



Impacts national policies on indigenous people livelihood in Nepal: A case study of the Raute community

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Abstract

Aim: The primary purpose of this research was to analyze and evaluate the policies currently in place in Nepal that affect Nepal's indigenous population. This paper focuses on the Raute people and how government decisions have impacted their standard of living.

Method: This study used a descriptive methodology. The Raute people of Nepal's mid to far-western development regions were singled out because they seem to have felt the greatest impact from shifting international legal norms and domestic policy agendas.

Findings: Evidence from various regions, such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia, shows that national policies often need to give more priority to protecting indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Adivasi Janajati, Nepal's indigenous people, account for about 37.2% of the country's total population. They comprise a sizable population but have been marginalized from mainstream society. The dominant groups have effectively marginalized Indigenous peoples' autonomy in terms of territory, resources, language, culture, customary law, and access to political and economic power.

Implications/Novel Contribution: Even though Nepal has ratified ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, the rights of indigenous people are not guaranteed in the country's recently promulgated Constitution of 2015. How this brand-new constitution and national laws deal with the provisions of this ILO Convention remains to be seen.

Keywords: Policy, Marginalized, Indigenous People

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples face significant challenges to survival in many developing countries due to colonization and dispossession of their lands and resources, as noted in the [United Nations Declaration \(2007\)](#).

Many academics have argued that indigenous communities play an important role in protecting wildlife habitats. Indigenous knowledge is the body of information that has evolved over time in response to the forest setting, which is the premise of this argument. Their insights have been crucial to maintaining forest resources and ecosystems. It has been their lifeline as cited by [Cunningham \(1991\)](#); [Subiyantoro, Sulistyono, and Prameswari \(2017\)](#). Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that the participation of local communities and Indigenous peoples is essential for successful biodiversity conservation ([Becker, 2000](#); [Chernela, 1989](#); [Nabhan, 1997](#)).

Many forest dwellers have seen their traditional ways of life destroyed by colonial oppression and the impact of modernization. In the 20th century, forest land was cleared for agricultural use at an alarming rate. Populations of many Indigenous peoples fell after they were forcibly relocated from their ancestral lands ([Nuchso, Tuntivivat, & Klayklung, 2016](#); [Panter-Brick, Layton, & Rowley-Conwy, 2001](#)). Deforestation, land encroachment by mainstream society and cultural/political marginalization are all issues that have affected the Raute in Nepal, which are the primary focus of this research ([Bista, 1976](#); [Gurung, 2010](#); [Fortier, 2009](#); [K. B. Bhattachan, 2005](#); [Luintel, 1998](#); [Singh, 1998](#)).

With this context in mind, the purpose of this review was to identify and analyze the various indigenous people-centric policies implemented by the various Nepalese governments over the years and to assess how these policies have affected the Raute community's ability to provide for its basic needs. This analysis will first provide a

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high-level summary of the demographics of Nepal's indigenous population. After that, we examine how different policies and laws affect Indigenous peoples' rights to harvest and other subsistence agriculture. What follows discusses the aftereffects of these policies on the daily lives of Raute people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Status of Indigenous Peoples in Nepal

Biodiversity is an important part of culture and the sustainable livelihoods for Nepalese. The country is endowed with rich biological and cultural diversity. Many species have religious values and are the source of food, fiber, shelter and medicine (Paudel & Parajuli, 1999). Indigenous Knowledge (IK) contains rich information about the conservation and use of biodiversity. IK on biodiversity is stored in people's memories and activities and is expressed in stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, dances, myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, customary laws, agricultural practices and others (Grenier, 1998; Weng & Yang, 2016).

Even though Nepal covers only about 0.1% of the earth's landmass, it is ranked at the twenty-sixth in the world and the eleventh in Asia in terms of biological diversity richness. This richness is attributed to diverse biogeographical features and climatic conditions, ranging from lush moist forests and sparse alpine deserts to luxurious grasslands in lowland plains (Delil, 2018; Dobremez, 1976). Nepal is in the meeting point of six provinces of Asia, namely Sino-Japanese, South-East Asian, Indian, African-Asian Desert, Irano-Turanean and Asiatic province. It lies between the Oriental realm and the Paleo-arctic realm and the altitude variation is between 63 m above sea level at Kechana Kalan, Jhapa in the southeastern plains to the highest peak in the world, Mount Everest at 8848 m. The diverse climatic conditions and the variation of altitudes have made Nepal suitable to harbor all types of forests found in the world (Joshi, 2005).

Nepal has about 4.27 million hectares of forests (about 29% of total land area), 1.5 million hectares of scrubland and degraded forest (10.6%), 1.7 million hectares of grassland (12%), 3 million hectares of farmland (21%) and about 1 million hectares of uncultivated land (7%). Its forests contain very diverse flora with 35 forest types (Stainton, 1972). The types of these forests are categorized into ten major groups: tropical, sub-tropical broad-leaved, subtropical conifer, lower temperate broad-leaved, lower temperate mixed broad-leaved, upper temperate broad-leaved, upper temperate mixed broad-leaved, temperate coniferous, sub-alpine and alpine scrub forests (Chaudhary, 2000).

Forests are legally categorized into national forests and private forests in Nepal. The national forest includes government-managed forests, protected forests, community forests, leasehold forests and religious forests. In community forests and leasehold forests, only the usufruct right has been given to the users.

However, because of social, economic, and political activities, along with global climate change, a number of species of flora and fauna is on the verge of extinction. Over-cutting of wood for fuel and construction, and heavy logging of trees for fodder and fire are the main causes of biodiversity loss. In the period between 1978/79 and 1994, the area of the national forest was reduced by an annual rate of 1.7 percent and shrub land increased by an annual rate of 8.4 percent. The area under agriculture and grassland remained more or less unchanged during the same period (Department of Forest Research and Survey, 1999; Land Resources Mapping Project, 1986). Due to the deforestation and degradation, Nepal's forest cover decreased from about 60% in the 1960s to 29% in the 1990s. According to Adhikari (2000), between 1964 and 1991, Nepal lost 570,000 hectares of natural forests, out of which 380,000 hectares were converted into agricultural land (Adhikari, 2000).

Consequently, Nepal is also rich in tremendous socio-cultural diversities. It has 59 Indigenous communities mostly living in rural areas. They largely depend on agriculture and harvesting activities in the forests. Most of them suffer from biodiversity degradation through deforestation, climate change and others. Biodiversity loss is directly correlated to the erosion of cultural diversity caused by the socio-politically assimilating forces and the exclusion of indigenous peoples from governmental and non-governmental initiatives in Nepal.

The Raute people are called the lord of forest because of their in-depth knowledge of using forest resources. They are one of the most traditional indigenous groups of Nepal with unique culture that has been sustained for generations. For them forest is an integral part of the Raute life and identity from birth to death. Forests provide them with woods and foods, but their livelihood has been threatened by deforestation and the depletion of natural resources such as water, fruits, and green plants (Fortier, 2009).

They are highly mobile people and travel 2,000-4,500 square miles each year between the Siwalik foothills and the Himalayan mountain range (Contemporary Vision Nepal, 2011). This ethnic group basically has followed two migrating routes: one in Mid-Western Development Region and another in Far-Western Development Region. The routes of their movement are largely influenced by climatic conditions, as they come to warm valley areas during winter months (November to February) and high mountain areas in summer months (March to September). Similarly, they prefer to migrate to riverbank or fallow land of surrounding villages in the dry season (April to October). In addition, the duration of their stay at a particular place usually is between one and two months, depending on the availability of food. Forested areas in these regions consist of 37 to 50 percent. Since 1978 to 1990, deforestation has caused a rapid decline in forest coverage in the hills by about 2.3% (National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities, 2003). Impacts of the deforestation and the depletion of natural resources such as water, fruits, and green plants have challenged the survival of the Raute people’s distinctive traditional way of life (The World Conservation Union, 2004).



Figure 1. Mobile Territories of the nomadic raute (Source: <https://urlzs.com/c2TL>)

Indigenous peoples are known in Nepal by adivasis (literally means Indigenous peoples, autochthons, native peoples) or janajatis (nationalities or indigenous peoples). The term adivasi/janajatis has been used in the government documents, including the Constitution. The National Foundation for the Uplift of Adivasi/Janajatis (Indigenous Nationalities) Act of 2002 also defines the Indigenous nationalities as communities or people who have their own mother tongue and traditional customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or oral history of their own (National Federation of Nepal, 2013). The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities Act (NEFIN) classifies the 59 Indigenous peoples into five categories based on a set of socioeconomic indicators such as literacy rate, housing unit, land holding, economic assets, education level and population size (Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, 2004). The Government of Nepal categorizes the Raute people as an endangered people.

Table 1: Category of indigenous nationalities of Nepal ([Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, 2004](#))

Categorizations	Indigenous Peoples	Total Number
Endangered Group	Bote, Danuwar, Darai, Kumal, Majhi, Raji, Raute	10
Highly Marginalized Group	Majhi, Siyar, Lohmi, Thudam, Dhanuk, Chepang, Santhal, Jhangad, Thami, Bote Danuwar, Baramu	12
Marginalized Group	Sunuwar, Tharu, Tamang, Bhujel, Kumal, Rajbangshi, Gangaai, Dhimal, Bhote, Darai, Tajpuriya, Pahari, Topkegola, Dolpo, Fri, Mugal, Larke, Lohpa, Dura, Walung	20
Disadvantaged Group	Chhairrotan, Tangbe, Tingaunle, Thakali, Baragaunle, Marphali, Thakali, Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Yakkha, Chhantyal, Jirel, Byansi, Yolmo 15 Advanced Group Newar, Thakali	2

In Nepal, indigenous peoples have been deprived of their economic, social, educational and political rights for a long time. Compared to the mainstream population, indigenous people have higher rates of infant mortality, unemployment, alcoholism, disease and incarceration. However, among the categorization of the indigenous nationalities; the advanced groups are at the verge of extinction of their distinct identity, some disadvantaged groups have managed to continue their indigenous identity intact and others are losing it to some extent because of the influence from the dominant groups and modernization. The Raute people are the only nomadic people left in the country living in remote rural forest areas and rely on subsistence hunting and gathering ([K. Bhattachan, 2008](#)).

This group is small in the population size 162 persons (0.0% of Nepal's population). Because of the imposition of the Nepali language as the only language for education (including literacy and basic and primary education), most of the indigenous peoples are either illiterate or have less education. The literacy rate among the indigenous peoples is among the Chepang (14 per cent), while the Newar and Thakali are the highest with 61.0 and 62.6 percent. The Rautes do not believe on education and never attended to the school any of them from their community ([Central Beureau of Statistics, 2003](#)).

Because of the State's predatory land policies, such as Birta (the rulers gave ownership of land to individual Bahuns) and Jagir (land given in lieu of salary) and have the abolition of Kipat (communal/collective land ownership) land tenure system ([Regmi, 1978](#)), all indigenous peoples lost ownership and control over their ancestral lands by the 1960s. The economic status of indigenous peoples varies enormously from the Rautes who still make their livelihood through hunting and gathering, to the Newars and the Thakalis who are well advanced in commercial and industrial activities ([Anaya, 2009](#)).

Among the categorizations of indigenous people, Newars have relatively better living conditions and political influence. Thakalis are also listed as an advantaged or well-off group but their representation in government is minimal. The Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment Team (GSEA) of the World Bank examined poverty outcomes among the excluded population in Nepal using indicators of economic wellbeing, human development levels and voice and political influence ([Nepal Integrated Research System, 2006](#)). GSEA shows that Newars and Thakalis have higher health indicators and life expectancy. Rural women of these groups also have the highest access to trained assistance during child delivery than other groups.

Unfortunately, due to the rejection of Raute people to utilize any kind of medical medicines and modern treatment in the Raute community, most of the women have been suffering from the lack of maternal health care services during the period of maternity. They have often deprived of having nourishing foods during post-partum, which becomes the main reasons of maternal child mortality ([Silwal, 2011](#)). According to the [National Report Nepal \(2011\)](#), Indigenous peoples have both the highest and the lowest proportion below the poverty line: poverty characterized a lower proportion of Newars (14%) than of other indigenous people, whose rates hover between 41% and 46%, significantly higher than the national average of 31 per cent. Similarly, the human development index shows Newar have a higher HDI value (Above than 0.6) than that of the other indigenous people whereas the lowest value of the Rautes have (-0.289) ([K. Bhattachan, 2012](#)).

Table 2: Regional category of indigenous nationalities of Nepal

Regions	Indigenous Peoples	Total Number
Mountain	Bara Gaunle, Bhutia, Byansi, Chhairotan, Dolpo, Larke, Lhomi/Shingsawa, Lhopa, Marphali/Thakali, Mugali, Siyar, Tangbe, Thakali, Thudam, Tingaunle Thakali, Topkegola, Sherpa and Wallung.	18
The Hill	Bankaria, Baramo, Bhujel/Gharti, Chepang, Chhantyal, Dura, Fri, Gurung, Hayau, Hyolmo, Jirel, Kushbadia, Kusunda, Lepcha, Limbu, Magar, Newar, Pari, Rai, Sunuwar, Surel, Tamang, Thami, and Yakkha.	24
Inner Terai (Inner Low lands)	Bote, Danuwar, Darai, Kumal, Majhi, Raji, and Raute.	7
Terai (Low lands)	Dhanuk (Rajbanshi), Dhimal, Gangai, Jhangad, Kisan, Meche, Rajbanshi (Koch), Satar/Santhal, Tajpuria, and Tharu.	10

Source: [Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities \(2004\)](#)

Indigenous peoples are struggling in different stages to maintain their social and political structure in Nepal ([Singh, 1998](#)). For example, the Tharus and other indigenous peoples of the Terai lost control over their ancestral land after eradication of malaria in the early 1950s and lost their traditional social and political structure with the introduction of the autocratic party less Panchayat system in 1960. That system had a mission of "One King, One Country, One Language, One Dress", which was a project of homogenization of social and political structures by the dominant caste group. Also, the Limbus of the eastern Hills of Nepal is the last indigenous peoples to lose the Kipat (the indigenous land tenure system). The Rautes, the last nomads of Nepal, still control their way of life but have lost control over the forest that they have been living in for centuries after introducing the Community Forest Policy in 1978. They keep moving from one place to another and making their living by hunting, gathering and bartering their handcrafted wooden products for food grains in nearby villages ([Integrated Institute for Development Studies, 2002](#)).

On the other hand, many indigenous peoples who live in the mountain regions have been almost untouched by the external social and political structure. While in the past, imposition of the national social and political structure, which is based on monarchy and Hindu religion, culture and society, has destroyed the social and political structures for many indigenous peoples of the Hills and the Terai, these structures continue for about 18 indigenous peoples of the mountain areas.

For example, the Marphhali Thakali, Tin Gaunle Thakali, Bara Gaunle and Loba of the Mustang district, which is a trans-Himalayan region, still have full ownership and control over their ancestral land, and their own traditional political, judiciary, social and cultural systems. The Mustang district police chief and officers pay fines to the local community when they fail to attend their meeting. The local body of the Nepal Government could not do anything without consulting with and getting the consent of these communities ([K. Bhattachan, 2008](#)).

Impacts of Policies on the Indigenous Peoples in Nepal

Indigenous peoples have been excluded from mainstream politics and faced discrimination in workplaces and schools in Nepal ([Rai, 2007](#)). The country has formulated the general policies and statutes, regulations and rules affecting Indigenous peoples. These policies and legislation are enshrined in the National Commission on Indigenous and Ethnic Communities Act, 2001, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, Muluki Ain (National Code) 1963, the Local Self Governance Act 1996 and international covenants on Indigenous peoples. These policies and legislation do not contain many provisions on the rights of Indigenous peoples to natural resources.

Although they touch on equality, and cultural and religious rights of the disadvantaged people at large, no provision deals with the traditional rights to natural resources for the indigenous peoples like the Raute. In addition, unlike Indigenous rights policies in the United States, Canada, and Australia, no recognition of Indigenous peoples' territorial rights to the ancient land. Recently, however, some local policymakers have discussed the possibility

of establishing some reserved areas for marginalized peoples, including indigenous peoples without any political outcome (Upreti & Upreti, 2002).

There are various laws and policies to guide the use of natural resources in general. These regulations or policies mainly consider national interests. The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) argues that at least 40 common and special laws are discriminatory against the Indigenous communities. Among them the following acts govern the use of natural resources related: the Land Ownership and Registration Act, the Nationalization of Private Forest Act, the Local Self-governance Act, the Land Related Act, the Nationalization of Pastures Act, the Land Taxation Act, the Forestry Act, the Protection of Water Animals Act, the National Park and Wildlife Protection Act, the HM King Mahendra Nature Preservation Fund Act, the Plant Protection Act, the Land and Water Resources Protection Act, the Water Resources Act, the Mine and Mineral Products Act, and the Guthi Corporation Act.

Nepalese forest policies have particularly detrimental to the traditional livelihoods of Indigenous peoples. The Nationalization of Private Forest Act of 1957, for example, placed all forests under the government ownership. Ethnic groups did not receive any compensation for these forests and the uncultivated lands lying there (Subba et al., 2002). Similarly, the Forest Act of 1993 placed the ownership of lakes and rivers along with the banks within the forest area, thus depriving more from Indigenous peoples. Groups like the Raute, Bankariya, Chepang, Kusunda, Tharu, Danuwar, Santhal (Satar) are largely dependent on forests and the surrounding areas. The forests the Raute have used have slowly been converted to community forest users' groups (CFUGs).

Daniggelis (1997) similarly observed that in east Nepal, the Rais and Limbu were marginalized by the cadastral survey and declaration of national park over their traditional territories. The Rais and Limbus no longer have free access to pasture, swidden land and forest resources (Gurung, 2010; Subba et al., 2002). The establishment of various protected areas (e.g., national parks, conservation areas, hunting reserves) has encroached on the lands of the Indigenous peoples as their areas have high level of biodiversity. The traditional skills and knowledge of the Indigenous peoples have also come under the attack of large capital and industries as Indigenous products cannot compete in the market (Gurung, 2010).

Nepal is a signatory to the number of international instruments and conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), International Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Racial Discrimination (1969), UN Convention on the Rights of Child (1989), and the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992. In 2007, the Nepal parliament ratified ILO Convention No. 169, which is directly related Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. In Nepal, Indigenous peoples have taken ILO Convention No. 169 and UNDRIP very seriously as these provide a basis of making dialogue with the Nepalese government and help protect Indigenous peoples rights.

For example, article 13 (1) of ILO Convention No. 169 emphasizes that the State shall respect the cultures and spiritual values of the Indigenous peoples concerned, and of their relationship with their lands and territories. Article 14 and 6 of ILO Convention No 169 also refer to safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples. Similarly, the UNDRIP and the Convention on Biological Diversity (articles 8j and 10c) recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities to biological diversity and genetic resources.

Articles 26 and 27 of the UNDRIP also recognize the land rights of Indigenous peoples even though the area is not exclusively occupied by [Indigenous peoples], but to which they traditionally had access. This provision can be interpreted that those lands used by nomadic peoples like the Raute and shifting cultivators are included. In ratifying these laws, Nepal is obliged to take specific measures to safeguard the rights of Indigenous peoples to lands (Adhikari, 2000; K. B. Bhattachan, 2005; K. Bhattachan, 2012; Roy, 2005).

The essential feature of the policy implementation process is that necessary task related to law should be carried out. The success of the implementation can be measured in terms of the extent to which goals are met. The implementation outcome is expected to have some measurable positive changes as a result of a program (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Thus, policy implementation refers to the connection between the expression of governmental intention and actual result (O'Toole Jr, 1995). This successful outcome of policy implementation in developing countries is challenging and causes legitimate concerns among the Indigenous peoples (Saetren, 2005).

Influence of Policies on the Raute Subsistence

A number of policies have been affected on the Raute people livelihoods. Since 1950s, including the inception of the forest law in the early 1960s and the Community Forest Policy in 1978 had been giving right to the indigenous people of eastern Nepal to use the land for hundreds of years and abandon them landless. Most of these the forest conversion policies formulated without considering the ground reality of historical livelihood practice of forest-based people, like Raute which extruded them to leave the traditional mode of their economy and forcing them to choose alternatives. Similarly, the royal decree of 1981 attempted to assimilate the Raute into national Hindu culture providing five groups with free land and houses (K. B. Bhattachan, 2005). However, the policy implementation was carried out hastily, and most of the settled Raute has suffered from poverty. They do not yet have enough knowledge about agriculture and cannot farm the land. The government has not provided any training (Gurung, 2010). The life of nomadic Raute has always been subject to encroachment and threat in spite of the interim Constitution of 2007 guarantees to preserve the cultural practices and livelihood practices of all Indigenous peoples. After having ratified CBD, ILO No. 169, and the UNDRIP, many NGOs and INGOs have introduced programs, projects and activities aimed at enhancing the socio-cultural and economic lives of the Raute. Since these organizations are politically motivated and responsible before the donor, they have implemented modernization programs, especially promoting global consumerism, to solve the immediate problems of the Raute. For example, NGOs and welfare organizations distribute cash in the Raute community, but they do not teach how to earn cash. Some INGOs provide fish instead of teaching the Raute how to fish, making them more dependent on the external world (Singh, 1998).

More recently, because of frequent meetings and discussions with various stakeholders and taking part in many local programs such as bio-diversity conservation, all the Raute, except women who used to be called mum traders, can efficiently articulate their opinions in Nepali language today. The leaders and some other senior men of the community are found very eloquent and logical in talking (Silwal, 2011). Their external relation and interaction have extended beyond the local area, and they have visited three different Prime Ministers at the Prime Minister's Office in the last ten years and expressed their grievances. However, the help measures provided by these Prime Ministers were influenced by global politics. For example, the previous Prime Minister Kamal Prasad Oli gave the Raute leaders Rs 300,000 (about US\$2,752.96) on February 11, 2016 and urged them to abandon nomadic life and adopt sedentary life wherever they want (Kathmandu Post 2016). These days the government of Nepal has provided monthly allowance to all the Raute Rs 1000 (US\$9.21 per person). Local leaders of various political parties often offer them food, grains, goats, chicken, among others, on the occasion of festivals. Hence, the immediate economic help provided by external agencies has increased the dependency of Raute to them thereby deteriorating the traditional mode of production (Gurung, 2010).

Forest Law and Its Impact on the Raute Livelihoods

King Mahendra promulgated the Private Forest Nationalization Act, the first forest law in Nepal after the increasing deforestation in 1950s as discussed above. It placed all forests in the country as national forests; all individuals were prohibited to use forests without the government consent (Gurung, 2010). In 1959 the government established the forest ministry and increased the number of forest bureaucrats for scientific forest management.

In addition, the government promulgated the Forest Act (1961) and Forest Protection Act (1967) mainly to prevent forest destruction and ensure protection through better management. These statutes, however, led to a lot of controversies and debates among local and national authorities because these acts further restricted the rights to use forest resources and neglected the Indigenous skills of forest management (Regmi, 1978). According to K. B. Bhattachan (2005), the stringent forest policy of the government affected more the Indigenous people, including Raute.

Table 3: Change in Nepal's forest area 1954-1999

Base Year	Forest Area (ha)	Percent of Total Area	Source
1954	6478000	47.6	FAO 1954
1964	6402000	45.6	HMG/USAID 1964
1977	5259348	35.7	Dur Sambedan Kendra 1985
1977/78	5617000	38.7	LRMP 1986
1985/86	5518000	37	Forest Dev. Master Plan 1988
1999	4268800	29	DFRS 1999

Source: [Adhikari \(2000\)](#)

Table 3 shows the area covered by forest in Nepal from 1954 to 1999. The area decreased, especially from the 1970s through the mid-1990s. During this period, the government introduced the community forest policy. The Raute encountered more problems in continuing their nomadic way of life according to Hari bhadaur Rastakoti (age 52).

Today, there are more than 1,013 community forests in Middle-Far Western districts in Nepal where nomadic Raute traverse for periodic migration. Since the forest authority has transferred forest access and management rights to forest user groups, the Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) of this area have worked for more efficient management of forest resources, curbing the traditional ways of forest use obey the Raute. CFUG managers considered that the Raute caused the severe environmental destruction without clear evidence. Forest officers also ask the Raute in every visit with intimidating tone to abstain themselves from their traditional ways of using natural resources ([Bowern, 2015](#); [Gurung, 2010](#)).

According to Devbahadur Thada Magar (personal communication), the secretary of Rakam village community forest, which is in my research area, the rate of forest cutting by the Raute had slowed down significantly since the establishment of CFUGs. Nowadays they have completely stopped setting fire in the forest and the trend of burning down the huts while migrating elsewhere has also gradually declined. There is almost no evidence for hunting animals except monkey, rhesus, small rabbit and some birds for the last five years.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In Nepal, biodiversity is vulnerable due to various social, economic, political and developmental activities. The loss of biodiversity is directly correlated to the erosion of cultural diversity, including that of the Raute people. This cultural erosion escalated as a result of government's assimilation policies and cultural discrimination. Indigenous peoples in Nepal have been excluded from Hindu-dominant political power for centuries. In the last few decades, various researchers have revealed the struggle of the Raute for survival. Today, we have better understanding about how the Raute have faced challenges in continuing their traditional way of living because of increasing cultural pressure from the dominant sedentary societies and ecological changes. The national forest management policy, especially the community forest act, has bridled the Raute to use forest resources freely as before and weakened the traditional mode of the economy. The new Constitutions have not helped improve the livelihood of the Indigenous peoples like the Raute. Either version of the Constitution does not mention clearly what rights are secured except the encouragement to participate in politics. Nepal has so far ratified a number of international treaties and declarations like ILO169, the UNDRIP, and CBD, but the implementation has not been successful. The nomadic Raute still practice traditional culture, but the tradition has been eroded to a large extent. The depletion of forest resources, restriction on using forests, welfare policies, and modern consumerism has increased the dependency of the Raute on the market. The Raute leaders are changing traditional strategies that used to strongly resist the external influences. Consequently, the traditional economic structure of the Raute has metamorphosed, and it is hard to predict how long they will be able to preserve their culture and traditional livelihood.

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