

# Livelihood Strategy of Bote Community: A Case Study of Bote Community of Patihani VDC of Chitwan

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## Abstracts

*This paper discusses upon the changes of Bote community of Nepal, in case of Patihani V.D.C. These changes are influenced by process of urbanization, globalization which has created constraints and opportunities on "Bote people of Patihani VDC". Historically these people had their livelihood from agriculture. Land was a major household asset and crop production (maize, millet, paddy, wheat etc.) was the means of survival. But the rapid process of urbanization and globalization has pushed them in transition both with opportunities as well as constraints. The household assets have undergone rapid modification. Now they have no option other than modifying the traditional occupation. Land fragmentation and change in social institution are resulted from the urbanization and globalization. The livelihood diversification and foreign employment have recently emerged as how livelihood strategies in the study area. Due to the proximity to the market, the influence of the urbanization is more apparent in the Bote Village. Most of the households follow the multiple occupations besides agriculture. The role of agriculture activities in their life is substantial. Although a few households sell their crops however most of them sell vegetables. The livelihood strategy of Bote community in the study area is in transition. It is shifted from agriculture to non-agricultural one. It is necessary to ensure access to resources and increase social and political participation of Bote community for integral development of rural community in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** poverty, urbanization, commercial farming, tarai ethnic group, traditional occupation

## 1. Introduction

Nepal is rich in diversification in terms of socio-cultural characteristics. It is land of different groups. It has unique characteristics in multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural aspects. Resources are almost limited only within the hands of few people. Majorities are lagged behind type of disharmonious pattern is prevailing here.

As per newly enacted national foundation for development of indigenous nationalities Act, 2002 AD, Aadibasi Janjati Utthan Rastriya Pratisthan, (2058 BS), the then His Majesty's Government has identified fifty-nine (59) indigenous Nationalities. Their population is 37.2 percent out of the total population. The Bote people belong to Tarai community. There are more than fifty-three different tribal groups speaking about 92 languages in Nepal. Among these groups Bote is particular ethnic group and the traditionally their occupation is fishing and paddling boats, which are used as ferries at various points across the rivers.

People were used a branch of tree to cross the river before the made of boat, and gradually they were identified to be 'Bote.' They call themselves *Bot* instead of *Bote*. So, it is more convincing that the term *Bot* which they use for their identity has its root relation with the *Bote* word '*Bot*' means tree. The word *Bote* might be a term used by Nepali speakers to indentify these people. Sharma (1985) presents another possibility that they were without land and house, so they took shelter of *Bot* by the river bank and ultimately become Bote as they are regarded now. People, for those people called Bote in the Terai. They are also occasionally referred to as Kushar in Terai. Majhi, Bote and Kushar all of them speak one language and follow the same patterns of life so all are identical. The area of the Bote habitation lies in Syangja, Gulmi, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Gorkha, Tanahun, Baglung etc. It is mostly on the banks of the rivers that those people live and go through their daily activities (Gatuam, R. and Thapa, A. K., 1994). They belong to the liquor drinking group and also touchable caste. They are scattered throughout the country. Generally, their habitats are in Central, Western and Midwestern development regions. Kushar of Tarai, Majhi of Hill and Botes of Chitwan look similar because of their profession, the boating is

common phenomena. Generally, Botes live by the bank of Madi, Seti and Kali Gandaki river (Panta 1997). So we assume that Bote are not identical to any other community of people.

Majhi or Bote people are economically, politically, educationally and socially backward and live with their own fundamental cultures and community. Majhis are dispersed into 65 districts of hill and Terai of Nepal. Boating, fishing and living on fishing are the traditional way of life of the Majhi people of all places. They have their own traditional cultural norms and values, customs, language, social norms and values, customs, language, social norms and values, dress etc.

But, because of modernization, education and contiguity of other caste people, their way of lives is changing. Economically and socially their living standard is very low. According to Population Census (2001) total number of Majhi people are 72,614 whereas 0.32 percent of total population 36,367 are males and 36,247 are females. The population of Bote is 7669 whereas 0.04 percent and cumulative percentage is 96.91 out of them 3881 are males and 4088 are females.

They have changed their professions like other people of Nepal and they have chosen other professions as their livelihood i.e. civil services, carpentry, going aboard, teaching, veterinary, cycle shop and various technical and non-technical sectors. Chitwan is one of the largest Botes holding district in Tarai Region. We can hardly find any study about the Botes of Chitwan, Rapti River vicinity. So, it is the need of time to study about the Bote of the district. Generally, the study of Botes was done regarding their socio-economic status, culture, housing pattern and overall living style. But the specific case of their landholdings pattern and their livelihood strategy is yet to be undertaken. So, it demands research to fill the gap. This paper focuses some research questions as what are the traditional livelihood strategies of Botes of Chitwan? What are they doing to support their livelihood in the present context? How does the present modernized livelihood pattern affect the Bote people? The main objectives of this study are to explore traditional livelihood strategies of Bote community, and to analyze the impact of modernization in Bote community.

## **2. Methods**

In this research, the researcher has collected primary and secondary information from different instruments. Household survey conducted in the initial period provided primary quantitative information while data from CBS and other organization provided secondary information. These works were followed by informal interviews key informant interviews and focus group discussion. The sampling procedure techniques and sample size has been followed the field study including sample design. Patihani VDC of Chitwan district, Bote Tole was selected purposively. For the study purposive random sampling has been used for household survey. The study covers 39 percent of total households. Primary data were generated through household survey, questionnaire, observation, key informant interview, informal discussion, focus group discussion and interview.

## **3. Changes in Household Assets and Livelihood Strategy: A Conceptual Framework**

Sustainable livelihood approaches place a heavy stress on the assets of poor men and women and households, but other previous development approaches lack it. They focused only on their needs or deficiencies (Sida, 2002: 24). The household assets in sustainable livelihood approach appear backbone for adaptive and coping strategies from them. People require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. Though there are numerous assets, sustainable livelihood approach identifies five core assets namely; human, social, natural, physical, and financial upon which livelihood is built. If we use this approach, it is possible to map out a particular livelihood system over the course of time. The assets that are used hinder adaptive strategies. It is necessary to measure whether these assets are being replenished or eroded and what are the factors that contribute in the process.

### **3.1 Household Assets**

#### **3.1.1 Human Capital**

Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labor and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives (DFID, 2002, 2:3.1). The importance of this cannot be exaggerated which directly

contribute to achieve better livelihood outcome on the one hand and on the other stimulate other assets to strengthen them. People, who possess good health, better skill and required knowledge, might have better access on employment and earning, for deriving better livelihood outcomes. Many people, therefore, regard the ill health or lack of education as core dimension of poverty (DFID, 2002: 2:3.1). Therefore, human capital is highly dependent on adequate nutrition, health care, safe environmental condition and education.

Most of the members of household sell their labor (in the form wage laboring) for livelihood. All the labors of the study areas are not equipped with required skill. Table 2 gives insight of labor force of the study.

Table 1: Person involving in wage labour

Job Category	Types of labor	
	Skill	Unskill
Carpentry	2	3
Electrician	2	5
Cycle-shop	3	2
Driving	3	2
Veterinary	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

In Bote Tole, most of young Botes have better earning because of working as electrician, driving or working in the market. People are traditionally associated with carpentry skill and have been able to earn their livelihood. Even the youth, who are learning new style and design, are working throughout the year in the city. All these shows better idea on the relation between earning and skill.

### 3.1.2 Physical Capital

Physical capital includes housing, tools and equipment that people own, rent or use and public infrastructure that they have access to (Sida, 2002: 28). Affordable transport, safe shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean affordable energy and access to information (communications) public infrastructure

associated with physical assets. Lacks of these assets are considered as core dimension of poverty.

### 3.1.3 Natural Capital

Natural capitals refer to environmental assets such as land, and common property resources (with communal management and traditional systems determining access and types of use) or free (open access) natural resources such as water, forests or grazing land (Sida, 2002: 28). Natural capital is very important to those who derive all or part of their livelihood from resource based activities (farming, fishing, gathering in forests, mineral extraction, etc.)

Table 2: Landholding by Household (Kattha)

Categories	Below 2 Kattha	3-5	6-10	Total
Khet	1	2	3	6
Bari	3	-	-	3
Ghaderi	11	2	-	13
Others	2	1	-	3
<b>Total:</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Table No. 2 clearly shows the very small land holding of study places. The land holding ranges from less than 2 *kattha*. The entire households were not possessed with both *khet*, irrigated land and used for paddy cultivation and Bari, dry and cultivated maize and other crops. In Patihani 6 household have *khet*. Among these 1 household has below the 2 *kattha* while only 3 households possess land between 6-10 *kattha*. Similarly some of the households have Bari land. Only 3 households have less than two *kattha* land where other households have no land. In Patihani, maximum households have *ghaderi*, homestead less than two *kattha*. However 3 households have been living in *ailani land*, not-registered land.

Table 3: Use of Forest Resources by Household

Use of forest resources	Forest Resources by Household	
	Number	Percentage
Firewood	25	100

Fodder	25	100
Litter	20	80
Fruits, Herbal	13	52
Vegetable	18	72
Others	5	20

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

The table 3 clearly reveals that in the study area the households use forest resources to get firewood and fodder and also for fruits and herbals. It is also evident that all households used forest for their households needs. It is because of urban influence and occupational shift from agriculture to non-agriculture, in Bote Tole of Patihani most of the households collect resources from the forest. Vegetables, fruit and herbals like *Neuro*, *Kagati*, *Kurilo* etc. for their livelihood. Forest products are found very important to the poor in situation they are unable to obtain sufficient income from agriculture or wage employment, some households headed by women in Bote Tole involved in collection of forest resources (leaf, wild mushroom etc.) to earn extra income besides their own household agricultural.

Table 4: Household Size and Structure

No. of Person	No. of HHs	Percent
1-2	2	8
3-4	5	20
5-6	5	20
7-8	7	28
9 and above	1	4
Total:	25	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

The process of urbanization and modernization has threatened the extended family and increased the nuclear family. Therefore extended family with more than 8 family members is only 28 percent in Bote Tole whereas 4 family members is 20 percent.

### 3.1.4 Financial Capital

Financial Capital denotes the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood. The definition used here is not economically

robust, in that it includes flows as well as stocks, and it can contribute to consumption as well as production. However, it has been adopted to try to capture an important livelihood building block, namely the availability of cash or equivalent that enables people to adopt different livelihood strategies (DFID, 1998; Sida, 2002).

## 3.2 Livelihood Strategy

Agriculture is wide spread livelihood strategy of Patihani. All the households of Patihani farm for their own consumption that farming contributes to total household livelihood is often rather limited. Only three households in study area are found as self sufficient in food production, however, no household as really self-supporting, having no other income than agriculture. Since, their traditional occupation of fishing and gold panning is almost declined. The changing occupational structure of the study area is not different than from Chitwan district as a whole where people depending on agriculture has been decreasing and there is corresponding increase in proportion of secondary and tertiary occupation. The changes in structure are the indication of changing functional basis of the district from dominant agrarian to cosmopolitan occupation (Subba, 1989).

### 3.2.1 Commercialization of Farm

Urban expansion has a significant impact on farming system in the surrounding peri-urban rural areas, where agriculture is often resident's traditional and primary occupation. Increasing demand from urban markets and consumers stimulates the intensification of production, especially high-value and perishable horticulture. Availability of fertile farming land and water is precondition for agricultural intensification, but urban proximity also often entails increased consumption for natural resources (DPU, 1994: 4).

### 3.2.2 Off Farm Wage Labor

Decreasing the land holding in the study areas compelled the people to be involved in off farm labor work. Off farm labor work typically refers to wage or exchange labor on the others farm. It may also include income obtained from local environmental resources such as firewood, charcoal, house building materials, wild plants and so on

(Ellis, 1998: 55). Among these activities work on others farm by landless, small landholders and large family depending on agriculture are the significant features in the study areas. The poor and vulnerable households were mostly found to send their children to work in others' farm. Such household children leave school and go for work. Some household also keep them engaged themselves in collecting natural resources in Patihani which is later sold for the cash besides working in others' farm.

### 3.2.3 Modification in Traditional Occupation

Agricultural activities and wage laboring are basically considered as the traditional occupation of Bote community. Agriculture covers both farming and animal husbandry while carpentry, household laboring, knitting, painting and weaving come under the work for wage laboring. Traditionally people of study areas did their traditional occupation. But with changed time these places are also facing the change in physical and socio-economic milieu because of process of globalization and modernization. Urbanization naturally pushes change and modifies traditional life style of ethnic communities (Gurung, 1998).

### 3.2.4 Work Opportunities in Non-Agriculture

The urbanization is associated with changes have not only given threat to their traditional occupation including their farm activities, but also provided opportunities in non-farm alternatives. Work opportunities in factory, workshop, and private office and in some extent government office are major non agricultural opportunities availed in the urban area. Involvement in teaching in schools by educated Bote is also considered as the opportunities available in their own areas in non-agricultural field. The Dhanaugi Primary School, Padam Pokkhari Higher Secondary School, Biright Star Boarding School etc. has provided teaching opportunities in the village. Besides, some people were also found being involved in business in their own areas.

### 3.2.5 Livelihood Diversification

The most important element of livelihood strategies in peri urban environment is income diversification. Access to a number of assets determines the extent to which the socio-economic and spatial characteristics translate into opportunities rather than constraints for the poor households. Transformations in the living are important aspect for traditional environment like semi-urban areas. In such areas most of households get involved in multiple occupations ranging from farming to services to processing and manufacturing. To adopt multiple occupations is imperative. Diversification can be described as a survival strategy for vulnerable households and individuals who are pushed out of their traditional occupations and who must resort to different activities to minimize risks and make ends meets (Tacoli, 2003). Involvement of the people in multiple occupations reflects the livelihood diversification of the study area.

### 3.3 Livelihood Challenges

Because of the globalization and modernization process, crops diversifications accrue in the study area. As crop diversification, the use of fertilizer and chemical are increasing in the farmland. By such, use the farmland is getting damaged day by day. Mr. Saune Bote, 54 (President of Bote Samaj, Chitwan) said, *Aja bholi ta mato pani bigrisakyo, mal nahalepachi dhan phaldaina, mal halepachi khet bigrincha, ke garn ke garn'*, nowadays soil is fragmented, without using fertilizer the productivity of land is quite less, what to do? On other hand, the family size of study areas is high, like this population growth is increasing day by day. But the farmland is limited. It seems that if Bote people have not changed their livelihood strategy of farm activities to non-farm activities, their livelihood is in intense crisis. Livelihood outcomes are achievement or output of livelihood strategy such as more income increased, well being reduced, vulnerability improved, food security and more sustainability. Here, the term livelihood outcome represents the achievement of the Bote household after adopting new livelihood strategy. From study there is no equal achievement in the entire respondent household. The household whose member works in the urban employment market with some sort of skill (driving, carpentry, cycle repairing, painting, house building and electricity) earns more than other household of their village. The new generation of such household have left their origin and settled permanently in the city. Others who are living in their own

place have invested their income in different family needs. Buying food is their first priority need, as these households cannot produce enough food for the whole year. After this, they invested their income in the education of their children. Such households have admitted their children in private school leaving the government for the quality education. After these they spend their income in health and for luxurious goods such as mobile, television, radio etc. If they have more amounts after these, they have also invested their income in repairing old house or for the new (Mahal) house. This household livelihood outcome seems more sustainable as there is source of regular income.

#### 4. Conclusion

The livelihood strategy of Bote community in the study area is in transition. It is shifted from fishing, boating and gold panning as a primary source of livelihood to agricultural and to non-agricultural one. The evidences collected from the field, suggest that rate of socio-economic change in Bote community is high. However, gradually Bote communities in Patihani are also in the process of shifting from agriculture based to non-agriculture based livelihood pattern. As the development and other economic activities change the surrounding environment of a space, the people of a particular space have to change their way of life to adopt with the changing environment.

Research in Patihani shows that historically people had their livelihood from fishing but it is almost declining so they adopted agriculture based activities. Land was a major household asset and crop production (maize, mustard, paddy, wheat etc.) was the means of subsistence. Since, Botes traditional occupations i.e. fishing, boating, gold panning and collecting forest product have almost been shifted to farm and off-farm activities for their livelihood. However, agriculture even in the past was not sufficient for them rather they had to dependent other activities besides agriculture. For the period in which agriculture was insufficient, they worked to collect forest resources, off farm labor work and or the wage labor in the city. Besides they also worked in the field of different sector for manual work.

But rapid urbanization and globalization pushed them in the transition which provides both opportunities as well as constraints. The household assets have undergone rapid modification. Now they have no option other than modifying their traditional occupation towards commercialization of agriculture or adoption of urban oriented non-agricultural activities. Land fragmentation, change in social institution, regularization in communal resources such as forest and grazing land, can be considered as the result from the urbanization and globalization. Increasing access in urban employment, expansion of the market for their agriculture and handmade productions are the opportunities created by urbanization and globalization. The livelihood diversification and introducing of foreign employment have recently emerged livelihood strategies of the people in the study area.

The livelihood strategies of Majhi, Danuwar and Bote were similar in the past. But some sort of difference was there. Due to the proximity to the market the influence of the urbanization is more apparent in Patihani. In the study area most of the households follow the multiple occupations besides agriculture; the role of agriculture activities in their life is substantial. Although a few households sell their crops, most of them sell the vegetable. They are able to harvest food for some months from their own production.

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