CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN AND THE HISTORY OF GUJJARS
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The word 'Gujjar' is the spoken form of Sanskrit "Gurjara", the original name of tract of land in Western India where Gujjars had a very powerful and extensive kingdom called the 'Gurjaradesa' during the Mediaeval times. Essentially speaking, originally they were not nomads but a people with flourishing settlements. Any locality to which the word Gurjara or any word of which it forms a part like Gujranwala, Gujarat, Gurjerkhan, is applied at present, indicates the settlement of this foreign tribe in its onward march from the North-Western Frontier of India to the Kathiawar Peninsula and the people residing in this tract whenever they migrated to other parts of the country were known as Gurjaras from the name of their homeland (Munshi, 1954). The other interpretation of the word Gujjar or Gujra is the corruption of "Gauchar", i.e. to pasture cow, which does not seem to be factual as they pasture and rear other cattle also (Crooke, 1974 and Negi, 1976). Baden-Powell (1972) on the
other hand gives the view that the word Gujar is possibly the Northern 'Tokhar' softened into a Sanskritic form as Tusara and then Gujara.

Cunningham (1924) accepts that Juzr or Huzr was the hereditary title of the King as well as the name of the country and he further confirms the identification of Juzr with Gujar or Guzr, which is a very numerous tribe whose name is attached to many important places in North-West India and the Panjab and more especially to the great Peninsula of Gujrat. He further clearly states that Gurjara existed as a powerful Kingdom quite distinct from Saurashtra nearly two centuries after Huien-tsang's visit in 640 A.D. This account shows that Gurjara must have been adjacent to Malwa as well as to Saurashtra, a position which clearly identified it with Rajputana (now Rajasthan).

The origin of Gujjars is still a controversial issue. They have been identified by General Cunningham (quoted from Ibbetson, 1974), Nijjar (1972) and Bingley (1978) with the Kushan or Yuchi or Tochari, a tribe of Eastern Tartar. General Cunningham says that about a century before Christ, their Chief conquered Kabul and the Peshawar Country; while his son, Hima Kadphises extended his sway over whole of the Upper Panjab and the banks of the Jamna, and his successor the no less familiar King, Kanishka, the first Budhist Indo-Scythian Prince, annexed Kashmir to the Kingdom of the Tochari. Before the end of the third Century A.D., a portion
of the Gujars had begun to move Southward down the Indus, where shortly afterwards separated from their Northern brethren by Indo-Scythian wave from the North.

Due to inconsistency of historical evidence Smith (1958) discards this theory and considers the Gujars or Gurjaras to be a branch of the White Huns who invaded India in the 5th and 6th Centuries. He states that there is no doubt during the 5th and 6th Centuries great multitudes of fierce folk from the Central Asian Steppes swooped down on both Persia and India. Those invaders are called by the Indians, Hūnas or in English Huns, a term used in a general sense like the earlier term Sākās, to cover a mass of various tribes. Other Huns who invaded Europe are known to have been fierce tribesmen of the Mongolian kind; but the assailants of India were distinguished as Ephthalites or White Huns, a name which may imply that they were fair people like the Turks. Many of the Rajput castes or clans as well as the Jats, Gujars, and certain other existing communities, are descended either from the Hūnas or from allied hordes which arrived about the same time. Smith (1924) further says that the Hūnas are often mentioned in books and inscriptions in connection with the Gurjaras whose name survives in the modern Gujars, a caste widely distributed in North-Western India. The early Gurjaras seem to have been foreign immigrants, closely associated with, and possibly allied in blood to the white Huns. A number of scholars agree with this statement (Barnett, 1913; Bhandarkar, 1921; Munshi, 1954; Baden-Powell, 1972;
Crooks, 1974 and Russell and Lall, 1975). Ibbetson (1970) says that soon after the Huns came, the Gurjaras who may indeed have come along with them, though the Gurjaras are never heard of until near the end of the 6th Century, as the records frequently bracket them with the Huns. It is now settled fact (Dhir, 1972) that they came from Central Asia from where the communications with India were a regular feature on well established trade routes.

Gurjaras have been identified with the Khazars who occupied a very prominent position on the border land of Europe and Asia especially in the 6th Century A.D. (Bhandarkar, 1921; Munshi, 1954; Smith, 1958; Mitra and Ghosh, 1969; Bombay Gazetteer, 1975). However, other scholars (Risley, 1901; Vaidya, 1924; Thakur, 1974) are doubtful of this view and have supported the Indo-Aryan origin of Gurjaras. Conversely, the Gujjars show similarities with the tall beautiful Khazars who are ethnologically and genetically much nearer to the Huns (Lall, 1982).

Baden-Powell (1972) have suggested that they must have used the Western or Indus Valley route as well as the direct route to the Punjab plains as they are found not only in the Indus Valley but in Upper Western India. Of the tribes which arrived in this way, the Huns settled permanently in Rajputana but the Gurjaras migrated to all parts of India (Munshi, 1954). The word Gujar or Gurjara also occurs from
about the 7th Century A.D. in the works of Bāna and Hiuen-tsang. During the 9th Century the Northern and Central part of Rajputana was called Gurjaratra. The Gurjaras are found in Bundelkhand, in Narmada Valley in Nagpur and in South India where they are said to have drifted before the 9th Century. During the 18th Century Saharanpur was known as Gujarat and Gwalior is still called Gurjaragarh (Munshi, 1954).

Gurjaras established considerable kingdoms or principalities in various places in Southern Rajputana, the capital of which was Broach in Gujarat and Bhīṃmāl or Srimāl, about 50 miles North-West of Mount Abu, the site of the firepit from which the Pariharas and several other Rajput clans originated according to the legend (J.R.A.S., 1909; Barnett, 1913; Smith, 1924; Sharma, 1965 and Ibbetson, 1970). In course of time, the Gurjara-Pratihara kings of Bhīṃmāl conquered Kanauj in 810 A.D. and became the paramount power (till 1018 A.D.) in Northern India (Smith, 1924; Munshi, 1954; Blunt, 1969).

The word Gurjara-Pratihara applied in ancient records to designate a royal dynasty, meant the Pratihara clan of the Gurjara race (Munshi, 1954). A number of scholars accepted that Parihar, Parmar, Chauhan, Solanki and Tomara, all descended from Gurjaras who were foreigners (Bhandarkar, 1921; Smith, 1924; Sharma, 1965; Ibbetson, 1970). Munshi (1954) confirmed that these were the allied clans which associated with the Gurjaradesa from about 6th Century to the end of 13th Century. The wars between
the Chieftains of these clans were merely a struggle for internal supremacy. This supremacy was held by Pratihars from 740 A.D. to 940 A.D., Parmaras from 940 A.D. to 1055 A.D. and Chaulukyas from 1100 A.D. to 1250 A.D. and Mihira Bhoja was the most powerful king who ruled from 840 A.D. to 890 A.D.

Smith (1924) emphasises that the prominent position occupied by Gurjara Kingdoms in the early Medieval times is a recent discovery. The existence of a small Gurjara principality at Bharoach (Broach), and a larger state in Rajputana, had been known to archaeologists for many years, but the recognition of the fact that Bhoja, and the other Kings of the powerful Kanauj Dynasty in the 9th, 10th and 11th Centuries were Gurjaras, is of recent date. Certain misreadings of epigraphic dates had obscured the true history of that Dynasty, until the correct readings were established. It is now definitely proved that Bhoja (840 – 890 A.D.), his predecessors and successors, belonged to the Pratihara (Parihar) clan of the Gurjara tribe or caste, and consequently the well known clan of Parihar Rajputs is a branch of the Gurjara or Gujar stock.

By the end of 13th Century and the beginning of the 14th Century, the disintegration of the third empire of Chaulukyas occurred and the powerful empire of the Imperial Gurjaras broken into fragments (Munshi, 1954). During this time, the raids of Mahmud Ghazni, Pathans and lateron of Mughals plundered the wealth they had acquired and the dynastic rule of the Gurjaras came to end.
The invasions of Muhammad Ghori, especially in 1195 A.D. compelled people to leave their homes and hearths in panic to other places for safety. From the 13th Century onward with the establishment of Muslim Rule in Rajasthan, the Rajput Dynasties gradually disappeared and went to other places for their livelihood (Jain, 1972). They suffered many disabilities and had to pay frequently a special tax for the protection of their lives and property. The payment was associated with humiliation and degradation. Sometimes, they were converted to Islam forcibly. Various factors contributed towards the rapid progress of Islam in India during the first three hundred years of the Muslim Rule (starting from about 1092 A.D.). Motives of personal gains, such as the desire to obtain high office in the state, led to abandon their own faith and induced them to accept Islam (Luniya, 1975).

Smith (1958) describes that after the victories of Babur (1526), the older colonies, however, multiplied, crowds of converts from Hinduism were made and inter-marriages between the old and new Muslims took place. The tendency of the Muslim population was to increase its fertility being superior to that of the Hindus. The immigrant Muslims, although thoroughly naturalized, retained their distinctness and never became merged in the Hindu majority. The reason was to be found in the definite character of the Muslim Creed, resting on scriptures of known date, and consisting essentially of only two doctrines, the unity of God and the divine mission of
Muhammed. The simple creed inspired intense devotion and offered unbroken resistance to the seductions of Hinduism, although Indo-Muslims social practice was affected considerably by its surroundings. The looser beliefs of the early immigrants from Central Asia were not strong enough to withstand the subtle influence of the Brahmanical environment.

Bingley (1978) narrates that West of the Indus and the Ravi, the Jats and Gujars became Muhammadans and being a conquered people of no political importance were looked down upon by the Pathans, Mughals and Muslims of Rajput descent who seized their lands and thus drove them to seek a living as nomads, wandering with their herds over the grazing grounds of the great Western plains of the Punjab.

The exact date of conversion of Hindu Gujars to Islam is uncertain but it is apparent that their different localities must have been converted to Islam at various times. As Cunningham (1924) says, "... the town of Gujarat is said to have been built or restored by Ala Khan Gujar in the time of Akbar", it is apparent that they must have been converted to Islam even before Akbar ruled. The Musalman Gujars in Oudh and Kerrut Division attribute this to the compulsion of Timur Lang when he attacked Delhi (1398) and converted all the people in the neighbourhood by force (Crooke, 1974). Bingley (1978) asserts that we cannot ascertain with any precision when the Jats and Gujars of the Northern Punjab adopted Islam, but when Babur invaded India (1526), he
found that in the Salt Range, they had been subdued and converted by the Awans, Janjuas, Gakkars and other Rajput Tribes which had adopted the Muhammadan religion.

On the other hand, Ibbetson (1974) says that it is impossible to fix the date of Gujar colonization of the lower districts in Punjab. They are almost exclusively Muslim except in the Jamna Districts and Hoshiarpur, and they must, therefore, have entered those districts before the conversion of the great mass of the Caste. The Jullundur Gujars date their conversion from the time of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) a very probable date. Nijjar (1972) also agrees with this date. In Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, the conversion of the Gujjars coincide with the period of Aurangzeb (Negi, 1976).

To conclude, it may be said that the exact date of conversion of Hindu Gujjars to Islam is still obscure, but it is apparent from the foregoing historical account that their different pockets must have been converted at different times. During the 13th Century (and even earlier) onward they have been induced as well as forced to accept Islam by various initial rulers and Sufi Saints, however, a massive forcible conversion took place during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707).

**DISTRIBUTION OF THE GUJJARS**

The distribution of the Gujjars was described by General Cunningham (cited from Ibbetson, 1974) thus..."
Gujars are found in great numbers in every part of the North-West of India, from the Indus to the Ganges, and from the Hazara Mountains to the Peninsula of Gujarat. They are specially numerous along the banks of the Upper Jamna near Jagadhri and Buriya, and in the Saharanpur District, which during the last Century was actually called Gujarat. To the East they occupy the petty State of Samptar, in Bundelkhand, and one of the Northern Districts of Gwalior, which is still called Gujargar. They are found only in small bodies and much scattered throughout Eastern Rajputana and Gwalior; but they are more numerous in the Western States, and especially towards Gujarat, where they form a large part of the population. The Rajas of Riwari to the South of Delhi are Gujars. In the Southern Panjab they are thinly scattered, but their numbers increase rapidly towards the North, where they have given their name to several important places, such as Gujranwala, in the Rechna Duāb, Gujarat, in the Chaj Duāb, and Gujjar Khan, in the Sindh Sagar Duāb. They are numerous about Jahlam and Hasan Abdal, and throughout the Hazara District; and they are also found in considerable numbers in the Dardu Districts of Chilas, Kohli, and Palas, to the East of the Indus, and in the contiguous districts to the East of the river."

Now-a-days, in India Gujjars are mostly confined to the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Western Uttar Pradesh (Figure - 1).
In North-Western part of India, both Hindu and Muslim Gujjars are found, but whereas the Hindu Gujjars are in the Sub-Himalayan and adjoining plains practise settled agriculture, the Muslim Gujjars are found exclusively in the hill areas and lead a pastoral, semi-nomadic life with seasonal migrations between low and high altitudes in search of conducive climate for their milch cattle and for pastures. They have down the generations led a pastoral life, depending almost entirely upon their herd of buffalo for a living and for all necessaries of life. At present both Hindu and Muslim Gujjars live in a complete social and geographical isolation and have separate breeding gene pools.