

ICSS/13/OP/568

Practice of Transhumance among the Bhotiyas of Central Himalaya- A Case Study

Debarati Mitra Rawat¹

Since ancient times, the geo-political regions of Kumaon, Garhwal and Himanchal Pradesh have been the centre stage of culture and life of many ethnic communities. The *Bhotiyas* of central Himalaya, one of the ethnic communities with a Mongoloid appearance and occasional aboriginal traits, have sub-groups like the Tolchchhas, Marchchhas and the Saukas. They are residing mainly in the frontline areas bordering on Tibet, in the permanent abode of seven river valleys. The present study will mainly concentrate on the *Bhotiyas* of the Chamoli District, classified as Tolchas and the Marchas, an ethnic group which still practices transhumance. The system of transhumance involves the movements of herds of domestic herbivores cattle, specially sheep, goat, cow and rarely buffaloes among complementary seasonal pastures, as an integral part of more broadly based agricultural systems, which includes sedentary cultivation. This study has been conducted in one of their ancient villages (Gamshali) in the Niti Mana Valley of Uttaranchal, and is based on observation from close proximity of the various socio-cultural and religious traditions of these people in their temporary seasonal camps.