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RESEARCH ARTICLE

“The Raji Tribe of Uttarakhand in Globalized World: In a Changing Perspective”

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Abstract

Impact of globalization is universal and its impact can be observed in all the aspects of life viz. economic, social, cultural, political, finance, health, nutrition and technological dimensions of the world. In present era of scientific innovations the process of *globalization* has brought the Raji in contact of outside society.

Raji is one of the five tribes (*Raji, Bhotia, Tharu, Jaunsari and Buxa*) of Uttarakhand state in India and it possesses the status of PVTGs (Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups) as declared by the government of India. The Raji tribe is one of the smallest tribes of India and is educationally and economically backward tribe of Central Himalayan region of Pithoragarh and Champawat districts in Uttarakhand. This tribal group constitutes around 679 individuals (0.27%) of the total Tribal population of Uttarakhand state. They are in a transitional stage between hunter-gatherer and a pre-agricultural economy.

The paper is the outcome of the field work conducted in the state of Uttarakhand and the findings of the Workshop held on “*Interaction between Tribes and Anthropologists*” organized by Anthropological Survey of India, N.W. Regional Centre, Dehradun in March, 2012 among the Raji tribe. In this paper the authors have tried to explore the impact of globalization on the Raji tribe of Uttarakhand. Globalization has knocked at the life of Raji tribe but it is in its initial stage and one can easily observe the impact of Globalization on them. Altogether they have been affected by the impact of globalization and they are interested much to adapt the impacts.

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INTRODUCTION

In India there are certain tribal communities among scheduled Tribes who have, even after the 65 years of India's independence are still in most vulnerable, deplorable condition, despite the various schemes, plans strategies adopted by the Government of India, State administration, Voluntary organization or social workers, towards the developments of Tribal's in General and PTGs in particular. The Tribal areas and the tribal people lag woefully behind others in development and the PTGs continue to be among the weakest and most exploited section of the society. Before and after independence, particularly in the context of special provisions in the constitutions for the protection and promotion of the scheduled tribes, various plans and programs were carved to promote their development, the Tribal Development sector has been used as a laboratory for different experiment, different tests to treat their disease.

PTGs are the most backward communities in India and considered more traditional society in comparison to other tribal communities in India. They are considered to have very low literacy rate, following traditional and primitive tools for agriculture and also represent very small population size. The demography of this tribe suggested that the Raji is an extremely small tribe (n=22) in according to 1901 census. Whereas Grierson G. A. estimated that there were 200

Raji during the course of his linguistic survey¹, and in 1950–51 there were reported to be 312 Raji².but in 1988 the Raji population was 456³. According to 2003 Census the maximum population live in Kimkhola village of Dharchula Block and minimum population live in Kadhyuli village of Didihat Block of Pithoragarh District. It is reported that their population is said to be Out of 556 persons in nine villages in which is 257 are females and 299 are Male individuals⁴. Now the Raji tribe represents 679 individuals in ten villages.

The Raji is little known tribal community that was brought to light for the first time in 1823 by the commissioner of Kumaun, C. W. Traill. It is said that the Raji or Banrawats are descendents of the prehistoric Kiratas, who were comparatively earlier settlers of the region that the Nagas or the Khasas.⁵ Raji is one of the five tribes in *Uttarakhand* and one of the two PTGs in *Uttarakhand*. Their population is distributed in two districts of *Uttarakhand* namely *Pithoragarh* and *Champavat*. Their population are scattered in ten villages on different the top of hills in both the districts. In *Pithoragarh* there are 9 Raji villages which represent total 556 out of which 302 are males whereas 123 individuals live in *Champavat* district in a single village out of which 72 are males. Until a few decades ago they lived a life typical of the Neolithic age, as cave dwellers and food gatherers – subsisting on hunting, fishing and jungle product⁵. Their traditional occupation was to collect the woods from jungles and giving different shapes to the woods and then sold out to the people of the same village. By nature they were very shy and aloof in past and did not like to talk the people other than their society. They left their selling things at the door of the people in evening and in very early morning they collected their earnings from the homestead. But condition have changed in the last several decades now they sell collected wood in the market directly without giving any shape to the woods, wage labourers, practice agriculture or raise livestock to earn their livelihood.

Population distribution of Raji Tribe in the different villages is given below:

Table: 1 Distribution of the population in different villages:

Sl. No.	Name of Districts	Blocks	Name of the villages	No of families	Total Populaion	Males	Females
1	Pithoragarh	Dharchula	Kimkhola (Ratura)	34	144	79	65
2			Bhagtirwa	9	36	17	19
3			Ganagaon	16	67	33	34
4			Chipalthara	10	37	25	12
5		Kanalichhina	Jamtadi	20	78	42	36
6			Altadi	15	65	38	27
7		Didihat	Madanpuri	10	39	19	20
8			Kutachaurani	19	75	40	35
9			Katula	3	15	06	09
10	Champavat	Champavat	Khiradwari	28	123	72	51
Total				164	679	374	305

Source: Base Line survey report conducted in 2003- 04.

Social structure:-

The Raji's social organization is based on both kinship and territorial principles. The Raji is also referred as *Ban Rawat*, *Ban Raji* or *Ban Manus*. They were cave dwellers and nomadic hunter-gatherers. Raji society is represented by nuclear family or *Nucleo-joint family*. Just after marriage new couple makes a new residence that is the prevalence of neo-local residence among Raji tribe. Parents generally live with the elder son or in separate household. The nuclear family dominates Raji society, who calls themselves Hindu by religion⁶. Social structure of the Raji society is very simple and society is divided into several castes like, *Kanyal*, *Rakal*, *Pachpaya*, *Badwal*, *Dayakori*, and *Galdiyar*. All castes are same and no superiority or inferiority i.e. social hierarchy is found among them at the caste level. At caste level they are exogamous and during the negotiation on marriage the castes are taken under consideration. Each caste has its own '*Isht Devta* (*Isht* means the God who is believed to care for caste).' The different *Isht Devta* with their respective castes is given in the table below:-

Table: 2 Social structures in the Raji society

Sl. No.	Castes	Ishta Devta	Villages
1	Kanyal	Dhanelinag	Kutachaurani, Madanpuri
2	Rakal	Ghurmali	Ganagaon, Kimkhola, Bhagtirwa, Nepal
3	Pachpaya	Malkarjun	Altari, Kimkhola,

			Bhagtirwa
4	Badwal	Betal	Altari, Kimkhola
5	Dayakori	Bhagwati	Jamtari
6	Galdiyar	Kedar	Chipalthara, Kimkhola

Raji society is patri-lineal but economic leadership is done by the females of the family. Females collect woods from the jungles in the evening and next early morning sell in the market. Males wait for their counterpart and as females reach at home male ask for income and receive some amount for liquor from wives and then males come down in the market to drink the liquor. After taking liquor they return to their homes. Now due to the impact of some working agency in the villages they are attempting to get job in the nearest market. Parents are sending their children in the schools. Some parents are sending their children in the private schools also for better education. One girl has given examination of intermediate this year for Raji community and three boys are know who are studying in *Pithoragarh* district headquarter. Thus, their interest is increasing in education. Some of the families from *Kimkhola* village are doing job in *Awasiya Janjatiya Vidyalaya* (Tribal Residential School) on contractual basis. Yet they are economically very poor in comparison to other families of other castes.

Table: 3 Sex Ratio in Different Villages

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Sex ratio
1	Kimkhola (Ratura)	823
2	Bhagtirwa	1117
3	Ganagaon	1030
4	Chipalthara	480
5	Jamtadi	857
6	Altadi	710
7	Madanpuri	1053
8	Kutachaurani	875
9	Katula	1500
10	Khiradwari	708
Over all Sex Ratio		815

At the level of community they are endogamous. Their various lineages are exogamous units with respect to marriage. The marriage age for a girl is 14 to 18 where as it is lying between 20- 25 in case of males. Monogamy (a husband will have only one wife and vice-versa throughout the life at the same time) is another feature of their culture. In past the most popular mode of mate acquisition was by negotiation which was followed by *Udal Viah*. Exchange marriage was also in vague but now they did not follow those customs but they the negotiation is started by the elders of the family and process of marriage is completed by Hindu priest. Thus, they have been Hinduised and follow all the ceremonial activities of Hindus during marriage ceremony. Married women were recognized by *Bulaki* (an ornament of nose). At present married women like to keep vermilion on their forehead as a symbol of marriage. Dowry which was absent from their custom has become a part of marriage ceremony but it is not followed strictly. Widow re-marriage does not exist. Remarriage is also absent. Rajis have a peculiar death custom. Traditionally they neither burn nor bury their dead but leave the body in the forest to be consumed by wild animals. But due to the process of *Sanskritization*, now a day they either bury their dead or practice cremation.

Political Organization:-

Raji has adopted several cultures from nearby Hindu communities. They have not their traditional political structured organization. They solved their problems and conflicts if arised with the direction of the elders the community. As the informants told that the disputes were very rare and hence such political organization was meaningless in past. At present also, the dispute in Raji community is rarely found and if it is found it is solved by the outside people like the village head or the people who are found to be faithful to them along with the elders of the community.

Economic Organization: -

The traditional hunting and gathering practices of the community are rarely observable in present situation. The Raji tribe's livelihood pattern comes to wage labor in agriculture, fishery and quarrying. Some people may also be found working on wood items. Primarily Raji are depending upon the collecting of woods from the jungles. They sell collected woods in the local market daily. Thus they earn daily for their own daily expenditures. Their economy is very simple. They also have agricultural land of very small size. They are depending for irrigation of the lands on Monsoon. Hence they are not able to produce sufficient crops required for their livelihood. They produce wheat as the main crop because

it requires little water. For cultivation they use *phawada* and *kudal* as tools. Goats and cows are their domestic animals which are reared for their own purpose. Each Raji village may be categorized with a special(s) economic activity as given below in the table. The Raji population of the villages Jamtadi and Altadi collect woods for their own purposes not for selling in the market. Their main source of livelihood is agricultural practices whereas the primary source of income for the families of the Kimkhola, Bhagtirwa and Ganagaon villages is collecting woods and selling it to the market.

Table: 4 Primary Occupations of Raji in the visited villages

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Primary Occupation
1	Kimkhola (Ratyura)	Wood collection and quarrying
2	Bhagtirwa	
3	Ganagaon	Wood collection and agriculture
4	Chipalthara	Labour and wood collection
5	Jamtadi	Agriculture and labour
6	Altadi	

Health condition:-

Health is a pre-requisite for human development and is essentially concerned with the well being of common man⁷. The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) comprises three components i.e. health, education and income generating capacity. Health is a function, not only of medical care, but also of the overall integrated development of society - cultural, economic, educational, social and political. The health status of a society is intimately related to its value system, philosophical and cultural traditions, and social, economic and political organization. Every ecological situation involves complex interactions between various components of environment⁸. Lack of proper healthcare in the area, some factors like irrational belief system is said to be aggravating the health and nutritional problems of these people which needs special attention⁹. Lack of health awareness on healthy lifestyle and also they have no any idea about healthy nutritious diet etc in Raji tribe. So they are not able to intake the nutritious substances (vitamins, proteins, minerals etc) because the health status in this community directly proportional to the economic (financial) and Socio-cultural conditions of these people. Therefore they are suffering from malnutrition, anemia, mental retardness and other symptoms which are related to the blood disease. An attempt has been made to make some recommendations related to their health and social development which might be helpful in their successful development⁸.

Globalization and Raji Tribe:-

In this paper the author has attempted to understand how the common Hindu society has influenced the culture and living pattern of Raji society and vice-versa. The influence of Hindu society on the Raji may be observed at each and every aspect of life. The impact of local Hindu society is not limited to a single aspect of Raji life but it was found in all the aspects of their life viz. in their food habits, dress pattern, marriage, etc. The first sphere of globalization for the Raji is the local Hindu population and there after the globalization is which is in true sense. Hence, the impact of globalization is discussed in two senses; impact of local Hindu society and then modern scientific world.

The Raji tribe was cave dweller and their life was limited to an area in Jungle. They were shy in nature and feared of interacting with outside people. Since last few decades, they came in contact with outside people who influenced the life style of Raji tribe. Starting from their food habits and dress pattern the impact may be observed in marriage as well as in death ceremony. Initially they were non-vegetarian and collected food from the animals of jungles directly. They hunted big as well as small animals for the purpose of food. Whereas presently maintaining their non-vegetarianism they purchase meat of goats and chicken from the market and also they do not eat big animals like cows and buffalos. Here the impact of Hindu communities on the Raji community is notable. Sometimes they go to jungles for hunting of small animals like rabbit, deer etc at present but it is rare. There is no literature about their traditional dress pattern but at present they look like other Hindu individuals. Males wear *Pant* and *Shirt* whereas females *saree*. Thus, after coming in contact with outside society they accepted the cultural features of the Hindu society. When they were cave dwellers, they hunted animals and enjoyed with other members of the family. Hunting might be a tool of amusement among them. Literature explore that they were not liquor drinker in known past but when they came in contact with outside people they started to take wine. Females are very simple and are the major source income in the family. Due to the impact of outside world they also have understood the importance of money and education. Now males have also started to work as labour and are also attempting to get job in different organization and institution in the *tehsil* and district. In Kimkhola village, one woman is also found who was working as maid in a block office and one more was also reported working as maid in Tribal school located in the area. Thus, they are coming in contact with the outside world and trying to make their life better. Initially, they were not very much interested in education, but now due to some Raji individuals who have been provided contractual job in Raji tribal school of Kimkhola, they are sending their children in school eagerly. One of the informants told that this year a female student has passed intermediate class

and it is first girl of this community who could do so. Presently, Kimkhola village has been listed in about 100% literate village of Raji communities but the real picture of the community is different.

The society which was known as bashful society in past is now visit district headquarter in search of livelihood and better education. The modern dresses and mobile phone have also been part of their life though very few members have mobile phones. One of them has been selected as teacher in an intermediate college and one has been elected as MLA for two five years tenures. These two events have also played very significant role in the changes in life style of Raji. It has given a new thought to Raji to think about their future like other local population.

Now they have almost left the past practice of livelihood i.e. hunting and gathering. The respondent explored two reasons behind it; one is the jungle where the population live is under state government and government does not allow to hunt and another reason is the influence of local population. The hunting and gathering practice is replaced by agricultural practice which has been an important mode of their livelihood. They work as wage labour on quarrying also which may be considered as the most important source of their income. Another source of their income is collection of wood from jungle and sells it to market.

Marriage ceremony was observed in presence of their community members only. They did not call priests for the rituals in marriage. But now the scenario is change which might be due to the influence of Hindu community. Both the bride and the groom are dressed up in wedding dresses and participants also join the procession in proper dresses. Vediography and photography have also been the part of marriage ceremony. *Varmala* has also been introduced in the marriage. The marriage ceremony is observed in the presence of priest. Priest is called Brahmin of Hindu community.

They believe in Hinduism and also worship Hindu gods and goddesses. They have their own community deity or *Isht devata* also (viz. *Dhanelinag*, *Ghurmali*, *Malkarjun* etc). The Raji society is horizontally divided six castes. Each cast is distinguished by an *Isht Devta*. The society is free off the hierarchy at the level of superiority or inferiority. *Isht Devta* is referred during the marriage negotiation importantly.

Table: 5 Castes and respective *Isht Devta* in the Raji society

Sl. No.	Castes	<i>Isht Devta</i>
1	<i>Kanyal</i>	<i>Dhanelinag</i>
2	<i>Rakal</i>	<i>Ghurmali</i>
3	<i>Pachpaya</i>	<i>Malkarjun</i>
4	<i>Badwal</i>	<i>Betal</i>
5	<i>Dayakori</i>	<i>Bhagwati</i>
6	<i>Galdiyar</i>	<i>Kedar</i>

In addition at technological level, TV and Radio were also observed in the some Raji families. It has brought them in the contact of local as well as global sphere. It has brought them with the day to day activity occur in the world. They like to see movies and serials also on Television.

Along with above adaptation with the outside world they have been major source of labour and wood vender in the area. They are very simple and also not have eager to earn more. They need only sufficient amount which is required for their livelihood daily to daily. It results the harassment by the some businessmen. They know this even they could not oppose it. On other hand, some tea stall holders prefer to purchase the woods from Raji because they are very honest and they provide woods on cheap rate. Altogether, such a relationship has brought them in contact of outside and they are being influenced by their culture and society. They are learning from outside and understand the significance of education as well as modern life system. Therefore, it may be hoped that this will bring them in main stream of country.

Conclusion:-

Altogether, Raji tribe is very much influenced of local communities. Since the local population lives a very simple life, the simplicity reflects among Raji tribe too. As far as the technological development is concerned the Raji use the mobile phones only. In this regard, they are entering in the world of modern technology but they are far from other aspects of advanced technology like use of computers. Now the cell phone has become one of the most important tools for their communication and also for their pity business. In past they were shy in nature but now the scenario is changed and they are mixing up with outsiders and are exchanging views over various social, political and economic issues concerned with them and their development. Now their world view is widening day by day and issues by issues. Now the picture of social relations and social structure of the Raji's is changing its shape and frame as the attendance of other neighboring communities in their traditional rituals, customs, and ceremonies is increasing and other members are happily participating and shouldering with them in all the spheres of their ritualistic life. It seems the coming age, so called modern age, would not be as astonishing as it was in past for the Raji's just because of their moving steps towards the main stream of nation.

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