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# A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe People in Poonch District of Jammu and Kashmir Shahzad Chowdhary

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Abstract

# Schedule tribe people are the third largest community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They constitute 11.9 percent of the total population in the state and 36.9 percent in district poonch according to the census of India in 2011. The social profile of tribal community in the district poonch is changing with time but not up to a satisfactory level. Socially, scheduled tribe are still practicing the old traditions, customs and rituals. Most of them are of superstitious belief and it is this belief that hinder in their way of social reform. The literacy rate is very low due to poverty. No doubt a few families have good achievement in education but majority of tribal still suffer due to their illiteracy and poverty. Another thing is seasonal migration is one of the biggest hurdles in the education of tribal community. However it is gradually increasing but the dropout rate is also high because of certain social stigmas such as child marriage, child labour, poverty, parental illiteracy, lack of school within walking distance, helping parents in occupations and migratory nature of community. The schedule tribe people of poonch district have taken to the Islamic faith and according to their dress, way of life, marriage and kinship; all are different as compared to their counterparts settled in other parts of the state. Schedule tribe community have their own culture and linguistic identity. The focus of study area is an attempt to identify the social, cultural and education aspect of the district. This paper is based on secondary sources i.e. population census of India 2011, various books, journals, articles and reports

Keywords: Schedule tribe, culture, community, poverty, education.

47.88 percent literate according to 2011 census.

etc. Results have indicated that the literacy rate among the schedule tribe population was

**Introduction:** The term tribe is nowhere clearly defined in the constitution and in fact there is no perfect or full proof definition anywhere. Its refer to the cultural and historical concept. It is used in term of flock's urban continuum along which different groups are classified, given a certain order of material culture and stage of technological growth and classified as tribes. According to Oxford dictionary the term 'tribe' is a group of people in primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor. For Verrier Elwin, the word tribe has been derived from the Latin root, the middle English term 'Tribuz' meaning the three divisions into which they early Romans where groped, come to evolve into the modern English tribe. Majumdar define the tribe as 'a collection of families or common groups bearing a common name, the member of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession/ occupation and have developed a well assured system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations'. In the constitution of India, the term tribes has not been defined clearly. Only the term 'Schedule Tribe' is explained as 'the tribal or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities' which the President may specify mutuality of obligations'. (Article 342).

The tribal people are very widely in their customs, tradition, culture and impact on the land, all consider the earth like a parent and revere it accordingly. In their opinion, 'mother earth' is the centre of the universe, the core of their culture, the origin of their identity as a people. We belong to the land. Our spirituality, our cultural and social lives depend upon it. At the heart of this deep bound is a perception, an awareness, that all of life-mountains, rivers animals, rocks, plants, insects and people are inseparably interconnected. In their society, material and spiritual words are woven together in one complex web, all living things imbued with a sacred meaning. (Nawaz 2013)

At the social level the tribal population in district poonch, Jammu and Kashmir state have ordered themselves in three principal groups: the Dera (household), the Dada-Potre (lineage) and the Jat or gotra (clan). The basic family unit is Dera or household which consist of husband, wife, children, and old parents. The dada—potre or lineage group consist of a patrilineally related kinsman tracing their ancestry to common ancestor up to seven generation and the Gotra or clan is the group based upon common belief among the Gujjars. (Warikoo 1999)

The tribal society of poonch district in J&K is mainly different from other ethnic groups and general society in various means like, in their habitats, degree of isolation, customs, beliefs, traditions, etc. But it does not mean there is no interaction with other group's society. Interaction with other groups is there at the larger scale. Furthermore, a tribe can be defined as a kinship group that constitute a society and the members of tribe consider each other to be related by the ties of kinship.

The schedule tribe population of poonch are semi-nomads and are concentrated almost in all part of district. The economy of tribal population is generally depending upon the cattle A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe... S. Chowdhary, A. Ahmed & P. Ahmed rearing while few also involve in agricultural activities. The community is seasonal migrate in search of food and fodder. They move twice in a year along their families. In their Dhoks (summer pastures) they spend five to six months between April to October and in winter they return to plains in their respective homes. In the poonch district mostly tribal people are gujjar and bakarwals and all the Gujjars and Bakerwals are engaged in pastoral economy but recently they have entered into agriculture also. Gujjars and Bakerwals of Jammu and Kashmir have several sub—castes. (Sharma 2013)

S.M. Dubey, (1972) studied on education, political consciousness and social change among the tribal community of the north east India. He concluded that tribes are illiterate, backward and there is a need of creating political consciousness among them. R.P. Khatana (1976) studied on the marriage and kingship among Gujjar and Bakarwals in Jammu and Kashmir and concluded that schedule tribe marriages within the clan strictly and community and also studied some aspect of transhumance in mountainous traits in 1976. P.C. Mehta (2000) studied on the overall review of the schedule tribe population development measure adopt in 20<sup>th</sup> century. He resulted that their socio-economic and educational status are not satisfactory they are insulation behind in each and every aspect of social life.

The paper present is an attempt to examine the Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe People in Poonch District of Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir State of India. It is based on the secondary source of data according to census of India 2011. The main objectives of the present paper are as under.

To examine the study of social, cultural and educational status of schedule tribe population?

The division of Jammu Poonch district is located on the southern slopes of Pir Panjal range and as such is rugged with Spurs and valleys. It lies between 33<sup>0</sup>25' to 34<sup>0</sup> 10'North latitude and 73<sup>0</sup> 58' to 74<sup>0</sup> 35' East longitude. Poonch district lies in the western side of the State. District Poonch is popularly known as mini Kashmir and is one among the remote districts of Jammu and Kashmir State. The district derives its name from the headquarters' town of Punch which is situated in Tehsil Haveli. The total population of district poonch (2011) 4, 76,835 out of which 1, 76,101 i.e. (36.9%) of schedule tribe population.

Distribution of Schedule tribe population: The tribal population is the third largest community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They constitute 11.9 percent of the total population in the state, and the district poonch constitute 36.9 percent of tribal population according to census of India, 2011. Schedule tribe population is highest in the Poonch district of Surankote block. The blocks which are highly concentrated by the schedule tribe population are Mendhar, poonch, and Mandi. Surankote block has 48.51 percent, Mendhar have 41.93 percent, poonch have 37.80 and Buffliaze have 27.79 percent of tribal population. In district poonch they are highly concentrated because this district has more pasture lands which favours for their livestock for grazing purposes. District poonch is mostly a mountainous area with many pasture lands, the tribal peoples are settle here. While the blocks of Balakote and Mandi has the lowest schedule tribe population.

Table no: 1 Distribution of schedule tribe population in Poonch district (2011)									
Sl.No.	District/	Total	ST population	Percentage of ST population to total					
	Block	Population		population					
1	Poonch	110454	41756	37.8					
2	Mandi	77947	18378	23.5					
3	Mendhar	116972	49056	41.9					
4	Balakote	24394	5933	24.3					
5	Surankote	97041	47075	48.5					
6	Buffliaze	50027	13903	27.7					
Source: census of India 2011									

The table showed that the schedule tribe population block wise of Poonch district. In poonch district main tribal population is spread by permanent agricultural block are Mendhar, Surankote, and poonch. The important blocks of tribal settlement are Mankote, Sawjia, Harni, Mendhar, Balakote, Samote, Buffliaze etc.

The permanent settlement and high density of tribal population concentration are Narole, Kasblari, Seindara, Hari, Mehrote, Bandi-chehian, chandak, Lassana, Sangala, kalaban Chhungan, Chhajla. In these village the density of population is more than 50 percent of the total population of the villages; otherwise every village are particularly have 30 percent to 70 percent of tribal population.

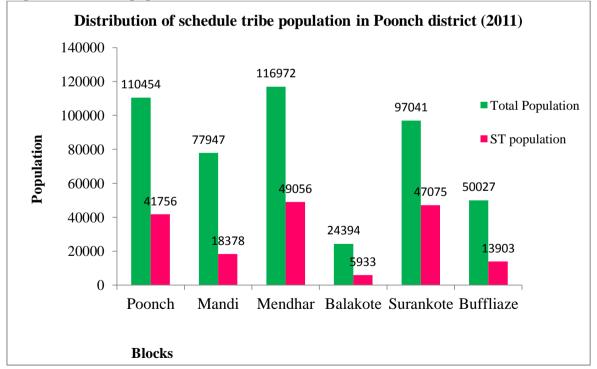


Figure 1: Graph showing the distribution of ST population in poonch. (Source: census of India 2011)

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The age composition of population is determined by mobility, natality and mortality. The differences in the mortality rates of the male and female also give rise to differences in the sex ratio. The female are more illiterate. These factors tell upon the health of the tribal female and result is relatively low female fertility. Consequently the sex ratio among the Poonch district is (893 female per 1000 male) and in schedule tribe population are (951 female per 1000 male). The impact of migration upon age composition of the tribal population can be analysed in a similar manner. The age composition of tribal population in district poonch, the presented study has been divided the population in three age groups, (i) the young below 15 years (ii) the adult above 15 to 59 years and (iii) all those who fall in above 60 years. The structure of tribal persons 15 to 59 years age group are mainly found and the below 15 and above 60 years persons are depend by the adults. It is fact this age group being a working class it is predominant in the study and structural phenomenon is almost similar to the other population living in the region.

### **Education:**

Table no: 2 Literacy rate of schedule tribe population in Poonch district (2011)										
Sl.No.	District/	ST	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female			
	Block	population			Literacy	Literate	Literate			
1	Poonch	23.71	51.73	48.27	52.26	60.73	43.19			
2	Mandi	10.43	52.18	47.82	43.42	53.24	32.70			
3	Mendhar	27.85	49.86	50.14	51.45	60.89	42.06			
4	Balakote	3.39	49.85	50.15	51.86	60.41	43.36			
5	Surankote	26.73	51.68	48.32	44.39	53.97	34.13			
6	Buffliaze	7.89	52.71	47.29	38.12	49.24	25.73			
		Total 100								
Source:	census of India									

Block wise distribution of literacy among the schedule tribe population in the above table shows that high literacy is found among the tribal population in the blocks of Poonch have 52.26 percent Surankote have 51.86 percent and Mendhar have 51.45 percent education respectively. These for the more literate blocks as far as the literacy among the tribal is concerned. Among the other categories of population in all the blocks have more number of educated people than the schedule tribe. It is highly marginalized and illiterate then general population of the district. The schedule tribe population have the lowest enrolment in school education in poonch district. In many schedule tribe areas have no school available at all, and in other areas the availability of school the tribal people are not permanent settlement because mostly the gujjar and bakarwals are in tribal people, they are applying poverty and migratory character of the seasonal migrants are the factor responsible for wide disparity in the male and female literacy rates.

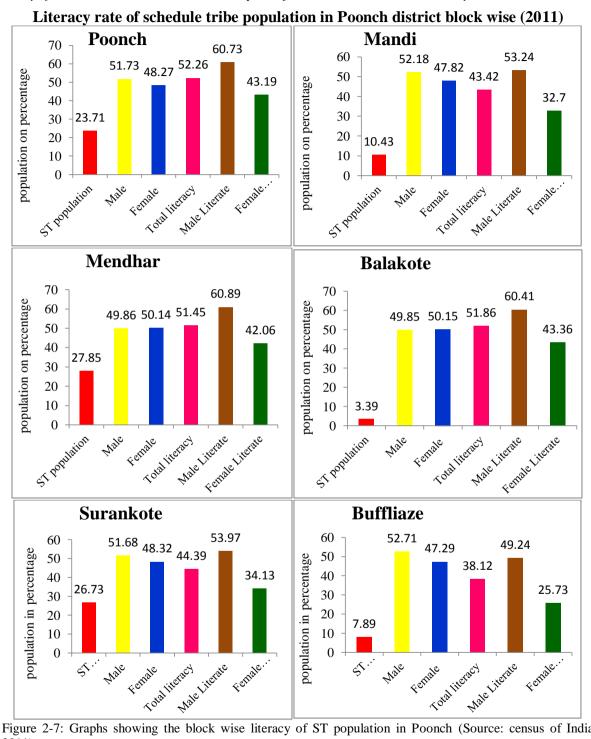


Figure 2-7: Graphs showing the block wise literacy of ST population in Poonch (Source: census of India 2011)

The government had opened mobile school (transferable with pastoral) in 1970 educational facility in the form of "Seasonal schooling camps" in the upper reaches of Pir-Volume- VI, Issue-II October 2017 254 A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe... S. Chowdhary, A. Ahmed & P. Ahmed

Panjal ranges and mountainous areas. The main purpose of this scheme was completed the educational need of migrated, nomad peoples. Some people are no aware from this policy and programmes of government. This type of school are availed in some areas of district poonch but they have not worked regularly because the teachers are not suffer far daily and they have no source of transport for travel.

Another thing is seasonal migration is one of the biggest hurdles in the education of tribal community. However it is gradually increasing but the dropout rate is also high because of certain social stigmas such as child marriage, child labour, poverty, parental illiteracy, lack of school within walking distance, helping parents in occupations and migratory nature of community. The literacy rate among the tribal population is low as compare to other inhabitants of the blocks. In the tough and cruel atmosphere for the schooling of children and result are the teacher's shortage and poorly motivated teachers in schools lead to the poor education. In a school throughout the field work found as 50 students per teacher. In some cases teachers do not attend schools due to poor monitor system in such schools. Low income of the parents which makes no easy for them to pay of tuition fee, uniform, books and other offerings to schools. Parents tend to make use of their children for their domestic as well as rearing cattle performance for the reason that the poor attendance of students was noticed in the schools.

Culture: Before describing the culture of schedule tribe population, it will be appropriate to understand the concept of culture. The most commonly acceptable definition of culture is given by E. B. Taylor; he defined 'culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, art, belief, morals customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". According to Haralambos in 2014 the culture of tribal population are concerned most of them flow the flock culture. Schedule tribe population of poonch district culturally very much depict able and by customs religious rites and dancing etc. In the district poonch the majority of tribal population are the follower of Islam thy flowed strictly old customs and traditions. They flow the custom of child marriage where girl are married in 14-15 years and boys at 17-20 years. Schedule tribe population have adjustment themselves to different patterns of life and adjustment. No doubt, tribal population in poonch have taken to the Islamic faith and according to their dress, and way of life, marriage and kinship, all are changed as compared to their counterpart settled in other parts of the district. They have developed the culture have adjusting through their local situation. But from the past few years the tribal indigenous culture has been distorted with the beginning of urbanization Industrialisation, and other several factors.

Language: In the community has the very beautiful language of Gujari also called as (Gojri). The language belongs to the Rajasthani language group. They have also developed fluency in other languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, and Pahari languages like Dogri and Kangri. As regards language of the tribal population, except tehsil Mendhar where Bakarwals have a speck different pronunciation, they take it easy of the community speaks the same language. (Rahi, 2011) Gojri is a form of Rajasthani and in opposition, Rajasthani is a form of Gojri and similarity of Gojri to Mewari is very striking. But still closer is the

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A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe... S. Chowdhary, A. Ahmed & P. Ahmed similarity of Gojri to Mewari tongue of Rajasthani. Gojri speaker constitute the third largest group in Jammu and Kashmir State and in the poonch district second largest group of Gojri speaker. Gojri language is one of the oldest and significant languages of the South Asian Sub Continent. According to current analysis of Gojri language is the first language of twenty million people in South Asia and almost eight million people in India majority of them in the Jammu and Kashmir State highly in Leh, Kirgal and poonch district. The Government of the Jammu and Kashmir has recognised Gojri already including it in the sixth schedule of the constitution.

Festivals: Celebrations are of an integral part for tribal group. They participate in all festivals of national significant. Many festivals celebrated by the tribal population are frequently among the Muslim brothers from poonch but few of them are celebrated by the tribal's only like Baiskahi, lighting lamps on the graves which are very close to the Hindus of north India. Festivals are a portion and parcel for tribal Community. They celebrate all the festivals have included their religious beliefs and customs. These are the important festivals for their society which they celebrate with great festivity. The main religious festivals and activities observed by the tribal community are five times prayers (Nimaz), fasting in the month of Ramzan, Idul-Fitar, Idul-Zaha, Idmaladul-Nabi, Baisakhi and Naoroz. They start their upward moving after the celebration of Baisakhi festival in April. But since the majority of them left the seasonal migration, significance of the Baisakhi festival is decline in the community. This Baisakhi festival has a large significance in the tribal life and in exacting for start the seasonal migration in April. During the course of annual migration, they pass from many shrines and graves of the pirs (holy men). If a death occur throughout the migration, the dead is buried somewhere along the route. They heap up stones on the grave and each year as they pass through this route they give respect to the departed soul and light a lamp on the grave. On the other hand in the home of death person they condoling the death of near and dear ones they recite poetic recitations from the books like c-harfi, Soni-Mahiwal, Saif-ulMaluk which enthrals the audience and regularly in 40 days of death. Most of the tribal people have a joint family system and travel together showed in below image. (Sharma, Anita, 2009).



**Food Habits:** Owing to their transhumant nature, topography and society the tribal community of the district has adopted different types of food habits. Their living pattern, food and dietary practices and their manner to different aspects of life, may often differ from those of the non-tribal population. As most of them, particularly those who are not sitting depend upon their animals and cattle. Their staple food comprises milk products and maize. (Sharma 2009)

Due to varying the agricultural system in the cropping pattern food habits for many of the communities undergone some changes and it was noticed in the tribal community too. Maize is the staple food of the hilly areas peoples particularly tribal as it gives the heat and power which the body is required especially in winter. Maize is grown-up in the mountainous and hilly areas it is a tropical crop in this region. The crop growing of maize is done by the tribal community as it is grown in hilly areas and majority of the nomads are settled in these areas. Other crops like wheat, rice etc need irrigation they are developed in the tribal areas of poonch. So they left the only option of cultivate the maize. Mostly they depend on milk products as their staple food besides maize, wheat and cereals. They may be vegetarians and non-vegetarians as well. The favourite dishes of tribal are "Maki ki Roti" Ganhar, Bathvoa Sarssoon ka Sag, Kari Lassi, Kalari, Karan, noon cha, Lipton tea and goat milk. The Bakarwal to eat bread cooked from both wheat and maize flour. Some of them take rice too. However, while for the majority of the tribal population are favourite tea as remains noon cha see in below image of noon cha some of them have started to enjoy the occasional pleasure of sweetened tea.



**Dress pattern:** The dress of the tribal population is quite different from the Kashmiris and Dogras. Owing to their transhumant nature, geography and culture the tribal community of the district poonch has adopted a unique dress pattern. The tribal men wear a turban of unique shape and form locally called as Safa, Pag and Lungi used of aged men. They wear Waist coat and Shalwar Kameez, worn by both men and women is known as suthan and the kameez as peherni or kurti, Kurta Pajama, Vaskat, jacket known as basket on the kameez, Angoo, Tehmad as well as shoes for the footwear which is also a typical of their group all through the year. Women too wear Shalwar Kameez and keep Gojri/Bakarwali Topi or Cap on their head apart from beautiful cloths called Duppatta, chuuni known as Chipri, or Head Sheet Which looks like a shawl and flock wear long gone called jubo, pheerni, jotti, jora,

A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe... S. Chowdhary, A. Ahmed & P. Ahmed shirt with choridar-shalwar a smaller triangular scarf mainly worn by the younger women is kasawa etc. Men sometimes wear rings of silver but they usually don't put on jewellery. Women however put on exclusive jewelleries, mostly silver Jewelleries. These contain a long chain around the neck called Gani, Har and Haseeri. Loung is put on nose along with a pair of Baali and Kantas in their ears. (Sharma 2009)

Folk Games: Despite having a hard life the tribal community takes out time for relaxation and diversion and in their own particular manner. They play numerous games like stone Lifting (Bughdar), Arm holding (Beeni Panjo), Chitto (played mostly by girls), Panj geete (indoor game with five little bit of stone) Ghlee-Danda, Santooli (seven flat and small parts of mountain and a ball making by some old clothes) Chhupan-chhupiee (some children are entered in the selected area of bushes and one are find of each) etc, the school attended students are playing all types of games in the school and after the time of school.

Arts and Crafts: The tribal community although less advanced in handicraft and art still presents a peculiar bring together of beauty and simplicity. Decoration of houses and animals with unique colours of flowers making by wool and jewelleries are simply beautiful. They decorate their horses and other animals wear taweez, (lockets) and some small bells loclly called as tali, or meale. They make baskets locally known as Khaari. They also make Phuri, Kheerha and Taplli as sitting tools. They make beds for their own use especially of grass and fur of Goat locally called as Manja, Manji and Khatt and in the dhoks (pastoral areas) they make the bed for their own use making by some thin and long pieces of wood and leafs of the trees locally called as Dangee.

Marriage Ceremonies: Marriage is one of the most important institutions of society and one of the social events in tribal community which can have very different implication in different culture. Broadly speaking, marriage may be defined as "The socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of opposite sex, whose relationship is expected to endure behind the time required for gestation and the birth of children". Marriages in tribal community are performed to fixed in adulthood by negotiation and are elder members of the family. Marriage is usually a set of ceremonies that are conducted both at the groom and bride's place. The family are mainly extended type but at times nuclear Families also come up. The legacy of the property from father to sons, who equally share it. Child marriage is still a social evil among the tribal baby Girl get married to the kids of their own age group or on many occasion to grown up men. Dowry practise is yet another evil prevailed among the tribal community of the state particularly in the peasantry class. (Akther 1999)

Generally tribal peoples have no matrimonial alliances with others, they marry within their own tribe and the Gujjars families feel reluctant to give their daughter marriage to non-Gujjars or bring bride for their son from outside of their community. They maintain their matrimonial and kinship relationship confined to their own community. Marriage constitutes an important basis out of which the kinship relations grow and sustained in general, monogamy is the norm of the tribal communities. But at the same time because the

A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe ... S. Chowdhary, A. Ahmed & P. Ahmed tribal community have embraced Islam, they have been permitted to keep more than one wife. The tribal peoples are avoid marrying the children of same mother, foster brothers and sisters and sister's and brother's children. The tribal community had custom of marriage generally start with the date fixing ceremony and continue till the marriage takes place. In between there are lot of sub-customs and rituals. Some of the important marriage customs among the tribal communities which are locally known as, Matti Khunni, Matti Lanee, Kapra Baterna, Lakri Tokni etc. All these customs are the kind of preparations and tasks for the marriage ceremonies. There are also some other marriage ceremonies these ceremonies are locally called as Tel, Chor Tel, (oil Ceremonies). In their weddings they use in their meals lot of curd i.e. Dahi and salt. The curd is presented by the relatives and neighbours people as a mark of gift to the household celebrating the wedding. In their locally dialect, this practice is called Bhaaji, Temol, (token money). The custom of water fetching is also celebrated by a women at the occasion, for this a girl who is appointed as the sister locally called as Dharm Behan to the groom or bride perform the task. And later on this water is used for the bathing of groom or bride. Then the custom of contributing money which is called as Nedra is performed it is considered as almost the end marriage. The peak ceremony is departure of the marriage's party from the house of groom and its reception at the house of bride. Then the custom of Nikha is performed to solemnize the marriage and this ceremony is performed in accordance with the established Islamic rules. The bride is decorated with silver ornaments like silver chains like silver Dolara, silver Sargast, silver Mahail, silver Gani, silver Ear-rings, silver Bangles, silver Rings and silver Necklaces called "HASEERI" etc. The bridegroom wears headwear like lungi, pag, safa waistcoat, shirt and shalwaar besides red handkerchief in his hands and "SEHRA" on forehead which adds to his grace and glory. On the occasion of celebration of marriages they recite poetic recitations from the books like C-harfi, Soni-Mahiwal, Saif-ul-Maluk, Mahiya, Gujjari batt, Phari-tappay, and Gheets etc, which enthrals the audience (Rahi, 2011)

Conclusion: It can be concluded from the above examination that social cultural and educational aspects of tribal in the district of Poonch is changing with time but not up to a satisfactory level. Socially, tribal population are still practicing the old traditions and customs. No doubt a few families have good achievement in education but majority of tribal still suffer due to their illiteracy and poverty. There is a wide spread poverty, illiteracy and backwardness among the tribal people which is evident according to census report as per 2011 census 47.88 percent literacy among tribal community. Most of them are of superstitious belief and it is this belief that hinder in their way of social reforms. The literacy rate is very low. Majority of the tribal of Poonch depend on their agricultural productivities and cattle for their livelihood in lower, middle and the higher mountain regions. These include nomadism, poor infrastructure as well as poorly motivated teachers. So, there is a lack of awareness among the tribal community. To make effort to generate educational awareness and attitudinal changes among the masses regarding tribal and the role of tribal's families. However it is gradually increasing but the dropout rate is also high because of certain social stigmas such as child marriage, child labour, poverty, parental illiteracy, lack of school within walking distance, helping parents in occupations and Volume- VI. Issue-II October 2017 259 A Study of Social, Cultural and Educational Aspects of Scheduled Tribe... S. Chowdhary, A. Ahmed & P. Ahmed migratory nature of community. Little has been achieved in the area of tribal development by the efforts of both government and civil society but more improvement is required.

They have distant culture which differs from other communities in poonch district. Their language, dress pattern, marriage ceremonies and other several ceremonies performed during the weddings create a distinct image from them in the district. The tribal have mostly joint family pattern which is necessity for the survival of the livestock and occupation. Due to the past some years the tribal community are changing in all aspect of their life. Tribal people are also influenced by it and changed are witnessed in their every walk of life we can find the changes in their social cultural educational aspects.

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