

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY OF BOTE COMMUNITY PEOPLE”A CASE STUDY OF DARCHHA VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF PALPA DISTRICT

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Abstract

The expected solution of this research was to identification the level of socio-economic condition of Bote community in study area. The case study was made using narrative and content analysis and some quantitative data were analyzed using simple statistical tools. The study reflect from the community about economic components was not more optimistic. They are considered as Hindu ethnic groups because they worship the holy cow and use its urine (gaut). They have been celebrating all Hindu festival such as Dashain, Tihar, Maghe Sankranti etc. their socio-economic and cultural system is adopted from the Arians and they belong to Matawali caste in the low social hierarchy. They still believe in mystical things like Sikari Pooja, Bayu Pooja etc. and .wearing typical dress .The settlement patterns was found differ them from other ethnic group. The literacy rate is very low. More than 90% households have been suffering from alcoholism. It seems to be the root cause of their backwardness. Some of them even sell goods from their houses to get money of alcohol. As a result of alcoholism, they do not have saving habit and many of them are under debt.

Key Words: Bote Community, Socio-economic, Hindu, Alcoholism, Debt

Introduction

Nepal is rich in diversification in terms of socio-cultural characteristics. It is the single land of different groups and section of people. It has unique characteristics in multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural aspects. But in practice, it could not be a single land for its entire people in equitable manner. As per newly enacted national foundation for development of indigenous nationalities Act, 2002 A.D, Aadibasi Janjati Uttan Rastriya Pratisthan, A group of people would use a branch of tree to cross the river before the discovery of boat, and gradually they were identified to be ‘Bote’. They call themselves Bot instead of Bote. So it is more convincing that the term ‘Bot’ which they use for their identification has its root relation with the Bote word ‘Bot’ meaning tree. The word ‘Bote’ might be a term used by Nepali speakers to identify these people. Hira Mani Sharma present another possibility that they were without land and house, so they would take shelter of ‘Bot’ tree by the river bank and ultimately become Bote as they are regarded now.

There is no different between Majhi and Bote. Majhi is actually term used by the hill people, for those people called Bote in the Terai. They are also occasionally referred to as Kushar in Terai. All are identical, Majhi, Bote and Kushar they speak one language and follow the same patterns of life.

The area of the Bote habitation is Syangja, Gulmi, Palpa, Nawalparasi, Gorkha, Palpa Tanahun, Baglung etc. It is mostly on the banks of the rivers that those people live and go through their daily activities. They are from the liquor drinking group and also touchable caste. They have scattered throughout the country. Generally, their habitats are in central, western and Midwestern development regions. Kushar of Terai, Majhi of Hill and Botes of Palpa look similar because their profession, boating is almost similar. But they are different among others. Generally, Botes live by the bank of Madi, Seti and Kali Gandaki River. So we assume that Bote are not identical to any other people.

Majhi or Bote is economically, politically, academically and socially backward people and living their own fundamental cultures and community. Majhis are dispersed into 65 districts of Hill and Terai of Nepal. Boating, fishing and living on fishing are the traditional way of life of the Majhi people of all places. They have their own traditional cultural norms and values, customs, language, social norms and values, dress etc.

Fishing and Boating are the main income sources of Bote. That's why they are called as fisherman or ferrymen. But these days they have changed and transformed their professions like other people of Nepal and gradually Botes have chosen other professions as their livelihood i.e. civil services, carpentry, going aboard, teaching, veterinary, cycle shop and various technical and non-technical sectors.

They resemble to Tharu, Dhimal, Satar, Majhi and such type of dark skinned tribal people. There still exists a great deal of confusion as to the true identity of the Botes and mashies have been mistakenly identified as the same and one. On the other hand proper understanding of Botes is almost impossible without proper understanding of the Majhis.

Botes are one of the inhabitants of Darchha VDC of Palpa. Their major settlement is situated on the banks of kaligandaki River. This VDC contains multi castes like Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Tharus, Kami, Damai, Magar, Tamang etc., though the research study is focused on the present livelihood status of Botes in Botegaon of Darchha VDC of Palpa district. What are the socio-economic statuses of Botes of Palpa ?

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to know the livelihood condition of Bote community of Botegaon Village, Darchha VDC of Palpa.

Data and Research Method

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of researches are employed in integrated way. These works were followed by informal interview, key informant interview and focus group discussion. Similarly it is based on descriptive cum analytical in nature and focus on to investigate the Livelihood strategies of Bote community. The research was conducted in Darchha VDC of Palpa district. Botegaun Village of Darchha VDC Palpa District was selected purposively for conducting this research. There are all together 185 households are the main inhabitants of the Darchha VDC. Most of the Botes live in small huts. The selected households were by systematic sampling for the 43 sample size. The primary data were collected by the researcher himself through field visit in study area and secondary data collect from published and non-published written document from individuals, experts, researchers and organizations related to research subject. Household survey through structure schedule, unstructured interviews, observation, and case study as well as focus group discussion method were applied in this study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The main traditional occupation of Botes is fishing as a source of food. They are practicing it since the long period of time and known to all season fishermen. The Botes still believe that they have some special relation with river and were born one day before the rivers come into existence. Botes have great deal of experience in fishing and possess a vast knowledge of fishes. They catch the varieties of fishes in the rivers. It is practiced in the night too. They use different fishing techniques in different seasons. In the study, the Botes catch fish by (i) constructing a tip, (ii) using nets, (iii) using hooks, (iv) poisoning, (v) hatching, (vi) changing the main course of small rivulet and (vii) removing water from the small ditches in the river.

In these days their traditional income source i.e. fishing is totally shifted due to the various reasons i.e. not getting sufficient fish from the river because other caste are also fishing in the same river. Researcher found some of the Botes are very depressive mood because of not having the fish as they found before 15-20 years ago.. Similarly more of the respondents narrate that they collect 30-40 kilograms fishes at a time within a few hours but not getting 2-3 kilograms even they spend whole day in present context.

Development and Change in Household Assets and Livelihood Strategy: Sustainable Livelihood approaches place a heavy stress on the assets of poor men women and household, but other previous development approaches lacks it. They focused only on their needs or deficiencies. The household assets in sustainable livelihood approach appear as backbone as one drives adaptive and coping strategies from them. People require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. Though there are numerous assets, sustainable livelihood approach identifies five core assets namely; Human, social, natural, physical, and financial upon which livelihood is built. If we use this approach, it is possible to map out a particular livelihood system over the course of time, the assets that are used and how these advance or hinder adaptive strategies. Therefore, it is necessary to measure whether these assets are being replenished or eroded and what are the factors which contribute to these processes.

Human Capital: Human Capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labor and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated which directly contribute to achieve better livelihood outcome on the one hand and on the other stimulate other assets to strengthen them. People, who possess good health, better skill and required knowledge, might have better access on employment and earning, for deriving better livelihood outcomes. Many people, therefore, regard the ill health or lack of education as core dimension of poverty. Therefore, human capital is highly dependent on adequate nutrition, health care, safe environmental condition and education. Labor is most important assets for the poor people, basically in urban and per-urban setting. If one has adequate skill, s/he has better chances for the job. It is also likely to have more income. In the reverse condition manual labor that does not have necessary skill is paid less. Most of the members of household sell their labor (in the form wage laboring) to derive livelihood. This includes household who use it as primary occupation and who use it as secondary occupation. However, all the labor of the study areas is not equipped with required skill. The following table gives insight of labor force of the study.

In Botegaon, most of young Botes have better earning with daily wages and the income of the technical labour is better than that of non technical ones. People are traditionally associated with carpentry skill and have been able to earn their livelihood. Even the youth, who are learning new style and design, are working most of them throughout the year in the city to earn more. All these shows better idea on the relation between earning and skill.

Physical Capital

Physical capital includes housing, tools and equipment that people own, rent or use and public infrastructure that they have access to (Sida; 2002:28). Affordable transport, safe shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean affordable energy and access to information (Communications) public infrastructure associated with physical assets. Lacks of these assets are considered as core dimension of poverty. Without adequate access to services such as: water, energy, health facilities housing, footing, they spend much of their time in non-productive sector. The opportunity is associated with poor infrastructure; can preclude education, access to health services

and income generation. Without transport, essential fertilizer cannot be distributed effectively, agricultural yields remain low and it is then difficult and expensive to transport limited product to the market. The importance of access to infrastructure, particularly roads, has been noted in helping people take advantage of living relatively close to city. However, though Bote Tole is close to Pakaudi, Gitanagar and Narayaghat Market, but they have less access to those infrastructures available in nearby market. This area is still not connected by road. As a result, they have to spend much of their time getting to market (city) to purchase goods. Such constraints also pose difficulties in transporting their agricultural or other types of products. Due to poor road network all the households couldn't take their agricultural and other kind of product in the market in time. The condition of communication is better in Bote Tole. Almost Five percent people have their own telephone. Others get this service from their nearest neighbors, or shop. 20 percent households have TV and 99 percent people have access on Radio.

Social Capital: As key asset for both the urban and the rural poor people is social capital. Social capital refers to networks of mutual support that exist within and between households, extended family, and communities, which people can mobilize to access. For example, loans, childcare, food, accommodation and information about employment and opportunities. Social capital is an increasingly used term, but also one which is difficult to define, especially in a commonly agreed manner and even more difficult to identify and access. In the sustainable livelihoods framework, social capital is intended in the widest sense as social resources (such as networks, memberships of formal groups, trust and reciprocity, etc) upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood of all the five livelihood building blocks, social capital is the most intimately connected to transforming Structure of these structures and processes. Both inter and intra household relation is considered vital aspect of social capital in peri-urban environment. The structure, composition and cohesion of the households are related with intra household characteristic, which determines its ability to mobilize labor, and for sharing both expenditure reducing and income generating strategies and are considered one of the important asset in the framework. Household relation refers here both sharing shame residence and multi spatial household with a relatively high proportion of active adults and the process of urbanization and modernization has been giving threatening to extended family and increasing the nuclear family..

Financial Capital: Financial Capital denotes the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives. The definition used here is not economically robust, in that it includes flows as well as stocks, and it can contribute to consumption as well as production. However, it has been adopted to try to capture an important livelihood building block, namely the availability of cash or equivalent that enables people to adopt different livelihood strategies. Income from the labor is often one of the most important assets for the urban poor and is equally important for per urban residents. People of the study area are engaged in different types of job, which are considered their sources of income besides selling labor. Most of all households have multiple sources of income. They are involving on off farm activities available in urban and in their own area besides fishing and agriculture. Some households in Bote Tole are exceptionally found having single occupation. Lack of skill and absence of social network hinders them from the opportunity. In their own areas construction and agricultural activities provides off farm labor work for the unskilled people,

Livelihood Strategy: Agriculture is wide spread livelihood strategy of Darchha and together with other strategies. All the households of Darchha farm for their own consumption. While this is very large number, the amount that farming contributes to total household livelihood is often rather limited. Only Three households in study area are found as self sufficient in food production however no households are really self-supporting, having no other income than agriculture. Since, their

traditional occupation fishing, gold panning is almost declined. The changing occupational structure of the study area is no different than the Palpa district as a whole where people depending on agriculture has been decreasing which leads the corresponding increase in proportion of secondary and tertiary occupation people. Many factors influence the total production of the household, such as amount of land, owned or rented the possibility to irrigate it and intensity of cropping and livestock breeding. Problem of water for the irrigation is leading factor for the low productivity in Darchha with slightly larger land holding. On the other hand in Darchha, small land holding seems responsible for low agricultural production which has better land quality. Moreover land fragmentation further triggers the decrease of the production. The residential areas are increasing in Darchha for new comers. Consequently more and more land is withdrawn from agriculture. In such context, they have to adopt better livelihood strategies besides agriculture and other traditional activities. The newly adopted strategies by Bote community of the study area according to this situation of their assets and the process, which is responsible to convert them in livelihood outcomes, are presented in following section.

Commercialization of Farm: Urban expansion has a significant impact on farming system in the surrounding per-urban rural areas, where agriculture is often resident's traditional and primary occupation. Increasing demand from urban markets and consumers stimulates the intensification of production, especially high – value and perishable horticulture. As these areas are being close to city, some sort of change is also noticed in farm activities. Commercialization in agriculture was found as such in the study. It was adaptive strategy of Bote Community in Darchha. It is because of tinny land holding in Darchha, which also further reinforce closeness of the city. Production of cash oriented crops (vegetable) and fruits are considered the commercialized activities and have significant contribution in the household income. They cultivate summer vegetables such as cucumber, green leaf vegetable and potato etc, when water for irrigation is not needed. But, in winter, they cannot grow any types of vegetables, they also produce fruits; Papaya and Banana is dominated fruit of this area. All these production are sold in the market. They themselves as well as vegetable businessman market transport the product..

Modification in Traditional Occupation: Agricultural activities and wage laboring are basically considered as the traditional occupation of Bote community. Agricultural covers both farming and animal husbandry while carpentry, household laboring, knitting, painting and weaving come under the work for wage laboring. Traditionally people of study areas did their traditional occupation. But with March of time these places are also facing the change in physical and socio-economic milieu because of process of globalization and modernization. Urbanization naturally pushes change and modifies traditional life style of ethnic communities who are part of that area. In such context most of them have already left the traditional occupation and have adopted new occupation. However there is significant proportion of Bote who have adopted the change brought by globalization with development of traditional occupation.

Livelihood Diversification: The most important elements of livelihood strategies in per urban environment are income diversification. Access to a number of assets determines the extent to which the socioeconomic and spatial characteristics translate into opportunities rather than constraints for the poor households. Transformations in the ways in which households and individuals make a living are important aspect for traditional environment like per-urban areas. In such areas most puff all households involve multiple occupations ranging from farming to services to processing and manufacturing. To adopt multiple occupation for them is therefore becomes imperative. Diversification can be described as a survival strategy for vulnerable households and individuals who are pushed out of their traditional occupations and who must resort to different activities to

minimize risks and make ends meet. Involvement of the people in multiple occupations reflects the livelihood diversification of the study area. In Darchha 5 households has single occupation. Except these all other household were oriented towards multiple occupations. Agriculture in household livelihood strategies is very important where it is combined with other sources of household livelihood diversification. Diversification process could not provide equal opportunities to all. Wealthier groups with better education and skills can be pulled by new opportunities, and their accumulation strategies aim to draw maximum benefits accumulation strategy, whereas poor and vulnerable households and individuals negotiate the rural-urban continuum for survival.

Livelihood Challenges: Because of the globalization and modernization process, crops diversifications mostly accrue in the study area. As crop diversification, fertilizer and chemical are increasing to use in the farmland. By using such, the farmland is going damage day by day. Mr. Suresh Bote, (54) said, 'Aja bhola ta mato bani bigrisakyo, mal nahalepachi dhan phaldaina, mal halepachi khet bigrincha, ke garne ke garne' (Now a day's soil is fragmented, without using fertilizer the productivity of land is quite less. And other hand, the family size of study areas is high, like this population growth is increasing day by day. But the farmland is limited. It seems that if Bote people have not change their livelihood strategy of farm activities to non-farm activities, their livelihood is in crisis.

Women and Institutional Change: Social institution seems essential to make society live; means without institution social process would not be possible. However it does not always facilitate social activities rather some time may become constraints. Institutions are not to be confused with 'organizations'; the former applies to the sets of rules and the latter to the organized sets of people involved in applying those rules.

Women in Household / Status of Women

Households are the sites of complex relationships, which revolve around dependency and authority arrangements and gender-driven roles. There is ample evidence to the gender differences in the distribution of assets, entitlements, as well as the gendered division of activities. In the household, gender roles are enacted in accordance with perceptions of power based on the relationship of the head to other members, and on who has control over household assets.

Household Assets Ownership: In general women were not found with their own assets. In a few cases in the study area, women have some asset but they cannot dispose or use them without prior permission of their husband. A greater percentage of women from female-headed household have ownership over inherited agricultural land the homestead. These are usually either inherited from parents or husband (in the case of widow), or are actually owned by the husband but registered in the woman's name.

Work and Responsibilities: In general, women are involved in different household activities. Collecting firewood, fodder, carrying children, doing domestic works are the major works of women. More or less the role of Bote women in household is not more different than other cast people. Men involve in sloughing field, preparation livestock care and general cropping while women perform hoeing, weeding, maturing, fodder and litter collection and general cropping..

Household Decision Making Process: Decision-making process in household is also to be considered important for gender analysis. Women were found to have modest decision making authority and this varies according to the situation. It is found that the Bote women have more decision making power for both inside and outside household work than Brahmin, Chhetri and other so called higher cast group. Women of Bote have full privilege to decide non-money related decision. Male mostly the household head takes the final decision. However they do not exclude

women completely in monetary decision.

Resources Use: The resources collected in the household how is distributed and are used largely determines the well being/ill being and the use of it is reflected in gender analysis. Regarding the use of resources there are some sort of understanding in the Bote community of the study village, some of which reflects gender aspect while others not. The distribution of resources earned is determined by bargaining power in the household: who controls income, age and customary patterns.

Women in Education: The condition of education of women in Bote community is worse than man. The impact of global process in this community in educational sector has brought mixed effect. Moreover increasing or even in some situation leading position of male in educational attainment should be viewed in positive sense happened due to social change resulted through globalization. In most of household of Darchha whether they were found educated have a perception about equal right of their children.

Conclusion

The livelihood strategy of Bote community in the study area is in transition. It is shifted from fishing, cannoning and gold panning as a primary source of livelihood to agricultural and agricultural to non-agricultural one. The evidences collected from the field, suggest that rate of socio-economic change in Bote community is high. However, gradually Bote communities in Darchha are also in the process of shifting from agriculture based to non-agriculture based livelihood pattern. The household assets of this community have greatly influenced from the process of adoption of new strategy and modification of traditional occupation. The household with comparatively better access to the capital to pursue livelihood have been adopting the influence of urbanization in their areas more easily than the households who have less access to such assets. As the development and other economic activities change the surrounding environment of a space, the people of a particular space have to change their way of life to adopt with the changing environment.

Research in this community i.e. Darchha shows that historically people had their livelihood from fishing but it is almost declining so they adopted agriculture based activities. Land was a major household asset and crop production (Maize, mustard, paddy, wheat etc) was the means of subsistence. Since, Botes traditional occupations i.e. fishing, boating, gold panning and collecting forest product have almost been shifted to farm and off-farm activities for their livelihood. However, agriculture even in the past was not sufficient for them rather they had to dependent other activities besides agricultural. For the period in which agriculture was insufficient, they worked to collect forest resources, off farm labor work and or the wage labor in the city. Besides they also worked in the field of different sector for manual work. But rapid urbanization and globalization pushed them in the transition providing both opportunities and constraints. The household assets have undergone rapid modification. Now they have no option other than modifying of the traditional occupation (Particularly fishing, boating, gold panning) towards commercialization of agriculture or adoption of urban oriented non-agricultural activities. Land fragmentation, change in social institution, regularization in communal resources such as forest and grazing land, can be considered the constant resulted from the urbanization and globalization. Increasing access in urban employment, expansion of the market for their agriculture and handmade productions are the opportunities created by urbanization and globalization. The livelihood diversification and introducing of foreign employment have recently emerged livelihood strategies of the people in the study area.

The livelihood strategies of Majhi, Danuwar and Bote were similar in past. But some sort of different was there. Due to the proximity to the market the influence of the urbanization is more apparent

in Darchha. In the study area most of the households follow the multiple occupations besides agriculture; the role of agriculture activities in their life is substantial. Although a few households sell their crops, most of them sell the vegetable. They are able to harvest food for some months from their own production.

The last Section of this research has discussed the role and responsibility of the Bote community in household and community sphere through gender perspective to understand the livelihood of the community in more individual level than the household. The women in general condition do not inherit their parental property with expectation of the case of widow. But they rear animals as their own property and can sell and use in their own accord. The work division in this community is no different than the other caste. Male mostly work outside the household where as female inside the household. Male works as a collector of the households, where female work as distributors. Regarding the decision-making process, the male takes decisions however female also participate in decision making. Regarding food no discrimination found in this community in terms of male and female. The boys are preferred for better education than the girls but the discrimination were observed in the clothing. The participation of women on communal and rather the ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and heavy load of household\old work deprive from such work. People of this society feel different role of the male and female in the society. Male role mostly considered the outside work and the source of collecting the resources for the family. However the role is not as different as other caste people. The education status of the female in this community is worse than male. Politically Botes are found excluded; they are not getting chance even in local bodies.

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