

CHANGING PATTERN OF LIVELIHOOD OF KUSHBAHIYA TRIBAL GROUP OF NEPAL

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Abstract

Kushbahiya, traditional stone cutter and brome maker, are marginalized Janajati of Nepal who at present reside in mainly in terai and some hilly district. Aproximately 3182 of them are living in Nepal. With development of country, change in policy, advancement of technology and acculturalization, Kushbahiya community are changing their livelihood strategy gradually. Once the community used to live like tribal group moving from place to place, hunting in jungle and selling silauto now they have adopted different occupation like rickshaw pulling, wage labour, bus conductor, foreign employment, machiya making, etc. They have also settled down in fixed area. This study is about the changing pattern in livelihood of Kushbahiya in Manikapur village, Nepalgunj Metropolitan city, Banke, as a quantitative research.

Keywords: *livelihood, acculturalization, tribal group, marginalized group*

BACKGROUND

Nepal is diverse in both geographical and landscape by structure. Likewise the country is inhabitant of diverse ethnic background. The settlers of Nepal also have diversity in social, cultural, religious. There are altogether 125 castes and ethnicity has been figured out in different parts of Country (Census 2011). Nepal is a country of multi-caste/multi ethnic, religious and multi lingual societies where different caste/ethnic people have been living for ages. Among them, Kushbadhiya is one of the marginalised and also known as Adivasi Janajati. The caste is a unit within Janajati. 'Caste is a "collection of families, bearing a common name, claiming a common descent, from a mythical ancestor, human and divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community'(Sir Herbert Risely).

The national foundation for upliftment of Adivasi Janjati 2002 defines Adivasi Janjati as those group or communities who have their own mother tongue, customs, distinct social structure and written or oral history (UNESCO, 2006). The flow of migration always occurred both from Northern and Southern part of the country to composition of the population of modern Nepal. Among them, Kushbahiya believed to be came from northern part of India and their customs and rituals are close to the resident of northern border of India indicate their migration from north Indian village. The indigenous people appeared as semi-nomadic attributes that have specific tradition, culture and language. The Tarai region of Nepal always has been facing significant migration from northern part of Indian state. It continues form so many years that contributes the identification of new species in local area of southern part particularly in border area of Nepal. From that event Banke district has not remained effected from indigenous migration. Among them, Kushbadhiya are one of the indigenous people dwelling in different part of Banke district of Nepal. Kushbadhiya are semi-nomadic peoples found mainly in Tarai areas from east to mid-western Nepal (Gurung 2014).

According to Indal Kushbadhiya they are born in Manikapur and their forefathers came to Nepal from Jamnabazzar Mallipur, India. Now Kushbadhiya settled in Fultekra, Indragaun (Indrapur) and Maikapur of Banke district. Kushbadhiya are identified and recognized as indigenous people by the Act of 2002 and categorized as endangered group by Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) in 2004. Their major occupation is stone cutting and broom making which they have been following from traditionally. Kushbadhiya are known from different names like Pattharkatta (stonecutter), Silkut, Kuchbadhiya and Kushbandhiya. Initially they are enlisted in Dalit caste by government of Nepal in official document. Therefore, they are treated as untouchable by other dominant caste group but later on the government removed Pattharkatta from list of Dalit in 2011. Now, the multiple identity of this ethnic group comes under the single identity as Kushbadhiya. They have their own language and different folklores and cultures. They celebrate various kinds of festivals in particular occasion with quite different way. Kushbadhiya are outnumbers in population size 0.012 to comparison with total population of Nepal. According to the census report of 2011 there are altogether 3182 around the country. Among them 332 are in Banke district and 55 in Manikapur. In present situation it increases to 70 from 13 household in Manikaur. Kushbadhiya makes small hut covered by straw, Khar(a kind of plant that used to cover houses in rural areas) and other substance that pretty much looks like khar. They like to stay in small houses and basically they cooked food outside (courtyard) of their house. Kushbadhiya are like to stay in joint family. The main occupation of this indigenous people is to make Silauto, lohoro, Jaato and broom out of Kush (a special kind of plant with high religious value). Kushbahiya does not have land ownership they roam place to place to search for food and subsistence. Kushbadhiya have their own cultural and religious practice they pass to their new generation to keep alive for future. The story about their ancestors, their occupation and placed they stayed are all they pass by parents. Kushbadhiya loved to hunt wild animals both for enjoyment and livelihood as well. They informed that there will be Tatil(hunting) tomorrow before the day of hunt (Shankar Kushbadhiya). They used to gather together and go for hunt. They hunted jackal, tortoise and gahawa or gohoro(komodo dragon). They called guri to their pray.

Kushbahiya have own language but not written script. They practice patrilineal and patrilocal society. They have different clan and they marry outside the clans. They have their culture, festivals and various religious practice from cradle to grave. They have their particular dress and ornaments. They are natural artisans and they makes different artefacts from patthar(stone). Almost the male and female love to make tattoos on their hands because it is an interest and they tattooed their family members names on arms and forearms. Kushbadhiya practiced Hinduism and they worship Hanuman God, Matamarani as ancestral deity, Kali Ma (Goddess) and Pipal in trees. The major economic activity of Kushbahiya is hunting and stone cutting, rope making from jute. They make silauto, lohoro and spinning rope and go to sell too far away the places like Surkhet, Chhinchu, and Dang district. Besides this Kucho(broom) and Kaiyo(comb) making as occupation is also popular among some Kushbahiya people. In present days government provided social security allowance became an important source of livelihood for Kushbadhiya.

This study is of Manikapur Village, Nepalgunj sub-metropolitan city ward 20, Banke.

OBJECTIVE

1. To explore the changing livelihood of Kushbadhiya Community and their present occupation.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: Descriptive analytical.

Sampling: 13 household (universal population, Manikapur Village)

Resource: Primary and secondary

Tools and technique: Household Survey, Interview

CHANGING PATTERN OF LIVELIHOOD OF KUSHBADHIYA COMMUNITY

Here we will discuss about the changes on livelihood of Kushbadiya over the past few decades. We shall discuss on the past adaptive strategies which Kushbadiya developed to cope in their surroundings and how those strategies were changed and how they are surviving in the present changing context. We will also discuss about the factors of change in the livelihood of Kushbadiya.

PAST LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF KUSHBADHIYA

In the past Kushbadiya households depend upon hunting wild game and selling hand-made jute and stone products for their subsistence. They move from place to place in search of wild game and raw materials. Hunting wild game is done mainly to supplement their daily food requirements. Sometimes, they do ritual hunting for entertainment. Therefore, the Kushbadiya must go hunting wild game and selling stone and jute products for their livelihood.

HUNTING AND GATHERING

Traditionally, the Kushbadiya were ingenious hunters. They hunt wild game and gather wild fruits, edible roots and tubers, and they continue their traditional occupations until today. They claim themselves to be traditional hunters they inherited the hunting skills and technology from their forefathers since time immemorial. They take hunting as daily food supplementation and game for fun or entertainment. Traditionally, women collect and prepare food at home and the men bring food from hunting. The Kushbadiya's main hunting prey is shyal (Jackal), kathuro (bigger than mongoose), kathumar (squirrel-like animal), dhebro (wild cats), khachuwa (tortoise, nakati), dhon (a kind of tortoise, with a shell on its back, which does not run away), dumsi (porcupine), kanahi or gohoro (komodo dragon), lokhan (squirrel), chubuan (fox) and chitti (python) along with rats, cats and mongooses. The hunting technology is very simple but very effective and the usually hunt in groups. They use a dog to smell, detect and drive the hunt. They shoot the game with iron-tipped spears or bow and arrow. They also use nets to trap the game. They are so smart and skillful in hunting that they sometimes catch live game with their hands.

Besides jackals the Kushbadiya catch other animals as mentioned above. Sometimes, they catch live jackals, gohoro, kachhuwa and other small animals and keep them for several days in front of their houses. The hunting dog is kept in one corner of the courtyard to guard those animals. They also catch rats and cats to eat. But these days, the Kushbadiya are looked down on by other caste/communities for eating rats, cats and other small animals. Therefore, some young Kushbadiya have given up eating the meat of these animals and as a result hunting is gradually declining from the Kushbadiya communities.

STONE CUTTING

Stone cutting and silauto/okhal-lohoro (stone mortar) and jaato (stone grinder) producing is another main occupation to support their subsistence. They get fully involved in this activity for commercial purpose. The Kushbadiya from Banke buy slabs at India border paying twenty-five

rupees as tax for a pair of slabs to the Custom Office at Rupadiya slab itself costs two hundred rupees for a pair. It takes half a day to prepare lohoro and silauto and one full day to prepare a jato. Preparation of okhali (a bowl-shaped mortar) is also labor intensive and a time-consuming task. It also needs a lot of concentration to make okhali. Therefore, Kushbadiya make okhali at the order of users. Depending upon the size and quality of slab, the Kushbadiya sell the ready-made jato/sialuto at minimum of three hundred to a maximum twelve hundred rupees in urban areas. They prepare silauto and jato at home and both men and women are involved in preparing silauto and jato. After cutting and carving stone for lohoro/silauto (khalia), okhali, and jato, the Kushbadiya take them on their head or shoulders to sell in centers where they can find their buyers. They also go to villages and walk from door to door to sell them. The Kushbadiya men, women and children get involved in selling these products across the bus parks and open markets.

However, these days, the availability of electric grinding machines have replaced the market for handmade stone mortars and grinding mills. Although electric grinding machines have replaced the markets of stone products, people still want them because they are cheaper, more durable and natural. The unnecessary troubles have put the Kushbadiya's traditional artisan work at risk. As a result, many Kushbadiya peoples have gradually given up their traditional occupation of producing stone products.

DAMLO/DORO, THAKRO/KUCHO

Damlo and Doro (leash and rope) making traditional occupation of the Kushbadiya. Damlos are essential for animals and doros are essential in binding rice bundles in carts pulled by bulls or a pair of male buffaloes. They are also used for tractors and tethering animals and doros have a good market in the Terai areas. They are made of the jute like fibre plants called sanahi and petua. Rope making is a reliable source of income for the Kushbadiyas, the price of 30 foot rope cost 100 rupees and the demand increases during paddy planting and harvesting seasons. The durability of handmade rope in comparison to readymade nylon rope helps them to continue their traditional work to support their livelihood. Farmers also prefer to have sanpatdoro than the nylon one because sanpatdoro is very soft and easy to handle. The Kushbadiyas bring raw sanpat and petuwa in Sauna/Bhadau (July/September) and they twist and entwine the raw sanpat into rope at home within one to two months. Usually, the Kushbadiya sell their ropes in Jetha/Asad (May/June). They move from door to door of their clients and leave their doro/damlo on credit and collect cash or kind for their doro/damlo in Kartik/Mangsir (October/November) after harvesting the paddy. Besides this, kuccho or kucchi (broom) and thakro-kaiyo (comb) making a occupation is also popular among some Kushbadiya people. The Kushbadiya are experts in making kucho and thakro-kaiyo. Kucho is made of kush straw and thakro-kaiyo are made from the roots of the kush. Each day they earn small amount of money from the sale of kucho and thakro-kaiyo. The money earned from the sale of these items is helpful for buying goods for household consumption.

PRESENT LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY

MIGRATION AND OTHER PROFESSIONS

For a long time, the Kushbadiya have travel from place to place for hunting and gathering, but they did not migrate to other places for employment opportunities until recently. Now the situation has changed. The Kushbadiya have started to migrate to other places for job opportunities. At present, we can find them in more than 50 districts. The widespread dispersal of the Kushbadiya to so many districts is a result of migration in search of job opportunities. Since they do not own agricultural

lands, the Kushbadiya do not have work experience in agricultural fields. Nowadays Kushbadiya is engaged in agricultural work as wage laborers. A few Kushbadiya have also gone to Gulf countries to work as laborers. The below table shows the detail of present occupations of Kushbadiya in Manikapur.

Table 1: Occupation status of Kushbadiya

TYPES OF WORK	NUMBER	PERCENTGE
Traditional(Silauto, lohor, jaato, Rope)	17	24.28
Small Business(Machiya, bata, chickn chick, home decoration items, carrying)	7	10
Service(Transport)	1	1.42
Foreign Employee	1	1.42
Wage labour(Agricultural fields, construction home)	12	17.14
Others(Fish pond Contract)	1	1.42
Not involving in work	31	44.28
TOTAL	70	100

Source: (Field survey 2018)

The above table describe that almost one quarter of Kushbadiya population are still involving in their traditional occupation like Silauto, Jaato making and entwine rope. The remarkable 10 percent population involve in small business and carrying and other goods. The table also shows that Kushbadiya have increasing popularity on other types of occupation like service and foreign employment. Wage labor is the other occupation that becomes an important source of livelihood. While majority 44 percentages above populations are not directly involve in working as they are most of children and therefore not reached in working age.

The main livelihood source of Kushbadiya is stone but in present situation some of Kushbadiya youths involving in Rikshah pulling, auto driving, wage labor, rope making, broom making, Machiya (Khatuli) making and some are attracted towards foreign employment. They used to roam different places in a group or alone with their stone stuffs like Silauto and Jaato. They bring slate types of stone from Shankargadh, India. Some of them loaded on truck from Shakargadh and others who cannot pay truck fare they buy from the Indian traders. Usually, they used to breaks, cut stones, carving and giving them in desired shape at home. When it is ready for sale they takes different places and this is the main source of income for Kushbadiya. They travel Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet, Dang, Kailali, and Dailekh to sell their stone products.

UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY ALLOWANCE

Social security allowance provided by the Government of Nepal has become a very important source of livelihood for the Kushbadiya According to the new policy of the government, indigenous peoples categorized as endangered groups receive a government social security allowance since 2009. As per this policy, each member of the family receives 2000 rupees a month as a social security allowance. The Kushbadiya are one of the ten endangered indigenous groups who are entitled to social security allowances. The Kushbadiya of Banke and Bardiya have been receiving the social security allowance since the beginning.

The social security allowance has become very helpful to poor and endangered groups. It is a guaranteed source of income. It has increased the socio-economic status of Kushbadiya communities. They have used the social security allowance money for medical treatment, education of their children, food, clothes fun & amusement, fairs & festivals and other daily needs of the family. Therefore, the Kushbadiya are very happy with this policy. At the same time, this policy has also negatively affected the Kushbadiya communities. Our informants told us that many Kushbadiya particularly young generations, have misused the money for alcohol,

cigarettes gambling, watching sex rated films, riding rental motorbikes for no purpose and so on. More negative effects of this policy are the gradual abdication of their traditional occupations by the younger generations. Now the young generations are no longer interested in cutting stone, making silauto and jato and moving from door to door for their sale. They feel degraded if they work with stone and jute. This type of behavioral change among the young generations is a threat to their culture and society.

AVERAGE EXPENSES OF STUDY AREA

EXPENSES TITLES	NUMBER/HH	PERCENTAGE
Food& Clothing	22	31.42
Child Education	15	21.42
Medical Treatment	13	18.57
Drinking & Smoking, gambling	8	11.42
Fairs & Festivals	7	10
Others(Fun & amusements)	4	5.71
TOTAL	70	100

Source: (Field survey 2018)

The table above shows that Kushbadhiya community manages various kinds of expenses from the social security allowances. As we figured out during the field visit and key informant interview Kushbadhiya people spends more on buying cloths for family and food which constitutes 31.42 per cent for food and cloth. Similarly 21.42 per cent expenses make up for child education followed by medical treatment 18.57 per cent. While more than 29 per cent money they spends on unfruitful activities like drinking alcohol, gambling, watching movie and rental bikes.

FACTORS OF CHANGE IN LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY & SUBSISTENCE OF KUSHBADHIYA

Change is a universal phenomenon and it is observed in any society and in any spatial context. We know that development is a continuous process. The development a various facilities has contributed a lot of change in livelihood strategies of the Kushbadhiya. In the study area, one a single factor not played the significant role to bring change in the livelihood of the Kushbadhiya people. There were several factors like road construction, modern education, extension of market help the Kushbadhiya people to change in their survival strategy. However, I have already stated that Kushbadhiya people did not totally give of their traditional occupation but adapt the new occupation as their new sources of survival. In the course of study, I found the following as the main factors for change in the adaptive strategies.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

Acculturation

Acculturation is the one of the influential factor of changing human behaviors by which a member of community adopt, learn and acquires socio-cultural aspects to mingle with rest of the community. Acculturation is a cultural modification of an individual or group or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture or a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact. The process which by human being acquires the culture of a particular society form infancy. The Kushbadhiya settlement area is mostly surrounded by other ethnic background and the change of customs, rituals and behaviors started too affected by the activities of that community.

Likewise, Sanskritization is the study of the change of social, religious and cultural life of the human being in particular society. It is used to describe social mobility of the particular society. M.N Srinivas stated that "It is the process by which a low Hindu caste or tribal or other group changes its custom, rituals and ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, 'twice-born' caste." The above mentioned statement helps to clarify that different types of culture needs those activity that is compatible to available environment or culture. As a result it affects the overall life style and subsistence.

Education

Education is one of the major contributing factors for the change in livelihood of the people including Kushbadhiya. Like other educated people, some of the young Kushbadhiya were also taken their education as a means of their livelihood. In the study area, there was no or very little consciousness about the education one elderly Kushbadhiya said. Therefore, they did not send their children to school for education.

During the study period, it was informed that there was a vast change occurred in the consciousness regarding the education. In the household survey, I found that most of the adult and old people (both male and female) were illiterate and very few found literate but the school age children were found to study in different level of school education according to age.

ECONOMIC AND MATERIAL FACTORS

Extension of Roads and Market

The construction of road provides opportunity of wage labor for the Kushbadhiya people in the study area. An elderly informant informed me that few young Kushbadhiya lad involved auto riksha pulling on Nealgunj- Rajha road and one of work as bus conductor in local transport service for wage labor. It also provided a great opportunity of wage labor for the road was extension. It has helped them to ease their life and make changed in their livelihood strategies. The new market was also extending close to study area. An elderly person informed me that they went to Nepalgunj and KohalpurKhajura Bazar for buying and selling of the products in the past. The bazaar was nearly 12 kilometers far from the study area. The extension of Kohalpur Nepalgunj road sector and other branches of road provided the transportation opportunity to the Kushbadhiya people but also helped to expansion of market in the road connected points. As I have already mentioned that newly established market provided several opportunities for the people of the study area. During the field observation, I also found that some of the Kushbadhiya people were going to market for selling the jute rope, JhumarJhala (kind of home decorated items), Silauto etc. However, they also informed that they sold their products for fulfill their basic needs like buying spices, kerosene, rice, study materials for their children, cloths and so on rather than for profit.

Media and Communication role

Along with the development media and means of communication also put extra effort to the changing environment of Kuhbadhiya community. At the same time, awareness raising program implemented by government authority and NGOs help to change the progressive mentality on Kushbadhiya community.

CONCLUSION

A trend in changing of livelihood can be notice among Kushbadhiya. They are adopting to new skills. Mostly Kushbadhiya are engaged in making Silauto and Jato, Dori damlo(rope making) because it is their main source of subsistence. Besides, they practice making kucho, machiya and goes to sell door to door. Sometimes they bring house decorating items, pots to sell public residential site. They also practice two types of occupations such as primary and secondary occupation. Stone cutting is their primary occupation and except this nowadays they are attracted to the wage labour, service and private jobs live riksha pulling along with foreign employing and small business like selling chicks and fishing on the seasonal ponds or lakes.

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