

Educational Status of Tribals of Jammu & Kashmir: A Case of Gujjars and Bakarwals

Umer Jan Sofi

Discipline of Sociology, IGNOU, New Delhi-110068, India.

Corresponding author: umerignou@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Education as a means of advancement of capacity, well –being and opportunity is uncontested and more so among communities on the periphery. In India, marked improvements in access and to some extent in quality of education in tribal areas have occurred and stem from various government and non-government initiatives. However, the number of out-of-school children continues to be several millions mainly due to lack of proper infrastructure, teacher absenteeism and attitude, parental poverty, seasonal migration, lack of interest and parental motivation etc. The scenario of tribal education is no way different than other states in Jammu and Kashmir. In Jammu & Kashmir the overall literacy rate of the Scheduled tribes as per the census 2001 is 3.7percent which is much lower than the national average of 47.1percent aggregated for all S.Ts. Though various efforts have been made by the government for the development of education among tribal communities but much more still needs to do. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the existing educational status of two prominent tribal communities of Jammu and Kashmir- Gujjars and Bakarwals. The study has been conducted in five tribal villages of district Anantnag. 124 households were selected with the help of stratified sampling for the survey. The study apart from presenting the existing educational status of Gujjars and Bakarwals in the area also provides suitable recommendations for the development of education among these tribal communities.

Keywords: Education, Gujjars and Bakarwals, Literacy rate, Jammu and Kashmir.

“..Education is a liberating force and in our age it is also a democratizing force cutting across the barriers of caste and class, something out of inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances...”
(Indira Gandhi)

India has the dubious distinction of having second largest concentration of tribal communities in the world. These scheduled tribes constitute 573 groups and sub-groups and are distributed in different proportions in most of the States and Union territories of this sub-continent. With the total population of 104,281,034 Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.6percent of the India’s total population (Census

2011). These tribal communities are spread over around 15percent of area of the country most of which are hills and dales, forests and plateaus and therefore, under developed and inaccessible. A majority of scheduled tribes of India are economically, socially and educationally backward. There is a wide variation in their social system, economic organization and political structure. Though they have a common cultural chord displaying their group identity, their art and craft, music and song, language and literature, rituals and religion are diverse and dissimilar in different regions. But one conspicuous commonality with the scheduled tribes of India is their backwardness and underdevelopment. They have suffered in the past and continue to suffer in the present and their future also seems bleak. Though a number of steps have been taken by the central and state governments for the overall development of the tribal population from time to time but so far the results have not been up to the mark.

Education as a means of advancement of capacity, well –being and opportunity is uncontested and more so among communities on the periphery. Marked improvements in access and to some extent in quality of education in tribal areas have occurred and stem from various government and non-government initiatives. However, the number of out-of-school children continues to be several millions mainly due to lack of proper infrastructure, teacher absenteeism and attitude, parental poverty, seasonal migration, lack of interest and parental motivation etc.

India made a constitutional commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14, nearly 60 years ago. The goal which was expected to be achieved by 1960, remains elusive, even now. Yet one has to admit that developments in recent years have had significant impact on the situation, raising the hope that universal basic education could be a reality with in a reasonable period of time.

Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir

The constitution of Jammu and Kashmir has notified twelve tribal communities as the scheduled tribes. Eight communities--- Balti, Beda, Bot, Brookpa, Changpa, Garra, Mon and Purigpa , among them were given this status in 1989; And Bakarwals, Gujjars, Gaddis and Sippis were notified as the scheduled tribes vide the constitution (Scheduled Tribes) order (Amendment) Act,1991. All the twelve scheduled tribes were enumerated officially for the first time during the census 2001, recording the population of 1,105,979. As per the census 2011, the total population of the Scheduled Tribes in the state is 1,493,299, comprising 11.9% of the total population of the state and about 1.5% of the total tribal population of the country. Most of these tribes are found in Ladakh region of the state. However, in Kashmir valley the Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes are predominantly found. Though these tribes are spread

in almost all districts of the valley but they are mostly concentrated in the Anantnag, Badgam, Pulwama, and Kupwara districts.

Table 1. S.T Population of the Jammu and Kashmir

Name	Population of STs Census 2011	Population of STs Census 2001	Variation
Jammu & Kashmir	14,93,299	11,0,5979	3,87,320
Anantnag	1,16,006	80,856	35150

Source: Census of India 2011

Literacy and Education Level of Gujjars & Bakarwals

In Jammu & Kashmir the overall literacy rate of the S.Ts as per the census 2001 is 3.7% which is much lower than the national average of 47.1percent aggregated for all S.Ts. Male and female literacy rates 48.2% and 25.5% are much below if compared to those recorded by all S.Ts at the national

Table 2. Literacy Rate among the Gujjar-Bakarwals and General Population in Jammu and Kashmir

Districts	Total Lit. Pop.	Bakarwals	Gujjars	General Pop.
Kupwara	232,557	20.4	16.9	65.32
Baramulla	447,075	19.3	19.7	62.48
Srinagar	641,267	15.6	16.3	78.83
Badgam	226,167	18.3	21.7	74.23
Pulwama	281,518	20.1	17.4	66.21
Anantnag	463,197	14.6	15.5	73.01
Leh	68,278	100.0	88.2	68.21
Kargil	60,803	17.4	50.7	63.98
Doda	274,425	15.6	16.8	54.82
Udhampur	343,429	19.3	21.3	61.21
Poonch	156,398	30.8	34.6	69.08
Rajouri	234,228	20.5	32.9	72.45
Jammu	1,070,574	23.5	39.0	79.07
Kathua	307,370	18.8	19.3	74.11
Total	48,07,286	18.4	25.5	71.23

Source: Census of India, 2001

level (59.2% and 34.8 %). Among all the S.T literates in the state 34.9% are either without any educational level or have attained education below primary level. The primary level literates constitute 26.2% followed by literates up to middle level (22.1%). The persons educated up to the secondary/ higher secondary level constitute 14.7% whereas 2% only are graduates and above. Non- technical and technical diploma holders form negligible percentage (0.1percent).

Though the above given data clearly shows the educational backwardness among S.Ts of the state in general but at the individual level Gujjars & Bakarwals have the lowest literacy rates (as per census 2001) of 31.7% and 22.5% respectively, which is lower than any other tribe of the state. Therefore, there is an immediate need to study the causes for such a low performance in educational sector by these two tribal groups so that a sociological framework of suggestions will be provided for the solution of those problems through micro-macro level programme intervention in the long- term and short term policy planning in the state.

It is quite clear from Table 2 and figures that educational level among the Gujjars and Bakarwals is not impressive. The analysis shows that majority of the population is illiterate, in the total 25.5% of the population is literate in the Gujjars community, 18.4% are literate among the Bakarwals. If we compare it to the General population, the general population has 71.23% of the literacy rate. In all the districts General population has higher literacy rate in comparison to the Gujjars and Bakarwals, because a major proportion of the Gujjar and Bakarwal population still practices transhumanism and they keep moving all around the year so they get less opportunity of educating their childrens as compare to the rest of the population.

Table 3. Levels of education among the Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir (in Percent)

Districts	Lit. with out Edu.	Below Pri- mary	Pri- mary	Middle	Sec.	High. Sec.	Non- tech Dip.	Tech. Dip.	Grad. & Above
Kupwara	16.8	28.0	26.3	21.3	5.9	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.2
Baramulla	10.2	31.9	30.1	19.0	6.6	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Srinagar	24.4	25.9	23.9	16.8	6.6	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.2
Badgam	14.4	34.0	29.9	14.1	5.9	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pulwama	19.7	34.2	27.2	12.2	5.3	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.5
Anantnag	26.3	30.4	24.8	13.5	3.9	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Leh	0.0	13.3	26.7	20.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.3
Kargil	1.8	20.2	21.9	22.8	24.6	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.0

Contd.

Doda	15.2	36.7	26.0	14.4	5.6	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.1
Udhampur	11.7	34.4	28.6	17.5	5.9	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.1
Poonch	5.6	25.9	28.7	25.1	8.5	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.1
Rajouri	5.9	25.7	27.1	27.1	9.4	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Jammu	4.8	28.0	28.5	24.0	9.7	3.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Kathua	11.9	35.6	27.9	15.0	6.5	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	9.9	28.26	27.6	22.1	7.8	2.5	0.02	1	1.5

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table 4. Levels of Education among the Bakarwals in Jammu and Kashmir (in Percent)

Districts	Lit. with out Edu.	Below Pri-ary	Pri-ary	Middle	Sec.	High. Sec.	Non-tech Dip.	Tech. Dip.	Grad. & above
Kupwara	11.4	22.7	24.4	24.4	10.5	3.0	0.0	0	13.3
Baramulla	12.5	23.6	27.5	22.1	9.3	2.6	0.0	0	11.7
Srinagar	43.9	24.9	15.7	10.1	4.1	1.2	0.0	0	9.7
Badgam	13.0	19.6	10.9	15.2	8.7	8.7	0.0	0	45.7
Pulwama	69.1	15.5	8.2	4.5	2.7	0.0	0.0	0	20.0
Anantnag	30.1	22.4	25.7	15.8	4.2	0.9	0.1	2	2.0
Leh	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
Kargil	63.5	15.1	11.1	4.8	2.4	1.6	0.0	0	2.4
Doda	19.6	37.5	26.0	12.4	4.0	0.4	0.0	0	5.0
Udhampur	13.6	36.3	26.6	16.0	5.1	1.9	0.0	0	3.7
Poonch	8.1	23.4	27.1	25.1	10.9	4.0	0.0	0	161.9
Rajouri	9.9	31.3	30.2	18.7	7.1	1.8	0.0	0	35.2
Jammu	5.9	44.6	23.0	14.1	10.0	1.6	0.3	1	99.5
Kathua	18.9	43.7	21.4	11.8	3.7	0.4	0.0	0	4.6
Total	18.3	30.0	26.0	16.8	6.1	1.7	0.03	1	1.0

Source: Census of India, 2001

Objectives of the Study

In the preceding situational thematic context this empirical sociological study will follow the following specific objectives:

- To carry out an empirical sociological investigation about the existing status of education among the Gujjar & Bakarwal tribals.

- To provide a sociological framework of suggestions for the resolution of problems related to the development of education among the Gujjars & Bakarwals in the state and to provide a data base to the holistic understanding of their crucial problems

Methodology

For this study data from both primary and secondary sources was used. Books, Journals, Census reports, government records etc. were the secondary sources of information and an intensive field study was conducted for primary data in the selected villages with the help of an interview schedule.

Sample Design

A sample of 124 households from five villages belonging to three different tehsils of district Anantnag was selected for this study with the help of stratified sampling.

Table 5. Villages selected for sample survey

Tehsil Name	Villages Selected	No. of Households Surveyed
Anantnag	a. Chakilpora	35
	b. Gadwail	30
Duru	a. Harigaws	25
Phalgam	a. ForestBlock	20
	b. Awoora	14
Total		124

Results and Discussion

The data on literacy rate of the surveyed villages as recorded during the field study (Table6) indicates that the highest literacy level among the all the five villages was in Harigawas (25.2 %). However, the lowest rate of literacy was recorded in the villages Forest Block and Gadwail as 9.46% and 9.93% respectively. In Chakilpora 16.49% and in Awoora 24.3% of total population was found as literate. Though the overall literacy rate of population is very low in every village but the female literacy rate is a matter of great concern. As the table given below shows that among the surveyed population only 4.07% females in Gadwail are literate. In ForestBlock only about 5% of the female respondents were literate. In Harigawas the highest 20.6% female literacy rate was recorded during the survey, followed by Awoora (15.2 %). Regarding the gender gap, the Awoora village with

16.9% tops the list, followed by Chakilpora (12.06 %) and Gadwail (11.14 %). ForestBlock having the lowest literacy rate (9.46 %) among the surveyed villages has also recorded the lowest gender gap of 6.98percent.

Table 6. Literacy Rate and Gender gap in the Study Villages

Villages	Literacy (percentage)			Gender Gap
	Total	Male	Female	
Awoora	24.30	32.20	15.20	16.90
Chakilpora	16.49	22.29	10.23	12.06
Forest Block	09.46	12.46	05.47	6.98
Gadwail	09.93	15.22	04.07	11.14
Harigawas	25.20	19.20	20.60	08.50

Source: Field Survey

Level of Education of Gujjars and Bakarwals in Study Area

As per census 2001, among the total S.T literates of Jammu and Kashmir, 34.9% are either without any educational level or have attained education below primary level. The primary level literates constitute 26.2% followed by literates up to middle level (22.1%). The persons educated up to matric/ secondary/ higher secondary constitutes 14.7percent whereas 2percent only are gradutes and above. Non-technical and technical diploma holders form negligible percentage (0.1).

The data regarding the educational level of the Bakarwal tribals in the sample villages of district Anantnag (Table 3.16) reveals that the literacy rate of Harigawas (25.2%) is highest in the list. It is followed by the village Awoora having 24.3percent of the total surveyed population as literates. The lowest literacy has been recorded in the villages of Gadwail and ForestBlock having literacy rate of 9.93percent and 9.46percent respectively. In Chakilpora a total of about 16percent of population was literate. So far as the female literacy rate is concerned, Harigawas (20.6%) tops the list, followed by Awoora (15.2%). The lowest female literacy rate among the selected villages was recorded in Gadwail (4.07%) and ForestBlock (5.47%). As already mentioned most of the Bakarwal literates are having education of below primary level. In ForestBlock, about 89percent of the total literates are having the qualification up to primary level, followed by the villages of Gadwail (84.27percent), Chakilpora (82.91percent), Awoora (79.25%) and Harigawas (72.85%). Similarly at high school level, Harigawas (6.9%) top the list, and is followed by the village Awoora (4.17%). At higher level the participation is almost negligible, among five selected villages only three villages – Awoora, Gadwail

and Harigawas have shown their representation at higher educational level. But their participation rate is very low. In Harigawas 0.43percent, Awoora 0.30percent and Gadwail 0.25percent of total literates have reached up to higher education level.

Table 7. Educational Level of the Study Villages

Villages Selected	Literacy Rate			Educational Level (percent)				
	Total	Male	Female	P	M	H	Hrs.	Hr.Edu.
Awoora	24.30	32.20	15.20	79.25	14.05	4.17	2.23	0.30
Chakilpora	16.49	22.29	10.23	82.91	12.20	03.69	01.20	-
Gadwail	09.93	15.22	04.07	84.27	11.65	02.30	01.53	0.25
Forest Block	09.46	12.46	05.47	89.07	8.73	02.20	-	-
Harigawas	25.20	29.20	20.60	72.85	16.15	06.90	03.67	0.43

P= Up to Primary level; M= Middle level; H= High school level; Hrs.= Higher sec. level; Hr. Edu.= Higher Education.

So for as the causes of such a low literacy rate, on one hand we can blame poverty and nomadic lifestyle of the community as the prime reasons for such mass illiteracy, but on the other hand lack of parental interest in sending their wards to schools is also one of the biggest obstacle in the development of education in the community. Usually when a child attains the age of 10-12 years parents prefers to engage them in their family occupation of cattle rearing. On the other hand if parents are willing to send their children to school, but unfortunately due to lack of schools they can do nothing other than engaging them in family profession. If any child gets family support and he succeeds to cross the high school level, then due to the lack of higher secondary schools in the far flung areas he is compelled to left the studies. The situation is even worse at higher education level, when a student needs to travel on an average 100-150 km to join collage in the town.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The literacy rate among the Gujjars and Bakarwals is too low as compared to other sections of the society. Some of the challenges for educational service provision to transhumants areas are similar to those faced by other rural and marginalized households in the region, although often more severe. These include -- Low population densities resulting in long distances to schools; lack of teachers willing to live in the hard conditions found in these areas, Resulting in teacher shortages as well as poorly motivated teachers; lack of parental resources to pay for schooling

costs such as uniform, books, stationary etc.; migratory life style and dependence on livestock economy, which compels children to spend long Periods away from their residential places and thus keeps them away from school.

Here under are some suggestions and policy measures necessary to be taken for the development of education and enhancement of enrollment rate among the Gujjar and Bakarwal tribals :

- (1) Hostels should be made for Boys and Girls on Block and Tehsil level so as to provide free education facilities to the tribal children. Though there are some hostels at district level but the existing infrastructure is very weak and unable to accomplish the rising demand. Therefore, there is a great need to strengthen the existing infrastructure and to improve its strength by establishing more and more hostels and tehsil and block levels so that more and more children will be enabled to cherish their dream of attaining education.
- (2) Shifting of Gujjar and Bakerwal Hostels Residential School on the pattern of Kenderya Novidiya Vidhyalya. It is the need of hour to stream line the management of these Residential schools and in this regard the existing system of Kenderya Novidiya Vidhyalyas can be a role model.
- (3) Enhancement in Mobile schools in each district of state and accountability of the teacher at various levels. As so far one of the biggest drawbacks of the mobile schooling pointed out by various experts is the non accountability of teachers because on the upper reaches there is non to monitor the working of these schools from administration and therefore the teachers generally remain absent.
- (4) Providing Local staff to the far-flung areas and enhancement of stipend to the Bakarwal and Gujjar students, so that they may continue their education. Due to emotional and sentimental attachment these teachers can give their best as also they are very well acquainted with the tough life pattern on the upper reaches and it will be easier for them to accommodate.
- (5) Enhancement of seats in Technical/Professional colleges for Bakarwal and Gujjar students. Universities of Jammu and Kashmir are providing reservation to the children belonging to these communities but there is need to provide special reservation in technical or professional colleges so that more and more children gets enrolled for various job oriented courses.
- (6) Establishment of permanent schools near temporary residences of Gujjar and Bakarwals.
- (7) Enhancement of admission quota in schools, colleges and professional institutions for Gujjar and Bakarwal students.

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