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Socio-environmental Hurdles and Difficulties in the Seasonal Migration of

Bakarwal:

A Case study of Mahore region of Reasi District of J&K

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Tribes are the important section of our society. Unique culture, traditions, and pastoral lifestyle are the identities of these ethnic communities. At present, there are 12 identified tribes in Jammu and Kashmir. Among these, Gujjar, Bakarwal, Gaddi, and Sippi are common and quite outnumber as compared to other tribes in the J&K. The bakarwal are nomadic shepherds and they deals with domestication and rearing of goats and sheeps in large number mainly and also horses in small numbers for transportation and carriage of their belongings during migration. The name Bakarwal is derived from bakri (goat) which they rear. Their seasonal migration takes place twice in a year .The present paper deals with study of hurdles which they face during their migration from plain to hills in summer and vice versa in winter. Questionnaire based survey conducted to know about the various obstacles which they face during their seasonal migration and both primary and secondary data used in present paper. Information technology has made tremendous change in the life style of people and has ease their life but still life of these nomadic people is hard and full of struggles. These up and down migrations are full of hurdles for bakkarwal tribes of Mahore region of Reasi district. Rain, snow, rough terrain, attack by the wild animals on the livestock, landslide, lack of roads, lack of electricity and many more with which they struggle during these journeys.

Keywords: bakarwals, traditions, ethnic, migration, tribes, hurdles, culture

INTRODUCTION

The seasonal migration is an age-old practice among the Bakarwal community of Jammu and Kashmir. This migration of nomadic shepherds is not by choice but a phenomenon compelled by seasonal variations of climatic conditions between plains and hills and availability of pastures for their livestock. There are twelve major tribes in Jammu and Kashmir. These tribes are Balti, Beda, Bot, Brokpa, (Drokpa, Dard, Shin) Changpa, Garra, Mon, Purigpa, Gujjar, Bakarwal, Gaddi, and Sippi.

Bakarwal is one of the important tribe of Jammu and Kashmir. Bakarwal, a nomadic pastoral tribe known for rearing goat and sheep livestock and it is animal goat (Bakri in local language) that they rear from where their name (Bakarwal) is derived. Bakarwal is an endogamous tribe and their distinctive features, the headgear that men of this community wear and their unique culture and traditions that are quite similar with Gujjar tribes. Gojri is



common language used by these tribes and both of these clans, Gujjar and Bakarwal are still backward and lag behind in their education and literacy rate but Bakarwal tribal students of Kashmir division are still in a very poor educational situation than their counterpart Gujjars (Mohd & Mohd 2014). Livestock farming is the main source of livelihood for Bakarwals. The total population of Bakarwal tribe in Jammu and Kashmir as per the Census of 2011 of the Government of India is 113,198. Bakarwals constitute 7.58 per cent of the total tribal population of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Bakarwal tribe is second largest tribe in the State after Gujjar tribe (Tribal administration J&K). Literacy rate of this tribe is abysmal and is just 25.31 per cent. Literacy rate among women is even worse, i.e., only 17 percent. There is a lack of access to better medical and health services and various policies of Government among these nomadic tribes and there is an urgent need for expanding health services for this section of the society (Bilal S 2014).

The Bakarwal tribes, during their migration are exposed to number of hurdles and difficulties on their way to destination. For these hurdles, the term risk factors used in the present paper. The movement along with livestock, goats, sheep, and horses with all of their movable belongings is always tedious and tough. This seasonal migration usually takes place twice in a year, in summer from plain to hills and in winter from hills to plains. The present paper focused on various socio-environmental hurdles which they come across in their seasonal journeys. The survey and interaction with the Bakarwal tribes on the way to hills via Mahore and Gulabgarh is conducted in the months of March April 2019 and findings are presented in the result and discussion section of the paper.

Study Area and Methodology

The present study pertains to the Bakarwal tribes who use Mahore Gulabgarh route to reach in hills of Anantnag, Phalgham, and Kulgam etc in search of pasture for their livestock. Bakarwals are the nomadic pastoral tribes, often live in remote locations of state where they can find pasture for their goats and sheep. Random survey is done on people of this tribe who were on their way to upper reaches of Gulabgarh, Anantnag, and Kulgam etc. The study is questionnaire based survey. Although, it was prepared in English but during interview and questioning was put in the form of lucid conversation in urdu and gojri language for the understanding of respondents. The respondents selected for the questionnaire were those who

(he/ she) must have been through at least three journeys of migration and above the age of 18 years. The total numbers of hurdles or risk factors selected are 10 and respondents were asked to rank these hurdles from 1 to 10. Rank 1 mean hurdle is severe and have high magnitude where in rank 10 is for hurdle which is least problematic or severe. Each risk factor got rank by the respondent as per their perception to the risk. The collected data is processed and average ranking value is calculated for each type of risk and presented to show the key findings of study.



S.No	Risk factors and Hurdles	Ranking of risk factor									
		Rank 1	Rank2	Rank3	Rank4	Rank5	Rank6	Rank7	Rank8	Rank 9	Rank10
1	Rainfall/snowfalls/ thunder storms/lightening	50	17	03	05	03	—	—	—	—	—
2	Attack by wild animals	17	42	13	01	01	03	—	01	—	—
3	Road accidents/traffic	06	07	40	12	07	01	04	—	01	01
4	Secure place for halt	04	04	13	19	22	04	03	01	03	05



5	Health or tiredness	–	03	07	26	26	04	04	02	04	02
6	Availability of ration or eatables	–	01	01	02	03	13	09	15	21	13
7	Fear of theft or loss of cattle	01	–	–	02	01	30	15	05	03	21
8	Birth of offspring of animals	–	01	–	–	01	09	36	12	10	09
9	Slipping or falling of animals	–	02	01	01	01	04	04	29	26	10
10	Availability of fodder or Pasteur	–	01	–	10	13	10	03	13	10	17
	Total	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78

Results and discussions

As the Bakarwal tribe deals with rearing of goats and sheeps. The nomadic tribes move from plains to hills in the summer and from hills to plain before advancing winter. In the present paper, the details of hurdles and difficulties faced by this tribe are accessed with help of a questionnaire-cum-conversation. From the interactions with members of tribes, it came into notice that their life is not comfortable but vulnerable as they remain in remote place where they can find pasture for their livestock in plenty. Interactions with the respondents, who have experienced hardships of nomadic life, revealed that they face lot of troubles during the migration, such as, journey by foot for several days which cause tiredness and fatigue, lack of fodder availability on the route, rainfall and snowfall in the way is also troublesome. In addition to this, birth of offspring by the livestock demand special care on the

way to journey, passage to remote and isolated forest patch exposed to the ferocious animals, steep topography and rugged terrain is another challenge for herds and members who are on escort of journey. Secure place to halt, availability of ration and eatables is also cause of worry for poor tribal people. This questionnaire based survey reveals that all the above listed difficulties varies depending upon the perception of individual respondent of the tribe. The group of Bakarwal tribes of Reasi District especially of Arnas, Bhomaag, Chaan, Bhullar, and Shikari moves upto Anantnag, Kulgam Phalgam and Gulabgarh seasonally. The finding of the study consolidated in the table 3.1 reveals the type of difficulties they face during their journey. These risk factors are ranked as per the response from the respondents. The total number of respondents was 78.

Table 3.1 showing Aggregate ranking to each risk factor

Note: Total number of respondents was 78.

The calculation and ranking of risk factor revealed that rainfall, snowfall, thundering, and lightening is the main hurdle during their course of journey through rugged terrain which make passage risky and also make other problems more worse like trouble of finding sheltering and slipping and falling of animals. The ranking value for this factor is 9.3.

Attack by wild ferocious animals leopard, wild dogs, even snakes and insects another cause of worry for this nomadic tribe. In past they witness several incidents of leopard attack on the lives of their children and livestock. The ranking value for this risk is 7.6

The risk factor at number three is traffic problem and road accident during their journey and it has got ranking value of 7.6

The long journey takes several weeks and on the route, they need a secure place for halt or rest. It must be spacious which cater their livestock and must have water availability it has ranking value 6.2

The members who are on escort of herd during the journey told that long journey cause fatigue and tiredness usually after travelling 15-20 km they needs rest. Male members and young people are on duty to escort the herd and they are guided by experienced head who have knowledge of passage and spots where they can stay. The ranking value for fatigue and tiredness is 6.

Another major challenge is availability of fodder on the way and at destination and rank value for it is 3.7. Following it closely, is fear of loss and theft of livestock which has ranking value of 3.6. The livestock during grazing or on way of journey sometimes got distracted from main herd. Birth by livestock and availability of ration has got ranking value of 3.4 and 3.2 respectively.

The least risk factor is falling or slipping of livestock. Goat and sheeps are well adapted to steep and rugged topography but still sometimes due to loss of balance chances are there. It has ranking value of 2.8. In the nutshell the ranking value is high for weather related risk of rain and snowfall and low for slipping of sheeps and goats.

Table 3.2 showing the ranking value or ranking number for each risk factor in descending order

S.No	Risk factors and Hurdles	Ranking factor of risks/hurdles
1	Rainfall/snowfalls/ thunder storms/lightening	9.3
2	Attack by wild animals	8.7
3	Road accidents/traffic	7.6
4	Secure place for halt	6.2
5	Health or tiredness	6.0
6	Availability of fodder or Pasteur	3.7
7	Fear of theft or loss of cattle	3.6
8	Birth of offspring of animals	3.4



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9	Availability of ration or eatables	3.2
10	Slipping or falling of animals	2.8



Conclusion

The life of nomads is full of troubles and hardships and their sole earning of livelihood is by rearing livestock. Wandering from plain to hills and vice versa involves adversities, vulnerabilities and difficulties. Tribes and forest are interrelated and have a co-existence. So, they must have forest rights including traditional forest based livelihood, collection of timber, and grazing of cattle should be allowed. There are several scheme launched by GoI for welfare of tribal people but due to lack of education, these tribes are unaware about it. Secondly due to lack of permanent settlement enrollment on educational institution also low. The only way for their upliftment and bringing them in main stream is education and awareness so that these tribal people can use various schemes that are there for tribal people and can get financial assistance at subsidized rate and start their own business or set up small scale industry. The lack of use of modern technology and digital illiteracy is one of other key reasons behind hardships they face today. Only if they are aware of advancements of



information technology, and know how to use them for accessing prior weather forecast and GIS systems. They can plan their migration journeys in better way according to weather predictions. Government can also play a better role in improving the condition of these tribes, the Financing schemes for socio-economic upliftment of eligible Scheduled Tribes category persons, to establish income generating unit is available in collaboration with National Scheduled Castes Finance & Development Corporation(NSTFDC), Govt. of India, New Delhi

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