CONCLUSION

Culture has been defined as being the whole way of life found in a particular society. In his book *Keywords*, Raymond Williams (1976), a leading theorist of culture, claims that ‘Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’. The word culture has in fact been used in a number of different ways both by sociologists and in everyday conversation. All the ways in which it has been used implicitly or explicitly contrast culture with nature. The things that humans produce or do are cultural, whereas the things that exist or occur without human intervention are part of the natural world. Christopher Jencks (1993) describes culture in this sense as ‘all which is symbolic: the learned … aspects of human society’.

Ralph Linton (1945) says “the culture of a society is the way of the life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation”.

The concept of identity is closely related to the idea of culture. Identities can be formed through the cultures and subcultures to which people belong or in which people participate. However, different theories of identity see the relationship between culture and identity in rather different ways. Those influenced by modern theories of culture and identity are more likely to see identity as originating in a fairly straightforward way from involvement in particular cultures and subcultures. For example, people living in Britain would be expected to have a strong sense of British identity. Stephen Frosh describes the view that identity draws from culture but is not simply formed by it in the following way:

Recent sociological and psychological theory has stressed that a person’s identity is in fact something multiple and potentially fluid, constructed through experience and linguistically coded. In developing their identities people draw upon culturally available resources in their immediate social networks and in society as a whole. The process of identity construction is therefore one upon which the contradictions and dispositions of the surrounding socio-cultural environment have a profound impact (Frosh, 1999).
The concept of identity has been defined as “A sense of self that develops as the child differentiates from parents and family and takes a place in society” (Jary and Jary, 1991). It refers to the sense that someone has of who they are, of what is most important about them. Important sources of identity are likely to include nationality, ethnicity, sexuality (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual), gender and class. Although it is individuals who have identities, identity is related to the social groups to which the individuals belongs and with which they identify. However, there is not always a perfect match between how a person thinks of themselves and how others see them.

Richard Jenkins (1996) argues that social identity is ‘our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others’. Identity is something that is negotiable and is created in the process of human interaction. It involves making comparisons between people and therefore establishing similarities and differences between them. Those who are believed by themselves and others to be similar, share an identity, which is distinguishable from the identity of people who are believed to be different and who do not, therefore, share the same identity. According to Jenkins, identity is an integral part of social life. It is only by distinguishing the identities of different groups that people are able to relate to other people. An awareness of different identities provides some indication of what sort of person you might be dealing with, and therefore how you can relate to them.

The present study “Culture and Identity Formation: A Study of the Settled Gujar Community in Jammu” has been an attempt to understand the interface between culture and identity formation among the Gujjars of Jammu. The other objectives of the study included study of their language, kinship rules, clan, marriage patterns, customs and rituals; understanding the dynamic forces which underlie their identity formation and assertion; investigation of the changes which have come about in their economy and various central and state policies for their economic upliftment; and analyzes the participation of Gujjars in politics and their efforts to carve out a space for themselves in the identity politics of the State.

The first Chapter introduces the topic and area of study with the explanation of the research problem in the context of the culture and identity formation among the
settled Gujjar community of Jammu. The chapter also introduces the concepts of identity, culture and identity formation used in the study.

The Gujjars have largely permanently settled in plains and gave away their pastoral and nomadic life and the profession of herding. They are now engaged in agriculture and other professions of modern origin and a great change has taken in their life style, language, socio-cultural setting and vice versa. So, it can also be concluded that this distinct and unique ethnic, socio-cultural and lingual group is in the process of social changes in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects.

Gujjars are a distinct ethno-cultural and lingual tribe, unique in nature and specific in social order. As regards their origin, it has become a controversial issue. Some historians claimed that they are of Indian origin where as others argue that they are alien intruders who entered India at the Hunic invasion and descendent of Persian ‘Gurjara’ tribe of herders.

Gujjars have embraced Islam but time or period of their conversion is not known. They belong to the Sunni sect of Islam and follow Hanafi school of Law. Gujjars mostly arrange marriage alliance within the premises of their community. Among Gujjars, endogamy is the rule of marriage but at the same time they believe in gotra exogamy. Cousin marriages are also prevalent among them.

Chapter second has made a detailed analysis of socio-cultural aspects of Gujjar community with an objective to find out the cultural aspects of Gujjars of Jammu District in the context of their language, kinship rules, marriage patterns, customs and rituals.

Their social structure is based on three important units namely clan (gotra), lineage (dada-potre unit), and household (dera). The main function of the clan is to regulate marriage among Gujjars, lineage gives security to the unit in an economic sense and household regulates the functions of the members of the family.

Gujjars have a rich culture consisting of many customs and rituals. Though many structural and cultural features of the Gujjars are customary, the impact of Islam is visible in many aspects of their culture. On each and every occasion right from birth to death
they have specific rituals and customs to perform. On each occasion of their social and religious life, they sought the advice of Maulvi and he is the person who performs all the rituals. Thus, Maulvi occupies an important place in the lives of the Gujjars. Gujjars believe in superstitions. They have their own folk games which they mostly play during marriage ceremonies.

Gujjars mostly arrange marriage alliance within their community but outside their gotra. In the study it is seen that the Gujjars follow gotra exogamy very strictly as suggested by the field data that in the sample of 180 male respondents, 37 male respondents of Khatana gotra had their respective spouses from other gotras i.e. Padana (12), Lodha (11) and Chechi (14); 27 male respondents of Kasana gotra had their respective spouses from other gotras i.e. Taas (8), Bhatti (9) and Khatana (10); 29 male respondents of Chechi gotra had their respective spouses from other gotras i.e. Mehsi (11), Khatana (13) and Kasana (5); 25 male respondents of Taas gotra had their respective spouses from other gotras i.e. Khatana (7), Awana (9) and Rathore (9); 30 male respondents of Mehsi gotra had their respective spouses from other gotras i.e. Awana (8), Padana (10), Paswal (9) and Khatana (3); 32 male respondents of Awana gotra had their respective spouses from other gotras i.e. Taas (11), Chechi(7), and Kasana(14).

Marriage among the Gujjars is the occasion for a number of rites and ceremonies. Their marriage involves the signing of a marriage contract, the nikahnama, by both the bride and groom indicating assent to the union. Included in the contract is a statement of the amount of mehr settled upon. Mehr is a payment to be given to the bride by the groom and his family whenever she demands it. If so agreed, some or all of the mehr may be paid at the wedding. Mehr is usually to be given in cash, but may also include silver and gold jewellery.

The data collected from the field revealed that of the total 80 female respondents, 21 female respondents are between the age of 24 and 29 year and all the twenty one female respondents received jewellery as prompt mehr and among these twelve female respondents have their deferred mehr in lakhs and nine female respondents have in thousands. Thirty four female respondents are between the age of 30-35 year and
received jewellery as prompt and eighteen female respondents have deferred mehr in thousands and eleven have in lakhs and according to other five female respondents only jewellery is considered as both prompt and deferred mehr. Ten female respondents are between the age group of 36-41 year and all have jewellery as prompt mehr and among them four have jewellery both as a prompt and deferred and six have their deferred mehr in lakhs. Eleven female respondents are the age the age group of 42-47 year and all eleven female respondents have jewellery as prompt mehr and four female respondents have their deferred mehr in less than hundreds and seven have in thousands. Four respondents are in the age group between 48-53 year and all have jewellery as prompt mehr and two have their deferred mehr in thousands and other two have in less than hundred.

Chapter third has made a detailed analysis of the identity formation among the settled Gujjars with an objective to understand the dynamic forces which underlie their identity formation and assertion.

The growing quest of Gujar identity is a sign of modernization and progress of the community. The declaration of Scheduled Tribe status was an important milestone in the Gujar quest for identity. Language is another vital attribute of an identity. After Gojri was recognized by the Radio Stations of Jammu and Kashmir, a cultural Academy of the State also gave it due recognition. While role of political leaders in promoting Gujar identity is well known no less vital is that of the Gojri writers and intellectuals who enriched it with their literary, cultural and scholarly contributions. Efforts have also been made to revive and preserve folk literature and cultural heritage of the community. Gujar consciousness has thus contributed to enrichment of the sum total of literary and cultural wealth of the whole society. It has also contributed to secularization of the society. Though all Gujjars in the State are Muslims but their emotional ties with Gujjars belonging to all important religions in the rest of the country helped in bringing about inter-religious harmony.

The granting of Scheduled Tribe status in 1991 to Gujjars has achieved significant objectives to uplift the community. The job reservation, both at the State and the Central level has been remarkable as the educational standard of the community has improved.
Moreover, representation of this community in the elected bodies and institutions has provided the required confidence to the community. A few number of voluntary organizations for Gujjar sect like ‘Gurjar Desh Charitable Trust’ and ‘Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation’, are working for the development of this community. The Trust created social and cultural awareness among the Gujjar community which has helped them to come out of their backwardness and illiteracy.

As regard the Gojri language, it is the third largest spoken language in Jammu and Kashmir followed by the Kashmiri and Dogri. Gojri, the language of the Gujjars has still not found its proper place though many languages were included in the VIIIth Schedule of the Indian constitution in the last one decade. Gojri is a language which is spoken by a vast majority of the people in the Indian sub-continent and programmes in Gojri are being broadcasted from a number of TV and Radio stations of India and Pakistan.

As the community is becoming more exposed to the urban and modern world, the members of the community are becoming aware about the significance of maintaining the identity of the community in the present times. With the substantial transformation of the community having been achieved, as of today the members though not majority of them are aware of the constitutional guarantees available to safeguard their identity which ultimately shall go a long way in bringing the community at par with any other community in the urban world.

Gujjars identity so far has been based upon primordial ties derived from their culture which is now going through a process of mobilization. Gujjar is the name of the people who are spread far and wide in Northern Indo-Pak sub continent. These people are akin to Jats and Rajputs. Probably Gujjars belong to Scythian peoples who entered India in 6th century A.D. Their body built shows that they belong to pure Indo-Aryan clan and Dravidian blood has not mixed with theirs.

Chapter fourth has made an analysis of the Gujjars’ political participation and identity politics with an objective to analyze the role and participation of Gujjars in present politics and examine this in the context of the identity politics of the State.
Political participation of the Gujjar community is the most significant aspect of empowerment. In a democratic set up, it is the responsibility of the state to have special care of the expectations and expressions of each social group. Following these ideals, the Indian Constitution under the provision of Articles 330 and 332 provides political reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislature for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. All the States of Indian Union have such provisions according to the population of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which figured 46 Parliament seats and 529 Assembly seats respectively except Jammu and Kashmir State.

Gujjar leaders have from time to time made it clear that political reservation is a pre-requisite for their overall educational and economic development. The Government should accept this demand in the right earnest, they added; installation of a popular Government in the State in 1996, after decade’s long turmoil in the State, again generated new hopes amongst the Gujjars. They had many meetings with the political leaders and pleaded forcefully their long pending demands of declaring political reservations for them.

Gujjars having been recognized as a Scheduled Tribe are provided with necessary legal, constitutional and economic safeguards. According to them reservations in Parliament and the State Legislative should be the first act to elevate their political status. They are of the view that the funds and grants for their welfare should be spent only on them and spent honestly and voluntary organizations dealing with the Gujjar community in particular should be associated with all their developmental activities and their intellectual resurgence.

According to the members of the Gujjar community, their most important demand of political reservation in various democratic institutions has to be conceded. This will enable them to have their representatives in greater numbers in these institutions and help them to highlight their problems and seek urgent redressal of their grievances. The Government has also given a serious thought to the measures which has been resulted in the economic betterment of the Gujjars. Special financial aid, loans and incentives have been provided to the Gujjars under various development programmes and schemes in order to enable them to reorient their traditional vocations.
The community has been granted reservation in educational institutions and in the matters of employment in the Government services in Jammu and Kashmir in the year 1991. It is a unique achievement of the community in Jammu and Kashmir, while their counterparts (Gujjars) in India have yet to achieve this landmark.

The Gujjar community in Jammu constitutes a significant vote bank. The successive Central Governments have allotted tribal development funds through which the Gujjar villages and establishments have linked with the towns. Urging for a distinct Law to protect centuries old Tribal Judicial system ‘zirga’ popular in Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir, as it is under the threat of extinction, the community appealed to Law makers of the country to provide legal safeguards to tribal courts i.e. zirga by making them constitutionally valid through an Act at National and State levels. Zirga resolved most of the disputes among the Gujjar community.

Chapter fifth has made an analysis of the economy and development programmes among the Gujjars with an objective to understand the socio-economic aspects of Gujjars in terms of the formation of their identity.

The Gujjars who were mostly nomadic and semi-nomadic were steeped in ignorance and age old backwardness since centuries. They lived mostly in primitive and semi-forest areas. They were financially, educationally and vocationally disadvantaged. Their traditional profession has been generally to graze their cattle and supply its produce such as milk and ghee etc. to the urban people after covering a many kilometers of the hilly track. They usually lived far from the towns on the hills and remote areas/places.

Gujjars are known traditionally for their transhumant economy and nomadic and pastoral life. The primary means of production for a Gujjar family is based on ‘Pastoral Economy’.

Gujjars, an ancient tribe traditionally leading nomadic and pastoral life since ages with main occupation as cattle herding and cattle rearing are now shifting to other occupations of present day social life. Many changes have taken place in the livelihood activities since 1947. A cattle rearing is no longer the main occupation among them. Though few families still rear buffaloes, milk and milk products, except in the settlements near the towns, are meant for domestic consumption.
As Gujjars are achieving new scales with the passage of time, their economy has shifted from their traditional occupation to the more diversified contemporary ones. The data gathered from the field suggested that majority of the respondents i.e., 59.61 percent revealed that they are employed in Government services; 25 percent were employed in Private sector and 15.38 percent revealed that they are running their own business. Some of them still rear cattles but for their own domestic consumption.

**Finding of the Study:**

The research work analyzes socio-cultural aspects, identity, identity formation, economy and political participation among the settled Gujjars of Jammu. The study has been undertaken with a proper interview schedule and the interviews were conducted in the five areas of Jammu namely Dhanoon, Jandyal, Jagti, Sunjwan and Narwal-Bala. The first three are rural settlements whereas the other two are urban. These five settlements have been randomly selected as each is Gujjar dominated settlement.

In order to ascertain the basis of Identity among Gujjars different basis have been identified which includes religion, language, way of life, culture, etc. The responses gathered from the field revealed that majority of the respondents i.e. 36.15 percent shared the view that both culture and language are the major and significant basis so far as their identity is concerned. 29.23 percent of the respondents said that religion is one of the bases of identity among them as only in J&K they all are Muslims.

In all, 20 percent of the respondents held the view that their language is an important basis of their identity and 9.61 percent of the respondents were of the view that they consider their culture as an important basis of identity and only few respondents i.e. 5 percent held the way of life responsible as basis of their identity.

There are many factors that are responsible for the distinct and separate identity of Gujjars. Of these work (traditional), language, social practices and Scheduled Tribe Status are the most important. Majority of the respondents i.e. 36.53 percent opined that Scheduled Tribe Status is the most important factor in shaping their identity.
Of the total, 24.23 percent of the respondents emphasized that their work is the chief determinant factor which gives an outstanding outlook to their community. A few number of respondents i.e. 14.23 percent held language responsible for their distinct and separate identity and few of the respondents i.e. 11.53 percent said that their social practices also play an important role in giving the community a unique identity.

On being asked whether you have preserved your identity or it is disappearing, all the respondents replied that they have preserved their identity to some or greater extent. From the field it has been suggested that majority of the respondents i.e. 55.76 percent were of the view that they have preserved their identity to greater extent and 30.76 percent were of the view that they have preserved their identity to some extent where as few of the respondents i.e. 13.46 percent revealed that they have managed to preserve their identity completely.

It is a notable observance from the field that 48.46 percent of respondents strongly recommended that ‘empowerment’ plays an important role in the preservation of Gujjars’ identity and that empowerment has come from the sustained efforts put in by their community leaders, certain voluntary and governmental organizations.

In all, 36.53 percent of the respondents were of the view that ‘education’ also plays an important role in the progress and development of any community because one becomes conscious of his rights and aspirations through the medium of education.

Rest of the respondents, i.e. 15 percent were of the view that economic well-being also contribute to the promotion of identity of any community as for example, the educated and prosperous leaders among Gujjars have contributed to the overall preservation of the Gujar identity as many of these leaders are holding very high and influential positions within Government setup.

From the field it has also been gathered that 44.23 percent of the respondents replied that they are conscious about their culture and practices to some extent and 40.38 percent of the respondents revealed that they are conscious regarding their culture and practices to a greater extent and they were of the view that it is not possible for them to
completely follow all their cultural practices because due to modernization and mixing up with other communities there is some dilution of their cultural practices.

Only 15.38 percent of the respondents were of the view that they are completely conscious about their culture and practices.

All the respondents were of the view that definitely the changes are also taking place in other communities of Jammu like Dogras and Kashmiris as well in terms of their language, culture and lifestyle as most of them prefer to communicate with their children and other community members either in English, Hindi or Urdu in preference to their mother tongue.

On being asked what steps are needed to preserve your distinct culture and identity, 129 out of 260 respondents i.e. 49.61 percent of the respondents shared the view that every member of the community should speak his mother tongue and rather every child should be encouraged to speak his/her own mother tongue i.e. Gojiri right from the beginning. Also official and link languages should be encouraged so that one may not lack in proper communication.

83 out of 260 respondents i.e., 31.92 percent of the respondents held the view that all the members of the community should be made aware of their cultural practices, tradition and heritage. In this context, the elder members of the community can play a very important role in educating the younger generation with their cultural and traditional practices and 48 out of 260 respondents i.e. 18.46 percent of the respondents were of the view that at a literacy level massive efforts are required to encourage the artists, writers and intellectuals to promote their language and cultural identity.

It has been observed from the field that all the respondents were of the view that granting of Scheduled Tribe status and consequent reservation in jobs and other avenues have helped the community to consolidate its distinct identity and if the identity is consolidated then significant consequences it will have for the settled Gujjars in the times to come like economic upliftment of the community, more representation of the community in top government positions, greater participation of the community members in politics and governance.

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The data from the field suggests that the granting of ST status to the community has made the community much more aware about the rights and aspirations. They no longer consider themselves as a neglected community and think that they have got a platform to air their grievances and demands before the Central and State Government.

It has also been gathered from the field that the society as a whole has become aware of the fact that the Gujjars are no longer a nomadic community as the people thought in earlier times as Gujjars also have become educated and hold good positions in public and professional arena.

Since the Gujjars are an important component of this State’s composite culture, so not only the Gujjars but the entire civil society must make concerted endeavors to conserve their pristine tradition of folklore, folk arts and distinct cultural identity. It is also noteworthy that their distinct culture flourishes in the existing multi-cultural setting leading to mutual exchanges and new learning experiences. The wide variety of cultural ethos provides breeding ground for full growth and projection of any particular community like the Gujjars.

Field based data revealed that 21.15 percent of the respondents were of the view that they have been benefitted from the reservation in terms of Government jobs, 12.69 percent have been benefitted in getting age relaxation in Government Jobs, and 9.61 percent of the respondents said that they had an upper edge in getting promotions as compared to counterparts.

Another notable fact is that 34.61 percent of respondents got scholarships for education and professional courses while 21.92 percent of the respondents said that they have the benefits of reservation in terms of admission to professional colleges and institutes of higher learning.

Thus it has been concluded that the community has got reservation in the wake of Scheduled Tribe status. Reservation in the field of jobs, admission to professional colleges, and many a programmes and policies were formulated and implemented by the Government for the overall benefit and empowerment of the Gujjars.
A notable observance from the field reveals that all the respondents shared the view that ascription of Scheduled Tribe Status to the community has not impacted the cultural practices at all. In fact the community becomes more aware of its cultural practices as they are promoted from voluntary and other organizations.

All the respondents were of the view that definitely the reservation has changed the communities’ profile.

Data collected from the field revealed that all the respondents were of the view that the changes in the communities’ profile in terms of its standing in the society as a whole has increased and they were also of the view that the changes have also noticed in the communities’ profile in terms of ‘In relation to other communities’ as their community is now getting enhanced opportunities to compete equally with other communities.

In all, 74.23 percent and 25.76 percent of the respondents were of the view that a change noticed in the communities’ profile in terms of the ‘Say of the community in the administrative/political matters has increased and they have very constructive say respectively in the sense that their say has substantially improved as a result of which the community can now itself play a constructive role in order to influence the concerned circles to promote more suitable schemes for their upliftment.

The information gathered from the field processed and analyzed in the following paragraphs deals with the community role in decision making, participation in casting vote in electoral process, support given to the political party in the recent elections, incentives to participate in elections and role and voice in political sphere.

On the basis of the data collected from the field it has been observed that 71.92 percent of the respondents were of the view that to some extent and 28.07 percent of the respondents were of the view that to greater extent their community is aspiring to play a role in decision-making process of the State whether it be political reservation, participation in political process, participation at Government level where they can get enhanced opportunities to put forward their demands effectively and getting the same
implemented and more economic emancipation of the community by way of political reservation.

It has also been collected from the field data that respondents felt that participation in the electoral process means participation in political empowerment and subsequent participation at the Government level which leads to the projection and implementation of demands and moreover the recognition of the identity in a more forceful manner.

On being asked whether they had cast their vote in the recent elections, all the respondents said that they have participated in the recent elections of the State.

The collected field data also revealed that 59.61 percent of the respondents said that they exercised their individual choices and voted in favour of the party of their liking where as 40.38 percent of the respondents said that they voted in favour of one party only because they felt that particular party was more instrumental in getting them facilities and safeguards which the community is enjoying at present.

A sizeable chunk of the respondents i.e. 67.30 percent were of the view that they have voted in favour of National Conference (NC) as that party was instrumental in getting them their due in the shape of ST status and many other demands of the community was projected and accepted from the NC platform.

It is a fact that 32.69 percent of the respondents said that they have voted in favour of Congress Party which also has Gujjars Representatives in the legislative Assembly and Council. Other parties might have polled a negligible percentage of Gujjar votes.

A notable observance from the field suggested that Gujjars do have certain expectations and aspirations as a distinct community. They felt that their expectations and aspirations means acceptance of their specific demands such as inclusion of Gojri language in the VIIIth schedule of the Indian Constitution, protection of their specific rights, culture and identity. They also expect Government to do more for political empowerment of their community.

It has also been observed from the field that all the respondents shared the view that if they participate in the electoral process, they are sure to get incentives in the form of their representatives being sent to legislatures where they can effectively air the
promises made by the Government at the time of elections and get those promises converted into realities.

All the respondents felt that at the present moment their voice is not very strong but at least they are now being heard in a better way and in the future their voice will be heard more strongly.

It has also been suggested from the field that 75.76 percent of the respondents felt that to a greater extent and 24.23 percent of the respondents felt that to some extent, the political reservation in the legislature and subsequent participation at the Government level is certainly going to enhance their status as a distinct identity because at the political level they can fight out for their distinct identity in a more substantial and effective manner.

The gathered data from the field revealed that 28.07 percent of the respondents held education as one of the factors responsible for change in their traditional occupation to the other contemporary occupations. Similarly 23.84 percent, 19.61 percent, 15.76 percent and 12.69 percent of the respondents held Scheduled Tribe status, reservation in services and education, various Central and State Government policies for economic upliftment of Gujjars and sedentarization factors responsible for the shift from traditional occupation to other modern occupations respectively.

The information gathered from the field revealed that all the respondents reported that they are aware of that their community is accorded with Scheduled Tribe status. They said that it is a great benefit to their family for improving their economic condition.

Majority of the total 260 respondents reported that they are aware that their community is accorded with Scheduled Tribe status. They said that it is a great benefit to their family for improving their economic condition. About 240 respondents stated that they are aware of about free education provided under Tribal Development Programmes. The schemes of free books/free uniforms, scholarship to students and free hostel made available to them under Tribal Development Programmes. Similarly 233 respondents have knowledge about reservations in services which were provided by the Government to improve their economic condition. The schemes of credit facilities are known to only 93 respondents.
The data collected from the field also revealed that the respondents on being asked whether they have benefited from any of such programmes, 17.30 percent of the respondents reported that they have been benefited as a result of free education facilities proved under tribal development programmes like, free books, free uniforms and free hostel facilities.

The benefit of scholarship accrued to about 34.61 percent of the respondents. It is, however, to be noted that 21.15 percent of the respondents reported that they have benefited from the Tribal Development Programmes through reservation in services. The benefit of financial assistance has been drawn by 9.61 percent of the respondents. Because of ST status accorded to their community, the schemes for the tribal communities helped these families in one or another way.

In all, 76.15 percent of the respondents have confirmed that they are aware that Tribal Associations/NGOs are active in the state; the remaining 23.84 percent of the respondents are unaware of the intervention of the Tribal Peoples Associations.

It has thus been concluded that the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir drew much benefits from the programmes launched by the Central and State Governments for the socio-economic upliftment. Tribal Associations/NGOs are also playing significant role in socio-economic development of tribal people. However, their work is concentrated mainly in tribal areas and exceptionally in cities. Voluntary action is a form of organizing activities, supporting, strengthening and helping to develop work to meet all types of legitimate needs of individuals and groups in a society. Therefore, after independence, the Government of India, on its part, started programmes of financial assistance to tribal Associations/NGOs for undertaking programmes of social welfare.

Thus, the Government, in the first 20 years of independence, adopted policy of working with Tribal Associations/NGOs for promoting welfare of the people. As a result several Tribal Associations/NGOs are formed in the tribal areas of different states which are working for the tribal development with the financial assistance of the Government and public donations. Important Tribal Associations and non-official agencies, covering tribal welfare in their programmes in J&K are – (1) Gurjar Desh Charitable Trust (2)
Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation etc. These Tribal Associations/NGOs, in recent years, are playing a significant role in advancing the social and economic development of Gujjars.

Thus, from being a mere community, Gujjars have become conscious of their identity and are mobilizing themselves as a group. They make use of the primordial base i.e. their ethnic and tribal character and lobby for support to come together. As the homogeneity of their location and culture is declining with shifting population and increasing interaction with the ‘others’, the need for strengthening themselves as a group is becoming more important among the Gujjars. On the one hand, they are trying to forge internal cohesion while maintaining their specific culture; on the other hand, they are consolidating their identity vis-a-vis other groups in the J&K State. With political space and power-politics becoming important and economic and occupational advantages shrinking, the confrontation of Gujjars with other groups is also increasing. They have realized that in the Kashmir-centric politics of J&K, they have to make extra efforts to create a niche for themselves.

Gujjars are making all efforts to organize themselves and adopt all means to mobilize as a separate group. They are more educated and in better and well paid occupations than before. With these initiatives, they are able to assert themselves better than before as a distinct identity. However, they feel that they can play a stronger role in the politics of the State and would do so in future. In an attempt to carve out political space for themselves, they do come in confrontation with other groups trying to establish their own identities like the Kashmiris or the Paharis. In the politics of identity being played in the State of J&K wherein different groups try to keep their hands above others, the conflict for power within the category of Scheduled Tribes has enabled the Gujjars and Paharis to emerge as two rival groups.

Amidst this situation of identity politics where space for political power is contested, confronted and negotiated; the identity formation among the Gujjars has acquired a formidable character in its new construction. Their culture with its distinct tribal primordial base has only strengthened this process of identity formation among them.
It can thus be concluded that the present study strongly supports the hypotheses that Gujjars are culturally homogeneous with strong kinship ties which in turn helps them in their identity formation. The study also confirms that as higher the consciousness among Gujjars in terms of education, Scheduled Tribe status and political rights, more are the chances of their identity formation which strengthens their chances of acquiring political space vis-à-vis other dominant groups like the Kashmiris, the Dogras and the Paharis in the identity politics of the State.