

# A Bird's Eye View of Pastoralism Focusing on Nandagawli And Melghatgawli Communities of Eastern Maharashtra, India

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**Abstract-** This paper is written on the experience of an in-depth study of two community viz. Nandagawli and MelghatGawli of eastern Maharashtra. Information are collected through semi- structured interview, narratives, focused group discussion and case study. It has a goal to bring the pastoralism into the limelight as a livelihood. It mainly focuses on the origin of this community, their past practices and the transformation over time. In earlier times (25-35 years ago), Nandagawlis had the access to the forest lands and they could take their animals (cows and buffalows) to the forest for grazing. As the bulls of gawlao cow are very good for agricultural purpose (like hoeing, tilling etc). After the implementation of 'Bor Tiger Reserve Project', these communities lost the access of forest land and were rehabilitated to the plains. Due to these, these pastoralists had to buy fodder and also had to pay for those needs which they usually fulfilled before from different forest products like they used different plants for medicinal purpose, different weeds as food, woods as fuel etc. This paper also include the present shocks, seasonality and trends in the livelihood.

**Keywords-** Pastoralism, Nandagawl, MelghatGawli, Livelihood study

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pastoralism is an ancient system of livestock rearing and it is found in almost any part and any situation of the world. Livelihood of pastoralist community largely depends on livestock. This livestock include sheep, goat, cattle (both cow and buffalo) and in some cases poultry. These livestock varies in different communities like Nandagawli community mainly rear cattle where as Kurba community people rear sheep, goat, horses etc. Community like Dhangar rears both cattle and sheep depend upon the regions. Dhangars of Wardha district of Maharashtra depends on cattle rearing but the Dhangars of Kolhapur region or Karnataka, depends on sheep rearing. In Maharashtra pastoralist communities come under 'Nomadic Tribe' due to their lifestyle where they migrate to different places to provide fodder and water to their

animals. As livestock are the main source of livelihood of their communities, it is necessary for them to migrate to those places where there is the availability of food and water for their livestock in different seasons. In the Indian constitution there is no mentioning of Nomadic Tribes. They are considered as schedule castes or schedule tribes or backward classes. Tripathy (2020) states in his article that among them nearly 104 million people which is 8.6 per cent of the total Indian population is belonging from the tribal community and they are always excluded from the mainstream amenities from the period of mythology. As a continue of this they remain excluded from the mainstream development and schemes. Due to this different type of lifestyle they often face various problems regarding their basic rights, getting benefits of government schemes, to be involved in the main stream of the society. It is also difficult to cover them in different government schemes because of their migration activity

## II. STUDY AREA

This research was conducted at two different areas of Maharashtra. One, in the Wardha District of Maharashtra and another one is in the Amravati district of Maharashtra. In both the areas there is a significant population of Pastoralist communities which are known as 'Nandagawli' in Wardha and 'MelghatGawli' in Amravati. Both the areas are topographically identical and this topography has a significant effect on the lifestyle and livelihood of these communities. These areas are topographically undulated and surrounded with dense forest of 'Bore Tiger Reserve.' Pastoralists prefer this region because of the availability of grassland and preferable weather for their animals.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Informations are collected through semi- structured interview, narratives, focused group discussion and case study.

#### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### Mythological Background of the Community:

According to some mythological story, Nandagawli community is originally from Uttar Pradesh. When lord Krishna came to take Rukmini to Mathura from ‘.....’, ancestors of this community came with lord Krishna with their livestock as well which were ‘Gawli’ breed of cattle and ‘Nagpuri’ breed of buffalo. Krishna went back with Rukmini but some of those people remained there and are currently known as Nandagawli community. After that these people started to migrate to different places in search of water and fodder for their animals. Some of them migrated to Amravati and was latterly known as ‘MelghatGawli’. Slowly they started to purchase or occupy lands at different places during their migration and started to be settled.

##### Past Livelihood of Nandagawli and MelghatGawlicommunities:

In earlier times (25-35 years ago), Nandagawlis had the access to the forest lands and they could take their animals (cows and buffaloes) to the forest for grazing. As the bulls of gawlao cow are very good for agricultural purpose (like hoeing, tilling etc). So earlier they sell those bulls and used to use the milk mainly for self consumption. After sometimes, they started to earn profit so started to rear buffaloes also as the quantity of milk is more than the gawlao cows. Then there was almost zero financial capital input for getting milk as due to the easy access of the grassland in the forests. Mondal and Tripathy (2019) in the article about the Asur tribe mentioned that collecting and gathering of forest resources is a very common livelihood of the tribes, in this case also it is not an exception. After little value addition the price also increases for value added products like ghee, butter, *khoa* etc. They also used to sell the milk and buttermilk directly to the market. Some people of these communities, who bought or occupied land, also performed some level of agriculture as an alternative livelihood. At that time also these communities were the major supplier of milk to the market to fulfil the major demand of milk and milk items.

##### Present Livelihood of Nandagawli and MelghatGawli Communities:

After the implementation of ‘**Bor Tiger Reserve Project**’, these communities lost the access of forest land and were rehabilitated to the plains. Due to these, these pastoralists had to buy fodder and also had to pay for those needs which they usually fulfilled before from different forest products like they used different plants for medicinal purpose, different

weeds as food, woods as fuel etc. These reasons started to decrease the income and forced to shift to other livelihood options like agriculture, labourer, service, self-employment etc. Introduction of different foreign and mixed breeds which can give more milk in same input, is also a big reason behind the decrease of interest about this livelihood as those breeds created competition and accrued the market. Before pastoralist communities used to be the only source of milk in market but later other communities also chose and adopted this livelihood and create competition. Now their traditional livelihood, cattle rearing, becomes an alternative livelihood and the number of animal is largely decreasing. Most of the members of these communities are now rearing cattle only to maintain their tradition.

##### Reasons for Shifting from Traditional Livelihood:

- Implementation of ‘Bor Tiger Reserve’ which restricted the access of these pastoral communities to forest lands. With this restriction they lost the access of different fodders which were important for the good quality and quantity of milk.
- Introduction of new breed which give huge amount of milk and occupy the market.
- Increase in the cost of fodder and ‘dhep’ (cotton seed cake). Earlier there was almost zero investment as all the fodders were available in the forest for free of cost and.
- The pastoralists had the knowledge about those and how to use those fodders sustainably. These knowledges were transferred orally. Slowly with the time this oral knowledge were lost or distracted.
- Introduction of different dairies which sell the milk at comparatively low price. These dairies started to give competition to the pastorals.
- Due to the advancement of technology and communication, the outer world becomes reachable to the new generations of these communities and the urge to live a life with all types of modern facilities lead them to shift from their traditional occupation.

##### Changing Pattern of Migration:

As there are some village which are on the slopes and mainly rain feed agriculture was practiced in this region, during summer season there was scarcity of water due to its hilly topography and low level of ground water. As a result, availability of fodder, drinking water for animals and irrigation water has decreased. To fulfil the demand of fodder, water for animals and to find another livelihood, people of these areas migrate during January-February to May-June to either the plains or to different cities. In earlier times they use

to migrate with their full family to the plains where the water and fodder are available. But with time, these communities started to settle down and perform agriculture. So, the pattern of migration is also changed with time. Now only the male members or some family members only migrate. Other members take care of the children of the families and perform agriculture. Also there are some people who completely leave pastoralism, they either do not migrate or migrate to the nearest cities in search of work (like labour work).

### **Other Issues Related to these Pastoralist Communities:**

#### **Issue of Rehabilitation:**

Due to the 'Bor Tiger reserve', a large number of people are being rehabilitated from the core areas of the reserve forest and are resettled on the plains. During this they have been paid Rs.10,00,000 for one adult member of the family. Villagers are informed about rehabilitation and compensation and given choice for either staying in the jungles or resettling in the other places. After that, those who wanted to be resettled are given the compensation but those who are staying in jungle, are started to face problems of transportation, medical facilities and other basic facilities. Also it is difficult for them to buy land for agriculture and housing which can support their whole family. It also affects their culture, emotion and makes it difficult for them to cope up with new environment, culture, food habits etc.

#### **Problems Regarding Rehabilitations:**

- High price (approx 15 lakh/ acre) of land in the plain area.
- It is found difficult for the people to manage the compensation amount rationally as they are handling that much amount of money for the first time.
- These people are uprooted from their culture, habits, life style, environments, society and planted in a completely new situation where they have to start from the starting.
- Resettlement in the plains increases the expenses of those people which are hampering their lifestyle.
- Conflict between forest dwellers and forest officers.

#### **Inter- community Conflict:**

Other than Nandagawli and Melghatgawli, there are other communities also who are present in that area and are equally vulnerable (Gawlan, Kurku etc). Gawlans are also pastoralist community but now they leave pastoralism and are completely shifted to either agriculture or Hunting and gathering was the main livelihood of the people of Korku tribe. So they did hunting and also cut the forest to do agriculture (self- consumption purpose). Thus some of them illegally started to acquire land. On the other hand Gawlao and

Gawlan communities mainly dependent on livestock rearing but marked as guilty for hunting of animals and cutting of forest. Also Gawlan and Gawlao community people do not accept inter-caste marriage between these two communities. Gawlao and Gawlan communities come under NT (Nomadic Tribes) in state level and OBC in central level but Korku comes under ST (Schedule Tribe). Though both the three communities are facing same kind of problem in those areas but Korku is getting most benefits and reservation both in education and service due to their ST profile.

#### **Shocks, trends and Seasonality:**

Like any other livelihood, in this livelihood also there are several shocks, trends and seasonality. As shocks, infestation of different diseases to the animals, sudden decrease in market price, implementation of different governmental schemes (like tiger reserves), sudden increase in the cost of fodder, attack of robbers during migration, attack of wild animal both during grazing and migration, sudden loss of market etc are faced by the pastoralists. Though, older generations have some indigenous techniques to face some of these shocks.

In the field of cattle rearing and milk market, the trends have changed diversely. Introduction of several high quantity milk giving varieties of cows, introduction of dairies which occupied the milk market with time, lots of different indigenous oral knowledge, extinction of different fodders, losing of access to the different pastoral lands, continuous changing lifestyle and demands etc come out as most important trends of this livelihood.

Seasonality also plays an important role on this livelihood. During summer season there are scarcity of water and fodder. During heavy rain, these animals become susceptible to different diseases. During rainy season, animals also become susceptible to the attack of different wild animals.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

Pastoralism is an extensive type of livestock rearing. Pastoralist used to migrate from place to place to find water and fodder. They used to take their animals to the forest for grazing. After the 'Bor Tiger Reserve' project, the access to the forest land was stopped. Now those communities have to pay for different inputs which were free earlier. Due to this, their livelihood becomes vulnerable and profits started to decrease. As the indigenous breeds give less amount of milk, their competition is increasing day by day. In addition to this, their lifestyle was largely influenced by the outsiders or main

stream due to the access of social media. Also the new generation do not want to do such hard work for their livelihood. Because of the continuously changing habits and lifestyle, it becomes difficult to make the pastoralism sustainable and profitable. So, lots of pastoralists are shifting to agriculture and other livelihoods. Pastoralists either have to change their breed or have to shift to alternative livelihoods.

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