



MARGINALIZATION OF NOMADIC TRIBE: AN OVERVIEW OF DECLINE IN SEASONAL MIGRATION

Dr. Neharica Subhash*

Research Assistant, CSSEIP, University of Jammu. *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT The 'Bakarwal' community is one of the twelve tribal communities that are officially recognized in Jammu and Kashmir with the assistance of various amendments. Both 'Gujjar' and 'Bakarwal' communities together form the third largest population group in the state. According to the Census of India (2011), the total population of the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Jammu and Kashmir accounts for 11.9 per cent of its total population, out of which Gujjars are the highest in number followed by Bakarwal Tribe. It has long been a tradition among both Gujjars and Bakarwal Tribe to migrate to the highland pastures along with their livestock in summers and migrate back to the lowlands in winters. This tradition of seasonal migration has consistently been maintained by their generations together. This is why they are known as 'Nomads' and their movement is called 'Transhumance'. However, both Gujjars and Bakarwal Tribe have continuously been migrating, but this tradition has declined among them (declined more among Gujjars than Bakarwal Tribe). The paper focus on the decline in seasonal migration as the communities now feel marginalized as their social as well as economic life is more harsh and difficult.

KEYWORDS : Tribe, Seasonal migration, Marginalized

INTRODUCTION

The life of these nomadic people has been a kind of a periodical shifting. Such an oscillatory movement or mobility assumes that they must have two separate living places or dwellings-a permanent one in the village at low altitudes and another in the form of hut in alpine pastures. People living in mountains in isolation have not been exposed to the outside world. Their social life has deeply been affected with fear of the black magic and this creates a barrier in their advancement and progress. In their society, the process of overall progress and development has highly been constrained by the tough conditions. It is one of the areas where nature holds the upper hand and determines man's destiny. The residents of these kinds of areas have incorporated spatial mobility, flexibility in diet and eating customs, and maintenance of low densities of population, which raise the resilient feature of this fragile and weak ecosystem (Rets, et al, 2017).

The Bakarwal Tribe of Jammu and Kashmir have a unique way of life, language, and customs that are quite different in comparison to their counterparts who are settled mostly in the plains of Jammu and Kashmir. The Bakarwal Tribe remain nomadic, but even for them, this has been changing as it can be recorded that a significant proportion has settled in the plain regions of Jammu and Kashmir, owing to the increasing hardships that the phenomenon of the seasonal migration.

Research Methodology

For the task of investigating seasonal migration and its decline 7 districts of Jammu province were select using the purposive sampling technique (as these districts have considerable populations of the Bakarwal Tribe). The selected districts were namely Kathua, Samba, Jammu, Reasi, Rajouri, Ramban, and Poonch. A sample of 50 households belonging to the Bakarwal Tribe was selected and surveyed using snowball technique. A total of 350 households with the help of interview schedule recorded data on seasonal migration.

This paper takes into consideration the following aspects of the seasonal migration among the sampled households in the study area:

- Seasonal migration: Trends and challenges
- Decline in seasonal migration
- Reasons behind declining seasonal migration.

Seasonal Migration

As soon as the summer season begins, the Bakarwals start their seasonal migration towards the high altitudes and the heights of the Himalayan mountain range, where the lush green grass on the grasslands is abundantly available for livestock or herds. They mainly rear sheep and goats; therefore they are called as Bakarwals. There are six lakh Bakarwal in Jammu and Kashmir. In their appearances and attires, they are having a well built, and they are brave and very hospitable. Earlier, the members of the Bakarwal tribe did not construct a permanent house to live and reside in them. Most of the Bakarwali people have houses in the shape of tents only. These tent houses are made with the help of tarpaulin, small sticks, and rope lengths. They carry along their clothes and household things from one place to another by loading on the back of their pack animals, such as horses. Generally, each Bakarwal family has about 400 sheep, 100

goats, 6 to 8 horses, Bakarwali mastiff dogs, and some poultry animals. Bakarwals, generally, do not rear buffaloes and cows. The Bakarwali women wear home stitched caps. These people wear the shoe, which is called a 'Jooti' that is fixed with some iron nails at the bottom and are quite heavy (Sofi, 2013).

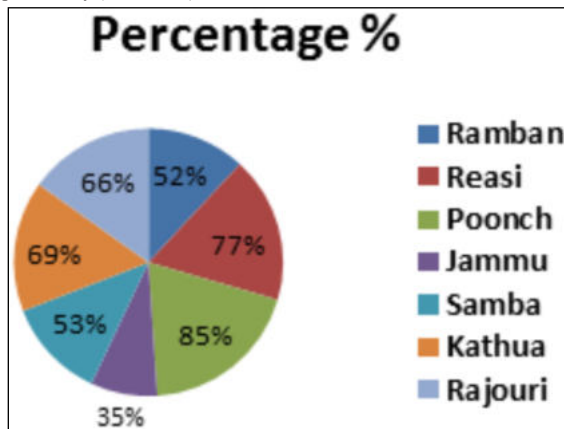


Fig:1 Percentage of the Sampled Households Migrating Seasonally

Fig:1 shows the percentage seasonal migration in different districts. Data clearly indicates that Poonch district has highest percentage (85%) migrating seasonally and Jammu district has lowest percentage (35 %). The study area clearly indicates 62% of the sampled households were migrating seasonally. It was found that highest percentages of seasonal migration were still found in hilly areas mostly as compared to plain areas.

Challenges Faced During Seasonal Migration

Warikoo (2000) states that in all the aspects of the lifestyles, members of the Bakarwal tribe have been lagging far behind as compared to the other communities. In the contemporary age of Science and Technology, when the other communities have been having an active participation in the process of development, the members of the Bakarwal tribe have been lying behind. Table 4.2 clearly depicts that in the study area, 70 % of the sampled households who were migrating seasonally faced challenges due to natural calamities, 25 % faced challenges due to health related issues and 26 % faced challenges due to transport and traffic issues, and 40 % of the sampled households faced challenges due to accommodation and fear of wild animal attacks.

Table 4.2: Challenges Faced By The Sampled Households During Seasonal Migration

Study Area	Challenges faced during Seasonal Migration*			
	Natural Calamity (In %)	Health Related Issues (In %)	Transport and Traffic Issues (In %)	Accommodation and Fear of Wild Animal Attacks (In %)

Ramban	87	23	12	54
Reasi	92	14	7	56
Poonch	23	11	9	34
Jammu	89	34	65	79
Samba	92	21	52	21
Kathua	82	43	24	23
Rajouri	23	32	16	11
Total	70	25	26	40

Notes: *Multiple responses. Figures may be round off.
Source: Field survey.

It was found that majority of the sampled households in study area faced challenges related to climate, such as snowfall, rainfall, and harsh and rugged terrain, accommodation and threats from wild animal attacks.

According to the Census of India (2011) the total population of the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Jammu and Kashmir accounts for 11.9 per cent of its total population, out of which Gujjars are the highest in number followed by Bakarwals. It has long been a tradition among both Gujjars and Bakarwals to migrate to the highland pastures along with their livestock in summers and migrate back to the lowlands in winters. This tradition of seasonal migration has declined. Data regarding status of seasonal migration among the sampled households in the study area have been represented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Status of Seasonal Migration in the Study Area

Sampled District	Status of Seasonal Migration (In %)	
	Declining	Not Declining
Ramban	67	33
Reasi	62	38
Poonch	96	4
Jammu	74	26
Samba	64	36
Kathua	90	10
Rajouri	83	17
Total	77	23

*Figures may be round off.
Source: Field survey.

In total 77% reported that seasonal migration was declining, which clearly indicates there is declining in seasonal migration.

Reasons Of Decline

Data in Table 4.4 reflects 92% decline in the quantity of livestock as a reason, 100 % reported low returns due to seasonal migration as a reason where as 63% reported family suffering due to seasonal migration as a reason, and 34 % cited other reasons. Besides that Poonch district reported 91 % decline in the quantity of livestock as a reason, 98 % low returns due to seasonal migration as a reason, 52 % family suffering and 76 % cited other reasons. In Jammu district, 98 per cent reported decline in the quantity of livestock as a reason, 92 per cent reported low returns due to seasonal migration as a reason, 64 per cent reported family suffering due to seasonal migration as a reason, and 38 per cent cited other reasons.

Table 4.4 Reasons Of Decline In Seasonal Migration

Study Area	Decline in the Quantity of Livestock (In %)	Low Returns due to Seasonal Migration (In %)	Family Sufferings due to Seasonal Migration (In %)	Other Reasons (In %)
Ramban	92	100	63	34
Reasi	76	96	67	45
Poonch	91	98	52	76
Jammu	98	92	64	38
Samba	85	78	56	74
Kathua	73	63	52	59
Rajouri	65	36	48	65
Total	89	80	57	59

*Multiple responses. Figures may be round off.
Source: Field survey.

In total 89 % reported decline in the quantity of livestock as a reason,

80 % low returns where as 57% reported family suffering and 59 % cited other reasons.

Alternatives Regarding Seasonal Migration

Data in context with perception regarding alternatives for seasonal migration have been represented in Table 4.6. In the study area 51 per cent reported that alternatives for seasonal migration were available and 49 per cent reported that alternatives for seasonal migration were not available.

Table 4.6 Perception Of Respondents Regarding Alternatives For Seasonal Migration

Study Area	Any Alternatives for Seasonal Migration (In %)	
	Yes	No
Ramban	48	52
Reasi	25	75
Poonch	22	78
Jammu	83	17
Samba	76	24
Kathua	64	36
Rajouri	42	58
Total	51	49

Note: Figures may be round off.
Source: Field survey.

CONCLUSION

Seasonal migration has posed a challenge than an opportunity to the Bakarwal Tribe in Jammu and Kashmir. In the present times, members of the Bakarwal Tribe have started looking for alternatives, such as going to Gulf nations earning their livelihoods, entering government sector, et cetera, and thus a steep decline in seasonal migration has been observed. The declining trend in seasonal migration has been due to factors such as no provision of accommodation places on migration routes by the government, loss of livestock, decrease in number of livestock, forest closures, decrease in sizes of grazing lands, non-cooperative behaviours of the authorities, lack of health facilities along the migration routes, tough and rugged terrains, harsh climate, militancy, theft, animal attacks, et cetera. The concerned authorities must make provisions for the places of accommodation along the migration routes so that the feeling of safety and security may develop among the Bakarwals. There has been no or little health and medical facilities along the migration routes. This factor also has led to the emerging declining trend of seasonal migration among the Bakarwal community. During seasonal migration, the children of the Bakarwals, mostly, do not attend schools, although there has been provisions for mobile schools. But it was found during the course of investigation that most of the mobile schools were not functioning properly and as required. The government authorities must keep regular and strict checks on the functioning of the mobile schools.

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