts (Tufail, 2014). Various income-generating initiatives were started by the federal and state governments for rural and tribal residents. The beneficiaries' income is to be increased through these income-generation programmes. The programmes are designed with the beneficiaries' current income levels in mind. The programmes are created so that they offer the beneficiaries a steady source of income (Ruhi, 2014). A few specific programmes in this category are as follows:

- Integrated Rural Development Programme

- Economic Rehabilitation of the Rural Poor
- Integrated Tribal Development Programme

A few specific employment-generation programmes are as follows:

- Jawahar Rojgar Yojna
- Indira Awas Yojna
- Self-Employment for Educated Unemployed Youth (SEEUY)
- Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
- *Culture*

Prior to discussing the Gujjar and Bakarwal cultures, it will be appropriate to grasp what culture is. The definition of culture that is most commonly accepted is that provided by E.B. Taylor, who stated that "culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Haralambos, 2014). The majority of Gujjars and Bakarwals adhere to folk culture in terms of their cultures. Gujjar and Bakarwal culture can be clearly seen in dancing, religious rites, and customs, among other things. The bulk of the tribal people in the state of Jammu & Kashmir are Muslims (Farhat. 2012).

- *Language:*

The lovely Gujari language, also known as Gojri, is spoken by the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities. The Rajasthan language family is home to this tongue. Other languages including Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, and Pahari languages like Kangri and Dogri have also become second nature to them. With the exception of Tehsil Mendhar, where the Bakarwals have a slightly distinct pronunciation, the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities speak the same language. Another noteworthy point is that Gojri dialect is still quite active since Gujjar and Bakarwals frequently communicate with one another and even with members of other communities like the Pahari. When speakers of a language value and treat it with respect, the language as a whole survives and advances (Rahi, 2011).

- *Festivals*

The Tribal Group celebrates on a regular basis. They take part in all of the major national holidays, including Eid, Holi, Lohdi (Sagraand), and others. Apart from these, the tribes have solidified their religious beliefs and customs. They celebrate all of the holidays with great joy and fervour. They pair well with unique music, cuisine, traditions, and society. These gatherings provide a venue for people with various levels of belief. The Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir participate in nearly all of the local festivities and festivals, but they also add their own exceptional charm and quality (Gupta, 2012).

- *Customs and Rituals*

Another significant aspect of Gujjars and Bakarwals is their customs and rituals. Custom emerges voluntarily.

According to Davis, it refers to customs that have been passed down through many generations. These procedures are being followed just because they have been in the past. Most Gujjars and Bakarwals kept carefully to the customs and traditions of the community. There are certain traditions that are followed throughout the society, from childbirth to funeral rites. Since this society is predominantly Muslim, it is clear that Islamic rites and practices have a significant impact on how they live. The circumcision of a male kid, marriage rituals, and funeral procedures are some significant Islamic practices. They deliver meals and food from their house to the residence at the time of condolences (Khatana, 1976).

- *Marriage Ceremonies*

One of society's most significant institutions, marriage can have quite distinct meanings depending on the culture. Marriage is often understood to be "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" (Mitchell, 2004). Marriages between Gujjars and Bakarwals are arranged as adults by negotiation and the family's senior members. The property is passed down from father to son, who inherit it equally (Khatana, 1976).

- *Folk Games*

Despite leading busy lives, the people of Gujjar and Bakarwal schedule downtime for entertainment and leisure in their own unique ways. They participate in a variety of activities, such as Stone Lifting (Bughdar), Arm Holding (Beeni Panjo), Chitto (often played by girls), Panjgeet (an indoor game with five tiny pieces of stone), and others.

- *Dress Pattern and Food Habits*

The Gujjar and Bakarwal groups in the area have adopted a unique dress style and have developed unusual dietary propensities due to their transhumant nature, topography, and civilization. Other than cereals, wheat, and maize, the majority of people take milk products as their main source of nutrition. Their main food sources consist of maize and milk products. "Maki ki Roti" Ganhar, "Sarssoon ka Droop," "Lassi," "Kalari," and so on. As the majority of them, especially those who are mobile, depend on their animals and cows (Farhat, 2012). As far as their apparel is concerned, men don Safa, Pag, and Lungi turbans, which are unique in shape and structure by regional standards. As the year went on, they wore Shalwar Kameez and waist layers. Women frequently wear Shalwar Kameez and keep their heads apart from Chiprior Head Sheet by wearing Gojri/Bakarwal Topor Topion (Rahi, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

The study sum-up by saying that Gujjar and Bakarwal's socioeconomic and educational standing in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is unsatisfactory. While there are undoubtedly some families with successful educational records, the majority of tribal members continue to struggle owing to their illiteracy and poverty. The census report makes clear that the indigenous people are generally poor, illiterate, and backward.



According to the 2001 census, the literacy rates for the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities respectively were 31.65 and 22.51 percent. If we compare it to the overall population, we find that their literacy rate is 55.52 percent. The bulk of Jammu and Kashmir's Gujjars and Bakarwals rely on cattle and agricultural productivity for their livelihood.

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