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INHABITATION NATURE OF GUJJARS IN PATHANKOT DISTRICT OF PUNJAB

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Abstract:

Punjab state is nourishing a variety of communities on its land. Each living being needs a permanent settlement to have a stable life. Even animals and birds also need shelter to survive in their life as human beings. However, all human beings are not able to have their own house, because it is very difficult for poor people to purchase a house in this expensive era. Like some other communities Gujjars are also following their hereditary occupation which is cattle rearing. In this modern era, where a man had stepped on the moon, the Gujjars are still living following a nomadic life culture. The purpose of the research paper is to discuss the inhabitation nature of Gujjars by exploring the benefits and drawbacks of their inhabitation. How their nomadic life and traditional occupation is affecting their inhabitation life. The study focuses on 50 Gujjar families from the most populated villages of the Gujjar community of the Pathankot district of Punjab and explores the present inhabitation nature of Gujjars, Barriers facing by the community in the field of their permanent settlement will also be discussed.

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1.0 Introduction:

India is a land, where several communities having cultural, racial and ethnic differences are being nourished. Each corner of India has a wide distinction between the culture, lifestyle, customs, tradition, etc of the people in India. Tribals are scattered all across the country. The tribes in India are varied in terms of their socio-economic and political development. Some tribal people are still living in their traditional phase, while some continue to adhere to their old lifestyle to large extent. rivers or another water bodies were the foremost choices of the human being from an early age to survive themselves so they can access water for their basic needs, in a result, most of the early civilizations were inhabitants near a freshwater body. The nomadic tribal people always prefer to stay near flowing water, Gujjar is also a nomadic nature community, most of the part of their life has been spent in moving one place to another place. The Gujjar's are a mostly pastoral community but many of them now live in settled communities.

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The word Gujjar is derived from the term Gaucharana, meaning to graze cows. In other languages like English, Hindi, Urdu. In Urdu, the word Gurjar or Gujar is in use but in all the ancient records up to 1300 A.D. it is Gurjar, its Prakrit is Gujjar which is normally verbal by the persons. Sanskrit Dictionary compiled by Pandit Radha Kant explains:

- Gurjar = Gur (enemy) + Ujar (destroyer)
- Gurjar means Destroyer of the enemy.

The Gujjars are also called as Goojar, Gujar, and Gurjara.

It is stated in a theory that the Gurjars were instigated in Central Asia and came to India via Iran Iraq and Afghanistan and were established their territory in Gujarat. They are first referred to in the 7th century as warriors; they migrated to the mountains for pasture for the animals. Their linguistic is Gojari, which is similar to the Pahari language. The census of India 1941 states: "Historians are accepted that the "Gurjaras" tribes were established in the area of Mount Abu in Rajasthan. It is thought that these and other divisions of the tribe were the descendants of those now known as Gujjars in this state.

In Punjab state, Gujjars has been migrating from Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh for decades of years. They are well known for their hereditary cattle rearing occupation. Jammu and Kashmir state lies in the hilly area which is unable to provide sufficient value of green fodder for their cattle in the winter season due to heavy snowfall. Most of the Gujjars were had a trend to move toward the plain area of Punjab because it is the first plain state next to Jammu and Kashmir which has appropriate weather conditions for them. In Punjab, easily availability of green grass for cattle grazing helps the Gujjars to nourish their cattle, so they can earn their livelihood by selling milk of their buffaloes, after many years of struggle many of the Gujjar families are getting settled down in several districts of Punjab state. Punjab has been divided into three regional zones named Majha, Malwa, and Doaba. The Gurdaspur District from the Majha zone is the evidence of a large number of Gujjars inhabitants in Punjab because it is not only much far from their motherland but also able the fulfil their basic needs.

Since the existence of man, the three items - meal, shelter, and clothes were the necessities to survive in life. A house keeps the human safe from various disasters and hot, cold weather. An early man had also understood the value of the house, he started to live in caves or wooden houses to protect themselves from the external hazards of dreadful animals. However, most families of the Gujjar community are still living nomadic life. They do not have their permanent residence, the ancestral Gujjars were practised cattle rearing by moving from one place to another with their cattle. A major part of the Gujjar community is are still following their traditional occupation and lifestyle which makes barriers to having a permanent settlement.

2.0 Objectives of study:

- The main objective of the research is to explore the housing status of the Gujjar community in the Pathankot District of Punjab state.
- To find the ratio between Cemented (Pakka house) and the Bamboo (Kacha house) houses of Gujjars.
- To explore the quality and strength of their houses.

3.0 Research methodology:

As far as the approach to research in the present study is concerned, it is a case study in which an attempt to analyse the housing status of the Gujjar community. Pathankot District of Punjab is marked as a research zone for primary data collection through interaction with the 50 Gujjar families. The secondary data was collected from the published books, research works, thesis, reports, etc. So, overall qualitative research methodology will be used to get fruitful results of research work.

4.0 Inhabitation Nature of Gujjars in Pathankot District

4.1 Discussion:

The nature of Gujjar's housing is classified into three categories are based on interviews that were conducted in the district. First is own house, in these kinds of houses Gujjar families are living who built their own houses after purchasing the land. They are owners of land and built their own houses on that land. In the Pathankot district, the number of own houses holding families are 17 out of 50 respondents, which shows that above 34% of Gujjars are having their own houses. They took 3-10 marle land to build a house as per their needs, 5.17 marle land is the average piece of land acquired by houses of Gujjars in the Pathankot district, which was calculated on the ground of the collected data from the respondents of the district.

The second nature of housing is rented houses, they are those Gujjars who took land on rent of lease for a particular time and built their houses on a small piece of that land. Rest of the land they use for the cattle. They pay rent to a landlord for the entire piece of land, but not only for their house. The rent slab of vacant land in the Pathankot district is 15000 – 40000 Rs. per acre for a year, which depends upon the location and variety of land. 21633 Rs per acre for a year, are the average rent amount paid by Gujjars to their landlord in the district. Sometimes they give cattle dung to the landlord as rent instead of money, landlord uses that cattle dung as natural manure for crops in his fields. Whereas this barter system depends upon the need of the landlord, but mostly Gujjars pay their rent in cash to the landlord. In the Pathankot district, 30 Gujjar families are living on rented land. They show that 60% of Gujjars do not have their land.

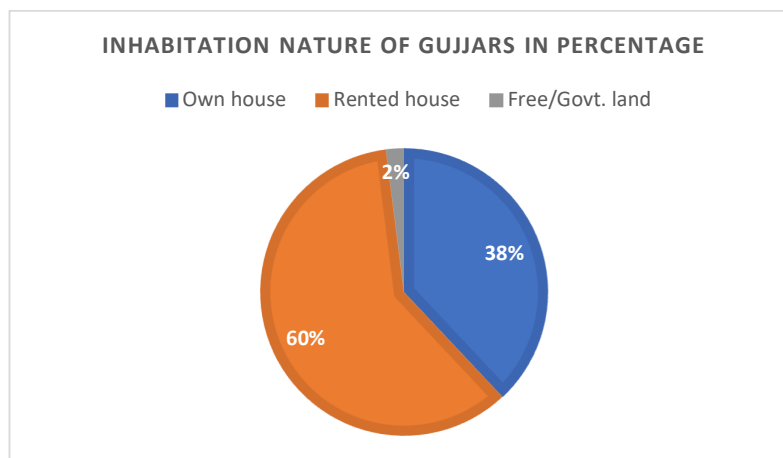


Fig. 1: Inhabitation Nature of Gujjars in Pathankot District
(Source: Primary data generated by author)

The third nature of housing is free or accommodation on government land, in these cases Gujjar families are living on some government properties like a riverbank, canal bank, Mandi, Shamlaat in villages, or on other government lands. These kinds of families are very frequently migrants;

they hardly spend a single season a place then move again to another place. Sometimes, they have to be victims of some natural disasters like floods.

In the Pathankot district, only a single respondent's family is living on government land without paying any rent. Anyhow, this nature of housing is less in numbers but also matter to think about their hard and unstable life.

4.2 Nature of their Inhabitation:

As above discussed, that Gujjars are living in their own houses, rented and on government land, these houses are of two types Kacha houses and Pakka houses. Pakka houses are built only on their land. Whereas, Kacha houses are built on rented or leased land with mud and bamboo and rice straw.

Table 1: Nature of Inhabitation of Gujjars

Type of House	In numbers	In percentage
Pakka house	18	66%
Kacha house	32	64%

Source: Primary data generated by author

In the Kacha house, Gujjars face the biggest problem is that they have to spend 15000 -25000 for the reconstruction of the house after 6 months because rice straw and other materials cannot give strength for more than six months. In the rainy season, the ceiling of their mud house starts to drip and the entire of their household area turns into a mire land. Whereas, Pakka house of the Gujjars in the district is nominal in numbers. Some of the major reasons are there behind their preference for making Kacha house.

- The profession of the Gujjar is cattle rearing and dairy farming and for that, they have to move from one place to another place, this is the reason that they do not make Pakka houses.
- The cost value of Kacha or muddy house is very low against the Pakka houses, they are unable to spend a lot of money for the construction of their house.
- Most of the Gujjars spent their life in nomadic mode and lives on a rented piece of land, where they cannot make a Pakka house on other one's land.
- They are experts in making their traditional houses and they do it by themselves. In this way, they don't have to pay extra money for labour.
- They do not have an electric fan or air cooler facilities; their mud house provides them with an appropriate environment for living in the summer season.

The above reason is showing that most of the Gujjars are living in Kacha house. Which is not their wish but how they are compelled by their circumstances. Their nomadic lifestyle is the biggest obstacle in the transformation of their housing from their Kacha house to Pakka houses.

4.3 Quality and strength of their houses:

The above data shows that a major part of Gujjars is still living in the Kacha house which is made up of bamboos, mud, rice straw and other dry grass. These types of houses are only protected them from hot and cold weather but not as much as a cemented house can save them. The strength of bamboo houses is very low in quality. So the most of the time their Bamboo houses are unable to provide them from major natural disasters like earthquakes, storms, heavy rain, etc.

Demerits of the bamboo house:

- The life span of bamboo houses is very low. As per the responses of respondents, a bamboo house cannot shelter them for more than 2 years.

- These types of houses demand repairing frequently. It takes Rs.5000 – 10000 twice a year.
- In the rainy season, the roofs of these types of houses start flowing rainwater. Hence, the family members and other household items get affected.
- The strength of mud houses is very low, they are unable to face any heavy natural disaster. They get damaged quickly.
- The bamboo and wooden houses can easily catch the fire, which keeps the life of Gujjars at risk.
- These houses are made up of mud, wood, rice straw, etc, it makes it easy for a snake-like creature to enter the house, which is can be s harmful to the family.
- Their houses are very unhygienic due to their structure and raw material used, it is an open invitation to several ailments.
- Gujjars are living along with their cattle, some of the cattle diseases can also make bad effects on them. It led them to an unhealthy life.

5.0 Conclusion:

The above demerits of their inhabitation reveal that the Gujjars are living a very hard life, without a permanent inhabitation. It makes difficult for them to live in the unsafe house. Gujjar is an important part of Indian society and culture. The research made light that most of the Gujjars are still living nomadic life due to some hard factors. As the other citizens also want to have a stable and strong inhabitation to live stressless life. The state or central government should also take the initiative to provide them with a permanent house under their various welfare schemes. The improper inhabitation is the biggest obstacle in the path of their community development. It is also not good for a nation that a major part of the community is still living without their own shelters. A permanent and cemented house can provide them with better safety.

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