

Telling Livelihood Hi(stories) of the Dom Community: A Resilience Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study applied qualitative approach with narrative inquiry as a methodological road map. It helped me to explore the livelihood strategies of Dom community who are minority and highly marginalized ethnic group of people in Urlabari Municipality. The livelihood life hi(stories) and lived experiences are represented by vignettes which are used as lively analytical tools. The Dom community who falls at the edge of social, economic, political and environmental development facets that have caused critical survival to struggle due to the advent of the liberal market system in the country. The survival vulnerabilities induced by the loss of their traditional and indigenous knowledge and skills as a means of livelihood have put them in the vicious circle of poverty for generations. The circumstances of livelihood shocks which they faced put them in the absolute transition in their livelihood practice from traditional and indigenous survival activities to new livelihood approach that is considered impious by the other community. This paper argues the sustainability of livelihood strategies in terms of adaptation and transformation after the livelihood shocks. The resilient and sustainable livelihood perspective is used as a theoretical lens to discuss the livelihood circumstances of the Dom community of the study area. Furthermore, the resilience perspective enhanced the analysis of livelihood transformation in the present context in terms of the disaster the research participants have been surviving with.

Key words: Dom community, livelihood, resilience, sustainable, poverty

Introduction

Dom community, an extremely marginalized group, is a minority caste group found and scattered across south Asia, the countries include India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal (Joshua Project.net, 2025) and parts of the middle east countries like Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt and Turkey (Diab & Saban, 2022). Historically, this community is connected with distinctive customary

occupations like waste management, pig rearing, metalworking and music. The Dom community encounters ever sticking vulnerable economic status, social discrimination, along with limited access to essential resources such as proper housing, healthcare and education.

This research endeavours to delve into the multifaceted realities of the Dom community, exploring their livelihood experiences, and the resilience in their pursuit of living a life of equitable opportunities. By examining the historical context and contemporary experiences of the Dom, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their livelihoods and perspective they live in as a community.

Maithili speaking Dom community is placed at the last category of Hindu caste system and social order as “Shudra” (Britanica, 2023) which is denoted as untouchable by the Hindu caste system (Shepherd, 2022). Shudra which is theoretically considered as the server to other three higher classes as seen traditionally practiced in the Hindu society. The Shudra as per the Hindu Varna system are endogamous in caste status which include a wide spectrum of endogamic status groups (ibid). Certain behavioral patterns and occupations they carry are considered as polluting in the Hindu belief system like, herding pigs, washers, tanners, shoemakers, sweepers, scavengers, etc. The occupation that majority of the Dom community of the study area, conducts at present is sweeping and cleaning (sanitary purpose job like; toilet washing and cleaning in the society) in the Urlabari municipality. The society considers such works ritually impious (Shepherd, 2022).

As a component of Dalit group, Dom community has not been addressed separately although they are very less in numbers comparing to other caste group. The constitution of Nepal 2015 mentions about the marginalized group in part 34 (m) as "Marginalized" as communities that are made politically, economically and socially backward, are unable to enjoy services and facilities because of discrimination and oppression and of geographical remoteness or deprived thereof and are in lower status than the human development standards under federal law, and includes highly marginalized groups and groups on the verge of extinction. Upreti (2010) states that although the constitution has provided huge legal ground to safeguard the so called lower or Dalit caste against caste discrimination but still it is far-fetched to attain the social equality due to deeply rooted social and cultural foundation of

caste system in the Nepali society. This foundation of inequality has created a huge gap in the livelihood strategies which mark the demonstrating resilient behaviour of Dom community in the study area.

Livelihood shock hit the Dom community more than thirty years before as they lost their traditional and indigenous livelihood generating occupations of weaving bamboo baskets, carpets, fans, and pig rearing. They had a unique traditional skills and knowledge of collecting especial kind of aquatic weeds to preparing Chatai (mat or carpet), and Nanglo (a flat round woven tray made up of bamboo for husking rice and other cereals). According to Elsamahi, et al. (2022) when any events occur and disturb the people's usual livelihoods, it is considered as livelihood shocks. The purpose of my research is to explore the livelihood shocks and the capacity of coping and adaptation of livelihood strategies into the present livelihood and advances the research journey with resilient perspective and sustainable perspective to enhance the analysis of livelihood stories of highly marginalized Dom community of Urlabari municipality located in the south-eastern terai region of Nepal in Morang district of Koshi Province.

For the process of this research journey, I utilized livelihood story telling process in order to contextualize the then and now livelihoods and its changes that shocked the research participants. I believe that the Dom community would never be in the position of achieving sustainable livelihoods unless the local government act relevantly with proper and appropriate interventions on improving their livelihood activities. The Dom people have been facing livelihood challenges for generations. The Dom along with other marginalized people of so-called lower castes like Santhal, Musahar and the like are facing several problems on their livelihoods due to the lack of access to education. They are deprived of human rights and even fundamental rights are not bestowed upon them due to which their livelihood activities are facing huge challenges. I found that they face humiliating situation due to their present livelihood practice as toilet cleaners. They do not like to be called as "toilet cleaner." However, they do not have other alternatives to go with because they are suffering from exclusion and inequality which has led them into the vicious circle of poverty (Bharadwaj, 2012) which has been obstructing sustainable livelihood activities and equality in the society (Lopez, 2006) for generations.

The Dom community of the Urlabari municipality is living with multidimensional sufferings. They suffer from economic, social, cultural, political and environmental problems. Those aspects are the major threats and challenges towards the sustainable development process as they belong to poverty ridden community. Nevertheless, they are striving to cope up with threats and challenges for their sustainability adapting livelihood activity with their indigenous knowledge and skills to establish independent livelihood strategies.

The Dom community has been risking their health all days and years due to the livelihood they have chosen and in return they are protecting and preserving the social environment and ecosystem of the surroundings. The Dom community is surviving on their own effort and trying their best to sustain their livelihood activities establishing the cleaning job as an indigenous work to them. They are not given much importance as human resource and their job is labelled as the lowest in comparison to other professions. It has become a matter of shame for them. They believe that though they are compelled to perform this job for livelihood affair that incurs a low respect in the society.

This paper explores the livelihood hi(stories), the experiences of transitioning their livelihood activities from bamboo tools makers and pig herders to toilet cleaners. I delve into their daily experience of livelihoods and the endurance they exhibit to search for better livelihood strategy. In addition, I explore the adjustment they have practiced coping up with and adapt the adversities in the present livelihood practice.

Literature Review

Dom community and their Sociality

According to NPHC (2021) the total population of Dom ethnic group of people is 19,901 in which male dominates female in terms of population as 10,079 and 9,822 respectively. They are scattered throughout the southern terai districts of three provinces as mentioned above. At present, the Dom community people in Urlabari municipality live with mixed ethnic and caste group like Rajbanshi, Dhimal, Brahmin, Chhetry, Tamang, Magar, Santhal, Rai, Limbu, Newar, Kami, Damai and others. Out of all these ethnic and caste groups Dom and Santhal are highly marginalized and underprivileged in the study area.

According to Sah (2007) Dom community inhabit in Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari districts of Koshi Province, Siraha, Saptari, Dhanusa, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara, Parsa and Rautahat districts of Madhesh Pradesh, and Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Nawalparasi, Banke and Bardia districts of Lumbini province in Nepal. They are considered untouchables or Shudras, the last category of Hindu social class. They are treated socially as a lower and untouchable class. They are highly marginalized and backward, and thus, victimized with inequality, socio-political exclusion and left behind in the development process.

I immigrated in the vicinity in early 1990s and was an outsider to them as I am the member of other community in term of community dweller. I used to hear about their holistic life stories in the schools where they were employed as cleaners, and later I got opportunity to understand their daily life affairs. They were involved in making bamboo materials for domestic purposes and performed pig herding (Sah, 2007). I had also learned that they were the pig herders living nomadically especially male members in search of customers and fodders for their pigs. Because of the occupations of toilet cleaning and pig herding, these people were lowly treated in the society. As there used to be high caste Hindu people living in the neighbourhood who dislike pigs and pork eaters (Pandey & Shrestha, 2023) they had to move on and on with the herds of pigs far off places and visit home arranging routine timing or keeping the pigs far from the neighbouring areas (Kulchand, personal communication, 13 May 2023). In this process, they fall the victim of exclusion and inequality in the development process. Now, they are suffering the consequences of exclusion and inequality in their livelihood and holistic living affairs.

I believe that they are at the end of the line of development process sharing disastrous livelihoods as Escobar (1995) in his book named Introduction: Development and the Anthropology of Modernity argued that the poor people are living with fragments of menacing future conditions. I argue that they are bearing social, cultural and political exclusion and inequality since the generations and are looking forward for positive change in their living conditions at a sustainable foundation.

Dom people are dark skinned, black haired, medium height and with stoutly built body. They follow Hindu tradition by religion in the study area. However, Muslim Doms are also found in the western Terai region of Nepal. Both Hindu and

Muslim Dom people originally immigrated to Nepal from India and spread in different districts (Sah, 2007; Pandey & Shrestha, 2023). The Dom community live with the belief system that because of the curse to remain poor for their whole life; spelled by their ancestral deity for killing a cow, they never become rich in their life. They are animist in religious character. They sacrifice animals especially pig and chicken in different occasions, festivals during the rituals. Dom people in Urlabari municipality worship Hindu gods and goddesses and celebrate Hindu festivals. Their staple food is rice, and they celebrate eating pork, chicken, fishes, buff, etc. It denotes that they follow non-veg menu from the kitchen aspect culturally and traditionally.

Dom people of Urlabari municipality live in a joint family. Majority of them do not possess land of their own. They are settled in a public land or rented land or house. Dom people did not prioritize their education due to which the first and second generation of them living in the study area have not even attained primary education by both male and female members (Magar & Guragain, 2023). Majority of the Dom people are the victim of multi-dimensional poverty due to which livelihood practices are quite difficult to be sustained by them.

Resilience and Sustainable Livelihood Perspective

Southwick et al (2014) stated that the plenary panel of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies in 2013 agreed that the resilience can be understood as a complex construct and that may require a contextual understanding in reference to individuals, families, organizations, societies, and cultures. In this research the definition of resilience carry meaning upon the viewpoint of individual, family, society and the culture aspects in which the Dom community is living with vulnerable livelihood practice. Etymologically, the word resilience is being derived from a Latin verb 'Lisilire' meaning to rebound or recoil and was used in English language in the early 17th century (McAsian, 2010). In my research journey with the Dom community their social and cultural assets of livelihood practices are also considered fundamental issues in connecting the thought of resilience. The magnitude of change concerns the concept of resilience essentially; that the coping capability of social system can continue functioning, in which the social system breed into bearing such changes in the long run. Moreover, my research journey streamlines the spontaneous undertaking onto the ecological, social and livelihood

resilience thoughts to evaluate an environmental and socio-psychological effect on livelihood practice of Dom community.

On this pretext, I stand with the viewpoint to regard that the vulnerable conditions of the Dom community in social, economic, political and cultural facets can be considered as the powerful opposition of the resilience which deal with the multi-faced challenges.

On the one hand, the concept of resilience perspective ensures and deals with the contrasting idea between the ecological resilience and livelihood resilience emphasizing the various characteristics of stability in the social system. The idea of stability is considered by the perseverance and consistency of a system leading to create a balance in the system (Rai, 2018). I observed that livelihood resilience encourages and ensures the pursuance of better living in the Dom community.

On the other hand, the livelihood resilience is the capacity of my research participants fighting all odds for three generations to withstand and improve their livelihood opportunities and welfare despite of social, economic, cultural, environmental and political adversaries (Adams, et al. (2015) contextually the cultural facet of the Dom community has exerted much pressure on their livelihood resilience.

I believe that the stress generated in once life is the reality of daily living (Southwick et al, 2014) that can occur anytime and anywhere in the social and economic living of the society. Such stresses are of multiple dimensions contextually occurring which traumatize our living and call for resilience perspective with all efforts. As such, the Dom community in Urlabari municipality have been fighting against social, cultural, environmental and economic adversities for long time bearing the consequence of transformation of livelihoods.

Moving onto sustainable livelihood approach that ensures assessing resilience perspective as a further support in theoretical base of this study. The Sustainable livelihood perception is assumed as a way of perceiving about the objectives, scope and priorities for a positive change in people's living standard eliminating the poverty (Ashley & Carney, 1999). The evolution of concept of sustainable livelihood approach is based on reducing poverty by understanding lifestyles of poor and connected issues with that of livelihood resilience. In my point of view, the sustainable

livelihood can be understood as livelihood resilience or vice versa as both deals with the coping up and changing in the context of social, political, economic and environmental challenges by addressing multidimensional issues through institutional means.

While coping up with all these contextual challenges for better endurance of the transformed livelihood activities, the Dom community in Urlabari municipality is critically suffering from natural, social, human, financial and manufactured capitals which are the bases of the sustainable livelihood (Abdilahi, 2024). In this connection, I believe that the sustainable livelihood approach makes up an idea of resilience livelihood enhancing better understanding of social, political, economic and environmental dynamisms. In addition, the sustainable livelihood approach ensures people coping up from stresses and disasters building capabilities on their own context and the assets they possess to conduct livelihood activities. For this purpose, they require knowledge, skills and capabilities dealing with the individual situation for transformation and improving their livelihood at present and future. The local tribe-Dom community of Urlabari municipality is understood here as an issue of transformation, dealing with knowledge, skills and capabilities and considering their individualistic challenges for the improvement of their living styles.

In this context, unemployment problem accompanied by financial illiteracy in Dom community would be the first priorities to be addressed in order to uplift their living standard. The unemployment problem and financial illiteracy could be addressed by providing skill-based training, conducting workshop and training on financial literacy, adopting social inclusion approach by the local government, good governance and so on. In order to address their adversities, this community also could be provided with technological skill-based training amalgamating with their indigenous knowledge and skills they possess. Furthermore, awareness campaign could be conducted for their inclusion in the mainstream socio-economic platforms hence to raise their fundamental rights and human rights aspects such as health, education, employment and the like.

This study deals with in-depth understandings of Dom community's life hi(stories) and lived experiences to assess their livelihood strategies and the resilient behavior regarding their livelihood shocks.

Research Methodology

In this study, I utilized a qualitative approach employing a narrative inquiry to storying the livelihood experiences of Dom community, the resident of Urlabari municipality. Daiute (2014) notes that the narrative inquiry acknowledges the dynamic nature in representing the lived experiences and argues that ‘dynamic narrating is a social process occurring in life and, thus, should be basis of research’ (p. 3). Using this methodological framework and locating myself as a participant observer on natural setting, I deal with the in-depth understanding of my participants’ life hi(stories) and lived experiences on livelihoods strategies and their resilient behaviours.

I worked collaboratively with our male participants throughout the research journey. During the observation, I spent good time in sharing lived experiences over time in different workplaces of them through social interaction with milieus (Clandinin, 2006). I also interviewed women participants at home who were responsible for looking after house affairs and children.

When I joined a government school as a secondary level teacher in 2019, I had an opportunity to get introduced with one of the Dom community members who was a teacher for lower secondary grade. As a colleague, I had a lot of conversation regarding the Dom people’s social, economic, cultural, political and environmental aspects. But he was quite ashamed and reluctant to talk about his community initially. Gradually, I started visiting his rented room and we became good friends. This close acquaintance allowed me to listen to his community’s story. Later in 2020 when I joined the college in the vicinity as a part time faculty member, I got an opportunity to be involved in a collaborative research project. The sole responsibility for research project was given to me and thus, I decided to choose Dom community as research participant to explore their social, economic and cultural facets in which I chose my colleague-teacher as the research gatekeeper. He helped me to build a rapport to extend relations as researcher-participants for this study. The vignettes are used as an analytical tool that helped me to offer a way to explore my participants real world circumstances.

My Participants: The Story Tellers

There were fifteen households of Dom residing in ward number 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 of Urlabari Municipality. Researchers used convenient sampling method choosing seven participants from among the sum of seventy-three members. The researchers chose only seven participants from different households' representative to the community to make an in-depth reach in their daily livelihood activities and strategies.

I tried multiple times to reach and add on the sample participants, but others did not agree on participating in the research journey. In this juncture, I decided to conduct participant observations following them in their workplaces around the city and its vicinity to enrich the study. This added value in preparing themes for the analytical and interpretive purpose. Following table shows the participants of the research journey:

Table 1 :
Demographics of participants

Pseudonym (story tellers)	Age	Gender	Occupation	Marital status
Phulo	28	Female	Housewife & Cleaner	Married
Muskan	27	Female	Housewife	Married
Injam	28	Male	Toilet Cleaner	Married
Bhukta	45	Male	Toilet Cleaner	Married
Chamu	38	Male	Toilet Cleaner	Married
Babu	17	Male	Toilet Cleaner & School Students	Unmarried
Sukra	48	Male	Toilet cleaner	Married

I chose them under convenient and purposive sampling strategy to join this project before and during the field visits who duly contributed to building themes out of the field texts collected through interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations. I transcribed the interviews recordings at home. It was quite a tiring job for me. sometimes, the same audio had to be listened twice or thrice to make meaning out of it. I wrote field journals and took interview notes. I read them and rewrote some and performed coding and decoding several times to building themes to provide appropriate sense to the research issue.

I conducted open ended interviews for three times in individual basis and group basis of two or three at a place. The focus group discussion was conducted that was organized at the campus premises among the members of the Dom community beside the representative participants. All the focus group participants were provided with lunch and incentives for attending it. All the financial burden was taken by the campus. The participants' focus group discussion was conducted at one of the houses of Dom community members.

For participant observation, I visited their working locations for three different places for three whole days. I remained with them talking and observing their way of talking, sense of making gestures, bargaining process for their job wage, dealing with the job scenario in different households, etc.

The gathered information was transcribed and coded as per the likelihood of their contribution in building themes. I speculated all the translated and transcribed field texts, triangulated journals and notes several times during the office time and off time. I continued meeting with my participants through phone calls for further information required while coding the themes. the themes were built as per the texts repeated in the interviews and focus group discussion. I put them with appropriate word patterns and performed translation work to form vignettes for the interpretation of the lived experiences and the life hi(stories) of the participants.

I worked on translation of field texts from Nepali to English which took a tiring effort, and several changes were made before finalizing the themes and patterns of narratives. Five themes were formed initially which I wanted to include in the discussion sections but out of them, I used only three themes in the analysis and interpretation section, and two others were put in the literature review section so as to provide thematic review for the issue that included empirical and theoretical literature review as Dom community and their sociality and Resilience and Sustainable Livelihood Perspective.

It was quite a challenging job to accomplish because my participants were much demanding in terms of time and space. So, I had to visit their homes and workplace to conduct interviews. While it provided huge advantage to me as it helped me to conduct participant observation for understanding their attitudinal behaviours. The demanding attitudes of our participants provided us with abundant

space and time to in-depth understanding of their life hi(stories) and lived experiences about their livelihoods.

Ethical Considerations

Urlabari Multiple Campus provided permission for conducting this study. Before entering the research field, I performed a good rapport building process through teacher-colleague of the same community. It was easy for me to reach into the field as I utilized his acquaintance with me as a good friend as a gate keeper for the research process. This provided me with a conducive environment to ensure informed consent for our participants.

I also ensured an ethical obligation to protect their privacy and right to be informed about the research process. I assured them about the prevention of disclosure of their identities, personal information and their responses. It was applied in securing field texts, use of pseudonyms and being transparent in their regards for handling of the information.

Analysis and Interpretation

Exploring Dom's Livelihood Practices and the Contextual Transformation

I had an assumption that the Dom people as a community fulfil their daily demands with the cleaning survival skill in a daily wage basis. It was assumed that cleaning occupation belongs to this community traditionally. However, it was adapted after mid 1990s as their traditional and indigenous skills of weaving bamboo materials was replaced by industrial products. Phulo puts her voice to explain us in the first interview about their lifestyles before and at present:

My grandmother and parents used to run bamboo tools business for households like, Supa (Nanglo in Nepali language), Chatai (carpet), fans, etc before because there were not easy and cheap industrial products as of today. The bamboo tools business was our family tradition but after the easy availability of industrial products for all household purposes, our traditional occupation was dead. We do not possess a good land plot for agriculture. We also do not have good education and skills for other works. So, easy and untouched task of cleaning was adopted. But it is quite not easy for us because we survive on daily wage. If you get cleaning job for the day, you have meal on that night otherwise stay empty stomach sometimes or half meal.

In the study area, toilet cleaning job at public places like schools, colleges, offices, and individual households is performed by Dom community members around the towns. They work on daily wage basis and some of them are exploited by the employers by not providing them wage on regular basis. This pattern of payment brings them difficulties to deal with domestic demands.

Muskan, at his late forty talks how her father had to leave his pig herding occupation and how his mother lost her traditional occupation of bamboo tools making.

My parents were pig herder. They used to travel a long distance from Jhapa to Siraha-Saptari along the east-west highway. But due to the increase of population along with urbanization process they had to leave their occupation. My mother was also a great weaver she used to prepare all kinds of tools for households from bamboo. She too had to leave her bamboo task due to the advent of industrial products in the villages and towns.

The Dom community lost their traditional and indigenous occupations due to the adoption of liberal market policy by the state since early 1990s. Nepal adapted open, liberal and market oriented economic policy by late 1980s and it was strongly taken into consideration after the establishment of multiparty democracy in 1990 (Nepal Rashtra Bank, 1999). Many of the empirical literatures provide positive aspect of the trade openness for instances (Makhmutova and Mustafin (2017); Asfaw (2015); Felicitas (2003); Lee (1996); Das (2010); Muhammad et al. (2020) who advocate the benefit of liberal market system for diversification of trade, access of products, boost of productivity, economic growth, etc. in the macro basis.

However, many of the indigenous community like Dom lost indigenous knowledge and skills for their livelihood. Because of losing their indigenous occupations like, pig herding and bamboo tools and utensils productions they have been in the vulnerable situation at present. They are struggling for their livelihood and survival and living with livelihood shock. Pandey and Shresthat (2023) comments that the Dom community used to involved in making various domestic tools like Dhakki, Nanglo, Supali, Bhakari, Bena, Taraju, Dali, etc. using bamboo.

My participants have been facing huge transitions in their livelihood practices. They are looking forward to surviving with dignity but due to the acute vulnerability due to generations long vicious circle poverty (Shakya, 2014), they are treated with

social discrimination in the society. Because of low level of education, they are socially and politically discriminated because of which they are always at the end of economic development. And thus, remain backward.

I had a different construct then. As an outsider and being a schoolteacher for long time in the terai region of Nepal, I observed them always in the role of cleaners. I was not aware of how their past generations survived and how they contributed to the society. However, after getting acquainted with them in a research-participants relationship, I was quite curious to listen to their life hi(stories) and lived experiences of their livelihood struggles.

When I observed the households of the Dom community in Urlabari Municipality, I found that all children were attending school. Few household children were attending private boarding school and majority of the children were attending government public school. This denotes that awareness level

The transformation of livelihood approach and adaption of survival skills have taught them various lessons in their lives. Now, they are sending their children to school although how hard for them to afford the children's education. They are daily wage earners, and some institutional schools exchange their labour for the study fees of their children. Due to the occupation they follow as an informal career, they are aware of what position they belong to in the mix community in which they are residing today. The Dom people of Urlabari municipality are always in search of sustainable livelihood for better future but could not come off from vicious circle of poverty and are surviving through the livelihood shock and adversities.

Chamu, a husband of Phulo and father to three children is a daily wagger earner who roams around the city with three other helpers for cleaning job. After clearing a ditch of safety tank at his workplace, he seated on the flat stone and commented:

We do not have fix job. In the early morning after tea and snacks at home, we set out for searching job of cleaning toilet. Rarely, we have fix job, that is in condition that we were not able to do it. So, we fix that job for next day. We do not perform other jobs because we do not want to take away others' livelihood. Sometimes we get a job or two if we travel little far from hometown. We receive our payment after completing the task of cleaning. We fix our payment on spot. Some people are good enough, but some do not understand our lives and bargain a lot. Sometimes we demand more from those customers/households. Sometimes I feel very sad looking at my life and feel quite

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discouraging. However, I see people poorer than me living happily and thus, I go on. We enjoy our home, eating and drinking local alcohol. We have bad tradition of eating meat and drinking alcohol every day. If we earn good wages then the story is different, we celebrate at home festively. We relax for some days at home and again the same routine. I have been doing this for more than 28 years, since I was ten. I used to work under the headman before, now I have become a headman of my team, and I have to fix the price for the job.

They perform cleaning tasks without wearing any health kits like, gloves, boot and mask. During the hot season (from April to August) they are being observed working without a cloth in their body. One of the presumptions; after the observation about the low life expectancy; as fifty-eight years only, of male member in Dom community is health hazard evolved due to their working style and the eating behavior (Shakya, 2014). As discussed before, when they make good income during the daytime; they have uncontrolled party making with local alcohol and meat eating especially pork and fish that they prefer as frequently as they earn income, it can happen every evening if they come home with the wage.

To educate their children, they exchange their labour with their children's schooling. They sell the labour and in return their children's study in the school which has increased the risk of getting empty stomach often when they are unlucky to find toilet cleaning job in and around the vicinity during the daytime search. They seemed committed to educate their children thinking that their children would be more skilled, capable and prosperous in the future. Both male and female equally participate in generating income for fulfilling the demands of the home. They wake up early morning, male or female whoever has regular cleaning job they reach their working place as early as possible, usually they begin their cleaning job at five am morning. The male member(s) of the household get-out in search of toilet cleaning, toilet clearing, market cleaning jobs, and the like in and around the city within which they are granted permission by their committee. If the day is lucky for them, they can earn bread for that evening and next morning; otherwise, they wait and test their luck next day for earning income. Such irregular cleaning job used to be performed in a group of three to five members who belong to different households.

Muskan, an employee at local private boarding school asserts her daily routine:

I work as a cleaner in a school in which my two children study. I attend my duty as early as five o'clock in the morning and by nine am, I complete my job. And same routined job of cleaning I repeat during the evening time too. Although I work regularly, I do not receive salary because my children study here. My husband does not have regular job. whatever the earning he makes, we put in our daily needs like, rice, vegetables, meet, alcohol for him, etc. Whatever my salary is, it is for the study of our two children. We want to work hard and make our children able like others. We do not have land for agricultural activities. We rely on our muscles for our survival.

Very few of the Dom community members find regular cleaning job in nearby hospital, school, college, or marketplaces. However, that also does not incur good surviving income for them due to low wages provided to them.

Furthermore, as an alternate livelihood strategy they have also followed the trend of seeking foreign employment opportunity for unskilled job. During the interaction only two male members from two different households among the fifteen were in the foreign employment in gulf countries. This is another livelihood strategy adapted by Dom community recently, but family members are not satisfied with the remittance they receive. These are the ways to cope up and transform themselves from the livelihood shocks and the livelihood crisis without making any negative impact upon the natural resource base negative impact (Uphoff, 1998; IDRC, 2006) and environmental even when their fundamental rights are not secured.

The Dom people in Urlabari Municipality have developed critical awareness regarding the political and civil rights in the process of livelihood transformation for better achievement of facilities from the local government. They know that the Dom people are discriminated in all aspects of their lives. They have been put in the end socially, economically, culturally and politically by the so-called high caste people. I observed that they had applied for drinking water supply filling the form for it along with their high caste neighbours. The so-called high caste neighbours were facilitated with drinking water supply as soon as possible and the Dom people were not provided with drinking water supply. They were furious about the action of the local government and were able to consider it as discrimination based on politics and, they were deprived of their civil rights.

This is a gradual process of adapting livelihood strategies trying for the sustainable livelihoods by the Dom community for their better living. They also

related the action of other local government in other districts where their relatives and friends live and talk about the facilities and development attained by their counterparts. They tried to raise voice by organizing meeting with local government authority, but their demands were not appropriately dealt. They were only promised to fulfil their demands during the election time but later they remain silent for every voice they made. So, they were thinking of changing the election strategy next time.

I believed that the resilience is a notion of concerned change of the behaviour bearing what magnitude of change can system cope up in the process of risking the functioning of their livelihood practice. The changed process of the system can bring positive effect in the livelihoods of the poverty ridden, backward, marginalized community like Dom community as that of Urlabari municipality who are struggling to adapt and transform themselves socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Approach Adopted for their Livelihood: Coping Mechanisms

Someone rightly said that little knowledge is dangerous. It resonates with my knowledge and understanding about the Dom community before indulging in the research journey. From my observations during the early career period as a schoolteacher the Dom were the people whose profession is only to perform sanitation job in and around the society for their livelihoods. They were employed in the schools, colleges, restaurants, hotels and the public places for sanitary job of brooming, cleaning toilet and else which are considered dirty and of the lowest status by other community. I wondered and revisited to my knowledge when I indulged in this research that it was a transformed occupation used for survival strategy. Traditionally, weaving different kinds of bamboo baskets, handmade bamboo fans, carpet weaving from special aquatic weeds, rearing pigs with nomadic lifestyles were the livelihood strategies before more than thirty years back. The weaved materials used to be sold in the local or regional markets. The children were encouraged and motivated by the parents to perform same jobs when they reached certain age, thus, rather sending children to school, the Dom community's parents used to transfer their indigenous knowledge and skills to their children transferring as their livelihood strategies adopted for generations. Muskan and Phulo have same points to talk about:

My parents did not allow me to go to school. I had to look after other siblings while father and brother used to for wage earning. My brothers were also not sent to school.

During the early age, they were allowed to go to school but after ten or eleven years they had to go with father for hunting wage. My father has expired already, and my mother is living at my maternal home. At present, we learned some ideas. We are sending our children to school although whatever struggles we go through. My husband is supportive to educate children. We hope someone may help us for our children's study further in higher classes.

The Dom community in Urlabari Municipality is worried about their livelihoods and their children's future. As they have begun sending their children to school and are getting upgraded into higher grades, they are mentally not sure how will they be affording their children's school study or college study. They are aware of now; without education their children's generation cannot move a step ahead in this competitive world. However, their concern is to sustain their livelihood issue for regular and sustainable income source for their better survival.

However, since 1990s due to the expansion and access to modern technologies, industrial development and open market policy endorsed by the democratic government of Nepal, the Dom community began facing adversity in continuing their indigenous livelihood activities and as the time passing by, they lost their indigenous skills and knowledge disastrously. This was the end of their traditional livelihood practices which were practiced and observed for generations before and after their migration in Urlabari municipality in 1969.

Injam and Bhukta were working together little far off their home for their day's wage. I reached there by contacting on phone calls. Bhukta, at his mid-forties simultaneously talking with me continuing in his job cautioned me:

Keep yourself little far. We are working with the human waste right now. Make safe for yourself. For us, no problem we are used to it. We might have eaten several times with the food because we work bare hand for whole day in this condition. I think God has made us this way. Everybody must be proud of themselves because God has created human being separately. Is not it? Sighing he seated on a flat plank and continued...

We do not choose other jobs because there is a lot of competition. We cannot compete in any sense because we are poor people. We did not go to school, but our children are studying now. I hope they will study and become big people in the future like you. But we may not make them study higher level because I have heard that it requires more

money. We may not afford their higher study doing this job and earning daily wage. I will be older man and if I could not even work like this, how can I feed my family.

In the present day, the Dom people's livelihood strategies have changed and performing sanitation jobs in and around the city has become the only occupation. It is socially established concept that it is the livelihood activity only practiced by the Dom and has been doing it for generations, at least two. I further observed that the Dom people in Uurlabari municipality do not choose alternative livelihood strategies although several occupations and professions are being open to them. I assessed that due to the lack of education as they have had cultural practice of not sending children to school, they are unable to attempt to secure other livelihood strategies. The technique of serving the society through making their livelihood easier; as there is not competition in their present occupation, has been carried out for the survival which has become an indigenous skill relative to Dom community in the society.

On one hand they are happy with the adversities they face in their livelihood activity as sanitary workers as no one opts and challenges in obtaining the job because it is considered the lowest category of occupation one holds in the society. On the other hand, they feel bad about their occupation as it is considered the lowest of all which is not respectable as other jobs and due to which people in the society look at them discriminatingly. Injam asserted:

Being a married man and father, one cannot avoid any kind of job. I tried in construction work as a helper to mason but that did not go well. Because if you fall sick for a day or two, the mason seeks other helpers, and he gets them easily. But in this job, there is no alternative. I have my old mother at home who helped me to go abroad as a labour worker before four years. I went to one of the gulf countries but could not earn well because the works are done differently there. I was not able to work well, and I returned to Nepal. Since then, I have been doing this job regularly.

The Dom community of the study area are not fond of seeking other jobs. They always fear about the competition. The lack of education and skills, and consequence of vicious circle of poverty have caused them to stay down at the end of the development process. There are several employment opportunities open in the job market but being citing them as unskilled and lack of education, they portray themselves the victims of competition. For example, seventeen-year-old Babu and Injam at his 28 claimed:

Now municipality office is also doing injustice towards our job as it is running a safety tank vehicle to clean up the toilets of the town. It is okay, if it provides us job there whereas if it does not provide us the safety tank cleaning job, our livelihood is in risk. How can we survive at this expensive era? For many years, we did not feel insecure but now it is. If we get regular job guaranteed by municipality, we can pay tax also.

Young generations like Babu and Injam are in search of sustainable livelihood and seeking slight shift in their occupation. However, various circumstances have been the hurdle for their lives. The Dom community have been practicing their occupation as an informal sector. The informal setting of their job pattern can be changed into formal income taxpayer when the local government desire to. The formalizing the cleaning job practiced by Dom community within the municipality can incur government revenue. This will end the fear of my research participants on losing their occupation that provides sustainable livelihoods.

As a participant observer, I scrutinized that in the routine stations they perform sanitary job basically in the early morning and evening time. The day is free for them, so they move for searching job of toilet cleaning in and around the society. Sometimes, they move quite far off places for searching the job. This activity has become a strategic wage-earning action in their daily lives for enhancing their livelihood that support them for sending their children to school, curing health issues of the family members and fulfilling daily domestic requirements.

Cultural Heritages: Means of Motivation and Expenses

Bhukta briefs his way of life after the good wage:

Today we have earned good money. We worked in three places. All three of us earned five thousand rupees each. We are happy. We will have good party time during the evening today. We drink and eat pork enough. When we earn enough money. We take rest at least for two days from our daily work. I call my relatives and friends today. Last time my family was called by them. We drink local alcohol daily in the evening. We work harder and get tired so to refresh ourselves we do it. Me and my working colleagues come together and drink at least a glass of local alcohol.

The Dom people in Uralbari municipality are fond of drinking locally prepared alcohol. The evening is the pleasurable time added with alcohol stuff and meat in the kitchen menu. They love eating meat or fish with rice in the evening. The guest(s) at home becomes important event and ritual for drinking and enjoyment. During

festivals, occasions and ritual performances guests are invited and served with pork or fishes or local chicken, and the home brewed, or local alcohol (Shakya, 2014) are served as necessity.

Sacrificing pig is compulsory in the marriage and other occasions like naming ceremony of infant, and festivals like Dashain, Tihar, and other and the size of the pig is determined by budget. The local or home brewed alcohol is a must. They enjoy eating after their offering is completed to their deity that include Hindu gods and goddesses like Kalimata, Durgamata and the like. To sacrifice such animals, in many houses they rear one or two pigs, chickens, and ducks, at the side of their home and sometimes they sell them for income as well. I noted that they are not only resilient towards their livelihoods; they are more resilient towards their behavioural acts during the drunken conditions.

Sukra shares his drunken fight with one of his relatives from India who had come to attend his relative's marriage ceremony.

Three months ago, our close relative's daughter got married. In this marriage, we had our guest from Bihar India. We drank together, talked together and even enjoyed dancing but at the end he picked up fight with me. He hit me with big stick and made this scar on my arm. But I did not hit him like that. Other friends just came and stopped us. Otherwise, I could have hit him too. But in the morning, all relatives gathered to discuss about the fight, and we were all nice. He stayed with us for some days and went to India.

As an outsider researcher, I examined that generally during the festivals or occasions they pick up fighting with each other so badly, nevertheless; they do not take it seriously and literally next day they are as usual, as if nothing had happened between them or among them. This cultural and behavioural domain of their livelihood strategy has prepared to be resilient making them self-dependent. They have deep cultural understanding through which they use cultural aspect as a "sustainable tool for income, security and the prosperity" (Rai, 2018, pp 652).

In Dom community, when they perform or celebrate different festivals, occasions, rituals all the relatives and friends are invited. The guests in return bring money or materials as Shanis (gift). The Shanis are used as personal possession and utilized accordingly by the host during the celebrations or can keep it for future usage at home as per the necessity.

It was an indication of capability that the resilience process of the Dom community in building opportunity to enhance their livelihood assets while continuously facing the disastrous risks without causing any harm to the natural resource (Bacud, 2018) as such from this cultural practice, the Dom community has benefitted in fulfilling some of the fundamental demands of the host's home and also help to enhance the cultural bond which provides collaborative strengths for sustainable livelihoods. This is how Dom community is protecting and preserving its culture although living with difficulties for generations.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Dom community who immigrated in Urlabari municipality in 1969 is treated as socially low caste group and highly marginalized ethnic people. The first visitors during early 1960s were the job seekers from Jhapa and Sunsari districts. Literatures assured that they were originally from India (Sah, 2007). Traditionally, they lived by preparing bamboo materials and selling them in the local and regional markets. However, they faced livelihood shock when the people started using modern industrial materials required for the home usages. And they began a sanitary job of cleaning toilets, market and public places, etc. in the surrounding areas which has become crucial part of their livelihood at present.

Although they have been living for more than sixty years in a same place, the land holding is magically the lowest in terms of land holding area. The biggest land possession by the Dom community in the study area is one "Katthaa" which is 338.63 m² or 3645 square feet of land. Since they have been suffering from vicious circle of poverty for generations their livelihood strategies are at risks, and they seemed far off from the sustainable livelihoods at present. The Dom people are being marginalized, socio-economically backward, illiterate and politically under facilitated in the study area.

From this research journey, I conclude that the male members' life expectancy until now is only fifty-eight years ever since they immigrated in Urlabari municipality in 1969. However, the national average life expectancy is 71. 1 years. It is because of uncontrolled alcohol drinking, no sanitary measures used during the work, low nutritional food intake and socio-cultural issues.

Since they lost their traditional livelihood practice of weaving bamboo items because of the advent of easy and cheap industrial goods in the local markets, they have adapted new livelihood strategy of sanitary occupation in and around the society for which they are struggling against the modernized and mechanized system of cleaning practices adapted recently. They lost the occupation of rearing pig of local species due to the emergence of modern pig farming in the area with modern technologies. The adult male members used to live a nomadic lifestyle as they used to rear huge numbers of pig, wandering place to place in order to search fodder and water for pigs and searching customers for their pigs to be sold.

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