



ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF GUJJAR TRIBE IN SAAL VALLEY OF CHAMBA DISTRICT, HIMACHAL PRADESH

Abhishant Slariya¹, Mohinder Kumar², Ph. D. & Abhidiksha Slariya³

¹Independent Researcher, Village Chima, PO Saru, Tehsil and District Chamba, HP

Email: hereisabhishant@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Govt. College Chamba, HP University Shimla

Email: mohinderslariya@gmail.com

³Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Panjab University Chandigarh

Email: findabhidiksha@gmail.com

Abstract

Gurjjar is a pastoral agricultural ethnic group living mostly in good number of populations in India and Pakistan and a small number in north eastern Afghanistan. In India Gurjjar are mostly found in the state of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Harayana, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh and considered OBC and scheduled tribe in different states. In the state of Himachal Pradesh, Gurjjar Tribe is one of the Scheduled Tribes and found in Una, Mandi, Shimla, Kangra and Chamba districts and follow Hinduism and Islam. In Chamba they found in saal, churah and lihal vallies and are mostly Muslim.

The main occupation is buffalo rearing and is the major source of their income. They are doing labour and some settled permanently and doing some agriculture and small businesses. They are most illiterate, but researcher has observed that presently most of the parents are sending their wards to schools. Usually they live in 'gurjjar kothas' which is made up of mud, clay and wood. The present paper is an attempt to document economic transformation of this tribe who got the status of scheduled tribe in 1950 along with Gaddies and Pangwals in the district by using exploratory method of research and applying suitable statistical and sampling techniques. To see the transformation, a comparative analysis has been done between the present conditions with the conditions they had ten years ago. The study concluded that there is a big difference between economic conditions presently as compared to the conditions ten years ago.

Keywords: Tribe, Scheduled Tribe, Gujjars, Economic Transformation, Employment



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Introduction

Since the inception of human civilization, man has been involved in the process of development and understanding different aspects of human life by applying scientific knowledge. Development is a composite term and includes variety of human activities like; socio-

economic, political or technical which are to be included when we are understanding any aspect of human population.

Generally, sociologists and social anthropologists firmly believe that the cognitive factors are more integral part of the dynamics of growth and capable to alter any aspect of human life. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) measures human development by combining indicators of gross domestic product per capita, and also concentrate on the purchasing power parity (PPP) by adjusting the native purchasing power, lifetime at birth, adult accomplishment, better quality of life and availability of life supporting and enhancing capacities of human beings.

Sociologists and anthropologists do not simply believe on the economic approach of development. Over the decades, sociologists and anthropologists had tried to engaged themselves within the varied areas of development studies and trying to develop mechanism which can be beneficial for the poor. Specifically speaking, tribals throughout the world almost are poor and sociologists and anthropologists are working continuously for their upliftment and Gujjar tribe in different countries like India is not an exception.

India as a second most populous, pluralist and multi-cultural country, with rich diversity, reflected in the multitude of culture, religions and language having around 10% tribal population, is one of the biggest tribal populous country in the world. India comprises of different castes, communities, social and ethnic groups. Gujjar are a pastoral agricultural ethnic group with populations in India and Pakistan and a small number in north-eastern Afghanistan. The special emphasis has been given on scheduled tribes by the government of India which encouraged social anthropologists to find real causes responsible for problems of tribals. Their main attention is towards various socio-cultural aspects of tribals as well as to the problems of their welfare. There are three main schools of thought dedicated to the study tribal development in India i.e., *isolation, assimilation and integration*.

Integration has been continuing as the policy for the tribal people in the country. The government of India has been taking special care concerning the welfare of the tribal people ever since independence.

Before the Britishers came to India, the tribal communities remained fully or partially *isolated* from the rest of Indian population, and this is the reason they remained backward and under developed as a British policy trick. After the independence, the founders of Indian constitution on the basis of their miserable conditions and to include them in the mainstream introduced special provisions in form of reservation. Over seven decades of independence, many

committees have been formed and reported for the tribal development and tried a lot to uplift their socio-economic situations. Based on the various reports of various committees and new strategies/ initiatives in form of five-year plans have been formed and executed to uplift the poor tribals living in the country. But in spite of all efforts made all levels, desired results have not been achieved so far. The tribal development is also being hampered because of many other reasons.

Therefore, tribal development studies continue to receive attention from various scholars as tribals are real custodians of tribal culture and preserving everything inspite of their misery condition and geographical limitations. The tribe can be defined as a *group of people in a primitive or barbarious stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor*. Indian sociologists, D.N. Majumdar defines, *tribe as a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous with no specialization of functions ruled by tribal officers hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes*.

A tribe should have least functional interdependence within the community. It should be economically primitive (i.e., primitive means of exploiting natural resources, tribal economy should be at an underdeveloped stage and it should have multifarious economic pursuits). There should be a comparative geographical isolation of its people. They should have a common dialect. Tribes should be politically organized and community panchayat should be influential. A tribe should have customary laws. A community to be a tribe it should possess all the above-mentioned characteristics and a very high level of acculturation with outside society debars it from being a tribe. Thus, term usually denotes a social group bound together by kin and duty and associated with a particular territory.

Tribes in India

The tribes in India forms an important part of the total population. It represents an element in Indian society which is integrated with the culture mosaic of our civilisation. The tribal population of India constitutes nearly 8 percent of the total population. There are a number of tribes in India, spread over different parts at different levels of socio-economic development. They live all over the country from the foot hill of the Himalayas to the lands tip of Lakshadweep and from the plains of Gujarat to the hills in the North-East. *According to 2011 census*, the numerical strength of the scheduled tribes in India stood at 104.2 million. Madhya Pradesh leads all other States as regards the tribal population. It is followed by Maharashtra and Orissa. The names of tribes like the Kurumba, the Irula, the Panga in South India; the

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Asura, the Saora, the Oraon, the Gond, the Santhal, the Bhil in Central India; the Bodo, the Ahom in North-East India; are found in old classical Indian literature

Gujjars Tribe

As per the written record available gujjars have been involved in agriculture (*most famously, dairy and livestock farming*). Gujjars being a largest heterogeneous group, is internally differentiated in terms of *culture, religion, occupation, and socio-economic status*. Historically they have been warrior and also has been quite diverse in society, on the one hand they founded kingdom, districts, cities, towns, and villages like; Gurjar Pratihara, Gurjaras of Lata, Gurjaratra which is earlier called Saurashtra, and ruled successfully by the Gujjar rulers like; *Qila Gujjar Singh, Gujjar Khan, Gujjarwala, Gujarat in Pakistan and India*. On the other hand, they are also *nomads with no land* of their own generally found in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana etc. They follow Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism and classified as Other Backward Class (OBC) in some states in India; however, they have status of scheduled tribes since 1950 in the state of Himachal Pradesh and in Jammu and Kashmir. Hindu Gujjars have been assimilated into various category of Hindu caste system in the present time.

Tribes in Himachal Pradesh

There are five notified tribal regions in Himachal Pradesh; *Kinnaur, Lahaul, Spiti, Pangi and Bharmaur* in Himachal Pradesh and beside these areas there is scattered population of Gujjars in *Chamba, Bilaspur, Mandi, Shimla, Una and Kangra districts*. At present these areas in have undergone significant socio-economic transformation in terms of literacy, educational patterns, societal structure etc. In the study conducted by an assistant professor Dr. BR Thakur from HP University sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) asserted that many aspects of socio-cultural milieu are transforming in spite of hostile topographical conditions, extreme cold and dry agro-climatic conditions, a non-industrialized economy and limited basic infrastructural facilities and some areas of tribe are continuing to be backward despite development programmes having been implemented.

Gujjar Tribe in Himachal Pradesh and in Chamba

Gujjars largely wandered in Chamba in the two main ranges of the Himalayas i.e., *Dhauladhar range* and the *Pir Panjal range* and they did not cross the Pir Panjal range. Gujjars in Chamba generally recalls their migrations from the Jammu region. Gujjars narrate that they accompanied the *Rani of Jammu to Chamba* who was married to the king of Chamba. They were said to have been sent by the King of Jammu to provide milk to her.

Gujjars have been invited by the queen of Chamba about 300-350 years ago for the supply of milk for the *royal family and people*. However, it is also mentioned that “*Gujjars were allowed to enter the erstwhile state of Chamba as a reward for old Gujjar woman who had saved the life of a close relative of the royal prince of Chamba of that time.*”

These legends, confirm Gujjar migration in Chamba from Jammu region. Chamba being rich in grazing grounds in the forests and water resources attracted Gujjars to migrate here. The colonial records such as, *gazetteers of Chamba and Forests reports of Chamba* confirms that the Gujjars migrated in Chamba due to the availability of grazing facilities in the area as Gujjars used to get the *auction of grazing lands and pay trini* (grazing tax) for pasture facilities. Probably, Gujjars migrated in the Jammu and Kashmir region from *Rajputana, Gujrat and Kathiawar region*.

Census of India 1941, Jammu and Kashmir mentions that, “The migration of a part of the tribe to the territories now known as the Jammu and Kashmir State is attributed to the outbreak of a serious famine in the regions inhabited by the tribe, now known as Rajputana, Gujerat and Kathiawar. The exact period has not been fixed but it is known as the *Satahsiya Famine*.” The Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir are parts of *two separate* migrations, one direct from Rajasthan and Gujarat, the others migrated from Punjab plains.

In another wave Gujjars seems to have migrated to Kashmir from the Gujrat town of undivided Punjab. This suggests that Gujjar in Jammu and Kashmir migrated from Rajasthan or also from Gujrat town of undivided Punjab. Gujjars in Chamba district occupied *deep forest zones known as dhars* which are part of Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas. Dhars fall in the villages of Chamba and one village have two or more dhars. Gujjars occupied the dhars of the *Sadar Chamba, Churah, Bhattiyat and Bharmour wizarat*. Sadar Chamba wizarat situated nearby the city of Chamba, presently known as Saal valley.

he area of the Sadar Chamba wizarat was of triangle shape and fell into Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas. Churah wizarat was spread in *Saho range*; while Bharmour wizarat occupied the area of *Tundah range*. Throughout the colonial period Gujjars used to *migrate into these dhars* in April and returned back to the plains of Chamba in October. Though some of them got settled in the hills like ordinary zamidars in the Colonial period. Each family has its own dhars or grazing ground in the mountains to which it always returns. Some have permanently settled in the hills. Even after independence Gujjar could be identified along these dhars.

Thus, Gujjars in Chamba even to the present day live in the dhars due to grazing and water facilities and come down in the plains only in the winter. Thus, generally Gujjars spent their summers in the dhars and come down in the plains of *Chamba, Kangra and Una in winters*. Dhars, where Gujjar settlements are still continued in *Shugand, Sara, Jamuhar, Ainpukhar, and Joul dhars in Chamba*.

Objective of the Paper

The prime objective of the present paper is to see the economic transformation of Gujjar tribe living in Saal valley of Chamba sadar region of Chamba district. Gujjar have got status of scheduled tribe along with Gaddis and Pangwalas and other tribes of the state, but the condition of Gujjar is miserable as compared to both tribes. This is the reason to select this tribe to study and see the economic transformation of this tribe presently and an attempt has been made to see the impact of the policies framed for the development of tribes after the seven decades of the independence of the country.

Research Methodology

To gain familiarity into the phenomenon of transformation and how it proves/ disproves a condition. Some people has migrated from any other villages while some people are *living there for 40-50 years*. For this purpose, out of all panchayats, *8 panchayats have been chosen for the research*. These panchayats have divided into *five (5) research clusters based on geographical limitations ranging from 3 villages to 4 villages* in a cluster. A considerable representation has been given to each village. To gain the familiarity with the phenomena, the respondents represents their cluster/village. They have been selected by using *simple random sampling method*.

Along with this, an effort has been made to have a close insight in the phenomenon of the *ill-effects received by the natives of the villages*. Gujjar people have a thinking that they have not get anything from government. Only the people who lives in lower portion of the panchayat are benefitted by governmental schemes. They are expecting much from the government so that their condition could be improved.

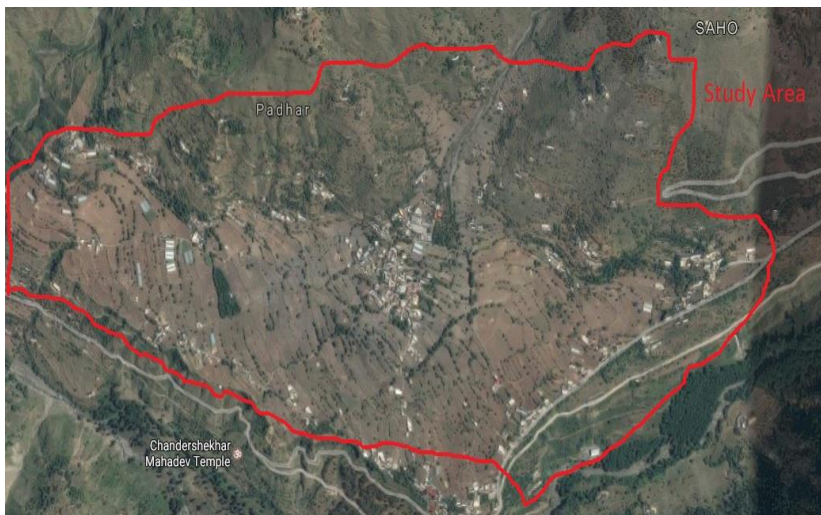
After receiving sufficient scientific response from the respondents on a tool developed (interview schedule) for this purpose, from the empirical setting of the study area, the interview schedule has been finalized and applied for the research in *4 clusters, 20 villages and 42 respondents*.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that the Gujjar people are suffering from lack of basic amenities like: *electricity, pucca house, good roads etc.* They are living at the highest point of the village that they are not being benefitted from any governmental schemes except MNREGA. It would be *interesting to document the condition of the lives of people who are living in Saal Valley.* Psychologically, they have *developed negative mind-set* about their conditions and expecting help in their transformation from the government, though govt. through different schemes is doing lot of things, but *because of ignorance they are not making the best use of such schemes* and continued to be backward and poor.

Study Area

The study is a case study of the native gujjars living in the Saal Valley in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. In this study, *20 villages were taken from 8 panchayats.* The condition of every village is different from other. The study area is also important because of the fact that



the area is relatively underdeveloped. 20 villages have been selected randomly by using cluster sampling method and the respondents selected by using simple random sampling method. Study area starts from the lowest area i.e., Saho Panchayat

and the village on maximum height is *Kot* which have un-mettled, muddy and steep road and researcher has to travelled on foot to see the real picture of the problem.

Figure showing study area

Research Methodology

In this study semi-structured interview scheduled has been used. To document the conditions of tribal people and to achieve aims and objectives, interview schedule was prepared with open-ended and close-ended questions. Both *qualitative and quantitative methods of research* have been used to gain familiarity with phenomena under study. *Suitable statistical tools have been used to document the condition of the poor tribals.* Due to various instruments of data collection, it is observed that tribal people has not come under modernisation and they are still

using aboriginal ways of living.

Result and Discussions

On the basis of above description, it can be stated that to achieve the objective of this paper, 42 respondents were taken for study and the responses of the respondents have been recorded by using interview schedule. To see the economic transformation, respondents have been asked and compared with the economic conditions ten years ago with present conditions. The responses received from the respondents have been documented and are being presented as follows by applying suitable statistical tools to arrive at the desired results:

Table:1 Showing the Occupational Profile of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Occupation	Ten Years Ago	Percentage	At Present	Percentage
1.	Agriculture	24	36.90	28	34.56
2.	Labour	10	15.40	16	19.74
3.	Cattle rearing	30	46.15	23	28.40
4.	Service	00	00.00	04	04.94
5.	Trade	01	01.55	10	12.36
	Total	65*	100.00	81*	100.00

*N is more than usual because of the fact that one respondent do more than one work at a time.

As it is evident from above table and figure, there is huge shift from the occupation as compare to what they were doing ten years ago. There is a considerable shift in every segment. Gujjars are practicing more than one occupation at a time as it is very difficult to rely upon on one occupation in fast changing world. As depicted in above table and figure agriculture, labour, cattle rearing, service as well as trade have experienced upward as well as downward mobility.

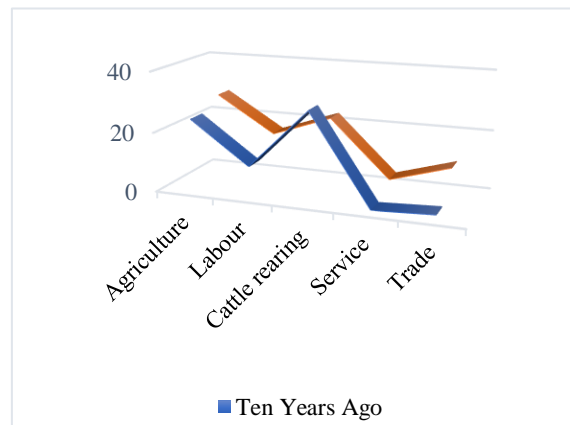
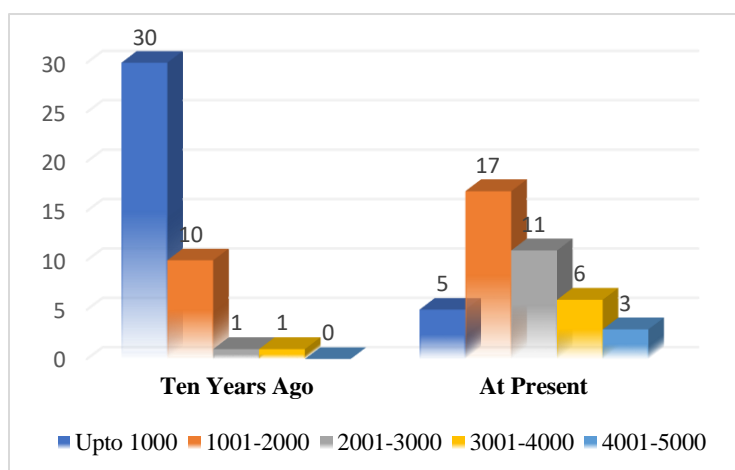


Table: 2 Showing the Monthly Income of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Income Level	Ten Years Ago	Percentage	At Present	Percentage
1.	Upto 1000	30	71.44	05	11.90
2.	1001-2000	10	23.80	17	40.47
3.	2001-3000	01	02.38	11	26.20
4.	3001-4000	01	02.38	06	14.29
5.	4001-5000	00	00.00	03	07.14
	Total	42	100.00	42	100.00



Earlier, the people in study area were not be able to earn more income because the only source of income was agriculture and cattle rearing. The difference is clearly visible in the above table (Table 2) that ten years ago, the percentage of

income up to 1000 rupees is 71.44 percent. The percentage of income between 1001-2000 rupees is 23.80 percent. And the percentage of income between 2001-3000 and 3001-4000 is 02.38 percent. This shows the poor conditions of the Gujjars at that time. But today there is a slight difference and little improvement in the income of tribal people.

Maximum percentage of income is between 1000-2000 rupees i.e., 40.47 percent. Followed by this 2001-3000 rupees got 26.20 percent. 3001-4000 rupees got 14.29 percent. Upto 1000 rupees got 11.90 percent. And the minimum percent of 4001-5000 i.e., 07.14 percent. According to Representatives, government schemes are only used by the people who live in the lower portion of the Panchayat and they got nothing. No one from government side have ever come to inspect the condition of the upper side of Panchayat. They hardly know about the governmental schemes except MNREGA. Other than this, the enhancement in the economic condition shows that the representatives got engaged in some other occupations other than cattle rearing and agriculture. This is something positive in the researched area.

Table: 3 Showing Annual Income of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Income Level	Ten Years Ago	Percentage	At Present	Percentage
1.	Up to 30,000	41	95.35	24	55.81
2.	30001-60000	02	04.65	16	37.21
3.	60001-90000	00	00.00	03	06.98
4.	90001-120000	00	00.00	00	00.00
5.	120001-150000	00	00.00	00	00.00
6.	150000 and above	00	00.00	00	00.00
	Total	43	100.00	43	100.00

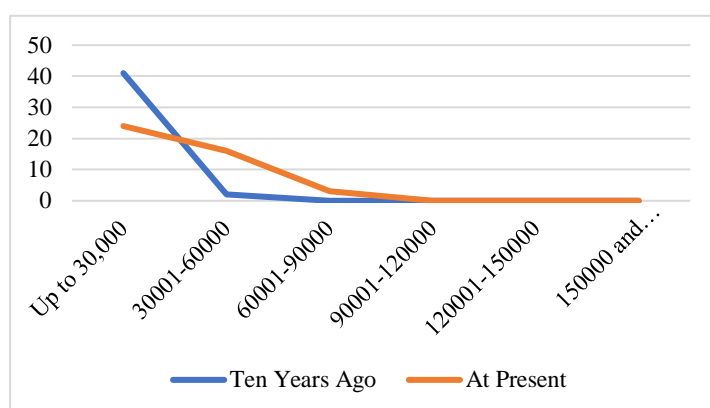
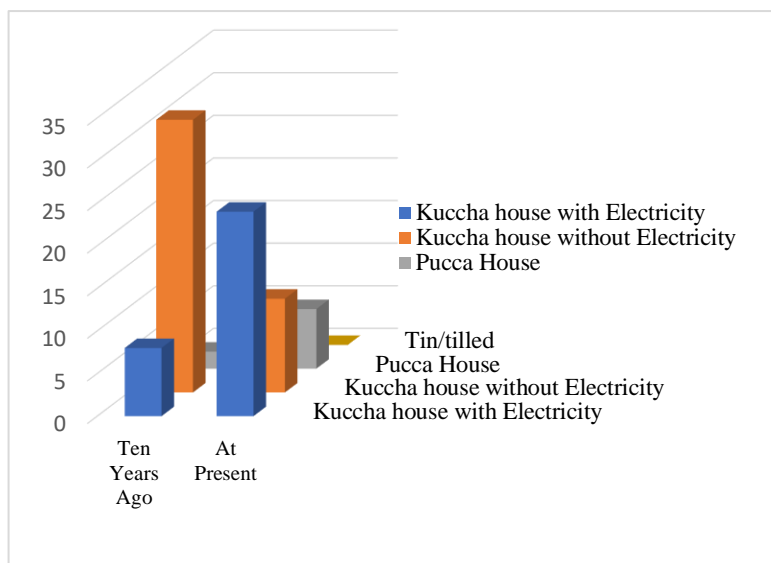


Table: 3 shows that, ten years ago the maximum percentage of annual income goes to 30,000 i.e., 95.35 percent. Followed by this, the interval of 30001-60000 got 04.65 percent. At present, percentage of income upto 30,000 is 55.81 percent. The interval of income of 30001-

60000 got 37.21 percent and 60001-90000 got 06.98 percent. This shows the betterment in the annual income level of the respondents. This also shows that other than agriculture and cattle rearing people also engaged in some other activities to earn more income so that they can improve their economic condition.

Table: 4 Showing Housing Pattern of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Types of House	Ten Years Ago	Percentage	At Present	Percentage
1.	Kuccha house with Electricity	08	19.04	24	57.14
2.	Kuccha house without Electricity	32	76.19	11	26.19
3.	Pucca House	02	04.77	07	16.67
4.	Tin/tilled	00	00.00	00	00
	Total	42	100.00	42	100.00



Earlier, houses were not in good condition because of insufficient income. The houses were made up of mud which is known as kuccha house. There was no electricity and the percentage of people who lived in kuccha houses without electricity is 76.19 percent. People used to enlighten their own lamps.

Ten years ago, the percentage of people who lived in kuccha houses with electricity is 19.04 percent and now the percentage is 57.14 percent. This shows the socio-economic development in study areas. Earlier, there were no pucca houses, but now the percentage of people living in pucca house is 16.67 percent. In some houses, there is a source of electricity but due to fear of paying the bill, they don't have a connection of electricity. But some people have that electricity connection because they earn more than other people in researched area. Now too, there are no tilled houses in tribal areas but there is a little development in the ways of living of tribal people.

Table: 5 Showing Amenities Available in the Household

Sr. No.	Amenities in the Household	Ten years ago	Percentage	At Present	Percentage	
1.	Electricity	03	06.52	31	24.60	
2.	Water Tap	Owned	04	08.70	22	17.47
		Public	37	80.43	18	14.29
3.	Television	Black and White	02	04.35	00	00.00
		Colour	00	00.00	06	04.76
4.	Refrigerator	00	00.00	01	00.79	
5.	Computer	00	00.00	02	01.59	
6.	Internet	Use of Internet on Computer	00	00.00	00	00.00
		Use of Internet on Mobile	00	00.00	04	03.17
		Use of Internet in Cyber Café	00	00.00	00	00.00
		Access to social sites (FB etc.)	00	00.00	02	01.59
7.	Available	00	00.00	00	00.00	

	Mobile Phones in Family	Number of Mobiles	00	00.00	34	26.98
8.	Four-Wheeler		00	00.00	01	00.79
9.	Two-Wheeler		00	00.00	02	01.59
10.	Cooking Gas (LPG)		00	00.00	02	01.59
11.	Electric Induction		00	00.00	01	00.79
12.	Electric Heater		00	00.00	00	00.00
13.	Solar Panel		00	00.00	00	00.00
	Total		46*	100.00	126*	100.00

**N is more than usual as one respondent possess more than one amenity at a time*

Ten years ago, tribal people don't get many facilities as they are getting now. They were poor and migrated from other places. Earlier, there was no electricity, no owned source of water, no television, no internet connection, no mobile phones, no cooking gas and no means of transportation. People used to travel on foot. But now, they have electricity, own source of water, computers, internet connection, mobile phones, means of transportation and television. The maximum percentage goes to electricity i.e., 24.60 percent. Mobile phones got 26.98 percent which shows more use of means of communication in study area. With the advancement of time, the tribal people are also getting advanced in their own way. Now they have more facilities as compared to the earlier time.

Conclusion

On the basis of above description, it can be stated that there is no doubt that one of the most backward and underdeveloped tribes of the country and one of most backward tribes of the state of Himachal Pradesh have experienced economic transformation because of many interventions of the state as well as central government. The schemes introduced for the development and benefit of Gujjar tribal are working efficiently though because of their ignorance they are not happy at first sight. But when they have been briefed by the researcher about the benefits of the provisions meant for them, they realised that undoubtedly whatever is occurring with their life, that is because of the welfare policies of the state as well as state government.

Though they are still uneducated but they are very much aware about the schemes of the government meant for them and they do not hesitate to see any officer at district headquarter as well as at state or national capital. They are presently giving good education to their kids and sending their wards for professional and vocational education as well. They do have own vehicles (two and four wheelers) and they are at present capable to do anything whatever other people are doing because of economic independence and they are no more dependent on local

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seths/mahajans, funders to cater their small and big requirements. Still govt. needs to do something extra to make them all aware and transform them economically and socially, which is a great work and for this the help of local NGO or CBO should be taken and only then finally they will realise the importance of freedom and independence as an Indian citizen.

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