IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG SETTLED GUJJARS

'The Community has protected its Culture and Language firmly'

It is quite difficult to explain and define 'identity' in precise and exact words as it is complex and vague, both as a term as well as phenomenon. It was in the works of Cooley and Mead that the term "identity" was used for the first time as a field of study in academic sphere. Talking in literal terms, "identity" is a noun, the origin of which is a Latin word "identitas". It refers to the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. "Men and Women are not born with an identity. We have to identify to get one. Identify presupposes identification... it is by means of a series of identifications that identity is constituted." But the term no longer remains so simple when applied to the socio cultural dimensions of a group of people which makes them a community. However, the term becomes more complicated and vague when it refers to identities that are manipulated politically. This chapter is an attempt to understand the concept of identity and identity formation and its application and relevance for the settled Gujjars in Jammu.

Identity stands for the understanding of self in relation to other. Identity is a psychological need of human beings. The search for identity has been one of the most cherished desires of human beings since the inception of human civilization. Identity has become dearer and more essential to modern individual, state and communities. It is a basic requirement to both individual and collective life and is formed in process of interaction and relationship with others. Although, the identity of human being is inclusive, comprehensive, multi-layered, universal and natural but still the process of identity construction and reconstruction has been an unending process and will remain so. The former expands the shared space because of its inclusive nature, whereas the later erodes the same by constructing the identities, which are more exclusionary, angular and binary in nature. Along with the civilization march of human beings new and newer
identities have been constructed and reconstructed in the context of time and space (Tajuddin, 2008).

In the pre-modern age, identities were given and normative and there was no question of construction and recasting of identities. Identities by and large remained confined to the socio-cultural fabric of society. Human beings used to enjoy autonomy in socio-culture matters and there was no threat in these affairs from any quarter whatsoever. It was the modern age and to be more precise the modern state, which has politicized the identities by way of transferring them from private to public domain (Ibid., 2008).

Initially identity studies focused primarily on the formation of individual identities but soon it came to be associated with group identities- for instance as understood in the Marxist perspective of ‘class consciousness’, that refers to the ‘we-ness’ of a group, talking of the similarities or shared attributes around which group members come together to develop group consciousness leading to the formation of communities. As a result, identity is generally relocated in collective identities, with race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, class and caste forming the major pillars. However, many believe that construction of identity is not a simple process of acquiring identity-based loyalty from an individual towards an identity-based group. There is a dynamism in which the collective defines the self and self also contributes to the formation of the collective identity. To quote Avijit Pathak:

One is not born with an identity. Identities are socially constructed. And this seems to be the reason why identities, no matter how ‘natural’ they look, can also be transcended. As a matter of fact, radical politics like feminism and Marxism often perceives alternative cultural practices through which one transcends socially imposed, particularly stigmatized identities, and seeks to become more universal and humane (Pathak, 2006).
He quotes Mcad (1934) to further emphasize his point. He notes:

Both aspects of ‘I’ and ‘me’ are essential to the self in its full expression. That is why, even when the ‘me’ is habitual and conventional or a conformist, we come across innovative situations when the assertion of the creative ‘I’ becomes inevitable, when we see a person ‘who replies to the organized attitude in a way that makes a significant difference’ in other words, man is not merely an actor reading the script which has already been written for him, he can alter it (Ibid., 1934).

In the context of the debate in which the process of identity formation is seen from varied perspectives, it becomes imperative to understand the way identity operates and impacts on the people and society. It also raises a number of questions- for instance does Identity present itself as a stable entity or not? If we see the concept of identity in terms of it being ‘constructed’ rather than ‘given’ then it means that identity is always in a situation of ‘flux’. It is this nature of identity in the postmodernist context which makes it different from other perspectives.

There are many who would like to put the whole question of identity in the context of modernity. For them, identity is an issue of the modern age. Earlier in pre-modern societies, identity was not an issue that could attract any discussion or debate or discourse as it was unproblematic. People did not have to face or undergo any identity crisis. This whole phenomenon of identity crisis is a modern concept. Identity became fluid, more mobile, multiple, narrower, personal, and self-reflective and subject to change. It comes out clear from many writings like anthropological folklores which perceive identities as solid, stable and fixed. The identity here was defined in terms of the social customs, dictums and roles that existed from time immemorial and which were predefined and thus shaped identity and concerned paradigms. The traditional and customary realities provided religious and other social sanctions. Such rules decided and determined what position and place one would have in the world or society, and it was only such social interaction and training which influenced the sphere of thought and behaviour. People were born into a particular identity-based group such as a member of some particular tribe or clan within a fixed kinship system.
The most important issue raised by this kind of a perspective is the relationship between modernity and identity. An important question one can ask then is: what changes has modernity brought that led to the sharpening and assertion of identities? As people are caught up and engaged in several contradictory as well as conflicting roles it becomes difficult for them also to recognize themselves. Another important question that comes to the forefront is: has modernity brought about more confusion and dilemmas? And if it is so then identity presents itself as quite complex and problematic a discourse in modern times (Mooya, 2001).

However, the belief that in pre-modern societies identity was stable and, therefore, blaming modernity for bringing about a plethora of unstable identities is in itself questioned and contested by many. There are many scholars who support the case of stable identities in modern times as well.

In fact, the identities that are often seen as ‘given’ or ‘ascriptive’ acquire their significance only through carefully evolved cultural practices. As Pathak says:

I may be born in a ‘Brahmin’ family, but whether or not I acquire a ‘Brahmin’ identity depends on the way I am socialized, and trained to separate myself from ‘non-Brahmins’. In other words it is important whether I see myself belonging to a subjectively self-conscious community that establishes rigid criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the group. Likewise, the potency of one’s ethnic identity depends on the intensity of the cultural practices. I often recall the way one grows up as a ‘Bengali’ in West Bengal. The specific festivals and ceremonies like Durga Puja, Bengali New Year and Tagore’s birthday reinforce one’s ‘Bengali’ identity. At school one is constantly reminded of the distinctiveness of Bengali language, its pride and history, one is told about its heroes and icons: Khudiram, Vivekananda and Netaji: one grows up with this self-perception that celebrates visible cultural markers, one knows that one is ‘different’ from, say, a ‘Bihari’, and ‘Oriya’ or a ‘Madras’ (Pathak, 2006).

Hence, it comes out clear that there are many who are of the view that identity is not a static or stable phenomenon. On the contrary, it is fluid. One may recognize one specific identity at a time, while totally becoming alien to it the other time. Identities may
be formed around various dimensions-global, national, regional, sub regional, religious, cultural, lingual, gender based, interest based and caste based etc. Some of these identities may be mutually contradictory as well making it difficult for individuals to identify with all these identities at a time as one identity becomes dominant at one point of time while other remain dormant at the same time.

This gives space to the debate as to whether identities are given and/or predetermined or they are structured in a particular time and space in different social, political or economic contexts. Therefore, for some, identities are primordial or ‘given’, while for others, they are constructed. Given-ness of identities is based on the presumption that it is something ‘natural’- something a person is born with. For example one’s gender identity is often regarded as innate and given. Constructed identity, on the other hand, proves this presumption false with the claim that identities involve some institutionalized agencies like leadership and elites to artificially construct them for some political programme and gains. Studies undertaken in disciplines like Anthropology and Sociology vindicate such assertions. For example, they approve that gender is completely different from sex, and the process of growing up as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ is essentially a cultural construct. There is not much weight in the argument that being born as a male or a female has something to do with ones’ masculinity and femininity. Rather this biological or sexual differential fact is transformed into an attitude, a belief, an ideal through family socialization, school curriculum and religious beliefs, and eventually one acquires a ‘masculine’ or a ‘feminine’ identity (Ibid., 2006).

**Dimensions of Identity:**

**Attribute:**

All identities be it individual i.e. youth, woman, teacher or social i.e. tribe, peasantry, nation have some attributes or qualities. The attributes of an identity are defined by the intellectuals of the concerned group or the state depending on the situation. The attributes of one identity in different group in one state or one group in different states might be different. In one group also the attributes of an identity are not
constant. They change as the time changes. All the ‘good’ or positive attributes associated with an identity in totality is defined as a model or an ideal of ‘self or ‘we’, expected to be adopted by individuals or group members bearing the identity.

Symbol:

Identities of individuals or groups are defined or fixed for the purpose of facilitating interaction between or among individuals or collectivities of individuals who are identified in a particular context with a particular identity. The role and function, right and status, power and privilege of two inter-actors, whether they are individuals or groups and whether their interaction is cooperative or adversarial, are the functions of their identities.

Boundary:

Another important dimension of every identity along with attributes and symbols are boundaries. Generally boundary is perceived as an essential attribute of the particularity of a territory or an identity to express the extent of entitlement of the possessor of the territory or the identity bear whether one is a person or a group of persons. Boundary of an identity defines the extent of expectations of one identity from other in course of their interaction. In other words, boundary delimits and defines rights, duties and privileges of one identity versus other relative identity. In any interaction every identity is expected to behave within its respective boundary and a reciprocal behaviour is desired from the other identity with whom the interaction is being done (Tajuddin, 2008).

Approaches for the Understanding of concept of Identity:

An attempt needs to be made to seek an idea about the various approaches that are associated with the concept of identity. There are generally speaking two accepted models of Identity: the traditional view and the modern view. The former model views that all the dynamics of identity (class, gender, race etc.) operate simultaneously thereby producing a fixed and stable identity. The latter views that identity is fabricated
constructed and in the process and involves both psychological and sociological factors. However, there is no denying the fact that no model on its own can explain the concept fully. There are many approaches to understand identity. One is to find out as much as one can about it objectively from outside. The second is to describe how I and others feel about it, i.e. what I know from the inside. These two approaches or perspectives are the ‘it is’ and ‘I am’ positions. In the ‘it is’ perspective the individual is seen from the point of view of the social; the ‘I am’ perspective is that of the individual in society (Pathak, 2006).

The individual identity is a psychological construct and its formation occurs through various phases.

Identity originates in the earliest interplay of the infant’s temperament with the mother’s attitude, gains structure from primitive introjections, refines itself through later selective identifications, acquires filiations and generational continuity in passage through the Oedipus complex, and arrives at its more or less final shape through synthesis of contradictory identifications and greater individuation during adolescence. It remains subject to further refinements during young adulthood, midlife and even old age. A cohesive identity comprises a realistic body image, subjective self-sameness, consistent attitudes, temporality, gender, authenticity and ethnicity. Disturbance of identity suggests psychopathology, with greater identity disturbance being associated with more-severe conditions (e.g. severe personality disorders, multiple personality, and psychosis). Clinical and psychometric assessment is therefore relevant and might indicate treatment strategies and outcome expectations (http://rer.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/64/1/55).

Thus, for those who believe that identity is a psychological construct, it is acceptable that people do define themselves. But, one may contest it by arguing that such perception is more correct with the individual’s self or private identity. As Madan Sarup argues that identities are defined by many factors that are outside them. This outside is perhaps our public identity while the inside is our private identity. Sarup brings out the intricacies and relationship between what he calls public identity (or that may be called by others as group identity) and its resulting advantages. According to him, it depends on
time and space as to what extent do we choose our identity. This opens out a space for many questions like does identities are switched over when certain advantages/benefits are revealed in doing so (Sarup, 1996).

**Formation of Identity — Role of Past:**

For an identity to be capable of carrying out a collective action, mobilization is the utmost important instrument. The collective memory of shared socio-cultural traditions provides for emotional and political bonds of an identity. Thus political interests are achieved by cultural means. This is how an identity entrenches in a community. Our identities do get shaped and influenced by the emphasis on past events and actions. For those responsible for mobilization, the past becomes an instrument for constructing a modern identity. History therefore assumes importance. However, the approach towards history is not objective but very subjective. Only those moments, situations, heroes, and events are reinstated which suit the modern needs of identity. Rather than the objective and total conception of history, it is the selective interpretation of the past events and actions that becomes important.

This process is best explained by Hobsbawm when he talks of ‘Invention of Tradition’ while giving his concept of origin of nation and nationalism. As Hobsbawm argues that despite the historical novelty of nations, they establish continuity with a suitable past and use history as a legitimate of action and cement of group cohesion. For him, this continuity is largely factitious. Therefore, there is no doubt that history and past of a community or even an individual, influence and determine as to what kind of identity one will have in the future. The histories and traditions of the working classes or of royal families have become a key part of their modern identities. The underlying reasoning is usually that “long memories can make great people” (https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/citd/holtorf/5.5.html)

Hermann Lubbe has argued that the past has become more important as a source of reassurance and identity as our everyday world changes at ever faster rates, causing alienation and a search for compensating factors. It was the glorified past and history of civilizations like ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece which rendered them the
status and identity that no one else could boast of even after several centuries of their decline. It is the feeling of such shared history and culture that provides for giving a concrete form to a unified collective identity. The collective vision of a shared origin and identical forefathers and foremothers, linked to ancient traditions, monuments and graves, can be the most important thing which all members of a community share, and about which they are collectively proud in their social memories. Ancient historical practices and monuments can therefore be crucial for the unity of a group of people. They seem to stand outside the flow of daily events and are symbols of stability in an ever changing world. One could therefore say: “He who controls the past controls who we are” (Ibid.).

**Individual Identities and their Formation:**

Identity is a definition of person or a group of persons large or small in relation to or contrasts with other person or group of persons. Every small or big identity is assumed/ formed/ constructed for the purpose of any and every type of social interaction between two or more persons and/ or two or more groups. The primary self defining or identity inquiry question is: who am I or who are you? The reply to this question or defining one’s identity may be many depending on the purpose and nature of the inquiry, context and situation in which the inquiry is being done. The reply of this question might be generally of two types. First, providing some personal individualistic information or data or expressing any dimension of one’s personality. Secondly, providing information or data about some groups to which she/ he belongs to or feels solidarity with. These two types of replies can be categorized into two types of identities- personal or individual identity and social or group identity. Every person has a set of multiple individual identities and another set of multiple group identities. The contexts of interaction and the persons or group who are interacting make relevant one identity of each inter-actor from the set of their respective identities (Tajuddin, 2008).

Identities of different persons in a private or public space fix their position and status, rights and duties, privileges and depravities. The nature of a society- primitive, pre-modern and modern is defined on the basis of individual and group identities prevalent in the society. As the society advances from simple to complex so the avenues of human
interaction increases and hence the personal or social identities or naming of roles and functions of the inter-actors too increases. In a simple society the set of personal and social identities of every individual is small. These grow larger and larger as the society advances.

Some identities of every individual are permanently ascribed by the society at the time of birth i.e. gender. Some ascriptive identities change with the change of certain factors. Age related identities- infant, youth, old etc change with growth of age. Physique related identities- tall, fat, good looking, etc. changes as and when the physical appearances changes. Every individual inherit some of his/ her identities i.e. ethnicity or race, mother tongue or language, religion and nationality. Most identities in modern time are either earned or achieved or rewarded through accredited process of education and training or due process of appointment, nomination or election i.e. farmer, weaver, mason, doctor, teacher, clerk, officer, executive of an institution or a state (Ibid., 2008). Though individual identities are important, and are usually drawn from shared or collective identity, for this study collective or group identities are considered more useful.

**Collective Identities and their Formation:**

Social identity or group identity or collective identity is created by the conscious section of a group on the basis of one or more characteristics which is common among all the persons in the group despite many characteristics in which they may differ from each other. Irrespective of the group members diversity or heterogeneity from each other in many respect the intellectual leaders of the group asserts that one or two common features of group members are ‘the true’ characteristics of the group. These ‘true’ characteristics are articulated and highlighted and the differences are overlooked and deliberately kept aside as trivial or immaterial vis-a-vis the ‘true’ attribute(s) of the group which is declared as the basis of their social identity. The common feature(s) is/ are highlighted and propagated as the basis of their unity, homogeneity and cohesion.

Collective identities are mainly of two types- primordial and modern. Primordial social identities are formulated or constructed on the basis of common descent or ancestry, common gender, common territorial habitation, common language and common
religion. The most common social identities based on common ancestry are: clan, tribe, caste and race. The group identity which divides the whole humanity into two groups on the basis of sex is masculine and feminine gender. Territorial habitation based identities are: common identity of every person living in one village, all habitants of a town, all who hail from a cultural region and all who are under a common territorial authority or state. All speakers of any language of the world who use the language as their first tongue are identified with one common linguistic identity.

Modern social identities which originated during and after the Industrial Revolution in Europe are based on nationality, class, ethnicity, occupation and profession. The changes which emerged into different sphere of life during this period created these modern social identities which superseded in their appeal and importance to the primordial identities. These modern basis of group identity have not completely obliterated the primordial basis of identity. Contrary to the expectations of the social scientists the primordial basis of collective identity are not strong. The most important basis of modern group identity formation is nationality. Nationality is a common identity created on the basis of real or imagined sharing of characteristics: common descent, territory, history, religion, and way of life, world view or any other attribute which the members of a group share or believe to share from birth (Ibid., 2008).

The second important basis of modern identity construction is class. The ever widening gap in prosperity of the bourgeoisie and miseries of the proletariat made the Marxist concept of class a very attractive basis of binary opposite class based identity. The common class based identity created a strong basis of solidarity among the deprived and the marginalized working class in every nation state of Europe and even at international level throughout the world.

Third important basis of collective identity formation throughout the world is ethnicity. Ethnicity is a new concept coined by the American social scientists in twentieth century to study different social groups of the American citizen who have emigrated from different countries. In its early definition ethnicity implied a term of identity for a group who have been displaced or dislocated from its homeland in long or near past caused by
conquest, colonization or immigration. In its contemporary prevalent usage every group in a society or state is an ethnic group who has a distinct sense of difference from other groups on the basis of culture and descent.

The fourth type of modern group identity is based on common occupation or profession. All occupations or professions are regular economic activity in the modern economy of society. They are based on specialized education and training. Any person who has achieved the defined qualification of a profession can adopt that profession for livelihood privately or join some job or the profession (Ibid., 2008).

This chapter deals with the identity formation among the settled Gujjars of Jammu. In the process of settling down they are also trying hard to maintain their identity vis-a-vis mainstream society. The Gujjars who have settled in and around Jammu are getting the benefits of good education, prosperity and economic upliftment. Due to their exposure to these factors they are likely to lose their distinct identity in terms of language, culture, beliefs and practices. So in order to preserve and maintain their distinct identity many voluntary and Governmental organizations including their prominent leaders are putting in lot of efforts for the promotion of their language, culture and their distinct identity so that they are not cut off from their cultural roots.

The identity formation among Gujjars today is derived from their tribal culture (primordial) and is based on the consciousness of their position in the regional/political context and mobilization of their interests towards this (constructed) as well as their need to occupy political space in the Identity Politics of the State.

Gujjars of the State, no doubt, are akin to those Gujjars, who are spread all over the Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and other Western parts of India, but the Gujjar community of the State of Jammu and Kashmir has retained its identity and traditions better than anywhere else in certain ways. They are regarded as a tribe unlike other States where they are seen as a ‘caste’. In J&K, they are almost always the followers of Islam religion as different from Gujjars of other states, most of whom are Hindus.
Gujjar Identity:

“Gujjar community is a sum total of the warrior tribes which inhabit not only in India but in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Russia also. Historians have different opinions of their origin and their coming to India. Some historians are of the view that they were the inhabitants of India herself long ago while others say that they had migrated to India from Central Asia” (http://mshahidch.tripod.com/id27.html).

In Jammu and Kashmir, Pir Panchal region is considered as home of the Gujjar tribe. Besides this region they are also scattered in other places in the State as well, viz. Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Udhampur, Kathua and Doda district. Gujjars also inhabit the other side of LOC (Line of Control) particularly in the areas like Mirpur, Bhimber, Kotli, Plandri, Rawala Kote, Bagh and Muzaffarabad district in POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). However, they are rich in their unique tribal culture and heritage (Hussain, 1994).

In the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, the concentration of Muslim Gujjars is observed in the districts of Rajouri and Poonch, followed by Anantnag, Udhampur and Doda districts. They are present in the entire State except Leh and Kargil. The Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir were notified as the Scheduled Tribes vide the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment Act), 1991. According to the 2001 Census of India, Gujjars are the most populous Scheduled Tribe in Jammu and Kashmir, having a population of 763,806. Around 99.3 percent population of Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir follows Islam. But according to a local NGO namely ‘Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation’, Gujjars constitute more than 20% of the total population of the State.

The Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir in 2007 demanded that Gujjars be treated as a linguistic minority in the State and provision of Constitutional safeguards should be made to their language Gojri. They also impressed upon the State Government to take up the matter with Delhi for inclusion of Gojri in the list of official languages of India. In 2002, some Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir demanded a separate State (Gujaristan) for Gujjar community, under the banner of ‘All India Gujjar Parishad’ (Rahi, 2011).
Gujjars are an almost a unique tribe having its own cultural and linguistic identity and since 1990s a specific politics as well. Gujjars constitute the third largest ethnic group in Jammu and Kashmir only after the Kashmiri speaking Muslims and Dogra Hindus. Out of 87 assembly constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir, Gujjars as a vote bank have the strength of influencing the winning prospects in 20 constituencies of any party. Thus, they are a sizeable population that attracts the attention of all political parties and leaders in the State.

Gujjars have undergone a substantial improvement in their socio-economic status, as a consequence of the provided Scheduled Tribe status since 1991. It was in 1989 that President of India acting under Article 342 of the Constitution of India promulgated the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Schedule Tribe Order 1989. Consequently, Government of Jammu and Kashmir issued SRO 8 of 1981 which came into effect on January 03, 1991 and under which the benefit of reservation in service was extended to the Scheduled Tribes. Thereafter, the President of India issued an Ordinance on April 19, 1991 where by the Gujjars and Bakerwals were also included in the list of Scheduled Tribes with respect to Jammu and Kashmir State. On August 20, 1991 the Parliament of India converted that Ordinance into Act and further included Gaddis and Sippis in the list of Scheduled Tribes (Warikoo and Som, 2000).

Article 330, 332 and 334 of the Indian Constitution provide for the reservation of seats in Parliament and State legislature for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe in proportion to the percentage of their population in their respective States and Union Territories. It is high time that this long pending demand of Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir State is met. There is need to work out strategies and policy framework to eliminate the socio-economic backwardness of the Gujjars by removing uneven development and without tampering with their socio-cultural ethos. Empowerment of weaker and marginalized sections of the society like the tribal Gujjars through mass education and political participation, is the need of the hour (Ibid., 2000).

However, the benefits if given a closer look reveal certain contradictions. A section of the Gujjars that includes Bakerwals is still downtrodden and has not been able
to serve their cause with such reservation. They still remain oppressed and backward economically, socially or educationally. As a result voices are being raised that mere provision of Scheduled Tribe status and the present benefits out of it are not sufficient. Therefore, the demand of political reservation is being made in order to really have an impact in improving the conditions of those left behind. According to the provision of Constitution of India with respect to the Scheduled Tribe status, they are entitled to the reservation in jobs and other welfare benefits. Gujjars are now asking for political reservation for getting due seats in the Assembly as is proportionate to their population (http: //www.countercurrents.org/kashmir-choudhary090207.htm).

The Gujjars first gained political prominence when Sheikh Abdullah was trying to rope in the Muslim-majority districts of Rajouri and Poonch and the Kashmiri-speaking Muslims of Doda into a ‘Greater Kashmir’ in the late-1970s. Mrs Indira Gandhi devised a new electoral arithmetic which calculated the Dogras and Gujjars as a counterweight to the Kashmiri Muslims. A conscious decision seems to have been taken to arouse the ethnic Gujjar as opposed to a religious Muslim consciousness of this community (Hussain, 1994).

**Quest for Gujjar Identity:**

A noted scholar, Balraj Puri(2000) said that the growing quest of Gujjar identity is a sign of modernization and progress of the community. As they get educated, they become aware of their heritage. As communications grow they can maintain contacts with scattered members of their respective communities. As industrial development causes greater prosperity, it also improves their means to consolidate their identity.

Hari Om, a well-known historian of Jammu (2000) said that the Gujjars, however, achieved a major breakthrough on April 19, 1991, when the President of India took a momentous decision and conferred on the Gujjars the status of Scheduled Tribe. The April 19 decision, inter-alia, entitled the Gujjars to a share of 10 percent reservation in educational and occupational institutions.
According to Balraj Puri (2000) the declaration of Scheduled Tribe status was an important milestone in the Gujjar 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 Gujjar 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. Gujjar 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. Thus the apprehension that Gujjar consciousness might promote narrow mindedness is unfounded.

Moreover, no identity can and is exclusive. In fact no single identity can satisfy all aspirations of human beings in modern times. Just as a person has many identities within a family and is simultaneously a father, brother, husband, son and so on, a Gujjar is not only a Gujjar but also say Muslim, an Indian, a Jammuite and a member of a professional community at one and the same time (Warikoo and Som, 2000).

**Language: An Epitome of Ethno-cultural and Distinct Identity:**

Among various cultural symbol- religion, race, language, traditions and customs, etc. that differentiates an ethnic group from the other, Language is the most potent cultural marker providing for group identity. Its spatial spread over a fixed territory makes language more important than religion as a basis of ethnic identity formation (Pushp and Warikoo, 1996).

The people of Jammu and Kashmir State, whether Kashmiris, Dogras, Gujjars, Bakerwals, Ladakhis, Baltis, Dards, etc. have in all the censuses unambiguously identified their indeginious languages as their ‘mother-tongue’ thereby consolidating their respective ethno-linguistic and cultural identities.
The dialect of Gujjars is Gujari or Gojri. Walter Lawrence (1967) has termed the Gujjar’s language as ‘Parimu’ or ‘Hindki’. Gojri is a third largest spoken language in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the first two being Kashmiri and Dogri respectively. Besides the State of Jammu and Kashmir, it is also spoken in by a minority population in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Gojri is an Indo-Aryan language of Central group. Grierson has classified Gojri as a dialect of Rajasthani closer to Mewati. Its classification has however been debated at length. It does share a large number of linguistic characteristics with Rajasthani, Pahari, Punjabi and Dogri languages. The language is also influenced by Kashmiri and other neighbouring languages where it is spoken natively. Gojri shares many linguistic features including vocabulary with the neighboring languages. Gojri is largely influenced by Kashmiri in the Kashmir Valley. All the Gojri speakers are bilinguals in Gojri and Kashmiri. Similarly in the Jammu division, Gojri is influenced by Dogri, Punjabi and other languages spoken in the regions of Gojri settlements. Gojri shares a number of linguistic features with Punjabi and Dogri (Warikoo and Som, 2000).

Gojri spoken out of the State of Jammu and Kashmir is largely influenced by the local dominant languages. Gojri speakers are usually bilinguals. They use Gojri for intra-group communication and use the local dominant language for communication with others. Language is one cultural aspect which always gives a community a distinct identity of its own. Gujjars throughout the State of Jammu and Kashmir whether in Jammu, Srinagar or anywhere else speak only Gojri language, their mother tongue which helps them to identify themselves with their community members.

**Demand for Inclusion of Gojri in VIIIth Schedule:**

Gurjar Desh Charitable Trust, the voluntary organization of Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars has time and again impressed upon the Government to take measures to give Gojri rightful place and have included it in the VIIIth schedule of the Indian Constitution. But this genuine demand of Gujjars, constituting the third largest ethnic group of the State, to give due recognition to Gojri and have it included in the VIIIth schedule of the Constitution is being ignored.
This demand has repeatedly been raised in various fora including State’s high democratic institutions. Assurances were given at various political levels to fulfill this genuine demand but nothing concrete has been done so far. The Trust has expressed the hope that the Government would immediately attend to the urgent demand of Gujjars and recommend to Central Government the inclusion of Gojri in the VIIIth schedule of the Indian Constitution. This besides meeting the long pending demand of Gujjars will also give the Gojri language its rightful place, which has been denied to it in the last over few decades.

Gojri is a language of Gujjar community throughout Jammu and Kashmir. After Independence, special efforts in Jammu and Kashmir were put in by agencies - official and non-official for promotion of Gojri language and its literature. There are various institutions Governmental and non-Governmental which are working continuously for the promotion and development of Gojri language.

**Role of Tribal and Cultural Foundation Jammu:**

The organization, “Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation Jammu” was established in 1999 by a young and dynamic Gujjar writer, researcher and social activist Dr. Javed Rahi with broader objectives of research, preservation and promotion of Gujjar culture through print and electronic media.

Dr. Javed Rahi has been organizing various seminars on issues relating to Gujjar culture at regular intervals in past few years. Besides this, Dr. Rahi has done a remarkable service to Gojri language through research in the virgin field of Gojri folklore and has since published some prestigious volumes on the subject including the encyclopedia of Himalayan Gujjars in collaboration with Central Governmental institutions. The lists of his publications include *Gujjar Shinakhat Ka Safar, Gojri Lok Geet, Lok Virso, Hindi-Gojri Glossary, Gojri Folklore Dictionary, and Encyclopedia of Himalayan Gujjars* (Anjum, 2007).
Role of Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy:

The Gojri section of Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and languages, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, started in 1978 and has since done a commendable job in the promotion of Gojri language and literature.

The achievements of Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and languages include:

1. Preservation of Gojri Folklore in black and white.
2. Recognition and encouragement of emerging Gojri writers.
3. Publications of Sheeraza on regular quarterly basis. It includes latest poems, ghazals, songs, short stories and research papers on different aspects of Gojri language and history including special issues.
4. Publication of books in Gojri and moral as well as financial assistance to Gojri writers in the form of subsidy or annual best book awards.
5. The Gojri dictionary in six volumes is the most remarkable publication of Gojri wing (Ibid, 2007).

Role of Radio:

The Gojri broadcasts over Radio Stations at Srinagar (1967), Jammu (1975), Poonch (1994) and Kathua (1993) boosted the morale of Gojri speakers and writers in general but the major contribution of Radio in the development of Gojri was the removal of inhibitions of Gujjars for communication in their mother tongue, as well as introduction of Gojjars among speakers of other languages. The major achievement of Radio is the recording and preservation of Gojri music especially folklore as well as recording of Ghazals and songs utilizing the modern recording facilities and equipments. This is all in addition to the broadcasts aimed at removing illiteracy and unhealthy beliefs and practices amongst the members of the community.
Role of Doordarshan Kendra:

The Doordarshan Kendra at Srinagar and Jammu are telecasting fortnightly programmes in Gojri, an utter prejudice to Gojri, which needs to be rectified reasonably by the people at the helm of affairs.

Role of Private Organizations:

Some private organizations and institutions, engaged in the promotion of Gojri language and literature have also worked sincerely and with vigour, for development of Gojri by direct contribution, encouragement of writers and stressing upon the concerned authorities for broadcasting of Gojri programmes from Radio and Gojri wing in Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. These organizations include Anjuman Taraqqi Gojri Adab, Adabi Sangat Kashmir, Idara Adabiyat, Gojri Adabi Board and various Dramatic and Cultural clubs.

Role of Gojri Research Institute, Jammu:

This Institute has been established under the management of “Gurjar Desh Charitable Trust” at Jammu. The role of this institution in promotion of Gojri language is appreciable. The publication of monthly magazine “Awaz-e-Gurjar” and establishment of a Gojri Library at Gojri Research Institute, Jammu are definitely welcome steps (Ibid, 2007).

The existing spatial distribution of Gujjar speakers does provide some sort of linguistic territorial homogeneity, which however, needs to be further consolidated to help in preservation and promotion of Gojri language and ethno-cultural heritage and fulfilling their socio-economic and political aspirations within the State. Inclusion of Gojri as one of the regional languages in VIIIth schedule of Indian Constitution and Sahitya Academy awards for Gojri writers, are basic steps that need to be taken.

Role of Gujjar and Bakerwal State Advisory Board:

Transparency of rules and achievements in any field is helpful to share the ideas and thoughts and it is necessary to remain in the heart of others. This Advisory Board for
the development of Gujjars and Bakerwal is working with this aptitude and making all strenuous efforts for the upliftment of this community.

India became independent in 1947 and after that all efforts were made to achieve and regain all around development in every field so that people could take benefits for their betterment. In Jammu and Kashmir, a Committee for the development of Gujjars and Bakerwal was set up in the year 1947 headed by former Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Jenab Shamas-ud-Din. After that an Advisory Board for the development of Gujjars and Bakerwal was constituted in the year of 1975 headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the then Chief Minister and Begum Akbar Jehan (Begum Abdullah) the Vice Chairman of Advisory Board (Rahi, 2011).

The Advisory Board has made some notable achievements for the upliftment of Gujjars and Bakerwal such as:-

1. Establishment of Gujjars and Bakerwal Hostels in each District.
2. Scholarships for students studying from first primary up to professional colleges.
3. Construction and allotment of shops for Gujjars and Bakerwals at different places to boost their economic condition and also to change their profession in accordance with the changing scenario.
4. Providing of stipend, free uniform, books to Gujjar students.
5. Reserving the seats in professional colleges of the State for Gujjar students.
6. Established Gojri section in Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages for the promotion and development of Gojri language and literature.
7. After getting ST status, made efforts for implementation of various schemes (Ibid., 2011).

**Identity Formation and Assertion among Gujjars:**

The information gathered from the field processed and analyzed in the following paragraphs deals with the community basis and factors of identity, consciousness about community’s culture and practices, influence of reservation as Scheduled Tribe on identity formation, benefits accrued out of reservation and impact of reservation on community members.
Table- 3.1: Basis of Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>29.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of life</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both culture and language</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>36.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field based data

In order to ascertain the basis of Identity among Gujjars different indicators have been identified which includes religion, language, way of life, culture, etc. The responses gathered from the field as Table- 3.1 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. 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.

Table- 3.2: Factors responsible for distinct and separate Identity for community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work ( Traditional)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life style</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social practices</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe Status</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>36.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field based data
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. 24.23 percent of the respondents emphasized that their work is the chief determinant factor which gives an outstanding outlook to their community. A 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.

**Table-3.3: Identity preserved or Disappearing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity Preserved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To greater extent</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>55.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Disappearing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very slowly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapidly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field based data*

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. Table-3.3 suggests 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.
Table-3.4: Identity preserved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>48.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>36.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field based data*

It is a notable observance from Table- 3.4 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.

Table- 3.5: Consciousness about Community Culture and Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conscious about Culture and practices</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To greater extent</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field based data*

The above Table- 3.5 suggests 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 where as 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 life style 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. Gojri right from the beginning. Also official and link languages should be encouraged so that one may not lack in proper communication.

Out of 260 respondents, 83 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 remarkable 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.

It has been observed from the field data 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 Gujjaras are no longer a nomadic community as the people thought in earlier times. Gujjaras have also become educated and hold good positions in public and professional arena which has helped them to improve their image in society.

It is also noteworthy that their distinct culture flourishes in the existing multicultural 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 Gujjaras.

**Table- 3.6: Responses towards Benefits accrued out of Reservation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits accrued out of Reservation</td>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Job</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admission to Professional colleges/Institutes</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age relaxation in Government job</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field based data*
Above Table- 3.6 suggests 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 has become more aware of its cultural practices as they are promoted from voluntary and other organizations. In this way education and well-paid occupations have provided further impetus in the formation of their identity.

**Table- 3.7: Has Reservation changed Communities’ profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whether Reservation changed Communities’ profile</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field based data*

Table- 3.7 reveals that 100 percent of the respondents were of the view that definitely the reservation has changed the communities’ profile.
Table 3.8: If yes, what changes did you notice in terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes noticed in terms of</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing in the society</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to others</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unequal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say in administrative/</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>74.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political matters</td>
<td>Constructive</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not make much difference</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field based data

The above Table 3.8 reveals 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 all of them were of the view that the changes are also noticed in their communities’ profile in terms of ‘In relation to other communities’ and 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.
To conclude, identity is not a static dogma but is fluid and always in a flux. One may identify with one specific identity at a time, while totally becoming alien to it the other times. Some of these identities may be mutually contradictory as well. Identities may be 'primordial' or given but keeping in mind the present milieu, it becomes a fact that identities are often constructed in many ways and by many agencies. It takes some institutional agencies like leadership and elites to artificially construct them for some political programme and gains (Pathak, 2006).

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, Tribal Research and cultural Foundation, etc. 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.

Gojri, the language of the Gujjars is still not finding 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 being 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. Sufficient literature in Gojri is available which entitle it to be part of VIIIth schedule of Indian Constitution.

Since the community was not previously much exposed to the urban and modern world, the members of the community had no awareness about the significance of maintaining the identity of the community in the contemporary world. With the substantial transformation of the community having been achieved by it, as of today many members have become 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 communities in the urban world.
Thus, from being a mere community the Gujjars has 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. However, the other factors like education and occupation are also providing strength to this base in consolidating their identity in the present times. 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. This will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter on political participation and identity politics of the Gujjars in the State.