



Regional Patterns of Gaddi Migration: A Case Study of Rehlu Village, Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract: The migration of tribes has been a fundamental aspect of human history, shaping cultural landscapes and civilizations worldwide. Tribes, defined by shared ancestry, language, and cultural practices, have traversed continents, from the Amazon to the Arctic, preserving unique traditions passed down through generations. In India, a country renowned for its cultural diversity, over 700 recognize tribes contribute to the nation's rich tapestry. Among these, the Gaddi tribe, indigenous to the hilly regions of Himachal Pradesh, exemplifies a unique way of life rooted in pastoralism and cultural heritage. Historically semi-nomadic, the Gaddis have adapted to the challenging mountainous terrain, relying on agropastoral activities for livelihood. However, contemporary challenges, including globalization and developmental shifts, have prompted changes in their migration patterns. This research paper delves into the regional patterns of Gaddis migration, focusing specifically on the village of Rehlu in Himachal Pradesh. For this purpose, primary data has been collected from 55 respondents with the use of a structured questionnaire tool from Rehlu village. By understanding the factors influencing their migration and its impacts on their livelihood, this study aims to contribute valuable insights for policy formation to enhance the quality of life for the Gaddi people.

Key Words: Tribal Migration • Cultural Heritage • Gaddi Tribe • Climatic Variations • Livelihood Adaptations.

Introduction

Tribes often defined as group of people sharing common ancestry language, cultural practices which have migrated for various reasons. Throughout human history, migration has played a crucial role in forming cultural landscapes and civilizations. Tribes have been moving across continents for millennia, creating complex patterns of mobility that show how they have adapted to various environmental and sociopolitical situations. These migratory migrations are continuing processes impacted by modern elements like globalization, climate change and economic possibilities, rather than merely historical events. The distinctive traits and experiences of every tribe must be acknowledged in the context of worldwide tribal migration, as these particulars offer a thorough grasp of their cultural legacy and survival tactics. Preserving their ancient traditions demands tailored interventions to improve living standards and address the distinct challenges faced by each tribe, ensuring the safeguarding of their rich cultural heritage (Sharma et al 2022).

Tribes have demonstrated distinct migration patterns around the world, influenced by a blend of ancestors' customs and modern needs. The Amazon's nomadic tribes, for example, have adapted to the thick jungle environment by striking a careful balance between resource utilization and movement (Moran 2017). Comparably, historically, the Sami people of the Arctic have moved in reaction to seasonal variations in the availability of resources, especially reindeer, which are essential to their way of life (Beach et al 1992). These illustrations highlight the significance of comprehending the regional elements—such as social structures, economic prospects, and climate—that impact tribe movement.

The geographical landscape of India, a nation known for its cultural richness, is greatly enriched by the contributions of its tribal people. India is home to a diverse range of indigenous cultures, each with unique customs and migration patterns, and has over 700 recognized tribes (Virginus 2001). India's diversified topography, which includes the Himalayas and coastal plains, has



forced its tribal communities to adapt and migrate in a variety of ways. The migratory patterns of the tribes in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh are a particularly striking example of this variety. The rugged landscape and unpredictable climate of Himachal Pradesh, a state in the western Himalayas, have long shaped the lifestyles and migration patterns of its indigenous tribes. Among the prominent pastoral communities of the Himalayan region are the Gaddis, Gujjars, Bakarwals, Kinnauras, Kaulis and Kanets of the north Indian Himalayas; the Bhotias of the Garhwal Himalayas; Bhotias and Sherpas from Nepal's Khumbu Valley; Kirats from eastern Nepal; Monpa yak herders from Arunachal Pradesh; Bhutias from Lachen and Lachung in Sikkim; and Changpas from Changthang and Ladakh (Bhasin 2006). Among them, the Gaddi tribe stands out for its unique way of life, which is deeply rooted in pastoralism and cultural heritage. Raising sheep and goats in the alpine meadows of the Great Himalaya, the Pir Panjal, and the Dhauladhar is the traditional occupation of the "Gaddis," a type of "transhumant agro-pastoral" tribe. According to Thakur et al (2024), they do this by seasonal migration from one ecological zone on the valley floor, where they spend the winter, to another ecological zone on the summits of mountain ranges, where they spend the summer. The term "Gaderan," which is the indigenous term for the mountainous regions of Himachal Pradesh, is the source of the Gaddi nomenclature. The Gaddis, a Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribe, are primarily concentrated in Bharmauri in the Chamba district; this region is known as "Gaderon," which translates to "the home of the Gaddis." Bharmour is often referred to as Gaddis's home (Pathania Biswas et al 2016). Despite historical challenges, Gaddis demonstrate resilience, actively pursuing a more prosperous future through education and employment opportunities while aspiring for acceptance within the broader social fabric (Kumar 2021). The Gaddis are mostly located in Himachal Pradesh's mountainous areas, including Kangra and Chamba. Historically, they have been semi-nomadic,

moving around in response to seasonal variations and environmental factors (Kapila 2004). Sheep and goat herding is the mainstay of the Gaddis pastoral economy, which requires frequent migration from high-altitude summer pastures to lower-altitude locations during the hard winter months (Bhatnagar et al 2006).

The Gaddis, like many other tribal tribes, are encountering contemporary pressures that are changing their migratory patterns despite their deeply ingrained traditions. Struggling to preserve its cultural heritage amid evolving circumstances, the Gaddi community faces the delicate challenge of balancing tradition with the impact of external influences on their way of life (Kumari 2021). Their traditional way of life is under tremendous strain from globalization, economic growth and infrastructure improvements, which is causing them to modify their migratory approaches (Iqbal International Institute for Research & Dialogue 2011). Furthermore, since the Gaddis search for favourable habitats for both themselves and their cattle, climate variations—such as severe temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns—are having an increasing impact on their travel (Gadgil & Guha 2012). Their migration patterns are also being influenced by economic possibilities, urbanization's attraction, and access to healthcare and educational resources.

Because Himachal Pradesh's high elevations are uninhabitable during the severe winters, Gaddis move to lower, warmer locales, such the villages of Kangra and the border areas of Chamba district. Their livestock's survival and the continuation of their customary pastoral activities are guaranteed by this periodic movement. But the shifting patterns of migration also show how the Gaddis have adjusted to new difficulties, striking a balance between their rich cultural legacy and the rigours of modern living. Gaddi community in Himachal Pradesh, integral to India's development, faces challenges like occupational shifts impacting their traditional lifestyle (Mishra 2019).

Micro-level research that focuses on a particular community within the Gaddi tribe offers unique insights into the subtleties of these



transformations. Changes in specific areas of their daily lives are closely linked to transformations in Gaddi life's. In addition to community and youth goals, it covers family structures, land use patterns, livelihood strategies, and social networks. The ongoing development efforts in the area have an impact on all these interdependent domains, which in turn lead to socio-ecological and cultural transformation among the Gaddis. (Malhotra et al 2021). The Gaddi community in the Kangra district holds a significant place in the cultural tapestry of the region, adding vibrancy and distinctiveness to the social landscape. In district Kangra the Gaddi tribe predominantly found in Dharmshala, Darri, Sihunta, Nurpur, Palampur, Baijnath etc. According to the Indian Constitution, this area is a scheduled territory, and the Gaddi people continue to be a dominating Scheduled Tribe in terms of both population and politics (Thakur and Sharma 2012). Migration among the Gaddis in the Kangra district is primarily motivated by climatic variations, education and health facilities, economic facilities, infrastructural activities and hazardous climatic conditions etc. and the changing seasons. Due to this reason, they migrating rapidly in villages of Kangra and the border of district Kangra and Chamba. In these villages the Gaddi tribe people are found in Rehlu village, Kareri villege, Durgela village Thamba village, Bajol village, Khaner village, Sihunta village, Boh valley, Salli valley etc.

For the purpose of analysing the regional patterns of Gaddis migration, the village of Rehlu in the Kangra area provides an appropriate case study. This study attempts to determine the causes of the Gaddis migration and how it affected their way of life. The results demonstrate how a variety of factors, including seasonal variations, climatic circumstances, the accessibility of health and educational resources, and economic possibilities, affect Gaddi migration in Kangra.

The results of this study have important ramifications for policy creation in addition to being essential for comprehending the Gaddis migratory habits. By addressing their unique needs—such as expanding access to healthcare and

education, creating job opportunities, and guaranteeing sustainable development that honours their traditional way of life—effective policies may improve the Gaddis quality of life. Through an examination of the Gaddis movement patterns in Rehlu village, this research sheds light on how indigenous people manage the challenges of modernization while retaining their traditional identity.

Study Area

Kangra district is the most populous district of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh as shown in the (figure 1) Dharmshala is the administrative headquarter of the district. The average elevation of district Kangra 733 meters (2404 feet). Kangra district derives its name from Kangra town that was known as Nagarkot in ancient times. Kangra takes pride in being home of the katoch dynasty as one of the oldest surviving royal dynasties in the world. Kangra district is also known for its attractive tourist destination, Dharamshala, Kangra, Palampur, Baijnath, Jwalamukhi and Masroor are the famous tourist place. Dharmshala is a seat of the Dalai Lama has become a place of international fame since 1966.

Locational extent of Study Area: Kangra is one of the important towns of Himachal Pradesh. It is located at 32.06N, 76.37E. The average elevation is 733 meters. The highest point is Hanuman Tibba. It is a district at the confluence of the Baner River and Majhi River, and Beas in an important river. The Rehlu village (32.2211° N, 76.2099° E) is located in the Shahpur tehsil of district Kangra in Himachal Pradesh. The site is at a distance of around 240 kms from the state capital, Shimla and at a distance of 450 km from New Delhi. The average elevation of village is 676meters. The total geographical area of village is 202.96 hectares. The topography of the village is mostly hilly, the type of cultivation is terraced, the major crops are wheat, rice, millets etc. This village lies in Dhauladhar Range. The literacy rate of Rehlu village is 74.51% Dharamshala, Chamba, Pathankot and Dalasi are the nearby cities to Rehlu village.



Research Objectives

1. To examine the factors influencing Gaddis migration from district Chamba to Kangra.
2. To examine their occupational structure pre and post migration.

3. To highlights the challenges faced by Gaddis during migration.

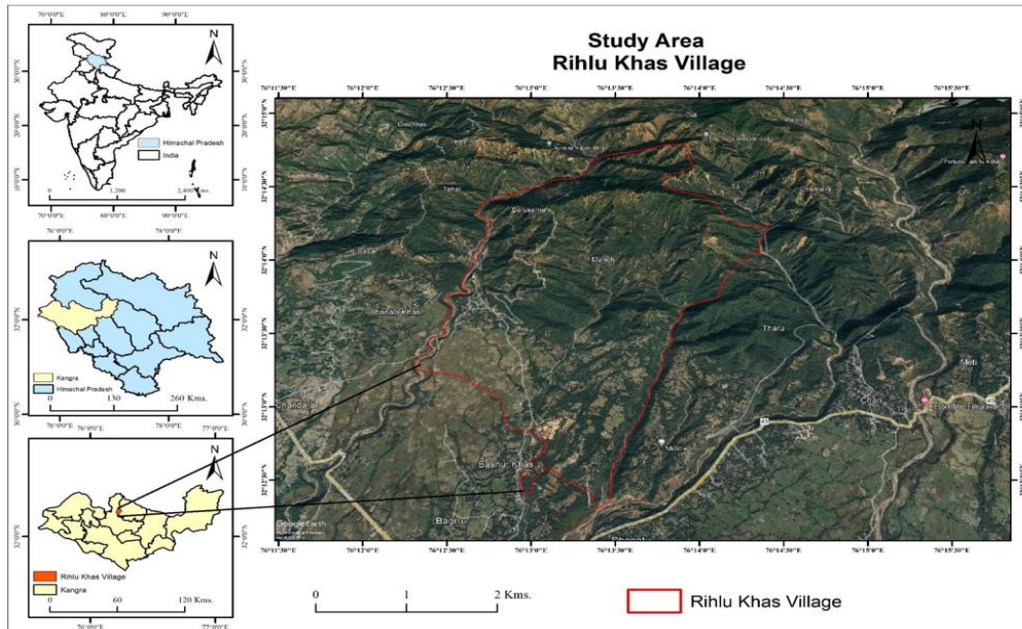


Fig 1. Map of the study area (Source: Survey of India and Google Earth Pro, 2024)

Research Methodology

This study is purely based on the primary data and so for the fulfillment of the research objectives the data has been collected through primary field survey from the households. A total of 55 responses has been collected through field survey with the use of purposive sampling. After that the collected data processed through coding and tabulation and analysed systematically to achieve the objectives. And the findings of the study have been shown through bar graphs, pie charts, diagrams and maps through Gis.

Result and Discussion

Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration

Geographical Factors: The figure 2, on factors influencing migration from Chamba to Kangra village Rehlu illustrates the predominant role of geographical factors. Terrain and climate were cited by 16.36% of respondents, while resource availability and proximity to urban centres were mentioned by a smaller percentage.

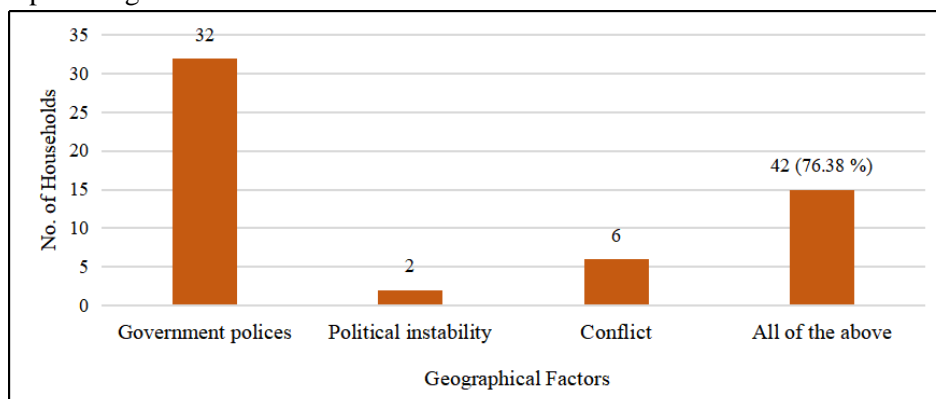




Figure 2: Rehlu Village: Geographical Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration
Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

However, a significant majority (76.38%) identified all these factors collectively as influential in their migration decision. This data underscores the comprehensive impact of environmental considerations on migration patterns, highlighting the interplay between natural conditions and human settlement choices in this region.

Economic Factors Influencing

The data in figure 3, highlights the primary economic factors driving migration of the Gaddi tribe from Chamba to Kangra village Rehlu. Employment opportunities were cited by 23.63% of respondents as a key motivator for migration, while market access was mentioned by a smaller percentage.

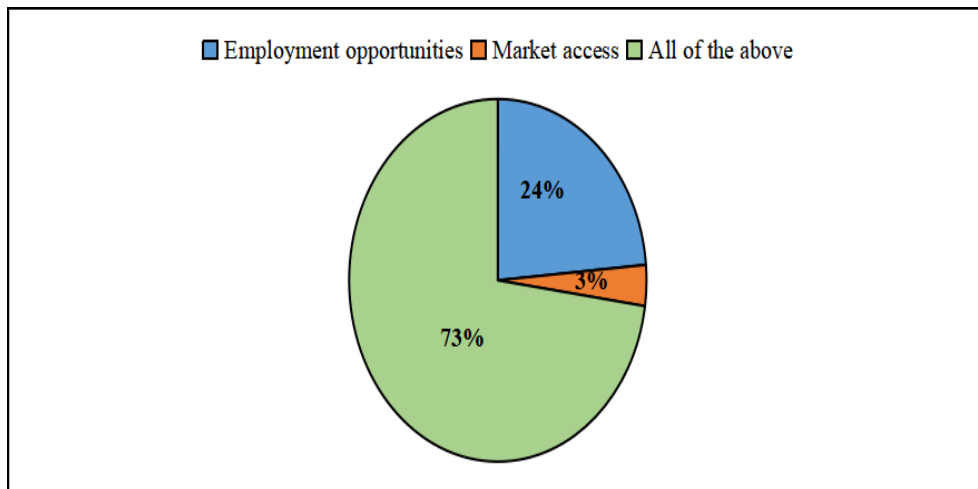


Fig 3: Rehlu Village: Economic Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration
Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

Notably, a significant majority (72.72%) identified both employment opportunities and market access collectively as influencing their migration decision. This data emphasizes the importance of economic considerations in shaping migration patterns within the Gaddi tribe, underscoring the role of livelihood prospects and access to markets in their settlement choices.

Social Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration

The data from the survey shown in figure 4, highlights significant social factors influencing migration from Chamba to Kangra village Rehlu among respondents. Education facilities emerged as a primary driver, with 49.90% indicating its importance in migration decisions. Family ties and social networks were cited by smaller percentages,

but a notable majority (41.82%) recognized the collective impact of all these social factors. This underscores the role of education access and broader social connections in shaping migration patterns within the community. The data suggests that educational opportunities play a crucial role alongside familial and social ties in influencing settlement choices among the surveyed population.

Political Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration

The survey data on political factors influencing migration from Chamba to Kangra village Rehlu as shown in figure 6, reveals significant insights. Government policies emerged as the predominant factor, cited by 58.18% of respondents, highlighting the impact of governance decisions on migration patterns.

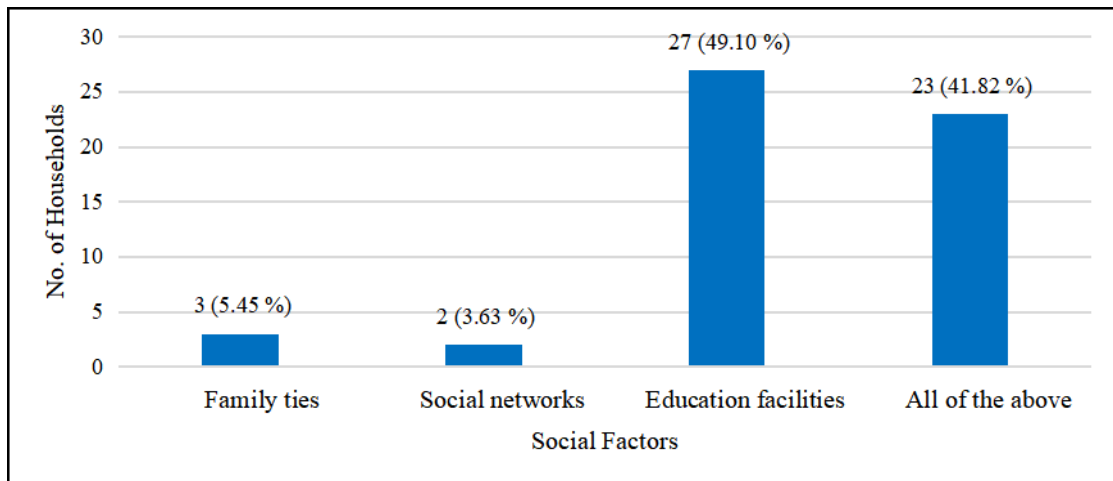


Figure 4: Rehlu Village: Social Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.



Figure 5: Interaction with Local People of Rehlu Village (Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.)

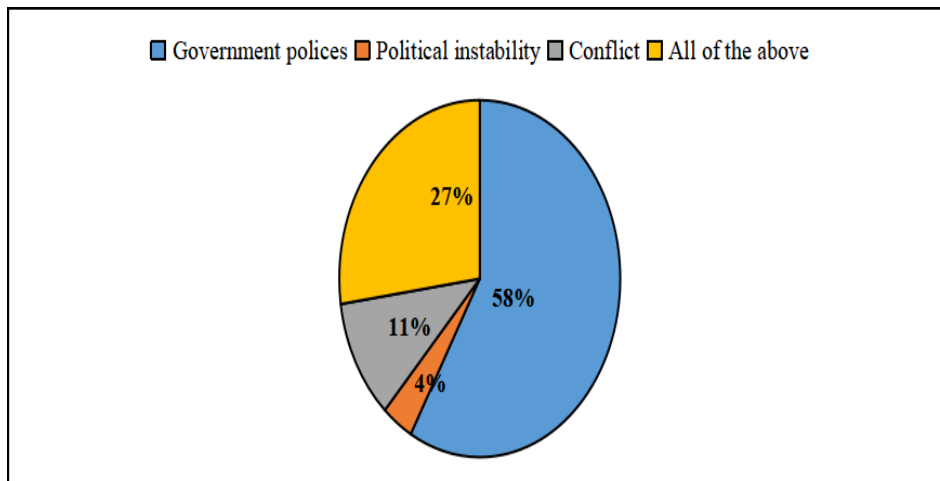


Figure: 6: Rehlu Village: Political Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration
 Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

Political instability and conflict were also noted, though to a lesser extent. Notably, 27.27% recognized the combined influence of all these political factors. It reflects the complex interplay between governance conditions and population movements in the surveyed region.

Cultural Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration

The data from the survey highlights the significant influence of cultural factors on migration from

Chamba to Kangra village Rehlu as shown in figure 7. Preservation of traditions, language and identity, and participation in rituals and festivals were cited by respondents. Notably, 67.27% recognized the collective impact of all these cultural factors on migration decisions, underscoring the importance of cultural identity and heritage in shaping community movements.

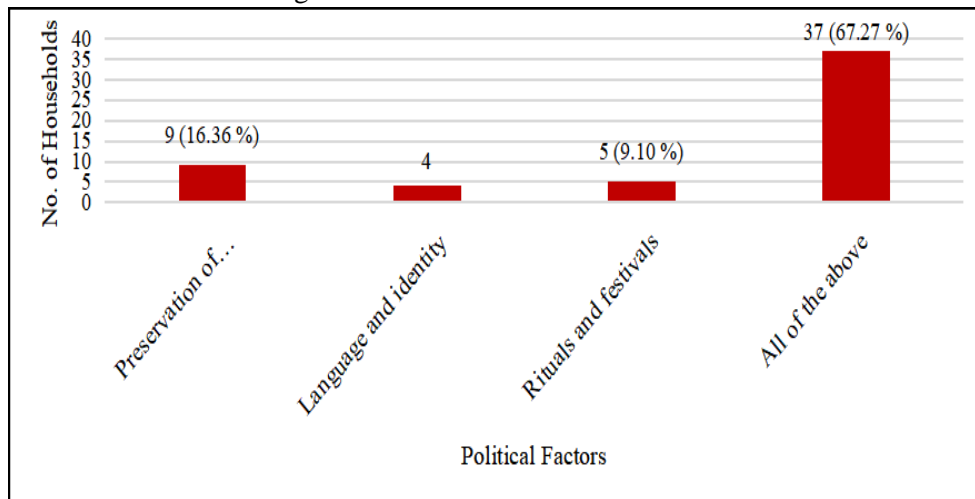


Figure: 7: Rehlu Village: Cultural Factors Influencing Gaddis Migration
 Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

This data suggests that maintaining cultural practices and identity plays a pivotal role in the migration dynamics of the surveyed population. It reflects the deep-rooted connection between

culture, tradition, and settlement choices within this community.

Occupational Structure Pre and Post Migration

The data below from Gaddis of Village Rehlu indicates a significant shift in occupation structure



as shown in table 1. A vast majority, comprising 87.27% of households, transitioned to new non-agricultural occupations, reflecting broader economic diversification. This shift likely reflects changing economic opportunities and the adoption

of alternative livelihoods beyond traditional agriculture. Meanwhile, a smaller percentage (12.72%) shifted to different agricultural activities, suggesting some continuity in farming practices albeit with adjustments

Table 1: Rehlu Village: Change in Occupational Structure of Gaddis due to Migration

Occupation Structure	No Of Household	Percentage
Shifted to a different agricultural activity	7	12.72
Engaged in a new non-agricultural occupation	48	87.28
Total	55	100

Source

: Primary Field Survey 2024.

Gaddis Occupational Structure Pre-Migration

The data below shown in figure 8, reveals interesting insights into their primary occupations before the move of Gaddis. A majority (67.28%)

of households engaged in a combination of agriculture and animal husbandry, indicating a strong reliance on traditional rural practices.

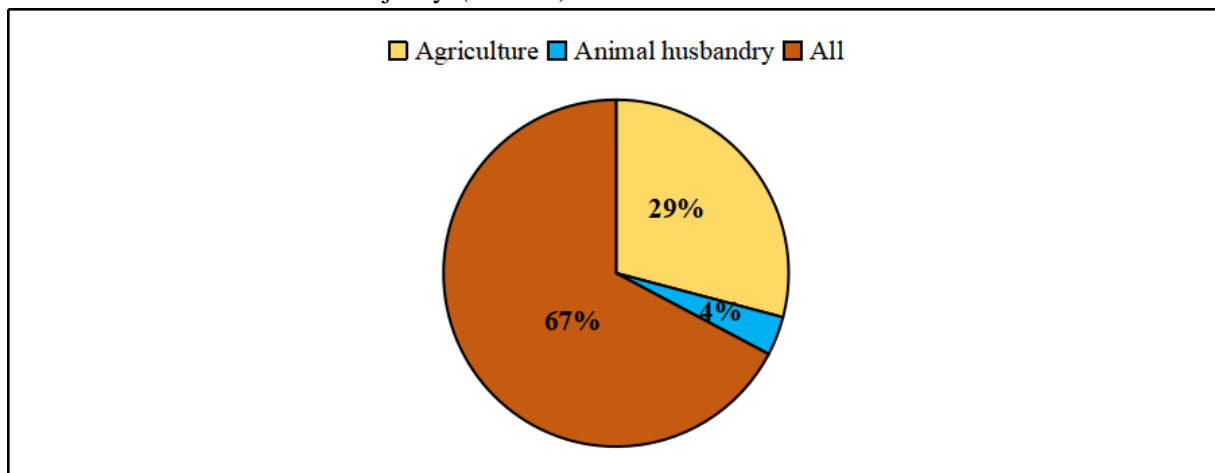


Fig 8: Rehlu Village: Gaddis Primary Occupation Before Migration

Source: Primary Field Survey 2024.

Agriculture alone accounted for 29.09% of households, underscoring its importance in their livelihoods. The low percentage (3.63%) solely involved in animal husbandry suggests a lesser emphasis on livestock-based activities. This data highlights the multifaceted nature of Gaddis primary occupations pre-migration, which likely influenced their adaptation and integration into the new environment in Kangra.

Occupational Structure Post-Migration

The migration of Gaddis from Chamba to Kangra Village Rehlu has brought about a notable transformation in occupational patterns. Among the predominant occupations post-migration, agriculture in advanced ways emerges as a leading choice, accounting for 23.64% of households as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Rehlu Village: Gaddis Predominant Occupation After Migration

Primary Occupation	No Of Households	Percentage
Agriculture in advanced way	13	23.64
Wage Labour	12	21.82
Service sector jobs	7	12.72
Tourism-related activities	5	9.10
Business	3	5.45



All of the above	15	27.27
Total	55	100

Source: Primary Field Survey 2024.

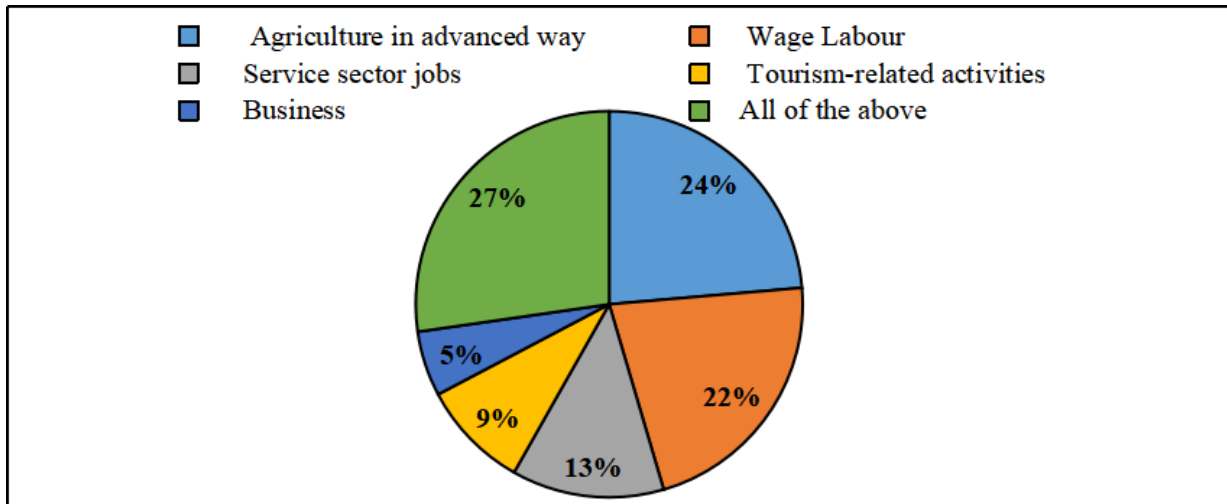


Figure 9: Rehlu Village: Gaddis Predominant Occupation After Migration

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

The above figure 9, suggests a focus on modernized agricultural practices for livelihoods. Additionally, wage labour and service sector jobs collectively constitute a substantial share (34.54%) of households, reflecting a shift towards diverse employment opportunities outside traditional agrarian roles. Notably, tourism-related activities and business ventures also show nascent contributions to the local economy.

Challenges faced during Migration

Physical Challenges faced During Migration

The data from Rehlu Village reveals significant physical challenges faced by the Gaddi community during migration from Chamba to Kangra. A substantial percentage of households (43.65%) encountered multiple physical challenges, including climatic conditions, terrain difficulties,

and transportation issues, which collectively impacted their migration experience. Specifically, transportation emerged as a major obstacle, affecting 36.36% of households, likely due to the rugged terrain and limited infrastructure in mountainous regions. Climatic conditions and terrain difficulties also posed challenges for a notable portion of households, highlighting the demanding nature of the migration process in challenging geographical settings. Addressing these physical challenges is crucial to ensuring the safety, well-being, and successful integration of the Gaddi community into their new environment post-migration as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Rehlu Village: Physical Challenges Faced During Migration

Physical Challenges	No of Households	Percentage
Climatic conditions	5	9.09
Terrain difficulties	6	10.9
Transportation issues	20	36.36
All of the above	24	43.65
Total	55	100

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

Socio –Cultural Challenges Faced During Migration

During migration from Chamba to Kangra, Gaddis in Rehlu Village encountered notable socio-



cultural challenges. Language barriers affected 12.72% of households, highlighting communication difficulties in new surroundings.

Cultural adaptation was a major concern for 47.27% of households, as they adjusted to different customs and norms as shown in figure 10

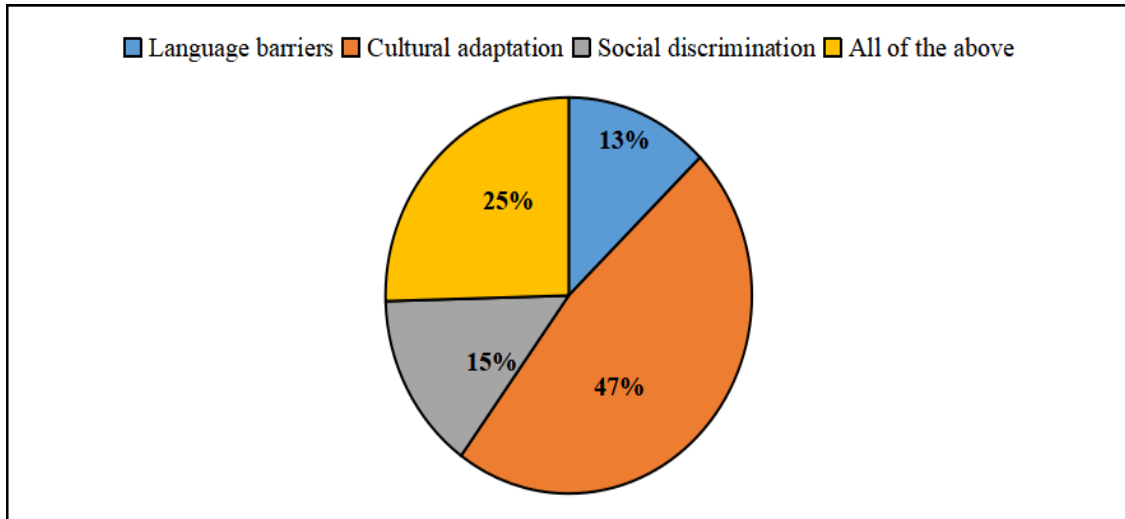


Figure 10: Rehlu Village: Socio –Cultural Challenges Faced During Migration

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

Social discrimination impacted 15 % of households, underscoring challenges in acceptance. Additionally, 25 % of households faced a combination of these challenges. These findings emphasize the complexities of migration

beyond physical aspects, emphasizing the need for support in language acquisition, cultural integration, and combating discrimination to facilitate smoother transitions and foster inclusive communities’ post-migration.

Economic Challenges Faced During Migration

Table 4 : Rehlu Village; Economic Challenges Faced During Post-Migration

Employment Discrimination	No Of Household	Percentage
Employment discrimination	10	18.18
Wage disparities	2	3.63
Access to credit and markets	4	7.27
All of the above	5	9.09
none of the above	33	60
language barriers	1	1.83
Total	55	100

Source Primary Field Survey, 2024.

In Rehlu Village post-migration, economic challenges persist for some households. As shown in table 4, employment discrimination affects 18.18% of households, highlighting barriers to fair job opportunities. Wage disparities impact 3.63%, reflecting income inequality. Access to credit and markets is limited for 7.27% of households, hindering economic growth. Additionally, 9.09% face a combination of these challenges.

Surprisingly, 60% report none of the listed challenges, suggesting a varied economic landscape. Language barriers impact a minimal 1.83 % of households. Addressing these economic hurdles is crucial for promoting equitable economic development and opportunities for all residents in Rehlu Village.

Overall Satisfaction with the Migrating Decision



In assessing the migration decision from Chamba to Kangra in Rehlu Village, households exhibit

varied levels of satisfaction (table 5).

Table 5: Rehlu Village: Overall Satisfaction with the Migrating Decision

Overall satisfaction	No Of Household	Percentage
Very Dissatisfied	5	9.10
Dissatisfied	3	5.45
Neutral	6	10.90
Satisfied	27	49.10
Very Satisfied	14	25.45
Total	55	100

Source Primary Field Survey, 2024.

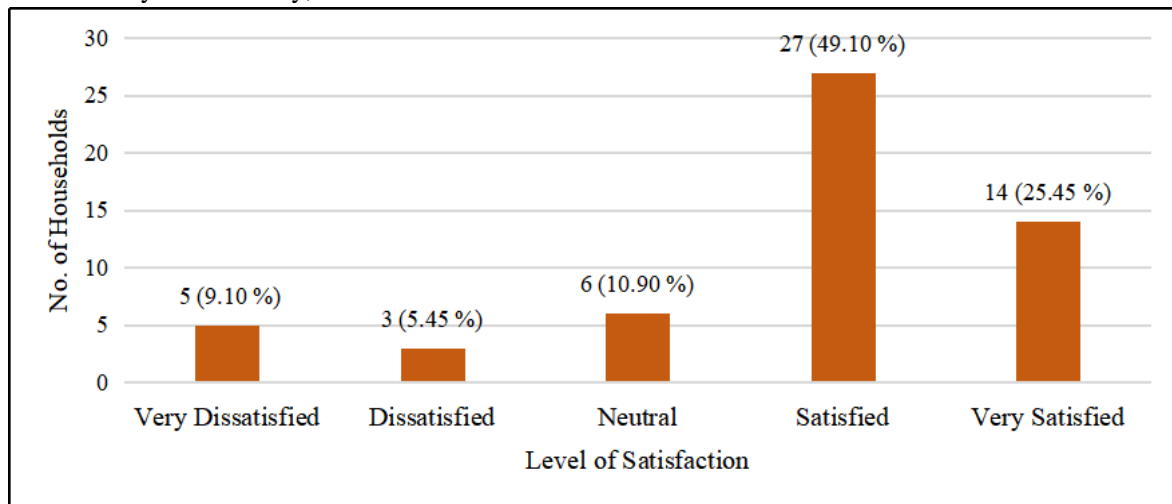


Fig 11: Rehlu Village: Overall Satisfaction with the Migrating Decision

Source Primary Field Survey, 2024.

The above figure 11, shows that 74.55% express satisfaction, with 25.45% being very satisfied and 49.10% satisfied. Conversely, a minority holds negative views, with 9.09% very dissatisfied and 5.45% dissatisfied. Neutral sentiments are expressed by 10.90% of households. These results highlight a generally positive sentiment towards the migration experience, indicating that a majority view the decision favourably. Understanding the factors contributing to satisfaction levels, as well as addressing concerns of those dissatisfied or neutral, is essential for fostering community well-being and integration in Rehlu Village post migration.

Conclusion

In the migration journey from Chamba to Kangra village Rehlu, the Gaddi community navigates a complex interplay of geographical, economic,

social, political, and cultural factors. Geographically, the challenging terrain and resource availability heavily influence migration decisions in mountainous landscapes. Economically, the shift towards non-agricultural pursuits demonstrates the community's adaptability and resilience in response to changing economic dynamics. Socially, education and family ties are crucial, reflecting deep-rooted community values. Politically, governance policies shape migration trends, while culturally, traditions are preserved amidst change. Data highlights significant shifts in livelihoods post-migration, with economic stability and improved living conditions evident. Challenges such as terrain difficulties and economic disparities necessitate comprehensive support strategies. Enhancing infrastructure, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering inclusive economic development are vital for



ensuring the well-being and integration of the Gaddi community in Rehlu. By addressing these challenges effectively, policymakers can promote sustainable development and enhance the lives of rural communities in Himachal Pradesh

Recommendations

- Focus on improving transportation infrastructure to alleviate the physical challenges of migration in mountainous regions. This could involve better road connectivity and transportation services to enhance accessibility and mobility
- Continue to promote economic diversification beyond agriculture by facilitating access to credit, markets, and skill development programs. Address employment discrimination and wage disparities through targeted interventions and initiatives
- Implement programs to support cultural adaptation and mitigate language barriers. Foster community acceptance and integration through cultural exchange initiatives and language training program
- Strengthen education facilities and vocational training opportunities to equip migrants with the skills needed for non-agricultural occupations. This can enhance their employability and economic resilience.
- Ensure sustained access to basic amenities such as water, electricity, healthcare, and education facilities to maintain and enhance the improved standard of living experienced post-migration.
- Develop strategies for sustainable resource management and climate resilience to leverage environmental factors positively impacting the quality of life for migrant households.
- Advocate for inclusive policies that address the unique challenges faced by migrant communities in mountainous regions. Prioritize community engagement and participation in policy development and implementation
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the long-term impact of

migration and identify areas requiring ongoing support and intervention.

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