

A Comparative Study on Protective Discrimination of Paharis and Gujjars with special reference to District Baramulla

Bilal Bashir

Research Scholar,

Department of Sociology, MANUU, Hyderabad, India.

Email - bilalsociologistamu@gmail.com

Abstract: A society is composed of overlapping groups and sub-groups and is highly stratified in terms of income, religion, geographical topography and political affiliations. It is pertinent to mention India is embraced with multicultural and multilingual atmosphere. However, in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Gujjars and Bakerwals are the tribal groups residing on the hilly and mountainous areas with different traditions, rituals, and language. Meanwhile, Paharis on the other hand are living in the same geographical setting and confront the same hardships and difficulties. Therefore, in this paper, a study has been carried out to draw the comparison between Gujjars and Paharis in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on the basis of occupation, education and income. The comparison is based on the lines of socio-economic status by using an interview schedule which includes the items related to socio-economic and educational indicators. The study revealed that both the communities are still far- away from the purview of progress. This paper is based on both primary and secondary data and tries to analyze the magnitude of socio-economic conditions. Further, this paper contains some suggestions, which need to be implemented on the ground level to eradicate their socio-economic problems.

Key Words: Backward, Illiteracy, Poverty, Discrimination, Socio-Economic Status.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India is home to a large number of tribal ethnic groups with assorted socio-cultural, economic and geographical backgrounds. The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is also inhabited by such communities; the most prominent are the pastoral Gujjars and Paharis, which are living in the remote, hilly and mountainous areas that are devoid of the basic necessities of life (Rahi 2014). One of the primary obligations of the government is to offer the basic facilities and safeguard the educational and economic facilities of these weaker sections. To alleviate the sufferings, the border regions were declared 'Bad Pocket Areas' and the benefits of the schemes were equally shared by all the sections of the people in respect of reservation for recruitments, border allowances for the government employees, scholarship etc. From the time of partition of India till 1990, people in these areas were jointly identified as a single unit with all the benefits accruing equally to Paharis, Gujjars, Bakerwals, Sheenas, and Ladakhis, without any discrimination on the basis of name, caste or creed (Tajjuddin Mohammad and Baljit S. Mann 2008)

It was in the year 1991 that these communities were declared Scheduled Tribe (ST) on the basis of their culture, language, geographical location and poor living conditions, except the Paharis, by the government. It has been since then the Pahari community intensified their demand for ST(scheduled tribe) status, by claiming that the Gujjars, Bakerwals and Paharis who reside in the same areas, face equal hardships and disadvantages must be entitled to equal rights (Sandeep Bamzai 2016)

Various studies have been conducted to discuss and analyse the different dimensions of the tribal life in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, available relevant studies have been critically reviewed. Javeed Bhat (2014) in his study mentioned that the reservation policy of the state has been driven by the vote bank politics. The criteria for reservation have always been controversial and debatable. This negligence on the part of policy makers sowed the seeds of division at regional, linguistic, ethnic and communal lines which proved to be a tower of Babel in the State.

Dar and Sarvanand (2015) discussed in their study, the socio-economic and health status of scheduled tribe in Anantnag district and found that Gujjars and Bakerwals are living in miserable conditions. The lack of infrastructure, inaccessibility to health institutions, nomadic tribal environment and inaccessibility and unaffordability to health care facilities are some of the main problems contributing to their poor health.

Azhar Ud Din (2015) in his study focused upon the socio-economic conditions of Gujjars living in various districts of Kashmir region and concluded that their condition is very pathetic as compared to Gujjars of Jammu province.

Aasif Ali Naikoo and Shashank Shekhar (2018) in their study observed that Gujjars are the tribal group mostly residing on hilly and mountainous regions of valley with different traditions, rituals and language. They are suffering

from many issues in their daily life. Their housing, sanitation, education, electricity, health care facilities are very low and sub-standard than other sections of society, The literacy rate among Gujjars of south Kashmir is also very low.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To study the socio- economic status of Gujjars and Paharis.
- To compare the socio-economic and educational status of Gujjars and Paharis.
- To suggest the effective measures for the upliftment of Gujjars and Paharis of Jammu and Kashmir.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The data for the present study was collected from the Baramulla district and population of the study includes all the Gujjars and the Paharis of Jammu and Kashmir in general and residents of district Baramulla in particular where the major chunk of people from both the communities are residing. Out of the total population of Gujjars and Paharis in this District, 52 respondents were selected through purposive sampling technique in order to make the study more convenient, 26 respondents were approached from each of the communities.

The comparison is based on the lines of the socio-economic status by using interview schedule in which the items related to socio economic and educational indicators. The items in the interview schedule were open and closed ended.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Category wise Distribution of Gujjars and Paharis:

The researcher collected data from the field was analysed in the tables below which determines the socio economic conditions of Gujjars and Paharis in Baramulla District.

Table No. 01 CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS

General	ST	SC	OBC	ALC	RBA	ST+RBA	ST&ALC	Total
04	18	00	02	03	17	06	12	52

Sources: Primary Data

The data shows that the reservation policy of Jammu and Kashmir is ambiguous and haphazard. The criteria for reservation has been adopted either on caste base or area base and on profession base while including these people in the list of reserved categories, no barrier has been put between rich and poor. These loopholes can be observed from the result shown in the above figure that a considerable proportion of population has been included in more than one reserved categories, so they are enjoying double, sometimes triple reservation benefits. On the other hand, creamy layer of the community identified as reserved categories is getting all the benefits at the cost of other poor people of the community. Their condition is still same as it was a decade ago. However, the government still make promises of some other reservations on the pretext and name of caste or language. The latest ongoing demand is the inclusion of the Pahari speaking people of the state in the list of Scheduled Tribe categories despite the fact that a good proportion among them are already included in OBC,(other backward class) ALC(actual line of control) and RBA(resident of backward areas) categories.

Table No. 02 EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Educational Status	Gujjars	Paharis	Total
No schooling	18 (34.6%)	08 (15.3%)	26
Sc (secondary level)	03(5.7%)	05(9.6%)	08
HSc Higher Secondary	03(5.7%)	07(13.4%)	10
Under Graduate	01(1.9%)	03(5.7%)	04
Post Graduate	01(1.9%)	02(3.8%)	03
Professional	00	01(1.9%)	01
Total	26	26	52

Sources: Primary Data

The data reveals that there exists a considerable difference between the Gujjars and Paharis in terms of their educational attainment. The proportion of the Gujjars in education is considerably low than the Paharis. There are several factors responsible for the low literacy rate among the Gujjars. A large number of Gujjars are still living nomadic and semi nomadic life, their nomadic character does not allow them to fully reap the benefits of

education. They are very much negligent and ignorant in their approach towards the importance of education. They do not prefer to send their wards to school rather prefer to engage them with the livestock rearing. In addition to this, the migratory character of the Gujjars and Paharis is the biggest obstacle in their educational field. However, during primary study, the researcher observed that the government has opened up a number of mobile schools which migrate to high altitudes during summer and come down to winter with them, but a large number of schools were found defunct due to the lack of basic infrastructure and dearth of adequate staff. Gradually, the Gujjars living in the remote areas have realized the importance of reservation in educational institutions, recruitment and promotions. Due to reserved quota, they get government employment as early as in intermediate stage or at undergraduate level so a least proportion of Gujjars were found in higher education. While as, the literacy rate among the Paharis is found better than the Gujjars because the Pahari population is not much dispersed as the Gujjars and thus possess adequate educational facilities. Due to fewer employment opportunities at the intermediate or at undergraduate level, they are largely found in higher education.

Table No. 03 OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS

Occupation	Gujjars	Paharis	Total
Farmer	03(5.7%)	07(13.4%)	10
Govt. Servant	04(7.6%)	09(17.3%)	13
Self-Employee	10(19.2%)	06(11.5%)	16
Wage Labour	09(17.3%)	04(7.6%)	13
Total	26	26	52

Sources: Primary Data

The researcher observed that the ratio of the Paharis in employment is somehow more than that of the Gujjars. The researcher further observed a significant difference between Gujjars and Paharis in terms of reserved quota of admissions in educational institutions employment and in promotions. The Gujjars get assistance and special subsidy from Scheduled Caste Development Corporation in order to run their small scale business establishments, and it was noticed that a good proportion of population from Gujjars were benefitted from self-employment schemes of the government for running their own business establishments at local level whereas the Paharis remain all along busy in cultivating their own land farms. Having fewer chances of employment opportunities at early stage of education, they are somehow compelled to go for higher education and develop the competence for government employment but since their demand of scheduled tribe status, government had launched several schemes specially focused for the development of these Pahari people.

Table No. 04 ECONOMIC STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Economic Status	Gujjars	Paharis	Total
APL (Above Poverty Line)	04(7.6%)	09(17.3%)	13
BPL (below poverty line)	22(42.3%)	17(32.6%)	39
Total	26	26	52

Sources: Primary Data

The data reveals that there is a significant difference between the Gujjars and Paharis on the measure of socio-economic status. The economic status of the Gujjars is lower as compared to Paharis because the economy of Gujjars people is based on cattle rearing and a major chunk of population do manual labour in towns and cities. Some of the Gujjars engage in milk trade but not on a large scale, whereas, the Pahari speaking people are economically sound than the Gujjars. They possess land for farming and a major proportion of population is engaged in trade and small scale business.

Table No. 05: FAMILY ANNUAL INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

Annual Income	Gujjars	Paharis	Total
Below 50,000	08(15.3%)	05(9.6%)	13
51,000 – 100000	10(19.2%)	06(11.5%)	16
1,00000 - 1,50000	03(5.7%)	05(9.6%)	08
1,50000 - 2,00000	01(1.9%)	01(1.9%)	02
Above 2,00000	04(7.6%)	09(17.3%)	13
Total	26	26	52

Sources: Primary Data

The data reveals that there exists a considerable difference between Gujjars and Paharis in terms of annual income. It was noticed that the annual income range of the Gujjars is considerably less than that of the Paharis because the nomadic fragile economy of the Gujjars does not add much to their annual income whereas the Paharis, who are no doubt well off than the Gujjars, are engaged in trade and business and thus have more annual income than the Gujjars.

5. CONCLUSION:

It is evident from the factual information collected by the researcher by administering an information schedule to the people from both the communities that the socio-economic status of both the communities is not at par with other groups, and specifically the Gujjars, who live in less concentrated and remote areas than the Paharis, are worst affected. Their nomadic character somehow confined them with their primitive jobs. These nomadic Gujjars got Scheduled Tribe status in 1991, but it is evident that such effective measures had not reached to the needy and deserving people. Now, there is a competition within the community between the people who got edge through reservation and are posted at the prime positions in the state and the people who are yet living at the shillocks remote and backward areas of the state. This sort of discrimination emerged because of the politics with the reservation policy of the state. These loopholes were observed by the result of data, which shows that a large proportion of population has been included in more than one reserved categories. Furthermore, while making comparison between the Gujjars and Paharis, the data showed certain significant results, the educational status of the Gujjars is comparatively low as compared to Paharis as their nomadic character had not allowed them to fully reap the benefits of education.

Thus it can be concluded that people from both the communities are not much stable economically as they are living in the remote areas of the state. They are facing equal hardships in their day-to-day life, but specifically Gujjars are worst sufferers. Therefore, some ameliorative measures are definitely needed to alleviate their socio-economic position but it can be ascertained that reservation had not proved to be a tool for this alleviation. Instead it had divided society and creamy layer of the community is taking all the benefits. So it is right time to introspect the reservation policy and launch some reformative measures which will help the needy and deserving. The following suggestions can be a way forward for the policy makers drafting the welfare measures for alleviating the weaker section of the society.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Government should do something seriously to preserve the culture of the communities feeling discriminated and there must be an emphasis on conducting studies/research and documenting their practices and life pattern.
- Government should look into the upliftment of backward sections of the society. However, granting a privilege forever is not an apt solution to the problem. One time package for education, livelihood, or holistic welfare of such groups can be a step forward.
- The Gujjars as well as Pahari community is devoid of adequate socio-economic and educational development. Therefore, a strong socio-anthropological insight is needed to look into the culture and life pattern, identity crisis and overall pressing issues of the both the communities.
- Both the communities are living in congruent geographical conditions and have adopted similar life style. Both the communities either live in remote and inaccessible hilly areas mainly Pir Pahchal region, also their basties (habitations) are located around LOC, therefore, they face similar problems like economic backwardness. Hence, both the communities need equal ameliorative measures.
- The Paharis have not yet been given a proper definition by the planning department of Jammu and Kashmir State and no proper survey has been made of their economic vulnerability. Consequently there is an urgent need for conducting a proper socio-economic survey so that sustainable development of all sections of society can take place.

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