



## Tribal Dormitories: A Study of Gujjars and Bakrwals of J&K

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### **Abstract**

An important social structure in tribal society is the dormitory for young people. Almost every tribe has these institutions, and it's the centre of their social life. Assamese tribes call them 'Morung,' while Angomi Nagas call the female dormitory "Yo," and the male dormitory "Kinchuki." They go by various names depending on where they live. Rangbang is the name given to it in Uttar Pradesh, whereas Gitiora is the name given to it by the Mundas and Ho tribes of Madhya Bharat. It is known as Dhoomkuriya by the Oraons, Dhangarbassa by the Bhuiyan, and Gotul by the Gonds<sup>1</sup>. Dormitories are large structures where these youth groups have their headquarters. They're made of straw and thatch and look like little houses. Boys and girls have their own residences. The dormitory is where all of the tribe's young people spend their nights.

**Key words:** Tribal, Dormitories, Gujjars, Bakrwals, social, organization etc.

### **Introduction**

People in ancient India were divided up into tribes before there was a caste system in place. They were divided up into tribes based on their social status within the community. Each tribe had its own dialect and culture, but they all had a close bond with one another and with the other tribes to the north and south. Rural regions lack industry and outside influence, which has allowed some tribes to persist throughout time. Despite the fact that technology and urban life have encroached on certain tribal<sup>2</sup> groups, other regions in less developed nations remain untouched. These are the last remaining strongholds of the indigenous people.

Dormitories are a term used among these tribes to describe the communal living arrangements. The Morung System is a term used by the Naga, a major tribe from northeast India. In Indian tribes, dormitories serve as a communal dwelling area for young people. The goal of this area is to assist tribe members develop life skills like hunting and crafts while also establishing a sense of community among them from an early age.

It's possible that tribes formed because of the widespread usage of dorms, although theories abound.

**Protection** -Due to their location in the heart of a tribal society, researchers believe that dormitories were built to keep warriors grouped together and ready to fight at a moment's notice. The dorms foster a feeling of belonging among the tribe's members and assist to preserve the tribe's unique culture for future generations. Ancient Indian<sup>3</sup> tribes lived in communal homes and enabled everyone to labour together. This tradition has been carried on

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<sup>1</sup> "Manku, D.S (1986). The Gujjar Settlements: A Case Study in Ethnic Geography, Inter-India, Publication, New Delhi. Pp.29-30"

<sup>2</sup> "Mir, A.M. (2002): Geography of Jammu: A Regional Analysis. Dilpreet Publ. house, New Delhi, pp 40-41"

<sup>3</sup> "Munshi K. M (1954). Ret Raj Gujjar Desh. The Glory, New Delhi. Pp.6-9"



to the present day. The tribes may have attempted to replicate this on a lesser scale using this tradition.

**Distinction** - There is a possibility that dorms were built to keep the genders apart by preventing the access of men and girls to one another. Because of the differences in Indian cultures, this is a lot less probable.

### **Dormitories**

Because of this, there is no way to tell how or why the dorms came into being. They spend their days working in their villages and their nights sleeping in a communal dormitory, which is where they all live. As early as 4 years of age, some tribes place their youngsters in dormitories; other tribes hold off until they reach puberty. Once a couple marries, they move out of the dorms, regardless of tribe.

### **Layout**

Males and girls have their own dormitories in most villages, however in certain tribes, the two are mixed. Some Indian tribes have so many members that they need more than two dormitories to accommodate them. Doulas or midwives who assist women<sup>4</sup> during delivery place the children in special dormitories. You get to choose the dorm, and that kid will be guaranteed to live there when they reach adulthood. Social hierarchy may be found in the dorms. The kids elect a leader, and that leader is in charge of ensuring the safety of the dorm and keeping everyone in it under control. It's possible that lower leaders will be selected to help with the tasks and responsibilities.

### **Dorm room characteristics**

Among the dormitory's key features are the ones listed below:

It's not uncommon for guys and girls to share a dormitory, depending on where you reside. The Muria follow this tradition. As an alternative, males dwell in the Morung while girls sleep at Yo among Assamese Konayak Nagas.

- Dormitories for Nagas are near fields, but they may also be outside the hamlet in the forest as with dormitories for the Nagas. The dormitory lies in the heart of the hamlet for the Oraon tribe.
- Dorm life is built on specific traditions and practises that are always adhered to by everyone who lives there.
- The average age of the people in the hostel varies from one tribe<sup>5</sup> to the next. Most tribes have an average lifespan of four to five years.
- The boys and girls share a dorm room until they are married, at which point their membership in the community is immediately terminated.
- The female who becomes a widow may rejoin the hostel as a member once again.

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<sup>4</sup> "Zutshi, B. (1998). Popula"

<sup>5</sup> "Chaudhary, S. N. 2009. Tribal Development since Independence, Concept Publishing House. New Delhi"



- In the evenings, after everyone has had their dinner at home, the dorm residents get together to socialise. People congregate in the dorms after dark, sit around a fire to tell tales and sing and play before going to bed.
- There are two courses in the dorm: seniors and juniors, which are separated by age. The dorm's leader is chosen by the seniors. It's his responsibility to look after the well-being of the whole hostel and keep things orderly. The juniors are subordinate to the elders and obey their orders. They also get various forms of instruction from the seniors.
- Everyone in the dorm is responsible for keeping the secrets of the dorm a secret.
- For example, they build a home for the bride and groom on the occasion of their marriage, or they assist the villagers in harvesting the grain.

### **The Gotul of Muria and Gond**

The Gotul of the Muria and the Gonds of Madhya Bharat deserve special attention as Indian tribal dormitories. It is supported by bamboo pillars and straw-baled roofs. There isn't even a crack for a window or a door in there.

The members can only get in if there's a tiny hole big enough for them. Every evening, all of the single guys and girls in the area congregate here, build a fire, sing and dance, and tell tall tales around it. The juniors assist the seniors and learn from them in a variety of ways. Various boys and girls are assigned different statuses and responsibilities<sup>6</sup> within the Gotul.

The dorm's leader is called Challen or Silledar. He is succeeded by Dewan, Tehsildar, Subedar, and Kotwal, amongst other officials. The females are assigned to jobs that are quite similar to theirs. Majumdar claims that the Gotul's mission is to protect the villagers from wild creatures. The adolescents are up for the most of the night, sleeping either in the last hours or throughout the day. In the forest, or out in the fields, they assist their parents tend to the livestock.

After eating, they go to Gotul for the night. Girls of the Muria tribe massage the men's bodies as a kind of sexual prostitution. In his book 'The Muria and their Gotul,' Verrier Elvin goes into great depth on the sexual lives of the Gotul. Apparently, the senior females are teaching<sup>7</sup> the younger guys about sexuality, as he has pointed out.

Shri Inder Jit Singh claims that there was no sexual activity among the Gotul in his novel, 'The Gandwana and the Gonds,'. Similarly, Hutton and D.N. Majumdar support Singh's position. In reality, Mr. Elvin has acknowledged and pondered the fact that the Gotul's members rarely ever conceive. Majumdar and Hutton claim that the Gotuls are social education hotbeds.

It features village traditional dances that depict agricultural, hunting, honey-gathering, and other economic pursuits. It is through tales that we learn about crime, punishment, and good and bad behaviour.

### **Conclusion**

Jammu & Kashmir's Gujjars and Bakrwals lag far behind other tribes in terms of socioeconomic development. It's a basic existence for the Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir state, who live in homes constructed of wood, mud, and straw that are covered

<sup>6</sup> "Lidhoo, M.L. 1992. Kashmir Tribes, Minakshi Publication, Srinagar."

<sup>7</sup> "Das, S.T. 1993. Tribal development and socio cultural Matrix Knashka Publication, Delhi."



with paddy and wild grass. Gujjar and Bakerwal social life is largely influenced by religion. To serve Maulvi, they go about their daily business according to religious customs such as marriage and death (priest). They are, in fact, colourful characters who have never done anything bad or are harbouring any remorse. There have been many natural changes to the community's environment, but little action has been done by government to address their politicoeconomic and sociocultural concerns. Poverty and a lack of opportunity are the foci of communal life. The Gujjar and Bakerwal ethnic groups, who live in the hilly region, are large and conservative in outlook. In addition to being known as "nature's own offspring," the Gujjar and Bakerwal people are also known as "lords of forest."

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