

CULTURAL PRACTICES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE DRUKPA COMMUNITY AT THE BORDERS OF INDIA AND BHUTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Cultural Practices and National Identity of the Drukpa community living at the borders of India and Bhutan. Anthropological field work was carried out for collection of data. This study shows that cultural identity overshadows national identity. Since the Drukpa community is divided across borders, the Drukpa living on the Indian side of the border frequently visit Bhutan for jobs, healthcare and meeting relations. National Identity holds less significance for them because of their cultural differences with the rest of India. National Identity is limited to the possession of Indian documents, the land they live on and the benefits that they receive from the Indian government.

INTRODUCTION

The issues relating to cultural practice and national identity of people living in the district along the India-Bhutan border, is an area where very limited research has been undertaken. How do those living at a border between two nations perceive questions of national identity? Do their cultural practices see the influence of both; the land they came from and the area they live in?

This study focuses on the Drukpa community who trace their origins to Bhutan but currently reside in the border district in India along the shared border with Bhutan. Though they have an Indian identity card and are legal citizens of India, they differ from the 'mainstream' Indians and also with the majority of the people who live in the plain areas surrounding them, with whom they have daily interactions. Their culture, food, social institutions, are more similar to what is practised in Bhutan rather than in India. One clear indication of the same can be seen in the kinds of posters and calendars that hang in the homes of the Drukpas living in this area. People whose

primary legal identity is Indian, frequently visit border villages in Bhutan with their domesticated animals to sell their products, and in turn buy vegetables and other food items from the Bhutanese vendors, thus making communication and exchange a common practice between people living across formal borders.

The co-operation in trade is largely determined by ecological factors rather than the issues of national identity. The India-affiliated community is a pastoral one which lives in the forest area with their domesticated animals. The community practices seasonal cultivation. When food in their usual habitat is scarce, they wander in the forest and sometimes even cross the border into Bhutan in search of food. Often their search for employment and means of sustenance takes them across national boundaries and this is something they do without a moment's hesitation.

The present study explores the tension between cultural practices and national identities in the Indo-Bhutan border of Duars region in West Bengal. The communities have been living in the region for generations but have different linkages with Bhutan. People of the Drukpa community living in this area are not too concerned about the different laws of the two counties and have been freely moving across the border to fulfil the cultural and ecological needs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nationalism and capitalism are two forces which have shaped the course and fate of human history in the last two centuries. It could be argued that there is an element of compartmentalization between the two as nationalism speaks of the specificity of boundaries, while capitalism defies the logic of boundary. Yet, the two phenomena have co-existed and even reinforced each other (Greenfeld 2001). Attempts have been made to 'nationalize' every aspect of life and space. Capitalism has commoditized almost everything which is needed for human life and often displaced traditional forms of economic organization. In the 'nation' centric world of ours, what is legitimate and illegitimate is defined and decided by the nation-state on its own terms. In the process of nation-building, the frontiers play an important role in differentiating one nation from the other and hence the need for clear cut demarcation of boundaries is necessary. "The notion of border is very often considered a materialized line between two spaces. Borders are associated with differentiated between outside and inside, with control of who crosses the

line. It is embedded into a theory of the territorial state that inhibits the capacity to understand the passage of the frontier controls beyond the national territory. Thus border control and state are intertwined.” (Gupta, Sharma 2007:202). However, mainstream theories of international relations and political science have ignored this fluid nature of cultural identities at the peripheral regions. The focus of this study is to identify, how the cultural identity of the people impacts their sense of National Identity and the practices at the borders. The study also explores how the people living in the borders deal with the restriction on crossing the border to satisfy their cultural needs.

Interdependent Borderlands exist where there exist social-economic and cultural connections across borders in the neighbouring states. This is possible in cases where there is a secure international relation and suitable economic climate on both the countries which will improve ‘growth’ and ‘development’ that are coupled with ‘foreign capital, market and labour’. In such cases if there is more flow of both the economic and human resources, there will be boon for both the nations as their economies will be structurally bonded. This will result in mutually benefitted economies. US-Mexico serves as a good example for this asymmetric Independent Borders. (Martinex 1994)

Otherness “borderlines think of themselves as different from people of interior zones and outsiders perceive them that way as well. This distinction impacts on relationships with citizens of other nations. Remoteness from the heart-land and sustained interaction with foreigners tend to dilute nationalism among border landers and make them more tolerant of ethnic and cultural differences” (Martinex 1994: 12).

Bhardwaj in his article describes in detail about the migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal. He says that the migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal is not very new. West Bengal has been a dream to most of the poor people of Bangladesh. It has a boundary with Bangladesh on the eastern side with nine districts borders. These migrants customarily have been engaged in the smuggling of goods, drugs, gold, and stealing of cattle. He says, this has been a controversial topic since long.

This trend of migration had started in the 19th century and continued till the partition of India, and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Between the years 1911 and 1931, millions of Bengalis, from what is today Bangladesh, migrated to Assam. By the year 1951, more than half billion migrated to Assam (Bhardwaj 2014). This has been a major concern as it is alleged that migrants are largely involved in drug dealing, terrorism, violent conflict, and insurgencies. There are many Bangladeshis who have settled in India which is now seen as a threat to the Indian national security. Hence, a demand for the tightening of borders to prevent illegal migration is seen as a critical component of India's policy (Bhardwaj 2014). There have been numerous clashes because of the Bangladeshi migrants in Indian states like Assam and Tripura. The conflict revolves around language and land. There has been a greater violence in the state of Tripura than Assam, with the resettlement of Bengalis, because the ethnic community of Tripura has now been reduced to a minority community.

Bhardwaj mentions that the report says, about two million names have been reduced from the voter's lists of Bangladesh between 1991-95. This indicates the scale of migration to India. According to 2001 census record the Muslim population is higher in districts which are closer to the Bangladesh border (Bhardwaj 2014). The reason for the Bangladeshi migration is because of the pull factor, people migrate for better economic conditions and a good life.

Though there is a linguistic similarity between the Bengalis in India and Bangladesh, the Indian Bengali is majorly drawn from the 'syncretic- linguistic' traditions of Bengal.

The issues of migration according to Bhardwaj(2014) should be viewed from the human angle. The people have been forced to migrate either because of political, religious. or social economic factors (Bhardwaj 2014).

Bhattraï, in his article describes in detail about the Indo-Nepal migration pattern. Nepal and India share an 'open' border as per the agreements of a bilateral treaty signed in 1950. According to the treaty, Nepalis and Indians can travel and work across the border and are to be treated at par with the native citizens. Rural Nepalis, who have for long been suffering poverty, unemployment and more recently a civil war, have been migrating to India in thousands every year. According to the

treaty signed in 1950, both the citizens have the right to travel and work in both the countries. The citizens of both the countries have to be treated as equal as their own citizens. This article focuses on the rural Nepalis, who have been migrating to India in thousands every year in search for a better life. These factors which are the push factor have resulted in migration to India. This paper discusses the study that has been done between the years 2003-2006. This focuses on the migrants belonging to the Nepali community who live in the four clusters in Delhi, having settled there after working there for a long time. He adds that “the interviews focused on day to day interaction between the Nepali labour migrants and the Indian state as it is embodied in the policemen and lower level administrators with whom the labour migrants mostly interact” (Bhattraï 2007:2).

The migrants from Nepal prefer India because it is near to their own country, there is an open border, there is cultural affinity, and the currency can be easily converted. The travel expenses are less and there is a history of migration to certain locations in India from the Nepali villages. The migrant profiles (where they come from, where they settle in, what type of work they do, quantum of money they send back home, family patterns, and the like) have not been chronicled (Bhattraï 2007).

Fredrik Barth (1969) focuses on how the boundaries of the ethnic people are negotiated between certain groups. His theory focuses largely on the interconnection of different ethnic identities. He says “ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact, and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation, whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories” (Barth 1969:1-2).

Barth (1969) in his book *Ethnic Group and Boundaries* says that:

“The constitution of ethnic groups, and the nature of the boundaries between them, has not been correspondingly investigated. Social anthropologists have avoided these problems by using concepts of ‘society’ to represent the encompassing social system within which smaller, concrete groups and units may be analysed. But this leaves untouched the empirical characteristics and

boundaries of ethnic groups and the important theoretical issue which an investigation of them raises.” (Barth 1969:1).

Barth asserts that boundaries exist if there is an interaction. The exclusion is what makes the border ethnic. There may be a boundary in real but still, social relations remain. Boundaries are also about accepting a certain type of people outside the line. Similar is the case here in this study. The people though live on the Indian side of the boundary are close to the people living in Bhutan because of the linguistic and the cultural similarity (same community). They have a discomfort with people living in their proximity i.e. plains of the country they live, whose practises in terms of culture, day to day activity and emotions differ significantly.

In the article “*The Lines That Continue to Separate Us: Border in Our ‘Borderless’ World*”, the author says borders should be examined from a bottom-up perspective rather than a top-down perspective. Case histories and backgrounds of the people should be highlighted, and an importance should be given to how the border impacts the daily life and cultural practices of the people living in such areas. (David 2016)

The present studies underscore a similar theme while studying the Drukpa, who live in a border between India and Bhutan. The focus of the study is to look at it from the bottom-up perspective considering the community is originally from Bhutan. It majorly studies how the treaty between the Bhutanese government and British India has changed their life. The boundary which was just a piece of land and the interaction, communication which used to take place on a regular basis, has now been governed by policies of different countries. There are different laws and policies. The people living in the border areas are unsure as to how they can respond to such policies. They are studied on how they cope with the policies and how they look at themselves, how they conceive their Cultural and National Identity?

(Haseksberger 2014), has argued in his work, “Decoding Borders: Appreciating Border Impact on Space and People”, that there are thick borders that should be changed into thin borders, which allows some types of flow. Further, he adds that it is important to establish ‘relational

geographies’, mainly the soft spaces that will go beyond borders. This is important to permit different kinds of coexistence.

Hjerm (1998), quoted in his article, “National Identities, National Pride and Xenophobia: A Comparison of Four Western Countries” spoke of a study conducted in four different countries; Germany, Sweden, Britain, and Australia. The study is about cross country comparative attitude. It talks about national pride and National Identity in relation to xenophobia. The choice of the countries is based on the different policies that are executed with regards to immigration and citizenship.

Hjerm(1998:337) refers to the works of Keane (1994) and Rex (1996) in his work that national “identity could be seen as an awareness of affiliation with the nation that gives people a sense of who they are in relation to others or infuses them with a sense of purpose that makes them feel at home”

National identity is an individual concept and can thus vary between individuals of the same nation (Gellner, 1983; Keane, 1994; Mac- Cormick, 1996). The religious and cultural connections across the border have had their influence on the way they identify or visualize their community/culture (Michael 2005). As the nation-state system came into being after the decolonization in the mid-twentieth century, the borders became the markers of legal identity and hence the notion of community became territorialized. But in cultural practices and belief systems the communities along the border have persisted with their conception of community, as it can be ascertained through religious and cultural practices. This does not mean that there has not been any change in the way the communities visualize their identity or community. Though the cultural and social change is given in any context,

In the present study the border is thin and porous as the people living across the border are of the same ethnic group. There are mobility and interactions across the border. The mobility is more of people from the studied village migrating to Bhutan than the other way around. The reason is that the villagers have their cultural affiliation to Bhutan. The village has no such facilities and policies that could attract the Bhutanese people towards India. However, the policies and laws in

Bhutan attract the villagers. The migration and interaction that happens in these places have had no impact as there is no such threat to both the places. The only strict action taken is when the people from the village go to Bhutan for conversion to Christianity. In such cases, the villagers have been jailed and had to pay fines.

The interdisciplinary approach with major inputs from anthropological understanding might give the study a critical edge since the conventional theories of state, nationalism and especially international relations largely ignore this aspect, except the newly emerging field of borderland studies in which the approach of this study can be located.

Hence this study looks at this dimension while using anthropological theories of identity, culture, community and religion, environmental niche to explore the way cultural practice and national identity are practiced.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the ways in which national identity is imagined and lived in the porous and fluid cultural milieu by the communities which live at the borders and have counterparts across the border with identical religious and cultural practices.
- To analyze the tension between national identity and cultural identity.
- To assess how the practices of national security impact the ways in which the communities at the border imagine their identity and lives.

METHODOLOGY

The Drukpa community was introduced to the researcher when she visited her uncle who lived in a town named Birpara on the Indian side of the Indo-Bhutanese border. Birpara falls in the Duars region, neighbouring Rajabhatakawa from where there is a path to reach the studied village. The children from the village are brought to these places for work and in return they are educated in the local primary school and a little money is sent to the parents back home. While interacting with one of the children and the family she was staying with, the researcher realized that the child belonged to the Drukpa community who are original inhabitants of Bhutan.

Through the interaction the researcher acquired an understanding about the cross-border migration patterns in this region along the India-Bhutan border.

Another reason contributing to the importance of this topic is, it focuses on how people at the borders view their own culture as well as the cultural practices, language and day to day activities as distinct from those of people and communities around them, especially when they trace their origins to the neighbouring nation. The researcher also wishes to assess whom did these people relate to? Did, they relate to India where they live and belong, or do they still wish to be united with Bhutan from where they originally hailed? The researcher was also keen about exploring how the villagers understood the working of the borders and the methods they had devised to move to Bhutan and back whenever required.

As a part of anthropological fieldwork, the researcher lived with the community for 27 days, in the village named Chunabhatti. The researcher built a rapport with the people, ate what they could offer and worked with them and travelled with them in the forest along with their herds. During this time the researcher spoke to almost all the people while collecting information linked to the household schedule, conducting interviews and completing case studies.

Interviews: Semi-structured and structured interviews were conducted to collect data to understand the social-political, economic, and religious institution and how these institutions play a role in the Drukpa Community. While conducting the semi-structured interview the history of how they have come to the region and what kind of relation they share with the forest and the officials was also sought.

Observation (participant and non-participant observation): Participant observation was employed for collecting data related to the life cycle rituals; how they function on a daily basis, what kinds of work they do, what kinds of food they eat, when do they perform and who performs the rituals, and so on. The non-participant observation was made to understand the relation with the family members and who takes care of the house, cattle and the like.

Case study: Case studies were collected focusing on detailed discussions with individuals to understand the migration pattern, means of sustenance, and how they had come to the village. This provided a framework to both; understand the past and comprehend contemporary developments.

Use of visual and audio aids: Technical aids such as camera, voice recorders and the like, helped the researcher in documenting the events, conversations and narrations of the Drukpas. The camera was used to capture various Drukpa pilgrim places, wild animals, birds, trees, dress patterns, festivals, life cycle rituals and the like. It was used to capture the cattle and the forest and the people taking care of the cattle.

Household schedule: Household schedule was used to collect the information about the migrating population and the nature and pattern of migration.

HISTORY OF THE REGION

The Treaty of Sinchula was an agreement signed by British India and Bhutan in the year 1865 after Bhutan's defeat in the 'Duar War' (Grover 1997). The treaty involved Bhutan's independence, a yearly stipend of 50,000 rupees that Bhutan received from Britain, and a promise by Britain to take care of Bhutan's foreign relations and the ceding of Bengal Duars as well as Assam Duars to the British. Any disputes originating in the regions of Cooch Bihar and Sikkim were to be handled by the British in accordance with the treaty. The Treaty of Sinchula was later revised and renamed as the Treaty of Panukha in 1910. The first amendment to the treaty was that the annual stipend was increased to 1,00,000 rupees. The British would never open an office in Bhutan and the British would never get involved in Bhutan's internal affairs. It also reinforced the fact that Bhutan was one of the few Asian nations that was never conquered by foreign powers. There was another treaty signed between Independent India and Bhutan in the year 1949 which had 10 clauses. It contained modified clauses of the Treaty of Panukha. The first clause was to conserve the peace and harmony between the two nations. The second clause was in relation to India affirming that it would never interfere in Bhutan's internal matters. India would only guide Bhutan in its external affairs when needed. The increase of the annual stipend from a sum of 1,00,000 rupees to 5,00,000 rupees was mentioned in the treaty. India, as a mark of goodwill and friendship agreed to return 32 square miles of Bhutan's former territory named

Devangiri to Bhutan. A clause stating perennial free trade between India and Bhutan was mentioned in the treaty. Another clause stated that any arms and ammunition that Bhutan imported would be under the agreement and supervision of India. Yet another clause clearly stated that any citizen of either country residing in each other's territories would be treated in a manner similar to its own citizens. On account of the above treaties and agreements, the residents of this region acquired their Indian citizenship. (Grover: 1997), (Online source). However, there is a vast difference between the cultural practices of the people in the two countries. Despite being politically attached to India, the people from this region gravitate towards Bhutan because of their similarity in ethnicity, culture and language. The people here have a fair idea that India pays a subsidy to the Bhutanese government for having taken over the area where they stay. They have a strong sense of belonging to the area and would never leave the region. They also opine that if the Indian government would give the area back to Bhutan and stop paying the subsidy, they (the people) would be better off as Bhutanese citizens residing in the same region. As they are not well versed in Hindi, Bengali or English, they feel that they are not reaping the full benefits offered by the Indian government. They also have expressed the view that if they would be under Bhutan there would be no disparity or hindrance in terms of language which would enable them to reap all the benefits offered by the Bhutanese government.

According to the villagers, since the late 1980's, refugees are not allowed in the village. Borders have been tightened (thick border). It is only during religious festivals people move across the borders freely. The Indian Drukpa who has a connection with the Bhutanese Drukpas are not allowed to meet freely. The Indian Drukpa cannot go to Bhutan whenever they wish to. They have to acquire a legal permit and cross the border at Phunstuling if they are going to Bhutan. But this crossing of the border legally is more on paper and in reality, is rarely adhered to by the villagers. They cross the line through the forest near the village on the Bhutan side of the forest. An attempt has been made to present in this chapter the analysis of major works of different scholars in these fields of migration, borderland studies, national identity and cultural practices. This Review of Literature provided a backdrop for the work that the researcher had planned as part of this study.

CULTURAL PRACTICES OF DRUKPAS IN INDIA

The account clearly indicates that there are distinct differences between the cultural practices of the Drukpas in Chunabhatti and those in the rest of India including those living around them. As the Drukpas live in the hills, inside the forest close to Bhutan border, the religious festivities, the Gods and Goddess they worship, their conceptualization of evil, their food habits and dress styles are more akin to those in Bhutan. All their social institutions resemble those of the Bhutanese. Drukpas though living in India, have a strong affinity to Bhutan, their culture and people. Their religious, cultural and linguistic practices appear to have more in common with those across the border in Bhutan rather than those in India. This possibly explains why they feel more connected to Bhutan. In other words, their feeling of cultural identity is with Bhutan though their nationality is essentially Indian.

All the Drukpas living in the village have Indian identity documents, regardless of some members working or settled in Bhutan. They are very much aware of their being Indian citizens. The Indian government is doing its best to help the villagers by giving the land (pattha) of the forest area. This is done so that the people have their own land and can practice settled agriculture. This will also prevent the people from resorting to shifting cultivation and would avoid wandering all over the forest.

The Sashastra Seema BAL (SSB) is located in the village on their request. In the past, in the absence of the SSB, there was unrest and tension in the village and people lived in fear for the lives and assets. The SSB provided them relief and safety. The SSB has not only safeguarded the people and the forest but they have also helped the villagers in times of crisis. The SSB are well aware of the culture and social practices of the villagers. They are also aware of their migration patterns and do not interfere in the same. The villagers are also very loyal and kind towards the SSB and respect them for having maintained peace and harmony.

The forest department involves the villagers in all its activities in an attempt to safeguard the forest. The Ecological Development Committee plays an important role in making the villagers feel at home. The Committee involves the villagers in their effort to protect the forest and ensure that there is no hunting of wild animals. They also provide the villagers with pathways in times of need. In a few cases they have built houses for the people who have been living in the village for several generations. LPG is being distributed among the villagers so that they do not cut trees. The villagers know all about the benefits they are receiving but see it as their right. They

say that they have an attachment to the region and the village, not very much with the country and the people in the plains. They get their sense of belonging and warmth from Bhutan despite facing difficulty in entering that country. One notices this very interesting contradiction between recognition of the efforts of the Indian government but expression of greater affinity to Bhutan on accounts of the cultural and social similarities.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

It appears as if cultural affinity has more importance than the national identity. The villagers say that they cannot identify themselves with India when nothing culturally and socially matches with the other Indians. The villagers have very limited interaction with the Indians around them. Since they live in a hilly region and the majority of population is Drukpa, they have not mingled with others and are not heavily dependent on Indian community living in the plains. The outcome of this is that the Drukpas are a majority community living in the hills, practicing their own culture and speaking a common language. Bhutan is physically close to the village. As a result, people visit Bhutan often. Reaching Bhutan is easy and suits their culture hence all the villagers prefer travelling to Bhutan rather than going to other parts of India. The villagers sense a feeling of unease in travelling to other states in India because of the language and cultural barriers.

The villagers make full use of facilities given by the Indian government. They have recently received their *pattas*(land owner certificates) too which they had been demanding for a long time. They are aware of some of the tribal policies and try their best to avail the said benefits from these policies through the Panchayat and the forest officials. It is also clear that their real challenge lies in their inability to communicate with the authorities on account of language differences. The villagers have to travel for hours to reach the office but in most of the cases they are not satisfied with the solution provided by the officials. The identity card is made mandatory for the villagers, as a result, the people who have migrated to Bhutan are called to the villagers temporarily when the officials visit the village for issue of such identity cards. This is done so that in the near future if there are better policies and job opportunities open for them they have the option to come back.

The Indian Identity is also important because the children can be benefitted in the future since India has better educational institutes. Since the villagers belong to the Schedule Tribe category, they benefit from the policy of reservations.

The villagers are not happy about the fact that there are no roadways and development in the region. If there were better job opportunities for the villagers, they would not have to go to Bhutan. Even though both the places in India and Bhutan are more or less equal in distance from the village, the villagers prefer Bhutan because of the opportunities that they have in Bhutan. The daily earning for the villagers in Bhutan is more than that in India.

The creation of boundary has affected the lives and culture of the people in several ways. It is in the recent past that the rules of national borders were implemented here and that has led to some expression of discomfort among the Indian Drukpa villagers. The villagers are not able to visit Bhutan as frequently as they would like to. They are only able to visit Bhutan after taking elaborate approvals and after stating the reason of their visit. This is when the people go to Bhutan by the legal way. However, people have found informal ways to cross the lines in order to satisfy their cultural, economic and medical needs.

The village border represents the 'thin borders' which makes it easier for the villagers to cross the lines. The villages and the forest where people go with the animals, represent the soft spaces. In the early days, there was no such rule and the villagers could go to Bhutan whenever they wanted, stay there as long as they wished and return at their own convenience. It should also be noted that the boundary near Phunstuling has created a cultural divide between the people living on either side of the border. This has resulted in the illegal entry of villagers inside Bhutan. There is not one festival they celebrate that is also celebrated by any other community of India apart from Christmas. Their festivals, Gods and food are unheard of in the plains.

While looking at the national and cultural identity, one notices that the cultural overshadows the political. As the people living in the village have very little interaction with the mainstream Indians but have all kinds of affiliations with the people of the same ethnic community who live on the other side of the border, their sense of closeness is more to their ethnic kin across the

border than their fellow nationals. Talking of national security, the villagers are not affected as long as they have the forest and their culture with them. The villagers are not too worried about the security and the punishment because they have many people in both the countries to back them during crisis.

The only sense of national identity one noticed among the Drukpas who live in India is that they have Indian citizenship and identity papers and live in what can be termed as Indian soil. Yet, their social and cultural affinity is much more with the people across the borders in Bhutan. There are several factors to explain this trend. Firstly, they speak the same language as those in Bhutan. Secondly, their food, culture, customs and other social organizations match with the Bhutanese. Living in India, they feel alienated and disconnected from Bhutan which they consider their motherland. Reaching the border of Bhutan for them is easier than reaching the nearest town in India. When the villagers travel to the nearest Indian town during health crisis, they feel that they are not treated in accordance to their illness because they struggle to explain their physical problems to the doctor. However, if they manage to go to Bhutan, they are able to explain to the doctor in their own language as a result their treatment turns out to be more effective. In most cases the villagers take help of their relatives living in Bhutan for free checkup.

For the villagers, national identity appears to be less important as compared to their cultural identity. There are very few policies of the government that the villagers can avail and take advantage of. Their only consolation for staying on this side of the border is the land they live off. They have a strong attachment with the land which their ancestors used for their sustenance. When the villagers have used the land to its full potential, and when their earnings do not suffice for their livelihood, they eventually end up going to Bhutan for jobs because going to the nearest Indian city is a cultural challenge as they have to adapt to some new languages which they are not very much open to.

They are aware of the fact that there is no congruence between their culture and that of mainstream India. Everything from the food habits to the Gods they pray to differs. It is because of a treaty signed around 150 years ago that these people are distanced from their actual

community living across the border in Bhutan. Despite the aforementioned conditions, they have not let the border and division come in the way of the rapport, business and communication that they share with the Drukpas of Bhutan.

The villagers long to be united with Bhutan even though there is no such possibility of the same. Over time they have learnt to embrace the fact that their future is as Indian citizens. Over the past decade, few of the villagers have desperately tried to work in the plains or in the neighbouring towns by opening fast food shops to earn for their family back home. In most cases their attempt has failed as there is very little in common between the Drukpas and the Indians in the plains and that the latter treat the former as refugees from a different nation. Hence, most of the villagers go to Bhutan through the forest as seasonal migrants to earn their living. This not only satisfies the economic needs but also gives them a sense of oneness and fulfils their cultural needs.

The villagers have some of their relatives and the family members living in Bhutan. This makes it easier for them to find a place to stay. The village has seen three major types of migration.

- Firstly, temporary migration happens when there is no work in the village. Villagers mostly go to Bhutan for some months and earn money for their living. In such cases the family members live in the village and mostly the men go to earn money. This sometimes leads to disconnect between the spouses resulting in second marriages. The women have to take care of everything when the men go for work.
- Secondly, the children who go to Bhutan for work during the school break. This migration is for earning the money to pay their school fees for themselves as well as their younger siblings. The children wish to go to Bhutan for work because they have social connection with Bhutan and there they can meet their relatives, cousins along with finding a means to earn money. Bhutan serves both recreational and economic fulfillment for the youth.
- Lastly is the migration to the forest with the animals. In such cases, mainly the old people prefer going to the forest with the animals as they have experienced that since childhood. The older generation knows about the sustenance methods which makes easier for them to stay back. The other members of the family take care of the house back in the village and do their daily work, thus the rhythm of their life is maintained.

NATIONAL BOUNDARIES

The inhabitants have a fair understanding of the border mobility restrictions set up by the governments of both countries. However, over time, they have devised new ways to work their way around the prevalent laws of both lands. The villagers know the exact locations where the defence personnel of Bhutan are stationed. Since the Indo-Bhutanese border is spread across many areas of the forest, it is not possible for the Bhutanese army to patrol the entire stretch. They take advantage of this situation and get into Bhutan in times of need. In certain cases, when they get caught by the Bhutanese army for trespassing, they justify their stand by impersonating Bhutanese nationals because there is literally no difference in the language and appearances between Bhutanese people and the villagers.

The Drukpa living in Chunabhatti have a strong cultural identity as they live in proximity to the villages in Bhutan. This results in frequent visits and interaction between the same communities living in the two different sides of the border since they live very close to the villages in Bhutan, and the villagers have relatives, friends over there. The men prefer going to Bhutan as seasonal migrants to earn money. Most of the Buddhist families send their children to work and study in Bhutan. The border is porous and thin and that has become a boon for the villagers to move. This has resulted in less interaction with the Indian community living in the plain areas.

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the cultural identity holds more value to Drukpas in India than national identity. At the same time, they are aware that they come under schedule tribe category and expect to benefit more from increased livelihood opportunities and right to property. They want Indian identity for their children so that can gain benefit in terms of job, education etc.

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