

OUT-MIGRATION IN A MOUNTAINOUS VILLAGE: A CASE STUDY OF VILLAGE LIPPA OF DISTRICT KINNAUR, HIMACHAL PRADESH

Archana Sharma¹ & Gaurav Kalotra²

¹Resource Person, Department of Geography, Post Graduate Government College, Sector 11, Chandigarh

²Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a case study of migration from village Lippa located in district Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh. A total of forty eight migrants from the village were identified. Information pertaining to certain demographic characteristics namely age, educational status, caste, ownership of land by the family of the migrant, place of destination and reasons of migration was collected from their families. After describing the demographic characteristics of migrants, an effort has been made to establish relationship between land, caste and migration in village. It has been found that young people from small and large landholding families are more migratory in comparison to medium landholding families. Employment and education were the chief reasons of migration from village Lippa.

Key Words: Out-migration.

Introduction-Migration is an integral feature of any society. In developing countries, rural-to-urban migration is the most widespread form of migration because of pronounced disparity between rural and urban areas. However, various migration studies reveal that not every rural household engages in migration. There is a multitude of factors which affect the decision to migrate. Many theories have been put forward to explain the factors effecting the decision to migrate. Rural-to-urban migration has conventionally been looked upon as a strategy to escape the poverty by the rural poor. Land is the sole asset in villages where employment opportunities are limited. Primary activities are the source of livelihood for a large proportion of population living in rural areas. This dependency on primary activities is all the more obvious in district Kinnaur which is entirely rural (District Census Handbook, Kinnaur, Census of India, 2011). This study examines the relationship between caste, size of landholdings and migration from a village located in mountainous district Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh. An effort has been made to bring out the determinants that effect the decision to migrate by making a comparative study of migrant and non-migrant households.

Study Area-Kinnaur is one of the twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh. It is the north-eastern frontier district of the state with Tibet to its east. District Lahul & Spiti lies to its North, district Kullu to its Northwest, district Shimla to its Southwest and the state of Uttrakhand is located to its South. Reckong Peo, district headquarters of Kinnaur, is around 225 kilometres from the state capital Shimla. Kinnaur is scenically a beautiful district hosting three mountain ranges of Himalayas namely *Zaskar*, *the Great Himalayas* and *the Dhauladhars*; enclosing valleys of *Satluj*, *Spiti*, *Baspa* and their tributaries. It covers 11.5 percent of the total geographical area of Himachal Pradesh and houses 1.22 percent of the total population of the state. Density of population in district Kinnaur is thirteen persons per square kilometre which is far below the state average (Table 1).

Table 1
Selected Parameters of Himachal Pradesh and District Kinnaur 2011

	Himachal Pradesh	Kinnaur	Percent
Area (in square kilometre)	55,673	6,401	11.5
Population	68,56,509	84,298	1.22
Density of Population (per square kilometre)	123	13	

Source: Census of India, 2011

The district is entirely rural and constitutes a scheduled area of Himachal Pradesh. There are no urban centres as per the Census of India, 2011. Kinnaur is geographically and culturally isolated. It is located in far hinterland in high mountains which are not easily accessible. The tribal people of the district have a unique and distinct culture. As far as migration in Kinnaur is concerned, mountain locked position and tough terrain of the region have been deterrents in the flow of people. Despite these deterrents, there has been a significant upsurge in the volume of migration in Kinnaur during the past couple of decades. This upsurge is

ascribed to the continuously increasing contact with the outside world. This contact has been possible as a result of construction of all-weather pucca roads and penetration of internet services. Unprecedented contact with the outside world and awareness about opportunities therein, has led to more and more people migrating to other parts of the country in search of better avenues. There has also been an increase in in-migration in the district. Expansion of horticultural sector⁸ has raised the demand of manpower which is met by the migrants from other states of the country and Nepal (Migration Tables, Census of India, 1981, 1991 & 2001, Data available on CD). This research paper pertains to relationship between caste, land and out migration in village Lippa located in tehsil Poo⁹ of district Kinnaur.

Selected Demographic Characteristics of Village Lippa: As per the Census of India 2011, total population of the village was 1,161; of which 594 were males and 567 were females.

Table 2
Selected Demographic Characteristics:
Village Lippa

Particular	Total	Male	Female
Number of Households	280		
Population	1,161	594	567
Scheduled Caste	200	101	99
Scheduled Tribe	845	410	435

Source: District Census Handbook, Series-03, Part XII-B, Himachal Pradesh, Census of India, 2011. Data Available on CD. There were a total of 280 households in the village. As far as the caste composition in the village is concerned, society is segregated into two social classes- peasants and artisans. Aforesaid social classes which are essentially based on occupation, form two caste groups namely *Kanets*¹⁰ and Scheduled Castes, further divided into sub-castes presenting social hierarchy¹¹.

Sampling Framework

Migration in developing countries is primarily economically motivated. People move from one place to other in search of better economic opportunities. As far as rural areas are concerned, land indicates the economic status of a family which in turn indicates the potential of a family to finance migration. In this study, land has been taken as criteria to select the sample population. All households of the village were classified into five categories on the basis of ownership of land. These categories were 25 bigha and more, 10-24 bigha, 5-9 bigha, less than 5 bigha and landless. Households of out-migrants were identified with the help of a couple of villagers whom the researcher was introduced to by the host in the village. A total of forty households in village Lippa were reported to have one or more out-migrants from the family. Forty eight independent migrants were selected for the sample from the identified forty households. Associational migrants were excluded from the sample. Having identified such families, left behind members was interviewed. They were asked questions about various attributes of migrants like gender, age, caste, reason of migration, frequency of visit to village and remittances etc.

Results and Discussions

Migration is a well thought over decision. It is a selective phenomenon involving a number of factors. Various studies suggest that internal migrants in India tend to be young falling in the productive age group. These migrants largely come from economically and socially disadvantaged class.

Age of Migrants-According to the findings of Sjaastad (1962), young people show higher propensity to migrate in comparison to their older counterparts because younger people are willing to take risks associated with migration and expect higher remittances over a longer period of time. In the sample of forty eight migrants, seven (14.58 percent) were from the age group 6-14, thirty two (66.67 percent) migrants were of the age group 15-35 and nine (18.75 percent) were of the age group 36-60.

¹ Horticulture is the most important economic activity in district Kinnaur. It has transformed the economy of the district from subsistence to commercial. Expansion of horticultural sector during the second half of twentieth century brought the much needed revenues in the region. Apple of Kinnaur is the finest in the sub-continent. Apart from apple, other fruits, dry fruits and vegetables are also grown in the district. Important horticultural products of Kinnaur are pears, grapes, figs, kiwi fruit, almonds, apricot, walnut, chilgoza, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, capsicum, peas and tomatoes.

² There are six tehsils in district Kinnaur namely Nichar, Kalpa, Sangla, Morang, Poo and Hangrang.

³ Kanet is the peasant caste found in Himachal Pradesh which is equivalent to the Rajputs in social hierarchy.

⁴ Entire district Kinnaur has similar caste hierarchy i.e. two caste groups namely *Kanets* and Scheduled Castes further divided into sub castes having different grading; some sub-castes claiming to be superior than the others in the same hierarchy.

Table 3
Age of Out-migrants: Village Lippa

Age group	Number of Migrants	Percent
06-14	7	14.58
15-35	32	66.67
36-60	9	18.75

Source: Field Survey, October 2016

These figures indicate that largest proportion of migrants was from the age group 15-35. These were mainly the migrants who had migrated either to pursue higher education or jobs. Migrants falling in the age group 6-14 were those who had migrated to pursue education.

Educational Level of Migrants- Educational level is one of the most important determinant in the decision to migrate. There are two contrasting views about the relationship between the educational level and probability to migrate. First viewpoint is that migrants are better educated or skilled than non-migrants as they have higher chances of getting employed at the place of destination (Levy and Wadycki, 1974) whereas the contrasting viewpoint is that migrants tend to be less educated and unskilled (Beals et al., 1967).

In case of village Lippa, it is observed that all the migrants were literates. Of all the migrants, thirteen (27.08 percent) were studying at the place of destination. Out of these thirteen student migrants, six were in schools and remaining seven were pursuing higher education.

Table 4
Educational Level of Out-migrants: Village Lippa

Educational Level	Number of Migrants	Percent
Matriculate	7	14.58
Senior Secondary	6	12.50
Technical Diploma Holder/ Other Professional Diploma	9	18.75
Graduate	6	12.50
Post Graduate	3	6.25
Professional Degree	4	8.33
Pursuing Education	13	27.08

Source: Field Survey, October 2016

Of the remaining thirty five migrants, seven were matriculates (14.58 percent), six had attended school up to senior secondary level (12.50 percent), six were graduates (12.50 percent) and three were post graduates (6.25 percent). Twenty seven percent of all the migrants were professionally qualified. Nineteen percent had obtained some technical/ professional diploma and eight percent had some professional degree in hand. It is evident that none of the migrants were illiterates. Largest proportion of migrants was technical/ professional diploma holders (18.75 percent). It included diplomas in industrial training, polytechnic, nursing and para-medical courses. Four migrants had some kind of professional degree. One was reported to be a doctor and remaining three were engineers. Hence, the educational profile of the migrants from the study area shows a pattern which is in contrast to the popular notion that illiterates and less qualified are more likely to migrate. It was, however, observed that literates and qualified people had higher propensity to migrate. On probing into reasons for such kind of pattern, it was found that whatever illiterate people were there in the village, they were above fifty years of age. When this group of people was in their youth, i.e. the time when someone has higher probability to migrate, out migration from village was not a common phenomenon. Moreover, because of ownership of land by each household¹², prevalence of sustainable livelihood practices, strong kinship ties, entirely different & unique culture and limited contact with the world outside did not expose them to the prospects of migration. Literates and better qualified people displayed higher mobility as there are no employment avenues in the village apart from in primary activities. Educated people do not prefer to work in agricultural sector where there is no certainty of incomes. Moreover, lack of quality education, healthcare services, harsh climate and other hardships associated with life in high mountains pushes them out of the villages. One noteworthy point here is that though out migration has become a way of life for the educated youth of the district as a whole, they are still very much connected to the roots. Migration for them is totally a rational decision.

⁵None of the households of the village is landless. Every household has its own piece of land. However, a disparity in the size of landholdings owned by different households is obvious.

Caste and Ownership of Land of Migrant Households-Table 5 depicts the caste and number of migrants in various categories of ownership of land. A close relationship can be observed between land, caste and migration.

Table 5 reveals that land ownership is more into the hands of *Kanets*, which is considered to be higher caste in Kinnaur. Larger landowners were all from the *Kanet* community. No scheduled caste households in the village had more than five bighas (one acre) of land.

Table 5
Land, Caste and Number of Migrants: Lippa

Land	Total number of migrants	Caste	
		Kanets	Scheduled Caste
Land \geq 25 bigha	4	4	0
10 \leq land \geq 24 bigha	7	7	0
5 \leq land \geq 9 bigha	11	11	0
0 < land \geq 4 bigha	26	9	17
Landless	0	0	0
Total	48	31	17

Source: Field Survey, October 2016

Of all the forty eight migrants, thirty one (64.6 percent) were from *kanet* community and seventeen (35.4 percent) were from scheduled caste households. However, analysis of Table 2 reveals that *kanets* formed 72.8 percent of the total population of the village and share of scheduled caste population in total population was 17.2 percent, meaning thereby that higher proportion of scheduled caste population was involved in out-migration from village.

As far as the relationship between ownership of land and migration is concerned, Table 5 clearly shows that largest proportion of out-migrants was reported from the smallest landholders (total size of landholdings less than five bighas). One noteworthy observation made during the survey was that all the households owning a minimum of ten bighas of land had at least one migrant from the family. Migrants from these households were reported to own houses at the place of destination as well. This indicates that proportion of migrants was higher in this category of landholders as well. Hence, it can be inferred that small and large landholders dominated the migration scenario of the village. Relationship between size of landholdings and migration is not linear. It is rather U shaped. At one end of the spectrum are the small landholders who expect better and certain wages at the place of destination. Despite facing difficulty in managing the initial costs of migration which involves the cost of boarding & lodging and bearing the daily expenses for a certain period of time; this class decides to migrate for economic betterment. On the other end of the spectrum are the better-offs who can easily finance migration. Migration for them is not necessarily a financial compulsion. It is somewhat a means to achieve a better quality of life.

Place of Destination of Migrants- An analysis of the place of destination of migrants shows that migration from village Lippa is primarily short distance migration involving migration to other districts of Himachal Pradesh, Union Territory Chandigarh and National Capital Territory Delhi. However, one migrant was reported to have moved to Mumbai.

Table 6
Place of Destination of Migrants: Lippa

Destination	Number of Migrants	Percent
Other districts of Himachal Pradesh	22	45.83
Chandigarh	16	33.33
NCT Delhi	9	18.75
Mumbai	1	2.08

Source: Field Survey, October 2016

An overwhelmingly large proportion of migrants had moved to other districts of Himachal Pradesh (45.83 percent). Of all the migrants, thirty five percent had moved to district Shimla alone. Remaining ten percent were reported to have moved to other districts of the state. Other favoured place of destination was Chandigarh where thirty three percent of the sampled migrants had settled. Around nineteen percent migrants had moved to National Capital Territory Delhi. These migrants were scattered unevenly in NCT Delhi and were reported to be working and staying in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida and Gaziabad etc. One migrant had moved to Mumbai.

Reasons of Migration- Migration from village Lippa can be explained in terms of traditional Push-Pull Model of Migration. People leave their native village primarily in search of better employment and

educational opportunities. It was found that scarcity of operational landholdings, lack of employment opportunities and absence of quality educational institutions, both school level and higher education institutions, act as push factors provoking the migrants to leave their village. Diversified employment opportunities and better education facilities were the pull factors associated with the place of destination.

As far as the sampled migrants are concerned, all the migrants in the age group 6-14 were pursuing education at the place of destination. Their sole purpose to migrate was to receive education in good schools located in towns/cities. Out of these seven migrants of the age group 6-14, five had gone to town Shimla and two had moved to Chandigarh. They were staying at the place of destination with their kin who had migrated at some earlier point of time. These kin were *Chachas* or *Tayas* who had migrated for the purpose of employment. An important observation made during the field visit was that whole family of a household never migrates. At least one brother out of all the siblings stays at the native village to take care of the house and land. It is expected from the migrated brother/s to take the kids of the brother/s staying at the native village to the place of destination to ensure better educational facilities for them. Though this unspoken convention is not followed in all the households but it can be seen in large number households. Migrants falling in the age group 6-14 migrated to pursue education and were taken care of by their kin. On the other extreme were the migrants in the age group 36-60, who were all working. In the age group 15-35, some had migrated to receive higher education, and for others, employment was the reason to migrate. A detailed analysis of figures of reasons of migration brings out that for thirty five of the forty eight sampled migrants, employment was the reason to migrate; and thirteen were reported to have migrated to pursue education. However, employment was the only reason of migration for those moving to National Capital Territory Delhi and Mumbai.

Conclusions

This case study of migration from village Lippa located in mountainous district Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh brings forth the relationship between caste, land and migration apart from studying some selected parameters of migrants. Findings of the field survey have been summarized as following:

- (i) Young people are more likely to migrate as they are more adventurous & energetic; and are willing to take risks associated with migration. Moreover after passing a certain age, people barely move out of the comfort zone which they find in their native places.
- (ii) In village Lippa, all out migrants were literate and better qualified in comparison to non-migrants. This can be attributed to the ownership of land by each household of the village. None of the households was reported to be landless and agricultural practices are sustainable and self-sufficient.
- (iii) In terms of caste, scheduled caste population was more mobile than the *kanets* of the village which is largely associated with their financial status. Scheduled caste households were found to be financially lagging behind. They could see better avenues at the place of destination.
- (iv) As far as land ownership and migration is concerned, a U shaped relationship could be found between the two. Small and large landholders were more migratory in comparison to medium sized landholders. For small landholders, migration is a mode of higher and certain incomes. They have little land in village which can be taken care of by left behind family members. Large landholders, who are well-to-do, can easily finance migration and can afford to bear the risks associated with migration. Migration for them is a strategy to achieve better quality of life at the place of destination. Medium sized landholders, though can easily bear the cost of migration, are least likely to take risks associated with migration.
- (v) Migration from village Lippa is short distance migration. Largest number of migrants were reported to have moved to other districts of Himachal Pradesh (to district Shimla in particular) followed by Union Territory Chandigarh and NCT Delhi. One migrant was reported to have migrated to Mumbai.
- (vi) Employment and education were reported to be the primary reasons of out migration from the village.

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