

CHANGES ON LIVELIHOOD PATTERN IN AGRICULTURE LABOURERS#

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Abstract

The study revealed that livelihood changing pattern isn't a single fact; it's tied other more social fact like education, awareness, health and so on. It found that low education status is the causes of poor health and poor hygiene. Livelihood patterns of grandfathers, fathers and childrens were drastically changed as well as labour relation too. Now, they were involved in many diverse fields of wage labor like as repairing, technician work in a hospital, mobile repair, tent-generator service, rickshaw pulling, brick making, tractor driver, auto-electrick-erikshaw, electricity works etc. Among them most of youths involved in the labor market, which is reverse to their parents; they choose or join where they got high income.

This study result is a contrast with mentioned in literature review all those four scholars i.e. Luintel (2010), Bhandari (2013) and Mondal (2008) but slightly matched with Mishra (2015) argument which is diversification and multiple activities of households' livelihood are more prosperous than single tie workers. Urbanisation and city construction opens more opportunities to them for job, education, awareness and dignity.

Key words

Livelihood; urbanization; Agriculture; labourer; Chamar

Introduction

Society is a "web of social relationship" (MacIver and Page). A society progressed in a gradual pace. It took a very long time for the society to develop into its present form. For this it had to come across several stages as

hunting and gathering, agriculture and industrial/age of Science. The beginning stage of the society is hunting and gathering stage. In this stage, people live on what they can obtain directly from the natural environment by gathering wild fruits and vegetables, fishing and hunting (Regmi, 2003).

People livelihood are changed with mode of production and available resources and their access (Marx and Engels, 1848). Livelihoods are 'means of making a living', and relates to the various activities and resources that allow people to survive. Livelihoods are the "ways in which people access and mobilise resources that enable them to pursue goals necessary for their survival and longer-term well-being, and thereby reduce the vulnerability created and exacerbated by conflict" Oxfam states that "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from shock, maintain itself over time and provide the same or better opportunity for all, now and in the future" (Young. et al., 2002).

Broadly, livelihood is a set of economic activity engaging either with self-employment and/or wage-employment to generate adequate resources (cash and non-cash) to meet the self and the household's requirements. Further, these activities are carried out repeatedly and become a way of life. Livelihoods, therefore, go far beyond

generating income. A livelihood is much more than employment. Chambers and Conway (1991) argues that :

"A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base". (P. 11)

Households employ diverse strategies for their livelihood, mostly guided or influenced by the socio-economic, environment, available resources, and society's access. So that people apply coping strategies accordingly, the conditions of their surroundings.

Statement of the Problems

Households headed by agricultural wage labourers are the poorest in Nepal. In 1995-96 the incidence of poverty among this group was almost 56 percent, and it declined only slightly to 54 per cent in 2003-04. As a share of the national population, this group is small and in decline. Comprising 12 per cent of the population and 16 percent of the poor in 1995-96, in 2003-04 this group made up 6 percent of the total population and 11 percent of all poor (CBS, 2005).

- What were/are the primary livelihood strategies of agricultural laborers/ Chamars?

- Why and how are the livelihood strategies among Chamars changing?

Objectives of the Study

This study's general objective is to assess agricultural laborer's livelihood and changing livelihood pattern of agrarian labors. The specific objectives of the study are;

- To explore the past and present livelihood strategies among agricultural labourers/chamars of Tarai,
- To examine the changing forms of livelihood strategies and its causes among chamars.

Significance of the Study

Nepal is a multi-religious country. The majority of the population, according to census 2011, is Hindus, i.e. 80.62 percent in Nepal. Religion plays a vital role in people's daily lives and the perception of the public sphere. It explored the condition of livelihood and dalit of tarai as well as how their livelihood pattern had change over time period and how they communicate means recreated that sustained their livelihood. This article emphasized to examine the causal relationship between livelihood and influencing factors that occurred change them.

Literature Review

Urbanization and Livelihood:

Urbanisation brings very complex outcomes in society. It creates

opportunities, inequalities, unbalanced between countryside and urban centre as well within urban. However, it provides better and multiple options than agrarian society to cope with the upcoming challenges and opportunities in life. The countryside is characterised by traditional settlements with rapidly urbanising rural markets and towns. There is the high disparity in income levels, physical facilities and employment opportunities between the rural and urban areas. The pace of urbanisation is inevitably going to be high in Nepal in the foreseeable future. Many movements, revolts, and social activities are changing the development profiles and potentials of Nepal's various regions (Sharma, 2005).

Concepts, Discourses and Empirical Studies on Livelihood

I would like to begin the discussion livelihood from what Mishra (2015) mentions:

Land ownership is very important from the points of view of employment, income, and consumption. Farmland is also vital as stored capital. The farm has become a sinkhole for household labor, which is often unable to pay off the cost of reproducing the household members' biological and social being. On the other hand, when sold or mortgaged, farmland does provide directly needed consumption expenditure or investment capital. Landownership does protect households from poverty. But as noted

earlier, expanded reinvestment and reproduction in the villages and the traditional and un-irrigated agriculture is almost for foreclosed in the existing structural and policy circumstances-- not the least because capital, as well as government policy, seeks greener pastures elsewhere-- the sector is not able to assist in overall expanded reproduction, except as a source of labor. (P.8)

Mishra (2015) further emphasizes on:

Paths to prosperity are historically uneven and specific. Such paths are, in a manner of speaking, inter-generationally distinctive. If accessing more extensive agricultural landholding was the highway to prosperity even 25 years ago, that is not necessarily the case now. The path to prosperity, i.e. higher levels of income, consumption and access to social services--although not often larger assets as such, are accessed through commercial farming, e.g. dairying, cultivation of vegetables which is only possible in irrigated farms, urban or urban-linked wage work, labor migration, and access to work in the 'formal sector'. The distinctiveness of these engagements is that they are located along with cycles where the process of reinvestment and expanded reproduction is relative compared to traditional agriculture—robust. (P. 7-8)

In the line of changing livelihood strategies and its relationship with market in the world system Luintel (2010)

emphasizes:

A reference to the collective action, choice and agency of Mahesh Khola's people; attempts to discern patterns in the ways households respond to or reposition themselves within the constraints and opportunities posed by capitalist market expansion in their lives and livelihoods. Wallerstein, one of the strong advocates of a structural analysis of the way the capitalist world-economy expands on a global scale and affects the country or regions unevenly, suggests we look at the way capitalism breaks the links between the household organisation and its territoriality; the way it creates a "partially waged" labour force to allow more accumulation; and, the way households' participation in the labour force is stratified (Wallerstein, 1984: 19) (P. 3).

Luintel (2010) further writes about changing forms of livelihood at village level:

The working class in Mahesh Khola is undergoing a process of internal differentiation that is reflected in two main, rather opposite trends: on the one hand one trend is that part of the rural workforce is migrating to the capital city of Kathmandu in search of urban jobs, while on the other hand, an important section of the rural workers has intensified their engagement in agriculture. I will call this process of intra-class differentiation or

"class divergence." Concerning the working class, this chapter illustrates how self-cultivation and renting-in others' land are part of agricultural self-employment initiatives that have been complemented by a revival of *perma* (exchange labour), followed by increasing emphasis on *thekka* (contract farming) instead of *adhiya* (sharecropping). By contrast, the upper-class households are currently in a dilemma regarding hiring wage labour or keeping their land fallow, neither of which is rewarding. (P.4)

Luintel (2010) argued that on household strategy in Mahesh Khola in the context of the increasing market expansion in their lives and livelihoods. While arguing this he highlights on:

The working class's different coping strategies; the upper-class households have devised during the last decade or more. The capitalist and market economy have expanded in much wider social structure of society. However, he aligned with other scientists on household strategies and acknowledge that "households are not the helpless puppet of structural forces" (Wallace, 1993: 95), and the recognition that they do strategise themselves in the changing political, economic circumstances by negotiation and resistance with the larger structural processes shaping their lives. Indeed, household decisions have limits within constraints posed

by larger social forces, but households do take their actions within those constraints. Households might get delinked from their usual place. The household as a co-residential unit may become impossible, partial wage-earning may become a norm, or different households may resort to different routes with respect to their labour force participation. However, the main point is the ways households are integrated into the broader thrust of capitalist expansion, and the likely social disruption it might entail to the local community (Wallerstein, 1984). The working class is rapidly going through a process of social divergence in its adaptation to the changing dynamics of capitalist encroachment. While a segment of them has opted for non-farm wage work outside the village and, have left farming and migrated to Kathmandu; the other segment has seen opportunities within the village and in farming. He exemplified the rural economy's restructuring in the broader context of capitalist encroachment into the agrarian peripheries. I have demonstrated through several renting-in provisions, including *kut* or *thekka*, those working-class households have ensured their increased access to land, particularly *khet* land, of which they were always deprived. (P.6)

Bhandari (2013) concluded in his study that households' livelihoods assets influence their livelihoods transition;

reveal that working-age children's presences encourage the continuation of farming as a livelihood strategy. He writes in detail as follows:

According to him, encouraging farm households to invest in the human capital development of children may increase farm exits in the long term as well as access to natural and/or economic capital like as the size of cultivated land and livestock keeping are two important factors that inhibit livelihood transition from farming to non-farm activities. He suggests pursuing policies that encourage small farm holders to leave farming, and then appropriate economic policies must focus on generating alternative employment opportunities in the non-farm sector. In the absence of employment growth in the non-farm sector, such policies will likely be self-defeating and tend to undermine the agricultural sector, while further exacerbating urban unemployment and congestion. (P.134)

Mondal (2008) further discusses the 'Changes of livelihood' about income, occupation, seasonality, and social identity, which was more related to land-use changes and effects on livelihood pattern. He mentions:

Occupations have significantly changed in the occupational pattern in the study area. In the study area, most of the household head's occupations were agriculture in 1990. Household whose primary source of income during the preceding year was farm

working as agriculture labor were considered as agriculture labor household. In 1990, the working people in the study area were engaged as labor in crop agriculture, but in 2006 those people engaged as labor in shrimp culture-related working and generated more income than before. Another indicator is **income** - one of the best indicators to measure the livelihood pattern of a community. The income pattern of household in the study area changes with the changes of land use. Lastly, Social identity is a very important concern which identity ones prefer more in his society. The social identity of the household head changed with the changes in land use. That gives more satisfaction to a small farmer. (P. 97)

Conceptual framework

The review discussed above is focused on four different issues on livelihood. They are the past and present livelihood strategies of people of different communities. The focus is on livelihood diversification and changing livelihood strategies. However, the literatures do not discuss on the major patterns of change in livelihood strategies and their reasons. This study therefore is focused on the past and present livelihood strategies of landless community; Chamars/ agricultural labours, Tarai. While doing so it adopts the framework developed by Chambers and Convey (1991). The components of livelihood are shown in fig. 1.

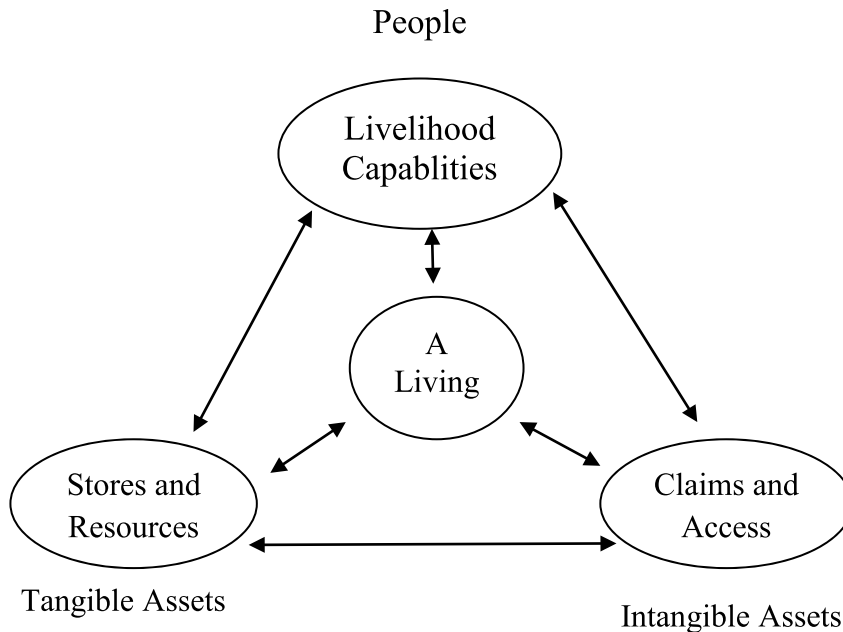


Fig. 1- Components and flows in Livelihood
 (Source: Chambers and Conway, 1991:7)

The rural livelihood framework developed by Chamber and Convey (1991) focuses on the relationship between livelihood capabilities in relation to stores and resources on the one hand and claims and access on the other. In order to discuss the livelihood strategies among chamars the components discussed in the framework are considered as the fundamental aspects of livelihood.

Research Methods

Bharwaliya is one of the well separate settlements of shoemakers with the renowned number in this place. Now they mostly join new works which tie with the urban area and non-agriculture work. This research followed a descriptive as

well as the explorative research design. A descriptive design provided a description of socio-demography about the respondents regarding their age educational level, marital status, family size, caste, resident, access to the property, wage structure, working experience...etc. Explorative research design assisted in exploring the causal relationship between employees who are unseen to till date. It helped to expose the relation of respondents and changing livelihood. They are 46 dwellers in this place; the entire households were selected for the study. Qualitative data includes interview transcripts, recordings and notes, observational records and notes, etc., which helped to examine those factors that can't be quantified. The Primary data collected from interview,

observation and case study etc. Primary data assisted me in presenting the current situation, but secondary data exposed to the previous knowledge. Both data had delineated respondents' changing scenario, social relation, communicating and interaction, and their livelihood pattern and strategies. A mixed question-set was used for gathering socio-economic characteristics of data. This study mainly focused on Chamar of the selected area. So it did not cover the overall situation of respondents as well as others as well as the study simply tried to explore the situation of livelihood of agriculture labours.

Discussion, Debate and Result/ findings

Gender: In Nepal altogether, 19.71 percent of households reported ownership of land or house or both in the name of the household's female member. In urban areas, 26.77 percent of the households show female-ownership of fixed assets while the percentage stands at 18.02 in rural areas and female-headed households in the country has increased by about 10.87 percent from 14.87% in 2001 to 25.73% in 2011 (CBS, 2011).

Table 1:
Distribution of Household Head by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	9	20
Male	37	80
Total	46	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 1 showed that respondents were divided by gender. Female were 20 %, and the male was 80 %. Dalit labourers' households are highly male-dominated. It is highly Hindu dominant society. So that livelihood activities and management are male-dominated; this is almost everywhere found in Nepali society.

Age: Age factor effects on people perception, thinking and everyday life; It is essential to know who and how much awareness about their right, duties, thinking, capacity and dedication to work, etc. Respondents belong to various age groups, and those age groups help people earn from labour or think, aware differently in his/her daily lives.

Table 2:
Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
25-50 Years	14	30
51-60 Years	19	41
60 + year	13	28
Total	46	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 showed that two age groups, 25-50 and 51-60, are economically able and consists of 71 %. It is the highest number of population; it means they can earn and survive easily toady. Because this age is the economically active age group that can independently survive and earn for others too.

According to CBS (2011), 30.14 % of the total population are 25-50 years age group, 6.89% are 51-60, and 8.14 % 60+ age group. It means active age group of respondents is higher than the national figured therefore, their earning population size is better. Their livelihood

conditions are comparative better now and in future too.

Education: Knowledge is analogously fundamental to the functioning of society (HDR, 1998). One of the important social objectives of education is to equalise opportunity, enabling the backward or underprivileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for improving their conditions (Rao, 2005); education plays a vital role in socio-economic development and changing pattern. The following table shows the Educational Status of the respondents:

Table 3:
Distribution of Respondents by Education Status

Education Status	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	30	65
Literate	7	15
Primary	7	15
Secondary	1	2
SLC	1	2
Total	46	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 3 showed that most household heads are illiterate and 2 % completed

School Leaving Certificate which indicate their livelihood are more tie

with agriculture wage labor and low paid labor. So that education is one of the key determinants of empowerment. Empowerment basically means a process through which people acquire more influence over factors that shape their lives (Dale, 2004). Respondents have less influence over factors because of the low literacy rate and lack of technical

education to labour.

Occupation: A job or occupation signifies a person's role in society. Notably, a job is often regular and often performed in exchange for payment ("for a living"). Many people have multiple jobs (e.g., parent, homemaker, and employee).

Table 4:
Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Agri-Farming	27	59
Trade/Business	1	2
Job	1	2
Wage	17	37
Total	46	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 4 traces respondents' occupation; the majority are still in agriculture, basically farming work. But significant numbers are involved in wage labor which exposes them different people, new societies like a business person, contractors, middle man, industries, town and others. They highly satisfied and enjoyed their new opportunities after the restoration of democracy, market, etc. Now, most youths are involved in the labor market, which is reverse to their parents, choosing or joining where they got high income. On the observation, there are drastic and unimaginary change seen in society, land-labour relation, role and duties of a rich person, social strata, the election process, participation and elected themselves, refuse to unwanted activities.

During the interview, Tulsi shared their bitter experience of last 6-7 decades and brutal behaviour of village chiefdoms. Tulasi further shared that he lost many of his goats, animals, and earning to landlords in the name of punishments. However, he is pleased now. He says that he and his kids do not have to depend on them. So that time and days are reversed like a dream.

Livelihood and Changing Pattern

Stores and Resources: There are tangible assets commands by household. Stores include food stock, stores of value such as gold, jewellery and women textiles, and cash savings in banks of thrift and credit schemes. Chamars of Bharwaliya have all types of foods and goods are stored for future consumption,

but this situation came after and during the last two decades of the period. Almost all households have taken loan from micro-credit groups and macro-finance, savings account, and banking transaction due to the government's social security plan. Resources include land, water, trees and livestock, farm equipment, tools and domestic utensils, Assets are often both stores and resources, as with livestock, trees and savings. They have now handpipe for water before they could use water after people from upper caste has used. They also own motorcycles, generator for business use, mixture machine for construction, and chicken poultry.

Food: They grow food in their land and rental land that used to be a very limited option in the past as they belong to the landlord and they used to work for the landlord for low wage rate in the absence of alternative job options in the past. But today, almost all Chamars had food stored for their livelihood. And this condition had changed over 20 years due to market expansion, job availability, increased wage labour and availability of construction work. They came out from agriculture with very limited optional works. The working-age group of population sizes is higher than their dependents. Some urban city expanded, and they created so many jobs opportunities.

Stock: Chamars have stocks of some food grains for future and hazardous conditions. But before 20/25 years, it

was tough to think about it. It is tough to imagine that period due to unpaid, low wage, and no other choice to earn for livelihood.

Gold and Silver: I observed kid's marriage and other rituals, they wore gold and silvers ornaments like other caste groups. They have bought some gold and silver for making ornaments that fulfil needs Madheshi cultures. They had made some ornaments for women and men too, two third households members had around one lakh price of ornaments and rest were below one lakhs. These conditions very tough in previous time but now they wearing during special occasion like marriage, ritual and trait functions. One old respondent told we are now like human as others so called higher castes. However, these practiced had change over time.

Jewellery: "It is a fashion that imposes them too," Respondents told his pain. Therefore, males and females wore a ring, neckless, and especially females wore expensive jewellery which increased marriage expenses. But they have some jewellery for their family member. Sometimes it is used for a mortgage for a loan.

Entrepreneurship: They have some small shops which contained daily use materials like salt, oil and foods, vegetable etc. Some people had conducted electronics' repairing and maintaining shop after learning skill. They reared goats and did animal husbandry and ran

their own business through microfinance and small farmers' grant.

Water: There is facility of safe and clean drinking water. For this purpose individual tap water are used. But few years ago there was a single common open-well for drinking water. It was difficult for so called lower caste to use that well for their purpose. However, this caste based practice is changed now. Now, all of them have their own tape/hand pipe for safe drinking water. It had due to local government provided and 5-6 household bought themselves.

Conclusion

Majority of household head are illiterate and small number have completed School Leaving Certificate, which indicates their livelihood is more tied with agriculture wage labor and low paid labor. Low education status is the causes of poor health, poor hygiene and so on. Therefore, their livelihood condition had deteriorated and low due to lack of knowledge and proper way of living.

Majority of labors are involved in agriculture, basically farming work. But significant numbers are engaged in wage labor which exposes them different people, new societies like a business person, contractors, middle man, industries, town and others. They are highly satisfied and enjoyed their new opportunities that got after the restoration of democracy, market, etc. Now, most

youths are involved in the labor market, which is reverse to their parents; they choose or join where they got high income.

There is an influence of Hinduism in the Nepalese politico-socio-economic system. The number of Hindus is more in every sector. Legally Nepal is secular country but by practice Hindu dominant in village as well as touchability and non-touchability.

Grandfathers and fathers livelihood pattern is gradually changed as well as change labour relation too. Thee/four shops open in this settlement; someone join in radio/tv repairing, technician work in a hospital, mobile repair, tent-generator service, rickshaw pulling, brick making, tractor driver, auto-electrick-erikshaw, electricity works etc.; these all worker are found in this settlement. So that they are now satisfied than their ancestor suffering and they are not want to remember. Majority of them have land today. As per the 2011 census, very few Dalit have own land property. But hereafter restoration of democracy, open market better opportunities for a wage; they have earned themselves.

My study is a contrast with above all those four households livelihood pattern that changed during different context; as above discussion, Mishra argument is slightly matched in my studied like diversification and multiple activities households' livelihood are more prosperous than single tie workers

which found in my study too. Luintel argues that the market and landowner livelihood but in my respondents are landless and poor that livelihood sustain from labor sold deo to nearer market provided them option wage labor to exit from agrarian attached labor. Bhandari (2013) and Mondal (2008) conclusion aren't near but their labor transit in non-farm activities more liberation them from

beyond condition. Urbanisation and city construction opens more opportunities to them for job, education, awareness and dignity.

#This article based on the study and data that had collected for M.Phil thesis, submitted to central department of Sociology.

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