

A COMMUNITY FACT FINDING OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In Jammu and Kashmir the Local tribes migrate in pastures and meadows of upper riches of Peer-Panjral range along with flock of sheep, goats, Buffaloes and horses in search of food and fodder where they resides in mud and wooden log huts locally known as 'Dhokes'. In these Dhokes these tribes live a very tough life along with their cattle under the same roof without basic facilities. It is in this context, the present paper is an attempt to study the life style of Local tribes at Dhokes of block Budhal in Rajouri district (J&K) and also to suggest few alternative strategies to improve their way of life.

KEYWORDS: *Dhokes, Gujjars, Bakerwals, Lifestyle*

Introduction:

Local Tribes in J&K

Gujjars and Bakerwals is the third largest community in the state of the Jammu and Kashmir which constitute about 20% of the total population.

In district Rajouri, there are only two scheduled tribes Locals out of 12 tribes of the J&K state. As per 2011 Census the total population of Local tribes is 232815 which constitute 36.2 percent of the total population of the district.

In Rajouri district about 12% population is comprised of Bakerwals while 23% population belongs to Gujjars. Gujjars mostly rear cattle and they are herdsmen of buffaloes and possess small pieces of lands, kachha houses on the slopes and foothills of mountains in Rajouri district. They are having their Dhokes on the upper reaches of Rajouri district mostly in Darhal, Budhal,

Kalakote and Manjakote areas. On the other hand, Bakerwals are the offshoots of Gujjars and they are nomadic tribes. Most of them are landless and houseless. Their livelihood is mostly dependent on sheep and goats for which

they have to rear these animals. In search of green pastures for their herds and flocks, they travel from one place to another with their baggage and luggage, flock of sheep and goats, fleet of horses and dogs. Initially, they were rearing goats; therefore they are known as Bakerwals (who rear goats). They are living nomadic life.

In the beginning of Summer season Bakerwal tribes migrates toward their Dhokes in the upper riches of Peer Panjal range and even cross the Valley and reach Lolab, Gurez and Sona-Marg on the Eastern top hills of Kashmir.

Methodology:

The study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. For collection of primary data the researchers interviewed 50 sample households of the Local tribes in different dhokes. The secondary data has been collected from different journal and reports.

Results and Discussion:

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the researchers made an insight on lifestyle of Gujjars and Bakerwals at dhokes and various problems being faced by them.

Life Style of Locals at Dhokes:

The Gujjars and Bakerwals lives a separate life at dhokes totally isolated from the rest of the area. The Gujjars and Bakerwals of Block Budhal, of the study area, migrates to upper riches of Peer-Panjal at dhokes namely, Rupri, Bella, Smartsar-marg, Richh-Begla etc. These dhokes are far away from the inhabited areas. These people have to cover a distance of 30-40 kilometres to reach in these dhokes. These places are green pastures and meadows where they graze their cattles.

These people don't use kerosene oil for cooking instead they use wood as fuel. There is not even a single plant or tree in these pastures. To get the wood they have to travel long distances for the procurement of wood. At dhokes they live in Groups to cope with the challenges and threats of theft and risk from the wild animals. During the spare time they use radio and flute for recreation and entertainment. The ladies of Gujjars and Bakerwals rear cattle in day time and the men sleep at that

time and wake during night time to guard their cattle from wild animals and thieves. To solve the internal disputes they elect a person of their own community known as Mukkaddm. Police and court also agrees with the Mukkaddm decision.

There is also shortage of food items due to far of location. Along with the pulses and food items which they took from the village or town at the time of migration, they also eat local panjali herbs and shrubs due to unavailability of food items. So at dhokes they had to eat local grown shrubs and herbs and also milk products like cheese, lassi, curd, butter and curry etc.

There is not any medical & veterinary facility at dhokes. At the dhokes these people also use local medicinal plants for themselves and their animal treatment. Their ladies at dhokes give birth to the children by natural ways. In this area a person is totally depend on the mercy of God to overcome from illness. Mostly the patient died on the way to dispensary or hospital.

There is unavailability of educational facilities for children. Mobile Schools it appears only exists on papers. Children get engaged in rearing of cattles in absence of educational facilities. Their life style and their living at dhokes is very tough in severe environment conditions. The climate is severe and harsh as stormy cold wind blow there. There is lack of oxygen also. After seeing their life style at dhokes one could analyse that these tribes are far from modernisation and development.

Table1: Dhokes & Sample Households

S.No	Dhokes	Total Households	Gujjar	Bakerwal

1	Smartsar-marg	10	4	6
2	Rupri	08	3	5
3	Richh-begla	09	4	5
4	Bella	10	3	7
5	Others	13	5	8
	Total	50	19 (38%)	31(62%)

Source: Field Survey

Problem Faced (code)	No. Of respondents of different Dhokes					
	Smartsar-Marg	Rupri	Richh-Begla	Bella	Others	Total
A	10	08	02	10	04	34(68%)
B	05	04	01	07	06	23(46%)
C	10	08	07	10	10	45(90%)

A look at the table1 shows that out of total sample households of different dhokes 62% are Bakerwals and 31% are Gujjars. This indicates that the migration is found more in Bakrewal tribe than the Gujjars.

Problem Faced (code)	No. Of respondents of different Dhokes					
	Smartsar-Marg	Rupri	Richh-Begla	Bella	Others	Total
A	10	08	09	10	10	38 (76%)
B	10	08	09	10	13	50 (100%)
C	8	5	09	10	10	42 (84%)
D	7	6	8	9	11	41 (82%)

E	5	4	7	3	10	29 (58%)
F	4	08	02	10	13	37 (74%)

Source: Field Survey

- (A) :Long distance
- (B) :No health facility
- (C) :No education facility for children
- (D) :Lack of basic facilities

- (E) :Wild animal fear
- (F) :Lack of Security

From the table 2. It could be analysed that there is no health facility prevailing in any of the aforesaid dhokes. After lack of health facility, it has been observed that lack of education facility in the dhokes is second major problem being faced by the population. The other problems being faced in the surveyed area can be put in the following order viz (1) lack of basic facilities, (2) long distance,(3) lack of security,(4) wild animal fear.

- (A) Nature
- (B) Fear of accident
- (C) Good quality grass
- (D) : Security Forces/Police
- (E) : Accommodation

From the above table, it can be interpreted that lack of good quality grass is the major constraint being faced by the nomads during their transition phase. Since Jammu and Kashmir being a high sensitive area hence the respective nomads have to face the problems pertaining to checking and verification and the percentage reads to 76%.these nomadic areas being located in far flung areas with poor road connectivity is the next constraint being faced. It could be further assessed that lack of proper and adequate accommodation during the migration is almost nil. Fear of accidents is also one of the major problems being faced by nomads of the study area, as 46% respondents have met the accidents during their shifting of places.

Problems and Constraints:

- 1) **Long Distances:** To reach in Dhokes the Local tribes have to travel 20-30 kilometres on foot. There is no shed or tent facilities on the way for their stay. There is also no medical and veterinary services and other arrangements on their way. As a result during their migration from lower areas to upper Dhokes they have to meet so many hazards. During interaction with the
- 2) Respondents, researchers came to know that on the way on an average they meet with the loss of two-three animals.
- 3) **No health facilities:** In Dhokes there is not any health coverage. In order to get medical treatment these nomads have to walk long distances ranging from 15-20 kilometres. There is no mobile dispensary in these Dhokes. As a result mostly patients died on the way especially the pregnant women. Thus in Dhokes these people totally depend on the mercy of God.
- 4) **No educational facilities:** There is no denying the fact that Govt. has launched the scheme of seasonal/mobile schools for the education of the children of Gujjars and Bakerwals people. But at the ground there is hardly any school working in these Dhokes. As a result the children of these nomadic people are deprived of the basic education.
- 5) **No veterinary services:** In Dhokes there is no visit of veterinary doctors nor any veterinary camp is organised. As a result their animals become victims of many diseases and ultimately die.
- 6) **Lack of basic facilities:** There is lack of safe drinking water, electricity, accommodation, food and other basic facilities in the Dhokes. As a result Local tribes have to lead a very tough life there.
- 7) **Wild animals fear:** The Dhokes of Local tribes are mostly in jungle areas which are inhabited by wild animals like leopard, wolf and bear. Sometimes these animals attack on the cattle and nomadic people. Thus these people have also the fear of become the victims of these wild animals.
- 8) **They live an orthodox life:** Gujjars and Bakerwal tribes are the orthodox people. They live their life in their own way. They don't get easily prepared towards modernization.

Their traditional old beliefs and customs were found to create hindrance in their integration and growth.

- 9) Lack of Security:** The Gujjars and Bakerwals also faced suffering due to infiltration of militancy in dhokes. Dhokes locates at far away in upper reaches and is a safe place for the hiding of miscreants as a result these people get exploited by them. In recent years, some Gujjars and
- 10) Bakerwals** left their occupation of rearing of goats and sheep because of feeling insecure at Dhokes which further added their problem.
- 11) Not exposed to Govt. Programmes and schemes for their development:** The Local tribes who practice seasonal migration are not much aware about various programmes and schemes which are launched for their upliftment by the central/state Government. There lack of awareness is also one of the reasons of their backwardness.

Recommendations and Suggestions:

The Local tribes lead a very tough life in the Dhokes. Their economy is livestock economy. To earn their livelihood they have to move from one place to another in search of food and fodder for their animals and for themselves. To make an improvement and upliftment of these downtrodden people, few recommendations are being made in the following pages:-

- **Educational facilities:** There is a need for access to education among the Local communities. Looking at the living conditions of the nomads, it could be seen that much need to be done to improve the situation if they are to get educated. Educational backwardness amongst Gujjars and Bakerwals which is one of the key factors for their poverty, ignorance and overall backwardness should be addressed on top priority. There is a need to strengthen the mobile schools so that more and more nomadic children are able to take its advantage. Though mobile schools are operating in some areas, but still on a small scale and largely outside the mainstream of education system. Most of these are „mobile“ on paper. As mobile school provides a flexible model of education that is well-suited to the nomadic lifestyle, these schools should move with the nomadic population.

In mobile schools, better teachers having knowledge and sympathy towards nomadic Gujjars and their culture and dialect should be appointed in these mobile schools so that schools remain functional throughout the year.

- **Mobile dispensaries and Veterinary camps:** The mobile dispensaries should be opened in Dhokes so that these people can get the medical facilities. In addition the veterinary & medical
- camps should be organised at Dhokes to check the health status of cattles of these nomads. Free medicines should be distributed.

Mobile doctors or health centres with compact medical requirements could go a long way in educating our illiterate Gujjars & Bakerwals for maintaining certain basic conditions for their health and hygiene.

- **Security:** The security should be provided to these Dhokes so that these nomadic people feel safe and secure at Dhokes. The security arrangement should be made up to the period of their shifting back to lower riches in winter. While their passing from the roads and highways, the traffic movement should be stopped so that they could be saved from the damage and loss caused by road accidents.
- **Food and Fodder:** The Government should offer food and fodder to Local tribes at minimum rates from Govt. Stores at nearby Dhokes. So that the problem of shortage of food and fodder could be minimised.
- **Lightening Arrangement:** It is suggested that since there is not any source of electricity at Dhokes. The Government should come forward as a goodwill gesture to donate one solar light lamp to each household. This will go a long way in raising the level of nationalism.
- A comprehensive grazing policy for Gujjars livestock needs to be formulated for the entire areas of these dhokes. Protection and proper management of the areas by way of introducing deferred and rotational grazing and fixing the stocking rates.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be summed up that Local scheduled tribes are still leading a very tough life in Dhokes. There is no denying the fact that Government has launched various schemes and programmes for the development of scheduled tribes but still a lot needs to be done. It is in place to mention here that since these Dhokes are their permanent migratory homes, there is a need to ponder upon these issues so that these tribes can lead a peaceful life.

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