



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

India

India – IND40060 – Jatt Sikh –
Lubana/Labana – Inter-Caste Marriage –
Amritsar – Punjab Police

13 April 2012

- 1. Please provide information about the Jatt Sikh and Lubana communities in Punjab, particularly which of the two is the higher and lower caste, and the strength of each caste in Punjab society.**

Jatt Sikh

According to a 2004 article in the journal *Asian Survey* by Ronki Ram, a senior lecturer in Political Science at Punjab University, the: “highest percentage of Sikhs comes from the Jat[t] caste”.¹ Jatt Sikh is the predominant caste in Punjab, and its members are the major land owners.² According to a 2007 article in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* by the same author, Jatt Sikhs also control the most important religious institutions in Punjab:

All the Sikh organisations like gurdwaras, Sikh deras, SGPC, and Shiromani Akali Dal are under the control of the jat Sikhs. In a recent empirical study of the caste background of the members of the SGPC, conducted by Narinderpal Singh, it is found that 80 per cent of its administrative posts are under the control of the jat Sikh...

...Dalits are often heard complaining that the jat Sikhs refused to consider them equal even after death by disallowing cremation of their dead in the main cremation ground of the village. This has forced them to establish separate gurdwaras, „janjghars’ (marriage centres) and cremation grounds. It is against this backdrop of social exclusion that a large number of dalits have been veering away from the mainstream Sikh religion and enrolling themselves into various forms of non-Sikh deras in Punjab.³

„Jatt Sikh’ is not listed as a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Other Backward Class (OBC) in the State of Punjab.⁴ Question 2 of *RRT Research Response IND34231* of 6 February 2009 provides three pages of information on the Jatt (including Jatt Sikhs) caste, including a history of the community in Punjab, its religious beliefs and other basic anthropological information.⁵

¹ Ram, R 2004, „Untouchability in India with a Difference: Ad Dharma, Dalit Assertion, and Caste Conflicts in Punjab’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No.6, pp.895-912, p.896.

² Ram, R 2004, „Untouchability in India with a Difference: Ad Dharma, Dalit Assertion, and Caste Conflicts in Punjab’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No.6, pp.895-912, pp. 897-898.

³ Ram, R 2007, „Social Exclusion, Resistance and Deras: Exploring the Myth of Casteless Sikh Society in Punjab’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No.40, pp.4066-4074, pp. 4066-4067.

⁴ „List of Scheduled Castes of Punjab State’ n.d., Punjab Scheduled Castes Land and Development and Finance Corporation website <http://pbscfc.gov.in/pscfc_castesList.html> Accessed 14 March 2012; „Central List of OBCs for the State of Punjab’ n.d., National Commission for Backward Castes website <<http://www.ncbc.nic.in/Pdf/punjab.pdf>> Accessed 15 March 2012.

⁵ RRT Research and Information 2009, *RRT Research Response IND34231*, 6 February.

Lubana

The Lubana caste is also known as the Lobana or Labana caste.⁶ In the 1976 book *The Transformation of Sikh Society*, by Ethene Marenco, the Lubana are described as being a ‚menial caste’, and are below the Jatt caste.⁷ Similarly in the 2004 article mentioned above, Ronki Ram includes Lubana in a list of ‚lower castes’.⁸ The Lubana caste, unlike the Jatt Sikh caste, is included on the Other Backward Class list for the State of Punjab.⁹ The following description is from *Peoples of India: Punjab*:

In the rural areas of Punjab, they are a land-owning community. Land is individually owned. In addition to cultivation they are employed in various services including army, which is considered prestigious in the community. Now, some of them are engaged in industry. However, those having small land holdings also work as agricultural labourers to supplement their incomes....Traditional caste councils known as Labana *sabhas* exist. A state level Labana Sabha also exists. It also publishes a monthly magazine, *Labana Sewak*, which publishes the community’s activities and matrimonial information. In rural areas, the community is well-represented in the statutory *panchayats*. They mainly profess Sikh religion. However, some believe in various Hindu deities.

The community freely interacts with other communities. Food and water are exchanged with other communities. They share festivals and religious shrines with other communities. They are employed in army, industry and judiciary. Leadership has emerged from among them at the state and national level.¹⁰

2. Please provide information on inter-caste marriages between Jatt and Lubana Sikhs.

Limited information was found concerning inter-caste relationships between Jatt and Lubana Sikhs; however, the two reports which were located suggest that a Jatt/Lubana Sikh relationship may not be considered acceptable by the respective families.

On 2 July 2010 *The Indian Express* reported that a Jatt Sikh woman was murdered by her step-father because she was in a relationship with a member of the Lubana community.¹¹ The victim and her boyfriend were living in Brussels with their families, and according to the report, the woman was visiting India with her family when she was murdered. According to a separate report in *The Indian Express*, the victim’s family “objected to any alliance with his family as they were Lobana Sikhs”.¹²

⁶ ‚Lubana profile’ n.d., Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lubana_sikh> Accessed 13 April 2012.

Wikipedia is a Web-based free-content encyclopaedia which is compiled collaboratively by volunteers.

Wikipedia articles can be useful introductory reading for a new topic, and the list of references in Wikipedia articles can provide useful leads to reliable sources. Many Wikipedia articles can be highly reliable, especially in regards to non-controversial historical or factual matters, and Wikipedia uses preventative measures against vandalism, bias and inaccuracy. However, the collaborative nature of Wikipedia makes it vulnerable to contributors with overt or covert agendas, and Wikipedia articles are thus prone to unacknowledged bias.

⁷ Ram, R 2007, ‚Social Exclusion, Resistance and Deras: Exploring the Myth of Casteless Sikh Society in Punjab’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No.40, pp.4066-4074, p. 4069.

⁸ Ram, R 2004, ‚Untouchability in India with a Difference: Ad Dharma, Dalit Assertion, and Caste Conflicts in Punjab’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No.6, pp.895-912, p.897.

⁹ ‚Central List of OBCs for the State of Punjab’ n.d., National Commission for Backward Castes website <<http://www.ncbc.nic.in/Pdf/punjab.pdf>> Accessed 15 March 2012.

¹⁰ Bansal, I.J.S and Singh, S ed. 2003, *People of India: Punjab*, Vol. 37, pp301-302.

¹¹ Rataul, D 2010, ‚Stepfather confesses to killing 17-yr-old for honour’, *The Indian Express*, 2 July <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/stepfather-confesses-to-killing-17yroid-fo/641118/>> Accessed 11 April 2012.

¹² Rataul, D 2010, ‚NRI honour killing: Boyfriend offers to come from Brussels’, *The Indian Express*, 2 July <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/nri-honour-killing-boyfriend-offers-to-come-from-brussels/641243/0>> Accessed 11 April 2012.

On 12 February 2010 a Jatt Sikh woman living in India posted a question on the internet forum, Ask Me Help Desk, regarding advice as to how she might convince her parents to accept her marrying a member of the Lubana community. The woman stated that her parents “are looking [for] a match for me from the same community”.¹³ Implied in the woman’s question is a perception that her parents will not easily accept an inter-caste relationship.

Information from previous *RRT Country Advice* indicates that inter-caste couples, particularly those involving members of the Jatt Sikh community, may be attacked or threatened by members of their respective families. For instances in which people have been killed for being in an inter-caste relationship, and which involve members of the Jatt Sikh community, see question 3 of *RRT Country Advice IND39966* of 4 April 2012.¹⁴

3. Please provide information of whether police and authorities are made up of Jatt Sikhs and, if so, what proportion.

An undated „State Wise Seniority List of Constables’ for the State of Punjab, posted on the Punjab police website, indicates that constables, the lowest and most prevalent police rank in India¹⁵, are recruited from a variety of communities, including the Jatt and Lubana Sikh communities. It should be noted that the list must have been assembled after July 2010, being the final recruitment-date provided in the document.¹⁶ The list includes 31,483 constables, of which 11,264 (35.7 per cent) are Jatts and 768 (2.4 per cent) are Lubanas. In general terms, 8,957 belong to a Scheduled Caste, 5,617 to a Backward Class, and 16,909 to a General Caste (i.e., upper caste). Lists of „Head Constables’ and „Inspectors’ were found which also include members of the General Castes, Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes, although the exact proportion of each caste could not be quantified.¹⁷

An undated essay on the South Asia Terrorism Portal provides the following quotes from the 1994 book *Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, by Mark Juergensmeyer, an academic at the University of California, Santa Barbara:

The leaders of the police and the central administration of the Punjab were often urban Hindus and Sikhs from merchant castes – traditional rivals of the *Jats*.

Punjab Police are often drawn from the so-called backward castes, such as the blacksmiths and carpenters, **as well as from the lowest, the scheduled castes** which include *churas* (sweepers). Urban sweepers, known as *balmikis*, have traditionally been Hindus and have allied with urban merchant-caste Hindus (such as *aroras* and *khatris*)¹⁸ (emphasis added).

¹³ „How to convince parents for inter caste marriage’ 2010, Ask Me Help Desk website, 12 February <<http://www.askmehelpdesk.com/marriage/how-convince-parents-inter-caste-marriage-446236.html>> Accessed 11 April 2012.

¹⁴ RRT Country Advice and Information Services 2012, *Country Advice IND39966*, 4 April.

¹⁵ „List of Police Ranks in India’ 2012, Wikipedia, 30 March <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_police_ranks_in_India> Accessed 12 April 2012.

¹⁶ „Tentative State Wise Seniority List of Constable of State Cadre’ n.d., Punjab Police website <<http://punjabpolice.gov.in/PDFVier.aspx?enc>> Accessed 12 April 2012.

¹⁷ „Seniority List of Head Constables of Armed BNS’ n.d., Punjab Police website <<http://punjabpolice.gov.in/PDFVier.aspx?enc>> Accessed 12 April 2012; „Final Combined Seniority List of Inspectors up to 01/01/2010’ 2010, Punjab Police website <<http://punjabpolice.gov.in/PDFVier.aspx?enc>> Accessed 12 April 2012.

¹⁸ Sahni, A n.d. „Social Science and Contemporary Conflicts: The Challenge of Research on Terrorism’, *South Asian Terrorism Portal* <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume9/Article5.htm>> Accessed 10 April 2012. For Juergensmeyer see: „Biography of Mark Juergensmeyer’ n.d., University of California Santa Barbara website <<http://www.global.ucsb.edu/faculty/juergensmeyer.html>> Accessed 12 April 2012.

However, the factual basis of the claim is questioned by the author of the essay, Ajai Sahni, a director of the Institute for Conflict Management in Dehli, who writes:

No statistics relating to the caste composition of the police, no sources and no authority is cited to support these views, and the only cross reference given is to another of Juergensmeyer's own writings. But this is a red herring.¹⁹

It should be noted, however, that the „State Wise Seniority List of Constables' cited above seems to support Juergensmeyer's claim. In a June 2003 article in the Indian magazine *Frontline*, the author, Praveen Swami, writes that during clashes between Dalit youth and police in Punjab in 2003 “young Dalits [refused] to respect curfew orders imposed by what they say is a **Jat-dominated police force** and administration”²⁰ (emphasis added). The belief that the Punjab police force is pro-Jatt is also present in a June 2003 article in *Economic and Political Weekly*, in which the author claims that over a period of five years, Dalits were abused by “Jat zamindars” in Punjab “invariably with covert support from policeman” (Zamindar is an Indian term which means „land-holder”).²¹

4. Please provide information on whether persons from the Lubana community are protected by police and authorities from attacks.

No information was found regarding the protection of members of the Lubana community by police and other government authorities in Punjab. It should be noted, however, that Lubanas serve in the Punjab police force, (see the response to Question 3 above).

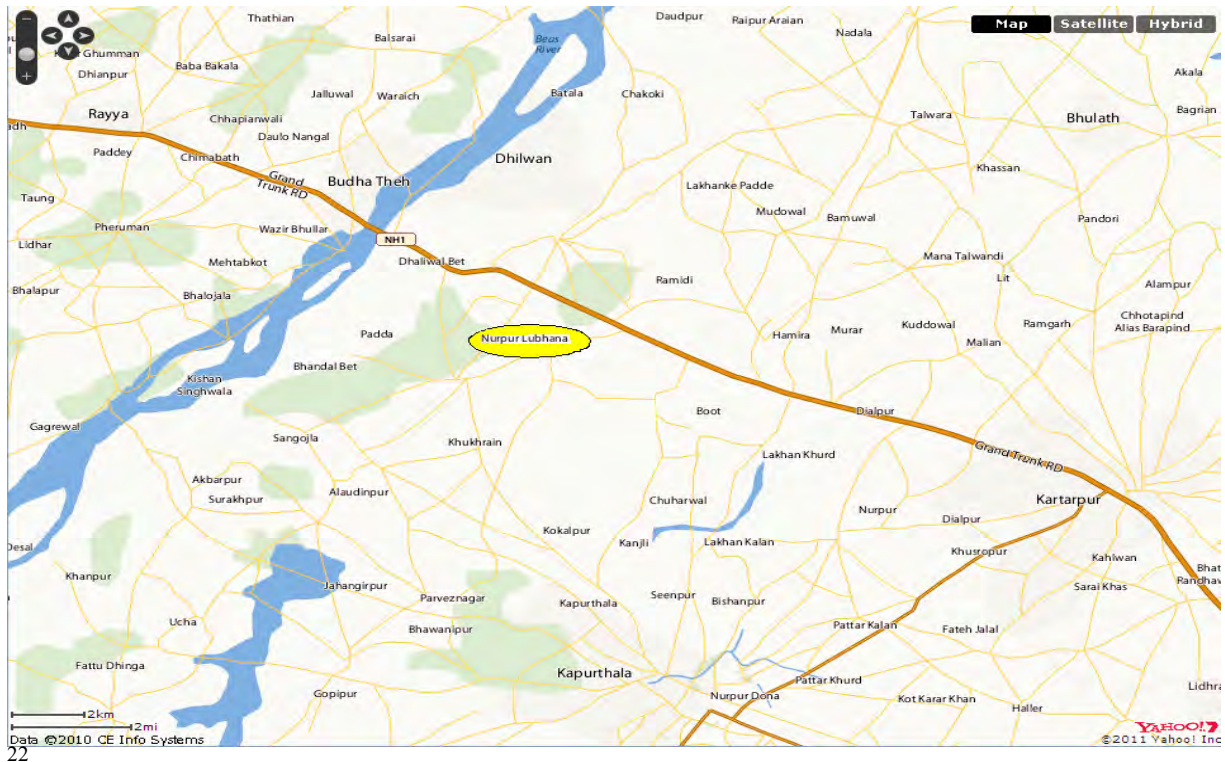
5. Please locate Nurpur Labana.

Nurpur Lubana is located in the district of Kapurthula, in the state of Punjab. The area encircled in the map below is Nurpur Lubana:

¹⁹ Sahni, A n.d., „Social Science and Contemporary Conflicts: The Challenge of Research on Terrorism', *South Asian Terrorism Portal* <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume9/Article5.htm>> Accessed 10 April 2012. For Ajai Sahni see: „Profile of Ajai Sahni' n.d., South Asia Terrorism Portal <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/icm/Profiles/Director.html>> Accessed 12 April 2012.

²⁰ Swami, P 2003, „A Shrine and a Struggle', *Frontline*, Vol. 20, No.13 <<http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2013/stories/20030704002703900.htm>> Accessed 10 April 2012. For Praveen Swami see: „Profile of Praveen Swami' n.d., *The Telegraph* <<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/author/praveenswami/>> Accessed 12 April 2012.

²¹ Puri, H 2003, „Scheduled Castes in Sikh Community: A Historical Perspective', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 26, p.2700; „Zamindar' 2012, *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 11 April <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/655661/zamindar>> Accessed 11 April 2012.



The following image is a close-up of Nurpur Lubana:



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6. Please provide general information on the city of Amritsar.

²² „Nurpur Lubhana in Punjab’ n.d., Yahoo Maps website

<<http://au.maps.search.yahoo.com/search/maps?p=nurpur+lubhana&fr2=sb-top&n=0>> Accessed 5 April 2012.

²³ The location was determined by comparing a map provided on the photo-sharing website Panoramio, in which the location of Nurpur Labana is highlighted, and Google Maps: „Photo from Nurpur’ Lubana in Punjab’ 2011, Panoramio website, 22 August <<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/57734905>> Accessed 5 April 2012; „Nurpur Lubana’ n.d., Google Maps website <<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?ie=UTF-8&hl=en&tab=w>> Accessed 5 April 2012.

The city of Amritsar is located in the district of Amritsar, in the State of Punjab. Its population in 2011 was 1,132,761.²⁴ The Golden Temple, an important Sikh site, is situated in Amritsar, as is the Sikh parliament (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee).²⁵ Aside from being a center for Sikhism, Amritsar is also an important commercial center in Punjab.²⁶ The following statements are from the Amritsar Portal website, a United Kingdom (UK) based website developed by „volunteers in the UK’²⁷:

There are a number of cotton, woollen and art silk textile factories besides other industries dealing with electric goods, sewing machines, auto parts, carpets. The milk processing plant at Verka about 6 kms from the center is the second biggest project of its kind in the country. Amritsar is India’s leading exporter of goods to the Middle-East, leading distribution centre of dry fruits, tea and condiments. It is also a shopper’s paradise and a gourmet’s delight. Amritsar is the world’s leading centre of Punjabi publications.

Amritsar Airport is now an international airport and fast becoming the gateway to Northern India. Amritsar is now the Gateway to Punjab and North India with Raja Sansi International Airport. Jet Airways, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Air India now offer Amritsar Flights from Delhi, Birmingham and London.²⁸

No information was found on the caste-based demography of the city of Amritsar.

²⁴ „Cities having population 1 lakh and above, Census 2011’ 2011, Census of India website <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/India2/Table_2_PR_Cities_1Lakh_and_Above.pdf> Accessed 12 April 2012.

²⁵ For Golden Temple see: „History of Golden Temple’ n.d., SGPC website <<http://sgpc.net/golden-temple/index.asp>> Accessed 13 April 2012; for SGPC see: „Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee’ n.d., SGPC website <http://sgpc.net/the-sgpc/index_eng.asp> Accessed 13 April 2012.

²⁶ Roy, V 2005, „Golden Temple shores up Amritsar economy’, *Business Standard*, 3 November <<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/golden-temple-shoresamritsar-economy/224719/>> Accessed 13 April 2012; Aulakh, G 2010, „Real estate on the rise in Amritsar’, *The Economic Times*, 3 January <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-01-03/news/28416598_1_developers-group-housing-amritsar> Accessed 13 April 2012.

²⁷ „Amritsar Portal’ n.d., Amritsar Portal website <<http://www.amritsar.com/>> Accessed 13 April 2012.

²⁸ „Amritsar’ n.d., Amritsar Portal website <<http://www.amritsar.com/Amritsar.shtml>> Accessed 13 April 2012.

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„Biography of Mark Juergensmeyer’ n.d., University of California Santa Barbara website <<http://www.global.ucsb.edu/faculty/juergensmeyer.html>> Accessed 12 April 2012

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<<http://au.maps.search.yahoo.com/search/maps?p=nurpur+lubhana&fr2=sb-top&n=0>> Accessed 5 April 2012

„Photo from Nurpur Lubana in Punjab’ 2011, Ponoramio website, 22 August
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<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/655661/zamindar>> Accessed 11 April 2012