

GENDER ROLES AND CHANGING PATTERN ON BARAM COMMUNITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY FROM *CHANDIPURNIMA* FESTIVAL

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Abstract

Second generation of women of Baram Community is highly constructive in social norms, values, customs, and tradition and very sensitive in gender equality than first generation. The major issue of this study is to find out the gender roles of Baram community from a major festival - Chandipurnima. The nature of gender roles and changing pattern on festival between two generations among Baram community, sharing behavior during the festival, power relation between male and female has been addressed. There are vast differences on two generations regarding the gender roles, first generation is still traditional and believe on radical cultural practices where as new generation has the impact of modernity and change due to the education and labor migration. However new generation is found high alert in social identity and cultural practices of the community. As it is an ethnography the study has been conducted based on participant observation and interview on the special occasion of celebration of Chandipurnima of Baram Community of Gorkha.

Keywords

Baram Community, Chandipurnima, Changing Pattern, Ethnography, Gender Roles

Background

Social learning theory asserts that gender roles are learned through the reinforcements – positive and negative – children receive for engaging in gender appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior (Wharton, 2005). According to her reinforcement may be one mechanism through which gender roles are acquired, this theory does not fully explain this process of gender roles construction and changing pattern in wholesome. Industrialization's impact on work and households are intrinsically connected to its role in reshaping gender roles.

Gender relation refers to the relation of power between women and men which are revealed in a range of practices, ideas, and re presentation, including the division of labor roles and resource between women and men, and the scribing to them of different abilities, attitudes desires,

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personalities, behavioral patterns and traits and so on (Agrawal, 1994). Citing Eagly, Amy defines gender roles as “those shared expectations (about appropriate qualities and behaviors) that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially identified gender. The changing patterns can be best understood by thinking about gender and gender roles, not sexual orientation. In other words, people’s expectations about and behavior in relationships depend more on their gender than their sexual orientation (Wharton, 2005). The role of male and female except biology of sex of 21st century, gender roles and the function of the household are issues that require attention, if we are to develop a genuine understanding of the factors at work in educational participation (Maslak, 2003). The specified roles and changing pattern of gender roles in Baramu community, will be the central argument of the ethnography.

Baram also known as Baramu are of the highly marginalized community of the 59 indigenous peoples recognized by Nepal government (NFDIN, 2005). They are scattered in different villages in Gorkha, Dhadhing, Makawanpur and Nabalparasi districts in Nepal (Sangh, 2056). Although they have been influenced by Hindu religion and culture they have their own original culture and they are in fact worshipper of nature. They worship their ancestors as the god, the name of *Bayu puja, Boksi bayu, Chandi Puja* etc. in *Chandupurnima*. Their main occupation is agriculture and animal husbandry. Most individuals fit into tribal gender roles “on the basis of proclivity, inclination, and temperament. The community had a tradition of gender designation based on dreams; a female who dreamed of weapons became a male for all practical purposes. The questioning of biology in the construction of gender differences and introduces the important question of gender roles being chosen and dreamt (Harcourt, 2016). The dream- wide horizon of mind set of lifetime achievement plays the vital role on gender construction.

The alternative terms Baram and Baramu are used as both ethnonyms and glossonyms. Other terms also found to have been used to refer to Baram in the past. Hudson in 1847 and Grierson in 1909 used Bhramu while Bista in 1980 used Bhra:mu and Ba:rahmu alternatively to refer to the people. Baram people, however, prefer to call themselves as Balbang, which means ‘people’ or ‘human kind’ in their language (Kansakar, et al., 2011). In their physical appearance, they resemble the Gurung and Magars but culturally and linguistically they are very different from any of Tibeto- Burman communities. Similarly, their clan and sub-clan names are similar to those of Sunuwars (Thapa Magar, 1996). According to latest Nation Census (2011) the total population of Baram is 8140 and as many as 155 people speak their mother tongue. The same census explains more than 82 percent Baram people are living in Gorkha District.

There are many controversies views how Baram came to this situation. According to Hodson in

1840, the habitat of Baram was the region called '*Ghagra*', situated in east of the river Kali. The word '*Ghagra*' phonetically sounds similar to 'Gorkha' and in fact, Gorkha lies east of the Kali Gandaki River. Similarly referring to Grierson and Konow in 1909, argue that Baram was one of tribes from Nepal Terai (Kansakar, et al., 2011).

According to Bista in 1980, Baram people inhabited the Terai and inner –valleys, living in the hot, humid and very malarious areas. In the context of habitation, Lewis in 2009 argues the habitat of Baram to be north of Gorkha district, Gandaki Zone, along the Daraundi Khola and its tributaries (Kansakar, et al., 2011). Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) press –release (January 03, 2005) states, "Baramu peoples are known as the aboriginal inhabitants of mid- hill regions of Nepal. It is explained that the ancestor domain of Baram is Gorkha. Later on they were migrated to other districts. Now days, they are found mostly Gorkha, Dhadhing, Makawanpur, Lalitpur districts.

They are rich in their traditional culture, religion, ritual identity customs and life styles. **Chandipurnima** is the major festival of Baram community (Baramu, et al., 2066). They celebrate these festivals on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti. Generally, this festival falls on Baisakh or Jesth. On the occasion of this festival, they worship 8 deities in the name of their ancestors.

Objectives and Methodology

The major objective of the study is to find out the general gender roles and its changing pattern in Baram Community. The specific objectives of the study are, to find out the gender role and its recent development pattern of Baram community.

Methodology of the study is an ethnographic study. Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring setting or fields by means of methods which capture their social meaning and ordering activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer, 2000).

Ethnography is essential method in qualitative research and study. It makes researcher the whole group of people. It is useful in intensive study (Kaini, 2017). Therefore, I used different types of field notes such as jottings, diary, logs and note. The use of these type notes have been proved sufficient to write, re-write and interpret the collected information during the field work. It has ensured the validity and reliability of the data collected from the study area. Description on the process of urban development, depletion of resources, displacement and marginalization of

Baramu ethnic nationalities have been presented supporting by the primary information that were drawn from the field area.

To accomplish the objective of this study, face to face deep interview and participant observation were used dated on 10th and 11th May 2017. The research area was Taku, Dandagaon. As the member of the community and a researcher, I was also invited by my elder sister on the occasion of festival called Chandipurnima. As being guest I reached there and got the chance to observe puja naming different deities. Ethnography refers to efforts to describe whole cultures through observation. Stephen L. and Margaret D. assert that the ethnographic research focuses on understanding of a local population in a broader socioeconomic and political context. Understanding this broader or macro context is essential in order to situate local experience and cultural observation (Kaini, 2017). Many relatives and neighbors were also present there. I passed whole two days talking and eating with them and had got chance to talk with old and young people. During the period of celebration, I stayed with them talking, singing and dancing. But as a researcher I was conscious on gender roles and beliefs at this time.

Review

Gender is an important social life and relation which include greater attention to men and masculinity, attention to variation within and between gender categories and desire to rethink important sociological concept and ideas from gender perspective (Wharton, 2005). Gender roles in Baram Community is similar as important social life and relations.

As a working definition of gender, gender as a social practice this system involves the creation of both differences and inequalities generally, three features are involved in gender definition first gender is as much as a process as fixed state, secondly gender is a multi-level phenomenon. Thirdly gender refers to its importance in organizing relation of inequality (Wharton, 2005). Similarly, in Baram community differences and inequalities are in existence. All the three categories can be appeared.

Land defines the social status and political power in the village and it structures relationship both within and outside the household (Agrawal, 1994). The same phenomena in land ownership, political power and household work division have influences on Baram Community.

Throughout the history and the world, division of labor has developed along the lines of sex. The sexual division of labor refers to the process through which tasks are assigned within the basis of sex. Children depended on the mother's care shapes the type of labor women can perform.

Conversely, men's greater average physical strength makes other activities more likely to be their responsibilities since the time of hunting and gathering age (Wharton, 2005). Same example can be seen in Baram Community.

Culture theory is a branch of anthropology, semiotics, and other related social science disciplines such as political economy, in particular, but also sociology and communication (to name a new). It seeks to define heuristic concepts of culture (Serrat, 2008). Ann Oakley in 1972 was the first social scientist to distinguish the concept of gender from the concept of sex (Amy & Blackstone, 2003). She refers gender is social term. Gender is defined as socially and culturally constructed accepted behaviors and relation between male and female. Behavior and relations are structured in the society (Pokhrel, 2001). Every society has some differences which have created differences in the role of member of the society but the degree of the inequality varies between societies (Giri, 2016). Likewise, the role of some differences between male and female can be found.

In the context of Nepal, the majority of the societies are patriarchal with the senior male as the head of male member in the family. Very few societies are matriarchal with the senior of family as the head of household. Regarding to Baram community no one has studied to find out actual fact.

Gender roles in the context of traditional societies and rural societies are rigid while modern and urban societies have flexible gender role regardless to the matriarchal and patriarchal societies. Male member of the societies are responsible for the work outside the house and female members are responsible for inside the house (Laurenco & Cachado, 2012). Furthermore, they explain male member play vital role in business, trade, raising children, education of the family members, arranging food, cloth, shelter, making loans and maintaining relationship while female members are responsible maintaining the house, cleaning, looking after child, preparing food and caring family.

The government of Nepal has declared major festival of every religion present in Nepal as national festivals and provides public holiday, some other festivals celebrated by the followers of certain religion are declared as religious festivals and only those who celebrates the festival get holiday facility. Ethnic festivals are those celebrated by an ethnic group like Newar, Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa etc. and only these ethnic groups enjoy a holiday during the festivals (Giri, 2016). In the context of Baram community, they have their own ethnic festival like *Chandipurnima* and *maghe sakranti*, celebrated by them every year but they have not got holiday in their festival because of minority group. Regarding to the meaning of festival, he further states referring to the free dictionary (2016) generally, festival means "a day or time of religious or other celebration, marked by feasting, ceremonies or other observances". Festivals in Nepal are mostly

celebrated based on the lunar calendar. Every festival has its own uniqueness in celebration and rituals. Dance, Song, varieties of delicious food and Puja activities are the most important part for celebrating festival. The nature of festival is not same; it is different place to place, community to community. Puja is the most important act for the festival. Puja refers to the worship of a deity through observance rituals which is usually considered an act of devotional service to God or the chosen deity. Puja is done in every society according to their ancestor ritual.

Family rituals are family events which happen on a regular basis, with a clear structure and a defined predictable sequence. Through the regular participation in family rituals i.e. meals, festivals, religious events, the girl child learns variety of cultural and religious rules, beliefs and practices (Lau, 1995). However, they have not explained about the role of gender in festival cultural ritual regarding the worshipping of the god as called Puja in Nepali. The study has analyzed the changing pattern of gender roles in two generations as well. The gendered nature of knitting and other handicrafts in many societies (although knitting is often associated with girls and women in this society, for example, handicrafts such as weaving were until recently conventionally produced by lower-caste men in Nepal).

Problem Statement

Traditionally perceived gender roles and birth order significantly affect a girl's chances to enroll in school (Maslak, 2003). Likewise, she cites, Neera Kuckreja Sohoni 1995 and Julia Cleves Mosse 1993 note the gender disparity favoring boys in their analysis of South Asian education and South American education respectively. These studies indicate that gender roles as perceived by parents do play a substantive and significant role in the decision to keep a girl out of school (Maslak, 2003). As so in Baramu girls? To find the answer of these questions the research has been conducted.

While the work of the women's movement, women in parliamentarian, NGOs and government has created the space for changes in practices, a deeper shift is needed. Deep-seated cultural change and transformation of gender roles and hierarchies must also be part of this; in particular, a reversal of the more destructive gender dynamics being played out in both national- and domestic-level violence (Harcourt, 2016). The violence and like such developments are close to Baram community as well.

If economic status (Land ownership, Employment, business etc.) increase the social status of the women will be high as in men in and intra household (Agrawal, 1994). So bargaining power and participation are necessary and that seems minimal in Baram Community.

Discussion

Chandipurnima Festival

The major festival of Baram community is *Chandipurnima*. This festival falls on Buddha Jayanti. Generally, festival is celebrated with dancing, singing, worshipping the god in their ritual, making varieties of delicious food and so forth. *Chandipurnima* is one of ethnic festival of Baram community. As a member of Baram community, I celebrate *Chandipurnima* every year with my family and relatives. Celebrating festival is little different from one to another place inside Baram community. Two years ago, on the occasion of *Chandipurnima*, I was invited by my sister and relatives to Taku- Dandagaon where natural language and culture of Baram can be found. Generally, they celebrate *Chandipurnima* up to two days. I reached there early in the morning from my house the previous day of *Chandipurnima*. That day almost villagers were busy for the preparation of celebration. I found young female member were busy for making bread and local wine (*Raksi*) in every house, some female, especially the senior female of house were busy for preparing puja materials for that day deities worshipping. During the period of *Chandipurnima*, the Ritual activities of Baram community are mentioned as below as I observed as an ethnographic researcher. These Ritual Activities are coined with gender roles and construction.

Ritual Activities

Koseli Preparation and Pahuna Khuwaune

Koseli is also one of ritual of Baram community. When I was staying in my relative's house, some married daughter (*Chelibeti*) had returned their parents house with bread, *Biramla* (beans) and local *Raksi*, that is called *Koseli* in Baram community. Generally married daughter had come to meet their parent, brother and father relatives with *Koseli* on the occasion of their ethnic festival, *Chandipurnima* and *Maghe Sakranti*. In those festivals, every year, without inviting they (*chelibeti*) visit to meet their parent, brother and single women with *Koseli*. They bring *Koseli* not only their parent, but for father's brothers' family; elder father's and uncle's family as well. Similarly, if their sons are separated from their parent, she brings *Koseli* for them also. That's why it is said, "Daughter to feed *Koseli*" is required in Baram community. Similarly, for unmarried women who are marriage age over they brought *Koseli* for them also. Thus, the value of daughter is attached in love and respect to strengthen the relations. So daughters or women should be very busy on the occasion.

From married women's point of view, unmarried daughters are also equally similar to brothers for them who help to deep relation between married daughter and parent family. Instead of *Koseli*,

parent family invited them to eat meal with their husband and children from every house; that is called *Pahuna Khuwaune* in Baram community. If it is not possible for providing them meal during the festival, they are invited next time in the name of *Chandipurnima*. In doing so, if someone is absent, *Kharcha* is provided them in the name of Chandipurnima from parent family. Rice, meat, salt, Raksi are included in *Kharcha*. It shows the reciprocity in relation between daughter's and parent's family.

In my research in the field, I had interviewed married daughter named Man Maya who was preparing *Koseli*. According to her, their husbands or male members help them for collecting materials such as oil, rice, millet etc. for making *Koseli*. Similarly, for *Pahuna Khuwaune*, male member of the family collect materials for cooking like meat, vegetable, wood etc. what they have required and female members prepare meal, sometime male member also help to cook rice. Likewise, gender behavior in Baram community is, gender friendly, rather than other community in surrounding Baram area. Roles or activities are assigned on the basis of inside of the house for women and outside for men.

As the name of *Chandipurnima*, more than 8 deities are worshipped in Baram community. Early in the morning, on that day, I had gone to Dandagaon for observing the worship of deities. Almost villagers were busy for worshipping.

Thani Puja

Another most important activity during *Chandipurnima*, the first day, the whole Baram communities representing from every house gather under the Tree for worshipping. Puja materials are brought from every Baram household and a cock and a hen should be brought to sacrifice the god, *Thani*. *Dhoja*, *Lawa*, *Puwa*, egg, rice, flowers etc. are also offered to the god. They have strong beliefs on the *Thani* to worship for protecting the village from wild animals. The pujari or priest of *Thani* - Tokman Baram whose father had contributed *Sankha*- instrument made for blowing to create sound of worship and Bell- to Baram community for worshipping the *Thani*, according to him, female members of family prepare puja materials but pujari (Priest) have not yet selected from female, however pujari plays vital role during the worshipping time. Baram women have to prepare puja materials and priests (male) offer it to god *Thani*. It means without women the puja (worship) will not be completed. Thus the roles of women are very significant however material preparation styles are different in both generations. Older women use older traditional materials however younger women use new materials.

Kacho Bayupuja

This deity is worshipped for the women who had done inter-caste marriage and accidentally dead people who have not mixed in *Bayu*. Before starting *Bayu puja*, already should have done finished of its worshipping. Represented from *Khalak* one cock and one hen are sacrificed as the name of this god but puja materials like incense, rice, thread, *Abir* etc. are offered from every house. After changing the year, death ancestor is mixed in *Bayu*. The priest of this deity also becomes male.

Bayupuja

This deity is worshipped as the name of ancestor. I found in the field five place of *Bayupuja*. It means there is five *Khalak* of *Baram* community. This *Puja*, worship, is done among *Khalak* of *Baram* community. Every *puja* is happened under the tree. Before starting *puja*, statue of the stone should be established. Generally, after one year of death people in *Khalak*, they are mixed in *Bayu*. It is the greatest deity of *Baram* community. This deity is done as the memory of past three generation dead people. The statues of the stone for fore three generation people were put under inside hut of the dry grass under the tree. Per statue of the stone everything offered what are prepared the god. In that day, the whole family of the *Khalak* gathered at once in Puja Spot. From every household of *Khalak* bring cock as name of male ancestor and hen for as the name of female ancestor to sacrifice the god. It is the worship of dead ancestors, like Shradha of Hindu and Buddhists' philosophy.

They used to sacrifice per person per cock or hen. Now, days, it has reformed from new generation people. It is prevalent now one cock for male ancestor and one hen for female ancestor and one goat from *Khalak* is sacrificed to the god. Different activities are to be done on that day. I found male pujari (Priest) in every Puja spot. Male and female young people were busy to bring water. Male were busy offer the flower and rice on goat, cocks and hens head. After shaking the cock, hen and goat body they bring to near priest in the deity spot to sacrificing. Shaking body of hen, cock, goat symbolize, god accept or agreed. Female members are busy for preparing bread, cooking rice, meat, collecting wine and *Dhupaksheta* (Worshipping materials) from every household to offer the god and participant peoples in the spot. Similarly, some male members are busy for cutting flesh of cock, hen and goat. Women also help them if they required. Both male and female become cook and distribute meal.

During the period of worshipping time, I found only male pujari (priest) who has a vital role in worshipping time. Except priest, other behavior was not so difference between male and female. However, we can assume that the power was centralized to the male in the past in *Baram* community also because of selecting priest from male.

Jhyalakani Puja

This deity is worshipped on the name of *Jhalakani Budhi* who has come to there from *Jhyalla*. She was not *Khalak* of Baram but she was brought by Baram to keep. After her death, she was named *Jhyalakni*. The procedure of puja is same as like *Bayupuja*, only she was separate from *Khalak*. This deity symbolizes there is no difference in the memory of male and female ancestor in Baram community.

Dangre

Dangre plays vital role to follow the social cultural rituals in Baram community. However, it is diminishing from community. In my field work, I found only one *Dangre* named Tokman Baram. *Dangre* is selected from their *Khalak*. It is said one *Khalak* should have one *Dangre*. But I couldn't find *Dangre* in every *Khalak*. For selecting *Dangre* whole family of *Khalak* sitting round and whose body is tremble he is selected for *Dangre* from *Khalak*. Because *Khlalak* believe him, he is the favorable person of *Bayu*.

After the worshipping activities of deities, from every household of the *Khalak* gathered in *Dangre's* house. *Dangre* is established in the evening time. First of all, the spot should be made purify with cow dung. After that, one of the *Khalak* gives him incense of cow ghee. Then he starts trembling with crying. He speaks what happens in the day, every ancestor gained or did not gain, have satisfied or not satisfied etc. If any fore people did not gain, danger starts weeping or crying, *Khalak* request him to give next time. Lastly, danger self asks leave. Then, again from member of *Khalak* gives him ghee of incense. Likewise, it becomes ending.

Baram communities celebrate *Chandipurnima*. First day, they worship the deity as the *Thani* and *Chandi* for securing the village from the wild animals. Both male and female members of the families are busy for preparing *Koseli*, worshipping Puja etc. In that day young people of Baram community, dance, sing, talking, eating delicious food typically *Chandipurnima* festival. They do not work of field. Everybody take rest at home. The next day, early in the morning everybody prepares and ready to worshipping spot. After finished worshipping activities, everybody eating together, dancing and singing spent whole day. Especially young people prefer dancing and singing and old people spent the time with talking. "Language and Gender," explores some common language ideologies concerning the ways in which women and men speak and reviews the research on the complex nature of gendered linguistic practices (Ahearn, 2012).

Conclusion

Baram Community is Animistic Community, believes in worship of Nature and have serious impact of Hinduism and Budhhism. Chandipurnima is the major festival of Baram community. They worship different deities as the name of ancestors in this festival. They celebrate this festival with worshipping many deities, distribution *Koseli* form *Chelibeti* (married daughter) to their parent family and enjoying with eating typically food of *Chandipurnima* like bread, Raksi, meat, dancing, singing and talking spent whole days. During the period of festival, male has major role in Puja as a priest. The role of male is cutting flesh of cock, hen and goat and collecting materials what requires in the family whereas the role of female is preparing materials of puja, cooking rice. Bringing water, Distribution meal is common behavior in festival. Except typically role they help each other; male cook rice, female also cut flesh etc what they have necessities. Finally, the impact of patriarchy system is in Baram community also, however, gender friendly behavior looks better in Baram community.

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