

# Factors Affecting Rautes' Education

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## Abstract

*This study aimed to identify the factors affecting Rautes' education. The study was conducted in mid-western and far-western parts of Nepal. Heads of the Rautes' family are the respondents of this study. The affecting factors included in this study are language, education, health and nutrition, socio-economic condition, social structure, geographical causes, home family and school physical facilities, misuse of funds, religion, traditional behavior and taboos.*

## 1. Introduction

### General Background

Among the various ethnic and tribal groups of Nepal, Rautes are oldest inhabitants of mid and far western part of Nepal. There are dense forests, where dangerous wild animals are found. The people usually hesitate and are afraid of staying there. These people struggle with the fatal climatic condition. But they are neglected and treated as alien group by the Hindu people and other ethnic groups.

Minority indigenous nationalities, Rautes are a tribe rare in the whole of Asia itself. It is a hunter-gatherer tribe and a nomadic band. Rautes roam in the edges of the mountainous jungles of Salyan, Pyuthan, Dang, Jajarkot, Surkhet, Dailekh, Achham, Jumla and Dadeldhura districts. The existence of Rautes in the forest was first prescribed by "Yogi" Naraharinath (1955) in his "History Publication- Part I." It was the first report of the Raute tribe. Systematic researches had taken momentum after Johan Reinhard (1974) of Vienna University and Bista (1976) conducted very short researches based on more observatories and less participatory approach. Gurung (1980) described about Raute behaviour. Gautam and Thapa-Magar (1994) also touched upon the Raute tribe. There are a few other articles written in English as well as Nepali on the Raute tribe. Sing (1997) studied about nomadic and settled Rautes' ethno biology and biodiversity. He present that altogether in Nepal the Rautes live in six places and in India in eleven places. The total number of Rautes is 980. The number of nomadic Rautes is 130 and number of settled Rautes is 850. In Nepal, the total number of the Rautes is 475 where as in India they are 505. The study found out that the so-called Rautes living in India are Rajis. In India there is no Raute residence but only Raji tribe. Belbase(1997) studied demographic and sociological aspect of settled Rautes in Dadeldhura district. The study shows there is the lack of education, poverty, traditional beliefs, higher the fertility and higher the mortality rate. Similarly, Luintel (1998) studied the nomadic Raute behavior. According to CBS 2001, the total number of Rautes in Nepal is 658, where male number is 346 and female is 312. According to CBS, eight Rautes are living in Rolpa but the researcher disagrees these data because no Rautes are living there. Only eight Kusunda are living there. The national news Kantipur daily (2002), Kathamadu Post (2003), Gorkhapatra (2003), describe about Rautes' behaviour and beliefs. Hellen (2003) studies the nomadic Raute way of life in Surkhet.

Rautes are dependent for their subsistence on hunting in the forest, gathering root fruits, and wooden items to exchange them for food grain in the countryside. They like to kill

Guan monkey. They do not do agriculture work. They distribute the meat bought from hunting equally. They have a policy not to individually collect goods other than those for personal use or goods to be counted as wealth, to remain affluent by balancing means and ends, to have richer social life, to work in a cooperative and social manner, to link hunting and collecting work with rituals, socialization and artistic expression.

### **Historical Background of Rautes**

A large number of Anthropologists and authors have tried to trace the origin of Rautes on the basis of Rautes dialect, Physiognomy, dwelling place and historical links. But such approaches have made more complication of the problem of origin, but there is not a single, widely acceptable explanation about the origin of Rautes. Rautes are supposed to be the distinguished among the indigenous people of Nepal. It is not yet confirmed that from when, where and how the Rautes came into being. Whatever information is supplied to this effect, none of them is based on factual evidence. They all are either speculation or hearsay from generation to generation.

"Once upon a time, there was a Thakuree dynasty. There was a powerful king. He had two sons. After his death there was a competition between those two brothers for riding the horse. The younger brother rode the horse first and then became the king. The elder brother was given a bag of coins instead of the half share of the state. The elder brother did not accept the bag of coins but jumped himself into the rivers. At the time, the Creeper God appeared inside the river and told him not to jump into river but to live in jungles. From that day onward, they became the Rautes and began moving in jungles. So, we are king descendants." It is one of the original myths of the Rautes as told by Kamal Singh Raute, the headman of the Rautes residing Ampani village.

The name 'Raute' is one of the many terms applied to this tribe. They are called Ban Rawat, Jangali, Banmanus, Ban Raja, Raji and Rautiya. The term Raji, Raute, Rajwar and Rautuya appear all to be based on a meaning of 'lord, or prince', and in this case used to distinguish the Raute as "Lord of the forest" as opposed to the lord of king of the cultivated land (Reinhard, 1974).

Kumauni 'Raji' and 'Rajwar', are another names for the Raute in India. Geographical isolation and time gap produced differentiation between the groups of the Raute tribe scattered over many places in Nepal and India through history (Singh, 1997).

Rautes are indigenous people. Raute language is similar to Tibato Barmese, so they are related to Kirat. Bista (1976) assumes that the word "Kirat" changed to "Kirant" and "Kiranut". After some time the "Ki" disappeared and the word became "Raut" and finally Raute"(Bista, 1985).

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study is to identify the affecting factors of education in the Raute's community.

### **Methodology**

This article mainly based on descriptive type of study design. Both nomadic and settled Rautes were the population of this study. Purposively selected head of the Raute's family were the sample population of this study.

The nomadic hunting and gathering, Rautes were located at Nikas at Surkhet. For the first 2-3 days, it became very difficult to get information of the tribe for the writer because they did not allow outsider into their territory. Many attempts had been made to develop relationship with the Raute headman or the other Rautes. The Raute headman was brought to Birendranagar in Surkhat to make relation “Mit” with the researcher. By proving a cock and some tobacco very strong relation was developed with the Raute headman and other Rautes.

After that, it became much easier to receive information. At the same time investigation on all other aspects of the Rautes was also carried out. Research materials like camera and tape recorder were used for collecting data.

## **2. Presentation, discussion of the data and Key Findings**

There are many factors, which explain the reasons for the very low level of academic attainment and the high rate of absenteeism among the children of Rautes. The concept of attending school and receiving formal education is alien to them. Daily attendance is poor. Absenteeism increases in the rainy season, because they don't use umbrella. Some traditional beliefs and customary practices also affect their attendance. Children come to school for the nutritious food supplied by the school to them (rather than for education). Food is more important than education for the poor Raute children. This is all due to the poverty, which is the order of their lives. They will stay away from schools, if teachers scold them. Parents tend to take the children away for weeks to help gather fruit during the fruit season. Parents (Rautes) are still ignorant of the value of education. Thus, there arise the problem of maximum utilization of existing facilities and resources by the Rautes.

Factors affecting the raute's education are included below :

### **(a) Language**

The observation found out that in Raute community specially settled Raute children face this problem. Because, Rautes mother tongue is Khamchi and in school instruction is Nepali medium.

Most of the Raute children don't understand Nepali language. But in schools instructional medium is Nepali. So they are not properly benefitted by class instruction.

### **(b) Health and Nutrition**

The ancient philosopher Aristotle said 2500 years ago “Unhealthy body does not create healthy mind” Raute community has reached the same conclusion. The causes that especially lead to the poor health and nutritional standard of the Rautes are their poor economic condition, ignorance of the rule of hygiene and dietary rules, inequitable food distribution and inadequate health services and facilities. Raute communities have various food taboos, for example they don't accept modern packed food and medical vitamin. They believe that if they use these things their Hunting God will be angry. The daily meals of Rautes are usually poor and do not conform to the dietary requirement. Some times they have to live without meal for two or three days because of scarcity of hunting and gathering foods.

Raute who gets sick goes through treatment from Dhami and Jhakri (faith healers and exorcists), it is observed that most school Raute children suffer from scabies and worm

because of unhygienic habits of living.

**(c) Socio- economic condition.**

In nomadic, Raute community all are still engaged in hunting, gathering, fishing and bartering. There is no scope of raising the level of income and the living standard. More than 80 percent of settled Rautes engaged in agriculture and others are hunting, gathering, fishing and so on. (Two Raute youths have been engaged in official services: one in Nepal Bank Limited and other in Gramin Sudhar Munch). Rautes who are engaged in agriculture have the high growth rate of population but average size of holding is very small. New agriculture policy does not reach the door of Rautes. So, Rautes face a lot of problems. Rautes are born in poverty, live in poverty and die in poverty and bequeath poverty. Due to poverty deforestation and subsequently, the erosion and landslides are causing a serious problem. So, Raute people are unable to get education, which in turn, is responsible for social and economic problems.

**(d) Social Structure**

In Raute community there is nuclear family system in nomadic and also joint family system in settled. The nuclear family consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. Jointed family is composed of man and his wife, their married sons and their wives with children and one or two unmarried sons, daughters and brothers. The Raute family structure is very much traditional and does not give any educational atmosphere to the school going children. The children are under tight control of the parents or heads. Their activities are to be decided by the parental wishes and choices. The children are also forced to do some economic activities to support the parental income. Families are closely knit and emotional ties are strong. It is observed that most of the Raute have similar type of occupation like hunting, gathering and woodworking. Very few settled Rautes are engaged in agriculture work and as agricultural tenant. The family income of the majority of the settled Rautes per month ranges from Rs. 200 to 400 per-month. The low family economy of demands, the schooling children engage in different types of economic activities to support the families. This makes demand on their time to go to school for education and also affects interest in school negatively.

**(e) Geographical Causes**

Geographical disparity, especially of mid and far western regions, and remote areas with a widespread poverty, disparity in resources distributions and structural inequality injustice and discriminations have heavily fuelled Raute life. From the past till now, all the governments have neglected remotes areas. The governments neglected to recognize the gravity of the problem of geographically neglected areas and backward communities like Raute communities

**(f) Home/family and school**

In most of the settled Raute households, the declining per capita land holding, depleting-resources and growing population pressures have obliged the people to look for other sources to supplement their income even for the sake of maintaining the family at a subsistence level. Thus, the burden of supporting the family lies on the shoulders not only of the parents but also of the children who are required to lend a helping hand in doing household chores as well as to engage in productive and wage-earning activities so as to

ensure to the survival of the family. In fact, children are even at their early age, economic assets to a Raute family. Children's engagement in different activities varies with their age and sex. The young children (5-8 years) help the parents in household chores, which partially give them more time to be engaged in production activities. The grown-up children (9-15 Years) do the job of grazing animals, fetching firewood, etc. and are occasionally engaged in wage-earning activities. Thus, the children's role in household activities have direct or indirect implications for the economy of a family. In the words of settled Raute parent, "How can an old man and his wife support all their children, if they do not do their share of household work and are not busy with other supplementary income generating activities?" In Raute children, school education has very little impact because it does not change social and cultural factors. In nomadic Raute community children are never sent to school because of traditional beliefs and taboos.

#### **(g) Parental Attitude**

The study shows that father's educational status appears to have positively affected education at participation in Raute community, because Khadka Singh Raute has positive attitude towards education. Parental attitude towards education and the need for children's help in household activities appear to be two major factors hindering children's participation in education. In spite of these common notions, economically poor condition is the single biggest factor in no participation. The study shows that a number of factors, which are household, economic, social and health-related in nature, deter, in various combinations, the Raute children from participating in education.

#### **(h) Physical Facilities**

In settled Raute community, there are two school buildings. School buildings, especially in Raute areas are of a very poor quality school building consists of only two or three small classrooms, which have mud floors but have no furniture and no sufficient light. The rooms, which have no glass panes or windows, are cold in winter. Lacks of essential services like electricity, water sanitation and land for a playground are conducive neither to a good learning atmosphere nor to health. In secondary school buildings, there is a noticeable absence of science laboratories, workshops, libraries and appropriate instructional equipments.

#### **(i) Misuse of Funds**

Many donors tend to believe that whoever has a Rautes tag is a "depressed one" and so, they start pawing dollars. So, much money was spent for them by NGO, INGO and Governmental sectors. But no situation has changed in Raute community. Some of them are receiving through such INGOs as Action Aid Nepal, Save the Children US. UNICEF, Care Nepal, The Luthern World Federation. The budget is spent on such programs as social awareness, non-formal education, empowerment, advocacy, health service, occupational capacity building. These organizations started funding Raute only after 1990. in this period, the large amount has been received, out of which 90% of money has been spent only on interactions, seminars and tours. Hundreds of seminars and workshops have been held in the name of Rautes. But their impact is negligible.

#### **(j) Religion**

Assistant chief of the Raute Man Bahadur Shahi said researcher "We live in the pity of

God, but if the God does not care what can we do, this is right for us, our forefathers did not do farming and we also cannot do and that is not our religion, our forefathers had spent the forest life happily, but, why it is difficult for us to spend life like that?” One of the main function of religious belief and practice is to enable man to come to term with the forces in life which s/he can neither understanding nor control especially those like earth quakes and thunderstorms which threaten this very existence or death itself. Which force him to think about the purpose and meaning of his life on earth. Through religion, man tries to communicate with the wider universe he perceive beyond his own limited horizon, just as through language he communicates with his fellow men. Raute leaders Man Bahadur said that the Daremast, Vuhar, River, Sun, (Surya Narayan) are our god, he further said, “we are hear in an interest of God and God send us to move jungle not for education.”

#### (k) Traditional Behaviors and Taboos

Man Bahadur Shahi has dedicated his life to the preservation and fierce protection of his nomadic Raute tribe. He is in unquestionable command of the tribe and deals with outsiders to protect the interests of his subjects. He is guardian of the forest and the king of the trees. In his mind, the state and government are only the masters of the “fortress” and have no rights over the forest of the Raute. The life of the Rautes is governed by strong taboos and to challenge them would call on the wrath of their forest gods. Allowing counting of the members of the tribe, inviting strangers along for the monkey hunt or give access to the inner area of the camp are all covered by the taboos. Man Bahadur told researcher, they are willing to talk with outsiders, but not too much. The Raute thinks too much talking is like “chewing the rice too much, our mouths always tell the truth. But our feet are very treacherous”. The local people say “Raute’s talk” to indicate a promise that must be fulfilled. This is the only Raute tribe still practicing the ancient nomadic way of hunting and gathering - a way of life they have practiced for more than 900 years (Hellen, 2003). The Raute people don’t trust strangers, and their children and women are strictly instructed to avoid contact. Also, strangers are not allowed within their camp. The Rautes (Parents) are afraid of teachers thinking that they will influence their children to change their culture. So, nomadic Rautes never send their children to school and they hate education, but settled Rautes regard attending school as waste of time for their children. They need them at home to help in gathering foods and fish. The children themselves were easily bored with the school test and various school's disciplinary rules and regulations. Most, importantly they lacked the motivation to complete the task with their pairs. Because of the lack of trained teachers, problem of transportations, poor communication network and insufficient supply of food, strong traditional believes and behaviour they are unable to get schooling education.

#### 3. Conclusion

Settled Rautes are a little more modern than nomadic Rautes. They are flexible. They aren’t rigid and strict in their traditional habits, behaviour, beliefs, fashion, profession and lifestyle. They are gradually impressed by modern way of life, modern agriculture, modern transportation, communication and education. They are in the process of sanskritisation and acculturation. However, they deny the access to education because of poverty, misuse of fund, misinterpretation of religion, traditional behaviour and taboos, basic infrastructures,

health and nutrition, language, geographical problems, family environment.

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