

Pastoral Subjectivity: sedentarisation and healthcare challenges of the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract: Pastoral semi-nomadic Gujjars are known for their seasonal migration patterns, including winter migration from pastures situated in the Himalayas to lower ranges of the Siwaliks and plains and then back in summers. With time, Gujjars in Jammu and Kashmir are adopting a sedentary lifestyle owing to multiple factors, including economic transformation, developmental policies and the most recent armed conflict. Historically, these changes have shaped Gujjar relations with the State in complex ways. Mistrust is at the core of Gujjar-State relations. I call this 'specifically cultural and historical consciousness' of Gujjars vis-à-vis state as subjectivity. Through the analysis of ethnographic snippets from my ongoing fieldwork in Jammu and Kashmir, I argue that this subjectivity shapes Gujjars' experiences as health-seekers and their healthcare providers who belong to neighbouring dominant communities. Since both Gujjars and their healthcare providers share relations of mistrust with each other, it makes Gujjars' pathway to primary healthcare complicated.

Key words : Pastoralism, Scheduled Tribe, Biomedicine, Health seeking behaviour, Resistance, Mistrust, Tribe-State Relations