

TO STUDY THE MIGRATION ROUTE OF CHANGPA NOMADS OF LADAKH

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ABSTRACT

The investigation was aimed at, studying the different migration route of Changpa Nomads of Ladakh. The study was conducted in Changthang region of Nyoma block, of Leh district of J&K state. During summers, nomadic family member or hired shepherds take their livestock (sheep, goat, horse, and yaks), to Spangchen pasture land for grazing area. In autumn, they move to Zara camps and when spring comes, they all move towards Yagyang. Kharnak receive heavy snowfall, during winters and pastures are totally covered with blankets of snow, due to which they migrate towards Dadh, Tsamartsay, as snowfall is less in these areas. Korzok nomadic family members move around the Tso Moriri Lake, in the early month of June in summers and at the end of summer season i.e., ending August they migrate to Korzok Phu, where they spend maximum one month. In the autumn season, they migrate towards Paldo, Tatsang Tso basin, and north to Korzok village, where they would stay one and a half month. During summer season the Angkung nomadic family migrates to Zukthe valley, where they enjoy lush green pasture & snowmelt stream water and they would stay there for around 3-4 months. In spring and autumn season, they migrate to Angkung and nearby areas, where they spend around two months. At the start of winter, they start migrating to Tamayara valley, where they spend entire winter season on the rangeland. Samad village, consisting of 40 households spend their summer grazing area in Skyangchuthang, in the west side of Tso-Kar basin. In spring season, they move to Norchen, Nyorchung for pasture land. At the end of summer, they move towards Ronchen, Ronchung, Chubsang, Zomolong, Togra and Zirgul, where they find good pasture rangeland and other natural basic amenities.

KEY WORDS: Changthang, Changpa, Migration, Nomads

INTRODUCTION

Changthang is a unique part of Ladakh, which has harsh climatic dryness (with very low rainfall), whose temperature varies from hot to extreme cold. The area is known as a Cold Himalayan Desert and has very low thermal and hydric indexes. July and August, are the hottest and January is the coldest month of the region. The minimum and maximum temperature fluctuates between -40°C to 40°C and rainfall is meager. The average relative humidity varies between 13–90%, with the highest humidity corresponding to the lowest temperature. The snowfall in the area is very scant and when it does occur, it is dry and powdery. Wind velocity in the area is very high and the fallen snow gets accumulated in the gorges, which remain until the summers. During summers, melting of this snow causes regeneration of various grasses, in the region (Sheikh F D.et.al 2008). Changthang region is geographically located in the eastern part of Ladakh, the easternmost part of the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The average altitude of the area is around 14600 metres, above sea level. Changthang with an area of 21,000 square kilometers, occupies strategic

position, which also shares border with both China and Pakistan. It is home to thousands of the Changpa nomads.

Goldstein and Beall (1990), investigated the Pastoral communities and have remained stable for centuries, particularly through flexible responses to short term variations, in climatic conditions. They evolved a system employing migratory, semi-sedentary and deferred grazing practices, to produce ample quantities of animal products of their own households and for trade. The communal discipline, demanded by the system was established through strict adherence to a set of institutional arrangements, dictating all aspects of community life. Land itself was the property of powerful landlords and monasteries, but the nomads themselves dictated the day to day management of range and their livestock, allowing for wealth accumulation, among individual households.

Ahmed, (1996) Studied that, the thousands of Tibetan refugees entered India and settled in the border region, in towns and all over the Indian Changthang. The Changpas were essentially forced to leave behind large winter grazing areas near the border, due to a high number of refugees and soldiers in the area. The migration pattern changed and the nomads had to search for new winter rangeland. At the same time, the Changpas had to increase their population, with hundreds of Tibetan refugees with thousands of livestock. In addition to changes in migration pattern and increased population, the nomads were facing socio-economic changes, due to externally driven influences from development activities and improvement of infrastructure. The border dispute brought about a high degree of military activity in Ladakh. Roads were built and thousands of soldiers entered the region. The army brought in highly subsidized food and supplies, that the nomads could purchase inexpensively, which led to an end of the old trading routes and a change from subsistence economy, into market economy.

Chaudhuri, (2000) Studied that, While reducing the grazing area, the seasonal migration pattern had to change into shorter movements and the local nomads had to divide themselves into smaller units and shift settlement more often, which is more burdensome and exhausting, especially for the women. The nomad's shift 8- 15 times, depending upon the environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Locale of the Study

Changthang region, falls under the Nyoma block of Leh district, in Jammu and Kashmir. The Block Nyoma, located on the south-east of Leh District was established in the year 1966. Nyoma, the main part of the highlands of Changthang region of Leh district. The block is very important, as it is bounded in North and east by China. Indian Air Force and Army have jointly developed an Advanced Landing Ground (ALG), for extreme weather conditions at Nyoma, 23km from Line of Actual Control from China. The block has 17 villages. Nyoma block is backward and People live below poverty line. Nyoma is located at higher elevation, than the rest of Leh district and is well known for its pastures and meadows, flora and fauna, its lakes, the nomadic lifestyle and the famous Pashmina goats and yaks, as well as its nesting grounds for the Black Necked Crane. Nyoma block, which falls under the Changtang range, has three councilors that represent its needs in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. Changthang region has harsh climatic dryness (with very low rainfall) and temperature, which varies from hot to extreme cold. The minimum and maximum temperature fluctuates between – 40°C to 40°C and rainfall is very meager.

Sample

The information sources, for the study was primary as well as secondary sources. The secondary data was obtained from various published sources of journals, magazines, prospects, books and different websites. The secondary data was used, only after thorough scrutiny. The primary data for the study was collected from seven nomadic villages of Changthang region, from Nyoma block of Leh district. Participatory observation, interview and focus group discussions were held, with the family members of changpa nomads. The sample, for the study was drawn from seven nomadic villages namely, Hanley, Koyul, Korzok, Samad, Kharnak, Angkung and Sumdo of Changthang region. The sample for the study was drawn from Nyoma block of Changthang region. Nyoma block consists of 17 villages, from which 7 nomadic villages were selected for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Migration Route Followed by Changpa Nomads of Changthang Region

Table 1: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Kharnak Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Tagang
Summer	Spangchen
Autumn	Zara
Winter	Dadh, Tsamartsay

Kharnak is a small village, with an area of 27.5 hectares and has total of 15 households (Kharnakpa), which lies in south of Ladakh. During summers, nomadic family member or hired shepherds take their livestock (sheep, goat, horse, and yaks) to Spangchen pasture land, for grazing area. In autumn, they move to Zara camps and when spring comes, they all move towards Yagyang. Kharnak receive heavy snowfall, during winters and pastures are totally covered with blankets of snow, due to which they migrate towards Dadh, Tsamartsay, as snowfall is less in these areas.

Table 2: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Korzok Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Unti
Summer	Tso Moriri and Korzor Phu
Autumn	Paldo
Winter	Tegazong, Chumu/Chumus and Tso Moriri

The Village Korzok is located on a small hill, at the south-west side of Tso Moriri Lake, with an altitude of 15049 feet and has 40 households. Korzok nomadic family members move around the Tso Moriri Lake, in the early month of June in summers and at the end of summer season i.e., ending August they migrate to Korzok Phu, where they spend maximum one month. In the autumn season, they migrate towards Paldo, Tatsang Tso basin, and north to Korzok village, where they would stay one and a half month. In spring season, they move to Unti and stay there for around half month. In the month of November (start of winters) the nomads start migrating towards Teygajung, Tso Moriri, and Chumur area, which in their winter pastures had encampment at Chumur and Tsomoriri, around where they stay for winter grazing.

Table 3: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Angkung Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Angkung
Summer	Zukthe
Autumn	Angkung
Winter	Tamayara

Angkung is a small village, situated in Puga valley, at an altitude of 1521 feet and is consists of 15 households, with the overall population of 1200-1500 people. During summer season, the Angkung nomadic family migrates to Zukthe valley, where they enjoy lush green pasture & snowmelt stream water and they would stay there for around 3-4 months. In spring and autumn season, they migrate to Angkung and nearby areas, where they spend around two months. At the start of winter, they start migrating to Tamayara valley, where they spend entire winter season on the rangeland.

Table 4: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Sumdo Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Ribilphy
Summer	Chulday
Autumn	Chulday
Winter	Ribilphy

Sumdo village is comprised of 15 households, whose population migrates to Chulday valley, where they find good pasture and stream water. By the end of autumn season, they move towards Ribilphay valley and stay there till the end of spring season.

Table 5: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Samad Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Yorchen, Nyorchung
Summer	Rockchen, Rockhung, Chubsang
Autumn	Zomolong, Togra, Zirgul
Winter	Pankanugu, Tsokar, Thukje, Nobokhar

Samad & Rokchen are two separate names, for different pastures of Samad village. It is located between the pastures of the neighboring nomadic communities of Kharnak and Korzok, towards east of Leh-Manali road. Samad village, consisting of 40 households spend their summer grazing area in Skyangchuthang, in the west side of Tso-Kar basin. In spring season, they move to Norchen, Nyorchung, for pasture land. At the end of summer, they move towards Ronchen, Ronchung, Chubsang, Zomolong, Togra and Zirgul, where they find good pasture rangeland and other natural basic amenities. Rockchen and Rockhung are hidden, which is placed bit deeper inside the valley and is difficult to be approached by vehicles. At the start of winter, they migrate along with their livestock to Kangkanair, Thukje and Maborkhar, where they stay for at least 25 to 40 days. According to Samad people, they have a very good winter rangeland & most of the winter, they spend towards Tsokar east basin for the grazing, where they stay till the end of winter.

Table 6: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Koyul Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Koyul surrounding
Summer	Putit-la base, Karle area and Shisumle
Autumn	Langankhel
Winter	Doletango

Koyul village is comprised of 25 households and is located 260 kilometers, away from Leh. It comes under Nyoma Block of the Leh district. The seasonal and spatial movement patterns of the Koyul nomads, are more or less same like other nomads. During brief summer Koyul, nomadic people migrate to Putit-La base and Karle area, where it has good pasture rangeland for their herds. In autumn, they move towards Chisumle area nearby Koyul area. In spring, they move towards Lagankhel and at the start of winter season i.e., in December, they along with their livestock start migrating along towards Karle and Doletango valley of Koyul village. Over a period of time, they have lost most of their pasture land to China, as they are restricted by the army for grazing.

Table 7: Migration Route and Grazing area Followed by Changpa Nomads of Hanlay Village

Season	Name of the valley
Spring	Bongnak
Summer	Lukbuk
Autumn	Tongon
Winter	Zaklay

Hanlay Village is located at about 300 kilometers towards southeast of Leh & it consists of 40 households. Seasonal and spatial movement patterns of the Hanlay nomads, starts with brief summer, at Lukbuk area, which is approximately 80 kilometers away from Hanlay village, where they spend around two months, because of good pasture land and abundant snow melted water. In autumn, they move to Tongon, 25 kilometers away from main village & in spring season, they move to Bongnak valley, which is 15 kilometers away and stay there for one month. During winter, the nomads migrate to Zaklay, which is 15 km away from Hanlay village and spend their winter, along with their livestock. The nomads of Hanlay celebrate Losar i.e. (New Year), in mid-December at Zaklay valley.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that, the all the changpa nomads of Changthang region migrate from one place to another, along with their livestock. Changpa nomads migrate towards high rangeland, during summer and come back to low rangeland in winter. They migrate in different migration routes and grazing area of Changthang, where they find good pasture and other natural basic amenities.

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