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Research Article

Socio Economic Status of Gujjar and Bakarwal Tribes- A Study

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ABSTRACT

Jammu and Kashmir has officially notified twelve scheduled tribes Gujjar, Bakerwal, Beda, Balti, Boto, Brokpa, Dardic, shin, Changpa, Garra, Mon and Purigpa spread over the regions Jammu and Kashmir. All the twelve scheduled tribes were officially enumerated for the first time during the 2001 census recording a population of 1,105,979. Bakarwal and Gujjar are the third largest tribal group in Jammu and Kashmir constituting more than 11.9 percent of the total population of the State. In Jammu and Kashmir Scheduled tribes maintain its culture and heritage throughout the ages. This paper seeks to explore the socio-economic status of tribal communities, focusing specifically on the Gujjar and Bakarwal groups.

KEYWORDS: Scheduled Tribes, Bakarwal, Changpa, Brokpa, Kashmir

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 Census data for Jammu and Kashmir highlights several key aspects of its population dynamics, particularly regarding scheduled tribes. The total population stands at 12,541,302, with 6,640,662 males and 5,900,640 females. Scheduled tribes comprise 1,493,299 individuals, making up 11.9% of the total population. Among these tribes, the Gujjar tribe is the most populous, with approximately 763,806 members, representing about 69% of the tribal population. The Bot tribe follows with 96,698 individuals, and the Bakarwal tribe has 60,724 members. The Scheduled Tribe Act of Jammu and Kashmir was enacted in 1989, initially identifying eight tribal communities as scheduled tribes. The Gujjar, Bakarwal, Gaddi, and Sippi were later recognized through an amendment in 1991. The constitution of Jammu and Kashmir officially acknowledges 12 tribes: Bakarwal, Gujjar, Balti, Beda, Changpa, Gari, Bot, Brokpa (Drokpa), Mon, Purigpa, Gaddi, and Sippi. The 2001 Census was the first to enumerate all twelve tribes.

In terms of literacy, the scheduled tribe population has a literacy rate of 50.6%, which is significantly lower than the national average. Male literacy stands at 60.6%, while female literacy is considerably lower at 39.7%. This disparity indicates ongoing challenges in educational access and gender equality within these communities.

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Table 1: Scheduled Tribes Population in India

Census Years	Population in Millions	
	Population of ST	Total Population
1951	19.1	361.1
1961	30.1	439.2
1971	38.0	548.2
1981	51.6	685.2
1991	67.8	864.3
2001	84.3	1028.0
2011	104.5	1210.8

Source: Census 2011

The population of STs in India as per the 2011 census was 104.54 million constituting 8.6 percent of the total population. The tribal population had grown at the rate of 24.0 during the period 2001 to 2011.

Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir officially recognize 12 scheduled tribes: Gujjar, Bakarwal, Gaddi, Sippi, Balti, Beda, Bot, Brokpa, Drokpa, Dard, and Shin. The 2001 Census marked the first time all twelve tribes were enumerated, with a total tribal population of 1,105,979, accounting for 10.9% of the state's total population and 1.3% of the total tribal population in India.

Among these, the Gujjar tribe is the largest, with a population of 763,806. The Bot tribe follows with 96,698 individuals, while the Bakarwal tribe has 60,724 members, and the Brokpa tribe has 51,957. Together, the Gujjar, Bot, Bakarwal, and Brokpa tribes make up 88% of the total tribal population in Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting their significant presence within the state's demographic landscape.

Distribution of the Gujjar-Bakarwal Population

According to census 2011 the UT J & K constitute 8.1 per cent of the total population in the state. Bakarwals and Gujjars is the third largest community in the state. In Jammu region Gujjar and Bakarwal is the highest followed by Kashmir. The districts in Jammu and Kashmir are highly concentrated by the Gujjars and Bakarwals are Rajouri, Poonch, Anantnag, Udhampur, Kupwara and Srinagar. In the Jammu region, the population of Gujjars and Bakarwals is indeed higher than in the Kashmir Valley. This is largely due to the region's mountainous terrain and abundant pasture lands, particularly in the Siwalik and Pir Panjal ranges, which provide ideal conditions for their pastoral lifestyle. The availability of grazing areas in these high-altitude locations attracts these communities, allowing them to practice traditional herding and agriculture. This geographical advantage supports their settlement and sustains their livelihoods in the region.

Table 2: Distribution of the Gujjar and Bakarwal Population in Jammu & Kashmir, 2001 (in Percent)

Districts	Total Pop.	Bakarwals	Gujjars
Udhampur	743509	1.31	11.16
Srinagar	1202447	0.25	3.2
Rajouri	483284	2.72	30.31
Pulwama	652607	0.08	3.13
Poonch	372613	0.62	39.34
Leh	117232	0.02	0.014
Kupwara	650393	3	7.6
Kathua	550084	0.5	2.75
Kargil	119307	0.6	0.18
Jammu	1588772	0.099	3.81
Doda	691929	0.89	9.09
Baramulla	1169780	0.3	4.4
Badgam	629309	0.04	2.24
Anantnag	1172434	1.26	7.14
Total	10143700	0.59	7.52

Source: Census 2001

Sex Composition

The sex composition of a population is often expressed as the number of females per thousand males, commonly referred to as the sex ratio. An unfavourable sex ratio, which indicates a lower number of females compared to males, serves as a crucial indicator of gender inequality within a society. A skewed sex ratio can highlight various social issues, including discrimination against females, unequal access to healthcare and education, and cultural preferences for male children. Monitoring sex ratios is essential for understanding the broader implications of gender inequality and for implementing policies aimed at promoting gender balance and equity.

Table 3: District Wise Sex Ratio among the Gujjars and Bakarwals and General Population in Jammu & Kashmir

Districts	Bakarwals	Gujjars	General Pop.
Udhampur	872.9	889.0	860.2
Srinagar	807.9	929.5	851.4
Rajouri	898.8	894.2	878.0
Pulwama	883.2	906.6	944.9
Poonch	943.2	931.4	918.6
Leh	0.0	0.0	823.0
Kupwara	982.0	925.4	905.6
Kathua	848.3	919.8	900.8
Kargil	910.5	744.2	836.8
Jammu	834.7	912.7	868.5
Doda	866.7	889.9	903.4
Baramulla	802.6	905.1	902.7
Badgam	584.9	974.5	930.1
Anantnag	854.6	891.3	922.2
Total	867.9	908.0	891.0

Source: Census 2011

The sex ratio among the Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir stands at 908 females per thousand males, which is notably better than the general population's sex ratio of 891. This suggests that the Gujjar community has relatively more balanced gender representation. In

contrast, the Bakarwal community exhibits a significantly lower sex ratio across all districts, indicating deeper issues related to gender inequality. Possible reasons for the Bakarwals' unfavorable sex ratio could include higher maternal mortality rates, cultural neglect of female children, and limited access to healthcare and education for women. These factors contribute to the disparities observed in the population dynamics of these communities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to improve the status and well-being of women, particularly among the Bakarwals.

Rural and Urban Composition

According to the 2011 Census, a striking 98.7% of the Gujjar and Bakarwal populations in Jammu and Kashmir reside in rural areas, with only 0.85% of Gujjars and 0.03% of Bakarwals living in urban settings. In contrast, the general population has a much higher urban representation, with 26.8% classified as urban. This stark difference highlights the predominantly rural character of both the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, with no district showing more than 1% urban population among the Bakarwals. This low level of urbanization can be attributed to their traditional lifestyles, reliance on pastoralism, and limited access to urban resources and opportunities, underscoring the socio-economic challenges they face in adapting to modern urban environments.

Table 4: Distribution of the Urban Population of Gujjar and Bakarwals and Others in Jammu and Kashmir (in Percent)

Districts	Total Urban Pop.	Bakarwals	Gujjars
Kupwara	25495	0.11	1.8
Baramulla	196322	0.04	0.2
Srinagar	946166	0.009	0.05
Badgam	70588	0	0.4
Pulwama	68507	0	0.5
Anantnag	168363	0	0.15
Leh	28639	0	0
Kargil	10657	0	0
Doda	47695	0.35	0.42
Udhampur	116627	0.13	1.2
Poonch	23978	0.4	5.5
Rajouri	33655	0.2	5.4
Jammu	701218	0.03	1.96
Kathua	78728	0.01	1
Total	2516638	0.03	0.85

Source: Census 2011

District-wise literacy Rate

Gujjars and Bakarwals are significantly marginalized and exhibit higher illiteracy rates compared to the general population of Jammu and Kashmir. This tribal community has the lowest school enrollment rates in the region, with many areas lacking schools entirely. In places where schools do exist, enrollment is alarmingly low, typically ranging from only 20 to 30 percent.

Table 5: Literacy Rate among the Gujjar-Bakarwals and General Population in Jammu and Kashmir (in Percent)

Districts	Total Lit. Pop.	Bakarwals	Gujjars	General Pop.
Udhampur	343,429	19.3	21.3	61.21
Srinagar	641,267	15.6	16.3	78.83
Rajouri	234,228	20.5	32.9	72.45
Pulwama	281,518	20.1	17.4	66.21
Poonch	156,398	30.8	34.6	69.08
Leh	68,278	100.0	88.2	68.21
Kupwara	232,557	20.4	16.9	65.32
Kathua	307,370	18.8	19.3	74.11
Kargil	60,803	17.4	50.7	63.98
Jammu	1,070,574	23.5	39.0	79.07
Doda	274,425	15.6	16.8	54.82
Baramulla	447,075	19.3	19.7	62.48
Badgam	226,167	18.3	21.7	74.23
Anantnag	463,197	14.6	15.5	73.01
Total	48,07,286	22.51	31.6	71.23

Source: Census 2011

Housing

The nature of the house was considered as another indicator of the socioeconomic status of the respondents. In the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities, the house is considered a status symbol as most of the Gujjars and Bakerwals are nomadic grazers.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents According to Type of House

Types of Houses	Respondents	Percentage
Kucha	36	72%
Semi- Pucca	10	20%
Pucca	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

As per the data from the above table out of the total respondents, 72 per cent of respondents responded that they are living in Kucha houses made up of mud, wood, and tents, 20 per cent of respondents responded that they are living in semi-pucca houses made up of wood, stones and tin sheets and only 8 per cent respondents responded that they are living in pucca houses made up of bricks, cement and tin sheets. It shows that the majority of the respondents are living in Kucha houses.

Table 7: Income-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Monthly Income	Respondents	Percentage
Below 5000	12	24%
5000-10000	22	44%
10,000-15000	7	14%
15000- 20000	5	10%
Above 20000	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

As per the data from the above table out of total respondents, 24 per cent of Respondents stated that they were earning less than 5000, 44 per cent of Respondents indicated that their monthly

income varied from 5000 to 10,000 and 14 percent Respondents indicated that their monthly income varied from 10,000 to 15,000. While as only 8 per cent of Respondents indicated that their monthly income varied is above 20,000 and 10 per cent of respondents responded that their monthly income ranged from 15,000 to 20,000.

Types of Fuel

Using the fuel for cooking and heating in winter is an essential amenity for people especially those who live in the higher altitude of the Himalayas. Winters in tribal regions are quite harsh to live in and need an adequate heating system. There are different types of fuel but firewood is common and most of people use it as it is readily available in tribal areas.

Table 8: Distribution of the Respondents as per Types of Fuel

Types of Fuel	Respondents	Percentage
Fire Wood	18	36%
Cow dung Cakes	16	32%
Kerosene	9	18%
LPG Gas	7	14%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

As per the data from the above table out of the total respondents, 36 and 32 per cent respondents stated that they use firewood and cow dung cakes for cooking and heating, while 18 per cent of respondents stated that they use kerosene for cooking and heating and only 14 per cent Respondents stated that they are using LPG gas for cooking and heating. It shows that the majority of the respondents responded that they are using firewood and cow dung cakes for cooking and heating.

Toilet facility

Toilet facility is an important pre-requisite of a civilized society. It indicates the actual socio-economic profile of the people. It was found that only few respondents were not having toilet facility at their homes.

Table 9: Distribution of the Respondents as per Toilet Facility

Toilet Facility	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	42	84%
No	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

As per the data from the above table out of the total respondents, 84 per cent of respondents responded that they had toilet facilities at home, while only 16 per cent of respondents responded that they did not have toilet facilities at their homes.

Drinking Water

The source of drinking water was regarded as another indicator of the respondents' socio-economic status. In the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, the source of drinking water for a family is viewed not only as a status symbol but also as a crucial element for survival.

Table 10: Source of Drinking Water Used by the Respondents

Drinking Water Source	Respondents	Percentage
Government Hand Pumps/Tube Wells/Taps.	6	12%
Wells/Boreholes/Water Tanks	5	10%
Springs	39	78%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

As per the data from the above table out of the total respondents, 12 per cent had access to government hand pumps/taps/tube wells, and 10 per cent of respondents responded that they took water from uncovered wells/boreholes/water tanks. While as majority 78 per cent of respondents responded that they took water from natural springs found in the mountains. It shows that the majority of the respondents took water from natural springs.

Lighting

Lighting is an important necessity of a man. The source of lighting has evolved from one generation to another. Fire Enlightened from the wood was used as a source for lighting by the early man. For the past many centuries, earthen oil lamps were used for lighting. However, with the change in living, the earthen oil lamp has gone out of practice. Electricity is available to the majority of the people in towns and villages these days. Apart from electricity, fuel and other sources like candles, lanterns, etc. were found to be the next popular source of lighting.

Table 11: Source of Light Used by the Respondents

Source of Light	Respondents	Percentage
With Meter Connection	0	0
Without Meter Connection	38	76%
Fuel and other Sources	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Source: Field Survey

As per the data from the above table out of the total respondents, 76 per cent of respondents responded that they have electricity connections without a meter. While 12 per cent of respondents responded that they are using fuel and other sources for lightening. It shows that the majority of the respondents responded that they have an electricity connection without a meter.

CONCLUSION

The Gujjars and Bakerwals are leading a hard life because of poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, nomadism and discrimination. This discrimination is prevalent in many forms. Some of these, worth mentioning are calling them with derogatory names, avoiding handshake with them, avoiding sitting and eating with them etc. In the present study, it is concluded that the basic social services like education and health are available in rural J & K but due to ignorance, illiteracy and transhumance practice, Gujjars and Bakerwals are not able to avail them. Gujjars and Bakerwals are not deprived of such facilities. However, these people are dispossessed of decent housing because of their low income, economic status and transhumance practice. As far the quality of life is concerned, it is ascertained by the study that majority of the Gujjars and Bakerwals are leading a life lower than the other community.

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