

Impact of the disturbed situations on the transhumance and cultural activities of the Gujjar and Bakarwal tribes in Jammu and Kashmir

Dr. Mohd. Tufail, *Assistant Professor*
Department of Geography
Govt. Post Graduate College Rajouri, J&K
Affiliated to University of Jammu

Abstract

For centuries, poets and travellers from around the globe termed Kashmir as a paradise on earth. According to Mughal Emperor Jehangir “*Gar firdaus bar rue zamin ast, hami asto, hamin asto, hamin ast*”, means if there is a heaven on earth, it is here, it is here. But the paradise has become the place of disturbed situations and nobody has suffered in the difficult times than the peoples of the region that is the reality of the militancy. Gujjars and Bakarwals are religious by faith but in the field it was noticed that very few of them offer nimaz because hardly they get any time from livestock, an occupation which requires round the clock labour, even during the night time shepherds has to be in an alert situation from the snow bear attack on the sheep and goats. Transhumants are among the most vulnerable people in society due to their dependence on the nomadic life style, a life style which is currently challenged by the effects of Climatic Change, resource depletion and disturbed situations in particular in Jammu and Kashmir. Out of the 12.5 Million population of Jammu and Kashmir, approximately 1.5 millions are nomadic Gujjars and Bakarwals (Census 2011). Some of the challenges they face at present are marginalisation that restricts to access social and economic opportunities, continuing disturbed situations due to militancy, repeated cycles of droughts and floods from the past few decades and never ending problems of poverty. Because major chunk of the population is living below poverty line and illiterate, they do not participate in decision making even in matters concerning to their lives. Due to their acute poverty and nomadic life style they are more exposed to vulnerability in the militancy period which leads to the exploitation of them.

Key Words: Disturbed Situations, Impact, Culture, Economy, Gujjars & Bakarwals, Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

Demographically, Jammu and Kashmir represents various ethnic diversities as the state is inhabited by 12.5 million peoples belongs to different religious backgrounds, culture and linguistic backgrounds. In valley itself there are religious minorities¹ 'Kashmiri Pandits' and ethnic minorities 'Gujjar and Bakarwal'. Most of the Gujjars and Bakarwals are sunni by faith and are strong followers of Shrine in Wangat Lar Sharief, Kangan Kashmir. This shrine is one of the most sacred shrines of the Gujjars and Bakarwals. About a million people across the line of control has a spiritual attachment with the shrine. Lakhs of peoples across the state, gathered at the shrine annually at the time of annual urs on 8th June every year. This shrine is a pride of Gujjar Heritage and Culture and main stream Indian nationalistic politics.

Once, I was travelling in a Sumo from Heer Pura to Srinagar during my field work. Heer Pura is a point on the side of Kashmir Valley which is just next to the Peer Ki Gali mountain pass and is linked to the valley by a highway. I was waiting at a travelling stand to fetch a sumo to reach Srinagar. Meanwhile, I noticed two young Bakarwal shepherds on the same stand with carrying two injured goats on their shoulders. They are waiting for a lift to reach Srinagar and then onward towards their summer pasture in Sonamarg. But they were refused by the sumo drivers for the boarding and nearly ten sumo drivers did not give them a lift for travelling. I was watching the whole incident. One sumo driver came to them and told them you peoples are dirty and smelling and carrying goats, if I will give you a lift other passengers will not travel because of you peoples. The shepherds starts shouting on the drivers in Urdu because they did not know Kashmiri language, we the Gujjars and Bakarwals are following the path of Prophet, a man which has the occupation of Goats. So you hate the occupation of Prophet and did not allow us to travel. We are proud to be an Indian Muslims tribe, a tribe which follows the occupation of Prophet in letter and spirit. So, you hate us by our occupation that means you are not a true muslim².

Transhumant in most parts of the world are considered as highly vulnerable to disasters,

¹Hindu Minority Community of Kashmir Valley which was forced to leave the Kashmir Valley by radical Islamists and militants in January, 1990.

² Bakarwal Shepherds, Heer Pur, Shopian.

droughts, floods and large scale out break of animal diseases, livelihood shocks related to the Government Policies, such as the closure of pastures by the forest officials, armed conflicts within and between countries (Morton 2010³). The nomadic way of life leaves them at more risk, it is difficult to count them making it a challenge to even determine their size approximately (UNESCO 2005). Transhumants are not only poor and exposed, they are also marginalised as they are generally found far from the national capitals and regions that from the economic hub of the society, even they have no political voice. Their settlement pattern, poverty and marginalisation is even made acute because of the fact that most of them regularly moves across national borders in search of pastures and water for their animals, 'which further renders them marginalised and vulnerable (Morton 2010)⁴.

In many parts of the world today, new laws and settlement patterns forced the nomadic communities to give up their centuries old occupation. Africa has 22 million population of nomads associated with the pastoral life. As most of them are the inhabitants of semi-arid and desert land where agricultural practices are difficult in the absence of rain. Their economy is totally dependent on the products of animals but major part of the pasture lands are converted into game resviour and parks in Kenya and neighbouring countries during the colonial and post colonial period⁵.

Closed Borders and Transhumance

Before the start of militancy and in the peaceful days, Shepherds could move over a vast area in search of the pasture lands. When pastures are not sufficient at one place they start migrating towards other areas in search of grass lands. Now when the Indo-Pak relations are volatile and have fought many wars, the government start imposing restrictions on the mobility of them across the borders both by India and Pakistan. Gujjars and Bakarwals were forced to live within the confine territory. They were not allowed to move freely without

³Morton, John (2010). Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. Development forthe World's Mobile Pastoralists: Understanding, Challenges and Responses. Retrieved on 23rd February, 2016 from www.nri.org/publications/professorial/d4101-10_morton-professorial.pdf.

⁴Morton, John (2010). Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. Development forthe World's Mobile Pastoralists: Understanding, Challenges and Responses. Retrieved on 23rd February, 2016 from www.nri.org/publications/professorial/d4101-10_morton-professorial.pdf.

⁵Pastoralism in the Modern World Report, <http://ncert.nic.in/ncerts/l/iess305.pdf>.

special permits issued by the security forces and it is not easy to get the permits without struggle and harassment. The new restrictions imposed on them suddenly changed the lives of transhumants and forced them to live the centuries old occupation. Many a times animals cross the borders while grazing because this stretch of area is a forest land and have numerous pasture lands.

Changing Climatic Pattern

Unseasonal rainfall, hailstorm, snowfall and droughts affect the life of pastoralism everywhere. When rain fails and pastures are dry, cattled are starving unless they have to move to other areas in search of pasture lands. That is the only reason that transhumants are called nomads, they move from place to place to survive in the bad times and to avoid crisis. But from the past few decades Gujjars and Bakarwals are forced to live in a fixed pasture and are not being allowed in search of a new pasture in the border areas. Climate change is adversely affecting the animals and the frequent bad years led to a decline in the animal stock.

Dependence on the Livestock Economy in the Pre and Post 1990 Period of Militancy

If we have a look at the dependence of the Gujjars and Bakarwals on the livestock economy in the militancy and pre militancy days. It is observed from the field work that majority of the tribals were dependent on the livestock as their main source of income before militancy. As 91 percent of the Gujjars and Bakarwals were dependent on the livestocks as compare to 37 percent in 2015.

Dependence on Livestock Economy in the Pre and post Militancy Period (in percent)

Villages	Pre 1990 Period	Post 1990 (Militancy Period)
Saranoo	95.0	40.0
Sialsui	88.0	35.0
Baroh	96.0	42.0
Chambitaradh	85.0	32.0
Total	91.0	37.0

Source: Field Work 2014

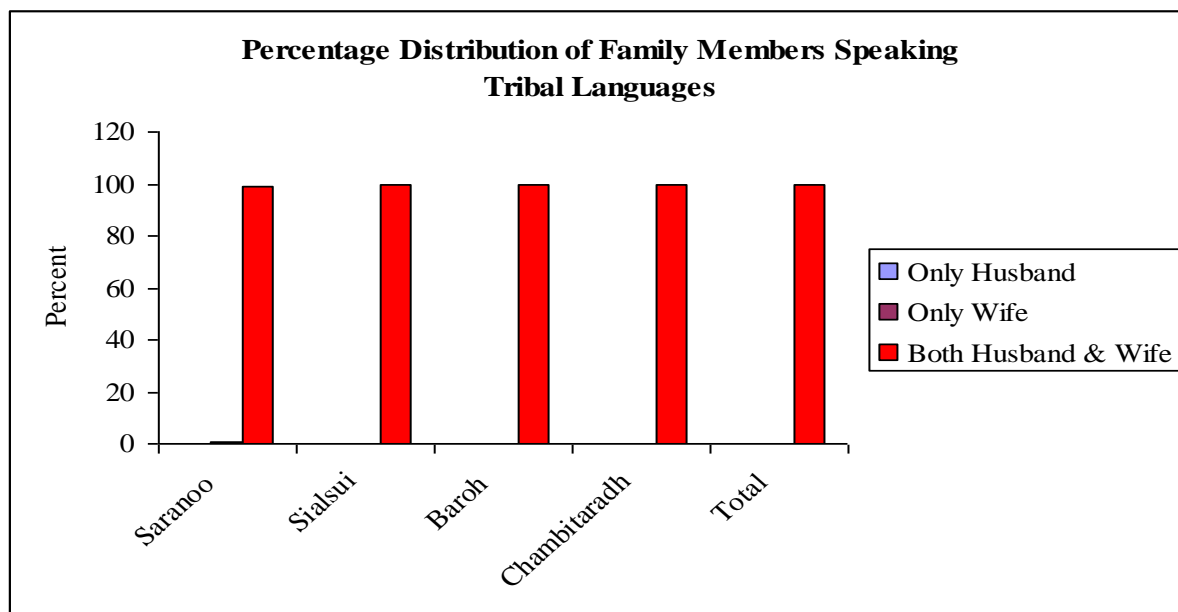
Diversion of Income sources from Nomadism

Now most of the Gujjars and Bakarwals are semi nomadic are fully sedentarized. From the below table it is concluded that livestock is the secondary source of income for most of the community members. 34.5 percent of the Gujjars and Bakarwals are dependent on the agriculture while 33.5 percent of them have their share of income from livestock, 17 percent labourers, another 6 percent are engaged in the business activities. From the above figures it is quite clear that tribals are shifting towards other source of income rather than livestock. Almost all of the Gujjars and Bakarwals are the speakers of Gojri language, as shown in the below table.

Percentage Distribution of Main Source of Livelihood among the Gujjars and Bakarwals (in percent)

Villages	Service	Cultivator	Labour	Business	Shepherd	Others
Saranoo	5	37.5	18	7.5	27	5
Sialsui	4	34.5	16	6	34.5	3
Baroh	6	32	19.5	5	35.5	2
Chambitaradh	5	33.5	17	6	34.5	4
Total	5	34.5	17	6	33.5	4

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work 2014

Cultural Activities

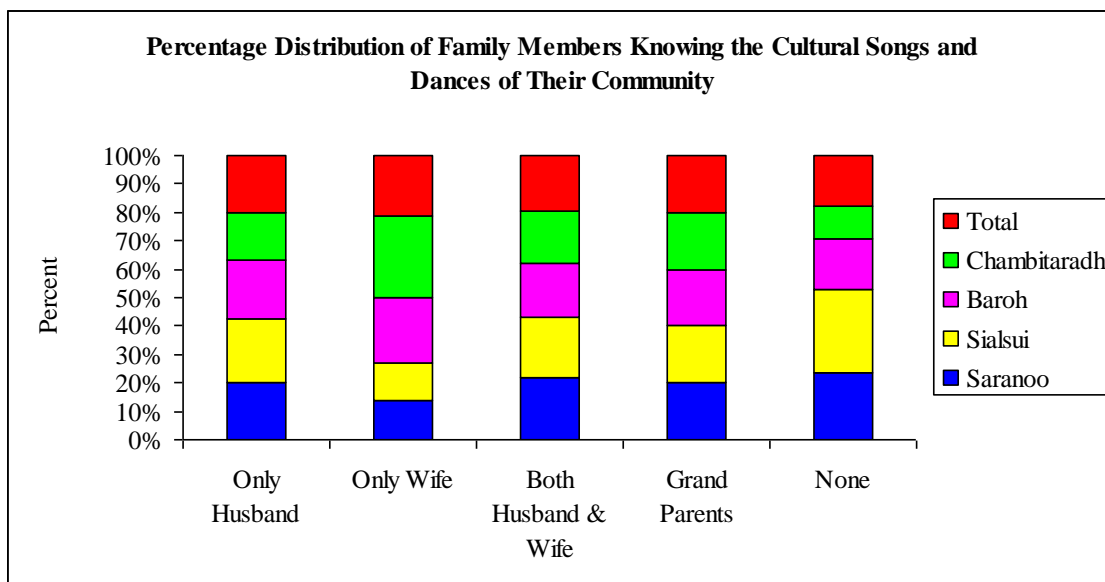
If we talk about the cultural activities of the Gujjars and Bakarwals in terms of traditional dances and songs. Only 22 percent of the Husbands know the dances and songs of their community.

While 21 percent of the wives are familiar with the cultural activities. 100 percent of their grandparents were associated with the cultural activities of their community. So, from the below table it is quite clear that the younger generation is no more interested in the culture of their community.

Percentage distribution of family members knowing the cultural songs and dances of their community (in percent)

Villages	Only Husband	Only Wife	Both Husband & Wife	Grand Parents	None
Saranoo	22.0	14.0	60.0	100.0	4.0
Sialsui	24.0	13.0	58.0	100.0	5.0
Baroh	22.0	23.0	52.0	100.0	3.0
Chambitaradh	18.0	29.0	51.0	100.0	2.0
Total	22.0	21.0	54.0	100.0	3.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work, 2014

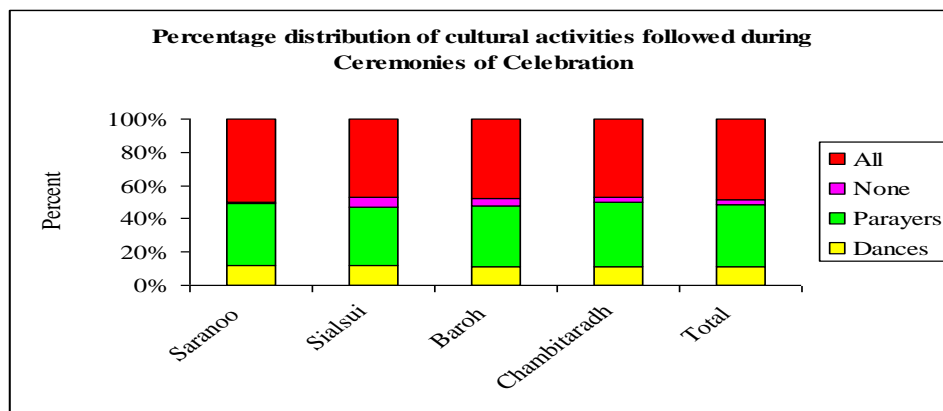
Majority of the Gujjars and Bakarwals are religious by faith. 72 percent of the surveyed families perform prayers during the death of their kith and kins. Another 22 percent dances

during the wedding and other celebration programmes.

Percentage distribution of cultural activities followed during ceremonies of celebration (in percent)

Villages	Dances	Prayers	None	All
Saranoo	24.0	74.0	1.0	99.0
Sialsui	23.0	66.0	11.0	89.0
Baroh	21.0	70.0	9.0	91.0
Chambitaradh	22.0	79.0	6.0	94.0
Total	22.0	72.0	6.0	94.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



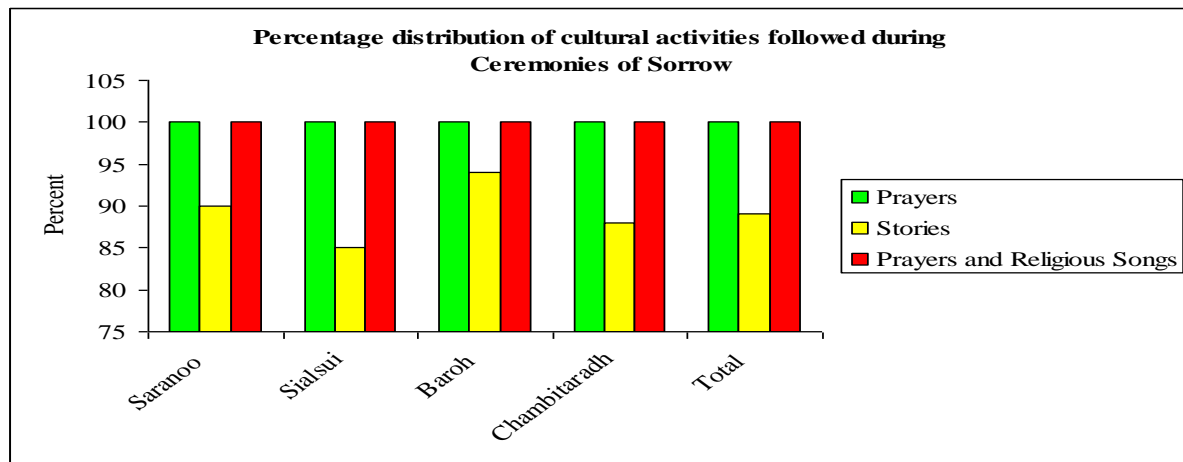
Source: Field Work, 2014

Almost 100 percent of the community members follows Islamic rituals after the death of their relatives and perform prayers in the name of *Khatams* on the day of their death. Another 89 percent tell the stories of their dead relatives about their contribution to the family and all on the visit of outsiders to their homes.

Percentage distribution of cultural activities followed during ceremonies of sorrow

Villages	Prayers	Stories	Prayers and Religious Songs
Saranoo	100.0	90.0	100.0
Sialsui	100.0	85.0	100.0
Baroh	100.0	94.0	100.0
Chambitaradh	100.0	88.0	100.0
Total	100.0	89.0	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work, 2014

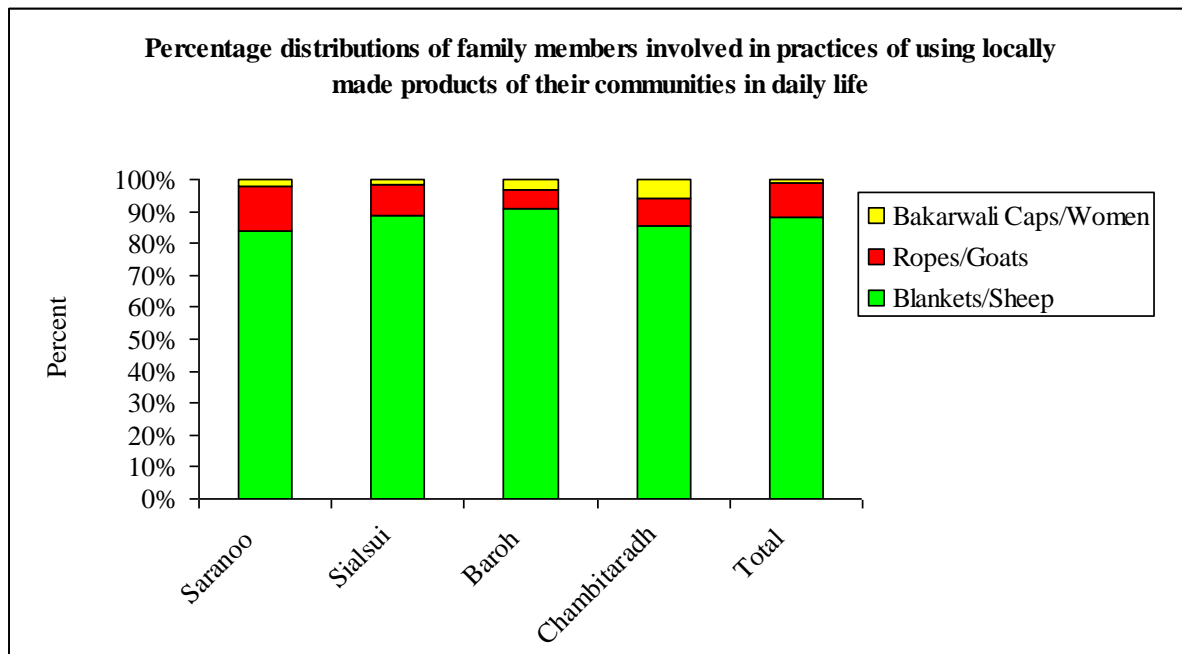
Use of the Local Products

Still majority of the community members use the household products in their day to day life. 68 percent use the blankets, lohi in winter months made up of the wool of sheeps. Another 8 percent uses ropes made up of goats. There is cultural shift of among the Bakarwali womens, only 1 percent of them wears the Bakarwali topis.

Percentage distributions of family members involved in practices of using locally made products of their communities in daily life

Villages	Blankets/Sheep	Ropes/Goats	Bakarwali Caps/Women	None
Saranoo	72.0	12.0	2.0	2.0
Sialsui	63.0	7.0	1.0	5.0
Baroh	78.0	5.0	3.0	1.0
Chambitaradh	60.0	6.0	4.0	0.0
Total	68.0	8.0	1.0	3.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work, 2014

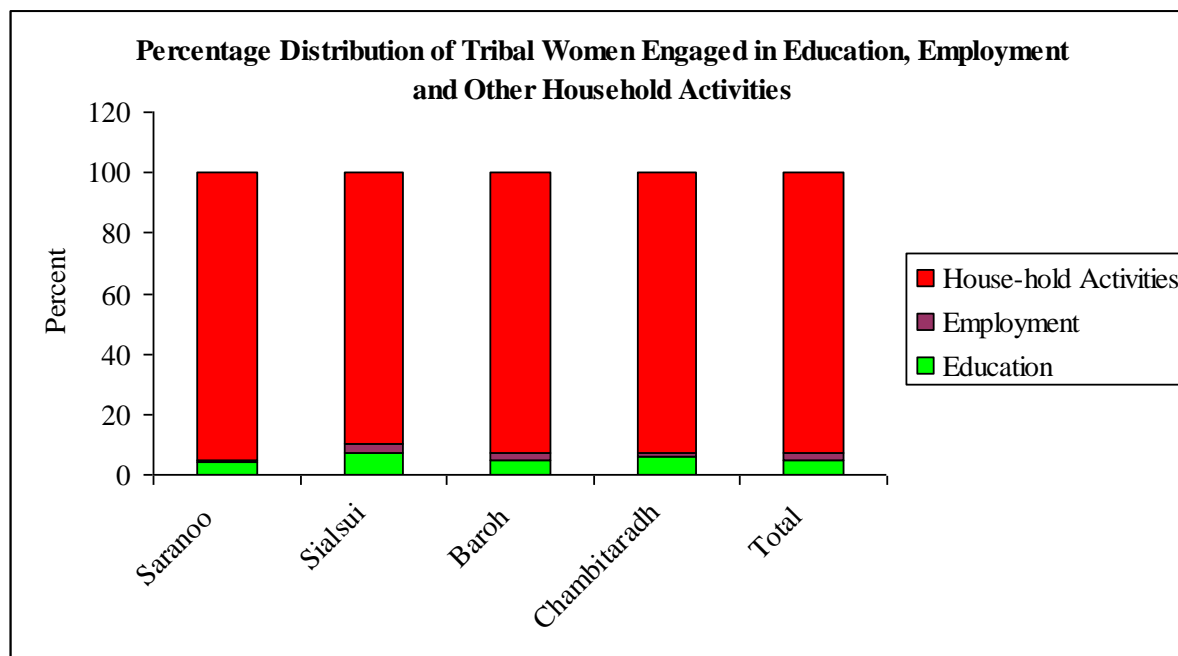
Share of Womens in Education, Employment and Other Household Activities

The occupation of sheeps and goats is labour demanding. Since goats travel many kilometres for the grazing purpose. So to keep them at a fix place, more shepherds are required. This is one of the reasons that nomadic childrens are forced to leave the school for the look after of the livestock herds. On the other hand womens are left with the option of household work. 93 percent of the nomadic womens are engaged in the household activities. 5 percent are in education and only 2 percent are employed.

Percentage Distribution of Tribal Women Engaged in Education, Employment and Other House-hold Activities

Villages	Education	Employment	House-hold Activities	All
Saranoo	4.0	1.0	95.0	100.0
Sialsui	7.0	3.0	90.0	100
Baroh	5.0	2.0	93.0	100
Chambitaradh	6.0	1.0	93.0	100
Total	5.0	2.0	93.0	100

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work, 2014

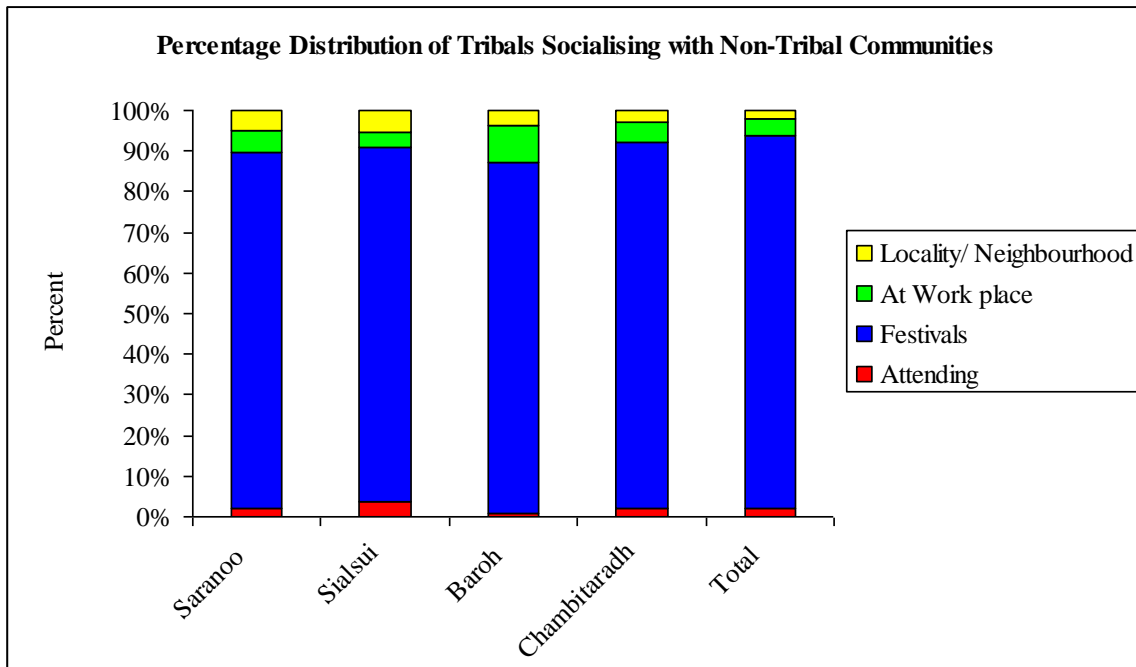
Socialisation with the Non-tribals

Basically, there is conflict between the Gujjars and Paharis in terms of reservation. Gujjars and Bakarawls got their Schedule Tribe Status in 1991. On the other hand Paharis are demanding for the Schedule Tribe status from last twenty years, they have the view that their community is also sharing the same habitat with Gujjars and Bakarwals. This is one of the reason that there is less number of Gujjar and non Gujjars marriages in Jammu and Kashmir. 91 percent of the families are visiting on the occasion of festivals in the non Gujjar houses. 4 percent of the surveyed families socialise with the non Gujjars in the working places. Only 2 percent socialise with the non tribals in their locality.

Percentage Distribution of Tribals Socialising with Non-Tribal Communities

Villages	Attending	Festivals	At Work place	Locality/ Neighbourhood	All	None
Saranoo	2.0	92.0	6.0	5.0	94.0	0.0
Sialsui	4.0	94.0	4.0	6.0	92.0	0.0
Baroh	1.0	89.0	9.0	4.0	88.0	0.0
Chambitaradh	2.0	93.0	5.0	3.0	86.0	0.0
Total	2.0	91.0	4.0	2.0	90.0	0.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work, 2014

Views on Modernisation

88 percent of the Gujjars and Bakarwals think that modernisation helps in the development of their community, another 17 percent have the view that our culture is diminishing due to modernisation of us. Almost majority of the Gujjars and Bakarwals, 90 percent compares modernisation to their betterment of education system among their community.

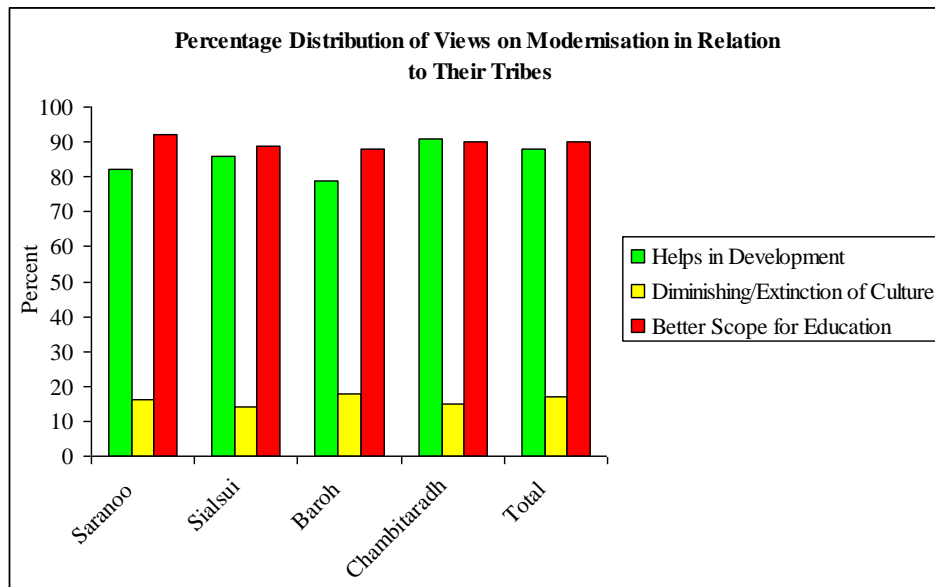
Percentage Distribution of Views on Modernisation in Relation to Their Tribes

Villages	Helps in Development	Diminishing/Extinction of Culture	Better Scope for Education
Saranoo	82.0	16.0	92.0
Sialsui	86.0	14.0	89.0
Baroh	79.0	18.0	88.0
Chambitaradh	91.0	15.0	90.0
Total	88.0	17.0	90.0

Source: Field Work, 2014

Majority of the Gujjars and Bakarwals thinks that we have to preserve our culture with

modernisation of them. 89 percent thinks that culture should be preserved with the modernisation of their community. While only 11 percent thinks that our childrens should preserve our religious cultural and traditions.

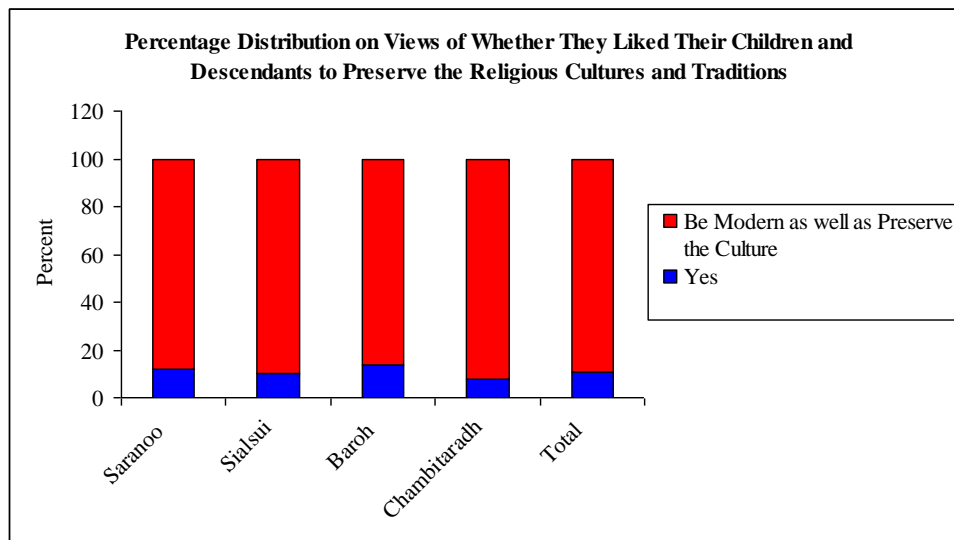


Source: Field Work, 2014

Percentage Distribution on Views of Whether They Liked Their Children and Descendants to Preserve the Religious Cultures and Traditions

Villages	Yes	Be Modern as well as Preserve the Culture
Saranoo	12.0	88.0
Sialsui	10.0	90.0
Baroh	14.0	86.0
Chambitaradh	8.0	92.0
Total	11.0	89.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



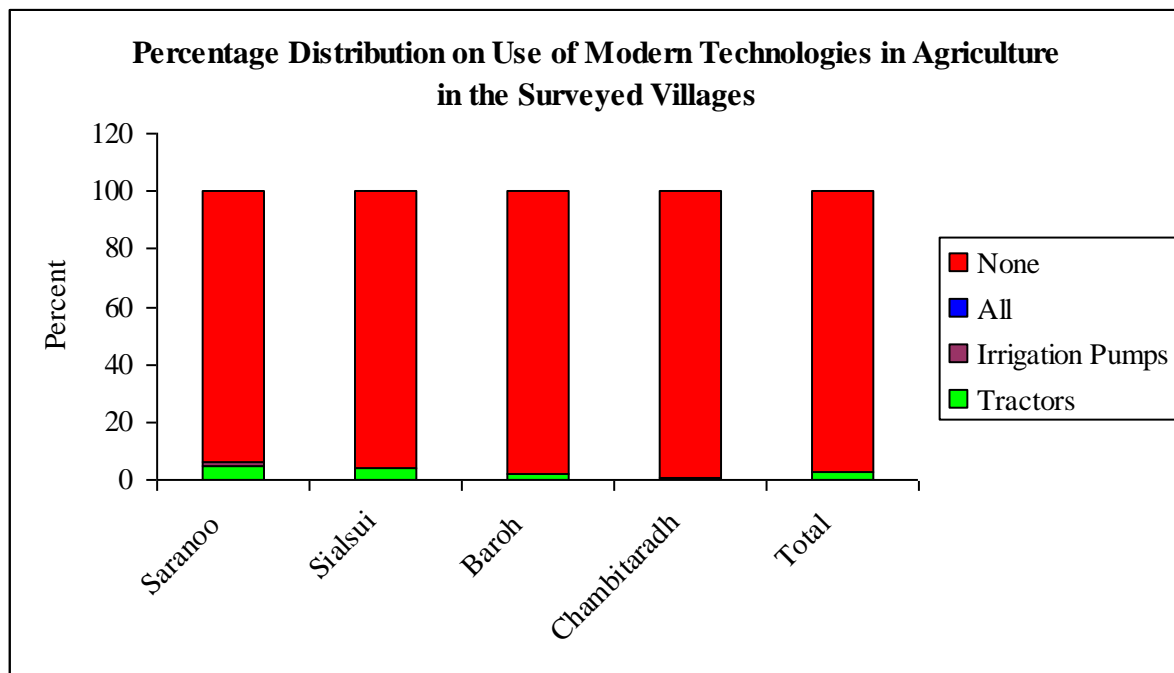
Source: Field Work, 2014

Gujjars and Bakarwals are using the traditional methods for the agricultural activities. Only 3 percent of the Gujjars and Bakarwal families are using the tractors for the ploughing purpose.

Percentage Distribution on Use of Modern Technologies in Agriculture

Villages	Tractors	Irrigation Pumps	All	None
Saranoo	5.0	1.0	0.0	94.0
Sialsui	4.0	0.0	0.0	96.0
Baroh	2.0	0.0	0.0	98.0
Chambitaradh	1.0	0.0	0.0	99.0
Total	3.0	0.0	0.0	97.0

Source: Field Work, 2014



Source: Field Work, 201

Conclusion

So, here it can be concluded that a number of the Gujjars and Bakarwals transhumance routes and pastures are closed to them for the last few years after the start of disturbance in the state. Most of the families have purchased land in the winter areas and start shifting towards sedentarisation. Either they are now settled in the winter areas or still transhumants but now the families settle in the villages and only a few male members go to the winter pastures with the livestock. This is a new trend from the last few years.

Bibliography

Kapoor, A.K., Parsad and Tiwari, S.C., (1989), "Semi-Nomadism and transhumance in Central Himalayas: A pragmatic perspective" *Man in India*, March, 1990.

Paul, Robbins, 1998, *Nomadisation in Rajasthan, India: Migration, Institutions and Economy*, *Human Ecology*, Vol.26, No. 1 (March, 1998) pp. 87-112

Negi, R.S. (2002) *The Gujjars of the Siwaliks: Seasonal mobility to sedentarisation*: In K. Warikoo (ed.) *Gujjar of the Jammu and Kashmir*

M. J. Andolan (2008), *Adapting Livestock Production Systems to Climate Change – Temperate Zones*. *Livestock and Global Change conference proceeding*. May 2008, Tunisia
Moktan, Manl. Ram and Norbu, Lungten (2008), *Ecological and social Aspects of transhumant herdings in Bhutan*, *Mountain Research and Development*, vol 28, No 1, Feb. 2008.

Morton, John (2010). *Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. Development for the World's Mobile Pastoralists: Understanding, Challenges and Responses*. Retrieved on 23rd February, 2016

Morton, John (2010). *Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. Development for the World's Mobile Pastoralists: Understanding, Challenges and Responses*. Retrieved on 23rd February, 2016 from www.nri.org/publications/professorial/d4101-10_morton-professorial.pdf