

Socio-Economic Conditions of Gujjars in South Kashmir Their Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Kashmir Valley is known as place where people are embraced with multicultural and multilingual atmosphere. Gujjars are the tribal group mostly residing on hilly and mountainous regions of Valley with different traditions, rituals and language. They are economically poor, socially backward, but culturally stable. Their economic profile is poor than the general population of region. They are suffering from so many issues in their day today life. Their housing, sanitation, Education, electricity, health care facilities are very low sub-standard than different sections of population, Also Government has not provided them the basic assets to eradicate the tribal poverty. The literacy rate among Gujjars of south Kashmir is also very low. This paper is based on both primary and secondary data and tries to analyze the magnitude of socio-economic conditions of different parameters and also this paper contains some suggestions, which needs to be implement on the ground level in order to eradicate their socio economic problems.

KEYWORDS: Gujjars, Poverty, Backward, Illiteracy and Economy.

Introduction of Gujjars in Kashmir: Gujjars are the pastoral agricultural ethnic and linguistic group with populations in India, Pakistan and a small number in northern Afghanistan. Gujjars have their unique language known as Gujjari. Gujjars are categorized as other backward classes (OBC) in some parts of India however Gujjars in J&k and parts of Himachal Pradesh are categorised as schedule tribes. It is assumed that Gujjars came to Jammu & Kashmir from Gujarat (via Kashmir) and hazara region of Khyber pakhtunkhwa. According to 2011 census 99.3% of Gujjars in J&K are the followers of Islam. The Gujjar tribe is essentially a nomadic community permanently settled in colonies, taking to farming, businesses and joining government jobs on small scale. Inter marriages freely take place among them. The houses of the Gujjars are locally known as “kothas”. It is generally a mud-house against the slope of a hillock. So far as the dress is concerned, the males wear a long shirt and a trouser as per the doctrines of Islam. Also they wear a turban of a peculiar style. The ladies usually wear a long shirt and shalwar with a cap or dupatta on their head. Gujjars are mostly vegetarians. The usual dishes of Gujjars are Daal, Maki ki Roti, Sarsoo ka Saag and products of Milk. They have their own cattles, they look after them and sell them at different times to earn their livelihood. Gujjars are the great followers of their culture and culture plays a great role in their day today life.



Methodology: The data for the present paper was collected from the four districts of south Kashmir on the basis of random sampling method. Among these four districts 200 respondents were taken for study purpose 50 respondents from each district through random sampling method to analyze the socio-economic conditions of Gujjars of south Kashmir. The major research techniques involved were interview method with a well structured interview schedule. It helped us to collect the deeper and real social facts of Gujjars. It also helped us to understand the every aspect of socio-economic and cultural life of such tribes. To get the exact information at the ground level we also conducted open and close end interviews. The close end interviews were based on properly formulated interview schedule and the data recorded was then analyzed carefully and formally written down.

Profile of Respondents:

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Districts selected	Gender		Marital status		Educational status		Age status		
	M	F	M	Um	Lit	Illit	15-25	25-35	35-above
Anantnag	20	30	30	20	20	30	15	30	05
Kulgam	35	15	43	07	22	28	18	12	20
Pulwama	40	10	30	20	15	35	10	20	20
Shopian	20	30	27	23	17	33	05	15	30
Total	115	85	130	70	74	126	48	77	75

Note: M=male, F=female, M=married, Um=unmarried, Lit=literate & Illit=illiterate

Table 1 is the profile of 200 respondents selected from the 4 districts of south Kashmir such as: Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Shopian, from each district we have taken 50 respondents for the current study, on the basis of Gender wise distribution among these 200 respondents 115 are males and 85 are females. On the basis of marital status among these 200 respondents 130 are married and 70 are unmarried. On the basis of Educational status among these 200 respondents 74 are literate and 126 are illiterate. The table also shows out of 200 respondents 48 respondents are in the age group of (15-25), 77 are in the age group of (25-35) and 75 are in the age group of (35-above).

Research Objectives:

The research problem has focused on the following proposed objectives.

- To know about the socio-economic life of the Gujjars.
- To know about the sources available for their income.
- To know about the facilities provided by the government.
- To know the culture and its importance among Gujjars.

Data Analysis: Data collected from the field is analysed in the tables below which determines the socio economic conditions of Gujjars of south Kashmir.

TABLE 2.1 TYPE OF HOUSE

Type of houses	No. of respondents district wise				Percentage
	Anantnag	Kulgam	Pulwama	Shopian	
Pacca	0	2	0	1	1.5%
Semi-pacca	05	08	07	03	11.5%
katcha	45	40	43	46	87%
Total	50	50	50	50	100%

This table reveals that 11.5% of the respondents live in semi-pacca houses, 87% live in katcha houses and 1.5% live in a pucca houses. This means that they don't have proper housing facilities, they are mostly poor and they are not able to afford pacca house.

TABLE 2.2 LEVEL OF SATISFACTION FROM HOUSING

RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDANTS DISTRICT WISE				PERCENTAGE
	Anantnag	Kulgam	Pulwama	Shopian	
Highly satisfied	1	2	1	2	03%
Satisfied	15	20	17	18	35%
Unsatisfied	34	28	32	30	62%
Total	50	50	50	50	100%

This table reveals that 35% of the respondents are satisfied and 62% of the respondents are unsatisfied with their housing conditions and only 3% respondents were highly satisfied with their housing conditions. In this study the area of the study was completely tribal. 90% of the respondents didn't have any toilet facility, they go in open for toilet purposes which shows that they are very backward in such modern times. All the respondents said that they use wood for cooking purposes as they can't afford a gas connection.

Table 2.3 Proper water supply

Name of the District	Total no. of respondents taken from each district	Yes	No
Anantnag	50	30	20
Kulgam	50	17	33
Pulwama	50	25	25
Shopian	50	20	30
Total	200	92	108

The above table reveals that 46% respondents said that they have proper water facility in their area and 54% respondents said that they don't have proper water facility in their area. This means that maximum respondents don't have proper water facility. Gujjars from District Anantnag and Kulgam revealed that they still have to cover longer distances to collect water for their daily use and drinking purposes and it creates lot of difficulties for them. Gujjars from all districts also complained about proper electricity.

TABLE 2.4 AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CENTERS

Name of the District	Total no. of respondents taken from each district	Yes	No
Anantnag	50	10	40
Kulgam	50	12	38
Pulwama	50	8	42
Shopian	50	9	41
Total	200	39	161

The above table 2.4 reveals that only 19.5% respondents have health facility in their area and 80.5% did not have health facility in their area. The tribes of Kulgam and shopian district are still facing so many problems and they have to travel lot of distance to reach the hospital. They said

that price of food items nowadays is very high and as such they can't buy all food items from the market. Moreover they cannot afford to buy all essential food items for their family because of their low income.

Table 2.5 Cultivating land of own

Name of the district	Total no. of respondents taken from each district	Yes	No
Anantnag	50	40	10
Kulgam	50	35	15
Pulwama	50	40	10
Shopian	50	30	20
Total	200	145	55

Table 2.5 reveals that 25% people have their own land for cultivation and remaining 75% people have no land of their own for cultivation and use land of others for cultivation. Gujjars of south Kashmir also narrated that Government have not provided them basic tools like proper fertilizers, pests, fungicides and proper irrigation facility, they also commented that rain and hail stones damaged our crop from last few years which have become a big burden on their economy.

Table 2.6 income status

income	No. of responses district wise				Percentage
	Anantnag	Kulgam	Pulwama	Shopian	
1000-5000	35	37	33	40	72.5%
5000-10000	10	12	14	5	20.5%
10000-15000	4	1	2	3	05%
15000-20000	1	0	1	2	02%
Total	50	50	50	50	100%

Table 2.6 indicates that 72.5% population is having income between 1000-5000, 20.5% population is having income between 5000-10000, 5% population comes under income level between 10000-15000 and only 2% population is having income level between 15000-20000. The study reveals that most of the population comes under the income level of 1000-5000 which indicates the condition of Gujjars is not as developed as it should be.

Table 2.7 Conditions of schools

Responses	No. of responses District wise				Percentage
	Anantnag	Kulgam	Pulwama	Shopian	
Good	10	15	20	7	26%
Bad	20	5	3	10	19%
Worst	2	5	2	11	10%
Satisfactory	18	25	25	22	45%
Total	50	50	50	50	100%

Table 2.7 indicates that 26% of respondents responded that the condition of schools are good, 19% of respondents responded about worst condition of schools and 45% people responded that the conditions of schools are satisfactory. Gujjars who resides in far flung areas were not able to send their children to school because the schools are very far from their locality and there are no means of transport system. Some of the respondents told that the seasonal teachers are not giving the proper attention towards the students.

Table 2.8 Type of family system

Type of family system	No. of responses District wise				percentage
	Anantnag	Kulgam	Pulwama	Shopian	
Joint family	40	35	38	27	70%
Nuclear Family	10	15	12	23	30%
others	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	50	50	50	50	100%

Table 2.8 indicates that 70% of families live as joint families and only 30% of families are living as nuclear families. It indicates that the Gujjars follow the the old tradition and they are bind with their culture because culture plays important role in their day today life. They live together and work together as a unit to save expenditures and it controls their work pressure.

Table 2.9 Age of Marriage

Age Group	No. Of Responses District Wise				
	Anantnag	Kulgam	Pulwama	Shopian	Total
10-15	9	7	5	6	13.5%
15-20	30	33	35	30	64%
20-25	11	8	10	10	19.5%
25-30	0	2	0	4	03%
Total	50	50	50	50	100%

Table 2.9 indicates that 13.5% marriages are held in the age group of 10-15, 64% marriages are held in the age group of 15-20, 19.5% marriages are held in the age group of 20-25 and only 3% marriages are held in the age group of 25-30. It indicates that the Gujjars still follow the child marriage and early marriage system and most of them believe in arrange marriage.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF GUJJARS IN SOUTH KASHMIR

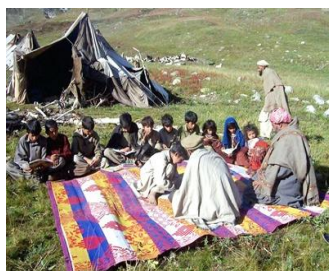


A large number of Gujjars reside in the south Kashmir. The percentage of literacy among Gujjars in the study area is very low. The Gujjars of this area reside in far-flung areas and are suffering from various socio-economic problems like as, having no road links, Child labour, Low percentage of literacy among Gujjar woman, Unemployment in educated Gujjar youths, less

opportunities of coaching for admission in professional and technical institutions, Poor economic conditions, Shortage of educational institutions in Gujjar localities, Malfunctioning of mobile schools, Lack of proper marketing facilities of wood, milk and matter, Lack of financial resources, Non availability of work to Gujjar labourers, unavailability of hospitals and other health centers, Lack of proper transport system, lack of proper irrigation facility, improper functioning of animal husbandry department and unavailability of modern agricultural tools

Challenges:

The Gujjars of south Kashmir are facing so many challenges in there day today life. Government have not provided them the basic facilities for the upliftment of social as well as economic status



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of people. Large number of population is still facing so many deprivations by the government and other private organizations. Educational organizations are not functioning properly which keeps them away from this field. Schools are not located at proper location which is a big burden for the present Gujjar population. The people are not aware about the tribal schemes or any other government implemented schemes which also keep them away from the development. There is not any proper irrigation facility when the whole population is dependent on agricultural activities and also they have to bring the drinking water from a long distance which becomes a heavy load on women folk. Most of the places are still suffering due to lack of electricity and government has not provided them any subsidy based gas connections, which makes their life so miserable.

Suggestions:

- i. Road connectivity and Transport system should be provided so that they remain connected with nearby towns.
- ii. Agricultural tools and proper use of fertilizers should be provided by the government.
- iii. Gas chulaas should be provided by the government on subsidy basis.
- iv. There should be regular surveys by govt. to check out their problems.
- v. NGOs should play the major role in all departments of village awareness.
- vi. There should be proper location of educational institutions.
- vii. Animal husbandry should work properly to aware them about cattle management.
- viii. Drinking water facilities should be provided by the government.
- ix. Government should provide them the cattle related business units.

Conclusion: On the whole it has been observed that Gujjars of south Kashmir have so many miseries and their life is not as comfortable as it should be. The poverty rates of Gujjars are more than the general population. All these scheduled tribe Gujjars are socially and economically deprived and have not basic amenities of life. Their agricultural facilities are also poor due to lack of agricultural facilities like (irrigation, proper fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides). They do not have proper means of health centers and transportation. Gujjars are also backward in means of education and there is a large number of child labour. Gujjars live in kaccha houses because they can't afford pacca houses. They do not have any proper source of income. It needs a great concern to eradicate their social and economic problems so that they can live a quality life.



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