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## Resistance and Change

*A Case Study of Economic Changes and Its Effect on Language, Food Habits and Dress  
of the Nomadic Hunting-Gathering Raute of Nepal*

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*Master of Philosophy  
In  
Indigenous Studies  
May 2016*





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**‘DEDICATED TO THE NOMADIC HUNTING-GATHERING RAUTE OF NEPAL’**

*‘BACHNAKA LAGI ARU NI KHAINCHHA  
PAYE RAUTELAI BANDARNAI CHAHINCHHA’*

*WE EAT AVAILABLE EDIBLE FOODS FOR SURVIVAL.  
HOWEVER, THE RAUTE ALWAYS LOVE TO HAVE MONKEY.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	i
Acronyms .....	v
Glossary .....	vi
Abstract .....	ix
Chapter 1: Research Introduction .....	1
1.1. Research Interest .....	1
1.2. Background of the Research Subject .....	2
1.3. Research Question .....	3
1.4. Significance of the Study .....	4
1.5. Methodological Reflection .....	5
1.5.1 The Approach .....	5
1.5.2 Nature and Sources of Data with Tools and Techniques of Data Collection .....	6
1.5.3 Universe, Population and Field Work Schedule .....	7
1.6. Research Challenges and My Role .....	7
1.7. Organization of the Study .....	8
Chapter 2: Theoretical Discussion .....	11
2.1. Introduction .....	11
2.2. Culture and Cultural Change for Adaptation .....	11
2.3. Cross Cultural Adaptation .....	12
2.4. Cultural Ecology .....	14
2.5. Conclusion: Use of 'Cross Cultural' and 'Cultural Ecological' theories .....	15
Chapter 3: Introducing the Raute .....	17
3.1. Introduction .....	17
3.2. A Glimpse of Nepal: the Motherland of Raute .....	17
3.3. Raute: The Forest Kings .....	18
3.3.1 Raute Territory and the Story of Their Origin .....	18
3.3.2 The History of Raute Sedentarization .....	19
3.3.3 Nomadic Raute and Rejection of Settlement Program .....	20
3.3.4 Social Composition, Language, Politics and Work Division in Nomadic Raute .....	21
3.3.5 Economy .....	23
3.3.6 Religion .....	24

3.3.7 Lifecycle Rituals.....	25
3.4. National Politics and Raute .....	26
3.5. Conclusion .....	27
Chapter 4: Traditional Economic Practices of Raute and Strategies for Cultural Autonomy .....	29
4.1. Introduction.....	29
4.2. Traditional Economic Practices of Raute.....	29
4.3. Verbal Arts for Resistance and Adaptation .....	30
4.4. <i>Ukhan-tukka</i> for Topic Deviation and Barter .....	31
4.5. Self-Esteem of Raute and the Ephemeral Relationship with Outsiders.....	34
4.6. Dual Social Status for Accommodation and Barter.....	35
4.7. Tricky Negotiation.....	37
4.8. Petty Theft.....	39
4.9. Pre-Mature Migration: a Strategy for Resisting Assimilation and Maintaining Relationship .....	40
4.10. Conclusion .....	41
Chapter 5: Socio-Political and Environmental Changes and Livelihood Practices of Raute .....	43
5.1. Introduction.....	43
5.2. Political Changes in Nepal and Raute.....	43
5.2.1 Forest Law and Raute.....	46
5.2.2 Globalization and Raute .....	51
5.3. Climate Change.....	57
5.3.1 Changing Weather and Declining Water Resources .....	59
5.3.2 Erratic Monsoon, Flood and Landslide.....	59
5.3.3 Decreasing Vegetation and Wild Life and Increasing Aliens.....	60
5.3.4 Spreading Waterborne Disease and Use of Allopathic Treatment .....	60
5.4. Conclusion .....	61
Chapter 6: Changing Economic Structure and Its Relation with Language, Food Culture and Dressing Style .....	63
6.1. Introduction.....	63
6.2. Economic change and Language.....	63
6.3. Economic change and Food Habit .....	69
6.4. Economic change and Dressing Style.....	74
6.5. Conclusion .....	77

Chapter 7: Summary.....	79
References .....	87
Appendix-I.....	94
Appendix-II.....	96
Appendix-III.....	97
Appendix-IV.....	98



## ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Company
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
FUG	Forest User Group
GHG	Green House Gas
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
NEFDIN	National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NOK	Norwegian Kroner
PM	Prime Minister
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nation International Children Emergency Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee

## GLOSSARY

### Nepalese

### English

<i>Akashbeli</i>	Dodder
<i>Amala</i>	gooseberry
<i>Ban devi</i>	forest goddess of wealth
<i>Ban jhakri</i>	forest god
<i>Barro</i>	sweet flag calamus
<i>Bhadari</i>	the assistant of <i>Dhami</i>
<i>Bhaisikuro</i>	a small but soft thorny bush
<i>Bhangro</i>	a kind of single peace cloth that has pouch on the back
<i>Bhyakur</i>	deltoid yam
<i>Budho-</i>	an old man
<i>Ciraito</i>	chireta
<i>Dankerno</i>	maiden hair fern
<i>Dhami</i>	the main priest of Raute community
<i>Doko-</i>	bamboo basket
<i>Duniya</i>	public
<i>Geet</i>	song

<i>Gharo</i>	the traditional dress of Raute women
<i>Hande</i>	a small but very hard thorny bush
<i>Harro</i>	chebulie
<i>Hasiya</i>	sickle
<i>Halhale</i>	curly doek
<i>Jamun</i>	black plum
<i>Jana andolan</i>	mass movement
<i>Khaniya</i>	dropping fig
<i>Kukath</i>	wood of no more use
<i>Kafal</i>	bayberry
<i>Lok katha-</i>	folk stories
<i>Mit</i>	a man with whom we keep fictive relation
<i>Mit ama</i>	fictive mother
<i>Mit bhai</i>	fictive brother
<i>Mit buwa</i>	fictive father
<i>Mukhiya</i>	chieftain
<i>Namlo</i>	carrying belt (of bamboo and other grass)
<i>Nigalo</i>	a kind of bamboo, small in size

<i>Niguro</i>	fiddlehead fern
<i>Salla</i>	pine tree
<i>Sari</i>	a garment consisting of a length of cotton or silk elaborately draped around the body, traditionally worn by women from South Asia
<i>Skus</i>	a kind of green vegetable like gourd
<i>Theki-</i>	a wooden utensil to put liquid or other stuff
<i>Tiju</i>	Indian persimmon
<i>Tika</i>	coloured point on forehead
<i>Tuni</i>	cedrella tree
<i>Tukka</i>	rhyming proverb
<i>Ukhan</i>	proverb
<i>Uttis</i>	cedar

## ABSTRACT

Raute, an endangered indigenous group, are the last nomadic hunting-gathering tribe of Nepal who basically traverse through four districts: Dailekh, Salyan, Surkhet and Jajarkot of mid-west Nepal. Hunting monkeys and rhesus, foraging wild plants and fruits, and manufacturing woodenwares to barter for food and non-food items with the sedentary villagers are the primary economic sources of their traditional life. However, the changes that occurred in the socio-cultural practices in surrounding sedentary societies (due to global economic politics) and ecology (due to global warming) have significantly influenced the Raute's traditional mode of economy for the last few decades in spite of their resistance. This ethnography basically focuses on the changes in the economic structure of Raute despite their meticulous resistive practices applied to avoid the external forces for cultural assimilation and its impacts on traditional language, food habit and dress, thereby maintaining cultural intactness.

The changes in Nepalese national political scenario over the last seventy years, mainly after 1990, formation of various national laws including several forest acts and the growing involvement of local villagers for forest resource management have significantly curbed the Raute's traditional ways of using forest resources these days. Additionally, depletion of resources, which were the sole sources of Raute economy, because of ecological degradation caused by global warming has further cumulated the effects on the Raute's ancestral economic structure. Although, the hunting-gathering culture of this nomadic tribe has been getting multiple arrows from different angles, the sensible manoeuvres that they have been applying to parry the external blows have remarkably diluted the imposed impacts. This study also highlights how the same resistive strategies on the other hand play a significant role in the Raute's adaptation to the changing socio-ecological context.

**Key words:** Raute, economy, nomadic, hunter-gatherers, sedentary, economic change, ecology, woodenwares, barter, resistance, asymmetrical, adaptation



## CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. RESEARCH INTEREST

I had heard some stories of the nomadic hunting-gathering 'Raute', who are also regarded as one of the endangered indigenous communities of Nepal, from elders in my childhood before I first read the authentic article 'A Research: Raute in Trouble' on this tribe written by Nanda Bahadur Singh<sup>1</sup> in an academic journal 'Pourakh' in 1998. I can truly assert that this article whetted my interest to know more about this nomadic hunting-gathering tribe. However, I had no idea how I could get more information about them. Neither could I imagine doing research on this tribe then. After few days I forgot it and remained busy with my daily chores.

My interest in knowing nomadic Raute and their life style closely resurrected when I was a Bachelor student in the department of Sociology/Anthropology back in Nepal. As a student of Sociology I read a lot of articles and stories of the nomadic Raute and watched a couple of documentaries as well. In 2008 when I completed a Master's Degree in Sociology, I wanted to write my thesis on one of their socio-cultural aspects but could not materialize it because of financial and political constraints.

Of late, for the last 10-15 years, the issues of Raute, their livelihood practices, mode of economy, interaction with outsiders, availability of forest resources and their right to use them etc., have been highlighted a lot in national politics and such issues have got massive media attention. As an enthusiastic learner of the nomadic Raute's lifestyle, I have been watching and analysing this information at my best. Reading articles and reports published in print and watching daily activities of nomadic Raute in visual media, I came to know a little more about their changing mode of economy and its impact on other aspects of life. To be honest, I was astonished when I for the first time came to know the importance/necessity of cash money in the officially recognized nomadic hunting-gathering community to run the day-to-day life.

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<sup>1</sup> Nanda Bahadur Singh is a notable ethno biologist of Nepal working for Raute community for the last 25 years.

Overall, the information I obtained for the last few years really made a cumulative effect to my long harboured interest on doing research on nomadic hunting-gathering Raute. As I have a very good opportunity and obligation to write a thesis in 'Indigenous Studies' now, I have chosen this topic not only to quench my long-term thirst but also to make a small contribution to the nomadic Raute community.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECT**

Culture is a set of manmade rules and regulations with dynamic character which controls the activities and provides guidance to its followers/members. As it is a dynamic entity, the characteristics it possesses change gradually according to time and situation (Stavenhagen, 1998:5). For example, until some thousand years ago humankind was mainly dependent upon forest-based resources for its survival. As the resources became scarcer, people began leaving the forests, and gradually the modern societies developed, and the life style of humankind changed in many ways (Gurung et.al, 2014:1). However, as the intensity of socio-cultural change is not equal in every society, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some of the tribes are still in the jungle living as nomadic hunter-gatherers, for example the bushman in Africa, the Raute in Nepal, etc. (ibid:1-2).

Raute is one of the endangered indigenous groups of Nepal. According to the life style, they are divided into two groups, the sedentary Raute and the nomadic Raute. The nomadic Raute, whose existence in the jungle was noticed for the first time by a scholar Yogi Naraharinath in 1955 and then only the study about their socio-cultural practices started in academia, is the only group in Nepal now living inside or nearby the forest as nomadic hunter-gatherers traversing the mid hills of Dailekh, Dang, Salyan, Surkhet and Jajarkot districts (Singh 1998:117). This group migrates periodically from one place to another within two months or less, unless anything untoward such as death of a member, flood, landslide, etc. happens. While migrating they destroy their huts (Bista, 1976:319, Pant, 2014).

According to Nepal (1998:169-170) and Fortier (2001:195-196), the traditional economy of nomadic hunter-gatherers Raute is solely dependent on hunting wild animals, mainly monkey and rhesus, collecting wild vegetables and manufacturing wooden utensils to barter for food grains and other needy items with the local sedentary people. Generally, men are responsible for



hunting and bartering the utensils, while women collect forest fruits and do household chores (Nepal, 1998:142-143). However, the traditional way of economy which is believed to be in practice for the last 900 years has noticeably changed nowadays in spite of their resistance and the nomadic Raute no more rely solely on forest-based economy (Sanghroula, 2009).

The life of Raute started being disturbed socially since 1950s when Rana regime was overthrown and the King gained the political power. The disturbance rate accelerated more when the concept of community forest act was established in 1978 in Nepal. The misery escalated cumulatively after the Raute sedentarization project 1981, *jana andolan* (mass movement) 1990, forest act 1993 and forest regulation 1995 (Bhattachan, 2005:287-289, Gautam et.al, 2004:139). As the new constitution and the forest acts crippled the Raute, limiting their traditional ways of forest use, depletion of forest resources, especially monkey and edible wild vegetables, caused by global warming has further hindered them from continuing their ancestral economic cultural practices. These circumstances have directly or indirectly intensified their interaction with the surrounding sedentary people, and gradually the socio-economic life has changed (Singh, 1998:199). Mr. Singh further suggests that the decreasing forest resources and increasing population of sedentary people have also affected the traditional way of Raute life (ibid). Similarly, the growing involvement of various state and non-state welfare organizations for upliftment of Raute life has also played a significant role in changing the economic and other socio-cultural structure of the nomadic Raute. Since 2008 when the government of Nepal started providing monthly allowance almost equal to 11 USD per person per month, their economic source has been changed dramatically from barter to cash, and it has affected significantly other aspects of their life such as language, dress, food habit, etc. (Kafle, 2014).

### **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION**

As mentioned earlier, I was (and still am) curious to know and understand the general livelihood practices of nomadic Raute. My curiosity level increased since the time I came to know about the changing economic structure of Raute for the past few decades because of changing national politics and ecology. Based on the curiosity to know more about the changing economic culture and its impact on other aspects of their socio-cultural life (language, food habit and dress) the following research questions have been formulated to achieve the objectives.

1. What is the traditional economic culture of the nomadic Raute?
2. In the context of changing surrounding socio-cultural (political) and ecological conditions, what are the resistive practices of the nomadic Raute against such external forces to continue their traditional way of life?
3. What are the changes in Raute's economic culture/livelihood practice despite their resistance for cultural autonomy, and what is the impact of changing economy on their language, food habit and dress?

#### **1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Even though nomadic hunting-gathering tribes are one of the most interesting research subjects for anthropologists for the last few centuries (Reinhard, 1969:234, Fortier, 2001:193), there are very few researches conducted on the Nomadic Raute of Nepal. In 1995, Yogi Narahari Nath for the first time studied them, however it was just a short note rather than a research paper based on scientific methods (Singh, 1998:117-118). The first anthropologist who published an article about the nomadic Raute was Reinhard, a student of Vienna University, in 1974 (Bista, 1976:317). Bista published another article in 1976; however these were also very short research studies based on more descriptive than participatory approach (Singh, 1998:117-118).

The researches carried out and the articles published till now are only concentrated on few aspects of the nomadic Raute; most of them are focused on ongoing life style or livelihood practices. Until today, except some newspaper articles, no scientific research has been conducted on the changing mode of production and its impact on other aspects of their life. In my thesis, I am trying my best to address this lacuna. This means that I will go into economic changes of the nomadic Raute. These changes have not, as far as I can see, been noticed yet by the researchers, and by addressing this section I will fulfil the research gap.

The outcome produced through this sincerely conducted research will always be useful for the readers – researchers, human activists, social organizations, planners and policy makers. The objective of this study is to acquire knowledge by focusing on the changes in the traditional economy of the nomadic Raute. Clearly the material or production-based life of this nomadic group, considered as a very strong stalwart of their culture and adamant to follow the culture of

outsiders, encourages the attempt to go into what impact the changed economy has made on other aspects, such as language, food habit and dress of their life.

Above all, as this research targets the nomadic Raute, the main significance of this thesis is to manifest the changes occurred in their lives because of changing mode of economy over the past few decades. The outcomes of the research are solely based on the genuinely collected field data, i.e. day-to-day life of nomadic Raute, and the data from authentic secondary resources. This is why this thesis strongly represents some aspects of their real life which, I believe, will connect them with the readers who love to know something more about the last nomadic hunting-gathering tribe of Nepal.

## **1.5. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

In this part of this chapter one, I am going to discuss on the methodology that I used for the research. The research approach, tools and techniques of primary and secondary data collection and the details of research universe are described below.

### **1.5.1 THE APPROACH**

Generally, in social science research three different approaches, i.e. qualitative, quantitative and mixed research, are used. The researcher is required to apply the proper methodological approach as per the nature of research data (Acharya, 2006:11). In my research, I have used descriptive qualitative approach because the data I am using here – whether primary, or secondary – both are of qualitative nature and all my research questions will be addressed by this methodological approach. However, in some cases where I collected some data in number, such as total population, average income and expenditure, etc., quantitative approach has also been used.

## **1.5.2 NATURE AND SOURCES OF DATA WITH TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION**

### *A. PRIMARY DATA*

To make a study more systematic and its outcome more valid and reliable, the choice and application of suitable research method/approach is very crucial (Wolff and Pant 1999:191). The primary data, which are considered very near to the truth of events or things (Williman, 2006), were collected by field work observation and interviews. As this was a qualitative research, I applied participant observation, and structured and semi-structured interviews.

#### **i. Field Observation**

‘Observation’ in qualitative research means the process of collecting direct-first hand eye-witness accounts/data of everyday social actions (Schwandt, 1997:106). As I had to collect the first-hand data related to the everyday action of nomadic Raute, I thought observation could be one of the best tools for my research. Throughout my almost month-long field stay I observed various activities, such as collection of food/food habit, dress, manufacturing wooden utensils, language, health and sanitation practices, behaviour with outsiders, of nomadic Raute as closely as possible. Moreover, in my field stay I observed the perception of surrounding sedentary people, mainly shopkeepers, towards the nomadic Raute and their changing economy.

#### **ii. Interview**

Another tool that I used for primary data collection was structured and semi-structured interviews through snowball sampling. The main reason for choosing this sampling method for interview was to get suitable candidates, who were assumed to be the perfect representatives of the whole community. I interviewed twenty-three people, where three were sedentary villagers, one local journalist, and the rest of them were the Raute. First, I sampled the Raute leaders as per the suggestion given by my research assistant; later I selected other respondents as per their (leaders’) suggestions. Unfortunately, I could not choose any woman representative since they are not allowed to have conversation with male outsiders. I had both formal and informal interviews with the respondents. The short and informal interviews were very helpful to get the

idea whether I was referred to the right candidate for the data I was looking for. I chose the best five respondents, in my discretion, for in-depth interviews.

#### *B. SECONDARY DATA*

We know that the sources for secondary data for a research are the reports published on the same subject earlier, but unfortunately there are very few studies conducted on nomadic Raute. Most of the previous researches available in the market/for general readers are conducted on the basis of observation only. However, I managed to collect some intellectual reports, articles and thesis surfing scholarly websites, visiting central library of the Tribhuvan University, Nepal, the library of the University of Tromsø, Norway, and the library of National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationality, Nepal, which provided me with a lot of invaluable data I needed. Additionally, I watched some documentaries on nomadic Raute available on internet, which also helped me to amass some important information I was looking for.

#### **1.5.3 UNIVERSE, POPULATION AND FIELD WORK SCHEDULE**

My tenure of field stay was almost of a month duration: from 4<sup>th</sup> July to 29<sup>th</sup> July. The universe of this research was Goganpani VDC Ward no. 8 and 2 (as they moved to Ward no 2 from 8 during my field visit) of Dailekh, mid-west Nepal where I found a group of nomadic Raute living temporarily for the last 17 days. The total population of the universe was 148 with 83 male and 65 female members in 39 different households. When it comes to age composition, the number of children below 10 years of age was 47 and the rest of them were above 10. The oldest person of the community was Bechne Shahi, 82, the wife of former headman, late Man Bahadur Shahi.

#### **1.6. RESEARCH CHALLENGES AND MY ROLE**

Conducting a research systematically, whether the researcher is an insider or an outsider, is a daunting task in many aspects, as the researcher has to be very sincere in the every step from the topic selection to publishing the outcome (Wolff and Pant, 1993:139). Moreover, the research challenges increase if the researcher is an outsider (Wilson, 2001), and I found the level of challenge increasing more as I was conducting research on a vulnerable community. As the surrounding, setting, people around, etc., all were completely new and unfamiliar to me, building

a rapport with this strange surrounding was very difficult. Moreover, my outsider identity hindered to accelerate the intensity of rapport even after my assistant introduced me with the chieftains and some other senior members of the community. Although they speak Nepali, I found them difficult to understand in the beginning because of the western dialect which is not familiar in my home town. I noticed that in the beginning they hesitated in answering my queries.

Even after becoming familiar with the community after some days, observing the daily activities was hindered by the rainy season. Additionally, interviewing them in their favoured time and place was another big challenge. I remember interviewing some the respondents following them on their way to work or to the market. Many a time the respondents/Rautes asked me indirectly what they could get answering my questions. I could understand their expectation but had nothing to help them. However, I bought two handicrafts prepared by the Raute youngsters which also developed the level of my relation with them and became fruitful to obtain the data I was looking for.

To make my field visit more successful and amass as much genuine data as possible, I tried to see the things through native point of view, as Greetz (1974:44) says in his article 'From the Native's Point of View' and changed my front role more by speaking like the surrounding local people and changing my outer personality like of surrounding natives. Since the leaders, the key respondents of field work data collection asked not to publish their names in the thesis, I have denoted all the respondents with pseudonyms for their confidentiality and to maintain research ethics.

### **1.7. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

To achieve the research objectives, I collected a lot of primary and secondary information. The collected information is systematically presented in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. The first chapter provides a general idea about my research interest, background of topic, objective, and significance of the study. Similarly, the methodological approach, i.e., nature and sources of data, tools and techniques of data collection, and general background of research area are also

highlighted in this chapter. I have also discussed the challenges I faced during the field work and my role within this first chapter.

Chapter two deals with the theory applied for research and provides its justification. The overall introduction of Raute including their history of origin, nomadic territory, religion, economy, involvement in national politics, etc., is given in chapter three. In chapter four, the traditional Raute economy and the combating strategies to keep it alive have been analysed in detail. Additionally, how the same combating strategies have helped Raute to adapt to the new socio-cultural and environmental context has also been discussed here.

In chapter five, I describe in detail the causes and changes of Raute's traditional economic structure mainly over the period of the last three decades in spite of their resistance. How global economy and ecological degradation continuously exert pressure on Raute for cultural change is reflected here, too. Likewise, in chapter six I investigate the impacts of changing economic mode of Raute on their language, food habit and dressing style. Finally, the whole thesis has been summarized in chapter seven. I have incorporated a list of references and some informative appendices on the last pages of the thesis.





## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, defining culture and its nature briefly, I am going to discuss the theories, 'cross cultural' and 'cultural ecological', applied in this research. Additionally, I am giving some idea how these theories will be used in the research.

### 2.2. CULTURE AND CULTURAL CHANGE FOR ADAPTATION

Society is a group of individuals with meaningful relationship where they can air and exchange their experiences, sentiments, feelings, grievances, etc. (Acharya, 2007:3). In the long course of mutual sharing and understanding, people build up a kind of general set of livelihood practices which finally becomes culture (ibid). According to E.B. Tylor, the founder of cultural Anthropology, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor 1870:1, cited by Upadhy, 2003:34). In fact, it is the sum total of materials and spiritual activities which not only unites but also provides identity to its members/followers.

Culture involves the learnt experience, effort and understanding of everyday life to attain the higher degree of existence. It also incorporates the everyday practices of human life along with the way that people understand the social phenomena and ascribe the meaning to everyday life. Thus, it obviously is a dynamic entity and likely to be changed with time and situation (Adler, 1997:14 and Maddox, 1998:304). Indeed, cultural change and constant dynamic recreation of culture for adaptation in changing socio-cultural surrounding is a continuous and universal phenomenon (Stavenhagen, 1998:5).

An adaptation is a physical and behavioural characteristic that is developed in order to cope with the environment (Kennedy, 2014). In fact, in every society the social members gradually change and/or develop the strategies for livelihood according to the physical and cultural environment for adaptation (Acharya, 2007:272-273). According to Bird-David (1992:22), the modern day nomadic hunter-gatherers not only adapt themselves to the physical environment but also to a wide range of surrounding cultural environment. For their better adaption, they combine hunting

and gathering with a wide range of other productive strategies such as trade, wage labour, use of modern tools for hunting, etc. (ibid). In the case of nomadic Raute, the changing political scenario of the nation, widening of the settlement area of sedentary people, and environmental change and depletion of forest resources due to global warming have limited their sole dependence upon forest resources; consequently, the mode of economy has been changed (Bhattachan, 2005, Singh, 1998:117). In this process of socio-cultural and environmental change, the Raute not only have developed the ideas to confront the environmental tribulations but also learnt the strategies to acclimatize in changing cultural economy. These days, to excel the communication competence with the sedentary people, the nomadic Raute have learnt Nepalese language and transformed themselves from silence barterer to oracular sellers (Luitel 1998:35). According to Fortier, (2001, 199:252) to be adapted to the socio-cultural and political structure of the nation, this tribe gradually learnt Nepali language and started practicing various forms of social exchange, such as fictive relationship, begging, petty theft, etc., which are the popular practices among the villagers but were never in practice in Raute community before.

There are a lot of theories that deal with the various aspects of socio-cultural change. However, in my research I have chosen to dissect the changing economic structure and its impact on other aspects of the nomadic Raute's life through the theory of cross-cultural and ecological adaption.

### **2.3. CROSS CULTURAL ADAPTATION**

The theory of cross-cultural adaptation deals with the process of acclimatizing to the demand of a new cultural environment, which means both changing perspectives and reconciling beliefs to the dominant/host culture (Shi and Wang, 2014:24). When people are required to live, either by migration or by the effect of globalization, in a culture which is new or has drastically different cultural traits than they are used to, they learn the cultural skills of the host place to get adapted into the host culture and find better existence which in the long run changes many aspects of their native culture. In fact, all strangers in an unfamiliar ambience embark on the common project of cross-cultural adaptation, thereby establishing and maintaining a relatively stable and reciprocal relationship with the host environment (Taylor, 1994:403).

In this theory, the process of acclimatizing in the host cultural environment is conceived as a dynamic process of unfolding the natural human tendency to struggle for an internal equilibrium while facing the environmental adversities. However, the intensity of unfolding this human tendency depends on various factors, such as cultural proximity between native and host culture, condition of the host culture (facilitating or impending), rigidity and flexibility of the stranger's culture, his/her psychological strength and openness, length of stay, etc. (ibid).

The communication competence of stranger with the host in accordance with their (host) socio-cultural norms and values makes the highest value in cross-cultural adaptation. The more the stranger learns the communication practices of the new culture and engages actively in host cultural communication system, the better, faster and more successfully he/she gets adapted. This theory further argues that in spite of encountering a lot of unprecedented vicissitudes, we always keep on the process of adaptation in the host society. In the course of adaptation, we experience a gradual transformation in personal identity. This transformation implies a subtle and largely unconscious change which leads to the intercultural personhood; a state of fundamental psychic transformation in a person where he/she goes beyond the limit of his/her cultural periphery and acknowledges the interconnectedness among people, thereby developing emotional and perceptual maturity to understand the human conditions (Kim, 2008:360, 365-376).

In the end, cross cultural adaptation is an itinerary of life where success or failure depends on the people taking part in it. The people who transform themselves from the state of individuation to universalization passing the different stages of adaptation in particular, the honeymoon stage, the culture shock stage, the recovery stage, and the adjustment stage (Lysgaard, 1955 cited by Shi and Wang, 2014:24) are likely to have successful adaptation. (However, not all cross cultural adaptation processes follow the same stages.) Since we embrace and incorporate the elements of alien culture in cross cultural adaptation, this process develops an alternative way of living by integrating the people together. The personal achievements acquired in the course of adaptation are the strengths enabling us to confront the future challenges and tribulations, guidelines for days to come, and move beyond the customary imagination in search of effective solutions to problems.

## 2.4. CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Ecology is a branch of biology. It studies and emphasizes the idea that every living organism in the world is constantly trying to adjust, being interdependent on one another, to its non-biotic environment (Frake, 1962:53). Cultural ecology is the analytical study of the interaction and interrelationship between ecology, physical environment and culture, and man-made environment. In cultural ecology 'adaptation' is regarded as a process of cultural change, and the analysis of socio-environmental adaptation serves to uncover variables that explain the origin of particular cultural features in similar environmental conditions. Cultural ecologists believe that there exist a give and take relationship between culture and ecology; however, the degree and kind of functional interdependence among the parts of culture are not equal. In general, cultural ecology is the analysis of the relationship between a man-made culture and natural environment and the adaptation capabilities of human culture (Acharya 2007: 277-287).

The most influential personality in the development of cultural ecological theory is Julian Steward (1902-1972). He holds the notion that culture and environment are not separate spheres since there is a constant interplay between them. He defines cultural ecology as a research methodology to analyse how human cultures entail certain changes, while adapting to the physical environment, and how the differences in cultures occur as a consequence of the differences in technological development to adapt to the immediate environment (Gun, 1980: 19-20, Upadhyay, 2003:150-151). Although Steward is the pioneer of this theory, his concept of environmental determinism has been criticized, and a lot of other variants such as ecological perspective, environmental possibilism, actor-based model, ethno-ecological model, etc., were developed to analyse the relationship between nature and culture and the process of adaptation. Here, I will discuss three basic premises of ecological theory and analyse the data collected being based on them.

- There exists a logical interrelationship between culture and environment. The two are influenced by each other.
- Adaptation is the major process of cultural change and cultural diversity. Human beings develop specific forms of culture in the process of adapting in the specific environmental

condition. Since adaptation is a dynamic process, it changes with the environmental change.

- Cultural ecology studies the interrelationship between the environment and exploitative technology, and the extent to which behavioural patterns affect other sectors of culture.

## **2.5. CONCLUSION: USE OF ‘CROSS CULTURAL’ AND ‘CULTURAL ECOLOGICAL’ THEORIES**

In my analysis, the theory of cross cultural adaptation will be used to analyse how the nomadic hunting-gathering Raute have been gradually acclimatized in the surrounding society, highly influenced by globalization. Specifically, I focus on what kind of role Raute have been taking, how they are transforming themselves, what role the host culture is playing, whether they (Raute) have imbibed some cultural traits such as language, food, dress, occupation, etc. of host culture and how they have benefitted the Raute for adaptation. Meaning that I will demonstrate how they try to adapt and how they change their behaviour habits in some ways the process of adaptation.

Similarly, the changing ecological condition and its impact on Raute’s traditional indigenous culture, especially mode of production, will be discussed through cultural ecological perspective. Whether there have been developed some special cultures and how these new forms of culture have helped the Raute to adapt in gradually changing ecosystem will be viewed using cultural ecological theory.



## CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCING THE RAUTE

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

With a general introduction of Nepal, this chapter basically attempts to introduce the nomadic Raute through the various aspects of their life, in particular their settlement history, settlement area, pattern of living, population, social structure, language, politics, economy, religion and lifecycle rituals. Additionally, I will provide general information about the impact of national politics in their livelihood.

### 3.2. A GLIMPSE OF NEPAL: THE MOTHERLAND OF RAUTE

Nepal is a landlocked country situated in South Asia sharing the borders with India in the east, west and south, and Tibet, the autonomous region of China in the north. The geographical coordinates of Nepal are 28°00'N and 84°00'E<sup>2</sup>, and the total area covered by the country is 1,47,181 sq.km, 0.1% of total earth area. Topographically it is divided in to three different regions; the Himalaya, (above 3,00m) comprises mountains, alpine pastures and temperate forests. Out of 14 eight-thousands peaks of the world, eight lie in Nepal including the highest peak of the world, Mount Everest – 8,848m (Paudel et.al, 2012:3).

According to the national census 2011, the total population of Nepal is 26,494,504. The population density of the nation ranges from three in Manang to 4416 in Kathmandu, and the average density is 180. Altogether there are 126 ethnic groups and 59 of them are considered as indigenous group of Nepal. The largest caste/ethnic group is Chhetri with 43,98,053 populations followed by Braman 32,26,903, whereas the smallest is Kusunda, one of the endangered indigenous communities like Raute, with only 271. The total population of Raute, including the sedentary and the nomadic is 618 (CBS: 2011), where the nomadic hunting-gathering Raute are only 148 (field work, 2014)

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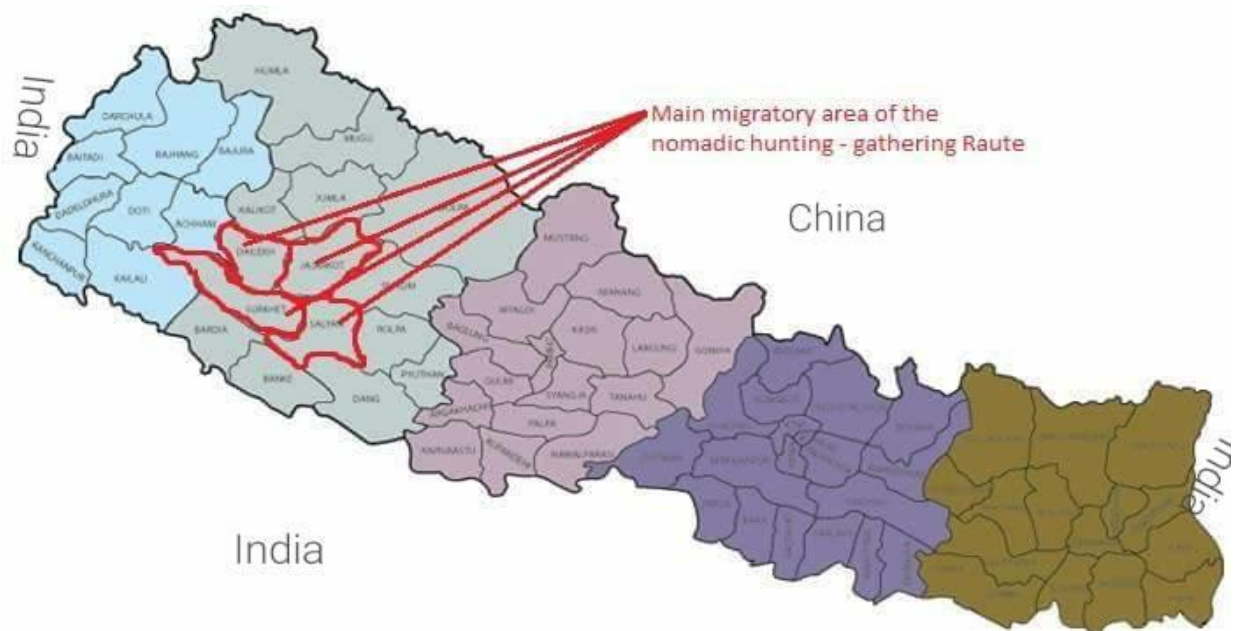
<sup>2</sup> <http://welcomenepal.com/promotional/know-nepal/geography/>

### 3.3. RAUTE: THE FOREST KINGS

#### 3.3.1 RAUTE TERRITORY AND THE STORY OF THEIR ORIGIN

According to Bista (1976:18), after the settlement of Kusunda<sup>3</sup> in the early seventies of last century the only tribe living in Nepal as nomadic hunters-gatherers is Raute. There is no concrete evidence traced out yet for how long they have been living in the western belt of Nepal and abutted on the Indian side (Singh, 1998:118). The area that Raute generally traverse ranges between the coordinates 28°-30°N to 78°-83°E which covers the area of six different districts of western Nepal and some parts of Utter Pradesh, India (ibid:119). However, the nomadic hunting-gathering Raute mainly migrate around the four districts: Dailekh, Jajarkot, Surkhet and Salyan of mid-west Nepal.

Map no. 1: Map of Nepal and the main migratory area of the nomadic hunting gathering Raute



Regarding the historical background both the nomadic and the sedentary Raute claim to be the descendants of erstwhile royal family. The Raute from western Nepal, who are living sedentary life now, claim that they belong to the Pal-Thakuri royal lineage. According to their historical

<sup>3</sup> One of the endangered indigenous group of Nepal



story, the eldest son of the King of Pal-Thakuri dynasty left home and went to the jungle when he got comparatively a smaller proportion of wealth after his father's death. Then he started living in the jungle and his descendants, also lived in the jungle until 1981. Nomadic Raute, on the other hand, claim that they are the descendants of the second son of Shahi-Thakuri<sup>4</sup> royal family, who left home for the jungle after his father, King Shahi, scolded him badly for a small misdemeanour (Gurung et.al, 2014:13-15).

Despite their claims of having different stories for their historical backgrounds, Singh, the most popular ethno biologists of Nepal working on Raute, claims that there are total 17 groups of Raute, six groups living in Nepal and eleven groups in India, share the same ancestral history and almost all of them were living nomadic life in jungle until 1950s (Singh, 1998:119-120). According to the latest census of Nepal, the total population of Nepalese Raute community is 618 (CBS, 2011:146), 320 male and 298 female.

### **3.3.2 THE HISTORY OF RAUTE SEDENTARIZATION**

The project of Raute sedentarization is one of the vividly manifested examples of political encroachment over forest-based Raute. With the aim of safeguarding the forest and providing better life to the nomadic Raute<sup>5</sup>, the forest dwellers, in 1981, the government of Nepal offered them to live sedentary life. However, only the Raute from the far west, Darchula and Dadheldhura districts, who were living in five different groups, responded positively for this process (Singh, 1998 b: 27, Gurung et.al, 2014:9). A meeting of government officials, socio-cultural scholars and Raute leaders, after a long consultation, decided to settle the Raute at Brahadev, Kanchanpur permanently. However, because of the intense heat at Bramhadev area the settlement process halted for some time. Finally, after an arduous paper and field work by the concerned authority and the Raute leaders, the five groups of Raute from far west settled down at Jogbudha, Dadheldhura and Aampani, Baitadi, an inner Terai area<sup>6</sup>, between 1983 and 1985

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<sup>4</sup> Both Thakuri clans, 'Pal and Shahi' were the kings of petty kingdoms that existed in Nepal before the unification started in mid-seventeenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Until the permanent settlement of Raute from far western in between 1981-1985, all Rautes were forest dwellers, nomadic hunter-gatherers.

<sup>6</sup> Inner Terai is the area which is not as hot as Terai belt but warmer than Hilly areas. General temperature of this area ranges between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius.

where the government provided them sufficient acre of land for cultivation and livestock (Gurung et.al, 2014:9-10).

Although the formal process of sedentarization was completed by 1985, the Raute accustomed to nomadic life could not confine themselves within a fixed boundary. Since the beginning of 1990s, they started selling their land to non-Raute people and some of them began to adapt a semi-nomadic life. However, the process of reversing to nomadic life was controlled by the end of 1990s, as the government provided them some training for agriculture and pastoralism skills (ibid: 10). The Raute living in the permanent settlements farm seasonal vegetables and fruits, rear goats and work as skilled and non-skilled wage labourers nowadays (Rana 2010:126-127).

Since 2011, the government of Nepal launched People's Housing Program to assist financially to the people of marginalized communities, including Raute (sedentary Raute here). Thirty five houses were constructed for sedentary Raute at Aampani, Baitadi, but only ten were constructed at another settlement area, Jogbudha, due to shortage of budget (Gurung et.al, 2014:9, Shakya, et. al 2015: 17).

### **3.3.3 NOMADIC RAUTE AND REJECTION OF SETTLEMENT PROGRAM**

Out of the 17 Raute groups living in the western Nepal and adjacent Indian surroundings, the only group still enjoying the life as nomadic hunter-gatherers is the Raute group of mid-west Nepal who has been refusing the proposals of settlement continuously (Singh, 1998:117-118). Until the day no official census of this group has been conducted. According to the field visit 2014, the total households of nomadic Raute community is 39 and the population is 148, where 83 are male and 65 female. According to age composition, the number of children below 10 years of age is 47 and rests of them are above 10. The eldest person of community is Bechne Shahi, 82, the wife of former headman late Man Bahadur Shahi.

The settlement pattern of nomadic Raute is always temporary. They travel through the lower mid-western hills of Dang, Dailekh, Salyan, Surkhet and Jajarkot districts of Nepal (Singh, 1998:117-123). During the monsoon season, the Raute tend to favour high mountain forests where they erect cluster of huts thatched with either forest leaves or plastic, whereas they prefer to migrate to river bank or fallow land of surrounding villages in the dry season. Generally, the

length of stay at a particular place is between one and two months, however it depends on the availability of food, the nature of surrounding and harmony in the community. Once they decide to move on, they destroy their huts immediately. Either they set fire on the huts or dismantle them (Bista, 1976:319, Pant, 2014).

#### **3.3.4 SOCIAL COMPOSITION, LANGUAGE, POLITICS AND WORK DIVISION IN NOMADIC RAUTE**

The population of the nomadic Raute is 148 and they are living in 39 different households. On average, one family consists of 4 members. They are of three different clans, Raskothi, Kalyal and Swobanshi, and they marry with the member of different clans. The average age of marriage is between 18 and 22. According to population structure, the number of males, 83, is comparatively higher than females, 65. As they are not occupied with agriculture and pastoralism, and are living communal life, they don't need large family units and always prefer nuclear family with parents and unmarried children (Gurung et.al, 2014:9).

The language they speak is Khamchi of Tibeto-Burman family. Generally, they communicate in their own language within their own group but use Nepali language while communicating with the outsiders. Because of the frequent encounters with the sedentary people, everyone, from the elderly people to the young children, can speak Nepali language without any difficulty (field work 2014).

The central position in the community is held by the headman who deals with the outsiders and possesses the greatest skill in manipulating the villagers (Reinhard, 1974:256-257). In most of the outside affairs, the headman/leader speaks for the group. Any conflict outside the community is completely handled by him whereas the conflict inside the community is handled in his leadership with mutual cooperation between the members of the group (Reinhard, 1974:258).

Overall, the headman of the community is all in all. Although he takes the final decision for any kind of work in the community, he often makes plans for working or migration or anything connected to the community sitting with some senior male members. He is supposed to provide equal justice to all the members of the community and look after them when they are in trouble.

There used to be one headman in the nomadic Raute community, but nowadays there are four headmen (Nepal, 1998:154-155, field work, 2014).

Although the headman is all in all for the administrative work of the community, the role of *Dhami* (Shaman) and *Bhadari* is very important in their religious affairs. The community believes that *Dhami* are the angel of god and they can directly communicate with the god and *Bhadari* are their assistants who collect and make ready all the religious items for worship. The role of *Dhami* besides performing religious activities is to exorcise people who are believed to suffer from evil spirits or any misfortune, such as accidents. In fact, the *Dhami* unite the community with the belief of supernatural power (Gurung et.al, 2014:45).

Hunting is the task which is done only by the male members of the community. Before they go for hunting or fishing they analyse the hunting area and divide themselves into different groups according to their skills and the availability of prey. The role of the headman in this process is very important, as he forms the group based on the physical structure, skill and experience of hunting. Interestingly, although they are hunter-gatherers, their preference is mostly for hunting monkeys and rhesus, and they rarely hunt other animals. Until 1980s they used to hunt tigers, bear and other deadly animals, mainly for security reasons. Similarly, they never hunt on the days of full moon and new moon (Nepal, 1998:140-147). Another important task of the Raute men is chopping down trees and making utensil such as boxes, bowls, chests, ladles, plates, bread rolling boards, water pots, etc. for bartering food grains with the sedentary people of nearby localities.

In this community, women are assigned the tasks that need less physical power, but they engage longer hours at work than men. Generally, the work of women is to collect fire wood, wild fruits and do household chores such as cooking, looking after children and elderly people, cleaning, etc. Sometimes they carry the hunted animals if the male counterparts ask them. Before cooking the meat of hunted monkeys, the senior woman of the family performs some rituals spraying water in the kitchen area and worshipping the god of meat (ibid, field work 2014).

The role of women in the nomadic Raute has been changing since 1990 (Singh, 1997: 49). For example, bartering wooden utensils for food grains with the surrounding sedentary people, which

used to be a sole work of men, nowadays is frequently conducted by the women as well (ibid). Additionally, nowadays, the women of this community use the amount of money they get either from selling goods or from the government allowance in their own discretion to buy groceries and other necessary goods from the market (field work, 2014).

Children under 14 generally help their parents at work. Boys follow the footpath of their male senior members, whereas the girls help their mother at the daily chores of the house. There is no system of sending children to school yet (field work, 2014).

### **3.3.5 ECONOMY**

The modern concept of economic development means little to the nomadic Raute. Indeed, the developmental programs launched by the government impinge the traditional way of life. For the nomadic Raute, the development equates with the freedom to roam peacefully through the forests but the various projects of the government restrict them from roaming freely in the jungle (Gurung et.al, 2014:45).

As the nomadic Raute are hunters and gatherers, it is very difficult to separate the economy from social structure and work division (Reinhard, 1974: 239). They have an economy primarily based on hunting of monkeys with nets, and arrows sometimes, gathering of yams and other edible plants from the forest and exchanging the wooden utensils for food with the surrounding villagers. They generally divide the economic activities according to gender. Hunting and carving woods are done by men and gathering is primarily done by women (Nepal, 1998:140-147).

Hunting monkeys is a co-operative effort for Raute male members, and normally they hunt dividing themselves into many groups, a group comprising more than 10 members. The collected meat is usually divided equally among those who participated and give some parts to those who remain at home or have gone for gathering, but those who are in the village for trading the wooden objects that day do not receive anything because of their religious belief. Fishing, on the other hand, is not the popular mode of economy in the community, but both genders do it if they get opportunity (Reinhard, 1974: 239-240).

The Raute carve wooden objects to barter for food grains with the surrounding villages. They are always friendly in business and normally do not force the villagers to buy their goods. However, when someone orders from them the wooden object, they consider it as a word of promise to buy their goods and lose temper in case the supposed buyer turn aside. As far as the economy generation by Raute women is concerned, they gather plants, particularly yams, in the forest and involve in trading woodenwares. The yam named *Dioscorea rotundata*<sup>7</sup> is the most desired one and *Dioscorea esculenta* is the most available one (Singh, 1998 b:23-27, Reinhard, 1974:244). Besides yams, other edible food items they mainly collect are mushrooms, banana, leafy greens and *Khaniya*, (dropping fig).

Nowadays, since 2008, apart from hunting and gathering, the economy of the nomadic Raute is assisted with the allowance provided by Nepal government. Each member of community gets nearly 11 USD per month and they use it for buying necessary goods for livelihood. Additionally, according to their claims, the monetary and non-monetary help provided by various organizations has played a significant role to run the economy because the rate of hunting and gathering has decreased remarkably due to the depletion of forest resources and strict forest acts (Sedhain, 2013). In 2014, a number of Rautes with their own approach to the concerned governmental authority have obtained government job as forest security guards. (Sejuwal, 2014).

### **3.3.6 RELIGION**

Although the Raute are Hindus, most of their religious practices are not similar to the sedentary Hindus. The god worshipping pattern of nomadic Rautes, however, is somehow like sedentary Hindus, but they still lack elaborate rituals, priests and witchcraft. They primarily worship two deities namely *Bhuyar* and *Daray Masto* (Nepal, 1998: 153).

*Bhuyar* is their hunting god and the deity they fear the most. They worship him especially on full moon days of June-July and July-August. Women are not allowed to participate in these religious worships. In this program they usually sacrifice a chicken or a goat. According to Raute, *Bhuyar* becomes extremely angry and curse them if any villager involves in this practice.

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<sup>7</sup> *Dioscorea rotundata* does not have particular local name. The Raute call it Long Yam, where *Doiscore esculenta* is called small yam.

(Gurung et.al, 2014:28-29, Reinhard, 1974:261-262). The god *Daray Masto* is considered as a soft and beneficent deity and is worshipped at the same time when they worship *Bhuyar*. This deity is worshiped even at the time when someone in the community falls sick or is involved in an accident. A bell and a metal piece in a human shape are kept in a wooden box and taken out at the time when *Masto* is worshipped. The worship is done in any open area, and rice is offered. Raute do not sacrifice animals for *Masto* (Nepal, 1998:152, Reinhard, 1974:262). Beside these two deities, two other forest gods, *Ban Devi* and *Ban Jhankari*, are also worshipped to get rid of any family and social misfortunes (Reinhard, 1974:262).

### **3.3.7 LIFECYCLE RITUALS**

Despite being Hindu followers, the lifecycle rituals of Raute, like their other religious practices, are significantly unique and different than of other Hindus. Elderly people, parents and headmen of the community play an important role in the major life cycle rituals, like birth, marriage and death (Nepal, 1998:150, Gurung et.al, 2014:22-27). Birth is an extremely important life ritual for the Raute community. The ritual practice of birth differs for a baby boy and a baby girl. For example, after the birth of a baby boy anything touched by the mother until 22<sup>nd</sup> day of delivery is considered tainted. On 11<sup>th</sup> day, a woman, generally aunt or sister, of the family plays the role like a priest in other Hindu community as she gives name to the child in front of almost all members of the community and sprays holy water or cow urine around the house to purify it. Additionally, she puts a red mark on the forehead of the child and ties a thread around the wrists and legs. She provides food to the guest presented on the day and ensures that the food is over. If the food is left, they believe something wrong is going to happen to the newly born child. However, all these ritual activities are performed on 9<sup>th</sup> day if a baby girl is born and generally the name giving ceremony of a girl goes silently (ibid).

In Raute community, the one and only practiced marriage system is arranged marriage. They marry within their own community into a different clan. There is no multiple marriage system in the community. When a boy reaches to the time of marriage, i.e. 18 and older, his parents talk to the headman about it. The next day, the headman talks to the parents of the preferred girl. If they agree with the proposal, they fix the day of marriage. In marriage the headman can play the role of mediator but cannot impose the power he normally enjoys in other social activities. Sadly,

nowadays as the men outnumber the women in the community, getting a girl has become a tough task and there are a good number of boys remaining unmarried due to the lack of a girl (Gurung et.al, 2014:25, field work, 2014).

On the day of marriage, the groom along with his father, brother and headman goes to the girl's house and brings her with him. Except some formal talk and sharing some gifts, they do not perform any rituals on this day. After a few days of marriage, the newly married couple starts living at their own house, leaving the parents and the unmarried siblings in the old house (Nepal, 1998: 153).

Death ritual of nomadic Raute is not elaborate. When a member of the community dies, they bury the dead body on the same day wrapping in monkey hunting net, and after completing the work of cremation they leave their camp/settlement area. There is no different system of cremation for male and female (Nepal 1998:152, field work, 2014).

### **3.4. NATIONAL POLITICS AND RAUTE**

The political movement of the 1950s in Nepal affected the whole nation. Since the inception of the forest law in the early 1960s, especially the Community Forest Policy in 1978, the livelihood of Raute has been affected noticeably. Similarly, the royal decree of 1981 to assimilate Raute in national Hindu culture providing free land and houses further thundered the socio-cultural practices of this tribe. However, the one group who is still living nomadic life has continuously been refusing the proposal. In fact, these direct encroachments of the national authority in Rautes' life restricting them from using their ancestral cultural practices and natural resources, and forcing to practice the sedentary lifestyle affected them socially, economically and psychologically (Bhattachan, 2005).

The political upheaval in 1990 once again brought a massive change in Nepalese society. This movement established democracy in the nation and the democratic government promulgated a new constitution in 1991. The government started liberal economy and embarked on the voyage of globalization, however, could not make any significant contribution to the indigenous communities who were oppressed for hundreds of years (Subba et.al, 2009:27). A lot of laws, rules and regulations of the state qualified the people's activities over natural resources,



especially the forest based resources after the Forest Act 1993 and Regulation 1995 (Gautam et.al, 2004:139). Consequently, the multiple aspects of indigenous people's life, including Raute, were severely affected as they were legally tethered to use forest resources.

Despite the fact that the interim constitution 2007 of Nepal guarantees to preserve the cultural practices and livelihood practices of all indigenous peoples, the life of nomadic Raute is always subject to encroachment and threat. The growing encounters of Raute with the surrounding sedentary people during bartering carved woodenwares, such as bowls, chests, ladles, etc., for grains, goats and ornaments slowly but steadily punctuates the life style of the Raute (Shahu, 2012). The barter economy of Raute has also been disdained gradually as the local users started getting plastic products, which are cheaper and lighter than the woodenwares (Sanghroula, 2009), which have further impoverished their traditional mode economy.

### **3.5. CONCLUSION**

There are two types of Raute in Nepal, nomadic and sedentary. My research is focused only on nomadic Raute who are the last nomadic hunting-gathering group of Nepal and travel periodically over the mid-hills of western Nepal. The history of Raute origin is based on their oral stories, as there are no written documents. They follow Hinduism; however, their ways of practicing religion are different in many ways than of sedentary Hindus. The traditional economy is based on hunting animals, gathering wild vegetables and fruits, and bartering wooden utensils for food grains and other needy items with the surrounding agro-pastoralists. For the last few decades, the Raute have been facing challenges in continuing their traditional way of living because of increasing cultural pressure from the dominant sedentary societies and ecological changes.



## CHAPTER 4: TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC PRACTICES OF RAUTE AND STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL AUTONOMY

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

The historical evidence shows that the nomadic hunter-gatherer Raute have been continuously rejecting the formal and informal offers given by the state and some non-state organizations to live a sedentary life. They have been found enjoying the way of life that has been followed since time immemorial. However, these days the increasing socio-cultural challenges by globalization and ecological challenges by climate change have massively influenced their traditional life, which depends solely on forest resources. Despite the continuous attack on their life style by the nature and dominant sedentary culture, Raute are still able to continue their nomadic hunting-gathering life. In this chapter I am going to discuss the traditional economic practices and some of the strategies that Raute have been applying for sustaining their traditional economy as nomadic hunter-gatherer, as well as their role in adapting to the changing socio-cultural and environmental periphery.

### 4.2. TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC PRACTICES OF RAUTE

According to Reinhard, it is very difficult to separate the Raute's traditional economy from their social structure and way of life (1974: 239). Since they are nomadic hunters and gatherers, it is obvious that their traditional economy is primarily based on hunting and gathering and the whole society's livelihood revolves around it. Hunting is basically considered the work of male members of the Raute community. Although they are hunters, they don't hunt all wild animals they come across. They basically hunt monkeys with nets, and sometimes by arrows. Sometimes they hunt rodents, porcupines, rabbits, etc. and some birds as well. The game is usually divided equally among the participants and given some portion to those who remain at home or have gone for gathering, but not for those who are in the village trading the wooden objects that day. Hunting covers almost 45% of the food proportion for the community (Fortier, 2001: 201-198, Nepal 1998:146-147).

Similarly, gathering is another important traditional economic practice of Raute. They forage edible wild plants, such as leafy greens, shoot vegetables, medicinal herbs, fruits, berries, yams, *bhyakur* (deltoid yam), etc. Generally, this is the work of women, however men also involve in foraging if there is no hunting and trading routine. Among gathered items, yam covers the highest proportion. *Dioscorea rotundata*, although it is/was the least available yam, is the most desired traditional food and foragers run miles for this, while *Dioscorea esculenta* is the mostly used common type of yam. In rainy season, the shoots of bamboo and *nigalo* also provide a good amount of food. Additionally, Raute have a tradition of collecting some vegetables such as spinach, carrot, radish, cabbage, *skus*, pumpkin, gourd, etc. from the villagers (ibid, Singh 1997:47-48).

Additionally, one of the most important traditional economic practices of this tribe is barter. Raute make different kind of wooden utensils targeting the sedentary people for their household use. They make sleeping planks, storage boxes, bowls, spatulas, bread rolling boards, bangle stands, etc. and barter for cereals and other items, such as clothes, salt, bamboo basket, etc. with the villagers. Sometimes they barter wares for chicken and goat, mainly in festive season. Mainly Raute men are eloquent in speaking, and negotiation take part in this economic process, where they often beseech for extra food grains or other things convincing the villagers during barter (Reinhard, 1974: 45, Nepal, 1998: 132-133).

#### **4.3. VERBAL ARTS FOR RESISTANCE AND ADAPTATION**

Considering the gravity of the dialectic context either in barter or deviating the topic of chat or claiming the right of resource use, Raute generally perform verbal arts (adages, rhyming proverbs, blessings and folk songs) which they define collectively as *geet* (song) (Fortier, 2002: 234, field work, 2014). They never get any formal instructions for verbal art, but the regular cross cultural interactions have sharpened their competence for communication. Moreover, their experiences have taught them to select the suitable *geet* for the particular context.

Verbal art contains meanings and messages of various facets of life such as forager-farmer relation, bartering mechanism, hunting-gathering economy, importance of the forest, happiness and pain of life, etc. On the one hand, this verbal art enables Raute to narrow down and negotiate

the cultural differences with the surrounding villagers, as rhyming proverbs, folk-stories, blessings, etc., are the popular communicative traits in Nepali agro-pastoralist society as well. On the other hand, the use of such art masks the life style and cultural practices of nomadic Raute from the outsiders' eye, as they (audiences/outside) concentrate and enjoy the verbal performance of Raute rather than focus on their radically different way of living (Fortier, 2002: 234, Nepal, 1998:170-173, field work 2014). Overall, the Raute idea of cultural negotiation with sedentary people disguising their reality is a clever and sensible strategy for adaptation maintaining their cultural autonomy, and at the same time resisting the external cultural hegemony in changing socio-cultural and environmental conditions of Nepal.

The nomadic Raute use such verbal art only when they are in communication with *duniya*<sup>8</sup>. In the sedentary community it is considered as a trademark style of advertising Raute economy. In fact, the practice of such verbal art is a beautiful tactic to acquire 'insider' status deceiving the sedentary people making them believe that Raute are applying their cultural practices. But in reality, these practices are only the tools for adaptation preserving nomadism and resisting other hegemony of the surrounding Hindu agriculturists (Fortier, 2002: 234, field work 2014).

#### **4.4. UKHAN-TUKKA FOR TOPIC DEVIATION AND BARTER**

Among the verbal arts, the nomadic Raute mostly use *ukhan-tukka* (rhyming proverb) to express their opinions symbolically or metaphorically in a succinct way. Although, in intercultural communication there is always high probability of miscues and misunderstanding in the meaning of information that the conveyer wants to convey (Gumperz, 1982), Raute are clever enough to understand the cultural sensitivity of outsiders and always perform perfect *ukhan-tukka* or other verbal arts. They never memorize them, but perform in the correct circumstances. Because of a long-term mutual interaction, Raute have learnt cultural values of sedentary people and are able to select suitable symbols and metaphors in communication. The Raute men who involve more in bartering goods with the sedentary people or deal the visitors, are expert in using such *ukhan*. For example, in my first meet when I was going for a field visit, I met Hari Bahadur, a Raute man in his sixties, five hundred meters away from the settlement on the way to market. I was

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<sup>8</sup> Raute address the sedentary people as Duniya

very excited seeing him on the way and introduced myself soon after he finished a little informal chat with my research assistant who was a local boy from a surrounding village and familiar in Raute community. But I found him not caring for me; rather he started additional talk with my friend. I could clearly notice him ignoring me; however, my friend dragged his attention towards me and described briefly why I was there. Slightly shaking his head, he asked me what my occupation was. Before I could answer and ask him something more, he performed the following rhyming proverb, *tukka*, looking at my eyes.

*Kahabata aayo tapai sa ra (sir)? (Where are you from sir?)*

*Hamlai ke lyamnuha chha ra? (Have you brought something for us?)*

Though I had heard and read about the skill of Raute's verbal arts, I had not expected to experience it within a couple of minutes of my first encounter with a Raute man. I was astonished listening to him because it was a perfect *tukka* delivered at a perfect circumstance. It was obvious that asking me where I was from and whether I had something for him, he wanted to divert my attention away and parry personal questions because Raute know what visitors ask at first meet. Generally, Raute perform *ukhan tukka* in such vulnerable situations where they think they could suffer from the questions related to the personal life, which they dislike. Diverting the focus of the visitor/outsider Raute always would like to build a talking ambience in a way they like, and express their problems begot by poor economic condition rather than their socio-cultural life practices for centuries. In fact, acting as a first person is not only the idea of Raute to express their current problems and parry the questions related to their personal life but also one of the best strategies of ignoring and resisting the cultural domination of outsiders (field work 2014).

In bartering woodenwares with surrounding agro-pastoralists, the use of verbal arts, basically *ukhan-tukka* and *lok katha* (folk story), is almost inevitable because they create a favourable talking environment for Raute. The witty *ukhan-tukka* helps them to control the atmosphere and gain a favourable exchange. Additionally, such verbal arts not only help in selling their woodenwares but also play a pivotal role in getting extra grains from villagers without investment. Sometimes they exchange their products for non-food items too, such as *doko*

(bamboo basket) and *namlo* (carrying belt) which are very essential for them to carry goods while shifting settlement and bringing stuff from the market. Similarly, *theki* (wooden water pot), *hasiya* (sickle), etc. are other items they barter with farmers. In the course of my field trip, I witnessed a Raute boy of 22, negotiating his bangle stand, which had a very crude look, with a villager for a *doko*. The villager had no interest in his bangle stand rather he was asking other woodenwares. As the boy did not have anything else to exchange then, he continued nagging the old man for *Doko*. Meanwhile, to grease the conversation more he shared an *ukhan-tukka*,

*Doko thupari k pauchha?* What do you get amassing such basket?

*Hamile khana pauchha.* It helps us carrying food stuffs and saves our life.

According to the boy knitting *doko* is a simple task for villagers as they are blessed with necessary skills and raw materials for it. But it has no value of knitting and keeping at home. Instead, if Raute get it, they can carry goods, food or other items for life, from villages or market to their settlement. Despite his request, the old man paid no interest in that exchange. After a long time of bargaining, the boy left the bangle stand at the courtyard of the old man's house and said with smile, "*Father, I will come in the evening*" and left for nearby grocery shop. I followed him and asked why he left the stand without consensus. He replied, "*Calling him father in a lovely tone will definitely affect him. I am sure until evening the budho (old man) will agree. I am in desperate need of doko.*" His reply astonished me and got to know how Raute use all possible strategies for bartering goods. He applied strong strategy, calling him father for gaining sentiments for favourable exchange.

Surface observation reflects a lot of similarities between Raute and Nepalese *ukhan-tukka*. They are almost of same length and the style of performance is also similar in many ways. However, the latent function of Raute *ukhan* is remarkably different than of Nepalese, and this difference plays a vital role for their adaptation in changing socio-economic and political context of Nepal. The agro-pastoralist community uses *ukhan-tukka* basically for moral lessons and glorifying historically ideal examples, but Raute use it as a part of their drama of impression management for adaptation, polishing the cross-cultural relation and masking their cultural reality. Additionally, most of their *ukhan-tukka* contain metaphors which echo hardship of villagers' life

in cattle rearing, farming, addressing social issue, etc. It is interesting to note that Raute, a nomadic group who loathe the life of permanent settlement, describes the vicissitudes of sedentary people's life as if they knew everything, and perform *ukhan-tukka* or other verbal arts which sedentary people find meaningful. Of course, because of long term forager-farmer relationship, it is true that Raute have observed the life of sedentary people and as they are subordinate group in this relationship double voicing (Mannheim and Tedlock, 1995:16) is expected because the subordinate group is required to learn the linguistic mannerism of the dominant group to impress them for adaptation. However, the level of concern shown by Raute about the difficulties of villagers' life performing various *ukhan-tukka* borrowing symbols and metaphors from dominant language is, I found, more superficial but a solid strategy of hiding the face of Raute reality and buttressing intercultural relations for adaptation.

#### **4.5. SELF-ESTEEM OF RAUTE AND THE EPHEMERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH OUTSIDERS**

Since Raute complete barter session or any kind business, they rarely maintain close relationship with sedentary people. According to an elderly Raute man in his sixties, they never keep intimate social ties with sedentary people because the nomadic group believes that close relationship weakens the personal and emotional strength and the secret stories of Raute society, which keep Raute distinct from other and are required to keep intact maintaining secrecy, can be oozed outside. They don't like to share the story of their socio-cultural life outside as most of the sedentary people look upon their life condescendingly and discriminate them as *jungali*,<sup>9</sup> which affects their self-esteem. As the sedentary agriculturists across the globe consider themselves superior than non-agriculturists (Woodburn, 1995: 31-64), the Nepalese farmers also consider their cultural activities superior than those of Raute. Former leader Ram Bahadur says,

*“Most of duniya want to know our cultural life not because they want to extend helping hands to mitigate our difficulties but because they want to compare us with them and show us inferior. We don't like anybody deriding our culture. People like you come from Kathmandu take our photos, publish books and make money but never give us anything.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Jungali—a denigrating way of calling the people who live in the jungle



He further claims that the nomadic Raute are the happiest people in the world because they never involve in politics and they have no cupidity to amass wealth<sup>10</sup>. Undergirding his point of view again he says:

*“Na chha lov, na chha dar”* No greed, no fear for future

This one stanza rhyming proverb reflects the Raute reality on property accumulation. The first three words of the stanza show Raute’s traditional practice of living helping each other without greed. The internal economy of Raute depends on sharing and solidarity. *Na chha lov* means they never harbour cupidity for amassing wealth for tomorrow. They believe that cupidity destroys human values. Similarly, *na chha dar* means that if there is no greed and cunning thoughts for wealth accumulation, there is no doubt about getting food for tomorrow. As Raute live in egalitarian society, they prefer mutual help and live for today. The way they maintain self-esteem and cultural intact in spite of continuous attack on their culture is a solid embodiment of resisting external hegemony. Ram Bahadur proudly says:

*“We have ‘we feeling’ and collective effort for resistance. We are stronger than you because we follow human and moral values. Perhaps you don’t follow it properly.”*

#### **4.6. DUAL SOCIAL STATUS FOR ACCOMMODATION AND BARTER**

Do the nomadic Raute manifest their pride always in such a bold way with sedentary people? Of course, not! Expressing pride and calling themselves the happiest people in the world are other clever strategies of resisting external hegemony thereby maintaining their cultural practices, and admonishing the *duniya* that Raute are not inferior people at all. But in normal occasions while having bilateral formal and informal chats, like other sedentary people, Raute also share the talks of daily life, mainly livelihood problems, and they always try to portray themselves as cultural ‘insiders’. However, since they don’t follow any sedentary practices, their drama of impression management for gaining ‘insider’ status does not always work well and they are also quite aware of it. Because of the outsider status, they do have a fear of being marginalized and excluded like

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCkFG6iRfzU>

the lower caste people<sup>11</sup> in dominant sedentary societies. As the marginalized people sometimes create new stories of hierarchy to invert the social order for getting better position in social/caste division (Parish, 1998, cited by Fortier, 2002:249), the nomadic Raute are also not an exception as they tell a story of their origin and claim to be the descendants of high-caste people.

The sedentary community is found not fully accepting Raute as an ‘insider’ despite their meticulous dramatic efforts of impression management and various stories of origin. However, most of the surrounding Hindu-agriculturists accept them as upper caste people, ‘Kshetriya’<sup>12</sup>. Because of this caste status they are able to stay in the houses of upper caste sedentary people while travelling for trade and eat the cooked foods offered. Staying with upper caste people and sharing common household space for some time, during trade, provides Raute a feeling of equality and sense of ‘insider’. At the same time ignoring the social hierarchy of caste division they are able to continue social relationship even with the lower caste Hindu community to extend the scope of barter trend. I have found them talking with the low-caste people about the injustice of caste division. While talking with the lower caste sedentary people, they reflect themselves also as a marginalized and excluded group. Additionally, Raute don’t mind to stay at low-caste people’s house and eat offered food while travelling for trade. I saw them persuading the lower caste people saying:

*“Manchhe manchhe eutai chha, All people are equal  
Ragat sapaiko Ratai chha”*, Because everyone has red blood.

The double social status of Raute, claiming to be of higher status with high-caste people and of lower status with the low-caste people, is solely a self-centred motif for personal advantages rather than mutual benefit, as well as a smart way to get adapted in dominant society. The higher caste status not only assists them in bartering with high-caste people but also provides a psychological and social strength to parry external cultural encroachments. Similarly, their idea

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<sup>11</sup> The people who fall under lower caste in the caste hierarchy of Hinduism are considered as untouchable and not allowed to enter the houses of upper caste people.

<sup>12</sup> There are four caste divisions in Hinduism; Brahman, Kshetriya, Baishya and Sudra. Brahman and Kshetriya are considered as upper caste people.

of showing equal status with the low-caste people helps them to embolden intercultural relation and continue the barter system with every villager without any difficulties.

#### **4.7. TRICKY NEGOTIATION**

The internal relations of nomadic Raute are based on equal sharing and solidarity. They follow an almost egalitarian exchange inside society. However, in intercultural exchange, basically in bartering woodenwares for food grains and other items with surrounding agro-pastoralists, they always focus on individual benefit, and to materialize it they often apply various cunning tricks without letting their counterparts know. Beside barter sessions, they apply strategies of tricky negotiation to get protection from physical as well as cultural attack while traveling through villages and avoid assimilation into Hindu society.

As nomadic Raute traverse through the mid-hill of western Nepal, they form different kind of relationship, though temporary, through which they can enjoy the patronage of sedentary people, and at the same time can conduct asymmetrical exchange. One of the most popular relationships they build with the sedentary people to get patronage is *miteri* (fictive kinship). According to Hindu mythology, this bond is built between two individuals of different caste of almost similar age performing a ritual of gift and blessings exchange, putting red *tika* on forehead and eating together on that day. It is solely concerned with love, faith and mutual help, where socio-cultural values of one individual is humbly respected by another, and everything in the relation is based on trust and tacit agreement. Partners call each other *mit* and the family members of *mit* are called as *mit-buwa* (fictive father), *mit-bhai* (fictive brother), *mit-ama* (fictive mother), etc. In fact, this bond, based on the ideology of love, care and sharing, cements the relationship between two parties, and the stronger party always helps the weaker one wholeheartedly when needed (Messerschmidt, 1982:5). In *miteri* relation between Raute and sedentary people, the sedentary party always maintains *miteri* values. I have seen farmers respecting and helping their Raute *mit* and his family members too. However, it is the Raute who deliberately breaches the principle of *miteri* relation and gradually apply self-centred and deceptive strategy for individual benefit. They are always eager to have this kinship with the sedentary people because this relation not only extends their socio-political connections but also provides patronage in order to be protected from unnecessary domination and physical attacks of common villagers and do a great

deal of begging, an asymmetrical exchange strategy. During barter sessions or begging, the Raute can wander freely through one village to another using the name of their sedentary patrons and beseech for extra food grains or other items.

Among villagers themselves, they always take care of the families of *mit* and help them for domestic and agriculture chores but Raute never do it. Raute *miteri* relation is demand-based. They use it as a tool for commodity circulation and always ask for asymmetrical exchange. I have witnessed them behaving like a pampered kid with their patrons and trying to extract more food grains, chicken, goat, tobacco and other items for some wooden articles. When asked about their responsibility for *miteri* relation, they simply answer that they are Raute and cannot follow all *miteri* ethics as sedentary people do. Additionally, they say that they cannot gift anything to *mit* because of their poverty, and the nomadic culture does not allow them helping their *mit* in farming and pastoralism.

As the Raute always focus on favourable exchanges, they apply their strategy to the forest officials and the local politicians also. They want to extend fictive relation with them too but generally the people in authority don't agree with this relationship. However, the Raute continue pleasing them, offering the woodenwares, showing their typical male dance, etc. The Raute *mukhiya* (chieftain) plays vital role in building relationship with authority. When the Raute feel that they are able to win the heart of the officials showing their unique livelihood practices and misery, they gradually ask for extra right of using forest resources. At the same time, they do not hesitate to ask for monetary help. There are, according to local villagers, a lot of incidents of Raute chopping down trees illegally, and when asked about it they simply answer that they are forest dwellers and have usufruct right of using forest resources. If the sedentary people complain about it to the forest officials, the Raute calm the officials showing their poverty and often please the officials by touching their feet. There is no evidence of Raute getting punishment for illegal forest resource use. Rather the officials ask them not to repeat the act and help them either by asymmetrical exchange or giving money or other things. About the help of government officials, my assistant told me the following story:

*“Some years ago a forest officer offered two pregnant goats to a Raute man asking him to rear them up properly for future. The Raute accepted the offer happily and praised the*

*officer for his generosity. No sooner had he reached the settlement than the community broke the promise and sacrificed both goats secretly for meat. After some time when the officer asked Raute about the condition of the goats, he replied in a serious tone, though superficial, that both goats died soon he took them to the settlement. However, the news of immediate sacrifice of goats was viral in the villages, and when the officer asked about it, the whole community denied it fiercely.”*

Although the Raute portray themselves as noble people and it is true to a large extent, sometimes they show their ferocity to the villagers when they could not come to the negotiation. Mainly they become fierce when sedentary people break promise and don't exchange food grains for their woodenwares. When I asked Raute *mukhiya* Krishna Bahadur, age 50, about the ferocity and exchange imposition, he rejected it in the beginning, but later indirectly he accepted. He said, *“We don't show loud anger as duniya say. We sometimes impose for exchange when they turn away from the promise made earlier.”* As I have read, in many cases the villagers exchange asymmetrically, fulfilling the demand of supplicants rather than facing scorn (Peterson, 1993), I asked similar question to an elderly man of the house where I used to live as a paying guest during the field visit why Raute force for barter and show anger sometimes even when there is no prior promise. He replied,

*“They know we don't enmesh quarrelling with them because of social prestige and responsibility. That is why; they consider it as our weaknesses and sometimes become fierce raising tone higher just to create pressure for fast negotiation, and fast negotiation often goes asymmetrical.”*

#### **4.8. PETTY THEFT**

In Raute community petty theft of vegetable and fruit from the garden of surrounding farmers is considered as normal social phenomenon. During their travel to villages basically for barter and begging, they cannot help stealing fruit and vegetable if they find any on their way and there is no land owner nearby. Although this is not a reliable idea for fulfilling their need, they consider it as an immediate problem-solution strategy. Raute believe that stealing some fruits and vegetable is not a crime. Some 5 years ago, the former Raute *Mukhiya* Krishna Bahadur, age 60,

had made public speech in a program, *“Stealing some vegetables from the garden is not a crime. We don’t commit crime as duniya do. Nobody can control themselves if they find something edible when they are hungry. It is natural.”* If they are caught red handed while stealing vegetables, they create stories of hunger, poverty, tiredness, etc. and run away in the middle of the discussion. Villagers are pretty aware of this Raute behaviour but they never make big issue of it, and rarely file complains to police. The police officials are also flexible in the case of Raute. Since they don’t get any punishment, Raute never deter repeating it time and again. However, they are also aware of severe punishment if they commit bigger crime/theft. Until now, there are no evidences of Raute stealing anything more than some garden products.

In the course of repetitive discussion with the Raute on this topic, they never accept it as morally and socially wrong deed. A youngster of 30, Jaya Bahadur, says that petty theft, if it goes as per plan, saves them from unnecessary discussion with sedentary people, and most of the time they get success. *“If it is asked with the farmers, they rarely give without belittling us and our culture. Rather they start teaching the ideas of farming. We are Raute and farming lessons have no meaning for us”*. So, from his tone it is crystal-clear that petty theft of fruit and vegetable is not only the strategy for immediate solution of hunger but also a tricky manoeuvre to avoid unnecessary conversation with sedentary people, which pressurize for assimilation, and keep their cultural practices intact.

#### **4.9. PRE-MATURE MIGRATION: A STRATEGY FOR RESISTING ASSIMILATION AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIP**

Raute are nomadic, so their migration from place to place is considered as a normal phenomenon of the life. Generally, nowadays they migrate every two months in the normal case, but sometimes their length of stay at a particular place, as per the information gathered during my field trip, depends upon the nature of surrounding villagers. Govin Bahadur, age 63, said:

*“Some of the villagers are very cunning and stingy as they don’t perform reciprocal exchange in bartering woodenwares with food grains. They even consider us inferior human being, behave impolitely and sometimes ask us to help them in their chores in*

*agriculture, cutting fodders for cattle, etc. despite knowing the fact that Raute don't do such work and loathe that kind of life."*

He spoke with a miffed tone in the course of discussion, and indirectly claimed that the rude behaviour of some villagers sometimes forces them to migrate earlier.

I wondered as I was listening to him. As it was a completely new and interesting piece of information for me regarding Raute migration, I wanted to learn more about it. Next day I went to the Raute leader Dipak Bahadur, age 40, and discussed about the causes of untimely migration. When I focused my point on the possibility that premature migration was intended to avoid unwanted confrontations with local villagers, he hesitated to provide clear answer. Diplomatically he answered:

*"We never mess with the villagers because they are like our neighbours<sup>13</sup>. Sometimes some altercation with neighbour is possible but it does not last long. We are the people of jungle and we have no grudges with duniya. If we feel uncomfortable with the surrounding where we are living, we can migrate from there before we are supposed to move out because the whole jungle is ours. But it rarely happens, almost never happens"*

Although indirectly, the leader dropped some important information about the premature migration, which is caused sometimes by uneasy relationship with the surrounding villagers. He hinted if they feel uneasy with the surrounding, including local people, they can leave the place for another settlement area. *"Unnecessary compromise and negotiation cost our cultural values and our almighty gets angry with us. In this case we happily choose migration. Additionally, we don't want to enmesh with the villagers"*, he clarifies the cultural and social importance of migration in such cases.

#### **4.10. CONCLUSION**

Raute are quite aware of the changing socio-cultural and ecological scenario of the surrounding. The strategies they have been employing are found very suitable not only for resistance but also

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<sup>13</sup> He said that the villagers are "Like our neighbour", not the neighbour. That implies their ephemeral relation with the villagers.

adaptation. The use of verbal arts, on the one hand, has helped to maintain their cultural privacy thereby not letting the outsider ask personal questions, and, on other hand, the same verbal arts are helping them in cultural negotiation and creating a harmonious ambience for acclimatizing in the changed periphery. The psychological and emotional strength they have acquired through the tactics of fictive relation and dual social status have massively helped them to embolden intercultural relation, and get asymmetrical exchange in bartering. Similarly, the idea of Raute not to keep close relation and enmesh with the sedentary people has also helped them in two ways: first of all, it helps Raute to keep some distance from sedentary people which further helps maintaining cultural autonomy; secondly, it avoids possible untoward (that could happen) and keep the bilateral relationship constant. Petty theft, which is a popular social phenomenon in sedentary society too, though not reliable, has also somehow solved the immediate problem of food shortage sometimes.



## CHAPTER 5: SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES AND LIVELIHOOD PRACTICES OF RAUTE

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In chapter four, I discussed the traditional economic culture of Raute and possible strategies they have been applying to keep their ancestral cultural practices intact, as well as to adapt in the changing faces of the environment. It is true and quite lucid that nomadic Raute, by heart, never wish to live sedentary life settling permanently. They loathe agriculture, livestock or any other kind of business for living life. Calling themselves the king of the forest, they always claim their usufruct right of using forest resources and migration inside the forest wherever they love to.

Although, the traditional livelihood practices of Raute have been playing important roles in cultural preservation avoiding the external socio-cultural dominance and assimilation, the growing changes in nature/physical environment and socio-political scenario of the country have severely affected their ways of life (Fortier, 2001:195 Bhattachan, 2005:286), mainly the mode of economy. Despite their meticulous attempts to keep the socio-cultural life isolated and intact from the dominant sedentary people and live a life completely based on forest economy, there are several factors in the particular national politics, forest policy, global warming, globalization, etc., which have been continuously forcing the nomadic Raute to apply external cultural practices for adaptation. In this chapter, I am going to discuss why and how the cultural economy of the nomadic hunter-gatherers has been changing over the period of time, mainly after 1990.

### 5.2. POLITICAL CHANGES IN NEPAL AND RAUTE

In the eighteenth century King Prithvi Narayan Shah (1779-1831 BS), the first king of shah dynasty of Nepal, unified a number of chiefdoms and small states which existed inside the territory of present day Nepal. However, the Shah dynasty soon embroiled in a protracted power struggle that culminated in the emergence of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1846, the first Prime minister of Rana oligarchy, who introduced the system of hereditary prime minister. The Rana regime, which lasted for 104 years in Nepal, eventually collapsed in 1950 by the overweight of its own unpopularity among the people and the royal family, heralding the emergence of modern

democratic Nepal. However, the multiparty democracy did not last for long, as the King Mahendra hijacked it in 1960 and established the party-less *Panchayat* system (Uppadhya, 2015:84).

The socio-political movements launched by the government of Nepal in the 1960s in the name of social transformation, for example the Forest Acts of 1957 and 1961, the modernization of the legal code 1962, the Land Reform Act of 1964, etc. affected the traditional socio-cultural life of people, because they followed a top-bottom approach, a kind of series of imposition. The Land Reform Act abolished the *Kipat* land system, which had been giving right to the indigenous people of eastern Nepal to use the land for hundreds of years, and stranded them landless. Similarly, the forest conversion acts formulated without considering the ground reality of historical livelihood practice of forest-based people, like Raute, paralyzed the traditional mode of economy, thereby forcing them to adopt alternatives (Bhattachan, 2005: 285-289). In 1981, the government of Nepal sedentarized five groups of Raute, except the present day's nomadic group, of western Nepal providing some alternatives way of living, for example land, house and cattle (Singh, 1998 b: 27).

Politics is a universal and dynamic activity. Its dynamism accelerated in full swing in post-cold war era, thereby changing the world politics into global politics: the relations among various actors in the world, the nature of these relations or interactions and their consequences (Singh, 2008:801). The political steps taken for the development of the nation after the reestablishment of democracy in 1990 in Nepal were also fully influenced by global politics. The policies, such as economic liberalization and privatization, the political movements formulated on the basis of global political interest rather than understanding the local geo-socio-political scenario, opted for by the Nepalese government in the early 1990s expanded the global market economy even to remote areas of Nepal. Regarding the impact of the growing market in the remote villages of western Nepal, where Raute have trade relation for ages, Krishna Bahadur, age 50, says:

*“The government has brought everything to duniya at courtyard. The number of villagers who used to involve in bartering food grains for woodenwares made by Raute have remarkably plummeted down ever since the market provided them things needed. The villagers are enticed by the fancy products available in the market. Since the villagers can*

*sell their production (e.g. crops, vegetables) in the market for cash money, the trend of giving such things sometimes to Raute has also been decreasing. In fact, the emotional attachment between the Raute and the villagers has been diluted these days, even though our interaction rate has been increasing because of several factors such as community forest, welfare programs, etc.”*

The modern concepts of development for example, forest conservation, infrastructure development, market expansion, etc., mean almost nothing to Raute because these concepts not only handicap the traditional cultural practices but also impede their freedom to roam through the forest (Gurung et.al, 2014:31). They harbour a big grudge against the government and the political leaders who, they consider, confiscated their right of wandering in the jungle and using resources freely by promulgating laws. About the impact of national forest law on the livelihood of Raute, Prakash Bahadur, age 50, says:

*“Laws are promulgated only to limit the Raute’s way of life. The forest is our home, our life. Do you think life is possible without home? No. This is nature. You can’t control it with laws, only god can if he wants. Restricting us to have our source of economy in the name of protected forests and areas for wild life conservation is very unfair and equates with sending a Raute for hunting tying his both hands. We ask the government, if it restricts us in using forests, give us permanent alternatives of living life. But we don’t adopt sedentary life style.”*

The global politics of governance involves a lot of national and translational organizations to accomplish the goal. There are a lot of NGOs and INGOs today working with Raute in the name of enhancing their socio-cultural life. Since such organizations are politically guided and responsible before the donor, they have implemented global/modern programs, especially the mode of global consumerism, to solve the immediate problems of Raute. For example, many NGOs and welfare organizations distribute cash money in the community; however, they don’t teach the ideas how to make cash. The support of I/NGOs ‘providing fish instead of teaching how to fish’ has made them more dependent on the external world, thereby eroding the indigenous knowledge and mode of economy.

Because of frequent meetings and discussions with various stakeholders and taking part in many local programs such as bio-diversity conservation, all Raute, who used to be called mum traders, can efficiently articulate their voices in Nepali language today. The leaders and some other senior men of the community are found very eloquent and logical in talking. Their external relation and interaction has extended beyond the local area, as they have visited three different Prime ministers at the PMO in the last ten years and expressed their grievances. However, the help measures provided by all the Prime Ministers were influenced by global politics<sup>14</sup>, for example, the incumbent prime minister K.P. Oli, handed the Raute leaders Rs 300,000 (approx. 27,000 NOK) on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2016 and urged them to abandon nomadic life and adopt sedentary life wherever they want (Kathmandu Post<sup>15</sup>, 2016, Feb 12). These days the government of Nepal has been providing monthly allowance to all Raute, and the local leaders of various political parties often offer them food grains, goats, chicken, etc. on the occasion of festivals.

Taking everything into account, although a number of programs have been launched by the state and non-state organizations to address the livelihood issues of Raute, these all are influenced by global economy, which ignores the traditional indigenous mode of production of Raute (ibid). The immediate economic help provided by the external agencies has increased the dependency of Raute to them thereby deteriorating the traditional mode of production. Here are some major elements of politics which have massively affected the traditional life of Raute.

### **5.2.1 FOREST LAW AND RAUTE**

The Ranarchy<sup>16</sup> (1846-1950) destroyed the forest of Nepal in two different ways; first in the name of increasing the area of cultivable land, and second in the name of generating national revenue for own expenditure since the Ranas were all in all (Joshji, 1993). Considering the increasing deforestation rate mainly because of lack of forest law, late King Mahendra, promulgated the ‘Private Forest Nationalization Act’ – a forest law for the first time in Nepal, in

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-W5ZjAbpKMk> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCkFG6iRfzU>

<sup>15</sup> Kathmandu Post is one of the leading national dailies of Nepal.

<sup>16</sup> Ranarchy is the oligarchy of Rana dynasty which ruled Nepal for 104 years, from 1846 to 1950.

1957, defining all forests in the country as national forests, which the individuals were prohibited to use it without government's consent (Gautam et.al, 2004:136-137).

In 1959 the government established the forest ministry and increased the number of forest bureaucrats for scientific forest management, and two acts were promulgated in 1960s, Forest Act (1961) and Forest Protection Act (1967). There was no doubt that the objective of those forest acts was to prevent forest destruction and ensure protection through better management, but it led to a lot of controversies and ignited a lot of debates on local and national levels because people considered that the act infringed their right to use forest resources and neglected the indigenous skills of forest management (Regmi, 1978). According to Bhattachan (2005:269-280), the stringent forest policy of the government affected more the indigenous people, including Raute, the forest dwellers, whose living was/is based on forest resources to a larger extent than that of other people because most of the indigenous people's livelihood economy was/is based on natural resources rather than other occupations such as agriculture, business, government service, etc.

Considering the growing forest destruction despite several meticulous attempts for conservation, the government amended the forest policy to make it people friendly, and enacted community forest policy in 1978. The community forest policy for sustainable management obviously enticed people and got their active involvement in management, however, according to forest experts, as there was still lack of mutual trust, sceptic nature of government and mishandling behaviour, especially hoarding system, of FUGs, it could not work well in controlling the encroachment rate of forest resources as expected (Gautam et.al, 2004:138-139).

Time Period	1964	1978/79	1984/85
Total Area of Nepal covered by forest	45.5%	38.1%	37.4%

Source: Department of forest research and survey, ministry of forestry, Nepal, 1994

The table above reflects the area covered by forest in Nepal from 1964 to 1985. Although the forest area was decreasing, the rate was significantly lowered down since the inception of community forest policy. However, according to Durga Bahadur, age 72, Raute have

encountered more problems in their nomadic way of life since 1980s. Remembering the days of 1960s, he said:

*“Since the late king Mahendra, during his Surkhet visit in 1965, allowed us with a public statement to use forest resources as much as we need, we then had no big problems in using them except some disturbances rendered by poachers and tree choppers. But by the time the villagers took control over the forest (i.e. community forest user groups), it is true that we have faced a lot of obstacles in enjoying our usufruct right of using forests, the spinal cord of our economy.”*

So, what is the role of the forest in Raute’s traditional life? Let us discuss it briefly. Since Raute are forest dwelling nomadic hunters-gatherers, their life is obviously based on hunting and gathering forest resources. They hunt wild animals, basically monkeys and rhesus, but other animals such as deer, porcupines, boars, roosters, etc. are also their favourite. Wild yam, tubbier, rhizome, fiddle head fern, bamboo shoot, berries, mushrooms, nuts, etc. are other food items they collect. If they find gradual depletion in forest vegetables, they have a traditional practice of setting fire in the forest to make the area more fertile which can yield ample food in the coming years. Similarly, in their traditional way of life they fell big trees indifferently for making woodenwares such as bowl, box, chest, etc., which they exchange for food grains with the villagers, and young trees are thickly used in making temporary huts which they burn down while migrating to another places.

Today, there are 1013 community forests in four districts where nomadic Raute traverse for periodic migration. Since the forest authority has transferred forest access and management rights to forest user group for sustainable utilization of local forests (ibid), the FUGs<sup>17</sup> of this area have also been working for better management of forest resources curbing the Raute’s traditional way of forest use, which is considered as one of the severe causes of environmental hazard.

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<sup>17</sup> Forest User Groups

According to a local resident of the research area, Purna Thapa Kshetri, age 48, the confrontation between nomadic Raute and FUGs is almost inevitable when they start making temporary huts at the newly migrated place. It is a traditional practice of Raute clearing the small trees and shrubs in the area where they decide to settle temporarily by erecting huts; however, it has become a serious headache for the villagers who have been working for forest conservation. According to a villager, Narahari Sharma, age 43, the periodic migration of Raute has severely affected forest resources. Not only do they cut down the big alive trees for fire wood and clean sweep the forest at the temporary settlement area, they also chop down small trees, the future of dense forest, of required size for pole/pillar, eaves, ridge, buttress, etc. for huts instead of branches of big trees. While observing the huts, I too found maximum use of wood, and asked the leader whether the poles, buttresses etc. are the branches or the small trees themselves. He cautiously answered, *“They are both, but more are the branches of big trees”*. Additionally, he said:

*“Since we are required to make sloppy roofs, use of branches of some kind of trees become very difficult sometimes because they are very hard and almost impossible to bend into an arc shape for eaves. That is why, in such cases, we use small trees to get properly angular shaped roof because they are naturally soft and easy to bend as required. However, we have significantly lowered down the use of wood while making huts”*.

It is an irony that despite Raute’s claim of using only *Kukath* for making woodenwares and as less wood as possible for constructing temporary huts, the confrontations between Raute and surrounding sedentary people on the issue of forest destruction have been continuing with time. The surrounding villagers claim contrarily that the Raute are never serious and loyal on the promises they make for sustainable use of forest resources. Although on this issue there are no records of brutal physical fights between them yet, they exchange heated conversations sometimes in bilateral meetings.

Before migration the Raute has a traditional system to identify and fix the new location for temporary living, and nowadays, though informally, they sometimes send prior information of migration to the nearby villages. However they don’t wait for the response of the villagers. In fact, this latest practice, according to Raute, has become one of the best ways to avoid

unnecessary confrontations which they honestly don't want. The member of FUGs, also agree that the dissemination of migration information has at least helped sometimes to sit together and discuss how to use forests.

The FUGs thoroughly observe the activities of Raute during their stay in the nearby forest, and react immediately if Raute are found destructing the resources. FUGs mean that cutting down trees for making woodenwares and fire woods causes deforestation, setting fires in the forest causes deforestation and kills many wild lives as well, digging big holes for wild yams can trigger land slide, and hunting wild lives leads to the extinction of endangered spices. Many unprecedented encounters increase the rounds of formal and informal talks, and in every talk the villagers consistently pressurize Raute to abide by the national forest law in spite of Raute's resistance in many points raised in such talks <sup>18</sup>. However, in the meantime the villagers provide some alternative ways of living nomadic life with minimum use of forests in particular; the thick roofs of huts that used to be thatched (for water resistance) by bushy shrubs or branches of trees have been replaced by tents and/or big- thick plastic sheets provided directly or indirectly by the villagers.

Similarly, teaching the lesson of importance of biodiversity conservation as well as the legal consequent if forest rules are not followed, the forest officials also ask Raute in every visit with intimidating tone to abstain themselves from their traditional way of using natural resources for sustainable management.

According to the secretary of Goganapani, community forest, research area, Hari Sharan Thapa, age 52, the rate of forest destruction caused by Raute has been lowered down significantly since the establishment of FUGs. Nowadays they have completely stopped setting fire in the forest and the trend of burning down the huts while migrating elsewhere has also gradually declined. There is almost no evidence for hunting endangered animals except monkey, rhesus, small rabbit and some birds for the last half a decade. However, there are still serious problems on chopping down trees, big for woodenwares and small for constructing huts, which they do behind the back

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02sp719> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCkFG6iRfzU>



of the villagers, to be controlled. And at the same time, the Raute claim that the continuous hindrances created by the villagers in using forest resources and the threats of law have not only crippled the traditional way of life but also affected their psychology, especially of the new generation. Moreover, the occasional supports with primary needs, for example, tent, vegetables, grains, clothes etc., on the other hand, are the other tricky manoeuvres applied by the sedentary people to limit the Raute's natural movement in the forests.

Overall, the national forest management policy, especially the community forest act, has bridled Raute to use forest resources freely as before and weakened the traditional mode of economy (however it is still alive). The growing interactions of Raute with the sedentary people in formal and/or informal meetings for sustainable use of forest resources have become the predominant conduits to get them close to the villagers. Since Raute are open to talk with the local villagers nowadays, they don't hesitate to ask for help of any kind when needed and gradually get adapted in the changing socio-economic structure. In a way, of late the easy access to getting assistance for livelihood from the outsiders has become a major reason for temptation and inclination towards outside culture, thereby gradually losing independence and cultural intactness.

### **5.2.2 GLOBALIZATION AND RAUTE**

Globalization is social phenomenon based on technologies, which plays a significant role to homogenize the global culture. According to Mufwene (2004:218), it is a social process which connects the people of different parts of the world through various cultural aspects, such as economy, politics, language, etc. and develops their interdependency making the currently existing boundaries and borders irrelevant. However, the process of connecting people across the world and increasing their interdependency has been viewed with both connotations. The people with capitalistic frame of mind consider it as a true vehicle of socio-cultural development, whereas the socialists argue that it is the new form of colonization which destroys the socio-cultural values of indigenous, minority and poor people (Kelly, 1999:385). Overall, whatever the views people hold, it is true that the culture which comes under the influence of globalization gets gradually changed and it can have both positive and negative implications.

Until 1950, Nepal was almost isolated from the rest of the world since the nation was ruled by Rana<sup>19</sup> oligarchy. The establishment of democracy in 1950 provided Nepal with an opportunity to be connected with international communities. As an initial example, in 1956 United States Overseas Mission provided a special guidance to architect the national educational plan (Devkota, 2002:13). Although the assassination of the democracy by the royal coup in 1960 hindered the nation again to move ahead in full swing, the internal migration of people and easy border with India gradually developed the process of cultural exchange. The national political movement of the sixties had multiple effects on people's life, and the contact of nomadic Raute with the sedentary people also started growing up since then in a noticeable way. In 1974, Reinhard conducted an academic research on Raute, which is considered the first exposure of the nomadic hunting-gathering Raute in academia.

According to Appadurai (1996:32-33), the migration and interaction of people, the economic policy, the expansion of media and technology, and the growing rate of changing political ideologies are the major dimensions of 'global cultural flows' or globalization. When democracy was re-established in Nepal in 1990 and the government adopted economic liberalization in 1992, then Nepal truly entered into the phase of globalization, and the dimensions mentioned by Appadurai gradually flourished in the country (Khanal et.al, 2005:52-53). The open market economy combined with national privatization policy in 1994 further fertilized the soil for globalization, which gradually affected the traditional cultural roots of Nepalese, from urban modern people to nomadic hunting-gathering Raute.

Although the interaction of Raute with the external people had begun by the sixties of the last century, according to Bal Bahadur, age 60, one of the Raute leaders, who doesn't know at all what globalization is, it intensified after 1990. He further said,

*“For the last 20–25 years, although we have extended our friendly relationship with sedentary people of different parts of the world, our traditional life has been encroached in many ways. Our economic structure has been shattered.”*

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<sup>19</sup> Rana is a dynasty of the oligarchs who ruled Nepal from 1847 to 1950.

The growing market economy has expanded its wings to every corner of rural Nepal, and the availability of consumer goods has paralyzed the indigenous mode of production of Raute. The popularity of metal and plastic utensils among the villagers has significantly devalued the woodenwares of Raute. The traditional barter economy, though it is still in practice to some extent, has been now almost replaced by cash money. Until Raute were enshrouded by global capitalism, they would say touching money was a sin. However, nowadays Raute prefer money instead of food grains, which is easy to carry and can be used in the market to buy whatever goods they like. Because of the growing influence of capitalism and importance of cash flow in everyday economic life, Raute nowadays have opted for some alternatives ways of making money for adaptation. For example, a number of Rautes started working as forest security guards since 2014 (Sejuwal 2014) and wage labourers. On the very first day of my field visit, I found two boys of 15 and 16 making a wooden box for a villager. I asked Shyam Bahadur<sup>20</sup>, age 16, some questions based on their work, and the core of discussion is presented below.



**PHOTO:- 1, RAUTE BOYS MAKING WOODEN BOX AS WAGE LABOURER**

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<sup>20</sup> 'Shyam Bahadur' was older and comparatively more eloquent than 'Bishnu Bahadur', so he answered my all questions.

*Me: What are you making now and how long does take to complete it?*

*Shyam Bahadur: This is a wooden box for dual purposes, inside it you can keep your possessions and covering the lid at the top you can sleep. It takes almost 10 days to complete the box.*

*Me: Is this for order or you are planning to sell it later?*

*Shyam Bahadur: This is for order. Pointing to the villager, he said, "Mama (uncle) ordered it".*

*Me: How much food grains do you want in return for making it?*

*Shyam Bahadur: We are not going to exchange it for food grains. Mama has promised us per head Rs 50 (approx 4 Nok) for each day. We have already taken Rs 500 and he will give the rest as soon as we complete out task.*

*Me: Do you give this money to the parents or you use for yourself?*

*Shyam Bahadur: Both. But the maximum amount of money is given to the parents. We keep only a little amount for buying tobacco.*

According to traditional cultural belief, Raute are neither supposed to work for wage nor beg from others. However, the scenario has changed now. When I asked the boys (Shyam and Bishnu) to get me to their settlement area, they demanded some amount of money. The traditional culture of reciprocity and mutual help has been eroded. The impact of globalization has gradually displaced their indigenous culture, which is reflected in their productive system, consuming culture and trading mechanism today.

Since Raute are the only nomadic hunters and gatherers of Nepal, the flow of people to visit them for different purposes has been continuously increasing. Various Christian Missionaries, Red Cross, UNDP, UNICEF and several other NGOs/INGOs have been providing them support in the name of social welfare and livelihood upliftment. However, the organizations loyal to the donors have failed to deliver real service to uplift the traditional Raute culture. For many people Raute have become 'exotic' animals and 'subject' to romance. A lot of film makers, photographers, journalists and researchers also come to visit the campsite, and Raute ask them for money in return. Nowadays, asking money from the visitors has become a trend and the visitors can't get any help from Raute until the latter are given money. On the second day of field visit when I was interested to have some

discussions with the former leader of the community Ram Bahadur, age 60, he further asked me:

*“Why should I answer your questions sir? You people make a lot of money publishing articles on Raute and selling their photographs. What do Raute get in return? We, Raute, are living in famine. Rice is expensive and so are other food items. A lot of sirs like you come frequently from Kathmandu and foreign countries and give some money and things for few days but that do not help us for long to survive in the jungle. The moral and legal lessons don’t solve our perennial problems. We want a permanent solution; pension, monthly pension for all Raute at least Rs 5000 per head per month because the given Rs1000 is insufficient. Convey my voice to the Prime minister. (Taking a pause) If you want our help, help us first. You are rich people; we are very poor.”*

It was not difficult for me to understand him then. He not only wanted some monetary help from me, but also made it clear that the community has been paralyzed by the growing relation with the state and non-state agents of globalization in the name of rights, demand, incentive and pension.

Raute has a traditional culture of male dance, which is supposed to be performed mainly either to please the god or to make the villagers give extra food grains while exchanging goods. However, the traditional purity of this dance has been tarnished nowadays. They perform it to the visitors at any time for money and liquor. In fact, these days, money has become almost the sole means for purchasing, lending and selling commodities. The influence of currency in the Raute community has broken some cultural ethos, emotional attachment with widows, orphans and disabled of their own society and eroded trade relations with non-foragers. Adoption of the new consumerism culture has made their society more complex through new forms of exchange, and they are found losing their indigenized socioeconomic skills. Regarding the state of the indigenous skills today, Jit Bahadur, age 63, says:

*“The generation who spent their early life depending fully on forest resources is still alive. So, at least, I believe we have not lost our original skills of hunting and gathering. However, many of those skills have not been used for a long time, for example, catching*

*porcupine by chasing in a circle, trapping deer, hunting monkey by arrow, etc.; the new generation is not familiar with them. If we don't get chance to teach such skills to the youngsters, sooner or later our traditional skills of hunting will be lost. Additionally, the young generation, except for a few boys, is not skilled enough for carpentry because of two reasons; first, we are not allowed to use sufficient wood for it and, second, the market of our wooden products has been almost uprooted by modern products. So our skills are not lost yet but have rusted badly."*

Raute were silent traders. Until the beginning of nineties only very few of them could speak a little Nepali language and they used to lead in trading with surrounding villagers. But today all Raute can speak Nepali fluently because of the frequent interaction with the outsiders. Regarding the improvement in language Daya Bahadur, age 60, says,

*"We learnt Nepalese language for adaptation. When the ready-made plastic and metal utensils started affecting our traditional economy, we started wandering more and more in the villages for our traditional business. Even our women followed us for that. The continuous interaction helped us to understand Nepalese language on the one hand and on the other hand we paid a lot of attention to learn it for better communication and dealing, which could help in bartering the goods. Exchanging goods is our primary concern, and not so much of a concern for the villagers. Nowadays we speak Nepalese language sometimes for communication even when we are at the settlement."*

Nowadays, the influence of external languages has been spreading faster because of media expansion. I was astonished listening to a Raute boy of 16 singing a Nepali folk song while walking. When I asked how he learnt that, he replied,

*"I often go to villages and markets to get some food materials and I have heard this song on the Radio many times. So I learnt it. I know some more as well. Some of my friends also know these folk songs. We greatly enjoy singing these types of songs."*

The monolingual Raute have been transformed into multilingual. They sing these songs mainly in trade bargaining nowadays to impress the sedentary people showing their affinity. To

encapsulate, they have been using the dominant language to articulate their views clearly and forge better opportunities for adaptation.

The modern development projects of globalized world construct 'hyperspaces' in particular hotels, restaurants, markets, roads, airports, etc., which change the local socio-cultural life of local areas (Kerney, 1995:553). Because of the extension of such hyperspaces by the state and non-state agencies, the socio-cultural life of Raute has been transformed. Raute, the real wanderers, used to travel miles in a day for hunting, gathering and trading. However, the way of travelling for trading has been changed nowadays by transport facility. I saw Raute people travelling by bus to sell their goods into the market. Additionally, they use mobile phones (of sedentary villagers or of visitors) to talk with the officials of state and non-state agencies, who work for them, to intensify and strengthen the knot of interconnections. The monthly allowance provided by the government to Raute, Rs1000 per head per month, has been found as one of the most crucial factors to cultivate the consumerism in their territory.

In summary, the impact of globalization in Nepalese socio-cultural life began in the 1950s, however it intensified in the 1990s, when the democracy was resurrected and the nation opted for liberalized economic policy. The developmental projects launched by state and non-state organizations have affected the almost stationary traditional way of life of Raute. The continuous interaction with and the help from outsiders for socio-cultural welfare gradually have changed the Raute's traditional economic culture and increased the level of interconnection. Whether the effect of globalization may be defined as positive or negative that will be another part of discussion, but the changes in production, consumption and distribution culture have brought massive changes in every facet of their life.

### **5.3. CLIMATE CHANGE**

Climate is the average weather over a long period of time and when this average pattern of weather fluctuates abnormally then it is called climate change (Solomon et.al, 2007:942). In fact, the changes in total amount of energy (heat) reserved within the earth's atmosphere cause climate change, and it basically happens by two processes: (i) natural process such as volcanic eruption, changes in sun's intensity, etc. and (ii) human activities, mainly burning fuels, cutting

down trees, and excessive use of chemicals, which cause excessive emission of greenhouse gases (The Royal Society, 2010) (Dahal et.al, 2009:4-5).

According to UNFCCC<sup>21</sup>, climate change is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century's industrial revolution, the rate of energy consumption has increased by leaps and bound. The burning of fossil fuels and the use of chemicals in bigger amounts for energy produce excessive amount of greenhouse gases, which disturbs (by increasing) the balanced level of naturally available GHGs and results in rising global temperature. Similarly, deforestation, which has been caused mainly because of expanding industrialism and burgeoning population, is another striking reason for thickening the level of GHGs, thereby causing global warming because trees are the natural regulator of carbon dioxide gas, which not only converts CO<sub>2</sub> into oxygen by photosynthesis but also sequester a huge amount carbon within itself.

Climate change and forests are inherently linked, and the by-products of climate change, in particular draught, erratic monsoon, flood, landslide, increasing pest, etc., severely damage the productivity of forest resources (Timilsina et.al, 2014:1-2). Although everyone in the world now has been affected by it, the life of forest-based people, including people like Raute whose livelihood is directly based/depends on forest resources, has become more challenging and more vulnerable because the forest ecosystem is highly sensitive to temperature (Dahal et.al, 2009:14).

Nomadic Raute of western Nepal, which is found climatically more vulnerable than other parts of Nepal (Dahal et.al, 2009:24), have been experiencing its impact for the last some decades although they don't know what global warming is. During my field stay, Raute shared their livelihood difficulties that they have been experiencing for some decades because of global warming and the adaptive skills they have developed in this ecological change.

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<sup>21</sup> United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 1992, Article 1.



### **5.3.1 CHANGING WEATHER AND DECLINING WATER RESOURCES**

Although there is no scientific data about the exact increment in temperature in the area where Raute live in, according to the Nepalese meteorological data from 1975 to 2006, the temperature of Nepal has been increased by 0.006 degree Celsius every year and people across the country have felt it (Malla, 2008:62). Like other people of the country, scorching days, warmer nights, shorter and hotter winters, irregular and destructive rainfalls, etc. are some major characteristics of climate change noted by Raute. Because of significantly irregular rainfall and increasing hotness, the sources of water have gradually dried off. Raute had a traditional culture of drinking water only from sources like wells, lakes, etc. where water remains stagnant or doesn't flow, but nowadays there are almost no wells left in the area they traverse. They have started drinking water from the streams and the taps for adaptation; however, they collectively voice that the quantity as well as the quality of running water is also decreasing and they often have to walk miles to fetch drinkable water.

### **5.3.2 ERRATIC MONSOON, FLOOD AND LANDSLIDE**

Of late, the Raute and the surrounding villagers of the research area have been experiencing a completely erratic monsoon rainfall. Although the amount of rainfall is almost similar over the period of last 40 years (1975-2006), the trend of rainfall in Nepal has been found very erratic (Malla, 2008:63). According to Raute people, the monsoon<sup>22</sup> starts late these days and disappears soon. Nowadays the number of rainy days has been decreasing, but when it rains, it often rains cats and dogs. Remembering the catastrophe of 2013 June, flood and landslides, which brought a massive destruction in western Nepal, the Raute community described the painful moment of forced migration because of landslides in their settlement. The increasing trend towards floods and landslides have not only swept away a lot of natural resources, which Raute could feed on, but also devastated their travelling routes for hunting and gathering in the forest.

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<sup>22</sup> Monsoon is a cloudy wind that brings rain, and it generally starts in June and ends in September in Nepal.

### **5.3.3 DECREASING VEGETATION AND WILD LIFE AND INCREASING ALIENS**

Decreasing useful forest vegetation and wild life and increasing alien shrubs and pests have become, according to the Raute, the main threats for their traditional life. The soft trees that they used to get easily in the forest for making woodenwares like *Simal* (Red cotton), *Phaledo* (Indian coral tree), *Tiju* (Indian persimmon), *Salla* (chir pine) and *Tuni* (cedrella tree) are in severely declining state. *Uittis* (cedar), another important tree for wooden utensils, has become very fragile and almost of no use because of getting maturity earlier (Dahal et.al, 2009:14). Similarly, the availability of medicinal herbs, wild fruits, berries has also declined remarkably. *Ciraito* and *Akasbeli* are no more found in Raute travelling forests today. *Harro Barro*, *Jamun*, *Amala*, *Kafal*, etc. are also rarely available. The berries and wild fruits do not have the original taste and their seeds are quite small. Continuous expansion of Crofton weed, *Bhaisikuro* (a thorny shrub) and *Hande* (a small shrub with a hard stem) have affected significantly the production (regeneration) of Raute's primary traditional foods such as yam, mushroom and bamboo shoot and wild vegetables – *niguro* (fiddlehead fern) and *halhale* (toothed dock).

Along with vegetables, the animals that Raute prefer to hunt are also declining gradually. There were times when they used to hunt 10, 15 monkeys in a day but nowadays hardly fifteen in a month. Wild birds and animal like boar, bear and porcupine, are rarely found in the forest. Big rabbits have disappeared, but the number of insects, especially mosquitos, is growing since the days are getting hotter.

### **5.3.4 SPREADING WATERBORNE DISEASE AND USE OF ALLOPATHIC TREATMENT**

Raute have a strong faith upon their traditional healing system. If something goes wrong, for example illness, accidents, etc. in the society, they firstly worship their 'god' and then only take herbal medicine. However, these healing traditions today are not as effective as used to be. For the last 10–15 years they have been suffering from diseases, such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid, etc. significantly more compared to the past. Since the water resources are being polluted gradually, the impact of such waterborne diseases has been multiplied with time. The useful medicinal herbs such as *Ciraito*, *Dankerno*, *Amala* for waterborne diseases are declining severely and the efficacy of such herbals has also lowered down. There are no summers nowadays when

these diseases won't take lives. In July 2012, when cholera broke out in the community and killed three small children within two days, they were asked to take allopathy, but they rejected in the beginning. When the epidemic took the lives of two more children and two elderly people in the same month, the highly suffering patients accepted it with hesitation for the first time in the history however. From 2013, some Raute have been accepting vitamin 'A' for their children of less than five years of age. Though very slowly, the inclination of Raute to modern medicine has been elevating to adapt themselves in changing climatic pattern.

#### **5.4. CONCLUSION**

The economic and ecological challenges have severely threatened the traditional (economic) culture of Raute. It's true that Raute have not surrendered yet and still practice the traditional culture, but the dependency on it has significantly decreased. Depletion of forest resources (because of climate change), restriction on using them freely (because of laws), getting livelihood helps from villagers and various state and non-state agencies, and easy availability of food and other needy items in the nearby markets (because of global economy) have punctuated Raute's traditional life and increased the rate of dependency on sedentary people. The strategies they have been employing to resist the external pressures, though seem very sensible and tricky for maintaining traditional livelihood practice, as well as for cross-cultural adaptation in the changing scenario of the surrounding, are not strong enough to withstand the global and natural tides. Consequently, the traditional economic structure of Raute has been metamorphosing, and it is hard to predict how long they will be able to preserve it if the external forces continue to deflect them like today.



## CHAPTER 6: CHANGING ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND ITS RELATION WITH LANGUAGE, FOOD CULTURE AND DRESSING STYLE

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Even though Raute employ a lot of strategies through word and deed to avoid the assimilation into the sedentary culture, the global economy has influenced every facet of their traditional life. Expansion of global economy in different forms, such as bio-diversity conservation, infrastructure development, social welfare program, expansion of market, etc., through various state and non-state organizations has shattered the indigenous traditional way of production (economy), i.e., hunting, gathering and trading the woodenwares for food grains with the sedentary villagers, of this small band. Economic change has directly or indirectly influenced many other aspects of their traditional life, for example, depletion of indigenous skills, growing dependency, reduction in migration rate, ways of festivals celebrations, etc.

In this chapter I am going to discuss whether the changes in the traditional mode of production by modern means and ecology have directly or indirectly affected their language, food habits and dress style.

### 6.2. ECONOMIC CHANGE AND LANGUAGE

Every society, from the most primitive to the most advanced, depends on some form of communication network to transmit, receive and act upon messages, thoughts, attitudes and feelings through mutually agreed and understandable codes or symbols (Oyewo, 2000:157). And, in fact, the codes or symbols what we use for communication make up language- one of the most important characteristics of human behaviour (Tremholm, 1995:82). Although such codes and symbols vary from place to place, they not only play a vital role in transmitting information, but also work as a necessary condition for human survival, integrating the social members together. It is virtually impossible for any group of people to express their common and binding interest thoroughly without language.

There are almost 6000 languages in the world (Sengupta, 2009:17). Raute speak 'Khamchi', a language of Tibeto-Burman family. The sedentary Raute and some tribes of India also speak this

language but with different dialects. The dialect that nomadic Raute speak is not decipherable even for other Khamchi speakers (Singh 1998 b:27). The language of Raute does not have script. It has been transmitted orally for ages and everyone in the community has a very good command over the language.

As the global economy expands, the linguistic barriers gradually fall down and the politically less powerful languages, indigenous language in particular, begin to lose their grip and succumb to dominant national or international languages (Pun, 2012:17). Ever since the Raute came under the attack of globalization, the way of their communication has been changed. The Khamchi speaker Raute, have become bilingual today, as every individual in the band can easily communicate in Nepali language too. The changes in the economic structure may not have direct impact on the native language, but the factors which are highly affected by Raute's modern day economy, e.g., the changing migration trend, which has accelerated inter-community interactions; have direct effect on Raute's intra- and inter-community communication pattern (Singh 1998: 119).

Nowadays, the periodic migration rate has been decreased. Earlier, before the forest law was introduced, Raute used to stay at a place maximum for two weeks (Reinhard, 1974:242). However, nowadays, they remain stationary for two months. Regarding the increasing length of stay, when I asked Raute leader Dipak Bahadur, age 40, whether this was a sign indicating adoption of sedentary life in the near future, he replied:

*“Not at all. We are never going to live sedentary life like you people do. We feel it a kind of suffocation. Yes, of course we are staying longer in a particular place compared to the past but there are a number of reasons behind it. Firstly, nowadays we are neither allowed to cut down sufficient number of trees for woodenwares nor to hunt animals. Secondly, the availability of resources in the forest is also sharply declining these days because of global warming. Thirdly, since we have to buy most of the food items these days, we keep monetary relationship with the shopkeepers and other villagers. Most of the time we buy goods on debt and pay the dues when we get incentives from the visitors or allowance from the government. To clear the debt sometimes it takes longer time than expected. In fact, longer stay has helped us to gain the faith of the villagers, who lend us*

*some money and wait until we get government allowance. Because of these reasons our staying tenure has become longer these days.”*

Although he rejected the idea of living a sedentary life, his points made it clear to me that the increasing the length of stay is solely caused by the global economy. Similarly, the developing trend of longer stay at a particular place has not only fostered the institutional relations between two groups but also the personal. It’s natural that the more time you spend together, the closer you become, and the closer you become, the more informal relation you enjoy. Focusing on this topic, I had conducted two small surveys and the reports are presented below.

What makes you staying longer at a place nowadays?

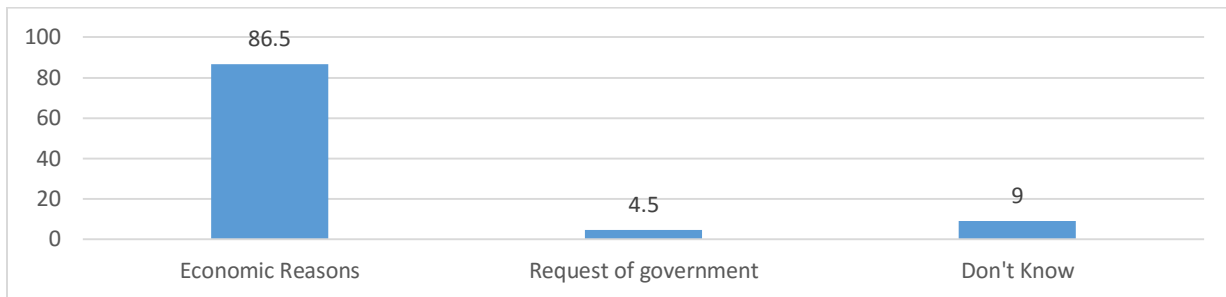


Figure 2: reason for staying longer period in a particular place these days, (field work 2014)

The graph above bolsters the view of Dipak Bahadur. Nearly 87% of the respondents claim that the tenure of staying at a place has been increasing because of economic reasons, while 9% has no idea why this is happening. There are some people who believe that the request of the government officials has made them decrease the rate of migration.

What do you think the reasons of strengthening mutual faith and personal relationship between you and the sedentary people?

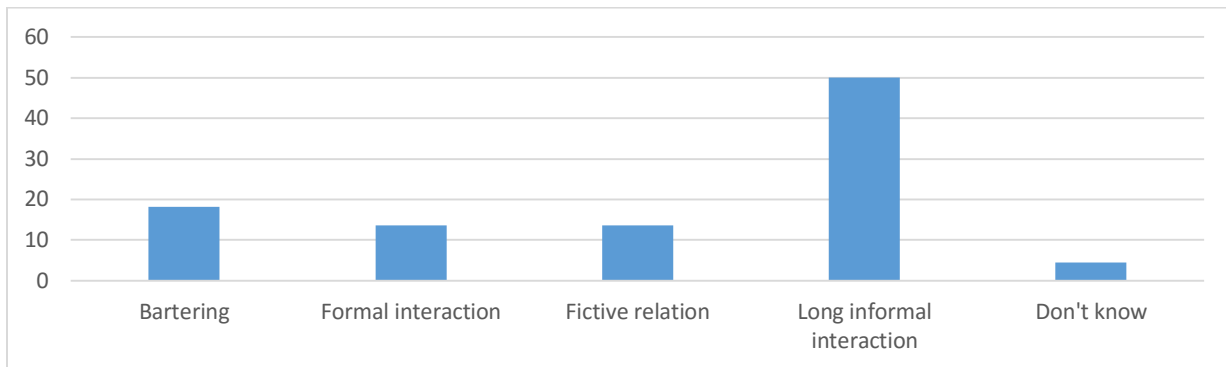


Figure 3: reason of strengthening mutual faith and personal relationship, (field work 2014)

According to the line graph, 50% people credit the ‘long and informal interaction’ for strengthening the mutual faith and personal relations between them and the sedentary people where 26 % believe that because of the formal meetings (13%) and because of having fictive relations with the sedentary people (13%), the mutual relationship between the two parties has become stronger. Covering almost 19%, a big chunk of people still asserts that their professional relationship has helped them to grow the trust and personal relation between two groups. Almost 5% of people have no idea why this is happening.

Considering the fact when the socio-economic and personal relationships of two groups get closer, the language of the dominant group gradually suppresses the language of the minority (Bandhu 1989:127), I asked another leader, Prakash Bahadur, age 50, whether the community had experienced any threat upon their language like their indigenous skills. He said:

*“There is no threat upon our language yet. We are almost 150 members in the community and everyone can speak Raute language fluently. The advantage for us nowadays is all the members of our community can speak Nepalese language, which has helped us to extend our relationship with the sedentary people. As I am a leader and have to attend so many meetings and programs at different places with national and international stakeholders, I would like to learn some English language as well so I could understand*



*them. You know, if you learn the language of rich people you can communicate easily and get help.”*

Since all the members of the tribe can fluently communicate in Khamchi, it's true that there is no immediate threat on it. However, the language which doesn't have written script and the speakers are learning dominant languages enthusiastically for various purposes, mainly for economic enhancement, is definitely threatened by extinction sooner or later (Yadav and Turin 2005:33). The Raute leader's interest in learning English surprised me a lot. It was clear from his tone that he wanted to learn English to get better opportunities for economic upliftment of the community. The way Raute encourages their children to learn Nepalese language, and the youngsters learn Nepalese songs, proverbs, etc. in addition to general communicative language may have serious impact on their mother tongue in the long run (Crawford, 1996:50-51). Here are some survey reports regarding the state of Khamchi language and the influence of dominant language (which foster the claim of the leader).

Do the parents want their children learning Nepalese language?

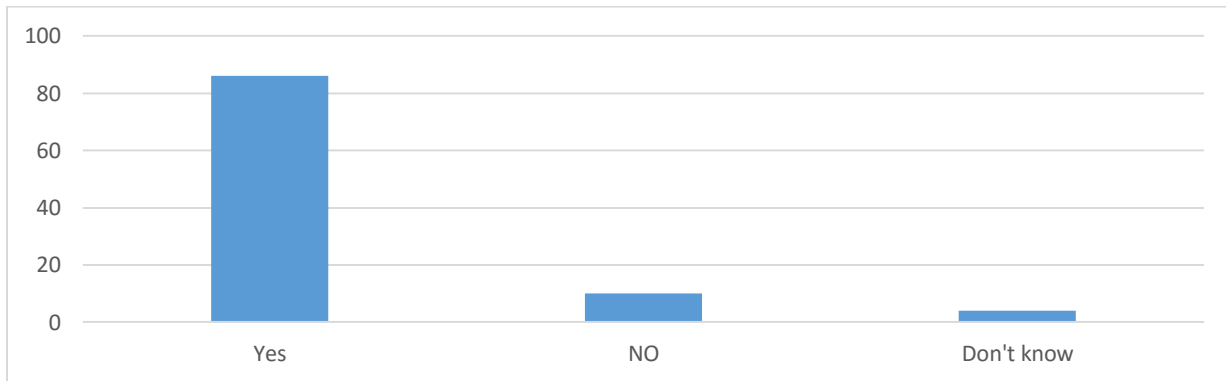


Figure 4: Parents who prefer their children to learn Nepalese language, (field work, 2014)

Which language do they prefer using for communication with tribe members?

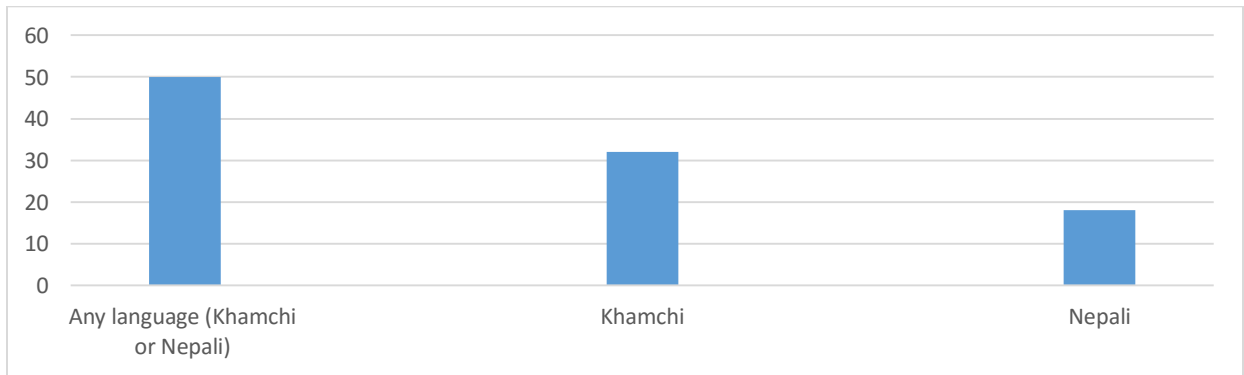


Figure 5: Preference for language while talking within the tribe members, (field work, 2014)

Which language do they find comfortable in speaking?



Figure 6: Comfortable language in speaking, (field work, 2014)

Overall, the aspects of traditional socio-cultural practices of Raute have been continuously changing in a noticeable pace ever since the extended global economic politics was implemented by the state as nation building program. As far as the impact on Raute's mother tongue, Khamchi, is concerned, presently it has not faced any immediate threat since all the members of the band possess extremely good command over it. However, the spreading influence of dominant Nepalese language and preference of Raute to learn it for better livelihood opportunities in changing socio-economic scenario have certainly diluted the strength of Khamchi and can have worse impact in the future if the same continues.

### 6.3. ECONOMIC CHANGE AND FOOD HABIT

The main reason why we eat is to satiate our hunger thereby fulfilling the physiological and nutritional need; however, what we choose to eat depends upon many other determinants as well. 'Eating' food is a natural need but 'food habit' is a culture, and it can be influenced by many factors, such as economy, physical state, environmental situation, social structure, etc. (Fischeler, 1980:937). That is why there is no common staple food in the world.

Since food habit is an integral part of culture, the changes in the economic structure of Raute has made a massive impact on the traditional food habits, just like in other cultural aspects. The food culture they have been following now is a hybrid culture, neither totally like hunter-gatherers nor like sedentary people.

The traditional sources of food for livelihood of Raute are hunting, primarily monkeys, gathering yam and other vegetables and trading of wooden objects for food stuffs such as rice, maize, wheat, etc. with the villagers (Reinhard, 1974:239). According to sex and age group, they divide themselves and collect food in different ways. Generally, men are supposed to hunt and trade woodenware for grains, women collect edible plants, yams and look after children at home, and the children help their parents in their household activities. However, this traditional mode of production which was fully sustained by the forest has been severely affected by forest laws coupled with forest land degradation (global warming) and accelerated market economy. These days, the forests are not sufficient to supply the food needed to the community anymore; consequently, the Raute's inclination, deliberately or not, towards markets for food stuffs have been increasing.

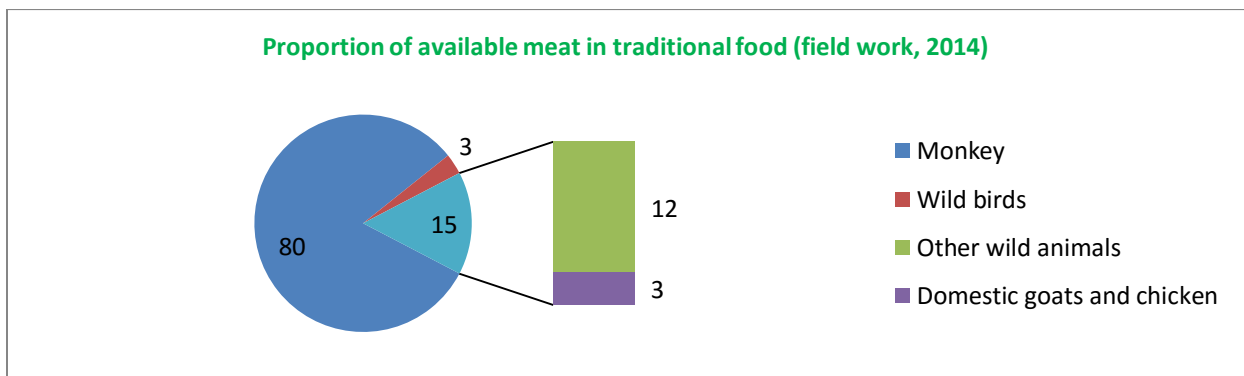
The traditional food of Raute consists 50% of meat, 20% wild edible plants, yams and domestic vegetables and 30% grains, in average. The meat of monkey gets the top priority and used to be consumed more. Regarding the important of monkey meat, Ram Bahadur, age 60, says in Raute's fashion:

*“Bachna ko lagi ta aru ni khainchha (We are eat available edible things for survival)  
Paye ta Raute lai badar nai chahinchha. (But the Raute always die for monkey)”*

In the past when Raute were solely depended on forest resources, monkey hunting was the most prominent task for livelihood. They used to leave home early in the morning and divide themselves into different hunting groups according to their skills and age. By the time they would return home, generally at dusk, there used to be a lot of games and the senior men would divide it in equal proportion for all the members of the hunting team and some portion to the community members. Remembering past days of monkey hunting, Govin Bahadur, age 63, says:

*“The primary idea of hunting monkey is/was using nets. Setting up the nets on the monkey trails, some of us hide somewhere near, where other members of the group chase monkey by yelling and whistling towards the net. Once the prey gets into the net, we pull the net ropes to close the ends, and finally we use axe and clubs for killing. In average, we used to kill around 100 monkeys in a month; the highest numbers I remember was 30 in a day. However, times have changed now. First of all, there are not sufficient numbers of monkeys like in the past; secondly there are so many other social and legal restrictions. Nowadays, we hardly get one monkey in day, not daily, but in average.”*

Apart from monkey, the wild birds, boars, jackals, big rabbits and porcupines are also Raute’s favourite games. They used to hunt tigers and bears as well but very rarely. Getting some chicken and goats from the sedentary villages, exchanged from woodenwares, is also a historical tradition to fulfil the meat requirements. According to the gathered information, the traditional food consists at least 450 gm of meat/day/person, and the sources of meat are shown in the following chart.



Similarly, edible wild plants such as leafy greens, shoot vegetables, species, medicinal herbs, fruits, berries and yams are other important sources of traditional Raute food. Generally, this is the work of women, however men also involve in foraging if there is no hunting and trading routine. Among the wild food, yam covers the highest proportion. *Dioscorea rotundata*, although it is/was the least available yam, is the most desired traditional food and foragers run miles for this, whereas, *Dioscorea esculenta* is the mostly used common type of yam. In rainy season, the shoots of bamboo and *nigalo* also provide a good amount of food. Additionally, Raute have a tradition of collecting some vegetables such as spinach, carrot, radish, cabbage, *skus*, pumpkin, etc. from the villagers.

Cereals comprise a good proportion in Raute's traditional food composition. Since these food items are not available in the forest, the only source of getting them was/is bartering woodenwares with villagers. The importance of grains in Raute's traditional food habit, according to Daya Bahadur, age 60, is:

*“We are Raute living in the forest, but this does not mean we don't eat cereals. Our trade relation with the sedentary people has helped us to fulfil this requirement. We primarily consume maize and millet, where rice, wheat, barley etc. are other cereals we are used to. The small children and the elderly people consume these items more. The importance of cereals is very high in festive seasons because we make various foods such as rice, bread, etc. Additionally, we use cereals, mainly barley and wheat, for making traditional beer which has very high value in our rituals.”*

The food that makes Raute's traditional cuisine are still consumed, however the proportion is very low. Climate change has severely degraded the re-productivity of Raute's food resources. The multipurpose wild herbals *Ciraito* and *Akasbeli* are no more found in Raute travelling forests today. *Harro Barro*, *Jamun*, *Amala*, *Kafal*, etc. are also rarely available and so are fiddle head fern, toothed duck, mushroom and yam. Similarly, the overall use of meat has gradually gone down with the decreasing number of monkeys in the forests. Moreover, the forest laws have restricted Raute hunting other animals they used to do earlier.

The traditional food culture of Raute has been attacked with multiple arrows. Beside climate change and forest laws, the expansion of global economy has tremendously influenced their traditional trend for food composition. Despite decreasing barter (woodenwares for food grains) trend, the consumption of cereals and other market food products have remarkably jumped up because of soaring cash economy. The incentives and allowances provided by various organizations and individuals have further pulled Raute into the market economy. During my field stay I had conducted two qualitative surveys on availability food resources and food composition of these days which are reflected in quantitative form below.

### Comparison of food Availability at different time frames, field work 2014

S.N.	Food Resources	Trend of Availability		
		Before 1990	1990-2000	After 2000
1.	Leafy vegetable such as fiddle head fern, <i>halhale</i>	3	2	1
2	Imp. medicinal herbs, <i>ciraito</i> and <i>Akashbeli</i>	2	1	0
3	Yam	3	2	1
4	Wild fruits and berries	3	1	1
5	Mushroom	3	2	1
6	Bamboo and Nigalo Shoot	3	2	2
7	Wild animals except monkey	3	2	1
8	Monkeys	3	3	1
9	Cereals	1	2	3
Total		24	17	11

Availability trend: High=3, Moderate=2, Low=1, Extinction=0

## Composition of food, field work 2014

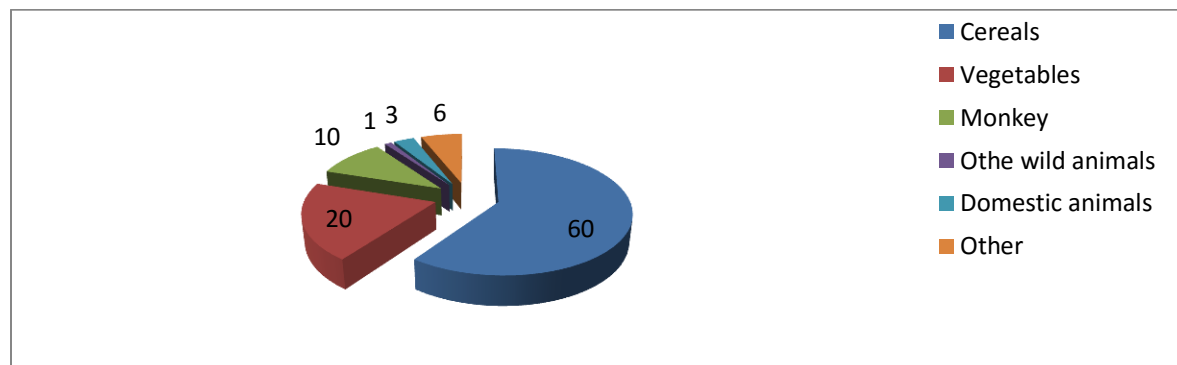


Figure 7: composition of food these days

Nowadays Raute rarely eat unbaked meat which was in vogue earlier. Meat soup has also got space in Raute's kitchen these days. However, they still prefer to have vegetables like pumpkin, radish, cabbage, etc. without cooking. They used to bake bread, wrapping the dough by a leaf, on a plane stone, but these stones now are replaced by crude frying pans prepared by local blacksmiths. Cooking oil is also in a vogue today. The use of salt, sugar and spices has increased significantly. The traditional practice of not eating any food, except raw or fruits, prepared by others (villagers) has been demolished these days. Raute eat anything whatever the villagers offer. They are used to drinking milk and have milk in their tea today, which used to be considered as sin earlier (Nepal, 1998:146-149).

Let alone food habits, the habits of drinking beverage, chewing tobacco and smoking have also been influenced by global economy. Beer/wine is very popular in the community, and in average one person consumes two hundred ml. in a day. Earlier they used to make beer with cereals (mainly with barely, wheat and rice) and wild berries, but these days they produce very small quantity at home. It has three reasons: first, extremely low availability of wild fruits and berries; second, decreasing forest resources forced them to use cereals mainly for food; and third; easy availability of wine/beer in the nearby shops. Similarly, chewing tobacco is a traditional habit and almost everyone in the community does it. Before, they used to ask green leaves of tobacco from the villagers, dry these leaves themselves and prepare as per need, however nowadays neither the villagers have tobacco plants nor Raute prefer doing this all the time. The

consumption rate of tobacco and cigarette has not changed today but the global economy has changed the source of getting them.

In a nutshell, the changes caused in the economic structure of Raute by global environmental factor and global economy have severely affected the availability rate of natural/forest food resources, on which their livelihood was fully sustained. Their traditional food culture, especially its composition has been changed now. The uses of products which can be bought in the markets have started dominating the Raute's kitchen these days.

#### **6.4. ECONOMIC CHANGE AND DRESSING STYLE**

The most obvious function of the clothing is to protect the wearer from external harms, such as sunburn, wind, etc. There are a lot of views regarding the development of clothing culture in human society, however relating the evolution of body louse with clothing: evolutionists claim that the practices of clothing should be developed at least 30,000 years ago, before the body louse existed (Kitler, 2003: 1414-1417).

In early phases of human evolution, the main sources of clothing were animal skins, bark and leaf of trees; however, it has modified gradually with time and technology. With the time, the concept of clothing has also changed from mere protection to material culture. Since it is an integral part of the human culture today, it obviously gets influenced by the changes that have occurred in other aspect of culture, such as economy, demography, physical environment, religion, etc.

Until some decades ago, the nomadic Raute used to wear pheasant feathers, cock combs, woven rhododendron and deer skin as clothes (Reinhard, 1974:197). However, the use of animal skin and feather was left in the early 1980s (Nepal, 1998:149). The traditional attire of both sexes seems similar, but the dressing style is different. Men wear short *Bhangro*-traditional attire, made up with the fibre of hemp plant, which covers the body from knee to neck and head turban where women, along with the *Ghagro* covering from calf to neck, use shawl on the neck to complete the attire (Gurung et.al, 2014:21).



The changes in Raute's economy have a noticeable impact on their traditional attire and clothing culture. Still, compared to other aspects, it is found less affected. Most of the Raute men are nowadays using clothes of modern materials such as cotton, polyester, etc. but the wearing pattern is almost similar to the traditional *bhangro*. However, instead of turban most of the men wear cap and muffler. The use of sarong, especially among elderly males, is also increasing. The wearers of modern dresses, such as pants, shirt, t-shirt, etc. were found extremely in low numbers. When I asked Ram Bahadur, aged 60, why Raute's attraction to modern dresses was comparatively lower, he answered:

*“Our traditional dress is very comfortable in wearing and it has pouch on backside where we can put our necessary things while travelling. Additionally, it does not have any button and zippers which often troubles the wearers. However, there are some Raute men in the tribe who wear modern dresses. But most of these are given, very less are bought. Food is more important than dress.”*

Compared to Raute men, women are found more inclined towards modern dress. Nowadays, the trend of wearing blouse, *sari* and four-knotted bodices has increased significantly. Instead of the traditional shawl, the head scarf has become so popular in the community. The girls of young generation are found wearing skirts as well.

Jewelleries have significant value in Raute's traditional culture. They are made of silver, iron, brass, copper, aluminium and pearl. Raute women wear nose tips, earrings, bangles and necklace (Nepal, 1998:149-150). Traditionally they are not supposed to put the ornaments off, however these days they wear heavy ornaments only in special occasions such as festivals. The trend of putting *tika*, coloured dot, on the forehead has been increasing. To make their hair, they use ribbon or thread these days. As far as the Raute men are concerned, only shamans used to wear silver bangles on their wrists and it is same practice these days too.

The biggest change in Raute's dressing style ever since the structural changes occurred in their economy is the growing fashion of foot wares. Nowadays almost everyone wears sandal or shoes (with or without socks), however they are not aware of size. I witnessed many Raute wearing

bigger slippers and shoes than of their sizes. Regarding the vogue of footwear in the community, Laal Bahadur, age 36, says:

*“Footwear not only gives a kind of comfort in walking but also saves your legs from different kinds of cuts. While felling down trees with axe, we often cut our legs, especially toes like mine, accidentally. But if you are wearing shoes, you have high chance of saving yourself from any untoward. Nowadays, it has become our habit if we go out of our settlement site we wear footwear. Ever since we started wearing footwear, the problems of thorns and sharp pebbles while walking have been edged out.”*

Almost all families have a woollen blanket today because of donor organizations. They have started using handbags to carry goods from the market. Although Raute are using some modern day clothes, they look very shabby and old because of poor cloth management.



**PHOTO:-2 CLOTHES ON FLOOR**

Overall, like other aspects of culture, the pattern of dressing has also come under the influence of global economy, however the intensity of change if found comparatively lower.

## 6.5. CONCLUSION

As it is mentioned above many time, the impacts of surrounding socio-cultural and ecological changes have not left any aspects of Raute's traditional life untouched, so there is no question whether their language, food habit and dressing style are affected or not. However, it is found that the intensity of the economic change impact on these aspects of life varies from one another. Since all members of the tribe are fluent in their mother tongue, it seems that they have no immediate threat of language loss. But it would be an immature idea to claim that the language is 100% safe because of two reasons: first, the language doesn't have a written script and, second, every individual in the community is equally fluent in Nepalese language, and their inclination towards it for better adaptation is growing higher.

Since Raute are hunters-gatherers, their economy solely means their sources of food. So, it is obvious that changes in the sources of food change the trend of consumption. Depletion of traditional food resources and availability of market goods has gradually changed their food habit. The consumption of meat has been decreased remarkably where cereals, mainly from the market, have occupied the highest proportion in today's food.

Although Raute are not enticed more in modern readymade dresses, they are found wearing the clothes made of modern fabrics. They are getting clothes from the welfare agencies and other individuals, especially blankets for the winter. The most significant change in Raute's dressing style ever since the economic changes is the growing fashion of footwear. Nowadays almost everyone in the community wears sandals or shoes, which was not done until 1990.



## CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY

Despite the nomadic hunting-gathering tribes being one of the most interesting research subjects for the anthropologists for the last few centuries (Reinhard, 1969:234), there are very few researches conducted on the nomadic hunting-gathering Raute of Nepal. Most of the published researches on Raute are focused on their traditional cultural practices. This study based on ethnographic research design is an attempt to address one of the lacunas by examining the changing economic structure of Raute. In this ethnographical study, observation and interview were used as the prime techniques for data collection. I used field notes, diaries, audio recording and photographs to preserve the collected data.

Culture is a manmade rational practice of living, and it changes with time. There are a lot of factors which influence culture and finally get it changed. As far as the influence of such factors on Raute's traditional culture (economic culture here) is concerned, I discussed in this thesis how the global/national political and the ecological factors have been directly or indirectly but continuously pressurizing them to adopt new ways of economy. Similarly I have also discussed the techniques applied by Raute to withstand the external pressure for preserving the identity of nomadic hunting-gathering. In this chapter, I summarize the main findings of the study.

The life of Nepalese started getting stirred noticeably in this contemporary era when the government launched various developmental programs immediately after the establishment of democracy in 1950. Among the various projects for nation building, Forest Acts of 1957 and 1961, Land Reform Act 1964 and Forest Protection Act 1967 affected the traditional life of people markedly; especially the forest-based indigenous people, including the Raute. These forest acts for sustainable management however could not come up to the mark as expected since they had ignored the local knowledge of resource management where people develop environment friendly cultures (traditions and tools) for consuming the minimum natural resources for sustainability (Kalland, 2003). The government then promulgated the Community Forestry Act in 1978 addressing the previous weaknesses, and handed over the forest management right to the local users. When the local sedentary agro-pastoralists took the management right for forest resources, the hardships of Raute in continuing the traditional ways

of living mounted unexpectedly because the FUGs provided them no exemptions from the forest laws as they had enjoyed exemptions before because of the royal decree of 1965. The no. of tussles and confrontations between these two parties regarding the forest use not only confined the Raute's free movement in the forest, thereby troubling their traditional hunting, gathering and barter economy but also directly or indirectly forced them to adopt new economic ways of living. The degradation of ecological system due to climate change and dwindling the availability of forest resources, on the other hand, cumulated the Raute's trouble for carrying on the traditional mode of economy. When the hijacked democracy was re-established in 1990 in Nepal and the government opted for liberalized market economy, the level of challenges for traditional Raute economy further soared up because of easy accessibility of modern utensils in the local markets. Since the Raute were aware of those ongoing circumstances and could hint threats for traditional economy and challenges for adaptation, they gradually developed some sensible 'cultural strategies' to resist the external pressure for assimilation, and acclimatize in the changing socio-ecological environment.

The first and most important strategy that Raute developed to control the ongoing livelihood challenges is 'communication competence' in local language. In spite of a lot of unprecedented vicissitudes, the Raute have been found keeping on the process of learning communication skills and turning themselves into eloquent traders from the silent barterers, thereby increasing the cultural proximity and emotional attachment with the sedentary people. Interestingly, in addition to normal way of communication, the Raute have gradually learnt the artistic way of conversation like the local villagers. The fluency in local dialect has benefitted the Raute in many ways. Firstly, since the communication skills are considered as the prime techniques for cross cultural adaptation, Raute's competence in Nepalese/local language has helped them in negotiating the cultural differences with the villagers. Whether it is for 'symmetrical' and 'asymmetrical' barter or describing their history of origin for gaining social status or asking some forest rights with the concerned authority or even for other tricky negotiations, the role of 'communication competence' seems paramount for 'adaptation'. Secondly, though indirectly, the communication capabilities of Raute in local dialect have helped them solidly for masking their cultural privacy. Since the Raute are aware that some of the sedentary people deride their

nomadic life, which they find pure, lovely and divine, as the progeny of inferior culture, they don't want to give any more space to the outsiders for mocking their valuable culture by letting them know more about the core cultural values. Instead, they use verbal arts such as, adages, blessings, stories, etc., in communication to create an amusing environment where their persona can hold the listeners within the environment of ongoing discussion. In fact, despite their claim of keeping their core cultural values secret for making their almighty happy, the strong reasons of its secrecy are to retain 'cultural sovereignty' and 'intactness' and 'avoid external domination'. Thirdly, besides holding the outsider on superficial talks, the Raute deviate the topic of conversation using the verbal arts if the outsider wants to know more about them or ask them to live sedentary life. In this situation the Raute mainly tell folk stories and rhyming proverbs describing the hardships of agriculture, dangers of herding and the intricacies of caste relation in sedentary life, and defend their right to hunt and live nomadically in the forest.

Similarly, the concepts of 'dual-status' and 'fictive relation' are also found as the solid techniques for both purposes: adaptation and cultural resistance. Since the caste system is so ingrained in Nepalese rural societies, the idea of 'dual social status' of Raute connects them with both the higher and lower caste sedentary people. Caste hierarchy is an integral part of sedentary culture, and describing the ethno-history of their origin as they are the descendants of erstwhile Thakuri King, the Raute not only get cultural attachment with the higher caste villagers but also win an equal social status. Additionally, this attachment helps them for easy accommodation while roaming around the villages and opportunity for asymmetrical exchange in bartering. Similarly, they camouflage their caste status with the lower caste sedentary people and claim that they are also the socially 'marginalized and poor' people. Being emotionally close with the lower caste people, who are also the artisans of the tools for manufacturing wooden utensils, the Raute create a harmonious environment where they not only extend their trade relations but also execute asymmetrically. Likewise, the *miteri* relation of Raute with the sedentary people, which is the recently developed social relationship, has connected the two parties closely, thereby reducing the pressure for assimilation. The notion of *miteri* relation is to love and care the *mit* and his family and it has become very fruitful to the Raute as they have been enjoying the help and patronage from the *mits* and their family. Additionally, the Raute always beseech

asymmetrical exchange with their patrons. However, they never gift to the *mit* because the relationship for them is built on demand, solely for adaptation and avoiding cultural domination.

Although Raute often beseech the villagers for something they need, they are equally careful that unnecessary conversations can ooze out their communal core values and they can be the subject of mocking. To avoid those unnecessary conversations in transient issues, the Raute execute their strategies silently. 'Premature migration' is one of those strategies where the Raute do not let the sedentary people know why they are migrating. Since they know the importance of having friendly relationship with the sedentary party in this socio-ecological context for adaptation, they rather choose migration instead of messing with the villagers. It is purely an idea for maintaining the ongoing relationships and avoiding external domination for better adaptation. Similarly, 'petty theft', stealing green vegetables and fruits while walking through the villages has become a popular social phenomenon among Raute these days. As they have to travel a lot these days for bartering the wooden utensils and/or getting some needy items from the market, it takes them long time to return back to the camp. That is why; they apply the strategy of 'petty theft' to satiate the hunger immediately. Additionally, it avoids unnecessary conversations as well, thereby maintaining isolation. Overall, the strategies that the Raute have been employing these days are purely focused for their cultural intactness and adaptation in changing socio-cultural and ecological context.

There is no doubt that the resistive as well as adaptive mechanisms applied by the Raute have significantly diluted the external pressure of cultural homogenization and helped them for adaptation in changing environment. However, the flood of national/international politics coupled with environmental hazards has massively affected the nomadic hunting gathering life of Raute. Because of the continuous and powerful pressure of dominant societies and ecological constraints, the efficacy of Raute's traditional economy, i.e. hunting, gathering and barter, for livelihood has been remarkably decreased and they are found adopting some alternative cultural practices for livelihood. Nowadays, they are living life with the mixed economy: hunting, gathering, barter and the modern day market economy (cash economy).

The forest based traditional economy which was the sole source of living earlier contributes only 40% for their livelihood today and the remaining 60% is fulfilled by the new economic sources



(field work, 2014). The modern day state and not state welfare organizations, local villagers and visitors have become the Raute's alternative sources of income for livelihood. Nowadays, a good number of NGOs and INGOs are working with the Raute for ameliorating their livelihood hardships. The monetary and nonmonetary help measures provided by those organizations have become boons for Raute to overcome the immediate economic shortages. However, the level of their dependency upon others has been increasing since the helping hands of those donor based organizations are targeted basically for solving the immediate problems. Similarly, another source of today's economy is asking money with the people who visit their campsite. Raute charge the visitors for every reason, for example taking photograph, asking information, watching traditional dance, etc. and their response to the strangers becomes commensurate with the help they get. These days the Raute have started working as wage labourers too with the help of local people. Sometimes they make wooden utensils on wage and sometimes work as forest guards. However, they prefer calling it a reciprocal exchange rather than wage labouring. The most important new economic source of Raute for livelihood today is the monthly allowance given by the Nepal government. Each member of the community, indifference of age and sex, gets Rs 1000 per month from the government. The cash money they get from various sources has helped them for adaptation in today's cash based market economy. The scarcity of foods caused by forest laws and resources depletion has been supplemented in one way another by the cash economy, thereby helping the Raute for adaptation. The point to be noted here is the Raute who had a belief until early 1980s that touching money was a *pap* (sin), nowadays are making ends meet mainly by using the same paper money.

Besides developing the new economic strategies, the Raute have modified and abandoned some traditional practices to cope with the cultural and ecological changes. For example, since there are very few wells remaining in the Raute area because of global warming and they are facing water scarcity, they changed the culture of using water only from the stagnant sources. Now, they drink water from other sources such as tap, canal, river, etc. Similarly, the culture of not staying night in the sedentary villages has also been changed. Nowadays, they not only stay in the villages for nights but also accept the offered cooked foods which used to be considered as *pap*. The nomadic Raute who used to believe only on herbal medicine and black magic for

curing the illness, now have begun, although hesitantly, testing the allopathic medication since the medicinal herbs like *ciraito* and *akashbeli* have already disappeared and others such as *harro*, *barro dankerno*, etc. have been dwindling day by day. Raute nowadays have started taking bath as well.

Since every aspect of Raute's traditional life has been more or less affected by the economic changes, its impact on language, food habits and dressing style can also be seen vividly. Every Raute individual can speak Nepalese language besides Khamchi, the mother tongue. The longing for easy adaptation and better economic opportunities has motivated them to learn Nepalese. Although there is no danger lurking as regards language loss for now, it might have some repercussions in the days to come if the growing influence of dominant language persists in the next couple of years. Similarly, the Raute's cuisine, which used to be dominated by the meat of monkey, has experienced a lot of changes. Nowadays, cereals are the primary food items where monkey's meat covers only 10% of total composition. Depletion of forest resources and availability of cash money alter their food composition. The food items needed are mainly bought from the market. The market products such as cooking oil, turmeric, chili powder etc. are also slowly entering into their kitchen these days. As far as alcohol is concerned, its popularity in the community is same as before. However, the trend of brewing alcohol at home has decreased nowadays. The inaccessibility of raw materials (wild fruits and/or cereals) and the easy availability of readymade liquor in the market are the reasons behind it. The same trend, buying rather than making it at home, is seen in chewing tobacco and smoking as well. Unlike other aspects of the Raute culture mentioned above, dressing style is found comparatively less affected. The practice of wearing *bhangro* and *gharo* is still in fashion. However, the women nowadays wear *sari* and four-knotted bodice. The biggest change in Raute's dressing fashion today is the growing fashion of footwear. Nowadays, almost everyone in the community wears sandal or shoes (with or without socks) while travelling long distance. However, they are not much aware of shoe size.

To encapsulate, the ecological degradation and the transformation of Nepalese political structure have threatened the Raute's nomadic hunting-gathering life. The strategies they developed to face the obstacles endangering their traditional life have played a significant role to dilute the

intensity of such challenges. However, they are not strong and sufficient enough to withstand the mighty blows of the global climate change and the modern world. That is why the traditional economy of Raute has been gradually changed and the changed economy has influenced other aspects of their socio-cultural life too.



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## APPENDIX-I

### Mostly consumed fruits and vegetables by the nomadic hunters-gatherers Raute

Nepalese Name	English Name	Scientific Name
<i>Ainshelu</i>	Golden raspberry	<i>Rubus ellipticus</i>
<i>Amba</i>	Guava	<i>Psidium guagava</i>
<i>Armale</i>	Blue Pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensi</i>
<i>Banda</i>	Cabbage	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
<i>Bethe</i>	Lamb's quarter	<i>Chenopodium album</i>
<i>Bayer</i>	Indian plum	<i>Zizyphus mauritiana</i>
<i>Bhyakur</i>	Deltoid yam	<i>Discorea deltoidea</i>
<i>Bojho</i>	Sweet flag calamus	<i>Acorus calamus</i>
<i>Chutro</i>	Barberry	<i>Berberis aristata</i>
<i>Niguro</i>	Fiddle head fern	<i>Athyrium esculentum</i>
<i>Githa</i>	Air potato	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>
<i>Ghiu kumara</i>	Indian aloe	<i>Aloe vera</i>
<i>Halhale</i>	Tooth dock	<i>Rumex dentatis</i>
<i>Jamun</i>	Black plum	<i>Prunus nigra</i>
<i>Kafal</i>	Bay-berry	<i>Myrica esculenta</i>
<i>Kakro</i>	Cucumber	<i>Cucumis sativus</i>
<i>Kauli</i>	Cauliflower	<i>Brassica aleracea</i>
<i>Kera</i>	Banana	<i>Musa paradisiacal</i>
<i>Khania</i>	Dropping fig	.....
<i>Koiralo</i>	Pink bauhinia	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>

<i>Khursani</i>	Chilly	<i>Capsicum annum</i>
<i>Kuvindo</i>	Gourd	<i>Benicasa hispida</i>
<i>Lauka</i>	White gourd	<i>Lagenaria siceraria</i>
<i>Mel</i>	Wild pear	<i>Prus communis</i>
<i>Mewa</i>	Papaya	<i>Carica papaya</i>
<i>Mula</i>	Radish	<i>Raphanus sativus</i>
<i>Padamchal</i>	.....	<i>Rheum australe</i>
<i>Palungo</i>	Spinach	<i>Spinacia oleracea</i>
<i>Pharsi</i>	Pumpkin	<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>
<i>Pidalu</i>	Co-co yam	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>
<i>Simi</i>	Bean	<i>Dolichos lablab</i>
<i>Sakhar khanda</i>	Sweet potato	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>
<i>Tarul</i>	Yam	<i>Dioscorea</i>
<i>Timur</i>	.....	<i>Zanthoxylem armatum</i>
<i>Tite</i>	Chiretta	<i>Swertia nervosa</i>

## APPENDIX-II

### Commonly used plants/trees by Raute for making woodenwares and erecting huts

Nepalese Name	English Name	Scientific Name
<i>Arjun</i>	White murdha	Terminalia arjuna
<i>Bhalayo</i>	Marking nut tree	Anacardium
<i>Chap</i>	Golden champa	Mangnolia champaca
<i>Devdar</i>	Cedar	Cedrus deodara
<i>Gobre salla</i>	Fir	Abies spectabilis
<i>Falant</i>	Oak	Quercus glauca
<i>Katus</i>	Chest nut	Castanopsis indica
<i>Khirro</i>	Milk tree	Sapium insigne
<i>Paiyoon</i>	Pine	Pinus
<i>Phaledo</i>	Indian coral tree	Erythrina stricta
<i>Salla</i>	Chir pine	Pinus roxburghii
<i>Simal</i>	Silk cotton	Ceiba pentandra
<i>Tiju</i>	Indian persimmon	Diospyros peregrine
<i>Tuni</i>	Cedrella	Toona ciliate
<i>Uttis</i>	Ceder	.....

## APPENDIX-III

### Categorization of indigenous people of Nepal by NEFIN

<p><b>Endangered Group</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kusunda</li> <li>2. Bankariya</li> <li>3. Raute</li> <li>4. Surel</li> <li>5. Hayau</li> <li>6. Raji</li> <li>7. Kisan</li> <li>8. Lepcha</li> <li>9. Meche</li> <li>10. Kusbadiya</li> </ol>	<p><b>Highly Marginalized Group</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Majhi</li> <li>12. Siyar</li> <li>13. Shingsha</li> <li>14. Thudam</li> <li>15. Dhanuk</li> <li>16. Chepang</li> <li>17. Santhal</li> <li>18. Jhagad</li> <li>19. Thami</li> <li>20. Bote</li> <li>21. Danuwar</li> <li>22. Baramu</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Marginalized Group</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23. Sunuwar</li> <li>24. Tharu</li> <li>25. Tamang</li> <li>26. Bhujel</li> <li>27. Kumal</li> <li>28. Rajbansi</li> <li>29. Gangai</li> <li>30. Dhimal</li> <li>31. Bhote</li> <li>32. Datrai</li> <li>33. Tajpuriya</li> <li>34. Pahari</li> <li>35. Tapkehgola</li> <li>36. Dolpo</li> <li>37. Free</li> <li>38. Mugal</li> <li>39. Larke</li> <li>40. Lhopa</li> <li>41. Dura</li> <li>42. Wilung</li> </ol>	<p><b>Disadvantaged Group</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>43. Chairotan</li> <li>44. Tangbe</li> <li>45. Tingaunle Thakali</li> <li>46. Bahragaunle</li> <li>47. Marphali Thakali</li> <li>48. Gurung</li> <li>49. Magar</li> <li>50. Rai</li> <li>51. Limbu</li> <li>52. Sherpa</li> <li>53. Yakka</li> <li>54. Chhantyal</li> <li>55. Jirel</li> <li>56. Byasi</li> <li>57. Yalmo</li> </ol>	<p><b>Advanced Group</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>58. Thakali</li> <li>59. Newar</li> </ol>

Source: Krishna Bhattachan, <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/332c2997-792b-4ff9-95f6-30a2db2a9ed4>

## APPENDIX-IV

### Some field work photographs



FIGURE 2, A RAUTE COUPLE AT SETTLEMENT



FIGURE 3, BURNT AND LEFT SETTLEMENT





**FIGURE 4, RAUTE CARRYING GOODS BUYING FROM THE MARKET**



**FIGURE 5, WITH RAUTE MUKHIYA**





FIGURE 6, RAUTE SETTLEMENT CAMP



FIGURE 7, ONGOING CONSTRUCTION OF HUTS