



Demographic Profile of the Scheduled Tribes in J&K: A Case Study of Gujjars in Rajouri District

I.A. Khan

Assistant Professor, Govt. M.A.M. College, Jammu

Arun Kumar

Department of Geography, University of Jammu, Jammu

ABSTRACT

The spatial distribution of ethnic groups and tribal population, their settlements human occupation, network of transportation etc. are the important aspects of human geography research. The district of Rajouri (the area under study) is largely inhabited by Gujjars and Bakerwals, which have essentially an agrarian economy and tradition bound society, where winds of modernity has not penetrated yet. The society of Gujjars in J&K possesses a unique character of seasonal transhumance, which has resulted in their backwardness. Due to this reason, study of their demographic attributes assumes significance. During the study it has been found that though Gujjars belongs to a backward society, subsequent development over the years in demographic attributes like growth, literacy, sex ratio, dependency ratio and occupational structure has been observed.

KEYWORDS

Agrarian, Transhumance, Oscillation, Diffusion of Innovation, Kandi region

Introduction

Jammu region is characterized with great ethnic linguistic and religion diversity. It is inhabited by numerous ethnic groups casts and religious. Each ethnic group and community is the repository of distinctive cultural traditions and customs. The Gujjars of Jammu are one of the groups amongst them. They occupy the plain, kandi land the valleys and the side valleys of Himalayas. However, the majority of them live in Rajouri district and oscillate between the alpine summer pastures and the plain valleys during summer and winter seasons. Despite many development plans and programmes, these are still struggling in poverty. They are characterized by high birth and death rates with high infant mortality. The longevity is below 55 years. The literacy rate is very low with female literacy negligible. The sex ratio is 860 females per 1000 females. A significance of proportion of population is living below the poverty level.

Study Area

The spatial distribution of cultural phenomena, especially that of ethnic groups is largely a function of terrain, topography and pedo-climatic conditions. Rajouri district with its headquarters at Rajouri (citadel of Rajas) is located along the Actual Line Control like Poonch District and falls between Jammu in the south and Poonch in the North. Rajouri is a hilly and undulating district, which is located on the foothill valleys of Pir-Panjal mountain. It is decorated with a stream called 'Darhall Tawi' later known as Minawar Tawi across Nowshera, This river has its origin in Rattan Pir Rridge of the Pir-Panjal Range. It is also a glacial perennial stream. The other stream and its tributaries of Minawar-Tawi include Thanna Nullah, Ramgarh (Sukhtah Nullah) joining at Rajouri town.

Methodology

The study has been carried out at the block level for this purpose eight sample villages were selected, representing all the administrative units (Blocks). The villages were selected in such a way so that bigger as well as smaller villages are represented. From each selected village, ten percent of the household were selected for the collection of data like literacy rate, sex ratio, occupational structure, migration pattern etc.

The Jammu region is inhabited by different communities, some settled, quite a few nomadic. In the later category the most prominent are pastoral Gujjars and Bakerwals. The former form part of a large conglomerate of tribal communities inhabiting many adjoining parts of the sub-continent and are variously known as Gijars, Girjars and Gujjars.

The high concentration of Gujjars also found in Rajouri districts where about 20% of the total Gujjars population of the state is settled. Gujjar population is also inhabited in most of the parallel and side-valleys, which are formed by the offshoot hills of the Pir-Panjal Range. The most famous of the valleys, locally known as 'Nalas' are Darhal, Thannamandi, Peeri, Panihad, Ramgarh, Kotranka, Ans, Tattapani etc.

Table 1- Gujjar Population – Block wise

S. No	Block	% Gujjar Population
1	Rajouri	45.30
2	Manjakote	36.30
3	Nowshera	14.80
4	Kalakote	33.50
5	Budhal	52.50
6	Darhal	41.20
7	Sunderbani	6.90

An analysis of the population distribution data in table-1 vividly shows that the highest concentration of the Gujjar-population population lies in Budhal block of district Rajouri in which the proportion of Gujjars is 52.50 per cent of the total population. It is followed by Block Rajouri, block Darhal, block Manjakote and block Kalakote with total population of Gujjars at 45.30 percent, 41.20 percent, 36.30 percent and 33.50 respectively. The low concentration lies in the block Nowshera which is only 14.80 followed by the lowest Sunderbani block with only 6.90 percent of the total population. The spatial distribution of Gujjar population increases with altitude of the region.

Table 2- Literacy Rate Gujjars – Block wise

S. No	Block	Literacy Rate	Gujjar Literacy
1	Rajouri	28.1	14.1
2	Manjakote	15.7	2.9
3	Nowshera	15.2	5.3
4	Kalakote	15.0	3.7
5	Budhal	14.0	4.1
6	Darhal	15.0	4.2
7	Sunderbani	12.0	2.7

The data in table-2 reveals that the highest literacy rate of Gujjars lies in Block Rajouri of District Rajouri in which the total literacy rate of Gujjars is 14.1 percent.. The Rajouri Block is followed by Blocks Nowshera, Dharhal, Budhal and Kalakote with a total literacy of 5.3 percent, 4.2 percent, 4.1 percent and 3.7 respectively. The lowest literacy rate lies in the Block

Sunderbani which is 2.7 percent followed by Manjakote with 2.9 percent. The female literacy rate in all the blocks of Rajouri was less than 3 percent which is one of the lowest in the whole country. From the above analysis it may be concluded that the overall literacy rate in the district Rajouri is much less than the state average, further the literacy levels of Gujjar community is significantly low in comparison to the literacy rates of the blocks, state and national averages. Unfortunately, the female literacy percentage varies between two to five percent. From the literacy and educational point of view both the districts are at the bottom of educational ladder. The low female literacy vividly shows that among the Gujjar communities of the Rajouri districts, the females are not allowed mobility or there is marked prejudice against females, and hence low literacy. These are the main reasons why the female literacy rate among the Gujjars is one of the lowest in the country. Apart from religious factors and low status of female, poverty, early marriages, non-availability of schools and low level of urbanization are also responsible for low level literacy.

Table 3- Migration Patterns

S. No	Migration Routes	Altitude in mtrs.
1	Pir Panjal Pass	3491
2	Darhal Pass	3946
3	Rupari Pass	4099
4	Budhil Pass	4261
5	Kousarnaq Pass	3123

All the tracks of the Gujjars-Bakerwals start from then winter basis 610 to 1220 Mts. high above sea level in the area of winter disposal, south of the towns of Rajouri, Reasi, Udhampur and Samba. The tracks in this zone are numerous. From November to the middle of April they stay in the winter pasture zone on the outer hills. They plan their activities in the ecological zone according to the demands of the winter season. In the last quarter of April till the first week of July, they are on the move the summer pastures. From June to September they graze in summer pastures on the Pir-Panjal Range from a fixed point. In the months of October they again start returning to the counter bases through the same route of migration and reach winter pastures by the month of November every year. The major migration routes are-

1. Mughal Route or Pir-Panjal Pass Route.
2. Dharhal or Nanasar Route.
3. Rupri Pass Route.
4. Budhal Pass Route.

Table 4- Sex Ratio of Gujjars- Block wise

S. No	Block	% Gujjar Sex Ratio
1	Rajouri	851
2	Manjakote	835
3	Nowshera	824
4	Kalakote	838
5	Budhal	820
6	Darhal	833
7	Sunderbani	815

Table-4 reveals the sex ratio of the area under study. The overall sex ratio of Rajouri District is 830 females per thousand males. The highest sex ratio is found in block Rajouri i.e. 851 females per thousand males followed by block Kalakote shows 838 females per thousand males. Manjakote Block exhibits the sex ratio of 835 females per thousand males in the District of Rajouri followed by block Dharhal which shows the sex ratio of 833 female per thousand of males. The lowest sex ratio is found in block Nowshera i.e. 824 females per thousand of males and block Sunderbani the sex ratio is 815 females per thousand males. It is true that more males are born in both the districts of Poonch and Rajouri than the females. But this disparity between two sexes at the time of birth gets perpetuated if not accentuated due to higher females mortality. More females die at infancy, mainly during the reproductive period. The general neglect of females is largely responsible for high female mortality at childhood. Similarly, frequent confinements to bed due to high fertility may have explanation

for higher mortality during the reproductive period. In old age also the females suffer greater neglect than their male counterparts due to the difference in the relative status of the two sexes in general.

Table 5- Occupational Structure Gujjars Blockwise

S. No	Block	Occupational Structure		
		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1	Rajouri	65	11	24
2	Manjakote	80	8	12
3	Nowshera	82	13	5
4	Kalakote	82	7	11
5	Budhal	88	4	8
6	Darhal	83	4	13
7	Sunderbani	87	6	7

Tables 6 reveals certain interesting features in the distribution of workers in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the district of Rajouri. If the highest percentage (over 85%) of primary workers is found in Sunderbani and Budhal block of Rajouri District respectively same is not true for the secondary workers as the highest percentage of secondary workers is found in Nowshera Block of Rajouri District (about 10%). As far as the tertiary workers are concerned Rajouri block is are having the highest percentage of workers in this sector being over 30 percent among the Gujjars. This high percentage of worker in the tertiary sector can be explained by the fact that the Rajouri is the urban block where the educational facilities and the information about the employment opportunities are easily accessible.

Medium size of the primary worker percentage of which lies between 75% to 85% is found in the maximum number of blocks. Table 6.1 clearly shows that Manjakote, Nowshera, Kalakote and Darhal of the Rajouri District fall in the medium category of primary worker. Only two blocks namely, Surankote and Rajouri fall in the category which have less than 75% of the total workers engaged in the primary activities. In the medium category of secondary workers are included in the block of Sunderbani and Budhal of Rajouri district. Darhal have less than 5% of workers in the secondary sector. Nowshera seems to be lone block which enjoys the distinction of being the only block lying in the medium category of tertiary workers in the entire study area.

It is interesting to note that a large chunk of nine blocks out of the total 12 blocks of entire study are have less than 20% of the total worker in the tertiary sector.

Finally, it can be concluded that the majority population among the Gujjars is mainly engaged in primary sector which can be understood from their social structure. Less penetration of education and modernity has prevented the population's participation in secondary and tertiary sector.

Conclusion

In the concluding lines, it can be summed up that Gujjars in J&K belongs to the lowest strata of the society characterized by high proportion of population in the district, low levels of literacy, high growth pattern, low levels of sex ratio and diversified occupational structure mainly identified with primary occupation and high dependency ratio. Further, the various governmental schemes have been put forth for the development of this depressed class which has resulted in partial success and much more still needed to be done in this regard.

References

1. Charak, S.S. (1978). History & Culture of Himalayan States, Part I, p. 69.
2. Chib, S.S. and D.S. Raina (1992). Temporary winter Folk Gujjar House. The Culture-Ethymitological Analysis. Folklore, Vol. 33. pp. 32-39.
3. Husain, M. (2002). Human Geography: The Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir., Rawat Publ. New Delhi. pp. 108-114.
4. Khatana, R.P. (1974). The Advent of Gujjars in the Territories of J&K State. Paper submitted to Centre for Regional Development, JNU, New Delhi.