

Changes in Migration Pattern of Transhumance due to Climate Change: An Empirical Analysis of Gaddi Community of Himachal Himalaya, India

Himanshu Mishra (1) and Bindhy Wasini Pandey (2)

(1) Department of Geography, Delhi University, India (himanshumishra136@gmail.com), (2) Department of Geography, Delhi University, India (bindhywasini@hotmail.com)

Transhumance is a complex and traditional livelihood system seeking to maintain equilibrium between pastures, livestock and local people in variable and inhospitable environments. In Western Himalayas in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, pastoral groups of Gaddis inhabit almost inaccessible areas, where scarce resources and extreme climatic conditions limit options for alternative land use and livelihood systems. In such a harsh and unforgiving environment, mobility in the form of transhumance has been the traditional ecological response to climatic extremes. However, recently, such additional factors as global as well as regional climate change have brought about changes in the tree line, snow line and pastoral grounds along the historical route of seasonal migration of the Gaddis. The growing unpredictability of the once static route of migration has raised the possibility of Gaddis shifting to alternative land use and land management techniques. In the present research, we explore how transhumant pastoralism has been sustained and stimulated in the context of socioeconomic and climate change in the mountainous region of Himachal Pradesh and the future challenges that it faces. Based on case study research conducted in Chamba district in Himachal Pradesh; we have analysed the status, opportunities, and constraints of transhumant pastoralism in the changing context and modeled the possible alternative land use decisions. Finally we conclude that unless there are affirmative and progressive policy and institutional framework to support transhumant system, the indigenous practice will soon disappear from this part of the world.

Keywords: Climate change, Gaddis, Himachal Pradesh, Transhumance, Alternative Land Use