

# Culture and Society of Various Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir

Dr. Irfan Ahmad Lone<sup>1</sup>, Professor Manju Malothra<sup>2</sup>, Professor R.S Gurna<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctorate of Philosophy, Department of History, Desh Bhagat University, Amlah, Punjab

<sup>2</sup>Professor of History, USOL, Panjab University, Chandigarh

<sup>3</sup>Professor of History, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper, "Culture and Society of Various Tribes in Jammu And Kashmir State," is to investigate the culture and society of tribals in Jammu and Kashmir. The research will centre on the origins of numerous tribes. It will also investigate their life style, including population, physical appearance, religion, caste system, stratification, language, family, position of women, clothing style, language, dietary preferences, and so on, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Keywords:** Culture, Society, Scheduled Tribes, Jammu, Kashmir

## INTRODUCTION

A distinctive and important ethnic group in Jammu and Kashmir is the Gujjar. They rely heavily on raising cattle, goats, sheep, and horses. The social scientists have differing opinions on where they came from and how they got to India. According to some academics, they are of foreign ancestry and represent pastoral nomads from the Central Asian steppe grasslands who either arrived in India with the Huns or arrived a bit later. Our country's indigenous tribes have vibrant traditions and a distinct way of life. The majority of these indigenous tribes have yet to completely experience the effect of civilization. Even though they have been able to keep their rich history customs and culture intact. Such isolated societies have long piqued the curiosity of ethnologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians. The ethnic relationships are identified in such populations. Studies on such isolated populations are extremely intriguing since they provide opportunity to learn about and investigate their way of life, government, and social structure.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Maharaja Gulab Singh established the present state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846. Maharaja Gulab Singh is credited with integrating three significant regions: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. The state was administered by the Dogra kings until 1948 with paramountacy lying until 1947 in the British crown's representative in India. Jammu and Kashmir is a state in northern India. It is largely located in the Himalayan Mountains and has a southern border with the states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Jammu and Kashmir shares an international border with China in the north and east, while the Line of Control separates it from Pakistani-controlled Azad Kashmir in the west and northwest.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is known as a paradise on earth and the top tourist destination in India. It is home to many distinct ethnic groupings, foreign races, and faiths, all of which have affected the cultural philosophy and way of life of the people who live there. Jammu and Kashmir is home to a variety of communities, some of which are established while others are nomadic. The pastoral Gujjars and Bakarwals are the most well-known members of the final category. The history of diverse tribes and cultural groups settling in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is a chronicle of continual immigration impulses from the north, west, east, and south. The region has been impacted by several races, ethnic groupings, and religious waves.

Nowadays, the two most numerous ethnic groups in Jammu and Kashmir are Kashmiri Muslims and Gujjar Bakarwal Muslims. While there is a wealth of literature and knowledge accessible regarding Kashmiri Muslims, relatively little is known about Muslim Gujjars and Bakarwals.

Gujjars and Bakarwals are nomadic peasants who live in high altitude valleys and on higher mountain slopes near alpine

meadows. On steep slopes and in valleys, they raise buffaloes, sheep, and goats, as well as undertake some crop cultivation, primarily of maize. From ancient times, the physical qualities, language, manners, customs, attire, social structure, and economic activities have been extremely unique from those of other ethnic groups in the State. The Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir have a common ancestor with Gujjars from other regions of the Indian subcontinent. They share ethnicity, language, customs, manners, and culture with Gujjars from Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and other Indian states.

## **ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION**

The origin of the Gujjars and Bakarwals is still a matter of a debate:

Gujjars and Bakarwals both claim to be descended from the ancient Gurjar tribe of India. It is widely assumed that they held several areas in Persia, Central Asia, and Afghanistan before marching to the Indian Subcontinent. The Gujjars and Bakarwals are the most well-known, distinct, and culturally significant nomadic pastoral tribes of Jammu and Kashmir. Gujjars from Jammu and Kashmir are thought to have migrated from Rajasthan and nearby districts of Gujarat and Kathiawar due to a severe food crisis in their previous country. Researchers think they invaded Jammu and Kashmir in two waves, one immediately and the other after some term of settlement on the Pathiawar plateau in Punjab of undivided India and Pakistan. The majority of them settled in Sialkot, Gujranwala, and Jhelum in Pakistan, and in Bhimber, Nowshera, Kalakote, and Rajouri in Kashmir via Shopian and across the hills from Poonch to the districts of Baramulla and Muzafarabad.

Gujjars and Bakarwals account for around 20% of the state's population. Almost all Bakarwals and many Gujjars are nomadic. Gujjars were a cultural group found in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Gurjara and Gurjar are other spellings. The spellings Gurjara or Gurjar are preferred over the others. The Gujjars (Go=Cow) raise cattle, namely buffaloes, whereas the Bakarwals (Bakri=Goat) herd sheep. The Gujjars, for the most part, had fixed houses and were not nomadic. They are a member of an all-India Hindu community. Nevertheless, all Gujjars and Bakarwals in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as bordering portions of Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and to a lesser degree in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and north Punjab, are Muslims.

The word "Bakarwals" is derived from the *gojri/urdu/Punjabi/dogri* terms, "Bakra" meaning goat or sheep and "Wal" means (one who takes care of). Essentially, the name "Bakarwal" implies high altitude goatherds/shepherds. The Bakarwals belong to the same ethnic stock as the Gujjars, and inter marriage freely take place among them.

The Gaddis are another tribe that mostly inhabits the Indian states of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. They were Hindus from various castes such as Brahmin, Rajput, Dhanger, Khatri, Rana, and Thakur. There are at least four explanations for their arrival in that location, all of which rely on the interweaving of oral history and myth, and in one instance on disputed ethnic histories from the British Raj era. The Gaddi shepherds spend the most of the winter on the low slopes of the Shiwalik range. They went on to higher alpine pastures once the snow melted and the high passes were free. Omacanda Handa explores the dubiety of these and concludes that "the present-day Gaddis are the descendants of one of those casteless nomadic shepherds of the Indian plains who originally resided around the Barmer district of Rajasthan," based on parallels in numerous outfits and accessories.

## **Society and Culture of Gujjars**

The Gujjars organised themselves socially into three major kinship groups: the Dera (home), the fundamental family unit, which comprises of husband, wife, children, and elderly parents. The dada-potre (lineage) group is made up of patrilineally related kinsmen who can trace their genealogy back to a common ancestor for up to seven generations. The Gotra (clan) is a group based on Gujjar beliefs about their Hindu ancestors. Jammu and Kashmir's Muslim Gujjars share common and collateral relationships with Gujjars from other regions of the country. They share a history, culture, ethnic connections, beliefs, and languages with the Indian plains' Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim Gujjars. They believe that the Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars are of the same stock as any Gujjar in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and other states where they profess different religions, i.e, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam.

The Gujjars were categorized in the state of Jammu and Kashmir based on their occupation and settlements as: Cultivators (muqami) who had established in villages on the slopes or valleys. Transhumance Gujjars were further subdivided into Banihara or Dodhi Gujjars (Milkmen) and Bakarwal Gujjars (who rear sheep and goats). Gujjars have settled in places of Jammu that are suited for their animals, such as the valleys and slopes of Poonch, Mendhar, Surankot, Darhal, Rajouri, Nowshera, Sunderbani, Udampur, Jammu, and Kathua. Gujjars live in places above the 2135 to 2440 metre contour level in Kashmir valley. Gujjar communities dot the rocky slopes and valleys that surround Kashmir's valley. Uri, Baramulla,

Kupwara, Ganderbal, Kangan, Pahalgam, Anantnag, and Kulgam were the administrative divisions. These people, known as Dhoks, spent their summers in the upper peaks of the Pir Panjal and Greater Himalayas (pastures). Their villages are made up of Kothas (mud dwellings), which are aesthetically distinct from Kashmiri buildings. These Kothas were dispersed over the hills, bordered by corn fields and an animal enclosure. Gujjars speak a dialect of Gojri, which is an Indo-Aryan language. The language is part of the Rajasthani linguistic family. Dogri, Pahari, Punjabi, and Haryanvi are its closest cousins. In the Jammu and Kashmir, the Gojri language is written in Perso-Arabic script due to the impact of Urdu language. The Gujjar Bakarwal community is unique, and as such, it has a distinct identity.

### **Society and culture of Bakarwals**

In geographical Jammu and Kashmir State, a sub-tribe of Gujjars is known as Bakarwal because to their skill in goat herding. They are tall, well-built, and extremely gorgeous on the outside, yet they have a spiteful nature. Bakarwals are not completely nomadic; many are permanent farmers. This tribe, like the Gujjars, has sub-castes and goters: jindher, chohan, khari, and so on. As a result, the household is a major economic unit. A nuclear family is the unit of production and consumption. A big family cannot subsist on the little grazing supply since transhumance is on the move for around 110 to 130 days each year. The nomadic Bakarwals were landless and destitute, wandering around in the open. They do not have a house, only a tent, which is likewise composed of various old pieces of fabric. The tent is completely engulfed in smoke. Smoke had made my eyes swell. Women conduct household tasks such as cooking, washing, getting water, raising children, collecting wood, and drinking and creating woollen clothes. Males, on the other hand, conduct more difficult chores such as sheep and cow herding, tool and equipment maintenance, grass, herb, and deer-musk collecting, wild animal hunting, ploughing, and crop harvesting. Their animals were dispersed throughout the hills and may be destroyed by the hard climate.

Bakarwals were known for their bravery, fortitude, and hospitality. Bakarwals have the same Gotras (subcastes) as Gujjars such as Chauhan, Khatama, Hakla, Paswal, Bagadi, Jagel, Kalies, Sood, Kohli, Dhakkar, Thikria, Gegi, Mesi, Bajran, kandal, Keela, Gors, Khari, Chenija, chechi, bajar, and Kataria. Majority of Bakarwals were nomads. They were nomadic, moving from one location to another with their herds of sheep and goats, heads of cattle, and families, moving sect by sect and living in meadows. During this time of science and technology, when communities are playing an active role in advancements, these people are falling far behind owing to illiteracy and backwardness, because they live far away from civilization on the heights of hills. Gojri language is being spoken by Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir State and their mother language is Gojri.

### **Society and culture of Gaddi and Sippi**

The Gaddi tribe are mostly found in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. They are Hindus from various castes such as Ahir, Brahmin, Rajput, Dhangar, Gaderiya, Khatri, Rana, and Thakur. The Gaddi have a strong spiritual bent and are deeply devout people. The Gaddi tribe adheres to both Hinduism and Islam. Gaddi is a collective designation for the indigenous people of the Bahramaur area of Chamba district and other parts of Jammu & Kashmir. The Gaddis are mostly found in Bhadarwah, Jammu and Kashmir. Doda a few in Ramban tehsil of Doda district. The majority of the population of Gaddis is found in Bani, Basholi, Billowar, and Hiranagar tehsil of Kathua district and also in Udhampur district. The life style on the basis of their dressing and manner is different among the people of other tribes. *Chola* is the name of the dress worn by Gaddi men and this is being worn along with the turban and *Dora*. Launchri is the name of the garment worn by Gaddi women. Doda a few in Doda district's Ramban tehsil. The bulk of Gaddis live in Kathua district's Bani, Basholi, Billowar, and Hiranagar tehsils, as well as Udhampur district. The lifestyle of people from other tribes varies based on their clothing and way. *Chola* is the name of the garment used by Gaddi males, which is worn in conjunction with the turban and *Dora*. Gaddi ladies wear a garment called a launchri.

The Gaddis worked in a variety of vocations to earn their daily bread. The majority of Gaddi are landowners who rely on agriculture as their primary source of income. They were raising animals and selling mules, horses, lambs, and goats, as well as agricultural products. In the past, the majority of the Gaddi populace crushed millets and even hauled burdens to make a livelihood. The Gaddi never lost sight of their moral compass. Even in the darkest of circumstances, they remain true to their convictions. Anthropologists believe that the Gaddi are recognised mostly for their honesty, and that the people are too pleasant and peace-loving. Child marriage and many marriages were common in the early days of Gaddi culture. In matters of language the Gaddis speak Gaddi language and old people used Tankri script. These days the Devangri script is quite in trend. The Gaddi celebrate some of the most renowned festivals like *Baisakhi*, *Sair*, *Patroru sagramd*, *Lohri*, *Shivratri*, *Holi*, etc.

### **Religion**

Religion emphasizes family integrity as the core of faith, and understands that sustaining traditional roles for women is

critical to family integrity. The Gujjar and Bakarwal are considered staunch Muslims by the majority of native Kashmiris. The Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu Gujjars of the mountains and plains see themselves as offspring of a single progenitor and conceive of themselves as brothers. This sense of belonging shared by the Muslim Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir with the Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim Gujjars of the Indian plains may be found everywhere. By declaring, *Too main Ek Rakht* (you and I share the same blood), I discovered that a greater percentage of Gujjar and Bakarwal grow their symbolic beard and moustache as compared the other Kashmiri.

The Hindu Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir regard Lord Krishna, Radha, Lord Rama, Sita, Bal Ram, and Googa Pir to be their forefathers, as do other Indian traditions. They appear to be very proud of these visible declarations, affectionately or decisively touching their beards from time to time. The creation of the shrine and Babaji Larvi as a prominent religious figure in Kashmir in the twenty-first century is the cornerstone of the Gujjar and Bakarwal identities and origins in the valley. The pirs' effect on the religious fabric of the valley was so profound that his peoples triumphed in the region and gained a permanent presence within its land and civilization.

Surprisingly, the Gujjar and Bakarwal celebrate Hindu holidays such as Baisakhi and Lori, and execute various rituals on these occasions. The Gujjar and Bakarwal claim to practise their faith with tolerance for other religions. Their connection with other communities demonstrates that they are still loyal to this ideal. Despite the fact that all Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir profess Islam, they retain pastoral symbols, taboos, and totems. The vast majority of them still believe in Pirs.

### **Tribal women**

The Gujjar and Bakarwal Womens are no different they too, are tall and robust, with an air of grace about them. The sufferings of Jammu and Kashmir's Gujjar Bakarwal women outnumber those of other women from the state's several schedule tribal populations. It is commonly known that Gujjar Bakarwal women were far more hard working than tribal women from Jammu and Kashmir's Bot, Balti, Mon, Changpa, Garra, Purig, Brokpa, and Sippi tribes. Regrettably, her life is still plagued by superstition and ignorance. While she is well aware of her responsibilities and gives her all for the advancement of tribal culture, she continues to suffer like a sacrifice goat at the hands of her family and community. The nomad Gujjar women have been the victims of superstitions, and despite her heavy workload, she is not given appropriate respect in tribal community. In Gujjar society, since men are typically illiterate, women's educational opportunities are relatively limited.

The woman from Gujjar Bakarwal is being severely exploited. Women were required to perform all household duties, including cooking, selling milk, and assisting their husbands with farming and cattle feeding. She becomes physically and psychologically exhausted as a result of her hard job and boring lifestyle. As Gujjar Bakarwal people are mostly nomads, women and girls are expected to walk throughout the day while carrying their children and household goods. In the end, they have no time to even consider their social lives.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this study, it was shown that the Gujjar and Bakarwal ethnic groups originated in Central Asian nations and that they came to India at various points in history. They migrated to Jammu and Kashmir during the times of drought and hunger in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Jammu & Kashmir's Gujjar and Bakarwal populations are nomadic and dispersed over nearly the whole state. Being nomadic tribes they are interested in pastoralism and transhumance with their livestock's. They are a community that sells milk. Gujjars and Bakarwal are quite impoverished economically. Both men and women handle the Gujjars' livestock economy. Due to a variety of issues in their lives, they lead pitiful lives. The other Gaddi tribe has land, and agriculture is their main source of income. Anthropologists believe that the Gaddi are recognised for their honesty and that they are a hospitable and peaceful people. For their improvement, the government and other development organisations must act right away.

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