



Understanding Living Vulnerabilities of Santhal People in Nepal: An Ethnographic Observation

Prem Kumar Rai

Kathmandu University

Keywords: Santhal •Community •Diversity •Livelihood •Resilient

Abstract

This article is an account of life (hi)stories and lived experiences of the Santhal people at Gaurigunj Gaun of Jhapa, Nepal. This paper tries to respond to adversities and coping strategies for making livelihoods. Specifically, I have tried to explore the livelihood adversities of the Santhal people and what they have faced in their context of living. I also investigated the ways they have adjusted to cope with their current livelihood practices. The assessment of livelihood outcomes was done through the informal as well as formal interaction with the participants along with my direct observation in the research field sites.

The participants' lived experiences have been filled with remarkable Indigenous knowledge system having empirical traditional practices in the entire community. Having under a deteriorated situation, marginalized people like Santhal struggled to survive at Gaurigunj Gaun. For observation and experience, of all these facets of livelihood (hi)stories and lived experiences, I have used the worldview of interpretivism and criticism as the paradigmatic roadmap of this paper. Further, I took over ethnography, an observation of participation, which indeed contributed me as a researcher to present the self and other within a single ethnography which enabled me to focus on the characters and process of the ethnographic endeavor. Consequently, life (hi)stories and memoirs have been the pivotal methods for exploring the living resilience of the Santhal in the research area. Resilience theory has been used in order to gaze into the life (hi)stories of the Santhal. Throughout the practices of Indigenous empirical skills and knowledge, the Santhal people maintain their livelihood resilience.

Introduction of the Santhal Community

The far-easternmost foothills and inner Terai of Nepal from Jhapa to Sunsari are inhabited by the highly marginalized group of the Santhal (NEFIN, 1999). The Santhal community has lived in nearby forests for many years practicing foraging, hunting, and fishing as a means of livelihood. (M. Hemran, personal communication, September 24, 2019). However, deforestation broadly threatened their comfortable living as they were compelled to migrate to alternative location for

survival particularly they move to nearby river sides. The Terai districts were once covered with the dense natural forests having stand for extreme commercial as well as domestic values for the locals like the Santhal community. Notwithstanding, because of the large number of land resettlement and merchandise of timber. With the eradication of malaria during the 1950s, the Terai territory experienced mass arrival from the hill people looking for the land - an estimated 600,000 people migrated from the hill to the Terai in the period between 1960 and 1975 (Feldman & Fournier, 1976). Since most of the settlements resided nearby the rivers, fishing and hunting was one of the main livelihood activities of the Santhal community. Furthermore, freshwater shrimps, crabs, and smaller fish were eaten up throughout the year for sustainable practice.

The Santhal people, until recently, have been considered as tribal people living nomadic lifestyles where they frequently move from one place of residence to another altogether (Barakat, Hoque, Halim, & Osman, 2008). They lived in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Mauritius (Rai & Hasda, 2018). As indicated, traditionally, this community relied on hunting and fishing as their livelihood. However, the modernization of the society and geo-political changes forced them to shift into other occupations mainly working as daily wage laborers in agriculture and other areas.

In Nepal, the Santhal peoples are considered as one of the first settlers in the eastern plain area. Now they are mostly concentrated in Jhapa, Morang, and Sunsari districts. According to the National Population and Housing Census (NPCS, 2011), the total population of the Santhal is 51,735; the urban population of Santhal is 1736, whereas the rural population is 49,999 (NPCS, 2012). Linguistically, among five language families: Sino-Tibetan, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and language isolate, the Santhali language falls in Austro-Asiatic group (Yadav, 2021, p.55). The larger portion of the Santhal population is found in Jhapa and Morang districts of Nepal, where we find 92.64 percent of the Santhal population. Although the population is scattered in almost 30 districts, the number is very negligible in other districts except Jhapa and Morang where they have primarily settled in the southern municipalities of Jhapa bordering or near to India.

The Santhal people, who are considered to be '*sons of the soil*'; *permanent resident of the land*, are now almost landless. They have been displaced and now landless from their ancient traditional settlements (Chemjonget al, 2014; Rai, 2013). Very few households now have their own land and most of them live on public land or rented land. The public land they live on tends to be nearby rivers/streams, and therefore is more prone to flooding. According to Pradhan et al (2006), as reported in the *Baseline Survey of Highly Marginalized Janajatis (HMJs) Report*, 66.7

% of the Santhal population based on daily wages and labour works. In this work I glanced at their livelihood practices and its adversities in the society and also individually assessed their potential threats for their existence in the long run.

The Santhal peoples are facing various challenges in daily livelihood. Often characterized by the word '*Satare*'; *inferior word/derogatory terminology*, this humiliates them and makes them feel inferior (Rai & Hasda, 2018, p.1). Although they are black by color and being called *Satare* but this trend has also been changing now and calling them with respect as of time being. Poverty is the key reason which has been a challenge to them to have a healthy lifestyle and a secure livelihood (Upreti, 2010). The Santhal people experience of material poverty counters their abundance as culturally rich peoples who are happy to live in their community in harmony. Precisely, they are taking care of their traditional customs, culture, and practices through the means of marriage ceremony (in Santhal "bapla"), naming ceremony (in Santhal "dzanamts^hotijar"), and death rituals (in Santhal, "b^hn^oan") for example. These are indicators of the Santhals' rich cultural values and beliefs (Gautam, 2011).

However, there is a challenge economically; they do not have access to employment and resources to ensure a good living. Manmade as well as natural disasters have threatened and challenged their livelihood as climate change has affected agriculture, forestry, human health, biodiversity, snow cover, and aquatic to mountain ecosystems (Malla, 2008). Even though Santhal people always use their human assets by all means like laboring in the agro-base jobs and solve the livelihoods problem in the context of daily living. As a lack of getting national citizenship certificates on time we are hardly use political rights like casting votes as citizens of the country (R. Hasda, personal communication, August 12, 2019). Importantly, Chaulagai (2016) states that they remain all the time away from higher education even dropout rate seem very high because of their financial situation as a result they could not complete with the mainstream members in the job market. These are the challenges that Santhal peoples are face that make them vulnerable and put their livelihood at stake. Throughout this paper I strive to explore the livelihood adaptation strategies of Santhal peoples against these hardships and the ways that their Indigenous knowledge and practices facilitate them to cope with these hardships.

Resilience Approach: A Coping Strategy

In this article, I used resilience as a theoretical base. The concept of resilience can be traced to the Latin word *resilio* which means ‘to jump back’ (Manyena, 2006). Resilience is focused on the ability of an individual to cope in different circumstances to fight against adversity for betterment (Gunderson, 2000). In addition to resilience it is important to note the fundamental importance of assets either physical or human or natural is also adapted to make the Santhal livelihoods sustainable against shocks and trends. In particular, culture is an important aspect of livelihood interlinked with resilience in this research. This concept of resilience refers to the magnitude of change that the Santhal livelihoods can cope with while still being able to function, and to the ways in which social system can take these sort of changes. Further, I will also address the spontaneous movement between the ecological and social systems which are granted to assess the environmental impacts on livelihood. Based on this observation, my participants have been facing the adversities in the contest of living although they have managed to be resilient against the vulnerable situation so I assert that vulnerability is the flip side of resilience because this refers to limitations in the face of challenges.

Resilience is a critical approach when assessing sustainable livelihood. This approach aptly includes an individual’s assets, activities, and capabilities which support people to cope with their livelihoods whereby sustainability may be challenged by changes and outside stress. Because as in the perspective of sustainable livelihood, the local tribe or people are taken to be both objects and subjects of change under broad knowledge, skills, and expertise over their individual circumstance and the challenges and possibilities that they are facing with.

Ethnographic Research Approach

I used ethnography as a methodology for exploring the livelihoods of Santhals' culture. In doing so, it allowed me to engage in the field for exploring their daily behavior and livelihood practices. I observed the day to day lives (Tedlock, 1991) of the Santhal community people engaging with the natural resources. Scotland (2012) has explained that “Methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how field text is obtained and interpreted” (p.9). Further he has revealed that a methodological shift since the 1970s from “participant observation toward the observation of participation” presents both the self and other within a single

ethnography remaining focused on the characters of the research journey and process of ethnographic dialogue (p.9). Participant observation lets both observer and participants emotionally engage and observe the life of others, whereas observation of participation lets both experience and observe his/her own and others' participation within the ethnographic endeavors (Tedlock, 1991).

Throughout the research study, ethnography was the fundamental research method where I engaged with participants in the Gaurijung Gaun of Jhapa over a period of 15 months. I engaged openly or in consent with keeping the secrecy of the respondents' unwanted things to be unclosed. I spent extended periods of time observing what happened in the research fields, listening to what was talked about and shared and/or asking questions through informal interaction. This was helpful in order to build rapport and gather available data to shed light on the emerging issues and focus of inquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In alignment with ethnographic inquiry as a research methodology, I approached this work as an outsider-insider researcher to the Santhal community. Further, "Ethnography is what ethnographers actually do in the field" (Agar, 1980, 1992 as cited in Fetterman, 2010, p. 12). Again, I unveiled the daily lifestyle of the Santhal people and explained the complex social structures. Through the participants' shared stories, voices, photographs enabled me to deeply understand their experiences of living in this research. I estimated that their voices, short stories, and photography enabled me to provide of events in this research. Denzin (2003) is linked with the praxis in capacity to change the order of researchers which also suit my ethnographic research context. My research has been defined by fieldwork or the active and prolonged involvement of the ethnographer with the local context being studied

Research data was gathered through additional approaches that included observations and informal interactions or communication with the participants in the research area. In other words, all of the time was spent intentionally, not a single moment was wasted. Prolonged engagement in their field allowed me to collect every aspect and action of participants during this time. In order to answer the research question, the ethnographic methods allowed me to grasp a down to earth understanding of Santhals' livelihood adversities, coping strategies, and transformative learning for the sustainable outcome. Furthermore, I observed and experienced behaviors, interactions, and conversations that were the manifestations of society and culture in action (Murchison, 2010).

Narrative Overviews

On the verge of my field visit, I just recall one particular day, a Saturday. I was in search of some of my research participants since I had to collect specific information of the Santhal family in Gaurigunj Gaun. I found about nine group members who were between the ages of 24 to 75 years, they were busy for fishing in the middle of *Khet*, a piece of land whereby farmer cultivates crops, in *Dallu*, name of the local place. They were extremely busy with their job. They were dressed in traditional clothing, and practicing their Indigenous skills and knowledge to collect the fish, crabs, and snails *Gamchha*, piece of cloth mostly used in the Terai to wipe out their body and face while sweating and *Lungi*, this is a thin and long cloth that people use as a dress to cover up below the waist and above the ankles themselves. I stepped up ahead, they took no notice of me and were engaged in their job. The pond looked a bit deep and bushy so they had to take the water up from the pond and had easy access to the fish and other stuffs. While some of the members were throwing water out of surface, others (children) were busy fishing for *Ghungi*, a small snail type creature used as water foods in Terai and *Ekatum*, scary type of water creature, Terai people eat it as a high protein food available in bushy water and putting it into their fishing creels, *Dhokro*, made from bamboo and rope usually used it to keep fish and else into to this pot.

I enjoyed watching those affairs and almost forgot why I was there for. I refreshed myself and was prepared to introduce myself with them. This was challenging for me to talk with them initially without being familiar because they were very busy with their work and looked tired as well. It was very physically demanding work. Despite these observations, as a researcher, I had to collect information from them and without having a conversation, it would not be possible. So, I approached a woman who was busy collecting the fish, *Ghungi*, *Gangata* (snails, and crabs) beside the pond and introduced myself. I told her that I was visiting them to ask about their daily livelihood and concerns/affairs. As soon as I introduced myself, she started talking with others in Santhali. Fortunately, I was able to understand their language: they were considering whether to talk with me or not. I assured them the purpose of my research, that it was for the benefit of Santhal people and their community. I would gather information to know the non-Santhal people so that they could also understand Santhals culture, skills, and knowledge so it could be beneficial to them as well. Luckily, the participants could speak and understand the Nepali language very well, though they speak in their Santhali language their daily household affairs. During this introduction, other members continued to engage in their individual and group tasks while I was talking with them. It

was agreed that the women were ready to talk to me for a while but they want assure that this conversation would not misuse other than for the sake of Santhal people support as well as benefit.

During my time with the participants, I learned that these activities are primary skills (fishing and harvesting snails and crabs including water fruits and leaves like *shapla*, *panifal*, *shaluk*, the foods available in the water ponds etc.) that they have learned from their ancestors. This Indigenous knowledge has been taught to them and passed to their children as well. They gather these resources to consume for their livelihood and sell them in the local market to buy other household requirements. Fishing activities include culture in all ways, for example by including the worship to their Gods and ancestors and also regular rituals as a means of dedicating their foods. Because of the cultural importance of it, everyone including elderly members engage in this activity. In this sense, fishing is not only related to consumption for households as well as selling them in the local market rather this is a cultural practice related to their ancestors and deities, too. Meanwhile, while we were having conversation, one of the members screamed saying *Bam! Bam!* a type of snake like slippery fish (eel) taken as a good quality generally available in the bottom of muddy pond, then he caught it easily though it was slippery. I asked him how he could easily catch this slippery fish, the participant shared that *once water takes the shape of a circle, then fish cannot see properly and get unconscious for a while, then it is easy to catch them*. The Indigenous skills and knowledge are indicators of physical assets; these are vital to both formal and informal education. In my role as an ethnographic researcher, I holistically observed the behavioral pattern of Santhals' daily livelihood affairs. The experience provided a comprehensive and somehow canvas of the extraordinary socio-cultural community of the Santhal peoples. The detailed analysis, of course, contributes to the understanding of religion, culture, economy, and environment of a particular place (Fetterman, 2010, p.8).

After I conducted an in-depth interaction with this community, I explored the historical livelihood practices. I sought to have conversations with the elders so that I could figure out appropriate information. I navigated myself through the muddy, slippery path alongside the bushy pond, a sort of reservoir of water available in the terrain. There was an older man who was likely in his early seventies. I assumed that I could receive valuable information about the hardships of their livelihood. When I approached the man, he was busy collecting the crabs, fish, and snails, a job which seemed comfortable to him. Initially, I made an environment for conversation saying that *Letubaba*; grandfather; respected word to call an elderly man in their language, *Yo garmi ma*

yasto kam garna garo hundaina (Do you not feel difficulty doing such work during such hot season?) He replied nodding his head, "Not at all", further I inquired that '*Ani Letubaba tapai lagayat nati natini/ chhora buhari sabai machha marna aaunu hunchha ?*', (*Do you come for fishing along with your son and in-laws, and grandson-daughter?*). Again, he responded with smile, 'Yes' with the gesture of shaking head only.

During the conversation, I looked for indication that he was ready to have a short interaction with me without any hesitation. I felt victorious with this effort as I convinced him to be ready to talk Tutan Husda, a pseudonym, I am unable to include my participations details since I have to adhere the ethics also and I used pseudo names of my participants in this research so far. Importantly this study is totally qualitative methods not quantitative ones. I have looked for the informed consent of my research participants having built rapport including trust by visiting frequently and making them decide to participate in my research process on the basis of comprehensive and accurate information about the study. I individually thought that the relationship between the researcher and participants played a significant stand in my research. Further, I permitted them to be free to withdraw at any time (autonomy) from this process and protected the privacy of my participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), and introduced himself and at 73 years old he described himself metaphorically as a long run horse. He shared that some of his colleagues had already passed away having different sort of diseases like tuberculosis, cancers, and heart attacks. Albeit he declared himself as a down to earth fit and fine without any disease to date and was proud to share the secret to his health. After listening to stories about the participant and his past he was never worried about his health or his livelihood since he could work and was actively earning without having to depend upon others. Moreover, he eagerly shared with me that in his life he brought up his five children: four daughters and a son. His children are parents now themselves.

My participant shared the experiences and events he faced during his lifespan. He shared that in the mid-1950s, most of the *Pahadiharu*, people who generally live-in hills side away from malaria; an infectious pandemic disease with fever and chills caused by mosquitoes. Thus, most of hill people returned to the mountain again until its eradication. However, we Santhal people did not have any effects with those infection because of the indigenous resident having good immunity power that our forefather were born and settled of the area we had sustained as well as adjusted with the environment. Santhal people used to practice daily livelihood activities through hunting as well as foraging wildlife animals and collecting food in the forest, jungle, and rivers. He further shared that he had Indigenous skills to trap or capture the wild animals particularly rats, rattlesnakes, birds along with a collection of leafy vegetables, fungi, flowers, fruits, roots, and honey from the forest. As the legal provision was not strict it was easy to have access to the forest during that time. Therefore, to a great extent they depended on these activities in the jungle to maintain resources for survival. On this perspective Tutan Husda narrates that

Albeit hunting the animals could never be so easy as we had to be victimized ourselves sometime because we were attacked by many kinds of animals There were lot of men eating animals as they incorporated human flesh in their usual diet and largely hunted and killed humans. So, we did have to rely on alternative living practices in the forest vegetarian stuffs like mushroom, herbs and roots, nuts and so on since it seemed comparatively safer for us and specially for women so far. Thus, forest had played a crucial role to serve our communities against livelihood adversities and was sustainable at that time.

Slowly and steadily, the deforestation increased and the then government *Pachhayat Sasan*; the regime run by the monarchy of the Shah dynasty in between 2017 to 2046 B.S. period, started settling the Pahadi people in this area. In return, we were obliged to migrate nearby the river side because we did not have the authentic documents to claim the land ownership by then. Rather we were compelled to look for alternative living strategies like fishing, wage-based laborer, farming and the like though we have Indigenous skills and knowledge of fishing, weaving and so on. Traditional as well as Indigenous knowledge was supposed to be the fundamental weapon to cope with the adversities of living with comfort to a great extent.

While sharing information, he looked empathetic, though he was ready to share more stories ahead.

This very job is somewhat an alternative recourse for livelihood since these are seasonable activities only. As soon as the season was off, we had to move forward with other livelihood practices through domestic labors mostly in the agriculture sector. Unfortunately, we have to depend on other landlord's land because we do not have our own land ownership. We go for their agro-based services as a wage-based employee for plantation, fertilization, ploughing the land and the similar kind.

He further said, “The situation is supposed to be different one these days as compared to the time of my father and forefather. We need to cope up with the situations as time demands. Now we are relying on the *Sahus*; feudal of village and *Mahajan*; those who own large area of the land, again they appear sometime really merciless and dupe to us. Even though we are compelled to be silent like voiceless. Fortunately, in recent time some of us engage in Mahajan's land as *Adhiya*; agreement of fifty/fifty portion of share after production of crops. This made us plant as per the market demand for cash and cereal crops which include paddy, millets, maize, pulses, wheat, and other cereals. The instant cash crops production like vegetables (cauliflowers, tomatoes, potatoes, etc) and fruits (banana, lemon, mangoes, etc.) as well as cattle like goat, pigs, chicken, and ducks are also the remarkable resources of livestock farming as a means of agro-based income for us. As he was sharing that the large amount in quantity and products consumed in the household affairs and the additional quantity becomes saleable in the market for alternative purchase.

Whilst conversation, we both did not pay attention to the time since it had already been a couple of hours, though he seemed to narrate more about his experience of his community and time span. Further, he stated,

“I individually never tried to save my daily earning rather spent it for drinking alcohol particularly homemade Jaad and Raksi, homemade liquor made by rice, meat and other entertainment affairs so sometimes we had to face terrible scarcity of foods and treatment. However, my children now are pretty much conscious about it and started saving money for their children and themselves whenever it is necessary in an emergency. Importantly, they have started opening bank accounts because they have citizenships now.

In my time, I did not get any national identity card (national citizenship certificate) so without having it, I could not claim my legality which was the situation to my ancestors as well. Because of this circumstance, we had never had an occasion to be a wealthy family at all. I just took my citizenship in 2063 B.S. during my sixties.

He took a long breath for a while and asked me to allow to smoke and to take out it from his right top of ear. Generally, in the rural area of Terai, they prefer to keep the small stuff on ear, it was *Bidi*; tobacco which is wrapped up by a dry leaf of herbs, usually Terai people consume it and started smoking it for a while.

Through the observations, I figured out that both female and male were working together in the field. I raised a question to my participant, “Do you have any discrimination between male and female in your community?” He instantly replied,

' No ' 'Never', we worked together from the beginning, as I told you earlier, females used to work in the household chores initially in cooking, washing, collecting the fodders for animals, weeding, etc. But these days, they engage as well as work in the field like male counterparts and have got similar kind s of wages as male gets. Female never feels discriminated against the name of gender rather gets equally paid for labor. Because of these affairs, lots of poor household are able to maintain their livelihood in a convenient way.

During an in-depth interaction, others were doing their work regularly, although one of them approached as well as moved around us frequently and rolled his eyes downward and tried to aware us aware of our conversation as if I was doing skeptical activities to the participant. Even though in the beginning, I have informed them in regards to my purpose of visiting and talking to the old man. Yes, indeed, it was slightly uncomfortable to sit as we stayed in the northern most part of the pond having a muddy as well as slippery setting. However, this was quite a good vintage point to see myself as a researcher to investigate their livelihood activities.

The situation of the Santhal peoples is like the experiences of my own community which has also faced the suppression, isolation, and exploitation by the ruling (elite) in the past. The then ramification of haves and have nots appeared unequally. In the instance of my community, however, the situation has changed with the introduction of new constitution acts (Constitution of Nepal, 2015) whereby discrimination and exploitation are declared illegal. Like the participants, I experienced the same milieu in the past as we also planted the seasonal crops as well as raised animal husbandry for the sake of livelihood and sold these in the market whenever the production was high. In return, we secured the alternative commodities from the market for sustainable livelihood.

Moreover, I also assumed that this sort of efforts will assure them for a good income, food security and importantly, the quality of life so far.

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.” (DFID, 2000)

As they catch and clean the fish and others on time so that they can sell it in the market and get their necessary commodities in return. They supplied their livelihood supporting goods which were not locally produced from the market which is very far from the local place and moved seasonally. It explains to me that they were mobile, that was limited to the bringing of salt and cloths from the markets (Adhikari & Bohle, 2008, p. 45). They have maintained their livelihood under give and take strategies however this could not be for sustainable efforts.

Research Implications

Throughout the narration of participants' as well as my experiences in the surrounding, traditional fishing and farming continue to be fundamental ways of living of the Santhal people. They are deprived of the mainstream power of politics, decision making, and are always kept at a distance from the production making resources. Elite people control the rights, opportunities, and freedom having neglected by all means like Santhal which is the reality of bitterness. Eventually, they remained far behind economically, politically, and socially surviving in deteriorating circumstances. My key informants further stated that other non-farm activities, such as firewood collection, handicraft making, and weaving for example, engage mostly females on the one hand, whereas males have nothing to do except household chores as well as the preparation of firewood in the forest. In addition to that, during the agriculture season, men prefer to migrate for economic reasons. According to the Ellis (2000), "A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household" (p.17).

Once someone has education, skills, and knowledge, then they possess human capital which becomes an asset. Likewise, the Santhal people are always comfortable with nature and natural resources like ponds, rivers, and forests which are natural capital or assets. Thus, livelihood strategies concern the individual's ability to implement options for ensuring livelihood. As much as one has diversity in livelihood adaptation techniques, then higher the household's resilience against the shocks, trends, and seasonality that occurs within the vulnerable contexts. With the fishing practices, Santhal people strived to preserve their culture and try to fulfill their household consumption including bringing back other necessary objects after selling in the marketplace.

The Santhal people, nowadays, do not limit their nexus within the community rather they have expanded their activities through business and work which made them socially explicit and started participating in other forms of social events either taking part in the political election as a representative or casting their votes or operating business. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) state that "social capital is the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 119). This is an effort towards social capital for them that leads them to the power of decision making so they have been increasing their bargaining power and taking credit

or another subsidy from the specific sector. In this way, they have been decreasing vulnerability and increasing assets through their traditional skills and knowledge to protect against livelihood difficulty.

The Santhal people started participating in the political election, using their voting rights to opt for their representative or elect themselves as a member of the party. They have been operating their own businesses and identify themselves as entrepreneurs in society. Santhal peoples are also forming organizations in their community to advocate for their community's wellbeing. Throughout these practices, the Santhal people are using their social capital individually and in groups within society.

Conclusion

The Santhal people, as of today, have been considered as tribal people living nomadic lifestyles having resided and frequently moving from one place to another altogether. They live in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan and Mauritius (Rai & Hasda, 2018), with a dense settlement in Gaurigunj Gaun of Jhapa along with other parts of Nepal particularly Morang and Sunsari. While the Santhal people have largely lived by foraging and hunting, later they adopted farming and fishing and as sources of livelihood. With this adoption, Santhal people have been impacted by multi-faceted adversities, including power exercise such as political, social and detachment from land and national citizenship. They have been coping with these hardships upon their lives through by practicing their Indigenous empirical skills and knowledge. These have been preserved and practiced from generation to generation to sustain their livelihoods.

Hence, I have presented the implications of this study. These results can potentially contribute to the respective area of educational policy makers, development agencies, curriculum department, prospective students, and researchers. The Indigenous knowledge is enormous and underutilized national resource (Chambers, 1983); however, the concern authority is likely to be out of attention for the endorsement of lifelong Indigenous skills and knowledge. Therefore, in the context of decentralization (federal) of education, the local government like municipalities must include and recognize it through the curriculum of education.

Importantly, I have raised my concern that use of empirical Indigenous knowledge and lifelong skills might play a crucial role in the development interventions for the third world countries like Nepal. Moreover, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP 2016-2023) aims to

enhance students' socio-emotional, spiritual, cognitive, physical, and moral potential in order to promote life skills and valued-based knowledge. So, it needs to be incorporated in the curriculum of school or higher education by which it would be easier to create understanding of abstract subject matters and in turn, ensures better livelihood. In addition, as the notion of post development of the community and bringing back the deprived coteries like the Santhal people in the mainstream, the mix of Indigenous knowledge and external expert knowledge may play a crucial role in a sustainable development (Ziai, 2007).

References

- Adhikari, J. & Bohle, G. (2008). Rural livelihoods at risk: Determinants of the abilities of Nepali hill farmers to cope with food deficiency. In J. Adhikari, (Ed.), *Changing livelihoods: Essays on Nepal's development since 1999*, 41-104. Thapathali: Martin Chautari, Kathmandu.
- Barakat, A. Hoque, M., Halim, S., & Osman, (2008). *Study on land dispossession and alienation of Adibashis in the plain districts of Bangladesh*. Human Development Research Centre (HRDC). <https://www.bangladesch.org/pics/download/NETZ-study.pdf>
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Chamalagain, S. (2016) *Educational Status of Santhal Community: A case study of school drop out in Santhal Children of Eastern Nepal* (Master of Philosophy thesis). Arctic University of Norway, Norway.
- Chambers, R. (1983). *Rural development: Putting the first last*. Brington. Longman.
- Chemjong, D, Gurung, YB & Lama, K. (2014). *Santhals of Nepal: Ethnographic Research*, Series 9, CDSA. Kirtipur: Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Performance ethnography: Critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Los Angeles. Sage.
- DFID. (2000). *Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets*.
https://www.livelihoods.org/info/info_guidancesheets.html
- Ellis, F. (2003). *A livelihoods approach to migration and poverty reduction*. Paper Commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID).

- Feldman, D., & Fournier, A. (1976). Social relation and agriculture production in Nepal's Terai. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 3(4), 427-64.
- Fetterman, D.M., (2010). *Ethnography step by step*. Los Angeles. Sage.
- Gautam, D. (2011). *Marriage system of Santhal* (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis). Tribhuvan University, Department of Anthropology, Nepal.
- Gunderson, L. H. (2000). Ecological Resilience: In theory and application. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, 31, 425-439.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge. London.
- Malla, G. (2008). Climate change and its impact on Nepalese agriculture. *The Journal of Agriculture and Environment*, 9, 62-71.
- Manyena, S. B. (2006). The concept of resilience revisited. *Disasters*, 30(4), 433-450.
- Murchion, J. M. (2010). *Ethnography essentials: Designing, conducting and presenting your research*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass.
- NEFIN. (1999). *National consultation on integrated strategies for the promotion the right of Indigenous people in Nepal*. Federal council secretariat, in cooperation with Minority Right groups international. Kathmandu. NEFIN.
- Nepal Govt. NPCS.(2012). *National Population and Housing Census 2011: Village Development Committee/Municipality. Vol. 2*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, Ramshahpath, Kathmandu.
- Pradhan, K. & et. al. (2006). Baseline Survey of Highly Marginalized Janajatis(HMJ's). An unpublished report submitted to Janajati Empowerment Project, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities(NEFIN).
- Rai, L. (2013). *Conversation to Christianity and Social Inclusion: A Comparative Ethnographic Study of Chepang and Santhal Community*. An unpublished report, submitted to SNV/SIRF, Nepal.
- Rai, L.&Hasda, D. (2018). *Santhal JatiChinari or The Identity of the Santhal Ethnicity*. Sanepa: NFDIN(National Federation For Development of Indigenous Nationalities), Lalitpur, Nepal.
- Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and

- critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 9-16.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9>
- Tedlock, B. (1991). From participant observation to the observation of participation: The emergence of narrative ethnography. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 47(1), 69-94.
- Upreti, B. R. (2010). A decade of armed conflict and livelihood insecurity in Nepal. In B. R. Upreti, & U. Muller-Boker (Eds.), *Livelihood insecurity and social conflict in Nepal* (pp. 9-47). Kathmandu: Heidel Press.
- Yadav, YP. (2021). Indigenous Languages of Nepal: A State of the Art Situation. *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, 14(1), 43-56.
- Ziai, A. (2007). Development discourse and its critics: An introduction to post development. In A. Ziai (Ed.), *Exploring post-development: Theory and practice, problems and perspectives* (pp. 18-31). Routledge.