

Comparative Analysis of Nomadic Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir: Gujjars and Bakkerwals

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to make comparative analysis of Gujjars and Bakkerwals of Jammu and Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is home to the Gujjars and Bakerwals. Most of them live in remote, hilly mountainous regions close to forests and along the actual control line between India and Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir is home to the Gujjar and Bakkerwal Gujjar sects. The distinction between these sects is that those who choose goat and sheep rearing as their primary source of income are known as Bakerwals, while those who rely on agriculture, buffaloes, and other animals like cows are known as Gujjar. Gujjars and Bakerwals both belong to the same sub caste. There are roughly 10 lakh Bakerwals and 24 lakh Gujjars in the entire state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Keywords: Comparative, Analysis, Gujjars-Bakkerwals, Nomadic Tribe, Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

The Gujjars of Jammu And Kashmir State are divided in three tribes: Settled, Half settled and Homeless. The settled Gujjars are those who are settled at one place and staying in villages and they do agriculture pursuits and live with their animals like buffaloes, cows, goats and sheep. Half settled Gujjars are those who though live in villages and do agriculture profession and live with their animals like Buffaloes, cows, goats and sheep. For six months of summer, the half settled Gujjars go to the heights of hills, mountains and for winter months they move down to the plains. As far as the life of settled and half settled Gujjars of J&K state, is concerned, they construct their houses permanently and stay in them but they do agriculture and after winter months, they leave for hill and mountains of Jammu and Kashmir along with their belongings as there they can have sufficient grazing fields for their cattle.

These people's way of life is different from Bakarwals. In terms of the lives of settled and half-settled Gujjars in J&K state, they build permanent houses and live in them, but they also farm, and after the winter months,

they leave for the hills and mountains of Jammu and Kashmir with their belongings in order to have enough grazing fields for their cattle. These folks live in a different fashion from Bakarwals. Their dwellings are largely made of mud called 'Kotha' and are used in all aspects of life. These Kothas are frequently in poor shape. It has one large room with only one door. This Kotha has no ventilation or windows. They build a little area surrounded by mud on one side of this large space.

Dodhi Gujjars and Bakarwal Gujjars are two tribes of nomadic Gujjars (landless and homeless). One tribe of Gujjars in Jammu And Kashmir State is known as "Dodhi" or "Banyara" Gujjars. These folks are nomads and raise buffaloes. These folks spend the winter in the J&K districts of Reasi, Udhampur, and Kathua. Dodhi Gujjars also go to the J&K districts of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the Punjab districts of Pathankot and Gurdaspur. As summer arrives, these people begin to go to the Himalayan Mountains, where fresh grass is available for their cattle. They survive by selling milk and ghee. It is quite tough for these people to educate their children in this unstable world. As a result of this, people cannot compete with other communities in the field of education and are far behind in respect of education.

The wandering Bakerwals are without a home. Yet, these gregarious individuals spend their whole lives surrounded by quadrupeds. They just have a tent, which is likewise constructed out of numerous worn-out pieces of cloth, as opposed to a house. Family is inside the tent, worn out and weighed down by daily responsibilities. Youngsters are sobbing while lying nude. Some handmade wool clothing was saved by them. One ponders whether the world is aware of their struggles. The elderly man is coughing while he is laying inside the tent in ancient, filthy clothes. He is frail from illness. The tent is filled with smoke, filling your eyes to the brim. Their animals are distributed around the hills and can get killed by severe conditions. Bakerwals come under first line and are famous for their courage, bravery and hospitality. Bakerwals Gotras (sub caste) are same as that of Gujjars like Chauhan, Khatana, Hakla, Paswal, Bagadi, Jagel, Kalies, Sood, Kohli, Dhakkar, Thikria, Gegi, Mesi, Bajran, kandal, Keela, Gors, Khari, Chenija, chechi, bajar and Kataria. Bakerwals are

mostly nomads. These are migratory birds. They migrate sect-wise and live in pastures as they move from one area to another with their herds of sheep and goat heads of cattle and families. Bakarwals are lagging far behind. 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. They, like the rest of society, suffer from a lack of self-confidence and do not progress in the field of growth. They have not reaped the blessings of education. They are also unfamiliar with the modern ways of looking after the cattle and agricultural pursuits. Thus the way of living is of olden days and backward.

Gujjar Bakarwals dress differently than the inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir. They are fantastic and have nothing to do with history. The attire of the Gujjars Bakarwals of J&K is practically uniform. The clothes of these people are most probably similar. They dress in black and blue, with a blue, black, and green shalwar and kameez. Some Gujjars wear the same colour pants and loincloth (tehband). They cover their heads with a white or dark brown turban. These folks use a tough form of shoe called "Jooti," which is fastened with iron keels at the bottom and is fairly heavy. Gujjars Bakarwals hold their own panchayat which is named "Jerga".

This is a body comprising some old, honest and responsible persons of the community. They decide their matters, keeping in view the welfare and prosperity of their tribe. Most of the litigations are based on grazing fields and women and off and on the incidents of theft and murder are also being reported.

The Jammu and Kashmir state's Gujjars Bakarwals are economically, socially, educationally, and politically backward. Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir State speak the Gojri language as their mother tongue. Gujjar Bakarwals' problems and needs differ significantly from those of other communities in J&K. That is why our community has a unique position. The Gujjar Bakarwal community is unique, and as such, it has a distinct identity. Yet, the government must focus on their concerns and allow them to live in dignity.

At present the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals constitute a prominent segment of population of Jammu and Kashmir. But going back to the census of 1891 A.D, the number of Hindus and Sikh Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir were 883 as against 247913 of Muslim Gujjars. In 1931 A.D, the Gujjar and the Bakkerwals population in the state were 402781. After the 1931 census enumeration of population on the basis of caste and communities was conducted. The total population in 1941 Census comes to 81457.

Comparative Analysis of Gujjars and Bakkerwals

However, readers should be aware that, despite the fact that both the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals are nomadic tribes, there are major cultural differences between them. When highly positioned and intelligent people fail to create a parallel between the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals, an educated person is at a loss for words. They treat both communities as chips in the same block. By comparing the two communities on the basis of facts, one might conclude that the Gujjars have more access to benefit systems. This has resulted in a schism between the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals, since unequal distribution has prevented both communities from achieving equality with one other or with the rest of the population of the state. In fact, it is the Gujjars community which has gained more benefits from the educational schemes in comparison with Bakkerwals.

It is proper, if not legal, to do a complete research to distinguish between the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals of Jammu and Kashmir State. Initially, the Gujjars are the semi-nomadic tribe, however, the Bakkerwals are totally nomadic tribe, save few, who has agricultural land. Because the bulk of Gujjars have settled down and hold large tracts of land near settlements, they can readily provide the paperwork necessary to obtain a Scheduled Tribe designation, while the wandering Bakkerwals cannot. The Gujjars embraced a sedentary lifestyle over specific decades. The population, which primarily inhabits the plains abutting the foothills, has made land farming their major vocation. Nonetheless, a marginal Gujjar population is semi-settled and combines land agriculture. The Gujjars migrate their buffalo flock to the lower and intermediate mountain parts of the Pir- Panjal pastures in the summer and return to the plains in the winter. On the other side, the Bakkerwals, who primarily stay Khanbadosh, are still debating whether or not to settle down (homeless). They carry tents and occasionally dwell in tented colonies; they sometimes live in caverns or in the shade of trees. They move their garments and household things from one spot to another by loading on horses.

Second, the Bakkerwals only raise goats and very few sheep. They drink goat milk and use byproducts of goat milk in their daily lives, in addition to feeding their children. The Gujjars, on the other hand, raise buffaloes and cows for milk consumption and the production of byproducts for commercial use. This is the sole group that provides significant and nutritious prospective food goods for the nation, such as butter, milk, ghee, and other linked products, but it is heartbreaking to realise that they are not adequately compensated for their efforts. The middlemen try to abuse and deceive them in whatever way they can, and they do not receive a fair return on their produce. In return of their produce,

purchased by the shopkeepers at their whimsical rates, they are not mostly paid in cash, but the clever shopkeeper's sale out inferior oil-cakes, salt and cloth etc at exorbitant rates. The exploiting class has raised magnificent buildings and other valuable belongings at the cost of the Gujjar community.

Thirdly, the Bakkerwals prepare ropes and allied items with the hair of the goats. These ropes are very useful and economical during packing of their necessities of life, during their upward and downward journey. They also make rough *Chattas* with hair of goats and oftenly sell the surplus hair, known as *Jatt*, in local language in the market, just to supplement their income. It may sound odd, but it is hard reality of life that the members of the Gujjar community, in general, but the Bakarwal community in particular, take their food grain to water-mills in such bags which are made of outer skin of the dead goats and sheep, locally known as *Khal or Khalro/Basta* (bag of skin). This is quite durable and very economical, besides easy to carry the food-grain in hilly terrain to water-mill without feeling pain of load, they carry on their shoulders. The *Mashaq* (skin-bag) can be utilized by swimmers to go across a river or *Nallah* (stream-let).

Fourthly, the poorer sections of the Gujjar community possessing smaller flocks are incapable economically breaking away from the eternal cycle of transhumance. The people at the lowest economic status also lack the material support, such as adequate tents and ponies, to cope with the hostile ecological conditions. They are thus highly prone to malnutrition, disease and other natural hazards.

Should the flock be affected by some natural hazard, the poorer nomads have no other option left out to get attached as *Aajri* with some rich *Mukadam* (flock-owner) to become a laborer or wage earner or in some other economic activity. In this way also the poorer section, eventually leaves their links with nomadism and gets absorbed into the sedentary work force. On the other hand, comparing the flock strength of the Bakkerwals, they are economically well-off in comparison with the lower middle class Gujjars. Mostly a poor of the poorer Bakarwal at least own strength of 50 goats and in most of the cases, the family owns $\frac{3}{4}$ buffaloes and cows, which fail to raise the economic standard of their family in order to supplement their income, they go for cultivation of crop, if they possess their own land and in absence of agriculture land, they opt for cultivating land belonging to land-lords, in the vicinity of the towns or the villages. In this way, they act as *Haali* (cultivator). The Bakkerwals like the feast of rice with curd and sugar. They are fond of eating *Gur* (rough-sugar).

Fifthly, during stay at the alpine pastures, the Bakkerwals undertake breeding of their goats for the purpose of multiplication of their herd. In this way, the Bakkerwals add to their live-stock strength just to compensate the sale of surplus live stock and other animals, which fall ill or become incurable due to certain ailments during the ordous journey, they cover, to reach their Dhokes (Meadows). After selling surplus animals and their subsidiary products, they buy maize, rice and grocery from the villages for day to day consumption. It is pertinent to mention that during their stay at Margs/Dhokes many agents of the Butchers community approach the Bakkerwals in their dhokes mostly during September/October and purchase the healthy and fatty goats, for the sake of meat. These agents have a close rapport with the Bakkerwals, inside their dhokes and they keep on waiting eagerly for their early arrival. The sale of goats, supplement the income of the Bakkerwals manifold. The Gujjars on the other hand store fresh and fatty-milk of cows and buffaloes and convert it into butter, local Kalari (cheese), ghee and poultry for sale in the market. Thus the Gujjars also improve their economical condition by the sale of milk- products.

Sixthly, the big animals like cows and buffaloes are not accustomed to go higher and higher peaks for grazing, whereas, goats and sheep like to move upwards for grazing purposes. Thus this way the Bakkerwals and the Chopans (shepherd) are also accustomed to live in highland pastures (hamlets). Some Bakkerwals go to Kargil in Ladakh as deep into Suru valley as Rangdum but Gujjars never cross Zojila Pass and visit Ladakh division with their cattle.

Some Bakkerwals of Rajouri district even cross the valley and reach Lolab, Gurez and Sonmarg on the eastern top hills of Kashmir. Crossing the Pir-Panjal is the most difficult part of the orbit and quite few animals, especially horses may be lost due to malnutrition. Occasional intensely cold spells, bad weather and damaged tracks, crossing of rivers and stream is mostly dangerous task from the herds. It roughly takes from two to three days to cross the mighty Pir-Panjal. Once inside the Kashmir valley, the nomads want to pass through as soon as possible, sometimes covering 25 to 30 Kms per day. That is necessary because of certain factors. Firstly, the valley where the farmers, largely having cultivated the paddy are not then harvested and as such there is little space for pasturing the herd. Secondly, the side valleys often harbors groups of notorious cattle lifters, locally known as *Galivans* who are professional criminals and steal cattle, sheep, horses and goats during the night halts. The pastoral nomads reach the alpine meadows known by them as *Paarly-Kashmir* by the end of May, where they stay for four months till the end of September. Every year roughly 25,000 nomads migrate from Kalakote, Nowshera, Sunderbani, Surankote,

Mendhar, Thana Mandi, Rajouri and Akhnoor to the Dhokes/Behaks of Pir- Panjal range. These tribes travel on compact basis with their luggage, flock of sheep, herd of goats, fleet of horses and dogs.

Seventhly, the Bakkerwals feel themselves inferior in comparison with the Gujjars most probably owing to the reason that the way of living of the Gujjars is superior in comparison with that of the Bakkerwals. They differ from Gujjars in terms of clothes, especially the turban of the men and the cap of the women. The sense of cleanliness in the Gujjars community is higher in comparison with that of the Bakkerwals. The Gujjars prefer to wear the clean dress including their jacket and turban. They also take to regular bath in comparison to Bakkerwals.

The well-off Gujjars nomads mostly make the use of transport facility to carry their domestic animals to reach to their meadows across the Pir-Panjal. Almost the Gujjars from Kalakote, Nowshera, Sunderbani, Surankote, Mendhar, Thana Mandi, Rajouri and Akhnoor engage the big load carriers to reach their allotted Dhokes, meadows via old Mughal road beyond much talked Pir-Panjal. Thus the better off Gujjar community adopt easy and less troublesome ways in comparison with that of the Bakkerwals, who tend their flock of goat of numbering more than hundred along with ponies for transportation of goods and domestic items of their daily use coupled with ferocious dogs of particular breed to guard their flock of goats, besides few sheep. It is pertinent to record that during their stay at pastures, they keep distance from Bakarwal families for obvious reason. In short, the life style of the Bakkerwals is very rough and tuff and the feelings of inferiority complex in them, exhibit their helplessness.

Coming to the another very glaring factor which again differentiate the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals is their dropout rate in education and advancement of the Gujjars in political Circle, besides their customs and traditions, coupled with their better Placement in government services. It is why the Gujjars consider the Bakkerwals as their inferior cousins and a Gujjar Youngman don't like to marry themselves with the Bakarwali girls in spite of the inexpressible beauty and well built physical structure. One can think that inter-marriages between the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals are uncommon. In rare cases is marriages takes place in higher circles where the Bakkerwali family is either blessed with the political clout of possessing wealth in abundance and where the Bakkerwali bride is born with a silver spoon in her mouth. The Bakkerwals are struggling hard to cope with the existing situation and reached that stage of advancement, as their brethren in Gujjars, have acquired. The tussle between have and have not's has created a wedge between the Gujjars and

the Bakkerwals resulting into just like cold war situation. Since the Gujjars getting the Lion's share of the welfare schemes, launched by the central and state government, naturally the Bakkerwals feel a sense of discrimination with no fault of theirs. The majority of the Bakkerwals feel that those of us who are the educated can meet bureaucratic requirements of paperwork, reap the benefits of reservation. It is but natural that the benefits are exhausted, by the time, the trickle down, to the poor population of the community.

Among Gujjars and the Bakarwals tribe numerous cultural variations do exist. It is pertinent to note that the Gujjars speak Gojri, whereas the Bakkerwals speak Bakkerwali which is a dialect of Gojri language. Apart from it, Gojri has been influenced by Pahari, Punjabi and even Kashmiri. But one aspect of this version reflects that Bakkerwali dialect has remained unchanged due to the isolation of his tribe from the rest of the state. A specific trend amongst the younger generation with regard to their tribal identity can be observed when young boys of the Bakkerwals tribe can be seen wearing hats instead of the traditional *Patkas* and Sporting modern gear in lieu of the traditional *Shalwar-Kameez* with almost each household of Bakkerwal community is in possession of radio-set. The Gujjars wear mostly their traditional costumes and jewellery, the men-folk wear Kameez with waist-coat, studded with buttons and Tehmud (instead of trouser) with mini Chaddar on shoulders and loose turban, whereas women-folk wear shirt studded with variety of buttons with embroidery on it, with a black Shalwar known as Suthana. However, one traditional practices that binds the community of the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals, besides unifying the old and the Young, the educated and uneducated is the annual migration with their livestock. However, one must not confuse to think that Bakkerwals are to be wandering gypsies, since the nomads start their calculated and meticulously planned migration to their Dhokes (meadows) containing the practice of their forefathers.

Early marriage of girls is fairly common among the Gujjars caste barriers and untouchability is declining gradually. A comparatively wealthy Gujjar family may have a camel, a horse, two oxen, two buffaloes and a few sheep or goats. Being pastoral, some Gujjars observe a regular *Siapa* (mourning) on the death of the buffalo. The women of the Gujjar community mourn the death of the animal as if they had lost a relative. On the other hand the Bakkerwals settled the marriage of a girl, when she becomes adult; thereby attain the age of 18 years. Dowry system among the Bakkerwals is very simple. The parents give goats, sheep, spinning wheel and other domestic articles in dowry on the occasion of the festivity, marriage and melas. Singers and flute players (Jorri) are mostly asked by the elders to display their

skill and art. Banjli (flute) is perhaps the only permanent companion of lonely herdsmen grazing his flocks. Its melodious tunes not only help the players to remain engrossed but also convert the entire surroundings meadows and pastures infatuating and romantic. However, the Bakkerwals during their migration to Dhokes (meadows) bury their dead relative in an isolated place and a stone is raised on the grave of the deceased. It is worth recording aspect that they do pray on the site of the grave, the following years when they happen to pass by that grave.

Here it is appropriate rather liable to mention that the Gujjars are highly superstitious due to illiteracy and backwardness which has made them timid. Their belief in Pirs and supermen is unchallengeable.

Taweez (amulets) *Mantar and Phookh* (blowing of breaths by holy men on the object) for them and their cattle, is a panacea. Due to superstitious few of them allegedly having become victim of ghosts, dains and churails (evil-spirits). They start trembling and in such an odd situation their family member contact Pirs, Jogies and Darveshs and pray them to cure the victim. The experts dealing with the evil spirits behave abnormally. Sometimes they burn red chilies in the fire pot and place it before the nose of the victim. Sometimes, they beat the victim black and blue and sometime they create such fear psyche threat that the patients take their word so seriously and all of sudden the victim starts uttering that she is indeed and evil-spirit. Almost black cloth, black cock, piece of iron or cash is taken from the people of the house by the Darvesh or Joggi. The Bakkerwals too believe in Pirs and the supermen of the Gujjar community.

It is why that so called spiritual leaders with magical instinct are easily available in the Gujjar community. All Islamic rituals have been super imposed by modes of propitiating so many Pirs and religious leaders. Different groups of the Gujjars have their allegiance to the Pirs of the respective area. On the other hand, the Bakkerwals are having in-born instinct to collect variety of herbs including popular *Kuth* which are useful from medicinal point of view. Obviously, we can differentiate the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals from spiritual and *Hikmat* point of view. The herbs collected by the Bakkerwals from high altitudes during the stay at the Alpine pastures cure many of their diseases. It is fact that health centers are far and few, particularly in the remote areas. While the Gujjar communities and some sacred Bakkerwals encounter fewer health problems due to the comparatively closed vicinity if health centers.

Nomadic Bakkerwals have little access to health schemes or allied benefits. Though the health department runs mobile medical centers, they are not

managed well due to lack of monitoring in the upper reaches.

It is universally recognized that sheep did little damage to the forest and as such the Gujjars and the Gaddies were given a lenient treatment by the Dogra regime in comparison to that of Bakkerwals, especially of the foreign origin. During Maharaja Hari Singh's rule, the then minister of revenue informed the prime minister of his highness government on October 12, 1931 that the Bakkerwals be declared a criminal tribe, since most of them were foreigners bringing their flock of goats to graze in the state forests. During the year 1916, the chief conservator of forest made another representation and a committee was formed which recommended that the foreign flock should be totally excluded by gradual enhancement of fees. In regard to local Bakkerwals slight increase in the grazing fee was made to give the Bakarwal time to get rid of their flock of goats and substitute sheep for goats which could give less harm. Even now the state govt is very serious to get vacated the forest land from the possession form the Bakkerwals, floated all the norms just to encroach upon the public property. Their counterpart Gujjars too have encroached upon state land on the bank of rivers, canals and wildlife sanctuaries and some time the situation becomes explosive resulting in the law and order problem. The remedy lies to follow the set norms of the state and make the use of allotted land through legal procedure.

In order to collate the family bonds between the Gujjar and the Bakkerwal community, we find that bonds are much stronger among the Bakarwal tribes. Many Deras move and live together for decades. In the absence of political unification, the only sense of community oneness comes from their *Baradari* (clan) affiliations. The nomadic tribes depend upon the Dada-Potre lineage that exists within the tribe. After attaining the maturity, the youngman in Bakarwal family gets wedded. The head of the family offer the bride-groom certain flocks of goat/sheep for the sake of running his house hold independently. This process of shifting responsibility from father to his sons goes unabated. Separate kitchen of the newly wedded couple; hardly disconnect the ties between the parents and their off-springs. The Dada-Potre lineage is so strong that routine bifurcation hardly snaps the tie of blood relation. The ties go on from generation to generation. If there is some family dispute among the Bakkerwal Dera, the Mukkadam or the headman settles the issue there and there. The writ of the headman runs high and none would raise finger against his authority. He becomes the fountain of justice and yield unparallel influence on all sundry. As regards the ties of blood relation in Gujjars are concerned, it too remains close and everlasting due to the close supervision of elders. Any controversial issue is solved due to timely intervention of the headman. But the

accountability of the younger generation towards their elders is subjected to their whims and mood. In the Gujjars community early marriages, eloping with the paramours is a common feature of their life. The family disputes are settled by the Jirgas (panchayats) a council of elderly members. The disputes mostly pertain to matrimonial alliances or immovable property viz. land. In case if the Jirgas remain inconclusive and fail to reach to any logical conclusion, the cases are taken the court of law.

The Muslim Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir have common and collateral ties with the Gujjars of the other parts of the country. They have common history, culture, ethnic affinities, beliefs and languages with the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim Gujjars of the Indian plains. They believe that the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir are of the same class or breed as any other Gujjars in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra etc. where they profess different religions i.e. Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam.

The Muslims, Sikh and Hindu Gujjars of mountains and plains consider themselves as the son of the common ancestors and have affinity like brothers. The spirit of we-ness of the Muslim Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir for the Hindu, the Sikhs and the Muslim Gujjars of Indian plains is found everywhere. In the past the Gujjars of Rajasthan and the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir were struggling for their demand of reservation in the category of backward class and the schedule tribe respectively. When the respective state governments of Rajasthan as well as of Jammu and Kashmir were putting a lid on the demands of the Gujjars of both the states came to different religions and faiths, the Gujjars of both the states came to rescue of each other and forced the authorities at the helm of the affairs to concede to their demands. The explanation of Gujjars for this is that they have common blood, history and culture and their fore-fathers were Hindus. The Gujjars express their spirit of we-ness by introducing each other by saying "Too main Ek rakt" (you and I have the same blood). That is the philosophy of all the Gujjars irrespective of their religious affinities and geographical distances. Religion has had little impact on the Gujjar brotherhood and affinity. The women folk of Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars still perform traditional practice in their homes and they also celebrate *Baisakhi*, *Lohri*, and *Goverdhan Pooja* festivals. Coming to their counter Bakkerwals, they have no common rapport with the other states of India, where the Hindu Gujjars reside. It would be one of the reasons that the Bakkerwals have no such history of any affiliation with their origin and ancestral blood relation with the Gujjars of other states in India is totally ruled out. Thus the Bakkerwals are only confined to certain areas, whereas, the Gujjars have extra-territorial jurisdiction.

Apart from that the Bakkerwals live in complete harmony with the wild life. The Bakkerwals inhabiting the forest with their herd are close observers of animal behavior. They also have a considerable knowledge of the terrain, the lands, the vegetation, the flora and plant life. Their subsistence strategy keeps them occupied with the care of the herd. Their material culture therefore, has no weaponry or implements other than sickles of various sizes to cut grass and to lop off branches of the trees. In addition to it, they have axes for splitting wood, which is in plenty, as a result trampling known as *Hathi-Tod*. On the contrary, the Gujjars keep the fire burning all the year round, during nights which keep away the wild animals. In the open, when the Gujjars have to keep vigil over the herd in the forest, they again keep the fire burning. No wild animals can attack the herd during the burning fire. Thus, the subsistence strategy is to build a protective mechanism against the wild animals, which is true for all pastoralists world over. It sounds incredible but it is a fact when the Bakkerwals enter the Margs and Dhokes, they look like actual rulers of the area, because of no law and order authority prevail in these Margs.

One more aspect of similarity and dissimilarity between the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals is pertaining to aesthetic sense. The Gujjars inherit their talent during *Khutna*, marriages and other social and religious functions as compared to the Bakkerwals. Besides, incarnation for poetry, leadership qualities, literary taste, playing flutes and reciting Baits, *Baramasi* coupled with *Saif-ul-Malook* is salient feature of the aesthetic sense present in the Gujjar community. Recognizing that, sporadically at most, the Bakkerwals also take part in cultural activities.

Since they are mostly on the move, as such, they find rare opportunity to indulge themselves in literary and cultural pursuits. It is why, when a body of the Gujjar and the Bakkerwal poets, critic's story writers is constituted, the participation of the literary personalities belonging to Gujjar community does have an upper hand in very show. The Gujjars damsels in their traditional attire, with their melodious voice, cast a spell, on the audience. Their presentation of cultural items, like lyrics, elegy or ballad, leaves an indelible impression on the minds of listeners. The melody sung by the Gujjar ladies old young, surcharge the atmosphere with sweetness, joy and the solitude. The Bakkerwal women too are oftenly talented, but the inherit talent in their songs is oftenly missing. The *Jorri* (flute) is common musical instrument used by the Gujjar and the Bakkerwals community on specific occasions. In local parlance, it is called as *Algoza*, which makes this nomadic section of the society all the more colourful. The spectators start dancing at the tune of *Algoza* (flute).

Their main folk songs are Chann, Mahia, dholan, Kenchi and saif-ul-Malook. One of their favorite songs is called Noora, a warrior.

Gojri language enjoys official patronage in Jammu And Kashmir State. The academy of Art, Culture and Languages has been encouraging writers and poets of Gojri language by providing them financial assistance and various incentives in the form of cash awards and certificates. But no such provision has been adopted for the Bakkerwali script. Besides, the Radio Kashmir Srinagar and Jammu as well as the Doordarshan Srinagar and Jammu have regular news broadcast and programs in Gojri language in which poets, writers and social workers participate and express their views and ideas in Gojri language. But it is unfortunate that no such exercise has been made in the case of Bakkerwali language. Recently, the Gujjars have put up another demand for the establishment of Gojri department at Jammu University, on the pattern of Gojri department in the University of Jammu and Kashmiri Department in the University of Kashmir. They plead that Gojri Research centre in Jammu University will cater to the specific educational needs of the Tribal and marginalized population of Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and ten Northern- Western states of the Himalayas.

Thus the facts and figures in the matter of counting of heads between the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals tribe vary due to obvious reasons. Scope for political empowerment of the Bakkerwal is of great concern. With their small floating population, the Bakkerwals have not been able to find a significant political voice to address their problems. Though the granting of the Scheduled Tribe status to the Bakkerwals in 1991 may have come as a relief to both the communities, but the lion's share in matter of services and welfare schemes are being enjoyed by the Gujjars who are vocal besides, being well informed. It may seem that both Gujjars and the Bakkerwals could reap equal benefits from their reservation, under the Tribal status but taking into consideration the totality of the situation, it seems to be un-manageable, unless the Bakkerwal community garners adequate political representation. It appears incredible, but it is hard reality that there is not a single Bakkerwal on the Gujjar Bakkerwal Advisory Board, comprising of eleven members. For all intents and purposes, they are only given representation at District Development Board, in certain pockets where the Bakkerwal community dominates their counterpart's i.e. the Gujjars. Hence faith of the Bakkerwal community is hanging in the balance.

It is apt to mention that the members of the Gujjar community, now to some extent have understood the importance of family planning and even are interested to

control the size of their family by adopting the family planning methods. On the contrary, the Bakkerwals in majority have very little idea about the latest concept of family planning.

Obviously, they have never adopted methods to control the size of the family. The Bakkerwal community considers the children as the blessing of God as such they feel that joint family system, prevalent in their community is undoubtedly a boon rather than a curse.

Apart from formation of family in the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals, one more glaring aspect has to be noted down in their wedding ceremonies. As a matter of fact, the earlier marriage customs, such as Matti- Khunni, Lakkri-Tokhni were a common practice among the members of the Gujjar and the Bakkerwal community. Meanwhile, it has been observed in the present era that many of the marriage customs have been abandoned by them. Contrary to it, the Bakkerwals have rigid attitude follow the customs and traditions of their ancestors. They are very sensitive towards the old wedding rituals and traditions. Similarly, the majority of the members of the Gujjar community are not in favour to keep more than one wife. Since they believe in nuclear family and taking into consideration, the education and economical issues of the limited family, they avoid further matrimonial alliances for themselves.

Similarly, now the practice of divorce among the members of the Gujjar community has been minimized to a great extent. This can be gauged from the fact that previously the members of the Gujjar community were in favour of keeping more than one wife. Apart from that the Gujjars were not inclined towards marrying outside their community due to the reason that marriage outside their own tribe was resented tooth and nail. But due to the influence of modern education and the settled ways of life, many Gujjars have started marrying non-Gujjar Muslims. But their counterpart, the Bakkerwals has adopted rigidity and they prefer marriages within their own fold. It may appear unbelievable, but it is fact that the parents of the bridegroom in the Bakkerwals has to pay the cost of the bride in terms of sheep, goats, horses etc. to her parents before marriage and if they fail to do so than there would be son-in-law has to work as servant, in the house of the bride until the price of dowry is recovered from him.

Likewise, earlier the members of the Gujjar community used to practice all the traditional rituals very staunchly in their lives like Panj-Peer Puja, NagPanchami etc. But with the passage of time, as a result of modernization, the following of rituals, with rigidity has declined considerably. Earlier, the young and the old members of the Gujjar community used to visit the shrines and saints as a part of their religious duty. The present younger

generation, in their tribes is showing half-hearted interest to visit the shrines and the saints. But the young and the old people in the Bakkerwal community are still adhere to practice all the traditional rituals of their tribe and offer prayers regularly coupled with visiting the shrines and the saints as a part of their religious duty. The holy shrine of Mian family is situated at *Wangat (kangan)*, where the nomadic community has religious function every year in the month of June.

The participation of the Bakkerwal community in this Urs of Hazarat Baba Sahib Larvi, a great Wali of his time at *wangat*, is considered as a matter of pride and of spiritualism, irrespective of their age and sex. The Gujjars also visit this shrine during the annual Urs but the Bakkerwals over number their Gujjars brethren.

Coming to the provision of special census for the nomadic community, as they are moving through seven major routes towards the upper reaches of Pir Panjal, Shivalik and the Trikuta Hills of the Himalayas, the nomadic tribes move along with their live stock during the census operation. The Gujjar community often receives a fair deal in matter of counting their population, since many of them are ploughing agriculture land coupled with better infrastructure. Owing to better knowledge and awakening among the population of the Gujjar community regarding the importance of the census operation, they remain on the toes to show their presence at their base camps. Obviously, they supply the exact information about the members of their family to the census enumerators which ultimately which ultimately proves beneficial for them at the time of sanctioning of welfare schemes for tribal upliftment. On the other hand, the census enumerators generally display callousness with regard to gather correct figures of the Bakkerwals community, since most of the members of the Bakkerwal tribe are nestled in remote areas on the high altitude, where the visit of the enumerators poses a challenge.

Apart from it, the Gujjar women folk are addressed as Mehri or Choudharni. Some of the common names of the Gujjars are Nuro, Meeru, Jumma, bajo, taj Almio, Kalo, Satrio, Phajio, Akko, Gammo, shayyo, walyo and Baru. Similarly, their women folk are addressed by the names such as Beebi, Phajji, Shapi, Gani, Seeran, Gulabo, Shai, Makhani and Kalsari.

The Bakkerwals are generally addressed as Makkadam, Mir, Sardar, Panch etc. whereas their head women-folk are known as Sardarni, Mehri, Makkani and Kalsari. The common names of the Gujjars and the Bakkerwals are shared by the tribal population without any murmur or resentment. The Bakkerwals by and large feel contented with their own lot and avoid any sort of direct confrontation with their brethren Gujjars. Virtually

being a nomad tribe, they prefer to live in their own world far away from the hustle and bustle, hue and cry, pomp and show of the present bright scenario so called advancement in the 21st century. Keeping in mind all the social, economic, political and educational aspects, it can easily and clearly be concluded that in order to bring Gujjars and the Bakkerwals of Jammu and Kashmir state at par with other sections of population, it becomes imperative for the government of Jammu and Kashmir to take urgent steps towards the overall development and empowerment of these two backward sections of populations.

The government's efforts made so far in this regard have been quite in-adequate and in-sufficient. The government of Jammu And Kashmir State has to take care of welfare, development, progress, upliftment and glorification of these two most important and deserving communities at the time of preparation of future development plans. Last but not the least is the role of Gujjar and Bakkerwal Charitable Trust located near Malik Market Narwal, Jammu for the upliftment of the Gujjar community is worth mentioning. The said trust runs schools upto secondary level besides degree college and a well equipped lab and library. It adds new colour to project demand of the tribe.

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