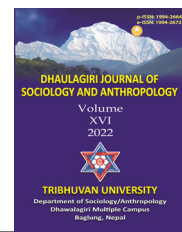


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Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology



Development Defect: A Case Study on Destroying Indigeneity of Majhi Community

Article Info

Received: September 2, 2022

Received in revised form: December 4, 2022

Accepted: December 13, 2022

Available online: December 31, 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v16i01.50972>

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Abstract

Majhis have coped with marginal resources in the Neoliberal economic context and are facing many problems. This article focuses on the Majhi people and their livelihood transformation from traditional occupation. The main objectives of this study are to explore the present condition of the Majhi people in Baglung and how they got into their traditional profession. This study adopts qualitative data based on observations, case studies, and in-depth interviews through primary and secondary sources of literature review. They usually change their traditional occupations to boating, selling firewood, gold mining, and fishing. The Majhis are forced to change their livelihoods due to globalization. Modern means of transportation and limited income are insufficient to fulfill their basic needs. They face social, economic, and physical difficulties in their daily lives. Globalization and modern modes of transportation present them with more challenges and fewer opportunities because of the construction of the Pokhara-Baglung highway. Majhi people have not been able to easily grasp opportunities for political, social, and educational changes due to a lack of education after abandoning their traditional occupation and living place due to the construction of Pokhara- Baglung highway. This paper will be valuable for policy makers, future researchers, and academia as well.

Keywords: boating, changing livelihood, Majhi, occupation, poverty, traditional, transformation

Introduction

Nepal is a country of diversity with 125 castes, 61 ethnic groups, and 123 languages living together (CBS, 2011). It has various languages and cultures, resulting in a diverse and unique culture (Bista, 1989). The ethnic group 'Majhi' expresses the identification of the river individuals who furnished the essential offering of crossing humans in their boats. These individuals, who for hundreds of years helped humans effectively, go to the rivers at the moment, are one of Nepal's marginalized, endangered, and excluded indigenous groups.

Majhi refers to waterway users who provide critical administration for their vessel's passage. Majhi are called by different names in Nepal. Majhi is called Bote in the Tarai and hills. Likewise, Bote lives in Tarai, or Bhitri Madhesh, and Kushar in the Chitwan Valley (Bista, 2005).

These people have been the oldest inhabitants of this part of Nepal since time immemorial. The Majhi are the main leaders of social organizations, like the Hayu, Dhimal, and Sandhal castes in Nepal. These castes are responsible for settling ethnic or social disputes in their village and arranging banquets for mass festivals (Sharma, 2049).

The Majhis, who have been crossing waterways safely for centuries, are now a part of Nepal's imperiled and marginalized tribal community. It could be a country with an innate nationality. Nepal may be a social mosaic, shaping an interesting multi-ethnic and caste society throughout history (Dahal, 2003). So, Nepal can be respected as a socially wealthy nation. It has been home to people of various ethnic groups, religions, cultures, and so on. It comprises diverse dialects and cultures, which make it a wealthy and one-of-a-kind culture (Bista, 1989). Majhi is believed to have lived around the Saptakoshi and



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its tributaries in Nepal for two thousand years in the hills, central, and eastern regions (Majhi, 2063). The Majhis have been around Gandaki and Narayani since the Mahabharata, about two thousand years ago (Pokhrel, 2037). Majhi is found to have migrated from Tanahun to the Narayani river banks centuries ago (Gautam & Thapamagar, 1994). Majhi lives on the banks of the Kaligadaki River, such as in Khaniyabas, Baglung, Maldhunga, Phalewas, Bachha, Bihadi, Parbat, Myagdi, Tanahun, and other districts of Gandaki province.

Majhis have a total population of 83,727, most of whom live in the hills and Tarai of central and eastern Nepal. Traditionally, livelihoods and customary lifestyles have revolved around the banks of local rivers. They have survived through traditional agriculture; fishing, boat building, and support for crossing rivers by ship are traditional professions of the Majhi (Panta, 2078).

The origin of Majhi was Madhya Pradesh, India. The Majhis have been living in the Mid-Hills region through the inner Madesh, passing through Mithila from India before two thousand years ago. Because they are living in the mid-hilly region, they are called Majhi (Kandel, 2055). When they entered Nepal, they may have separated from the Tarai indigenous Tharu people and settled in the hilly region at the river banks (Pokharel, 2057).

Majhis are an indigenous people of Nepal and closely related to the river, and their ancestral lands include the Kali Gandaki River in the hills, Saptakoshi and its surroundings, Sunkoshi, Tamakoshi, Dudh Kosi, Arun, Barun, Trishuli, and Tamor as well. Majhi has its own culture and customary way of life. They are "nature worshipers" who speak the Indo-European spoken language Majhi Kura and now prefer to be called the "*Tantra*" religion. However, they are also engaged in the religious practice of syncretism, according to their original religious beliefs (Gharti Magar & Majhi, 2068).

Livelihood-related research in Nepal is not new. Furer-Haimendorf's (1975) study of the Sherpas of the Khumbu region, Bishop's (1990) investigation of the Karnali region, Ephrosine's (1994) investigation of Rai, and Sherpa of Upper-Arun Pandey's (1998) investigation of the Upper-Arun Valley's land use dynamics, intensification, and rapid land use changes. Subedi and Pandey (2002) Livelihood strategies of *Rai* communities in the Arun Valley: continuity and change, Subedi et al. (2007) studied crop-based subsistence agriculture, supplemented by remittances and off-season farming, as a means of livelihood in mid-western Nepal. Luintel (2015) studied "Livelihood Change and Household Strategies: Social Displacement of the Upper Class in Dhading, Pandey (2017) studied life and livelihoods in the 'Forbidden Kingdom,' the Trans-Himalayas, Nepal, Panta (2021) studied the livelihood pattern of Gandharva in Baglung, Nepal. Besides these research efforts, many considerable studies have been carried out in Nepal, but for the livelihood systems of the Majhi in Baglung, Nepal, there is a unique spatial gap that

is not covered. Therefore, this study is to document the livelihood-related picture of Baglung.

Many researchers have studied Majhi people, but why they transformed into their occupation is one of the gaps in this study. Majhis are not able to meet their basic needs. They face problems with livelihood support through their traditional native occupation. This study documents the changing livelihood of Majhi people in this study area. Majhis are leaving their native, traditional profession in Baglung and its periphery. They are called poor people and behave differently from other people. Majhis have socially and economically backward communities (Bimali, 2020). Whenever Majhi people lost their own houses and land due to the construction of Pokhara- Baglung road, they started living at Bangechaur as homeless people. Similarly, they missed their traditional occupation like boating, fishing, and selling firewood. Majhi themselves also called the poor and demanded homes and property for survival. Majhi of Baglung are impoverished due to a crisis in their traditional occupation. This research tried to find answers to two research questions: what is the present livelihood condition of Majhi? And how do they transform their traditional profession?

The Study Area

Baglung District is in Gandaki Province; it is known as "Mini-Nepal," with a rich culture and identity (DDC, 2074). The Majhi population in Nepal is 83,727, out of the, only 193 Majhis live in the Baglung District. Out of 193 total populations of the district, only 17 households in Baglung Municipality-1, Khaniyabas, Baglung (CBS, 2011). After displacement for the road in their home place, while constructing the Pokhara-Baglung highway, a houseful of them defected in 2047–48 BS, and they had spent 28 years at Bangechaur. Finally, Majhis got the opportunity to live in the Khaniyabas area with the support of Baglung Municipality and the Janata Aabas program. They feel compelled to change their occupation due to the disappearance of traditional occupations such as washing sand, fishing, boating, and selling firewood due to modern tools and technologies. Thus, Majhis are diverted to various contemporary works for their livelihood.

Methods

This is a case study based on both descriptive and analytical methods. In completing the study, I conducted field observation, interview and discussion for information collection. All of the households (17) of Majhi in the study area were selected as a study population by census methods. As secondary information, various sources of literature were reviewed. Such as CBS reports, profile of District Coordination Committee, profiles of the Baglung municipality, related articles, and newspaper articles relating to the Majhi community, their livelihood, and

their transformation were reviewed. Among the total population, eight males and seven females were selected from the Majhi family and two from another community for interviews and case studies. Two males were selected from those who knew their overall lifestyle, health condition, traditional profession, livelihood, changing strategy, and transformation for their survival.

Findings

Population of Majhis

The total population of Majhi is 83,727 (CBS, 2011), but there are 193 reside in Baglung district. There are only 17 households Majhi in Baglung municipality-1, Khaniyabas, Baglung (Field study, 2022).

Matriarchal to Patriarchal

The family is a vital institution for all people. In the Majhi community, family is the base of sharing and helping each other. Earlier, Majhi people used to live in a joint family with three to four generations, from grandparents to grandchildren. But now, they have changed to a nuclear family (Panta, 2078). After marriage, they live separately and struggle for livelihood. There is a cooperation between men and women to fulfill basic needs and support the family.

Traditionally, we used to live in a joint family. Now, we are attracted to the nuclear family. Sons become uniform after separation from their parents, except that the parents' property is used by the youngster who looks after the parents in the stem family. Our family was previously matriarchal, but it is now patriarchal. The sons perform the funeral rites. Our fishing community has changed in Baglung with the knowledge of family size and family planning. Thus, the family size is smaller than before. (Personal communication, Som Bahadur Majhi, April 10, 2021).

It is obvious that households that rely on wage labor stand out because there are more single-family homes in this subsection than two-family homes (Luitel, 2009). The Majhi family was previously matriarchal (Gharti Magar & Majhi, 2068, p.28). But, it is now patriarchal and nuclear. It has changed due to changes in their livelihood pattern, such as the fact that youth are not interested in taking up their parents' traditional occupations. Aside from that, Majhi fishing and boating are endangered, as is the practice of family planning. Although Majhi people are in poverty due to the influence of modern equipment and the lifestyle of other communities, there is a compulsion to change their lifestyle, although Majhis have limited income sources. Therefore, they are living a miserable life. They do not get the proper environment and financial support. In the past, they were educationally backward and superstitious. Now, Majhis are influenced by modern cultures.

Traditional Occupation and Livelihood

A "livelihood" is a way of life that depends on what

people can secure and maintain using multiple resources. Contains the sustained action of a specific group of people in your life over some time (Pandey, 2017). Majhis have had an uncommon and intimate connection with the streams in Nepal. Boat building and river transportation are the most common occupations of Majhi people in Nepal. Majhis people are not willing to migrate once they have matured in an area. Migration is measured as a shame to their individuality and survival. Because of their ancestry, they are Baglung indigenous people. Majhis people, who have lived on the bank of the Kali Gandaki River in Khaniyabas, Baglung, Maldhunga, Parbat for many years, lost their homes during the construction of the Pokhara-Baglung Highway and have been displaced for a long time. After 28 years, they have arranged to exist in a beautiful settlement at Khaniyabas on the banks of Kali Gandaki river as an integrated settlement in collaboration with various agencies, including the state. Majhis are expected to push the vessel boat across the watercourse. As a result, they are also involved in angling and cultivating along the waterway (Rai & Majhi, 2014).

Majhi practiced traditional fishing on the Kali Gandaki, Kathekhola, boating, and spent time looking for gold at the bank of the Kali Gandaki River for their source of revenue. At present, they do not pursue a traditional occupation because modern bridges and sources of transportation have replaced their occupation. Because of the necessity of earning a living, the new-fangled generation of Majhi adopts other professions for livelihood.

We have been living on the border of Parbat and Baglung, at the bank of Kali Gandaki. By the time I reached 50, the only option to cross the Kali Gandaki River was by boat. Along with my father and uncles, we drove the boat and took passengers across Kali Gandaki. But now it has been taken away by modern bridges and vehicles. I do not care how many people I have crossed paths with because of his profession. I have been doing shift work since I started moving my hands and arms. Like Kali Gandaki, life was flowing at its own pace. In 2048/49 (BS), there was a sudden flood in my life. I was thrown into the buggy by the same flood. I missed the turn myself while beating the others. Then the day became more difficult. At the time, both *Gas-bas* (food and shelter) had to struggle for food (*Gas-bas*) and a place to live in the morning and evening. After the settlement was displaced during the construction of the Baglung-Pokhara highway, we spent almost three decades building a hut in Bangechaur. (Gumsingh Majhi, personal communication, April 10, 2021).

Majhi people lived on the border of Parbat and Baglung, at the bank of Kali Gandaki, because boating and fishing were their main occupations. The development brought them difficulty while constructing the road from Baglung to Pokhara, and modern bridges became a problem. They lost their work and living place. The Majhis have been

residents of Bangechaur for nearly three decades. They could not reap development; there was a sudden flood in their lives. Therefore, the day became more difficult. At the time, the struggle for food (*gas-bas*) and a place to live lasted all morning and evening.

Use of Resources for Livelihood

People benefit from development, but after the Pokhara-Baglung highway was built, the native Majhis of Baglung and Parbat Maldhunga lost their land.

Out of 17 households, three households have only little *Bari*. Other households do not have even a small piece of *Bari*. Although they have little *Bari*, the lands are not fertile and have low productivity. As a result, it is difficult to maintain.

(Personal communication, Umadevi Majhi, April 11, 2021).

Natural capital is important in supplying goods and services to both human and non-human life, according to (Daily, 1997; Ekins, 2000). But there are 17 households of Majhi in Khaniyabas, Baglung. They do not have land for agricultural activities. Out of them, only three households have a little dry field (*Bari*). Other households don't have even a small portion of *Bari*. Although three households have little *Bari*, the lands are not fertile, and livelihood is impossible due to low productivity and income. Thus, it is not easy to sustain.

Once upon a time, due to the misappropriation of miserly arrival, downpours, surges, and surges had to happen at various ghats; once a day, it was obligatory to use a vessel to transport postmen and government employees. Similarly, their arrival was made possible by the fishermen. The rulers turned it into a racket. This occurrence is mine, displaced by my absence. Even during the Panchayat era, the state turned them into racketeers and rendered anglers landless and squatters.

(Personal communication, Harka Majhi, April 10, 2021).

The livelihoods adopted by the rural communities in Nepal are derived from traditional economic activities based on locally available natural resources such as streams, agri-business, creature cultivation, timberland, etc. (Banskota & Pradhan, 2007). The Karnali area was seen as a macro-scale open system with a number of sub-regional systems comprised of clusters of villages and a number of households. The people of Karnali were found to use trade and mobility options to compensate for the poverty of their local resources (Bishop, 1990). The same situation exists in the Majhi community of Khaniyabas, Baglung.

The economic condition of the Majhis is poor. Majhis have no regular sources of income, fertile agricultural lands, or physical capital. Majhis were dependent on forest resources for making boats, selling firewood, fruits, medicinal herbs (*Kharsikokhoti*), and materials for building houses. Majhi women used to collect leaves, firewood, and

other necessary things from the forest for cooking. The new cohorts of Majhi speak of the fact that Majhis would not survive only by following their traditional profession and equipment. There is a transformation in their community; liquefied petroleum gas and electronic devices are used. Majhis now migrate to India, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia for work; one person lives in South Korea; and they also work as laborers in nearby villages and towns.

Education

Education is essential for all people, but due to poverty, they did not have the opportunity to study because nearly all Majhis spent their time working rather than studying. Majhis did not study and could not send their children to school. Instead, they sent their children to traditional jobs such as boating, fishing, and manual labor. Being poor, Majhis did not have equal rights of entry to education or a role in decision-making.

At the moment, Majhi children in Baglung attend school. Parents are now interested in sending their children to school. The youth of Majhi are trying to study now, and a few of them have passed SLC/SEE class 12, but they are not studying at the bachelor's level. Although children in Majhi study at the primary level, they face difficulties advancing to the secondary level due to poverty. There are few educated Majhis. Still, they are not getting opportunities to study further and work as per their expectations of them due to a lack of opportunity and poverty.

(Personal communication, Asmita Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Now, Majhis send their kids to school, mainly in government schools. Few parents send their children to private schools because a boarding school in this community provides a scholarship and a school bus. As a result, small children are receiving better care than in the past, but Majhi children must work hard to obtain other study materials.

Although the children of Majhi now join in school, they contain a compulsion to work. Ashmita and Anju Majhi go to the banks of the Kali Gandaki River to earn money for their education and extracurricular activities. They move to the Kali Gandaki River early in the morning, a rain-swollen waterway each morning, to extract sand from the stream, which they afterward dump onto a holding-up tractor. They study in class eight at Lahare Pipal Secondary School in Baglung.

(Personal communication, Anju Majhi, 11 April 2022).

The children of Majhi now attend school, but they are still required to work for a living. Even children work due to poverty; their classes have been hindered. Likewise, the worldwide and the ensuing COVID-19 lockdown for the past two years disturbed their study. Ashmita and Anju Majhi were collecting sand for their education. Besides Anju and Asmita, other friends in the Majhi community face these problems.

Health, Sanitation, and Livelihoods

Health is the greatest wealth. A balanced diet is used to make people healthy. For Majhis, a balanced diet is not a priority due to poverty. They spend money on food, clothes, smoking, alcohol, and celebration. According to Ram Prasad Khanal, the health officer of Baglung Municipality,

The numbers of Majhis visiting hospitals in comparison to a few years ago have increased." They are conscious of their health. However, they have not stopped drinking alcohol and smoking yet. Still, they have found consciousness for environmental sanitation, saving money for health and education, and a bright future.

(personal communication, Ram Prasad Khanal, 10 April 2022).

The household environment was not clean in the past, and they fell prey to different diseases. It might be because of poor nutrition, fewer calories, plenty of rest, and the good environment required to be healthy. Males would rather drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes than spend money on a healthy diet. Females' health condition is somehow better than males' because males drink alcohol and smoke, and their poor nutrition and lack of a balanced diet make them ill time and again. The Majhi community believes in sorcery and ghosts. The practice of witchcraft is still prevalent here. However, their health has improved gradually since then. They depart to the hospital when they fall sick, and, owing to the new settlement at Baglung Municipality-1, Khaniyabas. Whenever Majhi people lived in Bangechaur, there was no neat and clean environment whenever they lived in Bangechaur three years ago. Now, the household environment is clean in comparison to last time.

Languages

Majhi used to perform and adhere to indigenous culture and language. Now, their language, culture, and dress are in a state of extinction. Kaila (2062), Parajuli and Bhadra (2004), Younjung and Tamng (2006) concluded research and said that the Majhi language is unsaved, extinct and endangered. According to the old Majhi people, they had their own Majhi language called "Bote language" also called it '*Majhi kura*' in Baglung, but they do not speak their language in everyday life. They speak only the Nepali language. However, Majhi language is spoken in Tamakoshi and Sunkoshi river basin (Majhi, 2063). I found that new generations are not interested in learning Majhi language in Baglung.

Whenever we speak our language, our children laugh. Our language is declining as a result of such activities. (Personal communication, Deukali Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Various linguists have discussed this issue and have mentioned that the Majhi language is insecure and endangered. It is described as an endangered language

(Yadav, 2004) and a much-endangered language (Yonjan-Tamang, 2006). Majhi rightfully worries that their native language will disappear unless there is a positive resurrection for its promotion and preservation. The household survey also highlighted the challenges that Majhi faces as he continues to speak his native language. According to Majhi Uththan Sangh, though Majhis have gradually lost their original lifestyle, their language is still alive, but in Baglung, the Majhi language is not in practice. Although a few elderly Majhis speak it, it is disappearing because new generations are not interested in learning their own language. New generations laugh while the elderly speak in their language and speak in the Nepali language. Because they study in Nepali and English languages at school, therefore, their language is declining.

Costume

As there is a transformation in food, occupation, and education, there has also been a change in costume patterns and decorations in the Majhi population.

New generations try to adopt fashionable costumes, but as the richest person, we cannot buy proper costumes as per their expectations of our children due to poverty. In any case, we have a costume transformation.

(Personal communication, Ujheli Majhi, April 11, 2022).

From the above narration, they are in poverty, but there is a compulsion to fulfill their basic needs. Previously, male Majhi wore kachhad, bhoto, and pheta. They now wear modern pants, shirts, T-shirts, jackets, sweaters, coats, half-pants, istakot, topi, caps, shoes, slippers, and clocks, among other things. Women used *dhoti*, *cholo*, *lungi*, *patuka*, *chura*, *pote*, and *bulaki*, but nowadays, they wear saris, blouses, lungis, cholo, kurthas, surawals, sweaters, coats, outerwear, rings, chura, pote, sindur, and sandals with modern cosmetic items, pants, and jackets are getting popular among men. Married women prefer sarees and blouses, while unmarried women prefer *Suruwal*, *Kurtha*, shirts, t-shirts, maxi pants, Aladdin jackets, and outerwear. Due to the globalization process, cultural transformation is seen in the Majhi community.

Transformation in Occupation and the Socio-Cultural Life of Majhi

Globalization contributes certain benefits to the local communities, such as promoting tourism and job opportunities both within and outside the country. Regarding Majhi community they have an influence on the overall lifestyle, including clothing, food, language, songs, and dances (Panta, 2078). There is a compulsion to change the lifestyle of Majhi due to global challenges, although the Majhi of Khaniyabas considers Kali Gandaki their brother. There is still a belief in this community that if someone dies, Kali Gandaki is a liar. After all, the Kali Gandaki River is the chief source of livelihood for the Majhi. The Majhi are now running their diary by running

sand from the same Kali Gandaki, as both gold, mining, and boating have not been done in Kali Gandaki recently. The younger generation of Majhi is also involved in driving and loading and unloading vehicles. However, the mainstay of the fishing community is still Kali Gandaki. They say the Majhis of Bagar are resting on the banks of the Kali Gandaki in Bagar. They face the challenge of giving continuity to their traditional fishing career; likewise, Majhi of Baglung is not able to take fish themselves now.

Majhi has a distinct culture and customary ways of life (Rai & Majhi, 2014). The Majhi community lives on the banks of the Kali Gandaki River. This community, which considers itself a worshiper of nature, offered puja to the river at a special event. The community here worships the river in the form of a festival every year on the third Tuesday of the month of Falgun, according to the Bikram Sambat calendar (Himalayan News Service, Mar 03, 2021).

According to Beynon and Dunkerley (2000), globalization is a creative process that leads to the homogenization or standardization of culture. "Cultural hybridization is the most exciting and liberating face of globalization, whereby new cultural forms are created through the fusion of diverse elements." It can be seen that ethnic influences are becoming more and more pervasive in western food, fashion, and music.

The socio-economic status of Majhis is changing. Now, they have access to mobile phones, FM radio, televisions, and other social media for information and communication. Many prefer to work in-country and abroad to support their livelihoods. They are now willing to be united for their human rights and to look for opportunities because it is difficult to support their lives without a regular income and traditional occupations.

Whenever we migrated from Bangechaur to Khaniyabas in the united settlement area, the poor housing was replaced by brick and tin-roofed houses with multi-story. We practice rites and rituals like other Hindu castes, such as naming ceremonies, feeding ceremonies, Upanayana (*chhewar*; *bratabandha*) ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, death rituals, and an annual ceremony (*Shraddha*). We practice and enjoy marriage, whether it is arranged or one finds their partner. On the 11th day after the baby's birth, we hold the naming ceremony. After death, the corpse is either burned or buried. We perform funeral rites on the 13th day. Every year, *Shraddha's* annual ceremony is performed for the peace of the departed soul. (Personal communication, Gumsingh Majhi, April 10, 2022).

Most of the Majhis follow Hinduism, and they celebrate most of the Hindu festivals (Rai & Majhi, 2014). They celebrate festivals like Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Janaipurnima, Maghe Sankranti, Sharawan a Sakranti (Luto Falne), Teej, Shivaratri, and Chaitra Dashain. Likewise, *Ladi puja* and *Kulpuja* are the main cultural practices of the Majhi community. In the Majhi community, males are treated as

the head of the family who makes household decisions. The main religious and religious festivals of the Majhi community include puja, including festivals like *Kula puja*, *Sansari puja*, *Goth puja*, *Bhume puja*, *Argo puja*, etc. The various rites from birth to death of the Majhi caste, including birth rites, pasni, chhevar, marriage, death rites, purification rites, full moon observance, Shraddha, calling the father, etc., exist here. They don't invite priests to perform these cultural celebrations, but there is a compulsory invitation to the brother-in-law, nephew, and niece. Although old generations follow traditional culture, the new generations practice it differently. Majhis enjoy modern foods and drinks. In the past, they ate *Dhindo*, *Aato*, *Roti*, *Makai*, *Khole*, *Kholesag*, *Sisno* (stinging nettles), *Jaluko*, *Githa*, *Ban tarul*, *Lakha*, and the meat of pigs, chickens, goats, ducks, and fish as well.

We have different traditions of birth, death, weddings, feasts, and festivals from other races. Our educational accessibility is limited due to poverty and cultural differences. (Personal communication, Umadevi Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Majhi people abandon their traditional occupations in order to survive. Four people are drivers, and three go to work abroad. One is a computer operator in an offset press; one is in finance; and one has a small tea shop, but they do not include permanent jobs for regular income. Anyway, there is some western influence in their culture. They, like their native language, culture, and dress, are on the verge of extinction. They used to live in a large family, but now they have a small family. The result of the interaction between capital and livelihood is deemed insufficient to produce new assets (Pandey, 2017). Compared to the past, many changes have taken place in this community. Although the level of awareness has increased due to modern means of communication such as TV, mobile, etc., the low level of economic conditions makes livelihoods difficult.

House and Land Ownership

The word "Majhi" describes the identity of the people of the river who performed the important service of crossing people by boat. These people, who have helped people cross the river safely for centuries, are now one of Nepal's most marginalized indigenous communities. Kipat and Majhis have been denied traditional rights to fish and boat services, and their joint land ownership system has been confiscated by the province of Nepal and its controlling elite. After the 1950s, they entered the world of modernization and development when they believed that Nepal began to lose more and more land and traditional life. Today, like other indigenous and ethnic minority communities in Nepal, Majhi struggles to perpetuate their culture and identity and regain their sovereign indigenous rights from the state (Gharti Magar & Majhi, 2068). Land made cultivable by Majhis was destroyed by road construction, and they became landless.

Majhis of this community do not have land, but after

a long time of waiting, 13 houses have gotten the land certificate (*Lalpurja*) of their houses. They do not have land. Their economic situation is poor and weak due to a lack of land. Wages, farming and raising livestock, beating stones, working as construction workers, and other occupations provide a living. Although the ancestors of the Majhis collected fish commercially and operated boats, they are now deprived of such traditional jobs. Som Bahadur Majhi said that three families, including his own, have not yet received the land certificate (*Lalpurja*) for their house. "After the municipality built the house, everyone else got the land certificate (*Lalpurja*) of the house," he said. According to the municipality, the process is underway.

(Personal communication, Som Bahadur Majhi, April 11 April 2022).

The livelihood of Majhi people depends on wages, farming and raising livestock, beating stones, and working as construction workers. They used to collect fish commercially and operate boats, but now they are deprived of such traditional jobs. While constructing the Pokhara-Baglung highway and suspension bridges in various places, Majhi people become isolated from their native place and occupation, which leads to poverty in their lives.

Majhis, who have lived on the elevation of the Kali Gandaki River at Khaniyabas, Baglung, Maldhunga, and Parbat for many years, have lost their homes due to the construction of the Pokhara-Baglung Highway and have been displaced for a long time. The municipality and local residents assisted in the construction of 13 houses and one common house (*Samudaik Bhawan*). Likewise, four houses were constructed through the *Janata Aawah* program.

(Personal communication, Bal Bahadur Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Three families, including my, have not yet received the "red card" (land certificate) of the house. After the municipality built the house, everyone else got the red card of the house. We are having problem with electricity and other purposes as there is no land certificate in their houses. (Personal communication, Gumsingh Majhi, 10 April 2022).

The local government provides land and support to construct a home. Three families are still struggling because they have not received Lal purja. "We had bought 22 acres (*ana*) of land from the municipality in the name of the organization as there was no land," said Yukta Prasad Subedi, information officer of Baglung Municipality. "The budget has been allocated to solve the problem of roads," he said. Baglung Municipality replied that the problem has arisen due to the non-disclosure of land allotments.

The municipality said that the process is underway. They will get a land certificate (*Lalpurja*) soon. The settlement has been constructed with 80 percent grant, 10 percent loan, and 10 percent local labor, as well as money from the city

development fund. Although the cost was estimated at Rs. 11.3 million, the contractor company undertook to build it for Rs. 8.2 million. Even if the settlement is completed, other development infrastructures remain unfinished.

Division of Labor

Labor sharing for livelihood is common in the Majhi neighborhood. In history, males worked outside and females did household work. Now, along with household work, male and female workers work together for a livelihood.

Men would row boats in the river, sailing people from one beach to another. However, during the last few decades, the community's members have stopped it. Men run subsistence fishing operations and help build boats and ferry goods across rivers via the Majhis. Their livelihood depends on daily wages, farming and raising livestock, beating stones, working as construction workers, and other occupations. For these activities, both males and females work together.

(Personal communication, Bhanu Majhi, 10 April 2022).

For Wallerstein, there are three main ways to enter the arena of households, which are increasingly under the grip of the global capitalist economy and showing some major social upheaval. They are as follows: a) constant pressure to break the link between family type and the organization and its territoriality and reduce co-residentially; b) press each family to enter a mode of remuneration regulated by "partial" wage work; and c) increase job stratification based on ethnicity, gender, and other social group membership (Wallerstein, 1984, p. 19).

Males have assisted people safely crossing rivers for centuries, but Majhi is now a marginalized and excluded indigenous group in Nepal. Thus, both men and women engage in income-generating labor. Women are engaged in household work like bearing, caring, and sharing and men work outside the home. The Majhi could farm, but they do not have enough land to fulfill their daily needs. The women sell "Marcha," an Ayurvedic medicine for making wine, and *Jand*, a special wine made from cooked corn, in the markets. The traditional occupation of the Majhi was to build a "boat," which was made by cutting down trees and use it for their daily lives.

Transformation in Occupation, Livelihood, and Strategy

Majhi built a "boat," which he made by cutting down trees, and used it for their daily lives. Traditionally, they used to slay fish, build boats, and operate boats, which have now turned into a profession. The women have been raising pigs and chickens and making chilies for making fluid. Now, Majhis are forced to engage in various occupations to earn a living from their customary fishing profession.

Gold mining is the old and main work of Majhi at

Khaniyabas. We are Sundhuwa Majhi. There is no Majhi above here, she says. I am a fisherman because I spent a lot of time in the water while boating and fishing. Majhi owned the majority of the land in Khaniyawas, but that the soil was captured and destroyed during the construction of the Pokhara-Baglung highway.

(Personal communication, Deukali Majhi, 10 April 2022).

They are compulsive to change their traditional profession according to a modern lifestyle. There is a change in the livelihood patterns and coping strategies of the marginal community of Majhi (Rai, 2009). Livelihood procedures can shift understanding with time and spatial measurements (Paudel, 2003). A vocation includes the capabilities, resources, and exercises required for living, and a vocation is feasible when it can adapt to and provide economical job openings for another era (Chamber & Conway, 1992).

Majhis's ancestral occupation is fishing and boating. We made a boat by chopping down the stem of the tree. Despite being Nepal's indigenous people, they are difficult to spot on the mainland. Living beside the river, fishing, boating, looking for gold, farming, and rearing animals are the main occupations of these people. Later, it denoted us, who shared a common occupation of providing fair service (personal communication, Prashant Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Majhis are supposed to row a boat to cross the Kali Gandaki River. So, they are involved in fishing and farming at the riverside (Rai & Majhi, 2014). With the construction of suspension bridges across the stream, the passage of other people sailing, the decline of the angle population within the waterway, and the growth of the Majhis population (Rai, 2009), they have abandoned their traditional profession. Vocation techniques have been expanded, and various exercises and choices of people or households are in place to meet their business needs.

Gamila Majhi heard that in the past, most of the land in Khaniyawas was occupied by Majhi people. They had all the land here. To fulfill the need for food, they borrow goods from merchants; finally, they sold the land here for a livelihood. (Personal communication, Gamila Majhi, April 10 April 2022).

Majhi owned land in the past. Their land was destroyed due to the Pokhara-Baglung Highway construction, and they became landless. They ought to move in their conventional occupation due to the development of suspension bridges over the stream, the entry of other individuals into sailing, the diminishing of the angle population within the waterway, and the developing population of Majhis (Rai, 2009). The old Majhis say that by building both concrete and suspension bridges, the Majhis lost their conventional profession of taking people across the river.

Meanwhile, lamented the Majhis' fading cultures; those were difficult days, but life was original and simple." Our children do not know about fishing and boating.

After the government built bridges, sailors with boats became obsolete. Due to a lack of land, we were unable to engage in farming; instead, we engaged in pig, local hen, and chicken rearing. (Personal communication, Aita Bahadur Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Majhis tried using nets and hooks to catch fish, but other people began to kill fish using electric currents and various chemicals. Therefore, there is a decrease in fish in the Kali Gandaki and Kathekhola rivers due to the use of chemicals and electrical currents. The Majhis were thus separated as a result of their fishing occupation. The jobs embraced by the communities in Nepal are determined by the traditional financial exercises based on locally accessible common assets such as horticulture, animals, ranger service, etc. (Banskota & Pradhan, 2007).

Though the youth Majhis are getting an education in comparison to last time, we have a lack of job opportunities. The community is not represented in the state's mechanisms for political participation. So, we are facing various problems, although we have tried to sustain them. (Personal communication, Krishna Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Majhi people are not able to get government jobs. They have no political connection, not even in the local government. They cannot compete freely because, to be winners, they do not have money. Therefore, they have to change their occupation from boating and fishing to collecting sand, stone, making pebbles (*Giti*) and finding overseas employment, which is necessary for their livelihoods. Thus, the Majhi community is in trouble after the crusher businessman started extracting ballast sand from Kali Gandaki by using a dozer.

Deukali Majhi says that "Majhi people have a problem while extracting stone sand using a dozer. "We are far from the boat, out of gold," she says. Even now, the rich people there have embarrassed us by using dozers. He has complained that the Kali Gandaki bagar, where gold was found last time, has turned into a deep pit. "No land is left where gold can be found. "After using a dozer, there is a crisis of sand and stone for us," she complains. The Majhis of this area have been cheated while selling the accumulated ballast sand. She said the businessmen gave them only one thousand five hundred rupees for a tractor load of ballast sand. We have been paying Rs 1,500 for the car of the Sahu," she said. We are in trouble anyway, she said. Consumers generally have to pay Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,000 per tractor to buy ballast sand from the crusher industry in Baglung.

Majhis have not been able to use resources from the bank of Kali Gandaki river (*Bagar*), where sand, stone, and gold are found. After using a dozer, there is a crisis of sand and stone for them. The Majhis of this area have been cheated while selling the accumulated ballast sand. The businessmen give them less money for a tractor load of ballast sand. They are experiencing difficulties as a result of their lower income. Besides this problem, there

is a transformation in their sources of entertainment, such as mobile phones, television, computers, social media, and the internet, which have threatened their culture. Majhis work as daily labor for their livelihood here. Though they are engaged in other sectors, their source of income is not satisfactory because they do not have regular jobs in the periphery and earn low wages, making them economically and socially backward (Panta, 2078).

The place where gold used to run is now unknown." As a child, I saw my father and grandfather sailing and washing gold. I remember the places made for running gold in Kali Gandaki's Bagar. But now it is not remaining in those places. Stone sand is being sold for the price of gold by bringing in dozens. There is a poor structure where gold is mined. I lost my traditional occupation. Now I am working as a computer operator in an offset in Baglung Bazaar. (Personal communication, Krishna Majhi, 10 April 2022).

Transformation and progress have created a crisis in their profession by forcing them to build suspension and concrete bridges in the place where boats cross. Due to large bridges and motor roads, their houses and lands have been destroyed and displaced, and their livelihood has been affected. Now all the people have been displaced from the traditional professions of boating and fishing. Thus, they start looking for alternative occupations for their source of revenue.

Guman Singh Majhi, now drives a Coca-Cola dealer's car in Baglung. Guman Singh says that 6–7 other Majhis like him also work as drivers. Further he says:

I drive the dealer's car, six other people also drive the car, some drive the tractor, and some drive the pickup," he said. He says that even though fishing is his main occupation, he is not able to taste it now. "Sometimes fish is killed just for the sake of tasting it," he says. "It is not customary to kill it for sale." (Personal communication, Guman Singh Majhi, April 11 April 2022).

At present, Majhis allow collecting ballast sand by hand except during the rainy season. Even if they got a house, the main problem for fishermen is long-term income. A few months ago, the Lions Club distributed some goats and chickens to each household to make them self-reliant. (Personal communication, Bal Bahadur Majhi, April 11 April 2022).

Asmita Majhi, a student for education and livelihood, was collecting sand in the roar of the Kali Gandaki waterway. Apart from Asmita, her friend Anju Majhi comes every morning to fetch sand from the river on the banks of the Kali Gandaki waterway, which she fills up in a tractor. Majhis collect ballast sand by hand. They get a house; the main problem is long-term income. The Lions Club distributed some goats and chickens to each household to become self-reliant, but they were not able to fulfill their basic needs.

Change in the Socio-cultural Standing of Majhis

There was the dignity of labor among the people. Majhi people were also respected by other community members. While constructing the Pokhara-Baglung highway and suspension bridges in various places, Majhi people became isolated from their native place and occupation, leading to poverty. Thus, they have changed their occupation for survival. The municipality is assisting in the transformation of houses. Similarly, changes in food, clothing and overall lifestyle result from modernization. Giru Majhi says:

Even though fishing is his main occupation, he is not able to taste it himself. "Sometimes fish is killed just to taste itself," he says. It is not customary to kill it for sale. This time, other people killed fish rather than Majhi people using electrical shock and pesticide." (Personal communication, Giru Majhi, April 12, 2021).

This time, instead of Majhi people, other people used electrical shock and pesticides to kill fish. Due to poverty, there is inequality in education, politics, and decision-making levels. Therefore, their lifestyles have become difficult. Local inhabitant and former teacher Ram Bahadur KC says:

Majhis used to help other people in society by crossing boats on the Kali Gandaki River and the periphery of Kathekhola. Through boats, they ran their daily lives through fishing. The Majhis have their identity, serving the people by crossing the river, selling firewood, fish, laboring in the field, and at home. Since then, they have changed in social, cultural, educational, and economic aspects. We have seen several transformations in their overall lifestyles. (Personal communication, Ram Bahadur KC, April 12, 2021).

Majhis have their identity, serving the people by crossing the river, selling firewood and fish, and laboring in the field and at home. Majhis used to help other people by crossing boats on Kali Gandaki River and the periphery of Kathekhola. Boating and fishing were the main sources of income. Since then, they have changed in social, cultural, educational, and economic aspects. The Majhis and their community have a high proportion of child population and a low proportion of the aging population, which contributes to low life expectancy and low status of Majhi citizens (Bimali, 2020). Majhis were deprived of their traditional rights, which were related to the river, when the state-issued contact licenses and frameworks for the commercial use of sand, stone, and fish. As a result, Majhis were uprooted and cut off from previous neighborhood relationships. Presently, they have given up their traditional native occupation.

In the modernization of improvements, anglers are drifting on the ferry as concrete bridges start to be built. It brought another emergency to his conventional calling. Expensive bridges and roads were built during the advancement process.

There is an occupational change in the Majhi community for survival. Boating, fishing, agriculture,

and selling firewood are difficult because people have stopped using firewood in the urban area where they live. Modern bridges, roads, and transportation systems replaced traditional boating, other people started fishing, and then they were in trouble. As a result, pig, chicken, and duck farming are now uncommon. Native traditional occupations and cultures are changing as a result of globalization's cultural assimilation effects. They no longer have the freedom to use and sell locally available sand and stones or to wash sand for gold in the same way they did previously (Personal communication, Som Bahadur Majhi, April 10, 2021).

Various natural harms occur by utilizing the current within the streams and rivers after beginning angling, and there is a deficiency of fish within; they must be removed from the traditional profession. To start with, the ownership of the stream with the closest connection has resulted from centuries of transformation and conditions for the angling caste; segregation has made them financially subordinate to the waterway, and the framework is in an emergency. Depending on the arrival and timberland, they are subordinate to farming and constrained to create a living by raising Majhi people.

Discussion

The total population of Majhi people in Nepal is 83,727. Out of them, only 193 Majhis are in the Baglung district (CBS, 2011). The Baglung Municipality had built 13 houses and a common (*Samaj Ghar*) for Majhi. It is supposed that development brings positive change to society, but transportation development has become a problem for Majhis in this area. Likewise, Majhi in Nepal are believed to have lived around the Saptakoshi tributaries for more than two thousand years and in the hinterland of Nepal's central and eastern regions (Majhi, 2063).

According to Pokharel (2031), the Majhi is originally from Madhya Pradesh, India. After arriving in Nepal, they may have separated from the Tarai indigenous Tharu people and settled in the hilly region along the river reservoir. According to Majhi Uththan Sangh, though Majhis have gradually lost their original lifestyle, their language is still alive, but in Baglung, Majhi's language is not in practice.

Four families have not yet received the land certificate of their houses. Although the municipality built the house, thirteen house owners got a land certificate, but those who do not have cards face the problem of electricity and water connection. But the municipality replied that the process is underway to provide the land certificate.

The province of Nepal and its controlling elite have deprived Majhi of his traditional fishing and boating rights and confiscated a joint land tenure system. Kipat and Majhi began to lose more and more land and traditional life, believing that they had entered the world of modernization and development since the 1950s when Nepal existed. They have moved in their normal profession owing to

the development of suspension bridges over the river and stream, the passage of other individuals in sailing, the diminishing of the angle population within the waterway, and the development of the Majhis population (Rai, 2009). Vocation techniques are extended, and a combination of diverse exercises and choices of people or households are in a position to reach their business needs.

The Majhis have their own identity, serving the people by crossing the river, selling fish, laboring in the field and at home, but they have to change their occupation from boating and fishing to collecting sand, stone, and making pebbles (*Giti*) and overseas service, which is a compulsion for their living. Majhis practiced traditional fishing, boating, selling firewood, and looking for gold at the bank of the Kali Gandaki River, which was intended for their livelihood. Males helped to cross rivers for centuries, but now Majhis are deprived of such occupational activities. According to the old Majhis, with the construction of highways and bridges, the Majhis lost their traditional occupation in Baglung.

The development brings positive change to the community and society. Still, building the Pokhara-Baglung highway and suspension bridges in various places has become a problem for Majhis in Baglung. They become isolated from their native place and occupation, and poverty sets in. Majhis, who lived on the Kali Gandaki River bank at Khaniyabas, Baglung, Maldhunga, and Parbat for many years, lost their homes during the Pokhara-Baglung Highway construction and have been displaced for a long time.

Education is essential for everyone, but because of poverty, many children in this community spend more time on their livelihood than on education. Students have to work for their education and livelihood, collecting sand and preparing small pebbles at the bank of the Kali Gandaki River. The fishermen of Baglung, whose economy, health, education, and political representation are weak, have many problems with their livelihood. It has been found that poor educational status among the Majhi group is due to economic, familial, and cultural reasons. The Majhi of Baglung faced economic problems, and they could not run hotels, restaurants, and other heavily invested businesses. Therefore, the people of this community have considered other professions and occupations to earn a living, such as foreign employment, in which they have gone to India and other countries for labor. They have to give continuity to their time-honored fishing job; the Majhis of Baglung are not able to take fish themselves now. Majhis follow traditional occupations for their livelihood and to receive food, money, or other necessary things. Only two years ago, after two and a half decades of hardship after being displaced during road construction, the Baglung Municipality built a house for the fishing community here. The new generations of the Majhi community cannot adopt the traditional profession.

Formerly, the Majhi people had their language, but

now their language is endangered. Although Majhis had their mother tongue, it is not in practice now as they have not been able to preserve their native language and have started to speak the Nepali language as their first language (Panta, 2078). Majhis are not interested in following their conventional occupation due to various reasons, such as the impacts of modern means of transportation. The Majhi were displaced as a result of bridges and roads, and their culture was lost. They earn their livelihood in the country through wages, farming and raising livestock, beating stones, working as construction workers, and other occupations.

Conclusion

The shifted settlement is an example of how the indigenous people are compelled to move to other occupations that are indigeneity because of infrastructure development including the road. This community has its own identity, serving the people by crossing the river, and selling fish for livelihood. Still, they have the compulsion to change their traditional occupations to fishing, boating, selling firewood, and searching for gold at the bank of the Kali Gandaki River are declining. As a result, Majhis' way of life becomes difficult. They are economically poor, politically backward, and affected by economic, social, cultural, and political differences. Due to lack of money, they cannot run a hotel or restaurant business or shop for economic gain. One of the effecting aspects in the economy is alcohol as shown in the field note. Despite gradual improvements in access to education, Majhis have not held government jobs and secured their position in policymaking. Regarding cultural significance, the Majhis cannot earn a living by attracting foreign tourists through civilization and boating. Less income makes it difficult to meet their basic needs. Thus, the new generation is not interested in following traditional occupations like searching for gold in the sand and fishing, although traditional boating has already disappeared here. They are leaving the traditional professions and adopting diverse occupations. Due to the previous generation's inferiority and the lack of development of new skills for the new profession, young people are found willing to go to foreign countries for their livelihood. Poverty has a far-reaching impact on their lives by causing them to lack adequate food, education, health, and other basic needs. Two major aspects must be considered by stake agencies: One, why the indigenous settlement was displaced without an alternative appropriate place in the age of politics of identity? Answers to this question should be kept in mind by development actors in the future. The next is awareness against uncontrolled use of alcohol and smoking should be created for their upward economic and social mobility.

Regular income-generating occupations, skill-oriented education, and consciousness are lacking here. There is a gap between knowledge, skill, and attitude for overall

development according to time and context. They are politically, economically, and culturally backward. Majhis are on the brink of urbanization, but they are lagging in basic needs and employment. There should be special initiatives to expand access to jobs, opportunities, and higher education. There must be a special initiative to enter government service. Modern agriculture and livestock farming, pig and poultry farming, bamboo and rope making, alcohol making, and local grain-based occupations need to be adopted by Majhis as soon as possible as alternative strategies for sustaining their livelihood and making daily life easier.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

I declare that this research has been conducted ethically.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials

The data will be available on request.

Competing Interests

There is no competing interest with any individual or agency.

Funding

No funding.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my profound and sincere gratitude to Dr. Man Bahadur Khattri, Dr. Lal Bahadur Pun, Dr. Prem Bhandari, and Mr. Kanchan Mani Dixit, who encouraged and guided me to make this research work strong, valuable, and publishable. I am thankful to the research participants for their strong support and cooperation in this research issue. Mr. Ram Bahadur KC; Mr. Ram Prasad Khanal; Mr. Krishna Majhi; Miss Asmita Majhi; Miss Anju Majhi; Mr. Aita Bahadur Majhi; Mr. Yukta Prasad Subedi; Mrs. Umadevi Majhi; Mrs. Bhanu Majhi and thanks a lot to all of the anonymous manuscript reviewers who provided constructive comments and insightful feedback that help to make this research work valuable.

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