UNIT 2  PASTORALISM

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the concept of pastoralism, major activities of pastoralist communities;
- describe the natural resource management patterns among the pastoralist; and
- comprehend socio-economic and political relationship among the pastoralist and also with the neighbouring people.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of pastoralism is one among the interesting topics in studying the evolution of human society in Socio-Cultural Anthropology. In order to understand pastoralism, one needs to cover different dimensions of all the aspect of life i.e. economic, social and ecological dimension of human survival. The holistic approach in studying the subject brings a better understanding of the subject and so one needs to keep an open mind for diverse perspectives of the content.

Ever since Adam Smith, different classifications of economic organization have been made about hunters, pastoralists and agriculturalist. Since the beginning of human being, man needs to feed themselves for their survival. They passed through different stages like hunting-gathering, pastoralism, horticulture and agriculture etc as a mechanism for getting their essential needs for their livelihood. And the surrounding environment and the available resources provide the essential food for survival. These activities enable them to grow the human civilization.
2.2 BEGINNING OF PASTORALISM / ORIGIN AND GEOGRAPHY OF PASTORALISM

“Somewhere around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, one or more groups of humans in one or more locations discovered that they could control and domesticate certain species for human consumption. Thus, instead of having to roam in search of their food sources, they could bring the sources “home” to them. This is sometimes referred to as the “Neolithic” or New Stone Age revolution, and it was revolutionary not only for how humans worked and provided food but for every aspect of their cultures and social relationships, as well as for the species they fed on. The revolution of domestication actually culminated in not one but two new economic system. The first we will describe as pastoralism. Pastoralism, originating from the word “pasture”, is the production of food predominantly from the exploitation of domesticated animals. It is what might conventionally be called “herding” or “ranching”. Thus, the primary “work” to be done was tending and exploiting – milking, breeding, and slaughtering – such animals as cattle, sheep, goats, llamas, horse, pigs, and other smaller creatures, depending on the locally available species. In the vast majority of these societies – and they were spread across the world, from grasslands of east Africa to the mountains of Central Asia and the plains of North America – the ownership and control of herd animals was the prerogative of men. Women and children might do the day-to-day work of tending the animals - milking the cattle and so on - but it was men who decided when one would be slaughtered or traded or sold for some purpose. Thus, in terms of production and even more so by control of production, pastoralism was a man’s world, and the gender division of labor devolved into a gender inequality. Men’s status was much higher than women’s in typical pastoral societies. Men accordingly tended to be the heads of family and household; again, women might wield real “domestic” power in the home, but their political power was limited compared to men.” (Jack David Eller, 158)

Looking back to the hunting-gathering stage, human being depends directly on the natural environment resources for getting the basic need by collecting or gathering the naturally grown leaves, fruits, roots, etc from the surrounding grown vegetation, and also from hunting, trapping and fishing activities. The nomadic people like the Eskimos, the pigmies, the bushman, the Australian aborigines are some of the examples of people who carried out such activities. With the advancement of human knowledge and skills, human being started taming wild animals and started a semi nomadic life. They started growing vegetation and domesticated animals like sheep, goats, pigs, horse, etc. However, they move from one place to another along with the herds of their animals in search of fodder, vegetation and water. Thus they became herders.

Pastoralism, as a means of livelihood by using of extensive grazing on rangelands for livestock production, is an important economic and cultural way of life for between 100 and 200 million people throughout the world. Many pastoralists can be found in Africa; however pastoralism is also practiced in dry and sub-humid lands in the Middle East, South and East Asia, South America and Europe. It can also be mentioned that in sub-Saharan Africa about 16% of the population relies on pastoralism, and in some countries, such as Somalia and Mauritania, pastoralists represent a majority of the population.

2.2.1 Definition

Pastoralists are the people who have strong relationship with herding for their livelihood. Most of the pastoralists are inhabited in the places where potential for crop cultivation is limited due to the lack of rainfall, steep terrain or extreme temperature like desert, etc. They are semi-nomadic or nomadic in nature due the
Pastoralism

Pastoralism is the search of water, fodder, and pasture for grazing their herds. They have different types of livestock like sheep, goats, cattle, horse, yak and camels in Central Asia, Buffalo in South Asia, llamas and alpacas in South America, and reindeer in the Pale arctic region. Close association with their animals is the most important characteristic of pastoralist community. At the same time, the pastoralist identity is also based on their strong association with their livestock that shape key elements of their social and ritual life. So, pastoralism is a highly complicated activity that needs to hold the balance amongst human population, animal population and natural resources.

The Basic Types of Pastoralism defined by Sutton Mark Q and Anderson E.N, 2010, in their book entitle “Introduction to Cultural Ecology” is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Major Features</th>
<th>Mobility and settlement Pattern</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Pastoral Systems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomadic</td>
<td>Almost all of the resources produced are derived from animals and their products, with some trade for other products</td>
<td>Highly mobile, seasonal round with few permanent settlements</td>
<td>Saami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminomadic</td>
<td>The bulk of the resources used come from animals and their products, supplemented by some horticulture, hunting, gathering, and trade</td>
<td>Generally mobile, seasonal round but with some of the population remaining in permanent or semi permanent villages</td>
<td>Maasai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semisedentary</td>
<td>Animals and their products provide many of the resources used, but horticulture, hunting, gathering, and trade are very important</td>
<td>Some mobility by specialized task groups, most of the population in settled villages</td>
<td>Navajo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pastoral Components of Larger Agricultural Systems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herdsman husbandry</td>
<td>Animals are important but farming the dominant activity</td>
<td>Animals are raised in pastures distant from the main agricultural centres, task groups tend animals and move them seasonally</td>
<td>Basque, ranchers in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedentary animal husbandry</td>
<td>Animals are important but farming the dominant activity</td>
<td>Animals raised in a static location</td>
<td>Dani, dairies in the United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT/UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES

For the survival of human being, man always exploits the available resources like plants and animals from their surrounding environment either in wild state or in a state of domestication. Herskovits has mentioned different economic systems of non-literate people. They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Food gathering</td>
<td>Plant (wild)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>Animals (wild)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Herding</td>
<td>Animals (domesticated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Plant (domesticated)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to avoid over exhaustive exploitation of the available resources for further uses, they maintain certain habits that are culturally taboo to them. For example, the Eskimos become food gatherer and taboo eating the flesh of sea mammals during the summer season. The pastoralist avoids eating meat when they get enough food and they became gatherer in order to preserve their economy for the lean season. They gather wild roots, nuts, seeds, and berries, and also trap or hunt small game animals or fowls. They also dried fruits, roots, seeds, meats so as to meet the need of their survival. In Europe, North Africa, etc. wheat, oat, barely are the important crops. Rice is predominant in Asia, Malaysia and Indonesia. However, maize, millet, yams and cassava are the important crops cultivated in Africa.

With regards to the resource management like the fertility of the soil, pastoralists have directly or indirectly helped in maintaining the soil fertility of their neighbouring village farmers. In fact, pastoralist are requested by the local farmers to hold their herds of cattle overnight in their field so that they could get the animal excreta (dung & urine) as a organic manure deposited in the field. Such amount of urine and droppings left during those short stay of night offer sufficient fertilizer to enrich the soil before tilling their field for cropping. Some of the important pastoralist communities in India are Rabaris and Bharwads of Gujarat and Rajasthan in the desert region, the Gujjars and Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh, the Dhangars in Maharastra, Konare in Tamil Nadu, etc.

2.3.1 Tragedy of Common

This is the major challenge among the resource management problems within the pastoralist community. Everyone eyes on the common property resources like the land shared by pastoralist that eventually have pressure due to over grazing and ruin. So, such human disorganized management led to desertification and depletion of the natural resource. In fact, it is a kind of major threat to the ecological balance in Nature. Due to this, there is also major climatic change. And also, due to the rapid urbanization and privatization, there are huge pressures on both the pastoral land as well as the livelihood of the pastoralist community.

2.4 TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Human beings have been depending on various tools and techniques for their survival in the history of mankind. Fire was tamed and the techniques of hunting and fishing were also developed with the changes of time. Man learns how to use river and other waterways as means of transport and also developed the knowledge of using wheel. He also learns the techniques of pottery making for various usages.
in their domestic life. The domestication of plants and animals led the agricultural activities for them to earn their livelihood. Such activities made them to discover the uses of animal labour with the uses of plough for tilling field, bullock carts for transportation. Then with the discovery of metal working and further improvement of wheel technology, sailing vessels, irrigation, better farming techniques and the more efficient employment of domesticated animals led to the betterment of human being. Subsequently, improvement of cattle herding also took place with the wider connection across the neighboring areas. Herskovits Melville J (pp 81) had mentioned four criteria of domestication:

1) Restricted habitat
2) Regular supply of specific foods
3) Protection against weather and predatory animals and
4) Controlled breeding.

Herskovits Melville J also pointed various techniques to control domestication like building of fences, or cages, or makes other devices to keep their animals from roaming. Making barns and other kinds of shelters that protect animals from weather, and watches to see that wild animals do not prey on them. Also avoid casual mating in order to develop and prevent the continuance of the pure lines and control quality of the domesticated animals. They also devised cooking techniques, drying of food material, making of clothes from animal furs or skins.

### 2.5 MOBILITY

Mobility among the pastoralist is a pattern of movement for exploiting more than one environment for finding grasses, fodders, and water. Such movement creates the people living in the arid region to support their livelihood during the food scarcity season. So, in search of the fodder, vegetation and water, the pastoralists move from one place to the other. Such requirement of grazing for their herds often compelled them to frequent shifts of locations i.e. a nomadic way of life. Nomadic Pastoralists is a type of food-producing strategy with its main base relying on the intensive management of herds for their primary products of meat and skin, and for their secondary products such as wool, milk, blood, dung and transport. Due to different socio-economic and ecological factors, this movement pattern helps in managing the herd. So, the members of the household move along with the herd and engage themselves in their cattle management during their seasonal migration.

On the other hand, the nature and extent of their movement varies from on one region to another and so regular seasonal migration happened for the sustenance of their livelihood. Thus, the term "trance humans" is often used for such seasonal migrations along with their herds in search of water and pasture land for grazing. Some pastoralist communities sometime settled for longer period and take up certain secondary activities like horticulture to supplement their livelihood. Such mobility follows the migratory track through the arrangement of local authorities who have control over the land resources. It is accessed through membership of kin group corporation but their live stocks are owned and managed by individual. The fission and fusion of their group depends on the availability of grassland for grazing their herds. Mostly during the scarcity of grazing land, the group divided and headed to different direction in order to avoid the conflict and competition for the pasture. Pastoralist communities often have an area with an approximate radius of 100-500 km. Long dependence induce pressure on the same grassland due to regular overgrazing. Burning is an important mechanism of revitalizing pasture land. Burning of pastures is believed to have an impact on soil fertility, the quality of yield and help reducing unnecessary weeds and bushes.
2.5.1 Cross-border Pastoralism

Frequent movement for the search of pasture for new grazing and trading of their goods is the main nature of pastoralist community. They travel many places and sometimes crossed the border in search of the grazing land for their herd. During their travel, they also have small trading for domestics goods like spices, clothes, grains, etc. and also sometime indulge in smuggling activities. Due to such undocumented trading between the border villages, there is loss of tax revenue and foreign exchange revenue in the country.

On the other hand, such cross-border informal interactions among the people also enhance the solidarity and maintain good relations among the people. It also helps in maintaining the food security within the border villages during the natural calamities like food scarcity period flood, famine, etc.

2.6 SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Pastoralist communities, like any other simple society, are egalitarian. The disputes are solved by their elders and sometimes the dispute within the group led them separate among themselves. The cattle are considered to be their property and their social and economic status also defined by number of cattle they have and they also use them as a medium of exchange. Transferring of animals from one individual to another happens as a gift, loans or marriage payments. Such exchange mechanism serves them to develop their social relationship within their communities.

Different adaptation process occurred in different socio-cultural and ecological environment and so there is no strict social organization pattern associated with the pastoralist community. However, most of the pastoralist people are often considered to be in the “Tribe” as their major source of organizing labour and expenses are from within the family. Majority of them inherit their property through their lineage. The possession of such animal property enables to retain social structure and maintain social relationship within the group to control their juniors who inherit property for the need of marriage payment as bride wealth. Due to the lack of centralized administration with the group and strong social security, the herding animals being easy to be stolen and driven away, raiding and cattle stealing that cause warfare with their neighbouring people became a common issue in the pastoralist community. And also due to frequent mobility, the group happens to split and re-group themselves depending on the availability of resources and their nature of social relationship within the group.

On the other hand, the pastoralist has a very strong symbiotic relationship with the neighbouring farmer or land owners. This is due to the fact that the pastoralist provides precious excreta (dung and urine) of the animals in their field to enrich the fertility of the soil or land and in return the farmers give money to the pastoralist. So, the seasonal movement of the pastoralist along with their herd coincides with the agricultural cycle of the farmers. Hence, pastoralists visit the farmer before sowing of their seed i.e. in beginning of monsoon. In addition to this, pastoralists plan and follow the roads and villages defined by their ancestral route? and tradition in order to avoid overgrazing of the available pasture and conflict within the groups.

2.7 IMPORTANT EXCHANGES OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Pastoralist communities follow different form of exchanges of goods and services. There is some degree of specialization, and exchanges are affected that are personal,
Pastoralism

direct, and specific. Such specialized form of exchange also happen among the advanced societies. The barter system i.e. direct exchange of goods for goods becomes more important. In addition to this, exchange of goods with the money also happen when there is market facilities. So, face-to-face trading of goods for goods is the most prevalent form of exchange among these communities. Bargaining may or may not be present as the situation demands. For example, North and South America perform intertribal exchange like Tewa of the Southwest trafficked corn, corn meal, and wheat bread for the buffalo hides of the Comanche, or the Choroti of the Chaco bartered dried fish for maize, red paint, and necklaces. However the value of the object may be fixed by negotiation depending on the availability and demand of the commodity. For example, among the Solomons, a bundle of six or seven carrying baskets is traded for a basket full of taro.

2.8 TRANSFORMATION OF PASTORALIST

With the advent of new economic policies, planning and development programs both at the state and the centre, the transformation of socio-economic conditions and livelihood of pastoralist is inevitable. During different Five Year Plans in India, strategy for community development through integrated tribal development programme and tribal sub-plan have provided scope for uplifting the socio-economic conditions of different primitive tribal communities including pastoralist. In addition to economic conditions, the changes in environmental and ecological conditions have too exerted pressure for the traditional pastoralists to look for other alternatives like small scale business, seasonal wage earning, engaging in settle agriculture, etc.

Despite all above conditions, the transformation among pastoralist is relatively limited and there is no specific developmental strategy for the pastoralist.

2.9 FUTURE CHALLENGES

Pastoralist makes a significant contribution to the economy of developing countries, both in terms of providing employment and income opportunities and in supplying nutrition to the poor. Pastoralist and their animal have developed a very long term mutually benefiting relationship. The pastoralists provide their animals with protection from predator, a balanced supply of food, health care and assured producing their progeny. And in return animals provide meat, milk, dung, wool, labour, and other services and the companionship and the transportation of people for better living. Pastoralist requires vast grassland for grazing their herds.

Besides, India is having a large number of pastoral communities that have very low socio-economic and political profile. They have been sidelined, paying no attention by the government policies, local businessmen, neighboring farmers, etc. even though their large contribution towards the national economy by producing milk, meat, leather, dung, and other products. The biggest challenge ahead to the pastoralist community is the shrinking of the pasture resource base due to establishment of national parks and sanctuaries, expansion of agriculture into marginal areas, etc. have crippled the traditional livelihood of pastoralist community. Consequently, the pastoralist are involved in long standing conflicts with forest authorities and many of them have bitter experience of forceful expulsion from their common traditional grazing areas.

The future of pastoralist in the present situation is sometimes in dilemma. With the rapid growth in urbanization and industrialization, the pastoral land turns into the urban zone or industrial zone. In addition to this, due to Green Revolution and the growing consumption of chemical fertilizers, the cropping patterns of the village
farmer have changed and the dependence of cattle dung for fertilizer also lessens. Such changes in cropping patterns led to the changing attitude of the farmers towards the pastoralists. Many agricultural communities also have huge encroachment for agricultural land in the grassland areas which was used earlier by the pastoralist communities as a grazing field. The symbiotic relationship between the local farmers and the pastoralist communities becomes less functional and ultimately the pastoralist communities are unwelcome to their village. Sometime, conflict arises between the farmers and the pastoralists about pastoralist movement with the herds while crossing the neighbouring villagers.

Also, with the establishment of national parks, wild life sanctuary, construction of heavy dams, wide roads construction also bring another challenge to the pastoralist community. Subsequently, many of the pastoralists are forced to shift their traditional way of earning livelihood of herding to some other mechanism. So, there is an urgent call for government intervention for up-lifting the socio-economic life of the pastoralist community.

2.10 SUMMARY

Pastoralism is the form of agriculture in which domestic animals are emphasized, sometimes to the exclusion of other resources. Pastoralists are people whose livelihood depends mainly on the raising of domestic animals including cattle, camels, goats, sheep, yaks, horses, and donkeys, which are used for milk, meat, wool, hides, transport, and trade; in addition, many pastoralists cultivate crops or have long-standing trading relations with agricultural neighbors. In pastoralism, humans and animals have formed a long-term mutualistic relationship where animals are guaranteed reproduction and protection and humans get food and other products.

Three major types of pastoralism can be defined. These are nomadic, seminomadic, and semisedentary. Two other forms, herdsman husbandry and sedentary animal husbandry, are pastoral components of larger agricultural systems. The primary components of any pastoral system include use and maintenance of pastures, the types of animals (grazers or browsers) herded, composition and size of herds, and the movement of herds.

Pastoralists occupy savannas, arid deserts, high plateaus, or sub-arctic forests and tundra where rain-fed agriculture is difficult or impossible. They also occupy large tracts of communally-shared land and utilize kinship ties for mutual herding and defense. Their herds are often large, in poor condition, but hardy enough to survive periodic drought and sparse vegetation. Many pastoralists practice some agriculture; they may also supplement their pastoral diets with wild plants, game, fish, grains and other food commodities purchased by the sale or trade of livestock, milk products, and hides. Some pastoral societies engage in long distance trade, such as the Tuareg of the Western Sahara, while others such as the Maasai practice localized livestock-keeping in semi-permanent settlements (Fratkin et al. 1994).

Pastoralists have undergone substantial social change, in response to pressures from national governments to sedentarize, and to the problems of population growth and environmental decline. With the advent of new economic policies, planning and development programs both at the state and the centre, the transformation of socio-economic conditions and livelihood of pastoralist is inevitable. The future of pastoralist in the present situation is sometimes in dilemma. With the rapid growth in urbanization and industrialization, the pastoral land turns into the urban zone or industrial zone.
2.11 REFERENCES


Suggested Reading


Sample Questions

1) Write a short note on Pastoralism.
2) How is pastoralist different from other simple societies?
3) Write a brief note on the socio-economic relationship of pastoralist with the neighbouring communities.
4) Describe pastoralist mechanism of avoiding overgrazing of pasture and their management of natural resources.