



The Raute: Empowerment Process

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Abstract: This article is based on the study conducted in Raute community. Raute are indigenous living ethnic group. Mainly, residing in Midwestern part of Nepal. During the study time, there were 149 members of 42 households and among them 11 were widow. This study was conducted in 2018. Main purpose of the study was to find out Raute's perception to educate their children. Because in the past, Raute did not touch money, however, now they are begging money even for one click picture. The main argument of this article is change is the heart of the society. Social change impacts in all sectors. Changing in social norm is social change and also change occurs when social norms are changing, likewise Raute community are also changing and empowering. The Raute community are still living in hunting and gathering phase. And they change their residential area in average 45 days because of their cultural practices such as death rituals, scarcity of foods and fresh places. They spent most of the money to drink alcohol. Due to long efforts by the I/NGOs to provide education to Raute children. Now they are agreed to teach their children. Jungleko Rajale Kahilai Padxa to Padepaxi Dherai kura thaha hunxa re aba padnu paryo (now, all people are getting education and through education people know more things, so, we have to teach our children). In the past they used to say, we are the Jungle King and not need to read and write, however, now they are slowly changing that norms to accept teaching system.

Keywords: Raute, social norms, empowerment, Education, shifting culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Raute communities are indigenous living ethnic group and last nomads living in south Asia. They were fully dependent on forests and its products. However, they are getting some allowances from the government of Nepal, support from local NGOs and support from helping hands. Raute community is a tribal community. Raute are nomadic indigenous ethnic group. They are officially recognized by the Government of Nepal. They are known for subsistence hunting of monkeys and also called monkey hunters. In hilly, relationship between village people and Raute is very important. They gather wild forest tubers, fruits, herbs and greens on a regular basis. They were fully dependent

and survive with jungle products. However, now they are very dependent to outside supports and forgetting their indigenous knowledge to cope up with the jungle. However, to date, they did not accept permanent settlement near to village. That is why they are called 'King of the forest', King of the Jungle, Hunters and gatherers. As their namesake, they really are King of the Jungle.

They have been practicing liberal system. There is one executive head called 'Mukhiya' chief, similarly there are four members court, which includes 'Mamamukhiya' great chief. Great chief are from past executive chief. They have power balance. Raute community is led by *Mukhiya* (King) and other

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four helper. Helper means like ministers who support *Mukhiya*. They practice democratic system in ruling. Their leadership can change not only based on blood relation, however, in other form. Because today's King of the Raute is not the son of previous King. He is the son in law of previous King Man Bahadur Shahi. Researchers (Fortier, 2002; & UNDP, 2011) focused that they are not eligible to share their cultures and often avoid to make relationship with villagers. UNDP (2011) reports shows "Only the Mukhiya of the Rautes, on behalf of their tribe, talks to outsiders regarding their lifestyle and tradition. It is for this reason that other people have not had the opportunity to understand their society and their tradition" however, now they are using mobile to call directly with chief district officer (CDO), district administration office, social activists and journalist. Raute people interact individually rather take permission from Mukhiya. One Raute responded that "*Raute ho risayo vane kasaiko sundaina, Mukhiya ko pani sundaina*" Raute is Raute, if Raute gets angry, disobeys even Mukhiya's (King) order. Like every other ethnic group that practices Hinduism, the Raute community upholds a patriarchal social structure. Women have a more important role in internal management issues than do their male counterparts. The Rautes continue to distinguish clearly between male and female labor. The majority of the time, the male group members engage in the production of wooden items, monkey hunting, market dealing, and grain collection. Unmarried girls and widows frequently travel to the countryside to procure food staples and deliver customer orders for handcrafted goods. With the exception of socializing, women in the Raute community are primarily responsible for home tasks and control practically every aspect of life. Before 20 years back, Raute were not more familiar with local language, at that time, they often use sign language to exchange their wood products. '*When I was in my village, A Raute approximately 40 years old came in my house with Koshi, My mother asked about the exchange offer, however, he did not reply, so my mother used sign language. He put his index finger with the middle of the Koshi and asked that is the demand of maize, when my mother went inside to bring maize, he sifted his finger little bit above. That means amount of maize will be increased, my mother smiled and gave maize. She knew that Raute tried good trick to survive.*' Ram Bahadur Chhetri local villager.

Raute's relationship with Jungle is inseparable, to obtain grain, iron, cloth, and jewelry, they carve wooden bowls and boxes to trade for goods from local farmers. 'If Nepal's forests disappear,' Raute's life also disappears (Fortier, 2002). She further says Raute's life will be very difficult if deforestation occurred. Other villagers use forests to raise buffalo, goats, and cattle. Raute's

wealth, too, comes from the forests. They make Koshi, woodenwares, from the forest and take everything from the forest. However, Raute do not sell other forest products, bush meat, or forest medicinal plants. That is why they are different from others. Their productive method incorporates monkey hunting, gathering foraged vegetables, making wood products such as *Koshi* (bowl) and bartering for grains and other goods. Despite the emphasis on equitable sharing in their internal social connections, Raute emphasizes harmony and good relationship with local people. However, in some cases, they confront with local people regarding their settlement. Raute need woods and they want cut it down if they see it, however, they might not be able to separate it from private property of local people.

Raute people generally get along well with the locals. Raute are monkey hunters, and monkeys frequently destroy local crops such as maize, wheat, fruits, and beans. Raute hunts monkeys, thus the locals support them because of this. In a similar way, they produce simple, affordable, and accessible wood products. Locals don't need to pay cash for such goods because they can simply exchange it for agricultural goods like wheat, maize, barley, buckwheat, millet, etc.

Changing social norms

Change is the 'heart' of society. 'Everything in this entire universe changeable except the word itself change'. Raute community also changing their social norms. In the past, Raute people supposed not to touch money, they had their own art and claim that Raute remains only Raute if they follow Raute norms. Raute norms means, shifting cultures, no education, no medication, wearing a row (not ready made) cloths etc.

In the past they, used to produce wooden materials and exchange with local foods such as corn, rice, wheat, vegetables and sometimes chickens and goats for meat and for worshipping their god. Their business was based on exchange; however, due to time and space, their business was replaced by the modern products. They stopped producing wooden products because of lack of market opportunities. Now they are living through begging and from government allowances. Raute are tricky and still they are saving their face by saying if we do as other people do, we are no more Raute, however, they are slowly changing.

She further says;

Sadly, the Raute people may soon accede to the pressures of assimilation even though they employ *ukhan* and other verbal art as defensive strategies. Not only villagers but

also international development agencies and the Nepalese government have persistently attempted to assimilate the nomadic Raute, believing this to be an act of social improvement. In March 2000 the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that it would provide 'aid' for the 'upliftment of the nomadic Raute tribe' (Kathmandu Post, 27 Mar. 2000). Even though Raute have refused to take vaccinations and explained that they do not 'stick to one place', the WHO planned to settle Raute in one of the southerly regions of Nepal and provide them with canvas tents, food rations, and polio vaccinations. The WHO's goal is to eradicate polio throughout the world by the year 2003 and, in order to accomplish this, apparently WHO officials in Nepal believe that they

would have to settle the Raute forcibly, (P. 252).

Rarely, I agree on this point with Jonna Fortier, However, slowly, Raute community changing their social norms and ready to provide education to their children. Nothing can remain as it is because there is interrelationship between villages. They were never detached from village, however, they were very clever to keep themselves as Raute in this point I subscribe Fortier's terminology they hide from villagers. The more interaction the more change. In the past they were limited in interaction. Now they are freely and individually interacting with village people. They are accepting allopathic medicine and education. Now, local NGO is working on Promotion of Rights of health and education for the improvement in daily lives of Raute people.

Household and age wise Information

Table 1: Household information of Raute community

Age Groups	Numbers	Percentages
0-5	47	31.54
6-15	24	16.10
16-40	44	29.53
40-60	20	13.42
60 above	14	9.39
	149	100

Household=46

Single women= 11

Totle population=149

Source: Field survey 2018

Table 1 shows that Raute's birth rate is high, however, they are decreasing in their numbers. Poor health status, extreme consuming alcohol are the main threats of Raute. In past days, they used to make liquor and that was not very harmful, however, now they are buying alcohol *Shofi* which is lowest quality and high rate of alcohol from market. UNDP report (2011) shows that there are 180 Raute people within 52 families. However, in 2018, they are decreasing and they are only 149 in numbers within 46 families and it is the exact number because government has issued identity card and carried out census with the SOSEC (Local NGO) who is implementing Raute project. There are 11 single women which is 7.38 percent of total population. Single women collect and manage their hand to mouth themselves and feed their children.

Raute are jungle people. Raute should not follow agriculture. They should not use readymade clothes. There are two types of people on the earth. One is like you and another is like us (Raute). However, we are brother. We were brother. Birkha Raute (Pseudo name). Now, slowly Raute are

changing their norms, however, they are claiming remain as it is.

CONCLUSION

Due to shifts in time and space, Raute people are compelled to change. They do, however, preserve face by stating that they wish to continue to be Raute. When dealing with people, they are incredibly shrewd. Raute people are putting democracy into practice. If anyone who is intoxicated talks loudly and angrily, King also listens and claims that he is currently unconscious and will soon come to. In the past they were very angry to read and write, however, with the support of local NGO, Raute now encourages its kids to study and practice allopathic treatment when they get sick. Raute are slowly empowering themselves.

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