

Permanent Settlement And Socio Economic Condition Of Van Gujjar In Garhwal Region

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Abstract: Even though today the human civilization is at the peak of development in the 21st century, but the nomadic pastorals present an example of human's early business or lifestyle. The Gujjar is a small pastoral community in Garhwal region who practice the transhumance system. This transhumance system faced the many changes continually. Garhwal region provides sustaining geographical background to transhumance system. No one knows where were exactly the first settlement and when the Gujjars began to grow up. Some scholars are of the opinion that they are the community representing those pastoral nomads from the Jammu and Kashmir, who entered Uttarakhand with their livestock to search the grasslands. Mostly opinions are based on the records of their language, costumes and name of the places. Gujjars are most numerous habitats in Rajaji National park and surroundings, other shivalik area and the Tons valley of Garhwal region.

I. INTRODUCTION

Van Gujjars are the Nomadic pastoral community of India and mostly live in Northern part of country. Historians are unanimous about the history of Gujjars so the origin of the Gujjars is still a matter of debate. The problems require of information from divers sources, historical, folklores, customs, traditions, anthropological, place names and ethnic study etc. In Uttarakhand Himalayas Van Gujjars identified as a pastoral tribe. The Gujjar community mostly survive in the forest areas so government, institutions, NGOs and other called them Van Gujjar. Term Van shows the connotation for forest and the term Gujjar is an Indian form of Khazars, a tribe that entred India along with White Huns. However, the use of term Van Gujjars in the documentation by the officials stands very contextually to Van Gujji themselves as distinct pastoral nomads and different from settled Gujjars refer themselves as Van Gujjars meaning Forest dwelling Gujjars and trace their migration from Gujrat a place now ni Pakistan.

II. SUSTAINABILITY IN GARHWAL REGION

So far as the historical evidences concerned, it is believed the Gujjars first appeared on the scenc towards the close of

15th century or beginning of the 16th century AD. According to Badarkar, Gujjars came to India as a separate grop with the 'Hun' caravans in 6th century AD. In support of this view Smith says that these people are almost outsiders and are related to 'white Huns'. However Smith discards the previous theories and considers the Gujjars to have been a branch of Huns who invaded India in 5th century AD. A larg section of sociologists and archeologists define them as the ancient tribe of Kalsacias Mountain in the southern part of Black Sea and Caspian Sea. It is thus clear that the original land of Gujjars has been Iran, Iraq and Afganistan in central Asia. Most belive that the Gujjars intered India through Afganistan and Pakistan in search of grasslands from Stepies grasslands from central Asia. Huns was Bajara community, who lived in the east of Bolga River who established a vast empire in 370 AD. Huns was actually a living resident of China, whom the Chinese people called Hun U. In time their two Branches were formed. One branch settled near the river Bolga and other attacked Iran and established its empire there. In the era, this branch invaded India. The Huns attacked India are called whit Hun. Around the 5th to 9th century, the Gujjars Empire expanded around Rajasthan and Gujarat. On the basis of historical evidence, it can be said that Gujjar first came to Rajasthan in India and then spread from there to other areas. It is also a fact that Gujjar of Rayas and Rajouri districts still consider

themselves to be from Sialkot, Gujarawala, Jhelum, Rawalpindi (Pakistan), and Panjab. For three reasons the Gujjar community had migrated from their native place. The first long term horrible famine, the increasing pressure on the pastures due to the second growing population, and the third, continued war and conflicts in their native land, due to which they made the habitat of Bhavara-Tarai lowlands and inaccessible Hialayan region. Some of the Ven Gujjars live Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Presently, those who call themselves Gujjars get from nomad shepherds to farmers and high lavle of society. Migration from the native land made their life more nomadic and they started searching for pastures in places where the interference of external society is less. Gujjars can be kept in two grops, first those who are nomadic pastorals in the Jammu and Kashmir, Himackal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and second who start living a permanent life other area of the country. Though it has not been made clear when the Gujjars come and how they reached in the Garhwal Region of the Uttarakhand. Government records, interviews of Gujjars peoples and pther proofs are clear that they came to Garhwal region of Uttarakhand after going to Himachal Pradesh from Jammu and Kashmir in search of Grasslands. A study from the Government of Himachal Pradesh (1981) traces them as one of the Scythian tribes who conquered Kabul about year 100 B.C from where they inhabited the Gurjara kingdom in Northen India. During later struggles with other groups, they were pushed into Jammu and Kashmir and later into the foothills of the Himachal Pradesh.

Gujjars, who entered the lower shivalik around 85 years back, have been following a system of levying grazing fee in the government forests in order to regulate the number of animals. As per the government order No.G.No 2779/XIV-3-364/75 dated 29/06/1981, the grazing fee per buffalo per season is Rs.8 and lopping fee per buffalo per season is Rs.20.⁷ Shivalik region and high alpin grasslands (Bugyal) of the Garhwal region are pastoral areas of the Gujjars. In winter, Gujjar migrate to Shivalik and Bhavar Terai areas and in summer to alpine geass areas of the high Himalaya. In the Shivalik region, east of Garhwal is the extension of the Pastoral area from the Kalsi forest range to the adjacent area of the Kotdwar. In this sub- Himalaya region, Gujjars lives in places like Gangabhogpur Gauhari renge, Gaendikhata Pauri Garhwal, Batoli, Dumet, Dhaula Tapad, Dharmawala, majri, kulhal, Simlash, dudhli, Bhaniyawala, Timli, Kadwapani Dehradun, Shikroda Khanpur, Laldang, Jakhan, Nastarwari, Shyampur, Peeli beet Haridwar, Sidha beet Haridwar, Mithi beri Haridwar, Kanswali Haridwar, Sajanpur, Aamsaut, Katebad, Sherpur, Dasoywala, Chidiyapur Rang, sauth Nlowala and north Nlowala Haridwar and the area covered by the Rajaji National Park, which can also be called a permanent residence of Gujjar community. The Government is now providing permanent home and school facility atthese places, which has had a huge impact on seasonal migration or transhumance system in Garhwal Himalaya. In the summer, these people migrate along with their cattle to the Bugyals like Kedarkantha, Rana, Hari ki dun, Fachkandi, Sotry, Devkyara, Dayara bugyal, Khedatal etc. in Uttarkashi district, Dudhatoli, kalpnath bugyal, Rajkhark, Choptata bugyal in Chamoli district, Panwali kantha etc. A large number of Gujjars reside

permanently in the Tons valley, and only a few members of the family migrate with the cattle in summer, not the whole family.

III. SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Van Gujjar is a nomadic community of north India. The first edition of Encyclopidiya of social sciences (vols-11-12) classifies nomads in three categories, namely, hunting and collecting nomads, pastoral nomads, agricultural nomads. Based on this classification Van Gujjar is a pastoral nomadic community who are mainly engaged in animal husbandry or transhumance system. At the social level, the Gujjar ordered themselves in three principal kinship groups: the Dera (household), the Dada-Potra (lineage) and the Jat or Gotra (clan). The the Dera (household) is the basic family unit which consists of husband, wife, children and old parents. The Dada-Potra (lineage) group consists of a particularly related kinsmen traling their ancestory to common ancestor upto seven generations. The Gotra is a group which is based on belief among the Gujjars about their Hindu ancestry. The above mentioned of the Gotra system is the best proof of their being Hindu in ancient times. They are among the few Muslim groups who have been able to retain a system of Gotras of their Hinduancestry, namely, Kasana, Lodha, Padhana, Bagri, Dinda, Bhainsi, Chauhan, Baniya, Chopra and Kalas respectively.

Most of their social and religious ceremonies are organiz in winter grazing areas, because their camps in summer pastures are much far away from each other. Only few domestic functions are held at summer camps with the Kafila. On other hand they spend most of times in winter grazing areas where the facilities and accessibility to each other are easy. Like the village, Gujjar community follows the Kafila system. Kafila (group) or some Kafilas living together in a forest range are electing a head of the society, called Lumberdar. Each Kafila also selects a member, they make a council is called Zirga. Lumberdar is the head of the Zirga and all the family and social dispute are decided by Zirga.

The Gujjar Dialect resemebles with Rajstani and its essence is maintained by Gujjars from all over Himalays. Gujjar history cites at number of places that Gujjars despite all the Geographical and Cultural differences have remained binded together by one thread that is language. Most of the Gujjars did not adopt the local language. But this dose not means that they do not know the local languages. They are well versed with the local languages yet the speek their own language. Gujjars, who lives in the Shiwalik area of Garhwal, speaks their own language with their own society and Hindi with external society. On the other hand, Gujjars, who permanently residing in the Tuons vally, speaks to local people in the local language. As a Conclusion the Gojri language is the language of all the Van Gujjars of Garhwal region, in which words of Rajasthani, Mewari and Gujrati etc. Either Gojri is form of Rajasthani and conversely Rajasthani is a form os Gojri and resemblance of Gojri to Mewari is very striking. But still closer is the resemblance of Gojri to Mewari dialect of Rajasthani spoken in Alwarsome distance to the

north of Mewar and separated from that state by the territory of Jaipur.

Gujjar follows the joint family system and above three generations live together. In the family is of the oldest male considered the head or mukhiya of the family. Women do more hardworking than men in family. Gujjars women have more freedom than other Muslim society, and also curfew system (purdah partha) is not practiced. All Van Gujjars, those inhabiting the Garhwal region are Muslim by faith and claim to belong to Sunni section. From the 7th to 10th century, the Gujjar king ruled on a very large part of northern India. All Gujjars were essentially Hindu, but during the reign of Aurangzeb (17th century), some people had embraced Islam. Ramzan, Mohrram, Idul Fitr, Idul Zuha etc., are the most religious festivals and few of them, also celebrate Diwali a day after Hindu Diwali, Baisakhi and Lohdi. Both parallel and cross cousins marriages system and exchange marriages (two aligning families exchange one boy and one girl) practiced by Gujjars. As a conclusion, Gujjars social life is very simple and mixed, which makes simple sense to other society.

IV. ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

Gujjars life is as simple as it is hard on other side. In this dazzling world of the 21st century, they are still living on their traditional life style. Although the effect of globalization is also on the Gujjars, but this community is at the last end of this impact. Keeping of Buffalo is the base of their economic life. N. Rubina opinion that the Gujjars (cattlemen) are a tribe apart, who keep herds of Buffaloes and make a living by the sale of milk and butter.¹³ In addition to animal husbandry, they do some other primary activity like, collecting of dried leaves, Tendu pattas, twigs, dried grass and other minor forest produce. Minor forest produce are Sami tree, Sal, Sandan, Haldu, Shisam, Maara, Khair etc. amongst these, vegetation used for fule and cattle grazing. The only life support system Van Gujjars have is their buffalo and the milk they get out of their buffaloes is used as a source of income. Income from buffaloes skins also a source which is very meager. Herd management of buffaloes is the main part of their daily life. A study shows that average production of per buffalo is above 3.5 liter. Urbanization in the Doon valley is increasing day by day and also the demand of milk is very high. The buffalo milk is highly valued by the Indian society and it is usually preferred to Cow milk for its sweet taste and high fat percentage. Uttarakhand Government sponsored Anchal Dairy is encouraging milk and milk products. Owing to their dependence on the buffaloes, the Gujjars community drives home the point that veterinary support for their animals is more important than the healthcare for them.

V. TRANSHUMANCE SYSTEM

Nomadic herding or transhumance system was the earliest occupation of human being. According to F.J. Mankhouse, 'Transhumance' is the seasonal migration of farmers with their flocks and herds in search of pasture for their animals. This includes the summer's movements from valley to upland

pastures and the winter's movement from upland to hot dry lowlands to mountain. The transhumance system is prevalent in the Garhwal Himalaya, where there are several communities, such as the Gujjars, Gaddis, Bhotiya and other non tribal community. Pastoral nomadism in Garhwal Himalaya is primarily buffalo and sheep-goat Pastoralism. Transhumance system is a system generated due to two different environmental or climate regions. There is an extremely close relation between these types of adaptation and the environmental milieu in which it operates, and this relationship also creates the basic necessity for mobility. In the Shivalik region, there is tremendous heat in summer, on the other hand at the same time, high Himalayan Bugyals has good alpine vegetation and temperate climate for grazing. On the other side too, i.e. in terms of technology, Buffaloes have an extremely high rate of grazing, thus continued pasturing in one locality cannot be done. These two factors of environment and technological provide thus the basic thrust for transhumance system. In Garhwal Himalaya, carry out the two types of transhumance, inter-valley transhumance and trans-valley transhumance. The dates of migration have traditionally been fixed. Gujjars start moving towards the Bugyals in April and towards the Shivalik region in mid-September. Moving towards the Bugyals, there is shortage of fodder when going Bugyals; small quantities of wheat straw and other dry grass have to be bought from the local people, which they have to pay a high cost. When returning to winter pasture, the bait is abundant. At that time the paddy harvest is done and the straw of paddy is abundant due to which they spend a long time on the path.

VI. CHANGING ASPECTS

Change is the law of nature. The social changes are as spontaneous as change in the nature. No civilization in the history can be imagined which has ever remain static. In its most concrete sense, social change means that a large number of persons are engaging in activities that differ from those which they engaged in some time before. When human behavior is in the process of modification this is only another way of indicating that social change is occurring. There is widespread change in the Gujjar community. Modernization, including urbanization, education and development programmes, and permanent residence providing schemes of government have their impact in bringing about social changes. Although the joint family system is still present, the change can not be denied. They are being provided permanent residences in Shivalik by the government. In this way permanent dwellings are being constructed in place of haystack huts. Changes in dietary habits, customs, dialects etc. are clear.

VII. CONCLUSION

Transhumance system or pastoral nomadism is as old as the history of mankind. Grazing based animal husbandry plays an important role in the tribal community of India. The Gujjars faced lot of problems during grazing in Shivalik forest area,

Bugyals and migration routes. In the Shiwalik area during grazing in forest by forest officials are bribery for the allotment of land and the cutting of Bhabar grass. The cutting of Bhabar grass is chargeable offense but the people who pay bribes are allowed to cut bhabar grass. Demand of milk is increasing day by day so transhumance system of Gujjars can be promoted through proper implementation.

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