

GUJJAR TRIBE IN THE HIMALAYAS: UNRAVELING SOCIOECONOMIC DIMENSIONS THROUGH DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Mr. Vikrant Kumar¹, Dr. (Prof.) Kulwant Singh Pathania²

¹Ph. D, Research Scholar in the Department of Commerce, Himachal Pradesh University, Summer Hill Shimla

² Professor, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, Himachal Pradesh University, Summer Hill Shimla

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Abstract: The Gujjar, an ancient tribe designated as a Scheduled Tribe in Himachal Pradesh, continue to lead a predominantly nomadic lifestyle even seven decades after India's independence. This study aims to comprehensively examine the socioeconomic dynamics of the Gujjar Tribe in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. A well-structured interview schedule was employed for data collection through direct personal interviews. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including the Chi-square test, were utilized to ensure precise analysis and interpretation of the data. The findings reveal a diverse socioeconomic landscape among the Gujjars in Himachal Pradesh. A significant proportion of this community still resides in rudimentary dwellings, relying primarily on limited sources of income, with a heavy dependence on livestock-related activities such as milk production and the sale of dairy products. Agriculture stands as the most prominent source of income. However, the study underscores the insufficient availability of medical facilities within their residential areas, leading to considerable challenges in accessing healthcare. In summary, the Gujjar Tribe in Himachal Pradesh faces a vulnerable socioeconomic situation, necessitating urgent interventions to uplift their living conditions and integrate them into the broader growth trajectory of the nation.

Keywords: Gujjars, Himachal, Nomadic, Socio-economic, Tribe.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Gujjar community, historically pastoral and nomadic, has seen a shift towards settled living in recent times. The name "Gujjar" finds its roots in the term "gaucharana," signifying their cattle-grazing heritage. Physically, they are known for their sturdy build and medium to tall stature.

The precise origin of the Gujjar community remains a topic of debate. Some, like historian V.A. Smith in "Early History of India" (1924), connect their beginnings to the White Huns, who arrived in India as nomadic groups around 465 AD. However, others, including Cunningham, place them within the Indo-Scythian tribes such as the Kushan and the Yueh-Chi, who swept through northwestern India during the first century AD. It is probable that the Gujjars are descendants of intermarriages between these early foreign invaders and the indigenous populations.

In the context of Himachal Pradesh, the Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation was established on November 14, 1979, under the jurisdiction of the Himachal Pradesh Government. Initially, the primary objective of this corporation was to enhance the economic well-being of Scheduled Caste families, and its original name was the "Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes Development Corporation."

However, in 1984, a collaborative decision between the Himachal Pradesh Government and the Government of India led to the expansion of the corporation's role, which now included providing financial support to Scheduled Tribe families in Himachal Pradesh. Consequently, the corporation's name was modified to the "Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation."

List of various schemes initiated in the state of Himachal Pradesh for the upliftment of people belonging to Scheduled caste and schedule tribes has been given below:

- ❖ Swarojgar Yojna (Self-Employment Scheme): Financial Assistance up to Rs.50, 000/- for setting up & expansion of Income generating avocations.
- ❖ Himswablamban Yojna (NSFDC & NSTFDC): To provide loans for Projects Costing more than Rs.50,000/- in collaboration with NSFDC and NSTFDC
- ❖ Study Loan: To provide loan up to Rs.1,50,000/- for a full course of five years
- ❖ Study Loan Scheme In Collaboration With NSFDC: To provide loan up to Rs. 7.50 Lac for a full course of 5 Years
- ❖ Dalit Varg Vayavsaik Prashikshan Yojna: To provide training to the SC and ST youth in traditional and non-traditional trades through ITI/ Private Institution/ Master Craftsman.
- ❖ Construction of Shop/ Scheme (Laghu Vikray Kendra Yojna): Corporation Provides Loan to the Municipal Corporation/ Municipal Committees/ Nagar Panchayats for Construction of Shops/Sheds for SC's/ST's.
- ❖ Hast Shilp Vikas Yojna: Corporation provides working capital assistance up to Rs.5000/- to individual as well as Group/ Society/Association of artisans.
- ❖ Small Business Yojna (NSFDC): To meet the small Financial need of poor Scheduled Castes families to start small and petty business individually, the term loans assistance up to Rs 50,000/- is provided by the Corporation directly in collaboration with NSFDC.
- ❖ Small Business Yojna (NSTFDC): To meet the small Financial need of poor Scheduled Tribes families to start small and petty business individually, the term loans assistance up to Rs 50,000/- is provided by the Corporation directly in collaboration with NSTFDC.
- ❖ National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development (NSKFDC): Financial assistance to set up any income generating activity of higher cost i.e. above Rs. 50000/- on concessional rate of interest such as small business unit, Taxi, Mahindra Jeep, Tata Sumo, Shuttering, Piggery farm etc.
- ❖ Micro Credit Finance (MCF): Provide Loans up to Rs.50, 000/- under Small Loan Scheme (In collaboration with National Corporation).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Existing literature on various aspects of Gujjars and other tribal communities has not received the attention it rightfully deserves. In 1970, N. K. Ambasht observed a social gap between teachers and students in tribal regions [1]. S. M. Dubey's 1972 study on education, social transformation, and political consciousness among tribes in Northeast India revealed their illiteracy and backwardness, emphasizing the need for political awareness [2]. In 1976, R. P. Khatana delved into marriage and kinship among Gujjars and Bakerwals in Jammu and Kashmir, noting strict endogamous practices. This study also explored aspects of transhumance in mountainous regions [3]. Subsequent researchers like B. Zutshi (1981) [4], Kango & Dhar (1981) [5], and Nau Nihal Singh (2003) made contributions to understanding Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes beyond socioeconomic issues [6].

K. S. Chalam's 1993 study on educational policy for human resource development stressed the necessity for educational reform among scheduled tribes [7]. In 1993, J. Daswani produced a "Tribal Study Synthesis Report," providing a summary of key findings [8]. The Department of Education, in 1993, analyzed the status of scheduled tribes and castes and introduced support schemes for their educational development [9]. D. K. Behera et. al. 1999 study, "Contemporary Societies, Tribal Societies," explored various social concepts related to tribes, concluding that they face social and educational backwardness [10]. In 2006, Sahu Chaturbhuj delved into aspects of tribal studies in a book of the same title [11].

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. Analyzing the Socioeconomic Attributes of the Gujjar Tribe
2. Investigating Perceptions of Challenges Encountered by the Gujjar Tribe

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology serves as a systematic approach to solving the research problem, essentially functioning as the science behind the scientific research process. It encompasses a comprehensive examination of the various steps typically employed by a researcher when investigating their research query, offering insight into the underlying rationale for these steps. This study integrates both primary and secondary data sources. It commenced with a pilot survey after conducting a thorough literature review. A strategically selected sample of 30 respondents from diverse locations in Himachal Pradesh was used for the pilot survey, which also underwent reliability testing. The pilot survey served the purpose of refining the research instrument.

Subsequent to the identification of crucial factors during the pilot study phase, a structured questionnaire was developed employing a 5-point Likert scale to conduct the main survey. In addition, the research drew upon secondary sources, encompassing various publications, research papers found in academic journals, magazines, and periodicals. The collected data from various sources were meticulously organized and tabulated to meet the specific analytical requirements. For the analysis of results, descriptive and inferential tools such as Chi-square were employed to evaluate the accumulated data.

The present analysis and interpretation of primary data which is collected with the help of questionnaire is based on the sample of 400. Interpretation is based on descriptive and analytical study of collected data aiming at the attainment of study objectives.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief Profile of the Respondents:

In the present study, respondents were thoughtfully divided into four distinct groups, each corresponding to specific geographical areas represented by the districts they belong to. The breakdown of respondents across these areas is as follows (as depicted in Table 1 and Fig. 1):

- Chamba District: 17.05%
- Kangra Districts: 20.30%
- Mandi District: 20.00%
- Solan District: 42.30%

Table 1: District wise distribution of the respondents

District	Frequency	Percentage
Chamba	70	17.5
Kangra	81	20.3
Mandi	80	20.0
Solan	169	42.3
Total	400	100.0

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

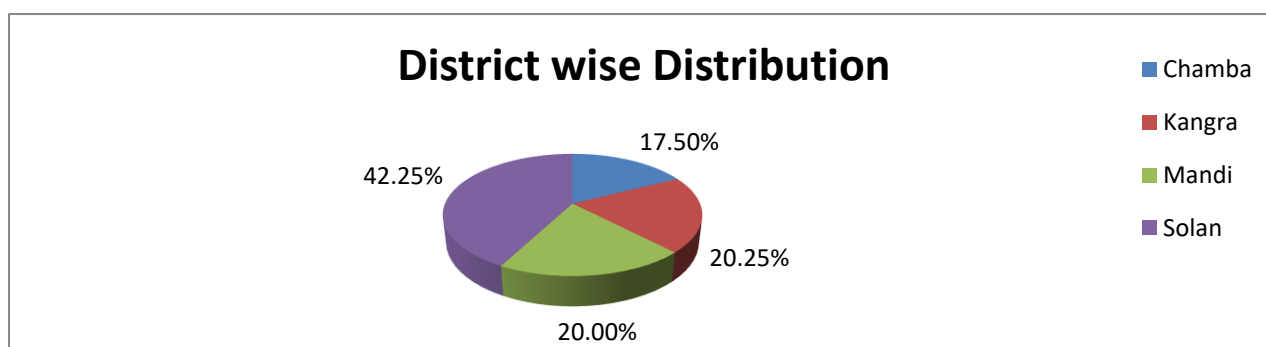


Fig. 1

It is notable that a substantial majority of the respondents, constituting 42.30% of the total sample, hailed from Solan District. Conversely, the lowest representation of respondents, comprising 17.50%, was observed in Chamba District. This allocation of respondents was guided by a proportional representation strategy, where the selection of respondents was based on the proportion of the Gujjar population within each district relative to the total Gujjar population across the sampled districts.

Literacy Status

The examination of literacy rates among the Gujjar population in Himachal Pradesh reveals notable educational disparities. Out of the surveyed respondents, 43.50% are identified as illiterate, signifying a significant portion of the community with limited or no formal education. In contrast, 28.50% of respondents have achieved a graduation level of education, indicating a substantial group with higher educational attainment. Additionally, 20.50% of individuals hold qualifications at the metric level, while 7.50% have pursued post-graduation and above degrees, demonstrating a smaller yet noteworthy segment of the population. This analysis offers valuable insights into the educational landscape within the Gujjar community and its far-reaching socioeconomic implications.

Table 2: Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Chamba			Kangra			Mandi			Solan			Overall		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Illiterate	19 (45.24)	13 (46.43)	32 (45.72)	18 (42.86)	18 (46.15)	36 (44.44)	16 (43.24)	20 (46.51)	36 (45.00)	35 (36.46)	35 (47.94)	70 (41.42)	88 (40.55)	86 (46.99)	174 (43.50)
Up to Metric	7 (16.67)	7 (25.00)	14 (20.00)	8 (19.05)	7 (17.95)	15 (18.52)	8 (21.62)	6 (13.95)	14 (17.50)	27 (28.13)	12 (16.44)	39 (23.08)	50 (23.05)	32 (17.48)	82 (20.50)
Graduate	14 (33.33)	5 (17.86)	19 (27.14)	12 (28.57)	12 (30.77)	24 (29.63)	11 (29.73)	14 (32.56)	25 (31.25)	26 (27.08)	20 (27.40)	46 (27.22)	63 (29.03)	51 (27.86)	114 (28.50)
Post-graduate and above	2 (4.76)	3 (10.71)	5 (7.14)	4 (9.52)	2 (5.13)	6 (7.41)	2 (5.41)	3 (6.98)	5 (6.25)	8 (8.33)	6 (8.22)	14 (8.28)	16 (7.37)	14 (7.67)	30 (7.50)
Total	42 (100.00)	28 (100.00)	70 (100.00)	42 (100.00)	39 (100.00)	81 (100.00)	37 (100.00)	43 (100.00)	80 (100.00)	96 (100.00)	73 (100.00)	169 (100.00)	217 (100.00)	183 (100.00)	400 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Column total

Family Size

Regarding family size data collected revealed a prevailing trend among the respondents, with a substantial proportion reporting family sizes of 4 to 6 members. Relatively smaller percentages of respondents fall into categories of smaller or larger family sizes. This consistent pattern holds true across various districts, highlighting the predominance of families with 4 to 6 members, while fewer families consist of 6 to 8 or 10 or more members.

Table 3: Family size of the respondents

No. of member	Chamba	Kangra	Mandi	Solan	Overall
Less than 4	15 (21.43)	15 (18.52)	16 (20.00)	36 (21.30)	82 (20.50)
4 to 6	34 (48.57)	42 (51.85)	40 (50.00)	86 (50.89)	202 (50.50)
6 to 8	5 (7.14)	6 (7.41)	7 (8.75)	10 (5.92)	28 (7.00)
8 to 10	11 (15.71)	12 (14.81)	11 (13.75)	26 (15.38)	60 (15.00)
10 and above	5 (7.14)	6 (7.41)	6 (7.50)	11 (6.51)	28 (7.00)
Total	70 (100.00)	81 (100.00)	80 (100.00)	169 (100.00)	400 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Column total

Health Status**Table 4: Healthcare Access in the Vicinity of Respondents**

Disrrict	Primary Health Centres	District Hospital	Sub-District Hospital	Community Health Centre	Total
Chamba	16 (22.86)	2 (2.86)	4 (5.71)	48 (68.57)	70 (100.00)
Kangra	18 (22.22)	1 (1.23)	5 (6.17)	57 (70.38)	81 (100.00)
Mandi	17 (21.25)	1 (1.25)	4 (5.00)	58 (72.50)	80 (100.00)
Solan	34 (20.12)	4 (2.37)	7 (4.14)	124 (73.37)	169 (100.00)
Overall	85 (21.25)	6 (1.50)	20 (5.00)	289 (72.25)	400 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Row total

Table 5: Problem faced while taking allopathic treatment in Hospitals

Statements	SA	A	NAND	D	SD	Total
1. Far away hospitals	105 (26.30)	16 (4.00)	166 (41.50)	53 (13.30)	60 (15.00)	400 (100.00)
2. Difficult to arrange money for treatment	86 (21.50)	52 (13.00)	116 (29.00)	88 (22.00)	58 (14.50)	400 (100.00)
3. Non- availability of the staff	56 (14.00)	54 (13.50)	30 (7.50)	230 (57.50)	30 (7.50)	400 (100.00)
4. Mostly treatment not available	82 (20.50)	22 (5.50)	137 (34.30)	110 (27.50)	49 (12.30)	400 (100.00)
5. Bad behaviour of the staff	93 (23.30)	48 (12.00)	117 (29.30)	89 (22.30)	53 (13.30)	400 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Row Total

(SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NAND=neither Agree nor Disagree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree)

Table 6: Descriptive and Inferential Statistical Analysis of above data:

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Chi-square	P-Value
1. Far away hospitals	2.8675	1.34516	-0.036	-0.991	165.575	0.000*
2. Difficult to arrange money for treatment	2.9500	1.33865	-0.085	-1.108	033.300	0.000*
3. Non- availability of the staff	3.3100	1.21556	-0.831	-0.633	359.400	0.000*
4. Mostly treatment not available	3.0550	1.28105	-0.340	-0.870	105.975	0.000*
5. Bad behaviour of the staff	2.9025	1.34070	-0.072	-1.129	42.1500	0.000*

*P-Value: Depicts the value is significant at 0.05 level of significance.

The data above data underscores variations in healthcare facility accessibility both across the study area and within specific districts. While many respondents have Community Health Centers and Primary Health Centers nearby, the availability of more specialized healthcare facilities, such as Sub-District Hospitals and District Hospitals, is limited. This information emphasizes the significance of considering geographical disparities in healthcare access within the study region. Addressing

these discrepancies in healthcare infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to a range of healthcare services are essential steps toward improving the overall health and well-being of the Gujjar population.

Foremost challenges encountered by the Gujjar community when seeking allopathic treatment in hospitals are centered around the non-availability of staff, followed closely by the non-availability of treatment and the financial constraints in arranging necessary funds. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the factors of distant hospital locations and negative staff behavior should not be discounted, as they also contribute significantly to the overall healthcare challenges faced by the community.

Occupational Pattern

Examining the occupational profiles of the 400 respondents provides crucial insights into their socio-economic conditions, the utilization of government schemes, and their overall financial landscape.

Table 7: Occupation wise distribution of the Respondents

Occupation	Chamba	Kangra	Mandi	Solan	Overall
Employed in Govt/Private Sector	9 (12.86)	11 (13.58)	10 (12.50)	14 (8.28)	44 (11.00)
Businessmen	4 (5.71)	5 (6.17)	4 (5.00)	13 (7.70)	26 (6.50)
Farmer	33 (47.14)	35 (43.21)	35 (43.75)	72 (42.60)	175 (43.80)
Unemployed	19 (27.14)	20 (24.70)	20 (25.00)	41 (24.26)	100 (25.00)
Skilled Worker	3 (4.29)	7 (8.64)	8 (10.00)	20 (11.83)	38 (9.50)
Unskilled worker	2 (2.86)	3 (3.70)	3 (3.75)	9 (5.33)	17 (4.30)
Total	70 (100.00)	81 (100.00)	80 (100.00)	169 (100.00)	400 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Column total

Notably, 43.80% of respondents identify as farmers, highlighting the significance of agriculture as a primary livelihood. Furthermore, 25.00% of respondents report being unemployed, revealing a substantial employment challenge. In contrast, 11.00% are engaged in formal wage employment, while 9.50% work as skilled laborers, and 6.50% are entrepreneurs. A smaller group, 4.30%, are categorized as unskilled workers.

Across all districts studied, a consistent pattern emerges, with the majority engaged in agricultural activities. The data emphasizes the overarching role of agriculture in shaping economic activities and employment dynamics. In Chamba, Kangra, Mandi, and Solan districts, a significant percentage of respondents are farmers, reinforcing the importance of agriculture in the economic landscape.

Dependency Ratio

Table 8: Dependency ratio

Age group	Chamba	Kangra	Mandi	Solan	Overall
0-14	5	7	6	15	33
Above 64	10	12	12	22	56
Total	15	19	18	37	89
14-64	55	62	62	132	311
Dependency Ratio (%)	27.27%	30.65%	29.03%	28.03%	28.62%

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

The data reveals variations in the dependency ratio among the various districts of Himachal Pradesh. Kangra District exhibits the highest dependency ratio at 30.65%, closely followed by Mandi District at 29.03%. Solan District shows a

dependency ratio of 28.03%, while Chamba District has a ratio of 27.27%. At the overall level, the Gujjar community in Himachal Pradesh faces a notable dependency ratio of 28.62%. This high dependency ratio is primarily driven by a significant population in the age groups of 0-14 years and above 64 years. Consequently, a considerable portion of the community's income is allocated to supporting this dependent population, potentially limiting savings and investment capacity.

Social Participation

Table 9: Social participation

Sr. No.	Social Participation variables	Yes	No	Total
1	Have your ever been a member of a Panchyat	104 (26.00)	296 (74.00)	400 (100.00)
2	Have your ever been a member of a Cooperative society	44 (11.00)	356 (89.00)	400.00 (100.00)
3	Have your ever been a member of a Religious Committee	59 (14.75)	341 (85.25)	400.00 (100.00)
4	Have your ever been a member of an Ex-Servicemen cooperation	29 (7.25)	371 (92.75)	400.00 (100.00)
5	Have your ever been a member of any a Youth Clubs	88 (22.00)	312 (78.00)	400.00 (100.00)
6	Have your ever been a member of a Krishak Sangh	51 (12.75)	349 (87.25)	400.00 (100.00)
7	Have your ever been a member of an MLA/MP (Political) organisations	19 (4.75)	381 (95.25)	400.00 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Row total

Social participation related responses illuminate a multifaceted landscape of social participation within the surveyed population. The majority of respondents, comprising 60.00%, do not engage in any of the considered social groups, reflecting a significant portion of non-participants. Conversely, the remaining respondents exhibit varying degrees of social participation, with 11% showing exclusivity in their affiliations, and others engaging in a combination of social organizations. This nuanced pattern of participation highlights the complex nature of community involvement and suggests that individuals tend to diversify their social connections by participating in multiple, albeit not all, organizations. Such insights can aid in understanding the dynamics of community engagement and inform strategies for promoting and enhancing social participation among the surveyed population.

Migration among Gujjar Tribe

Table 10: Migration among the Gujjar Community

District	Do your migrate from time to time		Total
	Yes	No	
Chamba	36 (51.43)	34 (48.57)	70 (100.00)
Kangra	42 (51.85)	39 (48.15)	81 (100.00)
Mandi	41 (51.25)	39 (48.75)	80 (100.00)
Solan	85 (50.30)	84 (49.70)	169 (100.00)
Overall	204 (51.00)	196 (49.00)	400 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Row total

Table 11: Responses of respondents regarding “Reasons for the migration”

Sr. No.	Indicator of Migration	Yes	No	Total
1	For employment	16 (7.80)	188 (92.20)	204 (100.00)
2	Due to Marriage	3 (1.50)	201 (98.50)	204 (100.00)
3	For the purpose of Education	10 (4.90)	194 (95.10)	204 (100.00)
4	Due to migration of other family member	14 (6.90)	190 (93.10)	204 (100.00)
5	Due to Land Fragmentation	4 (2.00)	200 (98.00)	204 (100.00)
6	Due to Breakdown of Family	3 (1.50)	201 (98.50)	204 (100.00)
7	In the search of new pastoral land	118 (57.80)	86 (42.20)	204 (100.00)

Source: Data Collected through Schedule

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of the Row total

The Gujjars in the study area are nomadic households who practice seasonal migration with their livestock, primarily buffalo herds. Their economic activities revolve around this practice, which involves moving to higher-altitude pastures during the summer months, where grass and water sources are more abundant. In the winter, they return to the lower regions or plains. This migration follows predetermined routes and a fixed timetable.

The decision to migrate within the Gujjar community is influenced by various factors, including employment opportunities, marriage arrangements, access to education, family considerations, land-related issues, and, notably, the pursuit of new pastoral lands. It is evident that migration is a prevalent and essential aspect of the Gujjar way of life in these regions. This data highlights the complexity of migration patterns and the diverse reasons driving this practice within the community.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, education is a pivotal element for the social and political advancement of the Gujjar community, and it should be prioritized. Additionally, the formulation of a comprehensive grazing policy for Gujjar livestock across Himachal Pradesh is essential. This policy should encompass the protection and proper management of grazing areas, introducing practices like deferred and rotational grazing and setting stocking rate limits. Moreover, the introduction of superior livestock breeds can significantly boost productivity.

To address the healthcare needs of the Gujjars, an expansion of mobile veterinary units, particularly in remote areas, is imperative. Furthermore, for their economic betterment, pricing for animal products should be adjusted to reflect inflation in other commodities. Granting political reservations for the Gujjars should be a top governmental priority. This involves identifying constituencies and reserving seats in local bodies and panchayats based on their population.

Language preservation is equally important; steps should be taken to include the Gojri language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Additionally, ensuring the recruitment of educated Gujjar youth in state and central services and facilitating their inclusion in semi-government organizations is vital. Welfare schemes must be meticulously planned at the grassroots level, considering the unique challenges and socio-cultural aspects of the nomadic Gujjars. Lastly, central sponsored schemes intended for tribes, such as the Gujjars, should be directly administered at the district level for more effective implementation. These measures collectively aim to uplift the Gujjar community and address their multifaceted needs.

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