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DEPARTURE FROM THE TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOOD: A STUDY ON PUROIKS OF KURUNG KUMEY DISTRICT, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract

The Puroiks are traditional occupational group in Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh inhabiting in about 20 villages. Hunting and gathering is their main livelihood. They use their indigenous knowledge and techniques to hunt animals and gather food stuffs from the dense forest. It is their popular livelihood and income. Presently lots of issue affects their traditional livelihood. They try to hold on to their profession but poor socio-economical condition compels them to change their traditional way of earning. Some external and internal social, economic, and environmental pressures are responsible for this change. At the same time, new generation does not give any positive response in favour of this profession. So, the tendency is very clear that it will change in near future. In this study, I try to find out the responsible socio-economic conditions of present scenario behind the changing patterns of traditional livelihood of Puroiks community.

Keywords

Livelihood, Socio-Economic Background, Puroiks, Kurung Kumey District

1. Introduction

It is well known that access to forest land and forest produce plays a critical role in the livelihood of the tribal people. However, instead of nurturing tribal livelihood, developmental interventions in India have mainly resulted in curtailment of tribal people's access to traditional sources of livelihood. The situation of tribal people in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, is no different from those in other states of the country.

Puroik (previously Sulung) is the official name of a tribe and a group of languages and dialects spoken in five districts of Arunachal Pradesh (Lieberherr, 2015: 235). Puroiks are the indigenous livelihood holders who are living at the edge of the Kurung Kumey district by hunting and gathering (Ramya, 2013; 2014). Besides, they also engage themselves in fishing as hunting and gathering is a seasonal occupation. But today most of them are shifted in other occupation due to socio-economic and environmental pressure, lack of money, over harvesting, political grouping, insecurity of life, etc. The objective of this paper is to observe their socio-economical background and to find out some notable points why they should leave their traditional livelihood.

2. Materials and Methods

The research has been conducted on the approach of active community participation based on Puroik community's consent. The researcher in this paper used both the primary and secondary methods to collect data. For the primary data, the researchers used observation, interview, questionnaire, and case study methods. For the secondary information, the researcher took the help of both the printed and electronic documents as well. A multi-method approach combining of both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools has been applied. Nyapin and Sarli circles of Kurung Kumey district were selected purposively for sample collection. Three Puroik villages each from two circles were selected randomly. Finally, the samples consisted of 60 households (10 each from a village) from six villages of two circles. The total number of samples was 60 and all of them were hunter-gatherers who were expert in hunting and gathering.

The data were collected between November 2011 to January 2012, which were analysed and presented into suitable tables and graphs to draw meaningful conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

The Puroiks at Rarish, Maching, Heleba, Korapu, and Waru panchayats were observed to be very poor. They have no life security. When they go to forest for hunting, they do not hope that they will come back home again. Generally, they go to forest for hunting and gathering only for few days in a year and for the remaining days they search for other occupations like fishing, agriculture, etc. The general information regarding the socio-economic profile is presented in a table.

Table 1: *Socio-Economic Characteristic of Puroiks at Six Villages*

Particulars	Kumayar	Rarish	Maching	Heleba	Korapu	Waru	Overall Average
No. of Puroiks	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
Average Size of family (no.)	6	5	4.3	5.4	5	5.1	5.13
Property (no)							
Landless	30	10	40	70	0	40	31.66
Homestead only	10	30	50	10	40	60	33.33
Homestead & Agriculture	60	60	10	20	60	00	35
No. of earning members	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.28
Monthly income	2350	2150	3700	4300	2780	1980	2876.66
Yearly credit	7600	5000	4400	3300	5500	8900	5783.33
BLC holder (No.)	10	10	0	30	20	20	15
Non BLC holder (No.)	90	90	100	70	80	80	85
BPL card holder (No.)	70	50	90	70	60	40	63.33
Job card holder (No.)	100	100	100	100	100	90	98.33
Job Experience (No.)	25.6	20.5	36.7	30.5	24.8	27.7	27.63
Job Satisfaction (No.)	50	30	60	70	40	40	48.33

Desire for other job (No.)	50	70	40	30	60	60	51.66
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Table in parentheses are percentage values.

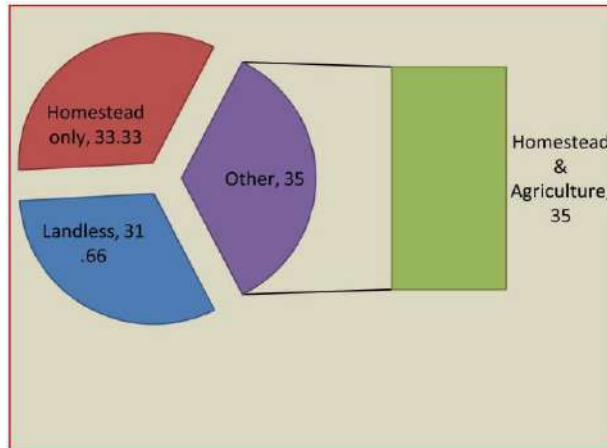


Chart 1: Overall property of *Puroik* community (60 samples).

The above table indicates that the people have poor economic condition. It represents that 63.33% of Puroiks are of BPL category and 51.66 % are totally unsatisfied in their traditional job. I found 98.33% of Puroiks have job card but all do not have any other job in offseason. In this investigation, I found that overall 31.66% Puroiks are completely landless and 33.33% Puroiks have only homestead and remaining 35% have agricultural land and homestead. The number of overall average family member in samples household is 5.13, whereas the average numbers of earning members are only 1.28. Overall household's income of 60 samples is 2876.66 per month. I found the variations in income in different panchayats like Kumayar (2350.00), Rarish (2150.00), Waru (1980.00), Maching (3700.00), Heleba (4300.00) and Korapu (2780.00).

So, it is clear that the total amount of their income from hunting is not enough. The amount of expenditure of the Puroiks is higher than their total of income. They are to buy their daily necessary household goods with this little amount of income. Moreover, they are to spend money for the treatment of the various unexpected diseases. Some time they face natural calamities. In this situation, they cannot able holding their traditional livelihood and it is changed gradually.

From the overall observation of the statistics it is visible that they have very narrow scope to earn sufficient money from hunting or related activities. They are the poorest segment of the local community. They are now leading a very miserable life. They live from hand to mouth, and often cannot give food and clothes to their wives and children. In this circumstance, they do not wait and depend only on traditional hunting and fishing, besides they want to engage in small business, farm labour, and company job in different sectors. But all these job areas are outside the Kurung Kumey district. Today they are going to other states. I investigate some of the key points behind the livelihood transformation; these are:

4. Causes of traditional livelihood transformation

4.1. Lack of life security (from tiger, snake, crocodile, and natural disasters): While hunting, people hardly have any lifeguard which protect them from being attack by wild animals. In case if such unfortunate incident happens, people's accessibility to medical attention or first aid is nearly impossible because the places they hunt are in remote, inaccessible areas.

4.2. Increased resource collectors but decreased harvesting area: In their habitations, the people who depend on land and forest are ever-growing which leads to gradual decreasing of resource areas. In such a situation of resource paucity, people moves towards other occupations which provide more secure life than their traditional activity.

4.3. Extreme poverty: This traditional occupation has not push out the people from the clutch of poverty. In a sense, this practice no longer sustains people economic life because the dependants of this occupation has also increased in a family. That is why, people tends to look for more secure occupation as this traditional practice is not enough for entire family to survive on.

4.4. They do not like it because it is high risk and hard job: While people respect this as their first and foremost economic occupation but they, nowadays, shying away from this occupation since it is too hard and risky job to continue. Unlike their traditional life, people have ample opportunities to choose various occupations without sticking to this highly risky occupation. This is one of the many reasons why they are leaving this occupation.

4.5. They are being exploited by the local Nyishis in various ways: Since the Puroiks are expert hunters, the neighbouring tribes, particularly the Nyishis, exploit them a lot. The Nyishis, who considers themselves as *Atu* (master) of the Puroiks, demand various sorts of hunted meats which the Puroiks happily accomplished. However, Puroiks are now consider this frequent

demand of their master as exploitation of their expertise. Such thought of the Puroiks is responsible for people's choice to give up this occupation.

4.6. Lack of future benefits: People started realising that this occupation does not have prospects. In other words, as the population increases there is high possibility that resources in their localities will be extinct. People now have numerous occupations to take up with more prospects.

4.7. New generation does not entertain because it is less income sector rather than other job like small business, security job, sealer, job of Construction Company, driving, etc.: People of contemporary era, especially the youth, see this occupation being less income practice. They prefer to run some small businesses like a shop, hotel, restaurant, driving, etc. which are more income occupation than the hunting.

4.8. Negligence of state government: Such traditional occupation of the people is not being supported either by local authorities or by the state government. Rather, the government has framed various policies and Acts to deal with the protection of resources in their natural habitats. Such policies of the government have curtailed this occupation of the people. With this, people somehow manage to survive through different occupations.

4.9. Lack of NGOs who support them: This occupation of the people has no support of the outsiders. In their localities, there is no NGO to raise this issue of people's dwindling occupation. In contrast, few NGOs are rather working to save the nature from being exploited by human beings. This, certainly, has curtailed people's subsistence economic activity.

Hunting and gathering is a challenge for the Puroiks. The whole process is full of great uncertainty. So the tendency is very clear. There are the reasons for which they are slowly shifting to other occupations.

5. Conclusion

In this discussion, it is clear that the life and future of the Puroiks are extremely uncertain. Poor socio-economic profile is the main reason for change of livelihood. New generation does not feel any interest for holding on to their traditional livelihood; because they cannot raise their family income only by this occupation. Today comparatively it is lower sector of income than other occupations. So, usually they want to work in high income sector rather than hunting or fishing. They always desire to work in less life risk field because hunting is a

major risky occupation. They fail to fulfil their basic needs and demands with the income of hunting. They cannot send their children for schooling because most of the children help their family from infantile stage. As they get large amount of money by other job like small business, building construction, security guard, etc. they can fulfil other demands. In this investigation, it is proved that most Puroiks do not continue this traditional job. The above statistics indicates that 48.33% of Puroiks support this job but they struggle all the times. Even the new generation is not interested in the traditional way of earning of hunting because they are not enough competent to do the job. So, it may be concluded that the shifting pattern of traditional livelihood has started off already. If their attitude remains same the traditional way of hunting will soon be extinct. So, to sustain the traditional way of livelihood a positive step from both the local authorities and government should be initiated without losing any more time.

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