

PASTORALISM AND ITS CHANGING FACETS

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Abstract

Pastoralism has changed over time, and there are many causes for it. This research paper covers two major causes of change in pastoral systems. These two causes include fragmentation, the dissection of a natural system into spatially isolated parts, which is usually caused by a number of socioeconomic factors such as changes in land tenure, agriculture, sedentarization, and institutions. Second reason can be coined in the terms of climate change and climate variability, which are expected to alter dry and semiarid grasslands now and into the future. An adaptation framework is used to place global change in context. Although pastoral systems are clearly under numerous constraints and risks have intensified, pastoralists are acclimatising and trying to remain flexible. It is too early to ask if the responses are enough, given the magnitude and number of changes faced by pastoralists today. For many years, studies of peasants and pastoralists have run in parallel, creating mutual blind-spots. Reflection on a large literature on pastoralism across nine world regions reveals that there are nevertheless some important contrasts with classic representations of a settled peasantry.

These are: living with and off uncertainty; Mobility to respond to variability; flexible land control and new forms of tenure; dynamic social formations; collective social relations for a new moral economy; engaging with complex markets and a new politics of a transforming world.

Keywords - Pastoral System, Nomadic herding, Climate Change, Land tenure.

Introduction

Ever since the beginning of human civilisation, man needs to feed themselves to survive. They passed through different stages like shifting cultivation, hunting and gathering, pastoral system, agriculture and industrial system. These activities enable them to grow through the human civilisation. Pastoralism, originates from the word “pasture” i.e. production of food predominantly from exploitation of domestic animals. It can also be termed as Animal husbandry, herding or ranching. It includes a tending and exploiting – milking, breeding and slaughtering- such animals as cattle, sheep, goats, horse, pigs, etc., depending on the local available species. Pastoralism is a means of livelihood by using an extensive grazing on rangelands for livestock production. Pastoralists practise it as a social, economic and cultural activity, practised by their descent as a tradition. Pastoralists have strong relationships with herding for their livelihood. Pastoralists occupy Savannah’s, arid deserts, high plateaus, or sub-arctic forests and tundra regions. They also occupy large tracts of communally-shared land and utilise kinship ties for mutual herding and defense. Regions practising pastoralism include tundra region, Argentina, Ireland, South Australia, New Zealand, etc.. Indian regions where Pastoralism is practised are Rajasthan, Himalaya region, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Maharastra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Pastoralists usually migrate from south to north in the summers and north to south in winters for their activity. Such migration is called Transhumance. Transhumant herders practise long time distance herding of livestock, where the practise is carried by owners of herds, along with their relatives, even sometimes by whole families, on seasonal grounds.

Objective

The present paper is prepared with the following objectives in mind:

1. What is pastoralism and its types.
2. To identify causes of change in pastoral system.

Types of pastoralism

The basic types of pastoralism as defined by Sutton Mark Q and Anderson E.N, 2010, in their book entitled “Introduction to Cultural Ecology” is as follows: Nomadic, Seminomadic, Semisedentary herdsman husbandry, sedentary animal husbandry. Nomadic herding also referred as Pastoral Nomadism, is defined, where nomads keep on moving with their herds for economic purpose. This activity is carried on subsistence level, where nomads rear their animals for the daily needs of milk, dairy products, and some other resources extracted from animals. While livestock rearing is also done for commercial purpose. In semisedentary, pastoralism along with rearing of livestock, is supplemented with horticulture, hunting and gathering and trade. They move on periodically and seasonally, while nomadic herds are highly mobile, with very few permanent settlements. In semisedentary, hunting gathering, trade becomes very important. Examples include Saami, Maasai, and Navajo respectively. Herdsman husbandry and Sedentary Animal husbandry is where animals are foremost, but farming is a dominant activity. Examples are Basque, Dani respectively.

Causes of change in Pastoral System

During British rule, there were radical changes in pastoral system. Colonial Gov in India brought certain laws that changed the lives of pastoralists. Such laws include Forests acts, Waste land rules, Criminal tribes’ acts, Grazing tax etc. The colonial government in India brought these laws to gain huge surplus and wealth, to a certain level they were successful in doing so.

According to waste land rules, the land which was completely unproductive, in their view because it was neither cultivated nor it yield any revenue to British officials, was termed as waste land. These lands were then given to people to settle there, along with the concessions. Due to which pastoralist were bare of land that was earlier used as pasture for their animals. It was a loss of livelihood for them.

Acc to forest act, british divided forest land into 2 areas: Protected and Reserved forests. Through these Acts some forests which produced

commercially valuable products were termed as reserved'. No pastoralist was authorised to use these forests. Others were classified as 'Protected'. Although some customary grazing rights of pastoralists were granted, but their movements were restricted. In protected forests nobody was permitted to enter the area, it was preserved for long time future purposes. While, in reserved areas, pastoralists were not allowed to enter, which had a huge influence on their activity as it limited the pastoral land for their animals.

Due to the ceaseless movement of nomadic herds, the land under grazing was left unproductive, which hampers the peasants agriculture for cultivating crops. To stop this, British officials passed the criminal tribes act in 1870, in which pastoralists were restricted to a certain notified area and they could not move out of it. By this Act many communities of craftsmen, and pastoralists were classified as Criminal Tribes due to their nature and birth. They were expected to live only in notified village settlements that led to decrease in their movement due to the boundaries imposed on them.

Grazing tax passed in 1850 to increase the revenue for the British government. Pastoralists were subjected to pay high taxes for the grazing tracts which they were unable to pay, so in return they were exempted from using those lands. The imposition of these laws led to severe restrictions on usage of pastoral land and, nomadic cultivation got replaced by commercial cultivation. All these laws had a drastic effect on the pastoralists and exploited them. Pastoralists had to face the shortage of limited land, over usage of pasture land on specific area led to land degradation, contrast to nomadic herders who kept on changing their place so that land once grazed can restore its fertility and can be cultivated next time. Also, if cattle were not fed, they die soon due to scarcity of food.

Further fragmentation, the dismemberment of a natural system into isolated parts, caused by a number of socioeconomic factors such as changes in land tenure, agriculture, sedentarization, and institutions has changed the pastoral system. Due to land holdings, common property which was earlier used by pastoralists, was no longer accessible to them. Pastoral land was reduced to a great extent. Due to

increase in population , and lesser resources, land per household is decreasing. And with further subdivisions , fragmentation of land took place. For the economic development of states, various conservation policies were introduced such as afforestation, road construction, army establishments and agriculture, which becomes the primary activity of peasants . Tourism and terrorist activities in high Himalaya regions have reduced the movement of pastoralists in those regions. Political boundaries were imposed on them for the protection of states because their continuous movement and no permanent stability were considered a menace to society. This creates anarchy in society as they go against the law abiding rules of state and hinders peace in society.

Nowadays, sedentarization of pastoralists is increasing due to emerging government policies and lack of support for them. Their migration is not assisted by government, they have no legal rights over the land , due to which further generations are not willing to take up this activity for their livelihood. Studies have shown that pastoral system is in change from agropastoral system towards agriculture and horticulture-based economy. Due to all these difficulties, pastoralists felt that this occupation will not serve their children for the long run, so they switched to daily wage earners. Due to presence of village Panchayat, pastoralists had to pay fee for land usage otherwise they were punished. In case they trespassed, they were liable to punishment. Expansion of irrigated agriculture, breakdown of village institutions, deterioration of lands nutrition value, no access to veterinary care, and reasonably priced medicine, dependence on middle men for marketing, lack of linkage with the outside world because of lack of access to education are all the causes of change in pastoral system which we see in the modern world.

Climate change and climate variability are the other two main causes of change in pastoral system. Due to elevation in anthropogenic ghg emissions in the environment, climate is affected adversely. Food production due to growing population keeps on increasing that further increase ghg emissions. Deforestation takes place in large extent to cultivate crops for food to support the human population, thus reducing the land under pastures. These emissions raised the surface and ocean temperatures. Drought becomes the major repercussion of rising

temperatures in areas such as sub Saharan regions, south Asia. Drought had an impact on the quality and quantity of pasture. Global warming has affected the abundance of plant and animal species. Heat stress due to global warming negatively impact the performance of pastoral livestock. Animals could die in such rising temperatures. Climate change effect the production and reproduction of livestock species. Heat stress also causes huge economic loss due to the lesser production of dairy products and lesser food intake by species while exposed to high temperature and humidity. It affects animal behaviour and result in high mortality. Agriculture occupies 70 percent of total freshwater on earth and only 8 percent is used by livestock. Mainly, water is used by pastoralists for feed production apart from drinking. Due to a rise in temperature, water thirst will increase but its availability will reduce. Due to dehydration , some animals die ,lack of feed and water effects the respiration rate of a species. Climate change also led to the outbreak of new emerging diseases. Increasing severity of such events effects animal health directly or indirectly. Rising temperature suppresses the immunity by favouring pathogens. For instance, the growth of *Bacillus anthracis* spores (pathogen for anthrax) depend on temperature, humidity and nutrient availability of the environment (WHO, 2008).

Studies have shown that challenges faced by settled peasants and mobile pastoralists are almost same, such as living with uncertainty, mobility to respond to constraints, flexible land tenure and governance, changing social formations, collective social relations for a new moral economy, interacting with complex real market and new politics for transformation of world. Peasants unlike pastoralists combine farming with livestock, moving to towns due to urbanisation, living sedentary lifestyles, living diverse livelihood to adapt to uncertain changes. They started collaborating with complex markets for commercial purposes, unlike pastoralists, via trade, without going long distance across borders. The process of social differentiation has resulted in inequalities that led to emergence of pastoral elites, as present among peasant society.

Conclusion

Due to these emerging challenges, they have started adopting new measures to cope with changes. Example- they changed their path of movement, reduced their cattle numbers, demand rights and duties in forest resources. Some people changed their occupation to the agriculturalist, some took to trading, some of them become daily bread earners. They respond to uncertainty so effectively because of social formations and production activities other than pastoralism. Example-developing other skills and assigning duties to all members of the family, based on age , and sex. Flexible property arrangements for livestock along with labour, sharing of animals, all these strategies not only help in acclimatising but also promotes solidarity and networks among them, strengthening their bond. Still in dry regions and mountains, pastoralism is most viable form of economic life. Pastoralists are acclimatising and trying to be flexible because risks have intensified.

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