

Social Activation of the Khambu Ethnic in Nepal's Indigenous Movement

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Abstract

The paper analyses the social and political movement of Khambu communities of Nepal, focusing on historical political and cultural perspectives. It brings into light the essential causes and consequences of the rise and settlement of all ethnic movements in Nepal. The paper argues that the ethnic group of Eastern Nepal known as the Khambu, due to historical changes, has transitioned from a revivalist movement to a national autonomy movement. Understanding the Khambu people's position concerning other ethnic groups in Nepal and their effects outside of the country will be beneficial. The paper is presented inductively and the choice of methodology is qualitative.

Keywords: Cultural identity, Hinduization, Nationalities, Sanskritization. Identity

Introduction

The lineage of the ruling dynasties, which prioritised national unification, remained the focal point of the history of the Hindu kingdom of Nepal for a considerable amount of time, straight from Gorkha's King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who, in 1768, brought the kingdom of Nepal together. Those who followed him, despite having grasped the diversity of the country's population in terms of culture, language, and ethnicity, managed to integrate the nation through a variety of means, such as ideological impositions like the primacy of the Hindu ethos in national life, social integration through the Hindu social system based on caste division, and the unchallenged power and authority of the Hindu king of Gorkha (Bhattarai, 2004). As a result, the imposed nationalism's hold on the ethnically and culturally diverse populace began to wane, and they began to claim a new position within the state and redefine their role within it. Rather than sharing a common identity with their rulers, the Gorkhali conquered territory, and the people there never came to share it (Niraula, 1998).

In this way, the ethnic groups in the far eastern region of Nepal, exist Khambu, a distinct ethnic identity, is a long-standing tradition in Nepal (Pradhan, 1991). It is also known as Kirat, Rai, Yakkha, Yamfu, Lohrung, Athpahariya, Walung, Mewahang, Danuwar, Sunuwar, Jirel, Hayu, Thami, Baram, Danuwar, Surel, Chepang, Majhi, etc. The worship of deities such as Same, Sammeling, and Tinchula, or the Mundhum civilization, reveals their relationship with the Khambu people (Imehang, 2008). Aryas, who called Kirat

people from other cultures Anarya, named them after their personalities (Acharya, 2070). The Khambu are a federation of clans rather than a single entity (thar), which are further separated into "pachha" (lineage) and "samait" (class). The number of Khambu clan divisions is unknown, with various scholars suggesting a large number of sub-groups. Each Khambu Rai clan has a unique oral history, story, or myth to explain the origin of the clan and the social customs connected to it (Hogdson, 1858).

The Mundhum religion has been practised by the Khambu since ancient times, with ancestor worship and animistic nature as the foundations. It rejects the existence of paradise and hell and does not establish a religious hierarchy. Khambu uses tribal shamans from the Nakchong, Mangpa, Dowang, and Nakso in their sacred ceremonies (Bantawa, 2058). The Khambu have gradually adopted Kirat, Rai, and cultural aspects of other major religions they have encountered, such as Christianity, Lamaist, Buddhism, and Hinduism. This is the changing trend in the cultural identity of the Khambu communities (KNF, 2009). Their Land is known as Khambuwan (Pradhan, 1991), have always distinguished themselves from the caste Hindus based on their culture and religion. The Khambu people are one such group. The people of Nepal have a long history of ethnic consciousness, which, in the case of far eastern Nepal (Whelpton, 1999), was both shaped by the physical environment of the region and the country's system of government. The Khambus, a mongoloid group of people who speak a Tibeto-Burman language (Skar, 1995), were mainly left to their own devices and were able to practise their own culture thanks to their location in the far eastern part of the kingdom. The Khambus people were granted possession of their communally owned Kipat land since the time of Prithivinarayan Shah (Shresth, 2003), and they were free to govern this land according to their laws and customs. But as the nineteenth century went on, tension grew more and more. The objective of this study is to analyze the cultural identity and cultural movement of Khambu and Its impact on Nepalese society from the social and political perspective.

Methodology

From the study of the previous works, almost all researchers and writers have raised, examined and analyzed the political and historical issues in their studies. I have found no serious academic research made on the Khambu social, and cultural movement issues in this study area. Therefore, It is an attempt to bring out the data and facts on the issue of socio-political movements and analyze it critically. The philosophy of the article is interpretivism and the socio-political movement character of Nepalese Khambu communities is its ontology and the knowledge about their direction and destination is epistemology and its impact is axiology. It is prepared by using primary and secondary data sources, the primary sources are used to complete the documents. The methodological design of this paper is qualitative.

Finding and Discussion

Rise Of Ethnic Activism

The 1854 introduction of the Muluki Ain (civil code) by Janga Bahadur Rana threatened the cultural survival of Nepal's ethnic communities (Sharma, 1986), who had repeatedly suffered at the hands of the upper caste. This code translated diversity into inequality and provided a legal framework for Vedic prescriptions by incorporating ethnic groups into the Hindu hierarchical caste system. It is still true that the state that divided and classified its people to force the various segments to assimilate and submit to a state-approved hierarchy always practised an exclusionary politics of dominance, discrimination, and deprivation, depriving the ethnic groups of social, economic, and political recognition (Rasaili, 2012). The gradual process that resulted in the mushrooming of various organizations demanding retaliation for their two centuries of Hindu domination with their recognition of ethnic and cultural distinctiveness along with sharing of resources and representation in the government was the basis for the development of some sense of unity, especially among the ethnic groups of being "Paharis (people of the hills) and a common struggle of rejection and marginalisation under the caste Hindu rule (O'Neil, 1994). Political unrest has always existed in Nepal, and following the democratic revolution of the 1990s, restrictions on political expression and ethnic and caste (Madhesies and Dalits) were loosened, which significantly accelerated the pace of ethnic and caste mobilisation. Terms like "Adibasis," "Madhesi," or "Dalit" seemed to just pop up and, in a matter of years, gain widespread recognition (Hangen, 2005). A small group of ethnic activists popularised the term "adibasi" (Newars, Tamangs, Magars, Gurung, Sherpa, Limbu, Khambu, Tharu, and others) in the middle of the 1980s (Bhattachan, 1998). They purposefully translated it into English as "nationalities," referring to "groups of people, each of which Political activism of the "Khambu" in Nepal's Adibasi (ethnic) movement DOI: 10.9790/0837-20911013 www.iosrjournals.org 11 | Page each of these groups of people is "potentially capable of forming a nation-state" because they share a common and distinctive linguistic and cultural background and are one component element of a larger group (as a nation) (Gellner, 1937).

The goal of the Janajati activists was to draw the boundaries of a new, non-hierarchical, non-discriminatory social structure. They set out to subversively appropriate and recodify signs, challenge national symbols, and search within their own group's history and traditions for unifying symbols around which their community could be reimagined and mobilised. During this process, the adibasis, a social group, evolved into a political entity (nationalities), which started negotiating with the government for more social, political, and economic rights for the populace. They began to justify their actions by pointing to past instances of enslavement, land theft, and subordination at the hands of the ruling class. They also began to draw attention to several striking contrasts, such as Janajati and jati, indigenous and non-indigenous, Hindu and Non-Hindu, and flat noses and pointy noses, all of which highlight ongoing discriminatory practices (Gurung, 2001).

In the end, they create new categories that people can be placed within; the most important aspects of this process are the rewriting of their local histories and the demand for a revised national historical narrative. The ethnic groups that had been established based on claims to identity and culture now began to tell their history using myths, fiction, and facts. According to the census reports from 1999 and 2001, the percentage of people who identified as Hindu and/or spoke Nepali as their mother tongue fell from 86.5 to 80.6 and from 50.31 to 48.61, respectively. This made it abundantly evident that there was an attempt to separate Aadibasis from the post-unification era's history through some sort of ethnic assertion (Hachhethu, 2003). The recognition of their unique identity as non-Hindus who resist the historical process of Sanskritization and Hinduization is the central tenet of the Adibasi movement. Their attempt to recreate history to maintain the appropriate historical past is motivated more by emotion than by logic. Restoring the connection between Adibasis and their culture was important for their group's dignity and self-respect, but it was also a way to make amends for the abuse they endured at the hands of Hindu monarchical rule. Their political claims, such as ethnic provinces' demands for equitable representation in the government and administration, reservations in state institutions, and federalism with provinces made up primarily of ethnic groups, form the foundation of their cultural identity (Levine, 1987).

The declaration of 1994–2002 as the decade of Indigenous people to highlight their problems gave the Adibasis issue more momentum, and eventually, the local problem became a part of the global movement (Lawoti, 2001). The National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) Act, which was passed in 2002, provided legal provisions to address various forms of discrimination and inequality faced by Janajatis and Adibasi. The Adibasi Janajatis' concerns were also expressed in the Nepal committee report for the UN Year of Indigenous People, which stated: "We, the indigenous people of Nepal, wish to protect our ethnic identities... and we are working to re-describe history." We desire to pen our historical narratives. These minorities' desires, which were based on their assertions of a shared identity and culture, thought that a correct history would best convey their views. Subsequently, their history was derived from a variety of sources, such as oral tradition, regional chronicles, and royal chronicles. Since the state was unable to develop any effective policies or programs to address the ethnic problem, the necessary claims for self-determination, in the form of autonomy or independence, are the most natural and inevitable result of cultural identity politics. As a result, they are moving towards new demands, such as separate territory. Building Blocks of State.

Mongoloid Consciousness

The word "Mongols" is widely used to refer to the Khambu, Limbu, Magar, Gurung, Tamang etc and other related races; in a broader sense, these people are considered to be among Nepal's "Mumbai," or aborigines. This group of people is delineating their exclusive identity as the indigenous people of eastern Nepal while simultaneously adopting a racial ideology and citing their culture and traditions (Kumar, 2005). This type

of identity issue is not new in Nepal, at least not in the last few years, as the nation, which has ignored the goals of the Janajatis or multiethnic groups, has already seen a "people's movement" (Janaandolan) focused on issues of imbalance or unequal access to political and economic resources as well as anti-Brahmanism (Price, 2006). Within the context of Khambu in eastern Nepal, the Janajatis' identity crisis is one of their main issues. This group of people is undoubtedly bringing about a cultural revival that has its roots in the strict high-caste favouritism they experienced in the Hindu kingdom, which is the source of their grievances (Panta,1992).

One of the most potent social and political forces in the modern world is still their demand for exclusivity, which stemmed from their identification as a distinct group based on ethnicity (religion, culture), and rationality. As a result, these individuals, who have a strong cultural heritage at their core, often form successful political communities. Their historical experiences and sense of wanting to give the country of their dreams a common history based on ethnic memories and a sense of common destiny arising from those memories have greatly influenced the formation of their ethnic identity (Shah, 1996). Their political mobilisation is still based on their shared memories, corrections, and justifications of their past. Quoting Immanuel Wallenstein (Gellner, 2007).

The past can only be depicted in its truest form not as it was. Because narrating the past is a social act of the present carried out by men of the present and impacting the current social structure. These people's current need to organize their cultural identity has driven them to establish the Janajati (ethnic) movement of Nepal's Political Mobilization of the "Khambu" pressure to redefine their lifestyles, Upon realizing that their historical recreation or cultural revival is seeking recognition of its own, in some sense (Rai, 2007),

The "identity" strategy is employed in the creation and realisation of social and material outcomes. The Khambus, which is organised along ethnic lines, is strategically redefining their identities through political affiliations (Gurung & Bhattachan, 2006). To achieve greater rights, their identity has been gradually moving from a purely symbolic level to the political sphere (Khambuwan Rastriya morcha, 2049). As Cohen correctly noted, "Ethnicity has no existence apart from inter-ethnic relations," and even in these postmodern times, it is probably more common for identities to appear fixed and immutable to those who hold them. These opinions regarding identity have been greatly shaped by the social structure in which they have evolved.

The 1990s saw the emergence of multi-party democracy, which allowed for the unrestricted expression of ideas and interactions. This gave rise to ethnic activism and the realisation of cultural differences among various ethnic groups, including the Kambus. The Khambu's identity crisis has gotten so bad that they now believe their complaints can only be addressed in the autonomous region of Khambuwan. In the process, their attempt to assess their existential realities has been greatly aided by the connection they have made between Nepali culture and history.

People create cultural identity in its entirety (Banerji, 2002), and some ethnic groups have played an active role in this process by bringing attention to the oppression that Nepal's various monarchical rulers inflicted upon the country (Fisher, 1993). The race ideology of the Mongol breed, which makes up around 80% of the population, has done a great deal to further their cause and encourage "biologically self-perpetuating," inspiring members of these racial brands to engage in an identity conflict. For the first time since 1996, their experiences of being marginalized in the fields of politics, economy, and culture, as well as their daily deprivation, resulted in a violent revolution. This struggle, particularly when considering the case of the Khumbu of eastern Nepal, has taken on a new form as they acknowledge their uniqueness by clearly defining their territory Khambuwan. People have become more attached to their ethnic communities as a result of the quick and drastic changes that human society has undergone, as well as the subsequent dissolution of traditional structures and the prior affective social units. People look for a group to which they can belong forever in a world where everything is changing and moving, and the identity group is the one that provides them with that assurance.

However, the identity or cultural identity itself is dynamically ascribed in the present and is neither fixed nor immutable (Gellner, 2001). The khambu's cultural identity stems more from social interactions, political context, dominant categorical distinctions, and political environment than it does from ancestral origins or purported ancestry. Identity, whether ethnic or cultural, is situational and ever-changing. The identity of Kambu has been shaped by several factors, including their desire for respect and dignity because they believe they have been treated unfairly thus far, their sense of empowerment in light of their successful past and their desire to realize the same, and above all their persistent fear and anxiety of losing their identity. Through interaction or the creation of culture, these ideas of who we are and what we could become become more intense in the day-to-day operations of daily life. Therefore, culture serves as a medium by which the world is made meaningful to an individual and the individual is made meaningful to the world (Crossette, 2005-6).

Although the suffering these people go through is usually real, the way they began to embellish their culture and "objectify their social life" by inventing traditions to represent them is what allowed them to build the foundation for access to various forms of social, economic, and cultural entitlements. Regardless of how much these people think of it as a discovery, their self-knowledge about themselves is more of a construction that is never fully isolated from their assertions that others know them in particular ways. Cultural identity is not a static state; rather, it is a dynamic process of constant creation and alteration that is unlikely to end, no matter how long specific groups continue to reinvent themselves. Although Khambu states that achieving their state is their ultimate goal, it is possible that in the future their culture will change in some other way to achieve much greater ascription.

Conclusion

The global agreement that identity claims are inextricably linked to specific claims does not adequately characterize Nepal's ethnic problem, which is primarily the result of cultural discrimination, Hindu dominance, exclusion from government decision-making processes, and socioeconomic deprivation of these ethnic groups. These realities are brought up by ethnic organizations. Even though their cultural rights are protected, the issue is significant because, in a multiethnic nation like Nepal, it will be probability to create ethnically autonomous regions like Khambuwani because of the diversity and mingling of people to stop across ethnic boundaries. Additionally, there may be a tendency towards increased instability and pressure for secession among the ethnic groupings' subunits. In the Janajati (ethnic) movement of Nepal, political mobilization of the "Khambu" implies that each of these groups of people is "potentially capable of forming a nation-state" because they share a common and distinctive linguistic and cultural background and are one component element of a larger group (as a nation). The goal of the Janajati activists was to draw the boundaries of a new, non-hierarchical, non-discriminatory social structure. They set out to subversively appropriate and recodify signs, challenge national symbols, and search within their own group's history and traditions for unifying symbols around which their community could be reimagined and mobilized. In this process, the Janajatis as a social group became a political entity (nationalities), which started negotiating more social, political, and economic rights for citizens with the government. They began to justify their actions by pointing to past instances of enslavement, and subordination at the hands of the ruling class. They also began to draw attention to several striking contrasts, such as janajati and jati, Indigenous and non-indigenous, Hindu and Non-Hindu, and flat noses and pointy noses, all of which highlight ongoing discriminatory practices. In the end, they create new categories that people can be placed within. Writing their community histories and calling for a revised national historical narrative are the first steps in this process.

The ethnic groups that had been established based on claims to identity and culture now began to tell their history using myths, fiction, and facts. According to the census reports from 1999 and 2001, the percentage of people who identified as Hindu and/or spoke Nepali as their mother tongue fell from 86.5 to 80.6 and from 50.31 to 48.61, respectively. This made it abundantly evident that there was an attempt to separate the history of the post-unification era from the Janajati people. The primary focus of the Janajati movement is the acknowledgement of their unique identity as non-Hindus who resist the historical trend of Hinduization and Sanskritization. Their attempt to recreate history to maintain the appropriate historical past is motivated more by emotion than by logic.

Though it was also done for the group's dignity and self-respect, the re-establishment of the bond between Janajatis and their culture has much to do with making amends for the mistreatment they endured at the hands of Hindu monarchical rule. Their political claims, such as ethnic provinces' demands for equitable representation in the government and administration, reservations in state institutions, and federalism with provinces made up

primarily of ethnic groups, form the foundation of their cultural identity. The designation of 1994–2002 as the decade of indigenous people highlighting their problems gave the issue of Janajatis more momentum, and after that, the regional problem joined the worldwide movement. The National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) Act, which was passed in 2002, provided the Janajatis with legal protections in response to various forms of discrimination and inequality. The Janajatis' concerns were also expressed in the Nepal committee report for the UN Year of Indigenous People, which stated: "We, the indigenous people of Nepal, wish to protect our ethnic identities... and we are working to re-describe history."

We desire to pen our historical narratives. These minorities' desires, which were based on their assertions of a shared identity and culture, thought that a correct history would best convey their views. Subsequently, their history was derived from a variety of sources, such as oral tradition, regional chronicles, and royal chronicles. The inevitable and natural result of cultural identity politics is the need for self-determination, whether it be independence or autonomy. Since the state was unable to devise a workable plan to deal with the ethnic problem, these demands have progressed to include demands for separate territory.

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