

 <p>ISSN 2631-2131</p>	<p>A review of history of Baram community of Nepal</p> <p>Bhadra Baram</p>
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Abstract

A review of history of Baram community is a study of history of Baram Community of Gorkha district of Nepal. It is a brief history of the community. Baram people are indigenous people whose language is called Balkura is closely associated with Tibeto- Burmese linguistic class. To write down the brief history of the community the review has been conducted. It is the collection of different available sources presented in references randomly. The study is also based on the interview of Tokman Baram and Bhairab Baram the old men of the community. In conclusion, Barams are exactly like Jirel, Surel, Thami, the mix of Gurung, Magar, Kirant and Sunuwar. They have huge influence from Hinduism and Bonism. Barams are animists or worshippers of nature.

Keywords: Baram, Culture, History, Prithvinarayan Shah

Introduction

Ethnic identity issues emerged when they felt that they are insecure or their existence is in threat. For their existence they became visible using different ethnic markers. These markers are invented or revived based on their knowledge and availability of their resources. They choose certain ethnic markers that can be carried as their invented cultural codes by the majority of the members of the community (Thapa, 2014)

Barams are the native original indigenous people of living in Gorkha district of Nepal. Barams have their own art culture, language, festivals and cultural practices. According to the census (2011) the total population of *Baram* is 8140. In that, women are 4459. Of the total population of *Baram* 6740 (82.9) live in Gorkha district (Baram, 2066). Gender construction as per in other different community, in *Baramu* community is also to some extent, because from womb to tomb the gender differentiation seems in every social function, norms and celebrations as well. Cultural encroachment has also a serious problem in *Baram* community because now a day they are celebrating *Krishna*

Asthami and Ram Nawami of Hindus. *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 village in Gorkha district, Dhading, Makawanpur and Nabalparasi 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 *Bayupuja*, *Boksibayu*, *Chandi Puja* etc. in *Chandupurnima*.

Method and Objective

It is a brief history of the community. *Baram* people are indigenous people whose language is called *Balkura* is closely associated with Tibeto- Burmese linguistic class. To write down the brief history of the community the review has been conducted. It is the collection of different available sources presented in references randomly. The study is also based on the interview of Tokman Baram and Bhairab Baram the old men of the community.

Discussions

General History

Baram (*Baramu*, *Bhramu*) is a critically endangered Sino-Tibetan language spoken in Nepal. And the community is *Baram* community of Nepal. Speakers are shifting to Nepali. Dialects are found in Dandagaun and Mailung villages. *Baram* is spoken in Dandagaun and Mailung VDCs in central and southern Gorkha District, Gandaki Zone, and in Takhu village up the Doraundi Khola (east side above Chorgate, near Kumhali) (*Ethnologue*). There are possibly about 7 villages in Dhading District as well. There are several discrepancies and differences in historical reports about the precise location of the *Baram* people. They call themselves as *Baram* or *Baramu*. These two words *Baram* and *Baramu* are alternative used. Their main inhabitant place or ancestor is Gorkha district. Later on, they were migrated to other districts. They are rich in their distinct culture, religion, rituals, identity, customs and lifestyles. *Barams*, are one of the highly marginalized indigenous communities, of the 59 indigenous peoples recognized by Nepal government. They are scattered in different villages in Gorkha, Tanahu, Dhading, Makawanpur and Nawalparasi districts in Nepal. Although they have been immensely influenced by other religion and culture, they have their own original culture and they are in fact, animists or worshipers of nature.

According to Hodgson (1840: 1114-25), the habitat of the *Baram* was the region called Gharga, east of the river Kali. He mentioned that they lived in the lower regions—the river valleys that were hot and infested with malaria—and yet seemed immune to the disease. The word Gharga phonetically sounds similar to Gorkha and, in fact, Gorkha lies east of the Kali Gandaki River. This suggests that Hodgson was correct in his statement but simply misspelled or mispronounced the word Gorkha as Gharga. His contention that they lived in the lower regions accords with *Baram* oral history, which holds that previously the *Baram* people lived in the river valleys, but that later when *Brahmins* and/or *Kshetris* migrated there, they deserted their original villages and moved up to the mountains. There are still several *Baram* settlements in the river valleys (Kansakar, Yadav, Chalise, Dhakal, & Paudel, 2011). It means that the origin of *Baram* people is before the 1800 and has written documents since 1840.

Baram people belong to the Mangoloid community. *Baram*, *Baramu* and *Bhahmu* are the alternative

terms used to refer the Baram people. Baram and Baramu are used their surname by the people themselves while Baramu is used to refer to them by another people. Other different terms are also found to have been used to refer to Baram in the past. Hodson (1847) and Gierson (1909) used Bhamu and Bista (1980) used Bhamu and Barhmu alternatively to refer to the people. But in fact, Baram people call themselves Balbang, which means ‘people’ or ‘human kind’. (Yadav, Parsain, & Chalise, 2062). Physically they resemble Gurung and Magar but linguistically and culturally they are very different from any of the neighboring Tibeto-Burman communities. Their clans and sub clan names are rare similar to Sunuwar (Thapa, 1996) but linguistically they are found to close Thami. Baram people believe themselves to be indigenous to the area where they live. But A.K Thapa (1996) claims that their differences from any of the neighboring communities shows that Baram is a dislocated group from its ancestral communities. Baram came to the present location after wandering many places, He was tried to explain how Baram came to the present places from the eastern part of Nepal where Sunuwar are still settled now (Thapa, 1996). The *Barhamu* people live in Nepal, a nation that is hidden in the Himalayan Mountains. Tibetan Buddhism has come to them from the north, and Hinduism came to them from the south. This shows that no place is too remote for new ideas to take root. Nepal didn’t open up to the outside world until 1950, and medical missionaries came at that time. They were not allowed to share the gospel, but their lives were a testimony of how the Holy Spirit could transform people. Today, there is a growing church in Nepal affecting many unreached people groups. Unfortunately, the church has not yet affected the Barhamu people.

History of Cultural Practices

Rituals for the worship of *Chandi* also entail the worship of Kul (the family God), *Bhume* (the land God), *Vayu* (the wind God), and *Banjhankri* (the jungle God), among others. Apart from their native practices, the *Barams* also follow most of the Hindu rites and rituals, and celebrate the Hindu festivals. They have also adopted cultural practices from other non-Hindu neighboring communities. For example, the *Barams* in Takukot take part in *Gaijatra* (the “cow festival”), which is celebrated by the Newar community. It is striking, however, that the *Barams* have nativized the adopted practices and follow them in their own way. The basic profession of the *Baram* people is agriculture; in the past they received loans of arable land under the *Kipat* system, indicating that the *Barams* were traditionally farmers. Farming and animal husbandry are complementary parts of the agricultural subsistence of the *Barams*. However, their ownership of land has decreased due to expansion of the family and other factors; as a result, their economic situation is gradually degrading as well. Apart from agriculture, the *Barams* are also found to be involved in other occupations, such as government service (especially membership in the army and police forces), business, and labor. Regarding education, a survey to identify the educational status of the *Baram* people was conducted by the Nepal *Baram* Association in 10 VDCs of Gorkha district in 2065 BS (Baram, 2066). Thus Baram has the history of more than 250 years.

The gender construction practices of Vedic culture have influenced to *Baramu* culture. In a birth the girl child and boy child are differently treated, it is imported from Hindu. In *Baram* culture, people celebrate birth of a human equally because *Jhankri* of *Baramu* (Priest) treats with same rituals. There is not any difference in *Baram* because Maternal Uncle (Mama) gives the name of New born child (Baram, 2066). The name of Male and female are highly influenced by other cultures. However, the typical names are also influenced by other culture. But there is equality in linguistic

terms as in English. There is not any difference in language to respect elders or masters or husbands or father or mother in laws. *Baramu* community does not accept dowry. *Baram*, *Baramu*, *Bhramu* and sometimes *Bhra:mu* are linguistically Tibetan- Burman community and the language is close to Thami community of Dolkha Nepal (Kansakar, et al., 2011).

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 issue of gender relation or any kind of relation is exactly homogeneous in the community. There is not any kind of differences in social relations.

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 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 Hudson in 1840, the habitat of *Baram* was the region called ‘Ghagra’, 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 Dor Bahadur Bista in 1980, *Baram* people inhabited the Terai and inner-valleys, living in the hot, humid and very malarias 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, and Lalitpur districts.

Their popular myth of origin connects them with Sunuwars, Surel, Jirel, Rais and Limbus, other indigenous nationalities of eastern Nepal. They also had Kipat land, communal land tenure system in the past. They have their own language that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family. Though much destroyed due to interferences of powerful neighbors, they still retain some distinct cultural traits. They are animists, but they are mixed to state Hinduism as their religion. Their social and religious practices resemble with those of *Magars* (Badal, 2019). Many *Baramos* trace their language and culture to Burma (Myanmar) and the Burmese. They are mostly engaged in farming. There are very few educated people among them. some of their children have started to attend schools, but failure

and dropout rates are very high. Ninety percent of them are landless and have no other source of subsistence, except occasional wage labor. According to 2001 census, their population is 7,383. *Baramos* are believed as an endangered indigenous people.

Baram (or Baramu) is one of the indigenous minority nationalities scattered in different villages in the districts of Gorkha, Tanahu, Dhading, Lalitpur, Makwanpur and Nawalparasi. They, according to their mythology, call themselves off springs of what they call five brothers: Surel, Sunuwar, Jirel, Rai (Khambu) and Limbu, and claim to have scattered to the west from the east. They believe that they are the successors of ancient *Kiratas*. They claim that they had heard of their ancestors owning *Kipat* land of their own.

Language

Barams have their own mother tongue called *Balkura*. This language belongs to the Tibeto- Burman family of languages and is similar to the Magar language to a great extent. This language is in endangered state. Although influenced by other religion and culture, they have their own original culture and they are, in fact, animists or worshippers of nature. It belongs to Tibeto-Burman language family (Kansakar, et al., 2011). This language is listed endangered language. Even though their population is spread over 13 different districts, the language of Baram, *Balkura* is spoken only in Takukot and Pandrung of Gorkha district (Baramu, et al., 2006). The term *Balkura* means, the language spoken by people. According the latest national Census of 2011, of their total 8,140, as many as 155 people only speak their mother tongue. The previous national census of 2001, the data showed that 350 people who could speak *Balkura*. A couple of newspaper and poems have so far been published in *Balkura*.

Naming Rituals

They name their newborn on the fifth or eleventh day. Their relatives perform the naming ceremony. While performing *Chhewar* (the ceremony of first haircut), the maternal uncle cuts the hair of his nephew in accordance with a special process.

Marriage Rituals

Marriage is done either with mutual consent or by arrangement. While asking for a girl, the boy's side offers a *Surkepfung* (a certain quality of spirit in a wooden pot called *Chauntho*). If it is accepted, the next process of bringing *thekipung* starts. In this process the boy's side should bring roti (bread), rooster, some money in the form of gift, a basketful of fish, etc. (Baram, 2019) except spirit. In the actual marriage ceremony, when the bridegroom enters the house of the bride's parents, he slaughters a cock at the main gate. And the remaining processes are completed thereafter. While returning home afterwards the same ritual of slaughtering cock at the main gate is repeated. The bridegroom is asked to step over the slaughtered cock to enter the house and the remaining procedures follow (Gorkha Baram Association, BS 2056). Cross-cousin marriage among *Barams* is equally acceptable. Many of their practices are similar to those of the *Magars*. Presence of *Jwain* (husband of daughter or sister) is compulsory in funeral performances. They cleanse themselves of funeral pollution through the relatives.

Festivals

Barams worship their family gods, *Chandi*, *Bhume*, forest gods and goddesses. They make use of *Dhamis* and *Jhakris* to perform worship rituals and to treat illnesses. They are basically farmers and they practice animal husbandry besides agriculture. They are very good at carpentry and masonry. Since agriculture and animal husbandry may not be sufficient for their subsistence they resort to daily wage work to earn their living. 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 as the name of their ancestors. Mythological refers to the oral history or the version of old and elite person. When, where and how *Baram* came to this situation we could not find any written history. Only just, based on the old people of *Baram* as well as non *Baram*, some of oral history can be found. Regarding to this, Bhairab Baram explained that before the unification of Nepal King Prithivi Narayan Shaha had used *Baram* youth with weapons to attack on Kritipur. In that war or battle field, they were defeated. Then King Prithivi Narayan returned to Gorkha. But *Baram* youth left there (Baram, 2066). Then, they started to live Bhadgaon, Lele destroying the forest. After sometime, Keshar Bahadur Bista who was powerful of there, hired the land of *Baram*, then they transferred to Sano Durlung and towards Thulladurlung where some of *Baram* are living there now.

Kipat of King Prithvinarayan

Prithvinarayan Shah was the pioneer of unification of Nepal in 17th century. According to the statement of Bhairab *Baram*, Lord Gorakhnath came in the dream of his priest and said that the man who is able to be the king is walking with friends in Gulmi districts of Nepal. Their living, eating is being together. To identify him, should be looked in the sleep of their bed. The boy who is suitable for the king gives signal and goes up 1 foot, should be taken him to Gorkha in the sleep. It was very much difficult work. The priest of Gorakhnath gave this authentic to *Baram* for bringing King to Gorkha because of their simplicity and honesty. *Baram* succeed to do that.

Then the king asked *Baram* what they want. They could not speak, only looked down the head looking and touching the land. The king understood their demand and gave some part of land as Kipat with Tamrapatra which can be seen still today in the *Baram* society. Likewise, another people, Tokman *Baram* states about *Baram* that they were living in Gorkha before the evolution of Shaha Dynasty. As being brought the King to Gorkha, some parts of land Gorkha like 900 Avrik, 700 Taku, Panchkhuwa Deurali, Pandrung and Phujel etc. were given to *Baram* as a *kipat*. The major person of that land was also *Baram*. They were known as *Mukhiya* and *Jimawal*. It is also stressed by him that *Baram* were major persons of twelve places. In his word, 12 means Barand Major mean Mukhey in Nepali, joining together to those words Bara and Mukhey became *Baramu*, later due to cause of tongue sleep became *Baram*, *Bhramo* (Thapa, 1996).

There are found to be several controversies about the exact location of *Baram* people in the past. According to Hodson in 1840, the habitat of *Baram* was the region called 'Ghagra', east of the river 'Kali'. He states that they lived in the lower regions infested with malaria and they seemed immune to their disease. But according to Grierson and Konow (1903), in his book *Barams* was one of tribes from Nepal Terai (Thapa, 1996). According to Bista (1903), *Barams* inhabited the Terai and inner valleys, living in hot, humid and very malarial areas. Grimes (1992), assumes the habitat of *Baram* to be North of Gorkha District, Gandaki Zone, along the Daraundi Khola and its

tributaries (Kansakar, et al., 2011). At present, according to the CBS report 2001, Gorkha District in the western Nepal is the main area where Baram live. They are also found to be living in Dhading and Lalitpur districts. A very small number of these people live in Lamjung, Tanahu and Syangja Districts (Kansakar, et al., 2011).

Gender Relations

Gender Relations in Baram Community is homogeneous. Nepal has made various national and international gender equality and women-centric commitments through signing of conventions and treaties. At the national level, the Constitution of Nepal has guaranteed women's rights in all spheres of their lives. Major challenges remain in reducing maternal and child mortality, improving nutrition and achieving further progress in battle against infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDs. Uterine prolapse is a serious health issue for Nepalese women though the Constitution guarantees women's reproductive health. The women can make her decision in Baram Community.

National Federation of Development for Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) in 2054 has identified the Baram community as a highly marginalized indigenous people of Nepal (Yadav, Parsain, & Chalise, 2062). After the identification and analysis, the community is listed among entire identified 59 groups, the interim constitution of 2063 has included it as an indigenous group. So, the community has been recognized as an important element of inclusive democracy. Language policy commission of 2011 of Nepal has listed the Baram language is highly disappearing language of Nepal. Women's participation in governance over the last 10 years remained limited except at the grassroots level. Although the participation of Baram Community in governance and polity are not satisfactory.

The ideology of patriarchy and matriarchy is simply the idea of utopia. But some blame each other as it is patriarchy, which is a structure as well as an ideology and under which males dominate across a multiplicity of events, conditions, institutions, etc., which structurally renders women's position relatively inferior to men (DeBeauvoir, 1953). Likewise, women are dominated structurally in the context of Nepal also due to the some socio cultural or historical practices. In the case of Gender is not sex as private organ but it is a sense in mind (Badal, 2017). It is socially constructed and a result of socio-cultural influences throughout an individual's development (Schneider, 2005). Gender identity can be affected by, and is different from one society to another depending on the way the members of the society evaluate the roles of females and males. The different roles and opportunities open to women and men within family, community and a societal structure is deeply rooted in the traditional culture. In South Asian nations, social boundaries are the major issues influencing attitude of the entire societies or communities. The cultural restriction limits women to freely mobilize and express their opinions. Among these south Asian communities Baram Community is advanced, free, liberal, and progressive in gender relation and development. The term sex refers to the biological distinction of being male and female to make the distinction clearer one could consider that we inherit the sex but we learn our gender (Boss, 2008). However, the behavior between male and female in the practice can be seen different in the society. Modern gender theory distinguishes biological makers from gender makers include such elements as dress, body language, patterns of speech, roles and types of activities that society allots to men and women (Ringrose, 2003). Likewise, in all societies, men and women, boys and girls have a different status and play different roles. In case of Gender issues men and women are equal because there is not any

hierarchical portfolio in Balkura- Baram Language; that is all are equal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Barams are exactly like Jirel, Surel, Thami, the mix of Gurung, Magar, Kirant and Sunuwar. They have huge influence from Hinduism and Bonism. Barams are animists or worshipers of nature. It is almost difficult to find out the history of any indigenous community however their written history can be traced out since the time of unification of Nepal by Prithvinarayan Shah from 17th century of Nepal. The community seems poor from economic perspective but very rich from social and cultural perspectives.

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