

Challenging approaches towards the livelihood pattern of Raji tribe in Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era when globalized world has become more interconnected and livelihood pattern of most of the people are wielded by technologies and also have tendency to incline on new technologies in different field of livelihood and direct dependency on natural resource for livelihood also decreased, the vulnerable primitive tribal groups till now directly depend on natural resources for their livelihood and live in a primitive way. The Raji tribe, one of the vulnerable primitive tribes among 75 tribes declared by the Indian Government, are inhabited in the hilly forest region of Uttarakhand. Few decades ago this tribe was nomadic and cave dweller. Till now they depend on hunting, gathering, fishing and primitive agriculture for livelihood. Their stagnant stage of population growth, low literacy rate, poverty, and scarcity of natural resources (due to implementation of forest act) compelled them to abolish demographically and also their tribal identity, livelihood and culture are on the verge of extinction. There is a large gap between the tribal territory and rest of the advanced earth. So, it is necessary to focus on how the tribal people face the challenges for their livelihood and try to adapt with the modern and globalized world for survival that examination help to understand the tensions, ambiguities and challenges among livelihood patterns of tribal people to identify the problems from grass-root level and find out the livelihood opportunities of Raji tribe for sustainable development.

1. Introduction

In the long past people were nomadic and cave dweller. They were totally dependent on natural environment and forest production and livelihood were totally determined by natural environment (Bora: 1988). After that human brings changes in the physical landscape to cultural landscape by their knowledge, intelligence and culture and learnt to control physical phenomena. With the help of tools and technologies people changes the earth on the basis of their demands and used natural resources by modification instead of direct use. In digital era when globalized earth are more interconnected and modern people are inclining to modern technologies most of the indigenous people are still living in a primitive way and also live in an inaccessible areas deprived from all kind of livelihood facilities depending on the direct and indirect benefits of forest resources.

In India, 33% of land is under forest cover and only 22% of land is under the forest department of India and out of this area, over 50% of land is devoid of vegetation due to over exploitation and biotic pressure. As a result, the livelihood pattern over 80 million tribal people who are dependent on forest resources has been threatened. Adverse effects of deforestation are evident in the form of shortage of food, fodder, fuel-wood, timber, non-wood forest products and medicinal herbs for the tribal people (Rawat: 1999). Raji tribe, the vulnerable primitive tribe of India, who have identified as stagnant or very little population growth, low literacy rate, primitive livelihood pattern and socio-economically backwardness, live in inaccessible hilly areas of Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand and prefer to keep themselves aloof from advanced society. About seventy years back, Rajis were known as 'Ban Raoute' (King of forest) or 'Ban Manus' (forest

man) (Bisht: 2006). They were nomadic and cave dweller (Atkinson: 1884). Though, now they are permanent settlers but still their livelihood largely depends on hunting, gathering, and primitive agricultural practices. Due to their primitive mind-set, age-old beliefs, and lack of facilities for transportation and communication, slow adaptation with modernity, environmental changes and implementation of forest laws they are on the verge of extinction. The study is need for identify problem among livelihood patterns of Raji tribes and how they face challenges for their survival and find out the livelihood opportunities among tribal people for their sustainable development.

2. Objective

To find out the livelihood challenges of Raji tribe due to changing environment.

3. Hypothesis

The Raji tribe faces challenges in their livelihood pattern in recent.

4. Methodology

The researcher has collected data from the nine villages (Jamtadi, Altudi, Madanpuri, Kimkhola, Bhaktirawa, Kulekh Gainagaon and Chifaltar) of Pithoragarh district Uttarakhand district. Random and Purposive Sampling method is used to collect the data. 25% Raji people of Pithoragarh have been interviewed. Primary data has been gathered through fieldwork and perception study. Secondary data has been collected from Block office of Didihat, Dharchula and Kanalichhina block and district library of Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand, research articles, web, newspapers, tribal

journals, magazines, District Hand-Book, and Statistical Hand-Book. Questionnaire (both open ended and close ended), Schedule (face-to-face), Interview (prefer to village headman) and Observation (direct) all have been used here to get the data. Descriptive statistics has been used to analyze the data.

5. Location of the study area

Rajietnic group is mainly inhabited in the nine different villages of Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand and some of them are settled at Khirdwari village in Champawat district. Due to rehabilitation programme a new settlement has been built up at Bilhari village in the district of Udam Singh Nagar. Based on the field study, it can be said that most of the Raji families are presented in the dense forest and top hill region of 2000 ft to 6000 ft elevation from MSL in nine different villages of Pithoragarh district at side of Indo-Nepal border amidst The villages are Kimkhola, Bhaktirawa, Gainagaon, Chifaltara, Madanpuri, Aultadi, Jamtadi, KuttaChawrani and Kulekh (which is also a new Raji settlement).

6. Result and Discussion

About seventy years back the Raji tribes were nomadic and they had not any permanent residence. Their inhabitation were the mountain caves or under the trees. They were dependent on forest resources directly. Their main foods were wild fruits, tuber roots, flesh of wild animals and fishes. They used medicinal herbs for treatment. They were hunter, gatherer, fisher, and game tapper. After that, they learnt to make wooden things such as wooden bowls or wooden tools. But due to the forest laws and scarcity of 'Genthi' wood they bound to stop to make wooden artifacts. They feared to talk with civilized people though they communicate with them in a peculiar manner. They keep things at neighbor's (Kumauni community) corridor or Courtyard during the evening and collect those things from Kumauni people at early morning without coming face to face contact (Singh:1994). Still it is following. They were not worried about their future because of available abundant natural resources and not interested to accumulate things individually for future because they thought that nature is the up-keeper of all of them. They worshipped nature, natural aspects and believe in supernatural power for determining the identity of good or evil. Their symbiotic relationship with nature occurs in the different manners; like: they collect fruits from forest and after consumption they throw the seeds of the eaten fruits at the open space and as a result plants grow from them naturally.

They only collect minor forest products for their substantial sustenance. In their earlier stage, they used to collect forest products primarily. But gradually, forest items are acquired as commercial value and they are making trade based on forest products. Again, the Forest Department has implemented the power of controlling on forest resources through three agencies (i) contractor, (ii) co-operatives, and (iii) Government Departmental agency (Verma:2002). However the jungle product is collected through agents in most cases. The Rajis are paid very little amount as their collections (forest items) by the traders. Many mal-practices have crept into the trade that affects the tribal livelihood.

Sometimes, they are being depriving due to their lack of awareness about forest laws. For their economic demands they get involved in criminal activity.

Nowadays most of them are going to the outer villages and towns to pursue better livelihood. But due to their poor educational qualification Rajis get job in office as laborer in temporary basis such as in agricultural fields, mining, offices, and road building constructions.

Due to lack of porous soil and rough climatic conditions Rajis are not interested to do agriculture. Though now, with the help of different organizations they are engaged in agricultural practices in small scale with primitive tools and engaged in horticulture, apiculture, cattle rearing, cottage industry etc.

Table: Percentage of distribution of Raji workers.

Economic category	percentage
Cultivator	15.6
Agricultural laborers	25.1
House Hold Industry workers	12.1
Other workers	47.2

Source: Census data of India 2017.

Table: Recent employment status of Raji tribe in Uttarakhand.

Total worker (%)		Non worker (%)
Main worker	Marginal worker	
25.1	16.2	58.7

Source: Field survey 2017.



Plate: Collected woods for selling by Raji villagers.

It is a matter of great wonder that the Rajis did not have any personal asset in their earlier primitive days. Their perspective was that as they were the lord of the forests, the whole forest area with its vegetation flora and fauna is their exclusively own resource. So, they used to collect forest resources according to their requirements which are very essential for their sustenance. The amount of resources which they drew from forest never disturbed the ecological balance. But with expansion of population the demand for basic needs of the people is increasing rapidly by Rajis. As a result ecological environment of the forest and its components are largely affected recently.

Rajitribe are trying to survive themselves by adapting and assimilating with the rich Kumauni culture. Henceforth, the original identity is deteriorating.

Due to governmental forest laws, the traditional tribal rights on forest have been reduced. As a result the tribal people who are the habitat of forest region and survived themselves depending on forest resources, become landless and asset less. Raji tribes of Uttarakhand face the same problem.

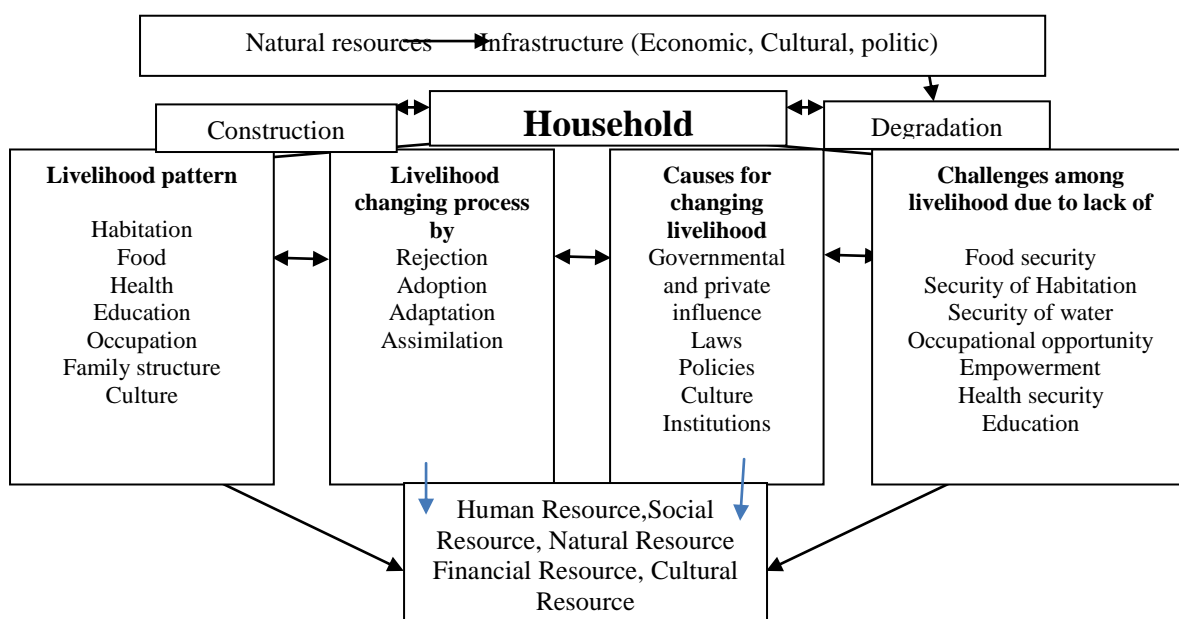
Now, most of them are landless and live in inaccessible hilly forest areas. Around 95% Raji people live in Below Poverty Level and deprived from all facilities like education and medicinal facilities. Among 679 people of the surveyed areas of Pithagarh district, total 39.62% are literate; of which 21.5% is male and 18.12% is female and 60.38% are illiterate; among them 29.73% is male and 30.65% is female.

Due to maximum illiteracy, poor health status, malnutrition and high mortality (Bisht: 2006) they are depriving. The gap between the target and achievement of their development is widening beyond control.

Due to governmental control on forest, they are facing scarcity of forest-foods. Agricultural productions are very poor which is not sufficient for their livelihood. Thus poverty has developed.

The culture of Hunting is now almost vanished among Rajis. Hunting, gathering and primitive livelihood are restricted now. Due to their obscure primitive language, lack of education and aloofness they do not get job in modern life. Personal and social empowerments among Rajis are also in question. Due to lack of educational institutions, health centre in Raji villages most of the Raji people cannot educate themselves. Their religious belief and superstitions are making obstacles to development. Due to the process of changes, they have adapted with other cultures and in this process loses their tribal identity or tribal culture and symbiotic approach towards nature.

Figure: Livelihood pattern, Changes, Causes and Challenges among Raji tribe.



Sustainable livelihood of Raji tribe is linking with Central Himalayan Region which is cohesive and interconnected with sustainable development. Till now their livelihood pattern is associated with forest resources partially. Their livelihood approach towards natural environment is essential for ecological and environmental sustainability. The life of Rajis can be sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not under mining the natural resource base (Krantz:2001). The Rajis of today will be the Rajis of tomorrow with developing their socio-economic and cultural life in eco-friendly way. The sustainability of Raji tribes depends on Security of habitation, food, economic, health, environmental security, empowerment and education.

Security of inhabitation of Raji means land for landless Rajis for their permanent settlement, food security depends on sufficient and nutritious food for their health and physical development, Government and its agencies have to think for

their occupational opportunity and financial security, not only by given money but also creating occupational opportunity.

Government may appoint the Raji people for the protection of forest, collection of forest resources directly as they are very familiar with their natural surroundings and forest areas, by forming a community among the Raji people. They have to be encouraged to grow medicinal forest and village forest to fulfill their requirements. Personal and social empowerment will help the Raji people to develop them. The government has to take initiative to establish educational institutes and medical centre in Raji villages for proper education and health treatment. Motivation is also necessary to change their primitive superstitious beliefs. Above all the bona fides of Government and Raji people help to overcome the problem and to build up eco-friendly livelihood for sustainable development.

On the basis of exploration, observation and above discussion it can be said that the vulnerable primitive Raji tribe still live in a primitive way. A large difference between the

livelihood pattern of advanced civilized society and Raji tribe of Uttarakhand is still prevalent. The livelihood pattern of the tribal people who were interconnected and had symbiotic relationship with nature is hindered by the neighboring rich culture and also rehabilitation of Raji tribe affect the tribal ecosystem.

On the basis of the study on livelihood pattern of Raji tribe the researcher has explored that the Rajis are struggling to get adjusted with the modern society getting rid of their primitive tribal livelihood. Besides due to overwhelming pressure of advanced society many changes have occurred in their traditional lifestyles but sustainable livelihood cannot be found

among them. Due to the influence of civilized society and changing environment the Raji tribe has started losing their own tribal knowledge, efficiency, own culture, language, symbiotic approach as well as eco-centric and eco-friendly livelihood; on other hand as they cannot get rid of their primitive mind set, long cherished and age old rituals, they are in a dilemma whether to accept the culture of modern civilized society or not and as a result their unique livelihood approach faces challenges from outer society, because the development occur without cherishing their age old eco-centric livelihood. So, we have to understand their challenging approaches towards livelihood pattern for sustainable development.

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