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Vulnerable Family Business of Brokpa Pastoral Nomad of Arunachal Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the Brokpa, is a small pastoral community situated at Arunachal Pradesh. The livelihood of Brokpa is depending on rearing the yak at Himalayan ranges of Arunachal Pradesh and selling of value added products at lower land. The major value added products are Chhurpi, Churkam, and Churtang prepared from yak milk by natural means and ethnic technologies. However, the community is rapidly declining in terms of their livelihood by decreasing the population of yak, climate threats, and less interest by the young generation. A data set of 120 Yak harder were interviewed in the West Kameng and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and found that future generation is not interested in this old age livelihood business. This article provides significant knowledge and documentation of shrinking livelihoods of Brokpa and its hardship.

INTRODUCTION

Brokpa is the sub-community of *Monpa* tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. However, they are known as separate ethnic tribe is Bhutan, Tibet and some areas of China. Their livelihood relies on rearing of yak, yak-cattle hybrid and selling of milk products. The Brokpa stayed at intermediate altitude and graze their animal under transhumance pattern to keep their animal sustainable. Brokpa is a mongoloid run down and their origin can be traced from the same Tibet region. As such the origin of *Brokpa* is unknown, but, by their way of living, it can be traced that this group of people belong to the Qiang region of Tibet and as per the fossil fuel suggests that domestication of yak begun before 10000 (late Stone Age) years ago by ancient Qiang people. Qiang people were pastoralist and had profound knowledge about taming wild to domestication of animal (Qian Yanwen, 1979). In the later period, hybridization of yak begun with Cattle in 2,000-2500 years ago (FAO, 2014). Time to time, migration of this particular group take placed

and spread to other Himalayan Ranges. Their migration takes place in a group. But, it is observed that they never graze their animal together. Eventually, the grazing pasture was divided more or less equally and then grazes their respective animals. In due migration course, the adult male is the sole responsible for taking care of animals, whereas, female used to arrange the food items such as flour, rice, vegetables, meat, can fish by selling milk products.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In Arunachal Pradesh more than 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas. About 58.44 percent of population belongs to the category of cultivators, 3.85 percent agricultural labourers, 0.86 percent workers in household industries, and 36.85 percent other types of workers including animal husbandry (Statistical Abstract of Arunachal Pradesh, 2008). Their main occupation is agriculture (Jhum) and animal husbandry. However, the

Brokpa's community of *Monpa* whose economy is mainly based on organic livestock farming and highly depends on forest products for their day to day live. They follows migratory pattern i.e. movement from one place to another more or less with their households and animals (Anonymous, 2006). However, according to the Das (2016) stated that the animals living in a transhumance pastoral form which can be classified as a semi-migratory system. The semi-migratory system includes the half months of the year (6 months) move to high altitude i.e. in summer and another half remains nearby their base pastures. Under transhumance system, the pastoral nomads did not remain in their jurisdictional political boundaries often the shared highland and low land pastures (Paul et al., 2015).

The *Brokpa* is similar like *Bakarwel* tribe moves to Jammu and Punjab plain during winter whereas, Kishtawar to other alpine pasture valley of Kashmir during summer with their goat (Wani, 2015). Similarly, the pastoral *Gujjars* of North India practices transhumance and migrate with their households and livestock during summer and winter (Jarial et al., 2006). The *Brokpa* under the sub-tribe of *Monpa* is yak and cattle herder who utilize highland pasture during summer and lowland pasture during winter (Maiti et al., 2015).

The pastoralists are depending on pastures and it is directly linked with their livelihood. Similar statement revealed by the Zangmo (2012) in his study on "pastoralism in the western Bhutan" that the shortage of pasture is a significant problem and proper action must be taken into consideration to save the pasture for the sake of the livelihood of the tribes.

Yak is the main animal of *Brokpa* and believed that it is comparatively less affected by infectious disease than other cattle reported by Deb (2016). The yak performs well effectively and adequately, in between the mean temperature below 5°C and 13°C. However, it is also survived up to -40°C as revealed Weiner et al. (2003). Kavoori (1996) studied on pastoralist in expansion of the western Rajasthan and exposed *Raika* community that, they used to rear camel, sheep and goat for their livelihood sustenance. These animals not only give economic support but also attached to their cultural sentiments and social security. Similarly, *Gaddis* of Himachal Pradesh is mostly oriented in hills and their major animals are sheep and goat. They fulfill their economic livelihood from these animals (Misra, 2011).

In Arunachal Pradesh, the yak is mostly found in Tawang and West Kameng district due to its suitable climatic condition. The yak produces very less quantity of milk i.e. 1 litre per head/day, but the herd size of yak herder was good in numbers, which helps them to produce milk products

such as *Chhurpi*, *Butter*, *Churkham* and *Churtang* (Bora et al., 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participatory and Ethnographic research was done. Ethnographic research is a qualitative research method involving the systematic study of people in their natural environment to understand their way of life. It has three methods such as participant observation, interviews, and archival research, however, in this study, participants observation and interviews were followed. The state Arunachal Pradesh was selected for the study. It is one of the landlocked and largest states in the North East Region of India. The *Brokpa* folk community of *Monpa* tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, mostly reside (80%) in the West Kameng and Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Hence, these two districts were selected purposively. The *Brokpa* follows migratory pattern, therefore, four (4) migratory routes were identified from each district based on their frequent utilization of route (past record) due to availability of water, shelter, and condition of the route(s). Then interviewed them in 15 group batches. Thus, total of 120 respondents were interviewed with a semi-structured interview schedule at their pasture field. Other methods of data collection such as observation, transect walk, story-telling, and group discussion were taken into consideration. The secondary data also used from various sources such as ICAR-NRC on yak, State Veterinary Department. The data collection method and its interpretation were satisfactory to conclude this study.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Vulnerable Family Business of Brokpa

Brokpa is a pastoral nomad, depend on the yak and yak milk products for their livelihood. But the nomad is in vulnerable condition and may witness a forgotten chapter in the history of animal rearing and family business within a few years. The following results from the study show the vulnerability and shrinking family business as below;

Declining of Hard Size and Population: The yak population in the state is 24075 only as per the Livestock Population Census 2019, and maximum are found in Tawang (7490) and West Kameng (3865) districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The average herd size in these two districts is 42 per head and 21 per head respectively. As per *Dzomo* (a female cattle-yak hybrid developed by ICAR NRC on Yak, Dirang) was concerned, it was found that per head 11 head in Tawang and 8 head in West Kameng district. The overall herd-size was 53 head per herder in Tawang district, whereas, the same was 29 head per herder in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.

State-wise Population of Yak, 2019

State	Gender		Location			
	Male	Female	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	8726	15349	24075	23991	84	24075
Sikkim	2639	2580	5219	5219	0	5219
NER	11365	17929	29294	29210	84	29294
All India	26019	31551	57570	57464	106	57570

Source: 20th Livestock Population Census 2019

The total population of yak in the north eastern state is 29294 head, and all India is 57570 head. However, in 2012, the total population was 80,000 head. The population of yaks in India has been on a declining trend.

Diminution of Yak Milk and Milk Products Production

Brokpa depend on yak milk and indigenously & organically prepared milk products such *Chhurpi*, *Churkam*, *Churtang* and Butter. ‘*Chhurpi*’ is a wet cheese and highly demanded products in the entire Himalayan Region such as Ladakh, Nepal, Bhutan, Darjeeling, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. The Brokpa were prepared ‘*Chhurpi*’ extensively with their low cost indigenous technology. On an average, about 4-5 litres of milk (left over after butter formation) were required to produce 1 kg of ‘*Chhurpi*’. The *Chhurpi* sold @ Rs. 300-350 per kg, or use as barter for other day to day’s goods. *Chhurpi* was the major source of two other products such as ‘*Churkam*’ and ‘*Churtang*’. *Churkam* is a dried form of *Chhurpi* and cut into small pieces, whereas, *Churtang* formed when *Chhurpi* stored in an animal skin bag for 6-8 months.

The Ethnic Measurement of Brokpa Nomad

1 hrang= 166 grams (Joone)

6 hrang= 1 kilogram (Cheek ek)

20 hrang= 3 kilogram (1 dokpu)

1 Martang = 30 kilogram (10 dokpu)

Therefore, due to the decrease of yak population and herd size, there is a drastic reduction of milk products which significantly hampering their livelihood sustenance.

Lessening of Yak Fibre Production:

Selling of fibre from yak gives an additional income to the Brokpa yak herder. Further, it was found that on average, the productivity of fine fibre was 0.63 kg/head, and course fibre was 3.10 kg per/head. As the fibres used in preparation of indigenous shawl, hand bag, door mat and other garments and costumes. There is a 27% reduction and harvesting of fibre which is keeping hand tight for additional income of the family.

Feed and Fodder Challenges

The yak requires green pasture for sustenance and better milk production. But it was observed that the grass intake was drastically reduced due to non-availability of pastures round the year . Fodder scarcity in winter season was the pre-dominant constraints as during winter season the temperature goes down and grassland were covered with snow. The second most natural constraints were pasture land degradation, as it was reported by 72.2 per cent of the respondents. During winter, the body weight loss was 25-30 per cent and the yak herder cover up to feed tree leaves of *Salix. Humboltiana*, *S. paniculata*, *Acer Hookeri*, *Berberis*, *Linguistriumysinitis*, bamboo etc.

Lack of Interest for Family Business Legacy

Rearing of yak in a migratory pattern is a challenging task. The harder have to shift one place to another with all food stuff in search of fodder and suitable temperature for the yak which exceeds 12,000 feet from the base land. Due to the hardship and recent developments, the present youth of *Brokpa* (81 percent in Tawang and 85 percent in West Kameng) are coming out of the family business and migrating for white collar jobs.

Border Disputes and Government Policies

Tawang and West Kameng districts are situated in the international border between Indo-China, and Bhutan. Therefore, there is a restriction from Government of India and China to graze yak at disputed high altitude international border.

DISCUSSION

The research has significant implications for the Asian Business. The implications are mentioned below;

Yak value supply chain

Yak is a multipurpose animal; almost all the parts are used for human services. Live yak is use for draught purposes, milk is used for value added products like *chhurpi*, *churkam*, and *churtang*. The wool of yak is soft and warmth, high durability and eco-friendly natural fibre. The fibre can be used domestic purpose, such as shawl, door mat, cushion cover, cap, socks, sweaters, sturdy blankets, and many more. In spite of this, the research indicates that the Brokpa is only producing organic value-added products

for their subsistence. However, there is an ample opportunity for commercialization, premiumization and better business.

Bio-eco tourism

Yak can be used for bio-eco tourism for additional income generation for the yak herder. Yak can be used for high altitude trekking for site seeing, snowfall, and photography.

Research and Development

Yak is genetically rich, phenotypically unique animal. Its genetic material can be used for continuous research, hybridization, commercialization and policy making sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The study shows the vulnerable condition of the *Brokpa* pastoral nomad and their shrinking family business livelihood supports. The nomad has very limited population of bio means which is declining and present youths are not interested to continue the legacy of old age tradition. The Brokpa community is *Sanskritizing* from their traditional family business. This article calls for an immediate attention to the Brokpa community and keep yak germplasm alive. The livelihood supports and continuation as well as commercialization of indigenous yak milk products and fibre need to done.

This study explores the gravity of seriousness and vulnerability situation of nomad. It is informed Brokpa community, and policy makers to build a safeguard mechanism to protect grassland, yak, traditional values, culture and their sustainability.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Author Contributions

Author 1 contributed to conceptualization, methodology, and writing. Author 2 contributed to data analysis and review. All authors approved the final manuscript.

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