

Tourism and Transformation: Changing Livelihood Practices of Mountain Dwellers

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Abstract



This article is about major changes in the lives of mountain dwellers brought by tourism. The article focuses on the people of the Khumbu region in general and the Lukla *bazar* in particular. Based on the primary research, the article reveals changing livelihood practices of both the Sherpa and the non-Sherpa people. The article mainly focuses on how traditionally agro-pastoralist Sherpa people transformed their everyday lives into multiple occupations. Tourism development has also supported the in-migration of non-Sherpa people and the out-migration of the Sherpa that not only made both groups dependent on tourism sectors but also ended the Sherpa's monopoly on tourism businesses.

Keywords: *Tourism, Khumbu, Transformation, Sherpa, non-Sherpa*

Background

This article is about changing economic activities of the Sherpa and the non-Sherpa people living in the Everest (Khumbu) region of Nepal. The Khumbu region is one of the most popular destinations for trekkers and mountaineers in Nepal. The lofty mesmerizing snowcapped mountains are a major attraction for tourists. In addition, tourists like and enjoy traditional cultures. The Sherpas' stories of bravery for scaling the mountains and their hospitality towards the guests appeal to tourists from all over the world. The region is popular for adventure tourism. The expedition of Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary on the Mt. Everest in 1953 A.D. and construction of Lukla airport in 1964 A.D. made the region popular for the tourists who want to climb the mountains and those who cannot climb but enjoy sight-seeing through trekking.

The number of tourists visiting the region is increasing every year (see table 1). As a result there is a structural change in society, culture, economy and demography. Tourism has transformed the way of living of the people. The in-migration of Sherpa and non-Sherpa people inside the Khumbu region and out-migration of the local Sherpa people has brought the structural changes in the region. The development of tourism sectors lured the people to in-migrate at the Khumbu. The non-Sherpa in-migrants are Tamang, Rai, Newar, Magar, Gurung, Kami, Damai who arrived for Khumbu seeking better opportunities in tourism. The non-Sherpa and even some Sherpa in-migrated to the region from different parts of Solukhumbu and other neighboring district such as Khotang, and Okhaldhunga.

The first section of the paper describes general background, objectives and the research methodology. The second section focuses on facts and figures of tourism growth in the

Khumbu region which is followed by traditional occupation, social- cultural and economic activities of its' inhabitants. The third section of the paper analyzes primary data in comparison with the past which is followed by concluding remarks.

This paper aims to analyze the changes in economic activities among the Sherpa and the non-Sherpa people of the Lukla *bazar* (market) in Nepal. However, the economic transformation of the Sherpa of the Khumbu region has also been discussed in general.

The study is based on field work and primary data. The research was conducted during 2013 to 2016 AD. I made several visits during the period. The census of three hundred eleven households of both the Sherpa and the non-Sherpa were conducted in Lukla- the gateway to the Khumbu region. Lukla was an isolated place until an airstrip was constructed in 1964 AD. It was not the major trekking route to the Khumbu region prior to the construction of the airstrip. But today, Lukla has one of the busiest tourist areas of the Khumbu region. In addition to this, the information has been obtained through semi structured interviews, informal *kurakani* (general conversation such as tea-talk) and observation. However, secondary data have also been analyzed as necessary.

Tourism and development theories

Anthropologists who study tourism sectors have multiple views and findings in regard to the effects of tourism on native economy and culture. Some anthropologists have blamed tourism as bad, destructive to indigenous culture, responsible for culture commoditization and culture commercialization. For example, Greenwood (1989), Harrison (1994), and Shepherd (2002) have found that tourism is bad and destructive.

But, some writers argue tourism is good for cultural revitalization and conservation. Jarvenpa (1994) stated that culture commoditization is very fruitful for enriching the social meaning of the culture. Similarly, Medina (2003) examines how the commoditization of culture for tourism affected traditional practices in a Maya village. She concludes that due to the commoditization of Maya culture and identity, they became able to revitalize the ancient Maya culture. Tourism has revalued, in certain contexts, traditional Maya knowledge that most young people lacked.

During the 1970s and 1980s, anthropologists used two development paradigms to study tourism i.e., Modernization and Dependency (Neo- Marxism) theories (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). But after 1980s community based approaches became central to many tourism development plans around the world which emphasized local agency, seeing communities and their constituent members playing an active role in determining tourism's outcome (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). In this paper I review two development theories are used to understand particular theoretical perspectives on tourism.

Modernization theory

Hall (1994) stated that modernization theory primarily focuses on the process of westernization and assumes that developing countries seek to imitate western patterns of production and consumption. Modernization theorists argue that development is a stage of growth or advancement. Claney (1999) states:

Modernization school viewed development as a linear process, with many poor countries simply behind their wealthier counterparts. Developing societies were seen as being 'underdeveloped' in the sense of lacking development. They were viewed,

however, as being in the midst of transforming themselves from traditional to modern; and although modernizing was viewed largely as an endogenous and often cultural process, economic ties between north or West and South were considered beneficial, or the very least benign. (p. 2)

Modernization involves in multiple aspects of society and culture. Huntington (2002) writes that “modernization involves industrialization, urbanization, increasing levels of literacy, education, wealth, and social mobilization, and more complex and diversified occupational structures” (p. 21). If it is so, tourism brings such changes in any tourist destinations: the sooner or the later.

Modernization theorists are interested in explaining the positive changes brought by tourism. Tourism as a means of acculturation brings changes on both guests and hosts. Modernization theorists argued that interaction between the guests and the hosts support the hosts to be acculturated with western life styles. The adoption or imitation of such a lifestyle is always better than the previous one.

Modernization theorists emphasize on the economy or material benefit that tourism brings in the host society. The new economy which is created by tourism would help to raise socio-economic status of the people and development of the country becomes possible. This concept was dominant during the 1950s and the 1960s that stated tourism industry as the ‘smokeless’ business (Sutheeshna, 2008) and focuses on the trickle down approach in economic development. Lanfant (1995) stated that the transformation of the traditional society into the modern society is possible by their incorporation into tourism sectors.

But rapid modernity in the rural and peripheral areas can destroy tourism businesses. The modernization supports to loss the culture and the identity of local people which not only makes the people homogenous but also helps to decrease the number of tourists. The tourists who enjoy authentic culture and ritual of the local people may not visit frequently once the local people are modernized. Rapid modernization may bring changes in the local economy but further deteriorate tourism sectors.

Dependency theory

Inspired by theories of imperialism, colonialism and Marxism, dependency writers generally argued that development was not a linear process but instead more holistic, where wealth and poverty were intimately linked on a global scale (Claney, 1999). Dependency theory is a theory of economic, social and political change which attempts to explain poverty, deprived social conditions and political instability of many poor countries of their dominance by rich and powerless countries. Drawing from Marxists concepts of capitalism, dependency theorists argue that development is an essentially in-equalizing process; while rich countries get richer, the rest inevitably get poorer.

Preister (as cited in Shrestha, 2011) states the condition of dependency could be demonstrated in four ways in reference to tourism: (1) Tourism promotes unequal exchange of surplus values between the local area and the core nations; (2) It represents an economic sector dependent on extra-local forces; (3) It restricts managerial and business opportunities of local residents; and (4) Tourism may reduce existing ownership and employment options because of conflict between these sectors and the tourist sector (p. 14).

Some authors take tourism as a form of imperialism (Lea, 1988; Nash, 1989), but Hall (1994) sees development and underdevelopment as parts of the same global process.

Neo-Marxists are interested in analyzing the unequal power and economic relations brought by tourism development between the developed 'West' and the underdeveloped 'Third World'. The theory assumes that the developed 'West' dominates the undeveloped 'Third World' by exploiting their resources, expanding the market of the multinational companies, and generating hegemony towards them.

Dependency theorists have raised most of the negative issues about tourism. In my view, there are two sides of everything, i.e. good and bad, but dependency theorists always analyze second side of the coin that is bad or negative. It is equally true that tourism brings unequal power relations, destroys culture and identity, and promotes new economic classes in the tourists' destination but it is also true that tourism has helped people overcome poverty and poor education. In addition, in the case of Nepal, tourism has helped preserve many monasteries in Khumbu and Mustang (Shrestha, 2019); the Sherpa of Khumbu are still proud of their culture. They are happy of constructing houses in towns and educating their children in expensive private school at Kathmandu.

History of tourism in the Khumbu region

Khumbu enjoyed their regional political autonomy and self sufficient economy before unification of Nepal (Fisher, 1990). Prior to 1950s, the Khumbu region was dominantly an agro-pastoral community (Kunwar, 1989). Some of the Sherpas traded across the Himalaya with Tibet. But, the Sherpa people had the hardest lives in the region before the growth of tourists and the development of tourism (Basnet, 2020). They farmed only potatoes and buck wheat because of coldness and high altitude and only a few of them had worked in tourism as porters in Sikkim and Darjiling (Stevens 1993; Ortner, 1999). After 1950s, three events were more important for increasing the number of tourists in the region. The first was scaling of Mt. Everest by Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953, the second was the construction of Tenzing Hillary Airport, Lukla in 1964, and the third was the establishment of the Sagarmatha National Park in 1976. These events have opened the door of opportunities for many Sherpa families in the tourism sectors as porters, Sardars (guides), domestic workers and hotel and lodge owners.

Hotels, lodges and other tourism businesses have regularly increased in the Khumbu region due to the flow of number of tourists. In 1980 the first data was recorded of tourists' arrivals at the region. In that year 5836 tourists visited the region (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation- MOCTCA, 2013). The number of tourists who visited this region was higher than the population of the Khumbu region. In 1970, the total population of the Khumbu region was 2761 including 274 Tibetans, 84 non-Sherpa Nepali, 2 Europeans and 13 people unknown of origin but the number increases in the year 1982 in which the Sherpa population was 2524, Tibetan 187, non-Sherpa Nepali 339, and 50 unknown origin people. The total population was 3108 along with 8 Europeans (Pawson, Stanford, & Adams, 1984). However, their data excluded the number of tourists visited the region in those years.

Although Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary reached the summit in 1953, the number of tourists increased only after 1964 A. D., when Tenzing Hillary airport at Lukla was constructed. Prior to the 1950s, the Rana prime ministers allowed a small group of American and British mountaineers for survey of Mt. Everest from the Nepalese side; they were the first Westerners to ever pass through the Khumbu village and monasteries to glimpse the south flank of Mt. Everest (Rowell, 1980, c.f. Stevens, 1988). Hornbein (as cited in Stevens, 1988) stated that after 1950 expeditions became a fact of life in the Khumbu region during the pre

monsoon climbing season. The British came to Mt. Everest in 1951 and 1953 and Cho Oyu (8201 m. 6th highest mountain in the world) in 1954, and Swiss came to Mt. Everest in 1952, 1955 and 1956. These mountaineers employed hundreds of high altitude porters, predominantly the Sherpa, who were paid Rs. 7.5 per day. The income was seven times more than any agricultural labour in the region (Fuerer-Haimendorf, 1975). Table 1 shows the trends of tourist arrivals in the Khumbu region.

Table 1: Trends of Tourists Visited the Khumbu region in different years

Year	Tourists visited in Khumbu
1980	5,836
1985	8,347
1990	11,314
1995	14,997
2000	26,683
2005	19,522
2010	32,084
2015	34,412
2018	56,303

Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2019

By 1971, some 1400 trekkers per year were visiting the Khumbu region. The number of tourists increased in 1972-73, reaching 3200 (Stevens, 1988). As the number of tourists increased, the locals also gained an opportunity for seasonal jobs. It has been estimated that 500 men were employed in trekking by 1971 and 70 percent households of Khumjung and Khunde had at least one member involved in trekking and mountaineering (Fuerer-Haimendorf, 1975).

In 2011, the total population of three different VDCs of the Khumbu region (Chaurikharka, Namche, and Khumjung; now Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality) was 7161 (CBS, 2011). The number of tourists was five times more than the number of residents in the region including non-Sherpa residents. The number of tourists increased every year and reached 32,084 in 2010, 34,412 in 2015 and 56,303 in 2018 (MOCTCA, 2019). This number excludes domestic tourists and Nepali trekking employees because the government of Nepal does not keep records for domestic tourists.

The data of tourist arrivals show that the people of the Khumbu region have interacted directly with many visitors from the different parts of the world. These interactions of hosts and guests have multiple effects on the host's communities in the region. The following section of this paper will try to reveal the economic transformation of the Khumbu people in general and the Lukla in particular.

Tourism and transformation in the Khumbu region

The increase of tourists every year has brought a wide range of effects to Khumbu. Trekking and tourism related jobs became very lucrative for the Sherpas after the 1970s. Traditional occupations such as agriculture and trade with Tibet has been gradually replaced by the involvement of Sherpa people in three different sectors of tourism; the first was getting

employed in trekking as porters and other staffs such as assistant guides and guides; the second was their involvement in hotels and lodges business in the trekking trails; and the third was the establishment of trekking agencies as a new business in Kathmandu. This means that the Sherpas were totally submerged into the tourism sectors. As a result tourism influenced their economy, society and culture. The impact of tourism in the region could be seen visibly as Fuerer Haimendorf (as cited in Stevens, 1988) notes:

...inflation of agricultural day- labour wage rates, which along with household member absences on treks, led to changes in the ability of many families to maintain multi elevation transhumant agro-pastoralism; a monetarization of the economy; and a change in the old barter trade of Tibetan salt for lowland grain to a system in which lowlanders hiked up to six days in order to sell grain cash on the Saturday market in Namche, established in 1965. (p. 73)

The market of the Sherpa trekkers is not limited to the Khumbu region. The trekkers even go to Tibet trek during summer season. The Sherpas, especially men, sometimes remained outside of their home for 8 to 9 months in a year. This is how the region introduced rapid socio-economic changes. Most of the Sherpas, who work in tourism, are able to educate their children at the private school of Kathmandu. Some of them are also able to buy either land or houses in the capital city.

Tourism in the Khumbu region may be described in two ways: the first is the involvement of the Sherpas in trekking and expeditions; and the second is the involvement of the Sherpa and non Sherpa in local tourism businesses such as hotel/ lodge, *bhatti* (a small hut selling tea, liquor, *dal bhat* especially for the trekking porters), shop, curio goods and so on. Now, the rich Sherpas of Khumbu do not join trekking as guides and other supportive staffs. They have established their own trekking company at Kathmandu or established the hotels in trekking trails. The Sherpa who are not economically sound and unable to establish their own business work in trekking as guides and other supportive staffs.



Picture 1: Lukla airstrip and some scattered houses in 1964, Photo credit: Peace Corps Photo Collection.



Picture 2: Lukla Bazar in 2020. Photo credit: Solukhumbu, a face book page.

The literature about tourism in Khumbu stated drastic changes and modernity in Khumbu. Pawson, Standard, Adams and Sherpa (1984) state:

...that the impact of tourism and modernization has varied from village to village. Most noticeable have been additions to the district capital, Namche *bazar*, where extensive tourist related construction has taken place. New buildings include at least a dozen tourists lodges, and there were several more under construction in 1982; grocery stores stocking surplus expedition food and luxury items such as beer liquor, toiletries, and film; numerous tea and *chang* (beer) shops; a bank that will change travelers' cheques; and, by 1983, a telegraph office. (p. 244)

The writers have presented the facts of the Namche bazar in the nineties but if one visits the same in 2020 what does one see? I observed that Namche bazar is not less modernized in comparison to Thamel at Kathmandu. The big and compact hotels and lodges, grocery, bhatti, banks, police check point, army camp, western music, the pub, and more than this the ideology of the Sherpas prove the transformation of the old Sherpa village into a new, modernized tourism market. The living standard of the people has been changed along with the changes in modes of production. The Sherpas, who travel outside the Khumbu region for trekking, establish tourism business inside or outside the region or visit abroad in sponsors have jet-set lifestyle that snuggled up against village way of life (Adams, 1997).



Picture 3: *Namche Bazar, Solukhumbu, looking northeast in 1966. Photo credit: Peace Corps Photo Collection.*

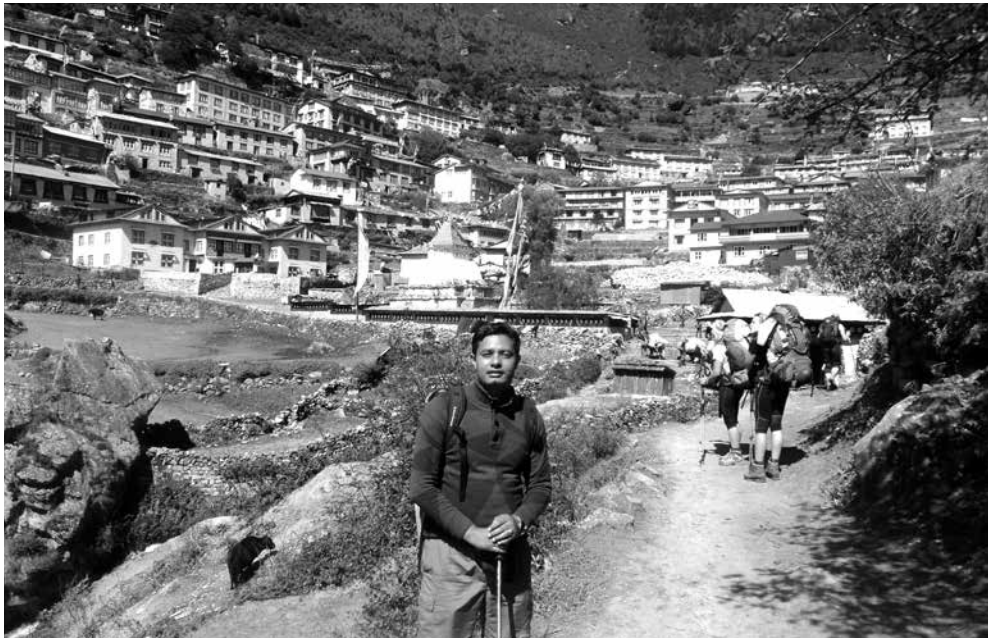
Changes in the economy of Khumbu

The most important changes in the Khumbu region including the people of Lukla can be seen in their economy. Once, agro-pastoralists, the Sherpas have been totally transformed in their overall economy especially their occupation and investment. Fuerer-Haimendorf (1964) has mentioned agriculture, animal husbandry, trade with Tibet and crafts as the major economic activities of the Khumbu people. But today, the economy of the region has been dependent on tourism sector. The tourism has created new occupations which created new forms of economy. Fuerer-Haimendorf (as cited in Bhandari, 1987) stated that “more than half of the families of the villages are involved in tourism as porter, *Sardar* (guide), and hotel keeper. The position of the *Sardar* has been a source of influence and economic power in the area. The *Sardar*, besides his wage, takes a commission on the wages of non-Sherpa porters too”.

Brower (1991) has also to some extent same findings about the economic transformation in the region. As she states:

The traditional Sherpa economy was a three-way dependency on agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade. Today, the picture is somewhat more complicated. This is mostly a result of tourism, which affects almost every household in Khumbu either as a result of direct involvement in the business of tourists (as guides, porters, hotel and shopkeepers, or owners pack- stock) or indirectly as a consequence of the restructuring of the economy initiated by tourism. (p. 55)

Comparing the findings of previous researchers with the present observations, the author can strongly claim that the economy of Sherpas is changing more rapidly than before. The traditional mode of production was based on land and labour rather than cash. The land value was based on agricultural production. But now land has become like a cash crop. The land is commoditized for the construction of big hotels and lodges or running shops and *bhattis*. Land ownership provides the social and economic power to owner. But this is only for those owners who have land on major bazar or on the way of trekking trail. The value of land is not measured by soil fertility and the quantity of crop production. It is valued in relation to tourism market. Now, I will describe ownership of land by different caste and ethnic groups in Lukla *bazar* and some major changes in their occupation and other sectors which are related to their economy.



Picture 4: *Researcher at Namche bazar from the southern side of it in 2016. © Khadga Narayan Shrestha.*

Land ownership

Land is the major source of production in Nepal. It is related to persons or households’ pride and prestige. The person who has much land has socio-economic power and prestige. The land at the Lukla *bazar* is expensive because of its market value; not because of its agricultural production. The land which is at the centre of bazar or near from the airport has much expensive than the land at the corner sides. The peripheral land is used for agriculture and animal herding. For example the land below the main bazar is owned by Rai community and they rear pigs and other animals.

Table 2: Land Ownership by Caste and Ethnicity

Caste/ Ethnicity	Land own/Yes	Per cent	Non- ownership/No	Per cent	Total H.H.
Sherpa	67	51.5	63	48.5	130
Tamang	21	31.8	45	68.2	66
Rai	11	20.7	42	79.3	53
Magar	6	40.0	9	60.0	15
Chhetri	1	7.1	13	92.9	14
Dalits	2	16.6	10	83.4	12
Hilly Brahmin	0	0.0	8	100	8
Newar	1	20	4	80	5
Others	0	0.0	8	100	8
Total	109	35	202	65	311

Source: Field Servey, 2016

The distribution of land is not equal at Lukla like other parts of the country. The data show that altogether 35 per cent households have land in their names at the Lukla *bazar* (the data do not include land outside of the Lukla *bazar*) but 65 percent households are landless. It shows the pictures of in-migration of the Sherpas and non-Sherpa people in the area.

The ownership differs by their caste and ethnicity. Sixty seven households of the Sherpa people have their own land among 130 the Sherpa households. It means 51.5 percent of the Sherpas have land ownership and the others do not. But among the land holders too, the ratio of land distribution is not equal. There is a wide range of differences among the Sherpas. For example some of the Sherpas own only 3 *Ana* (1 *Ana* = 0.0031 hectare and 16 *Ana* = 1 *ropani*) land which is the lowest quantity where as others have up to 30 *Ropanies*, which is the highest among all households.

Regarding other caste and ethnicity the Tamang has 31.8 percent, Rai 20.7 percent, Magar 40 percent, Chhetri 7.1 percent, Dalits 16.6 percent, Newar 20 percent, hilly Brahmin and others have no land ownership in the Lukla. Among the non –Sherpa people, the Magar holds maximum quantity of land up to 1.5 *Ropanies* and the lowest quantity is 3 *Ana* from Rai community. Similarly 40 per cent Magar households have their own land. It is because some of the Magars are migrated from the neighboring village like *Kharikhola*. Tamang and Rai households possessed much land in comparison to the other non Sherpa households. It is because the Tamang migrated earlier than other people followed by Rai. Even in the Sherpa community 48.5 per cent households do not have their own land in the bazar which proves that these were the migrants' Sherpas.

The land of Lukla was the land of the Sherpa people. If it is so, the questions come to our mind that how did such a land own by the non-Sherpa people? Why did the local Sherpa sell their land? The Sherpas who own the land are they local or migrated from nearby villages? Was tourism responsible for the displacement of the local Sherpas? This paper may answer some of these queries and remaining others may be useful for the further research.

Trekking and tourism related activities have allowed the local Sherpas to abandon agriculture and animal herding. The flow of tourists compelled them to establish hotels, lodges and taking part in trekking as porters at first and gradually they became the guides. The in-migration of the Sherpa and the non-Sherpa people in Lukla gradually plotted the land into different slices. In this regard some of the local Sherpas who did not involve in tourism business started selling their lands plot by plot and displaced like Tharu in Chitwan (Kunwar, 2002), and others became economically weak who sold their land located at the centre of the *bazar*. They lived at the periphery, watching everyday big houses and big business in their sold land. Hence, the ownership of land does not actually measure the economic condition rather the location of the land and their involvement in the tourism businesses that support to measure the material lives of the residents.

Diversity in occupation

The people of Lukla are engaged in different occupations for their livelihood. Some people operate shops, hotels/lodges, and others operate *bhattis* or getting employed in trekking, agriculture, and foreign employment. The statistics shows that the highest per cent people are engaged in trade and trekking tourism. Among 627 people, 28 percent people are engaged in shops and other trades relating to tourism. Similarly, 27.3 percent people are engaged in trekking. However, 20 percent people have been operating hotels and lodges for tourists and

others visitors. The people, who are engaged in agriculture, are only 7.1 percent; and engaged in foreign employment consisted only one percent of the total population.

Table 3: Diversity in occupation by caste and ethnicity

Occupation/ Ethnicity	Sherpa	Tamang	Rai	Magar	Chhetri	Dalits	Hilly Brahmin	Newar	Others	Total	in %
Trade	59	39	25	8	5	22	5	3	10	176	28
Hotel/Bhatti	65	32	14	7	1	0	3	2	1	125	20
Trekking	77	41	29	5	11	3	1	3	1	171	27.3
Employment	27	26	25	8	7	4	3	1	2	103	16.5
Agriculture	27	1	7	4	2	0	2	0	2	45	7.1
Foreign employment	5	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	7	1.1
Total	260	139	100	33	26	29	15	9	16	627	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Regarding occupational diversities, it is interested to examine peoples' involvement in different occupations on the base of their castes and ethnicities that provide much information on economic diversification and change. The data show that 33.6 percent the Sherpa, within the total population of trade, are involving in trade related business. Respectively, Tamang 22 percent, Rai 14.3 percent, Magar 4.6 percent, Chhetri 2.8 percent, Dalit 12.5 percent, hilly Brahmin 2.8 percent, Newar 1.7 percent and others 5.7 percent. It clearly illustrates the domination of the Sherpas in trade at Lukla.

As it is already stated that 20 percent people, within the total working population, are operating of hotels and *bhattis*; among them the Sherpas are 52 percent in total. . Respectively, Tamang 25.6 percent, Rai 11.2 percent, Magar 5.6 percent, Chhetri 0.8, hilly Brahmin 2.4, Newar 1.6 and others 0.8 percent are working for this types work. It is interesting to note that the Dalits do not have any hotel/lodge and *bhatti* in the *bazar* area, although Buddhists community does not have a principle of touchability and untouchability like caste system in Nepal. The Dalits are mainly engaging in shop-keeping such as ready-made clothing, groceries, tailoring, shoe making, metal work and other tourism related occupations.

Trekking is another main occupation of the Sherpas and the non-Sherpas. In trekking, 27.3 percent people are engaging. Among this, the data show that 45 percent Sherpa are working in trekking tourism. Besides, Tamang, Rai, Magar, Chhetri, Dalits, hilly Brahmin, Newar and other have been involving in this profession 24, 17, 3, 6.4, 1.7, 0.6, 1.7 and 0.6 percent respectively.

In the employment sector except trekking, the Sherpas involvement is fewer than the other non-Sherpa in Lukla. The Sherpa's involvement is only 26.2 percent in other employment sectors; whereas 25.2 percent Tamang, 24.2 percent Rai followed the Sherpas. Magar, Chhetri, Dalits, hilly Brahmin, Newar and others occupied 7.8, 6.8, 4, 2.9, 1 and 1.9 percent respectively.

In comparison to other occupations, agriculture occupies only 7.1 percent. The involvement of the Sherpa is higher than the other non- Sherpa. Among them, 60 percent the Sherpa are

actively working in agriculture, however only 10 percent are claiming as a farmer. Whereas, Tamang 2.2, Rai 15.6, Magar 9, Chhetri 4.4, and hilly Brahmin 4.4 percent are working in agriculture. However, Dalits, Newar and others have not been involving in in sector; it seems that they either have no any agricultural land or they have been working other works. Some people such as Sherpa, Magar, and hilly Brahmin of Lukla *bazar* have gone abroad for foreign employment. Among them 71.4 percent are the Sherpas; Magar, and hilly Brahmin are equal by 14.3 percent. Hence, these data vividly exemplify the occupational diversities among castes and ethnic groups residing in the Lukla *bazar*.

The traditional occupation of the Khumbu people has changed. Ninety two percent people of the study area are engaging in shop keeping, trekking, expeditions, operating hotels and lodges, and employment service. Large expeditions hire dozens of temporary porters to carry food and equipment from Lukla and some trekking porters are also hired. Due to this, people who worked in farming and animal herding are also changing their occupation.

Some people are engaging in multiple occupations simultaneously such as trekking in its season; and in off-season at farm, *bhatti*, shop, and so on. Although money making from trekking sector is not an easy work; people have to travel for many days with dreaming dollars and exchanging their lives into deaths at the high altitudes (Shrestha, 2011; 2018). However, the earnings from trekking and mountaineering are better than farming and animal herding. Mr. Chhetri, a director of trekking company, reveals the earnings of the trekkers and climbers:

The trekking guides earn 2000 to 2500 salaries per day. A trekking staff earns 1500 to 2000 and a porter earns 1200 to 1500 per day. This is the core salary of these people. In addition to these, the tourists give them some amount as tips, generally not less than 10,000 in one trekking but a climber may earn above one million per climbing (C. Khatri, personal communication, November 23, 2013).

The amount they earn per day or per trekking is a good amount and a farmer does not earn that much from farming. The earnings from farming are seasonal; they can harvest either potato or buck wheat in a year. The majority of the jobs in trekking and expeditions are taken by male whereas female are least participating in trekking and engaging in hotels, lodges and *bhattis* and so on.

Most of the hotel owners started their career in trekking as porters; later they got promotion in assistant guides and finally became the *Sardar*. As they earned from trekking and expedition, they invested this amount to another sectors of tourism. "I was employed in trekking, later I bought this hotel. I invested more to make this hotel comfortable for tourists. I also decorated this house both inside and outside" a Sherpa hotel owner at Lukla replied (P. Sherpa, personal communication, October 9, 2016). He is one of the representative characters and there are many other similar cases at Lukla; it is hardly to get anyone without involving in trekking.

In the regards, only a few number of people have changed their profession from farmer to hotel owner. Most of the people had changed their occupation from farmer to trekkers then after hotel, lodge owners. The change in occupation is not limited to the Sherpa; the non Shepa like Newar, Magar, Tamang, Rai and Chhetri have been also changing their occupations. I observed a group of Magar operating 3 hotels at Khumbu in the rented houses. These Magars are from outside of Solukhumbu district, started trekking first, then changed hotels

operating. Some of the people are engaging in multiple occupations like government offices, and their family members operate *bhatti*, small lodge, and grocery. Some other people are doing trekking and their relatives are operating *bhatti* and shop keeping.

Hence, tourism is responsible for changing the occupation of the people in the Khumbu region. However, their occupation is fully dependent on tourists. Arrivals of tourists in each season determine their fate and future. If the number of tourists is high, everybody get economic benefits more or less and if the numbers of tourists decrease then depending people on tourism sector have to face economic crisis as it was in 2015 when the earthquake disaster and Indian blockade both one at a time, and now the pandemic COVID 19 is not less than last one in 2020.

Inflation

The growth and development of tourism in the Khumbu region has encouraged the immigration of new people. A total of 56,303 tourists have visited the region in 2018 (MOCTCA, 2019), which excludes number of Nepali porters, guides and other supportive staff. The increased number of tourist has brought price hikes. The local production of goods is not sufficient to fulfill the demand of tourists, supportive staff and local people. The goods have to be carried either from Kathmandu by air services or from lower parts of Solukhumbu by mule or through the human labour. Hence, the price of goods is highly increasing.

Tourism has brought economic opportunities to many people but it also has created inequalities among them. This inequality has made the lives hard for lower class and local people. Brower (1991: 87) writes:

No everyone in Khumbu is in position to engage in these (tourism) enterprises: some gain at other's expense. Success in finding trekking assignments or employment in expedition tourism is largely a matter of whom you know. Particular clans and village enjoy a disproportionate share of the higher pay and prestige jobs with the more active companies.

The price of imported goods is hiked much than other local productions like potatoes. Rice, maize, wheat, fruits, chicken, mutton, and buff are imported either from lower parts especially by the local traders like Rai, Tamang or from Kathmandu by air services. It is natural to be expensive if the goods are imported from air services. Hence, the price of the goods is much expensive. Stevens (1993:380) states:

The price of rice has increased tremendously, from nine rupees per *Pathi* in 1964 to twenty six rupees ten years later, and thereafter rising more precipitously to thirty five rupees in 1978 and ninety rupees in 1988. In autumn 1990 rice cost ninety to one hundred rupees per *Pathi* depending on its quality. This is more than three times in comparison the price of rice at the lower altitude areas of Solukhumbu or at Kathmandu.

The price of goods shows that life of an ordinary people who are not involved in tourism related businesses is very hard. The people who are able to achieve economic benefits from the tourism can sustain their lives even the prices of goods go up and up (Rogers, 2007) but other people have to compromise on their daily lives and expenditure.

Inflation of the goods made people's life very hard. The porters, farmers, government service holders and other ordinary people are highly undermined. Mrs. Sherpa, a housewife in 2016, told that, "*sabai bastuko bhau badyo* (all things became expensive); we farmers have hard

days. The wage of workers is also increased so that we cannot hire them in domestic works” (M. Sherpa, personal communication, October 10, 2016). The business people of tourists’ route have no problem of inflation because they charge high price to tourists and other domestic visitors such as rice (*daal bhatt*) Rs. 300, tea per glass 50, beer small can 300, Mo. Mo 200 per plate in Lukla *bazar* and prices of goods again go up when we travel higher altitude than this. The main cause of inflation in Lukla is overflow of international tourists and their Nepali staff. The number of tourists is more than the number of local inhabitants which naturally hike the price of goods and services.

Conclusion

The growth and development of tourism has helped to modernize the Khumbu region. Tourists from various parts of the world have made the region a globally known hot spot. Tourism is mostly responsible for not only modernization but also socio-economic and demographic change. Tourism is responsible for in-migration of the non-Sherpas and the out-migration of the many Sherpas. This demographic change has multiple effects on the society, economy, and culture of this region.

Tourism has an effect on the day to day lives of the people. Economic prosperity and the diversification of occupations have not only made people to adjust in jet-set life styles but also changed their values, ideologies and behavior patterns. Tourism has promoted inflation simultaneously in any other tourism destinations too. These cases of Mustang and Annapurna area (Shrestha, 2019) are also similar with this. .

Tourism has also given social and economic opportunities to the Khumbu region but the maximum benefits are taken by big hotels and lodges owners. The non-Sherpa and the local Sherpa are engaging in other occupation rather than operating the hotels and lodges gain the less benefitted. The economically prosperous people are in key decision making process and they have a reputation for power (Hall, 2010). Inflation has made the least earning people’s life terrible which is one of the problems created by tourism.

These facts and figures of tourism of the Khumbu region can be analyzed through different perspectives. Tourism has brought modernization: the end of the hard days of the local Sherpa, replacement of their thatched huts by big cemented buildings, good education, jet setting life styles, and upward economic mobility. Modernization theorists take these changes as a part of development. They take these indicators as good and positive, and encourage other people of the ‘Third World’ to follow them.

Simultaneously, the in-migration of the non-Sherpa, out-migration of the Sherpa, and access of the non-Sherpa to the tourism business may end the Sherpa’s monopoly in the tourism sectors in near future in the Khumbu region.

Rapid transformation in economic structure has led to changes in the modes of production. Such transformation from traditional forms of economy to modern economy has not only made the diverse societies but also helped to create new economic classes. The new economy has made people completely dependent on tourism. In such a situation, if tourism sector is hit with crisis, as in 2015 and the recent crisis of COVID 19 in 2020, people’s everyday lives may grow much harder than before of the Khumbu’s tourism. This is what the dependency theorists warn about. Hence, there is an immediate need to think about tourism sustainability through supportive and supplementary economic activities to make lives better in coming days.

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