

**LITERARY CONCERNS IN THE FOLK SONGS OF GUJJAR TRIBE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH**

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**Abstract**

Unity in diversity is the central point of Indian culture. India is known for its diversity of cultures and multiple tribal societies living in its land. These tribal people have produced rich oral literature in their local dialects which remains unnoticed from the outer world due to different communicative barriers. But with the expansion of communication and printing technology their literature reaches the outside world. Oral literature of these tribes mainly revolves around the various issues concerning the tribal life which is usually full of day-to-day audacities to survive. In this paper, researchers have attempted to study the various tribal concerns in the folk literature of Gujjar, partially nomadic, tribe of Himachal Pradesh.

**Introduction**

Tribal literature in India is very colorful and vast. Most of the tribal literature in India is found in an oral form which is the reason it remains in oblivion for centuries. Tribal literature is mostly available in the form of songs, myths, and stories of local texture with a universal appeal. Tribal people in India are almost found in all the states of the country. These tribal people have their own language, customs, means of living, etc., which a very strong influence on the literature produced by them. Himachal Pradesh is known for its beautiful landscapes and various tribal people living in the far geographical places far from the crowds of the city. The main tribal groups of Himachal Pradesh are Gaddi, Gujjar, Kinnaura, lahaula etc. In this paper, researchers tried to analyze and study the literature of Gaddi and Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh. The main profession of these two tribes is cattle rearing and agriculture. These two tribes are mainly found in the Chamba and Kangra districts of Himachal Pradesh. These tribes are semi-nomadic and wander place to place in search of meadows. In summers they go to upper hills and in winters they come to plains with their sheep, goats, and buffalos. In this circle, they sing various folk songs; narrate different myths and stories related to their adventures and hardships of life. So, in this study, the various concerns of their tribal life which they express through their literature have been discussed.

**Gujjars: A Description**

Himachal Pradesh, known for its remarkable diversity, is a vibrant state with a multitude of castes and tribes living harmoniously, enriching its cultural diversity. Among the prominent tribes in Himachal are the *Bhodh*, *Gaddi*, *Gujjar*, *Jad*, *Kanaura*, *Lahula*, *Pangwala*, and more. Despite their differences, a common thread binds these tribes together: their deep-rooted dependence on animal husbandry as a cornerstone of their livelihoods. The Gaddis and Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh are pastoral communities, nurturing herds of livestock to sustain their way of life. Gujjars speak *Gojari* language to speak within community and Hindi or *Pahari* to the people of outside community. In the present study an attempt has been made to find out the various concerns related to their day-to-day life in their folk songs.

**Research Methodology**

The present study uses a qualitative method of study. Since, most of the Gojri songs are not documented and they are the part of an oral literature, the research relies on both field work and textual analysis. In the present paper researcher has studied and analyzed the secondary data like books, journals, newspaper

articles, YouTube etc. Researcher has also conducted interviews and discussions about their songs with Gujjars from Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh to know the themes and concerns of their songs.

### **Research Objectives**

- To find out the various social and cultural concerns in the folk literature of Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh
- To analyze the further scope of tribal folk music, dance, etc. in the present era of modern technology

### **Various themes and concerns in the Folk literature of Gujjars**

Gujjars in Himachal Pradesh have a very rich culture and traditions. Gujjars have their own folk songs, stories and anecdotes, which they sing or narrate on various social and cultural occasions. They have different songs to express their emotions on different occasions. They sing Gajjals and sad songs on various occasions during their long journeys which are known as '*Bait*' in Gojri language. The narration of someone's life or story through poetry or songs is known as '*Seeharfi*' in their local dialect. *Baar* or war is another genre in Gojri folk music which shows the bravery and war skills of folk heroes. Some of the important concerns in the folk music of Gujjars are following:

#### **Identity and existence**

Literature of Gujjars draws its energy from the identity and existence of their life. Their folk songs depict their identity and existence. In their folk songs we find the reflection of their culture and whatever rituals they perform from their birth till death. In their songs we find a glimpse of their rich culture. They have marriage songs, songs of segregation between lovers, lullabies, songs of parental love, etc. Religion is a very important aspect of their culture and essence of their identity and existence. In their songs we also find devotion for *Allah* or God. God is considered the sole saviour and protector of their livestock during arduous journeys. Apart from these different local proverbs and idioms enhance the beauty of their folk culture.

#### **Love towards their Livestock**

Gujjars rear animals for their living, especially buffaloes and sheep, which hold a significant place in their folk songs. There is a special mention of buffaloes and their organs in their folk songs, with beautiful descriptions of their teats, tails, and horns. Their songs also depict scenes of buffaloes bathing in rivers. There are songs in the form of prayers to protect animals from various diseases and natural calamities. The relationship between Gujjars and buffaloes is unbreakable; they rear and take care of their animals like their own children. Buffaloes occupy a very important role in their life. These animals represent their livelihood, prosperity and mobility from one place to another.

#### **Love and longing for spouse**

Gaddis and Gujjars sometimes travel for months staying away from their families. These love songs are mostly in the form of dialogue. The language of these songs is simple but always emotionally charged. Natural imagery of birds, moon and rivers mediates expressions of separation and longing. In their folk music we can find the pain of separation from their loved ones. There are several folk songs in *Gojri* language which are sung by Gujjars in the longing of their beloved during their travels to hills:

*Udd wala Koonjariye lambi road hai moda di*

*Ek Pardesi allah, Dooja maar vichoda di....*

YouTube link of the song: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YcNWBeWw\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YcNWBeWw_E)

#### **Depiction of Nature and Natural objects**

In Gojri folk songs, there exists a profound connection with nature and its various elements. Nature is revered as being akin to Allah or God. Simultaneously, Gojri songs reflect their profound ecological awareness. Nature is their permanent companion. Within their songs, one finds reflections of nature depicted in diverse forms: nature portrayed as both harsh and gentle, akin to a nurturing mother, and adorned with captivating beauty. Additionally, the songs prominently feature various animals encountered amidst the hillsides, further emphasizing the intimate relationship between the people and their natural surroundings. Gujjars are not drawn to physical indulgences or material possessions; instead, they find happiness in the tranquillity of trees, in the lushness of grass, and in the majesty of hills. In Gojri songs mountains are personified as protectors, whereas rivers symbolize life and endurance. Gojri songs, usually invoke, sun, moon, trees and other natural objects with a deep reverence.

### **Musical instruments in Gujjar tribal culture**

In Gujjars' folk music, musical instruments always accompany the melodies. Some musical instruments which they use are associated with their nomadic life style and others they have borrowed from other communities (Rahi). Their musical instruments are primarily prepared from wood, clay, metal or animal skin. Among the instruments frequently employed on various occasions are the *Bansuri* or *Alghojo*, (flute) *Harmonium*, *Dholak*, *Chimta*, and *Tabla*. Particularly, when embarking on long journeys through the mountains, Gujjars invariably bring along their *bansuries*, resonating the hillsides with their melodies. *Alghojo* or *Bansuri* is a divine musical instrument for Gujjar community. As they cross mountains, Gujjar men frequently gather in groups, harmonizing their voices with the accompaniment of diverse musical instruments.

### **Celebration of different festivals in Gujjars' folk songs**

Gujjars in Himachal Pradesh celebrate various festivals with fervor and enthusiasm. Gujjars in Himachal follow either Islam or Hinduism. The main festivals celebrated by Muslim Gujjars are *Idul Zuha* and *Bakar-Id*. During these festivals, *Namaz* is offered by every Gujjar. These festivals hold significant spiritual importance for Gujjars, and they maintain high spiritual standards while celebrating them. Muslim Gujjars do not participate in singing and dancing during these festivals (Singh, Kumar and Devi, 2022). Muslim Gujjars also celebrate *Holi*, *Diwali*, and *Nag Panchmi*. Hindu Gujjars, primarily residing in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, celebrate festivals such as *Holi*, *Shivratri*, *Lohri*, *Vaishaki*, and all other festivals celebrated by other Hindu communities in the state. And they celebrate these festivals with various folk songs and dance prevalent in the area.

### **Scope of Gojri folk songs in the age of Mass Media**

Although the scope of Gojri folk songs in the age of mass media is immense, Gujjars have preserved their music and culture orally for centuries. They have transmitted their music, stories, local proverbs, and idioms from generation to generation. However, their unique and rich folk culture remained out of reach from the world until now. With the invention of YouTube, Facebook, and other online platforms, their folk music has spread to different corners of the world. On YouTube, one can find various channels and songs pertaining to *Gojri* folk music. Some of the famous Gujjar folk singers like *Bashir Mastana* have laid a firm foundation to the *Gojri* folk music, enriching its cultural heritage. The depth and life experiences reflected in his melodies have aroused the interest of scholars. However, there is also a challenge to maintain authenticity and save *Gojri* folk music from distortion in the crass consumerism and post-truth era.

### **Conclusion**

Gujjars in Himachal Pradesh have a very rich culture and traditions. Gujjars have their own folk songs, stories and anecdotes, which they sing or narrate on various social and cultural occasions. They have different songs to express their emotions on different occasions. In their folk songs we find the glimpses of their rich culture and traditions. They have folk songs celebrating the different occasions of their lives. The folk songs of Gujjars have different themes ranging from their identity and existence to their festivals. Gujjars rear buffalos and in the search of meadow they keep on wandering from one place to another in the search of green pastures. In the winters, they ascend to the plains; and in summers, they descend to the hills. During these journeys they are motivated and solaced by the melodies and different musical instruments which they carry with them. For centuries, their folk songs remained in oral form. With the expansion of media, they have reached to the world. A few Gujjar scholars, like *Dr. Javaid Rahi*, are really working hard to preserve and promote Gojri folk literature. The government and universities should promote research and try to preserve their folk songs, stories, and proverbs in written form.

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