

## 3.6 The Raute Community: A Study of the Conditions in the Last 15 Years

### Background

Raute is a marginalized group of the Khas Aryas and an endangered indigenous community of Nepal. The Raute community have a nomadic lifestyle and mostly live in the jungle area of Salyan and neighboring districts of the Karnali Province. Although they speak the Khas language, they can understand and speak modern Nepali too. They mostly hunt monkeys and other wild animals, and live on tubers, fruits and other plants. The Raute people are especially seen using *laththi-lauro baja* (a stick instrument), *majira*, *madal* and *dhyangro* (a kind of drum). Observing their conditions in the last 15 years, we can understand that their special areas are the hills, ridges, and caves of the Karnali Province. They primarily wander in the forest areas of Karnali's Salyan and the neighboring Surkhet, Jajarkot and Dailekh districts.

Nepal's 59 indigenous-ethnic groups are classified into 5 categories: developed, deprived of facilities, marginalized, extremely marginalized, and endangered. According to this categorization, the Raute is a marginalized and endangered group. With a small population, the Raute is one of the minority groups among the ethnic groups.

It can be seen that the Raute have chosen Karnali because of adequate forests to make wood products, and abundant herbs to use in common injuries or illnesses except for grave health concerns.

Unless there are specific reasons to migrate, the Raute are found to stay in one place for a maximum of three to four months. When they have to migrate, they move to places within three-to four hours or a full day walk at the most. When they migrate in this way, the families transport all their belongings themselves within two to three days. Except for the elderly who need help, everyone else carries their own belongings.

Having a nomadic lifestyle, the Rautes migrate to and live in different forests. They make a living by making wooden *koshi* and *madus* and bartering them with food grains in the villages. Making wooden products through the day, hunting monkeys, and begging in the nearby villages is an everyday affair for them. They plan their day so that they have enough time to reach the villages, exchange the wooden products they have made with food grains, and return to their settlements. They construct circular and oval huts from branches with green leaves and wooden columns around a flat space, and keep this flat space in the middle for children to play and for the women to dehull and winnow rice. The women make the huts.

They think that it is a crime to stay in villages by cultivating through paying taxes, and to eat from others for free. On their journey, they do not turn back to drink water from rivers or lakes, but only drink water from springs. They only have

cooking pots and few tools to cut wood and hunt as possessions. They believe that if they meet a person wearing a shirt and pants, they will not find a hunt. They link not finding a hunt to God being angry.

As per the census of Nepal 2010, the total population of Raute in Nepal is 618. At present, including 46 families in Bangada Kupende Municipality-1, Salyan, a total of 146 Raute are residing in the community. Their prevailing castes are Kalyan, Raskoti, Satyal etc. Castes like Raut and Saud are also predicted to be the surnames under this ethnic group. There are arguments speculating the Rautes a *Shahbamsis*. The Raute's surnames could have been *Sahabamshi*; their *gotra* matches with *sogotri* and Sahi Thakuri's *gotra*. The Raute community has three types of surnames and *gotra*: Suryabamshi Chhatyal gotra (Aatreya), Raskoti gotra (Aatreya) and Kalyal gotra (Keshalma). Their surnames are found to be Kalyal, Raskoti and Chhatyal.

## 1. Objectives of the Study

- ▶ To obtain information about the economic, social and cultural conditions of the Raute community
- ▶ To identify the problems faced by this community and their solutions
- ▶ To facilitate the delivery of social security allowance and other services and facilities provided by the State to this community
- ▶ To draw attention of relevant stakeholders towards facilitating the livelihoods of this community
- ▶ To facilitate the development of expenses, transparency and accountability of the programs of non-governmental organizations, public budget and programs related to the Rautes

## 2. Methodology of the Study

This study is based on both, Primary as well as Secondary sources. Elucidation of facts and statistics of the study is based on the Constitution of Nepal, Statutes, National, and International Human

Right obligations, Civil Societies Movement, along with accountability of Government's decisions and policies.

### 2.1 Facts based on Primary Sources

- ▶ Observation of Raute settlement
- ▶ Interview with Raute *Mukhiya*
- ▶ Representative discussion with stakeholders
- ▶ Person specific study and incident presentation

### 2.2 Facts based on Secondary Sources

- ▶ Study of the news
- ▶ News and facts collected and published by INSEC
- ▶ Study of different books and newspapers related to Raute

## 3. Information obtained from the Study

### 3.1 The History of the Raute

There are many legends, beliefs, and arguments about the history of the Rautes. But the Rautes, also called Kings of the jungle, believe themselves to be descendants of *Suryabamshi* (Sun dynasty) Kings. People might wonder if the nomads might be Kings but there is a local and internal community belief that the Rautes have forsaken Kingship to live in the forests.

The neighboring communities also do not negate this belief. The nomadic Rautes are believed to be *Thakuri* descendants of Bishnu who resided in *Fukot*. Many writings note the legend that the Middle son, among the seven sons, started living in the Jungle after climbing downhill from *Fukot* as declared in the family's punishment.

In her 2009 work "Kings of the Forest: The Cultural Resilience of Himalayan Hunter-Gatherers", Anthropologist Jana Fortier claims that other legends cannot be trusted. She links the history of the Rautes to various nomadic communities in India. But the Rautes oftentimes claim to be Kings who ruled *Fukot*.

The Rautes explain that their place of origin lies in Western Nepal's Fukot area between Seti River and Madi River in Pyuthan in the East, previously in Seti zone. Interestingly, there is a *Thakuri* community in Mugu with the surname *Chhatyal*. There are similarities between the *Chhatyals* residing in Chhatyaldada and the *Chhatyal gotra* (clan name) found among the Rautes. They also explain the similarities. The publication of Raute Upliftment Foundation also mentions that the Rautes have not been in these conditions since primitive times, and that there is a historical account that Raute community left households and State, or possessions and unjust system of governance, to lead nomadic lives in the forest.

The Raute *Mukhiyas* (leaders) express that there used to be frequent and escalated wars between States at the time when the *Suryabamshi* Kings ruled. The comparatively small and war-averse Thakuri States did not have alternatives to the attacks and interferences from bigger empires. The Kings were forced to fight these wars. In this context, the Rautes were displaced and pushed into the forests by interference from bigger states and empires.

### 3.2 Nomadic Lifestyle of Rautes

Why do the Rautes not disclose their population? Why do they communicate with other communities through their *Mukhiya* only? The search for the answers again leads to history.

They start with being rulers and administering a State. When they left their State and started living in the forests, they faced the dangers of being killed by the rulers wherever they were found. Therefore, they started minimizing contacts with established societies. And they stopped counting their own numbers or disclosing it to others so that the enemy could not estimate their strength. Additionally, they established the trend of communicating with established societies in essential circumstances through the

*Mukhiya*, not individually. They believed that they risked losing lives if they went to the established societies individually, faced language difficulties and other risks and therefore established that the Rautes would not believe anyone but their *Mukhiya* and only follow the *Mukhiya* but no one else.

In response to the curiosity why do Rautes not farm and not stay in one place for long, they again refer to their history, claiming that the Rautes were not interested in agriculture because they had abandoned their households and States. They also add that agriculture does not match with their nomadic lifestyle. Studies in other countries also point to similar reasons for tribal communities not staying at one place. There is an anthropological explanation that nomadic lifestyle cannot continue with agriculture. The Rautes who have understood the disadvantages and difficulties of permanent societies consider agriculture to be sinful. Various studies offer two key reasons why they do not stay in one place: resource management and natural reasons, and fear of enemy and human reasons.

The Rautes leave a place immediately when any of their members die. The Rautes immediately bury the dead member in the place of their death and leave in search of another shelter; they cannot stay in one place because of these rites. As soon as a community member dies in a place, they consider the place inauspicious and go in search of a new place. They reach the new place and console themselves that things will be okay and try to forget about the death that occurred. The Raute do not study the place to move, wherever night falls, they consider that place to be a suitable shelter. They consider nightfall to be a sign from God to settle. They then cut off tree branches and settle in the place praying that no evil should happen in this place until someone else dies. They do not usually go to a place where one of their members died. Even if nobody dies, they move to different places if the crowd

starts making them insecure or if the villagers encroach the jungle.

### **Nomadic Life**

The Rautes with nomadic lifestyle migrate to and live in various jungles. They plan their shelter so that they have enough time to exchange their wooden products with food grains in the villages and return to their settlements. Those going out of the settlements are not permitted to stay overnight elsewhere. None of the Rautes are permitted to stay overnight outside their settlement unless the Raute Mukhiyas visit the Capital to meet high-level officers or for the treatment of the severely sick Raute. They don't move to other places only after someone in the community dies. Ten-fifteen years ago, they used to move after assessing the possibility of getting wood. But according to *Mahamukhiya* Mahin Bahadur Shahi, as far as he recalls the Rautes would walk in groups after leaving a settlement and wherever night fell, they considered that place as suitable shelter.

### **3.3 Population, Geography and Settlement**

According to the 2011 Census, the population of the Rautes in Nepal is 618. According to the Census, Kusunda has the smallest population with 273 people, Nurang has 278 members, and Raute is the third minority group. Among these groups, the population of the nomadic Rautes was 137.

Like the nomadic group that now wanders in areas of Salyan, another group that wandered in Darchula, Bajhang, Bajura permanently settled through the initiatives of Jogbudha's *Pradhanpanch* (elected local leader) Nandalal Joshi, share the elderly persons. Since food grains were scarce in the Himalayan areas at that time, the Raute *Mukhiya* who frequented the villages to barter wood products with grains was helped to settle in Aampaani and Rajyeuda so that they could be close to the forests too. After

settlement, the Rautes expressed that it was 'inauspicious' for them and wanted to leave the settlement many times. But Joshi persuaded them to stay back, says Ganesh Prasad Joshi, the Chairperson of Ward No. 12.

According to Laxmi—a local resident, although the Rautes have been living in Aampaani and Rajyeuda for more than 34 years, they began getting married with the Kshetris only 10 years ago. *Bohora*, *Bista*, and *Khatris* have had love marriages with daughters of the Rautes and a Raute youth has married a Magar's daughter. The endogamous Rautes practice arranged marriage and only accept love marriages if marriage takes place outside their community. They have not yet practiced arranged marriages outside the Raute community. All the Rautes living around Salyan say their surnames are Shahi. They explain that there are three Shahis: Kalel, Raskoti, Samal but all those residing in Dadeldhura get their caste identity written as Raute.

The Rautes in Dadeldhura now register the birth of their children soon after birth and the youth get their marriages registered immediately after marriage. Not only that, they have been obtaining citizenship soon after coming of age. Since the government provides the endangered social security allowance based on these documents, they proactively work to get the papers on time.

### **3.4 Denial of Education, Agriculture and Settlement**

The nomadic Rautes believe that studying, farming and settling permanently are three great enemies. The Rautes who have been living in Dadeldhura since 2041 B.S. also declined to study until late, providing evidence to the claim. After continued efforts, hardly five to six Raute individuals, amidst a population of about 600, have passed the SLC. In the last 10-15 years, they have slowly begun sending children to school. But the nomadic Rautes around Salyan express

that Raute should not study and do not allow outsiders to teach.

Rautes are fully against permanent residence. They reside on the base of the mountain and greenlands during winter for warmth and on mountainous areas during summer. Hence, they claim that Raute knows where they should stay in which seasons well.

### 3.5 Marriage Rites

The nomadic Rautes practice arranged marriages; they cannot marry whoever they want. If a young man has completed 16 years and likes a young woman who has menstruated, he can share his likings with the Raute *Mukhiya* or the guardians at home. If their proposal is accepted then only the marriage takes place. The Rautes celebrate the marriage day with the meat from wethers and home-made alcohol. The women also drink alcohol without any hesitation. It is mandatory to perform the Raute dance in the merry-making. The male and female who got married are also made to dance.

The newly married couples are provided a separate hut on the day of marriage itself. They host a communal feast on the day of marriage but the married couple stay separately and eat in their own kitchen the day after. The newly married couples are not allowed to stay with their families.

#### 3.5.1 Obstruction of Marriage

The non-Raute, general youth might not think about marriage due to partaking studies laboriously or due to work engagements; some youths plan to not get married until they are self-reliant. With increasing modernity, some of them are seen unmarried long after coming of age because they want to get married to someone who understands their feelings.

A Raute young female Gajali is yet to marry not because of concerns for the future or because of any special work engagements, but due to the non-existence of a young person of marriageable age

within the sub-group she is allowed to marry. The primary reason for Gajali to be unmarried even at the age of 28 is the non-existence of a young person in the *Samaal* Raute sub-group that she can marry into. Her mother is *Raskoti's* daughter and she is *Kale's* daughter. She cannot marry into either of these because they are within *haadnata* (related by bones) but the sub-group *Samaal* that she can marry into is yet to have young men who have reached marriageable age.

Due to the absence of *Solidoli chalne* kith and kins, a young Raute female has to wait until the boy crosses 15 years of age. The unmarried *Samaal* youth is just nine years old. Because he is too young, Gajali's marriage with him has not been determined. If Gajali has to wait for this boy to complete 15 years, she will be 34.

Even with about two dozen youth forced to remain unmarried because there are no Raute girls that they can get married to, the rule that they cannot marry outside the Raute community remains unchallenged. They fear that girls outside the Raute community might not agree to marry with the Rautes and therefore they might not take this huge social challenge.

### 3.6 Death Rites

The nomadic Rautes wrap the dead body and leave it at the base of a tree near the settlement if a child dies within 6 months of birth. All those over 6 months are buried in the frontyard of their huts on the day of death. They offer sacrificial blood of hen/rooster at the burial place.

After the burial, they eat meat and drink. They drink to forget the dead, argues *Mahamukhiya* Mahin Bahadur Shahi. After eating and drinking, they quickly move to a new place. They do not pronounce the name of the dead.

### 3.7 Some Unique Practices of the Raute Community

- ▶ The nomadic Rautes do not wear sewn clothes. They use needles to make the

absolutely necessary clothes on their own.

- ▶ No one is allowed to stay overnight outside the settlement. But there are some flexible practices concerning the treatment of grave diseases, and the Raute *Mukhiya* and other members assigned by the *Mukhiya* who commute to meet administrators of the Central government should let the community know where and for how long they are going
- ▶ The Raute do not count their members; they believe that counting results in decline of the population
- ▶ The Rautes consider water from spring to be pure and look for spring water when moving to new settlements. But in recent times, they also look for markets in the vicinity so they also use flowing water in case spring water is not found. They believe that piped water might be contaminated.
- ▶ The Rautes do not allow their women to comb their hair or to apply make-up. They do not allow their women to even put *tikuli* (colored dots on the forehead).
- ▶ The Rautes only eat barbecued meat. They claim that the taste of the meat is lost when cooked.
- ▶ The Rautes arrange marriages for young females within their kith and kin after they menstruate. The Rautes are not allowed to marry outside their community.
- ▶ In absence of Solidoli chalne (permitting marriage) kith and kins, a young female has to wait until the boy crosses 15 years of age. 28-year-old Gajali is forced to wait for a few years for the 10 or 11-year-old Samal boys to grow up since she can only marry in that Raute subgroup.
- ▶ The Rautes have arranged marriages. Earlier, the Raute *Mukhiya* would decide marriages between Raute boys and girls. But now there are flexible rules that allow marriages to take place with the guardian's permission.
- ▶ Polygamy is not yet seen among the Rautes. Widow and widower remarriage also do not happen. Gajali is not yet married because polygamy is not practiced.
- ▶ Huts are made and allocated for the newlywed couple on the day of their marriage. They do not use family planning products.
- ▶ They do not have sexual relations outside marriage, they do not sleep with other women.
- ▶ They collectively support the elderly, single women, disabled and children.
- ▶ If people have things they need, the Rautes ask for them but do not steal.
- ▶ The Rautes bargain while buying the things they need but they take things only after paying their prices. Even if they eat collectively, they pay individually.
- ▶ They eat collectively when food is ready but do not wait for the household head or any member.
- ▶ They pray to their gods at midnight.
- ▶ When children make mistakes, Raute suggests not repeating the mistakes but do not beat them.
- ▶ They do not lay hands on anyone during quarrels or when they have differences of opinion. They express the situation to the *Mukhiya* and seek a solution, so they do not have violent fights.
- ▶ The widow's door is on the opposite side of the house; for example, if the doors of others face East, a widow's door faces West.
- ▶ If any member dies, they leave the settlement and look for a new shelter.
- ▶ When they change their residence, they do not go further than half a day's distance. They collect all the necessary belongings from the same day they leave a settlement.
- ▶ They do not use scissors to cut their hair; they use blades if absolutely necessary. But they do not cut the hair of children below 10 years old.
- ▶ Rautes do not keep their women outside the house during menstruation or

post-delivery; they do not discriminate.

- ▶ They do not go to places where one of their community members has died for 12 years. They call that place “*haad pareko*” (bone has fallen).

#### 4. Problems faced by Raute community and its Impacts

15 members of the Raute community have died since 2077 Magh. It is guessed that these endangered Rautes have lost lives due to cold and excessive drinking. Salyan’s Chief District Officer (CDO) Laxmidevi Humagain shared that 15 people died while residing in Dailekh’s Gurans Rural Municipality, Surkhet’s Chinggang Rural Municipality, Salyan’s Kalimati and Surkhet’s Gurbhakot. The total population of the Raute was 156 in 2077 Magh. Now they are 141 and during this duration, four children were born, reported CDO Humagain.

‘A majority of children are found to suffer from pneumonia in winter. But they do not go for treatment even when they are sick. That is why there has been a rise in the deaths.’ According to a Raute activist Nagendra Upadhyay, the number of female Rautes is 69 and the male is 77. Among them 23 are below the age of 5, 24 are between five and 10 years, 15 are between 10 and 15 years, 11 between 15 and 20 years, and 73 members are above the age of 20. The number of single women is 11. Drinking alcohol is becoming a huge problem in the Raute community. People working with the Raute report that both men and women are addicted. Salyan’s Bangad Kupinde Municipality’s Mayor Govinda Kumar Pun expresses that drinking has been a problem in the Raute community. Both men and women are addicted to alcohol.

In the past, the nomadic Rautes did not believe in allopathic treatment but this perception has changed in the last few years. The Raute community, distant from permanent settlement, modern treatment techniques, education, agriculture, and animal husbandry, and

leading nomadic lives in Karnali Province and neighboring jungles have been slowly residing near village settlements. Nevertheless, with their closeness with people from other communities, the Raute community is not free from various diseases, infections and other interventions.

The Vice-Chancellor of Mid-Western University Prof. Dr. Nanda Bahadur Singh, who is also a biologist, claims that the protection of Raute lineage is a significant question. He says that in the absence of protection of the Raute rites and culture of the Raute, we need not wait long for their identities to be lost; it is a misfortune that a rare community like the Raute having lineage, culture and separate language is at the verge of extinction. This community is forced to migrate at short durations because of the trend of moving places at the death of a member.

#### 5. Encroachment in the fundamentals of Raute

Two girls (23-year-old and 19 year-old each) from Raute community of Gurbhakot Municipality-11, Surkhet were taken to the hotel of Milan Pun, 29, at Gurbhakot Municipality-9, fed alcohol and were sexually abused by Chaman Gharti, 35, and Bhupendra Budh, 24 on June 4, 2021. Video of the abuse was disseminated online. This demonstrates the increasing trend of encroachment of other people in the fundamentals of Raute community and has increased the security risk among Raute people.

A field study was conducted on this issue by the team of Human Rights officers in coordination of INSEC on June 11 and 12. In the course of study, it was found that the general people had been taking advantage of the innocence of Rautes who were trying to assimilate with other groups. Lack of legal knowledge along with knowledge about information resources and social media added the security threat in the group. Karnali Province’s Social development ministry’s women division has to take a lead to con-

clude the incident and also coordinate and cooperate with the stakeholders regarding bringing the perpetrators to the book. This will alert other communities regarding the behaviour towards Raute.

Concerned bodies of Nepal Government shall dispose the video disseminated online, Nepal police and law executing authorities shall discard the false accusations and information against Raute community spread across media, social medias and other mediums, concerned bodies shall work on assuring justice to the victims seriously and in recommendation of the institutions working for the upliftment of Raute community, local government shall form a Raute police and implement the same.

Necessary policies and programs shall be brought to safeguard the culture and unique identity of Rautes. Media or bodies that are involved in the dissemination of false information against Raute shall be brought in the ambit of law. Local government and security agencies shall work on ensuring access to information on reproductive health and materials related to reproductive health to the community and refrain the encroachment from other communities in the Raute community.

## **6. Legal Provisions and Role of State**

### **6.1. National Legal Provisions**

Although Nepal's Constitution declares all citizens are equal under the law according to sub-article (1) of the Article 18 of the Fundamental Rights related to right to equality, the sub-article (3) does not prevent special arrangements under the law for the protection, empowerment or development of socially and culturally marginalized castes, class, areas, gender, or minorities. This study facilitates to draw the State's attention towards additional programs and effectiveness of the current programs for the endangered Raute community in accordance to sub-article (3).

## **6.2. Role of State in Solving the Problems**

### **6.2.1. Provision of Identity Card**

Gurans Rural Municipality had distributed identity cards to all members of the Raute community on 2075 Shrawan 30 because they were spending nomadic lives around Dailekh district. The primary reason for the Municipality to distribute identity cards was to obtain factual data on the Rautes and to organize the services/facilities provided by the Government, says Khemraj Oli, the President of Gurans Rural Municipality.

A group of the Raute community has been residing permanently in Dadeldhura's Parashuram Municipality-12, Aampani and in Ward no. 4's Rajyeuda in the last 34 years. Some children of the Rautes in Aampani have also joined school. Some youths have obtained citizenship certificates and are working as Forest guards, in the Police and also in the Army. The Rautes in that place exhibit that they are back to their normal lifestyle.

The group that was recently provided identity cards in Dailekh are the only Raute people that lead a nomadic lifestyle. The statistics provided by Gurans Rural Municipality indicates that there are only 149 Rautes. Before this, the social security allowance was provided in their settlements on the basis of names provided orally. After they obtain new identity cards, they are provided government and non-government facilities based on the new cards.

### **6.2.2. Allowance for Endangered Indigenous**

Nepal Government has listed 10 communities with less than 10,000 population as endangered indigenous communities and has been providing them with social security allowance. The Rautes also get this allowance.

It was with the commencement of the Social Security Operating Procedure that the 10 endangered indigenous com-

munities received social security allowance, being provided by The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, for the first time in fiscal year 2065/066. This allowance is twice the amount of the Senior Citizen's allowance. The Senior Citizen's allowance then was Rs. 500 monthly and so the endangered indigenous social security was twice the amount, i.e. Rs 1000. From the fiscal year 2073/074 the Senior Citizen's allowance and allowance for single women was raised to Rs 1000 and from the same year the endangered indigenous community social security allowance of Rs 2000 was distributed.

The 10 endangered indigenous communities are: Bankariya, Raute, Surel, Hayu, Raji, Kisan. Lepcha, Meche, Kushbadiya and Kusunda. All the members of these communities, including newborns, have been receiving the endangered indigenous ethnic community social security allowance each month.

The Parashuram Municipality provided allowances to the Rautes with permanent settlement in Dadeldhura but in Dailekh, the Rural Municipality or Municipality where the Rautes currently resided would have to request the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration for allowances; this prevented the Rautes from receiving the allowances on time. Because of this problem and with the long-term goal of establishing a permanent settlement, the Gurans Rural Municipality provided 149 members of the Raute community (according to the population at the time) with identity cards in agreement with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. But the Raute *Mukhiya* Suryanarayan Shahi accepted the identity card on the condition that the State would not force them to obtain citizenship later.

After the identity cards were made, the Council of Ministers, on 2075 Jestha 30, decided that no matter where the Rautes went, services/facilities including social security allowances would

be distributed through Gurans Rural Municipality.

### 6.2.3. The Raute Project

Social Service Center (SOSEC) has been running a project to help the nomadic Rautes return to normal lifestyle. Raute project helps the community by providing warm clothes in winter, tent to diverse water from the roof and medicines to ease their lives. Gurans Rural Municipality distributed identity cards to the Rautes in accordance to The Raute Project's concept, says Gurans Rural Municipality's President Khemraj Oli. Before the Raute Project, Raute Upliftment Foundation helped with food, clothing, and other necessities and took initiatives for timely distribution of social security allowances. The President of Raute Foundation Satyadevi Adhikari, who has been working to improve the lifestyles of the Rautes, is popularly known as 'Raute's niece.'

### 6.4. Possibility of Permanent Settlement

A person whose perception cannot be changed is known as having "*Raute dhipi*" (Raute stubbornness). Even people who have never seen the Raute know this proverb by heart; this clearly indicates that changing the perceptions of the Raute is a difficult task. But the work done by the Raute Project, The Raute Foundation, and Gurans Rural Municipality indicate, albeit faintly, that change is possible with continued efforts.

In the past, the Raute rejected the use of medicines under any circumstances but now they apply tincture and betadine in wounds and injuries that bleed. They used to drink water from the springs only but now they use piped water to wash the dishes. Earlier it was not allowed to stay overnight outside the settlement, now they are allowed to stay overnight as needed after informing the *Mukhiya*.

Although the Rautes claim that they do not want to return to normal lifestyle, actions like meeting the President, Prime minister, Chief Minister, local

chiefs and CDOs, putting forth their problems and seeking warm clothes, food, and other necessary items, and merry making hint that they can return to normal lifestyle with continued efforts.

Journalist Bhakta Shahi, who has been working with the Rautes for long analyzes that since the Rautes relish mobiles and videos, these audio-visual media can be effective in changing them. He contends that videos can be effectively used to help children learn letters during the day and to highlight the importance of healthy behavior and cooked food in the evening.

If the Rautes spontaneously want to return to normal lifestyle then such activities should be implemented otherwise arbitrary activities by non-government organizations and some government organizations might only be pretense and unsustainable. The implementers of the Raute Project or other immediate help providers need to help them provide necessary materials to cope with monsoons, winter or other difficult times.

The Rautes sell the items like foam and readymade clothes (which they are given but do not need) for much lesser than market prices. If the Rautes have food grains in their shelter and they are additionally given food grains, they are found to sell them in lesser prices. They never store for more than five to seven meals. If they have more than enough, they sell or throw things.

The local government should strictly inform the inhabitants of any place where Rautes go that they should not buy anything given to the Rautes. If the trend to punish the act of buying things given to the Raute is not set, there is risk of the resources being misused. It will be beneficial to establish one door policy to provide help or services.

## 7. Conclusion of the Study

The Raute community has been found to slowly leave their traditions and

embrace the culture of other communities. Wearing sewn clothes, eating food from the market, begging, wanting to interact with people from other communities, etc. are evidences to prove that they have been changing. But chaotic lifestyles, addiction, chemical-laden foods have diminished their ability to blend with nature causing them to lose lives due to various diseases and problems. The study concludes that the Rautes receiving allowances from the Government have been protecting their culture and are keen on leading an easy life.

## 8. Suggestions

- ▶ Take necessary initiatives towards institutionalization of Raute's language, and culture
- ▶ Arrange necessary food materials and nutritional food and clothing for the Raute in lieu of allowance
- ▶ Construct Raute Policy with their active participation to ensure fair arrangements for education, health, food and housing
- ▶ Raise awareness for cleanliness, nutrition and healthcare

## References

1. Central Bureau of Statistics
2. Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
3. Ministry of Social Development, Karnali Province
4. Lekbesi Municipality, Surkhet
5. Gurans Rural Municipality, Dailekh
6. Social Service Center (SOSEC), Nepal
7. Raute and Endangered Castes Upliftment Foundation
8. District Coordination Committee, Salyan
9. District Coordination Committee, Dailekh
10. Parashuram Municipality, Dadeldhura
11. Local newspapers and online
12. Reports on the Raute

