

## Seasonal migration of Gujjar and Bakarwal in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir

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### Abstract

The Gujjar and Bakarwal are one of the largest tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir state of India. District Poonch of Jammu and Kashmir constitutes its 36.6 percent of population with scheduled tribe population (census of India, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup> in which Gujjar and Bakarwal are in high number. Mostly Gujjar and Bakarwal people are nomadic community who shift to the lower, middle and higher mountain ranges in the Pir-Panjal mountain and reach from Jammu to Kashmir region and return with the change in seasons along with their flock of buffalos, goats and sheep. This paper is trying to elaborate their problems and causes to the seasonal migration. This empirical study is primarily based on primary data (schedule and observation based). They have been severely hit by unwanted occurrent in Jammu and Kashmir.

**Keywords:** Gujjar, Bakarwal, seasonal migration, pastoral, nomadic

### Introduction

The state of Jammu and Kashmir lies in Northern India. It is located mostly in the Himalayan Mountains, and shares a border with the states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab to the south. Jammu and Kashmir has an international border with china in the north and east, and the Line of control separates it from the Pakistan-controlled territories of Pakistan occupied Kashmir in the west and North West respectively. The state has special autonomy under article 370 of the constituent of India. The total population of Jammu and Kashmir has 1,25,41,302 (1.035 percent to the India population) with a territory of 2,22,236 sq.km. (Census of India, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup>. There is one important aspect of its economy and life i.e. pastoral. This practice is a part of life of many tribal communities in which Gujjar and Bakarwal are important constituents of this practice in Jammu and Kashmir. These Gujjar and Bakarwal were included in tribe along with two other groups namely Gaddi and Sippi vide the Constitution (Jammu & Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1989, (Amendment) Act, 1991 (Census of India, 2001) <sup>[3]</sup>. The state Jammu and Kashmir have 11.90 percent population as a tribe to the total population of the state (Census of India, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup>. The Gujjar and Bakarwal are the third largest community in Jammu and Kashmir more than 11.9 percent of the total population of the state (Census of India, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup> schedule tribe is the only community, which maintain its culture and heritage throughout ages. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the concentration of Gujjar is observed in the district of Poonch, Rajouri, Anantnag, Udhampur and Doda districts. It is believed that Gujjars migrated to Jammu and Kashmir from Gujarat and Hazara district of NWFP (Warikoo, 2000) <sup>[13]</sup>. The Bakarwal shares a place with the same ethnic stock as the Gujjars, and intermarriages happen among them. There are 12 type of tribes in the state as Balti,

Beda, Bot, Brokpa/Drokpa/Dard/Shin, Changpa, Garra, Mon, Purigpa, Gujjar, Bakarwals, Gaddi and Sippi (Constitution, Jammu and Kashmir, Scheduled Tribes Order 1989, Amendment Act, 1991). These twelve tribes constitute 1105979 populations. Among above mentioned tribes Gujjars are largest (763806 i.e. 69.1 percent), Bot and Bakarwals compose the second (96698, i.e. 8.74 percent) and third (60724, i.e. 5.49 percent) order (Census of India, 2001) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Both Gujjar and Bakarwal migrate seasonally with their flocks i.e., sheeps, goats, buffalows, horses etc. but Gujjar tribal community have a low tendency for seasonal migration in comparison to Bakarwal, so sometimes Gujjars are also called Semi Nomads. With the beginning of summers every year, the Gujjar and Bakarwal journey along with their livestock to upper ranges of Himalayas through seven major tribal migration routes. All the major routes and sub-routes pass through various mountain passes which are known as *Gallis* in the local words. Various *Dheras* of nomads start their seasonal migration from various places like Poonch, Marhot, Surankote, Mendhar, Rajouri and Thanamandi etc. Every year around 20,000 people migrate to summer pasture and return back after the grazing season is over. Migration in the Jammu and Kashmir usually takes place from three regions: Poonch, Rajouri and Kishtwar regions. The Poonch and Rajouri migration makes the heaviest route out of the three. All these routes lead to different passes or *Gallis* in the Pir-Panjal ranges.

Over the period of time, such seasonal migration is going to change by different reasons. Such as, eruption of militancy, unpredictable weather, hurdle in travelling route, increase in population which tends to more family divisions along with land occupation and ultimately change in income. In such changing scenario the study of

seasonal migration of Gujjars and Bakarwals is imperative.

**Objective of the study**

The objective of the study is to explore the problems and causes to the seasonal migration of Gujjar and Bakarwal in the study area i.e., Poonch District of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Methodology**

The present study is primarily based on primary field survey. In which data is collected by stratified random sampling with schedule which is done in Poonch District. The secondary data are also used. Literature is consulted through books, old research materials, articles, newspaper clipping, official websites, historical document, magazine etc. Apart from this the information is also gathered by the observation method which is also used to elaborate the data. The whole study is having 180 sample size but for this article 58 samples are used, only those who are migrating for this year and have experience of previous

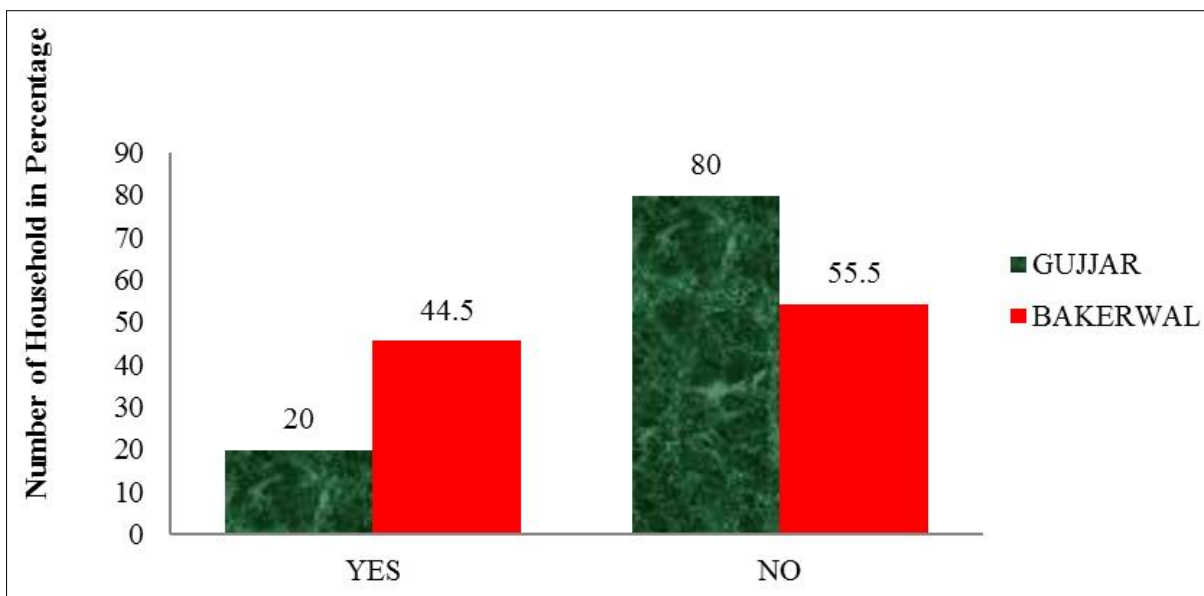
years. Data are analysed and presented here with statistical and cartographic tools. The data in bracket at tables are showing sample size and other values are in percentage.

**Limitations of the study**

The study could not conduct in the entire Pir Panjal ranges due to time and resource restraint.

**Result and Discussion**

The seasonal migration of Gujjar and Bakarwal people depends on climate and location of the area. Some people move in winter time and some in summer time as per need. The Gujjar and Bakarwal in Jammu and Kashmir started seasonal migration from early summer when temperature begins to rise from outer hill and plain area to upper Shivalik range. They reach their destination after 40 to 45 days of travel. They follows the different migration route i.e., *jamiyagali*, *gorabatta*, *Nanansar*, *RopadiDharal Pass*, *Mughal road* and other.



Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J & K, 2017

Fig 1: Number of households who are participating in seasonal migration

Table 1: Number of households who are participating in seasonal migration

Seasonal Migrant	Seasonal Migration		
	Yes	No	Total (Sample size)
Gujjar	20 (18)	80 (72)	(90)
Bakarwal	44.5 (40)	55.5 (50)	(90)
Total (Sample size)	(58)	(122)	(180)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J & K, 2017

It is observed that (Fig 1) Gujjars are less likely to participate in seasonal migration process in comparison to Bakarwal of Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir. The main reason is that these people have their permanent residence and have relatively strong economic base and education level. So these people stay at one place throughout the year. While only a few percent of Gujjars seasonally migrate to the hilly areas called

Dhokes, because these are economically and socially weak and backward. On the other hand most of the Bakarwals seasonally migrate from one place to other. Because these people are economically poor, and have low level of education most of them are illiterate and unskilled. So it is impossible for them to stay at one place throughout the year and they migrate to Dhokes for their better livelihood. While some people of Bakarwal

community do not migrate because these are economically well and they are landlord so they neglect their inherent traditions and prefer to stay at one place.

The main reason behind this difference is that Gujjar have built their permanent houses. Secondly, Gujjar are now emphasising the education, so mostly Gujjar

children are going to school. Thirdly, Gujjar are trying to employ themselves in other occupations. Fourthly, Gujjars are going to foreign as a labour in Gulf Countries and middle east countries. These reason are diverting them on another way and making them economically stronger in comparison with Bakarwals.

**Table 2:** Problems of grazing and it’s main causes

Grazing problem				CAUSE			
Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total	Increase of Population	Land occupy by Govt.	Both	Total
GUJJAR	100.0	0.0	(18)	16.7	0.0	83.3	(18)
BAKARWAL	97.5	2.5	(40)	12.8	2.6	84.6	(39)
TOTAL	98.3	1.7	(58)	14.0	1.8	84.2	(57)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

As, both the community move for pastures with their flocks, they had to face a lot of problems in the pathway. The foremost problem which they are facing is reducing grazing fields (table 2). The probable main cause of reducing grazing fields is increase in population and land occupancy by government. As human population is

increasing the demand of pastures are also increasing for animals as well as for settlement which leads to low availability of pasture land for nomads. Thus the area of pasture is reducing which instigate these communities to leave their traditional practices for livelihood.

**Table 3:** Problems of travelling during seasonal migration and it’s main causes

Problems				causes				
Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total	Transport	Shed	Both	Other	Total
GUJJAR	100.0	0.0	(18)	5.6	5.6	83.3	5.6	(18)
BAKARWAL	97.5	2.5	(40)	15.4	2.6	82.1	0.0	(39)
TOTAL	98.3	1.7	(58)	12.3	3.5	82.5	1.8	(57)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

The second problem which is faced by them, is transport and shed for cattle. Both the communities agree about their problems at large extent. Basically nomads face great problem, when they have to cross the pirpanchal (as the people of Jammu pronounce Pirpanjaal) range which many times remain snow covered. So it is difficult to cross the way without proper transport system, because of which it leads to animal loss. Another problem is the very

less availability of shed for cattle. While travelling, it is difficult to save cattle from bad weather condition, without shed. Apart from both, the nomads face the problem to set their temporary stay (*Dera*) at any place to stay at night or may be for one or two days. The nearby people who have their fields, deny for temporary stay. Especially Gujjar community indicates this problem.

**Table 4:** Problem of family division and it’s effect

Problem of family division				Effect			
Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total	Animal division	Animal and land	Other	Total
Gujjar	100.0	0.0	(18)	11.1	83.3	5.6	(18)
Bakarwal	92.5	7.5	(40)	2.7	86.5	10.8	(37)
Total	94.8	5.2	(58)	5.5	85.5	9.1	(55)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

The interesting aspect is that pastoral life is needed joint family structure rather than nuclear family structure, as more the hands will help easy to handle the cattle. In present time both the communities are suffering from structural change in family from joint to nuclear. This problem does not end here. It aggravates the problem of

pastoral communities by dividing animals and land. This leads to them again at low economic level. This is one of the reasons that Gujjar are shifting from this occupation while Bakarwal are still trying to sustain themselves in traditional practises, due to lack of education and awareness about other opportunities.

**Table 5:** Problems of weather and it’s main places

Weather problem				Problem at place			
Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total	Pirpanchal Mountain	Summer place	Both	Total
Gujjar	100.0	0.0	(18)	22.2	5.6	72.2	(18)
Bakarwal	97.5	2.5	(40)	12.8	0.0	87.2	(39)
Total	98.3	1.7	(58)	15.8	1.8	82.5	(57)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

Further weather is important natural factor which determine the seasonal migration in many ways. During the seasonal migration nomads have to cross the pirpanchal range to reach the pastures in Kashmir side. It's a big challenge for them to cross the pirpanchal range which is most dangerous place in term of weather conditions. Many times there is heavy rain and hail storm which ends with the loss of cattle. In such cold, many cattle get sick and even human beings also get sick and there is no medical facility which again ends with live loss. Sometimes such heavy rain instigate the landslide which blocks the path and pastoral have to stay in particular area in reverse circumstances and again create danger to livelihood. Further, when they crossed the PirPanchal and reach their destination, they may also have many challenges like their *Dharas* (kacha houses) damaged due to heavy rainfall and snowfall, so firstly they have to construct houses then settle. These are the most challenges and problems which they are facing during seasonal migration.

**Table 6:** Problem of checking during seasonal migration by authorities/army

Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total
Gujjar	88.9	11.1	(18)
Bakarwal	92.5	7.5	(40)
Total	91.4	8.6	(58)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

Since the eruption of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, the security forces including the police and army has keeping an eye on the migration population and checking the movement of militants along with them. For this purpose, the security agencies and the state administration has set up Joint Forest Check Posts (JCP)

since 2009 to monitor and record the movement of Gujjar and Bakarwal. Under this initiative, each JCP maintains a joint biometric observation or monitoring of the migration by one representative each from the police, army, Animal Husbandry Department and a Forest Department. There are currently six such check posts in the Poonch and Rajouri district located at Mandi, Kulali, Bhembarwali, Thanamandi, Darhar and Mahrot, along the routes followed by the Gujjar and Bakarwal. Another JCP was set up at Kandi in the initial years.

The table 6 shows that around 90 percent of nomads have to register themselves at army check point, remaining are those people who do not go far and follow the most remote routes. Mostly all the people suffer from this problem who migrates. Most of the time the army stop them and ask many questions, check their identity and irritates them. Such practises are creating problems to nomads; ultimately nomads are trying to avoid moving to far areas for pastures. That is also one of the reasons why Gujjar community are changing their occupation. But Bakarwal are still following the traditional practises due to which their economic status is declining.

**Table 7:** Problem of bribe

Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total
Gujjar	5.6	94.4	(18)
Bakarwal	10.0	90.0	(40)
Total	8.6	91.4	(58)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

The table 7 shows the problem of bribe. When seasonal migrants migrate some of the police men on the way illegally demand for money from them and these people are not in the position to pay such money due to their poor economic condition, so such people suffer a lot.

**Table 8:** Problem to avail education and it's main causes

Problem				Causes		
Seasonal Migrant	Yes	No	Total	Travel	No facility	Total
Gujjar	100.0	0.0	(18)	5.6	94.4	(18)
Bakarwal	97.5	2.5	(40)	0.0	100.0	(39)
Total	98.3	1.7	(58)	1.8	98.2	(57)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

Seasonal migration creates a big hurdle to avail education by children of Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes. There are mainly two reasons for lagging behind in education. Firstly, the people of these communities are economically weak and backward so they cannot afford their children in the private schools. Secondly when they migrate, there

is lack of education facilities both on the way and at their destination place due to which their children remain deprived from education. Although the government provides the facility of mobile schools but these are maintained only in the government records, not available on the ground.

**Table 9:** Problems of income reduction and it's main causes

Problem				Causes			
Seasonal migrant	Yes	No	Total	Loss of animals	Low land cover	Both	Total
Gujjar	100.0	0.0	(18)	22.2	11.1	66.6	(18)
Bakarwal	95.0	5.5	(40)	15.7	0.0	84.2	(38)
Total	96.5	3.4	(58)	17.8	3.5	78.5	(56)

Source: Primary Field Survey, Poonch District, J&K, 2017

The above mentioned problems ultimately culminate in income reduction. The table 8 reveals that all the people of these communities face the challenges of low income. The main reason behind this problem is that sometimes these people lost their animals during the migration and other one due to division of animals among the family members. Moreover they have very less land, so they are mostly dependent on their cattle. So, the loss of animals means the decline in their economy and they become helpless and dependent.

### Conclusion

Thus, it can be observed that nomadic Gujjar and Bakarwal population is facing tremendous change in their pastoral life. This change starts from their home where joint families are converting in nuclear family along with the partition of animals and land, which leads to low income because of which they remain in the poor status of the society.

During seasonal migration, they are facing shrinking of grasslands due to population increase and government occupancy on land. Not only more and more Gujjar and Bakarwal are settling in the plain areas for fear of terrorist but also for the fodder shortage, lack of education facility for their children during migration. Paucity of transport facility also forces them to settle at plain areas. Apart from manmade obstacles, weather also plays a vital role in migration. Bad weather condition, loss of animals and inadequate medical facilities also tends to increase the mental status of nomads to settle at plain areas. Due to above mentioned reasons the movement of nomads are decreasing and are compelled to do so.

### Suggestions

There should be adequate political space to the Gujjar and Bakarwal so that they may put their demands and get solution. Secondly adequate security, medical and communication facility should be at seasonal migration route so that they may call in the time of need and emergency. Thirdly the mobile should be functional at ground. At last there should be facility and price protection to sell out their products.

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