

THE CASE STUDY OF AVAILABILITY OF LIVESTOCK IN TRADITIONAL
TRADE FAIRS OF KUMAUN REGION OF UTTARAKHAND IN INDIA

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Abstract:-

This paper analyses the theoretical role played by the trade fairs organized in different parts of Kumaun region of Uttarakhand. It is well known that festivals and fairs have always been part and parcel of human culture since time immemorial. These are often celebrated at certain/ particular places on specific dates, wherein confluence of culture, trade and entertainment take place. In the Himalayan region trade has always been a challenge due to uneven terrains, dense forests, inaccessible and distant places. Furthermore diversity of flora and fauna, scarcity of ground water indeed make it difficult and in viable. Even though in the past the trade of articles to distant places had been in existence and this fact is consolidated by the presence of manuscripts/ Pandu scripts & commercial ledgers found in these regions. The researcher has vastly surveyed the region to make the case study resourceful to other persons.

Key words: - *Livestock, culture, diversity, fairs and festivals*

INTRODUCTION: -

For the availability of articles for daily use and to overcome the hurdles and limitations of Himalayan region people from all walks of life used to gather at a destined place where they could easily trade and barter. In fact to meet the commercial challenges and necessities fairs became the meeting ground and rapidly became prominent in the Himalayan region. In the 19th century around 150 fairs were celebrated across the Kumaun region in which 1000 to 30,000 people used to flood in. These fair were very important as they had always provided a platform to the people for sale and purchase of commodities including food items, clothes and other articles of daily needs. From commercial point of view these fares have still a great significance (Pant D, 2005:208). Fairs are called 'Kautik' in Kumauni (Verma, L, 1988:52)

In Medieval Kumaun the commercial fairs were the strong centre of business places. Due to the abundance of additional agricultural tools as well as the articles of daily needs & the availability of adequate livestock has boosted the trade, which still continues. Commercial fairs organised at prominent places are sometimes meant to exclusively for animal trade and last for days. Trading of animal wealth has been carried out in the fairs of Kumaun since ancient times; this practice still persists in the same ancient lines. Besides meeting the needs of people inhabiting this place, such trade fairs are associated with agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce, employment, status and dignity of the people. Even today these traditional fairs are associated with the agrarian society inhabiting in the remote mountainous regions. Livestock in these commercial fairs include Bulls, Horses and Mules, Goat & 'typical Bhotia Dogs'.

Bull trade is mainly associated with Somnath fair of Mansi & Uttrayani of Bageshwar. Horse & mule trade are with Chaitimela Kashipur, Uttrayanimela Bageshwar & Joulgeebie fair celebrated at Pithoragarh.

[A] – BULLS/ OXEN

Bull is also called 'Bald' in Kumauni. Barring small stretches of plains along the river side, terrace farming is widely practised in most of the mountainous regions. In such harsh climatic conditions and uneven terrains bulls are the only way to plough a farm. For a farmer the most valuable after his land is his livestock & within livestock, a pair of ox is much more valuable to him (Sharma, D.D, 2007:112). Even the importance of a pair of ox is reflected in Kumauni aphorism- (Bald marikhetinash, Bhaishimarikutumnash) (Dabral, S.P, undated: 141-142)

Means if an ox (Bald) dies, the farming ends with it & if a Buffalo (Bhaishi) dies, a family (Kutumb) destroys. Therefore the usefulness of ox is reflected in public narration too. Besides this the bull festival is celebrated every year on a specific day that is 'Hari bod hani-Ekadasi in Kartiksukla-Paksha. On this day fields are not ploughed, oxen are garlanded, well feed and their horns smeared with oil (Sharma, D.D, 2007:112-113). Similarly, during the festival of Diwali, on the day of Maha Laxmi Pooja the hand prints laced in concoction of rice & water are imprinted on the backs of cattle and their horns smeared with ghee. On the Gobardhana Pooja the print of "Mana" is imprinted on the backs of animals & their horns are oiled. Furthermore in agrarian society some days are meant to give rest to ox, these days are called A jot/A jaut (Noplouhgingh days) (Sharma, D.D, 2007:113).

Somnath fair was once used to be celebrated for 8 to 10 days like Chaiti fair of Kashipur and this fair had been trading ground of ox (Sharma, D.D, 2007:157). Till today bull traders from Ramnagar cluster here. Jailal shah a local resident and trader of Teet Bazar (Garur) used to bring ox in the fair of Bageshwar.

In any trade topography of a place play a dominant role. For example there is an abundant availability of woollen outfits and seasoned food items in the colder region vice versa availability of light cloths and cold beverages in the hotter region. The flux of trade is greatly affected by geographical extension of a place in terms of latitudes and longitudes. For example, the availability of basic commodities and oxen in the fair centres of Masi and Bageshwar is just due to their topography, as these two places are water feeding regions of the Western Ramganga and Saryu respectively.

Above mentioned traditions depict people's deep attachment to oxen. Therefore in Kumaun region the sale and purchase of oxen takes place just like other commodities in famous fairs. The much known Somnath fair was celebrated at 'Mansi' in Pali-pachhaun' that lies in the middle of Bhikiyashain and Chaukhutia and contain around area of 30km. that is in form of wide belt is/of water fed fertile land.

Even in Salt, Silore & Kang lasaunpatti, regions nearby of Masi is so fertile that in this region till today the crop of chilly is cultivated by traditional ox-driven method of ploughing. However in the other region of Kumaun the beds of chilly plants are prepared and after light irrigation through rain water these saplings are planted. By and large the entire 'Pali-Pachhaun' region had been famous for ample production of food grains. The famous historian

Badri Dutt Pandey has mentioned in 'History of Kumaun' - "Do grain decrease if it used by humans." (Pandey B.D, 1990 reprint: 102)

In context of mountainous region this abundant food production had not been possible without sophisticated traditional method of ploughing by healthy oxen. Undoubtedly, the people of these fertile lands would be in need of healthy oxen since ancient times. And just to meet the requirements of healthy oxen the bull traders of 'Bhabar' region used to trade oxen in these places. In Somnath fair bull traders of Ramnagar bring healthy calves of 'Bhabri' oxen. According to a traditional business man "The trade of bulls is their traditional business, calves are brought from even far place such as

Dehradun, Farukhabad and sate like Punjab, & Rajasthan. Their ancestors used to travel by foot to fair grounds but now time have changed, with them the mode of conveyance, now oxen are brought in trucks .It was very common practice among the people of Salt, Deghat, Nagchulakhal (Garhwal), Kaptur to exchange pairs of ox and people still arrive here during the time of fair but the demand had been gone low.” Furthermore the people of Chaukhutia, Rampur (ganai) Mehalchauri & Chaukot too used to exchange their low quality oxen with ‘Bhabri’ calves. The native of Salt’s were very fond of ‘Bhabri-oxen.’ Even today one can notice small chandeliers around the horns of Bhabri oxen in Salt region. It shows their intimate attachment to the high quality oxen.

Through these fairs the natives not only became accustomed with high quality oxen but also these proved to be useful to the traders as these oxen ploughed the uneven stretch of lands besides no training for pulling carts in plains (Dabral, S.P.:149). The traders still sell these oxen to the people of plains. In addition to it, the proximity of this highly productive, and water feeding region of ‘Dudhatoli plateau’ has definitely encouraged the trade of oxen, as for centuries the people of Ramganga valley of Kumaun used to drive their cattle via valley of Ramganga to Dudhatoli just for feeding them. Eventually after grazing nutritious grass for four years in a row these cattle acquire perfect shape and become strong. It is noticeable that people from around 125 villages out of the 140 villages of Talla and Malla Chaukot used to migrate to Dudhatoli region for cattle feeding in the summer. Where they used to have sheds (Kharak) at particular places in the Kumaun region (Dabral, S.P.:141-144).

Likewise, in Bageshwar fair the trade of oxen used to take place. Its reason was just the same (highly fertile and productive land) as it is situated on the confluence of river ‘Gomati and Saryu’. The catchment area of Gomati includes fertile land of-Deonai, Garur, Baijnath & Gagrigol. While the catchment area of Saryu consists of fertile plains of-Kapkot, Bharari, Bhalight and Mandalsera. Since ancient times, Bageshwar has been centre of grand trade fair. In such a significant centre the sale and purchase of oxen and agricultural tools is a common place phenomenon. In comparison to other fairs of Kumaun, the availability of agricultural tools such as Plough, Danali, Nasude, Pata, Mai, Juwa is adequately seen in this fair. Other than these agricultural tools the articles used for storage of food grains, made of Ringals such as-Doka, Byan, Pitar including Mohte used for thrashing of paddy are also readily available in this fair, which meet the needs of agrarian society.

{B}- HORSES AND PONIES

The use of Ponies and Horses is intimately associated with human life .The use of horses in cavalry, horse-riding and for carrying weights and loads is well known. Ponies are mainly used as beast of burden. A pony is hybrid of horse and donkey. Before the development and construction of roads in Kumaun, ponies were widely used for carrying loads. Ptolemy has also mentioned in his writings that the region from Jamuna to Sarda (Garhwal –Kumaun) was inhabited by Kirats and is called Tangana state. Tanka or Tangana region has been famous for its stout horses (Sankrityan R, 2015:26). Archaeologists believe that the word ‘Tanga’ is originated from the word ‘Tangan.’ There was a convoy of ‘Tangan horses in the cavalry of ‘Harsha. These horses were peerless, and had swift gait and precise moves. Even the water taken on the rider’s hand would not pour out (Vaishnav, Y.D, 1977:113).

There was a trend of tending horses in the medieval Kumaun. A tax named ‘Ghodalo’ was levied on the owner of a horse. It is also mentioned in copper plate of the Chand ruler – Bhismchand (saka 1436 samvat 1571) as- which means taxes were levied on the maintenance of royal horses and dogs. Similarly the description of Ghodalo also comes in the Copper-plate of Rajwar of Askot-Kalyanpal (granted in saka 1525) (Chaudhari, D.C, 2002:72).

Taxes levied on Horses indicate that the tending of Horses was widely prevalent in the Kumaun region. That’s why it fell in the category of taxable articles. During those times there had been wide pavements in almost in all corners of Kumaun which are still known as ‘Ghodi-Sadak’. The traders of plains or Tibet, Bhutan used to make use of horses for carrying goods and articles to the fair grounds. This practice is now almost out of trend except in the mountainous region where horses are still used by the Bhotiya traders, as these regions are deprived of fast means of road transport .Horses are still used in marriage ceremonies, grooms are carried on their backs .Even today, in some places of Kumaun where there is no facility of road transport and any mode of conveyance, horses & ponies are used for carrying cement, bricks, sand and edible items on their backs.

In plane areas, carts are driven by ponies and horses. One could not deny the strong position acquired by horses in the Kumaun region. Due to their varied utility the trade of Pahari/Jumli horses in this region still thrives in many fairs. In famous fair of Jauljeebee,

“The horses from ‘Humla – Jumla’ (Nepal) are brought for trade and business, are known as Jumali-Horses.” On the other side of Jauljeebee fair ground, in the land of Nepal along the side of ‘Kali- Nadi’ the stalls of Jumli- horses are set up. The bridge over Kali Nadi is not strong enough for the movement of animal across it. That is why the purchase of the horses takes place in the land of Nepal. After the deal is done the horses are made swim across the river to bring them to the other side with the help of skilful swimmers. Horse buyers still reach in this fair in large number. A few years ago, The Horses from ‘Dokpa Lumba’ region were also brought in this fair.

In the same fashion the horse-trade fair was organised in Bageshwar, During the British time, there used to be horse-racing in ‘Numaiskhet’ where the purchaser used to learn about the agility, strength, and the state of health of a horse.

Accordingly they used to bet money on their favourite horses. At the end of the race, the owner of best horse was awarded by an English officer in charge.²¹The horse trade fair was also organised in the Thalmela but now it is extant.

Besides, the mountainous region, in plains the fair of Chaiti (Kashipur) was a famous horse trading centre. At that time when horses were very useful, the horse trade was special attraction of this fair. People from Haldwani, Ramnagar, Barielly, & Moradabad used to arrive in large number to purchase articles and horses. Due to easy availability of goods & articles at Chaiti fair Kashipur, newly developed towns and cities, smooth road transport, advanced mechanical facilities, the need of horses has declined (Sharama, D.D, 2007:153).

The 'Nakhshabazar' of this fair is famous since ancient time. According to an anecdote-This place had been a favourite fair centre for the dacoit of Chambal Valley. They would visit this place in disguise. The famous dacoit 'Sultana' too used to come here to purchase horses. From ancient time, the horse from Kashgunj, Sauro, Sheesgad, Richa, Rampur, Amroha were brought here. The traders from other states used to bring horses with an intention to sell them for horse-riding. However the most of the traders from Uttarakhand and U.P. used to bring horses fit for pulling carts and carrying loads. The purchasers of fine horses are from U.P., Punjab, Rajasthan, still visit here. Not very long ago Bhotiyas Saukas and other inhabitants of mountains used to cluster here in order to purchase horses. The horses of high breed from every corner of the country are brought here for trade till today.

It is the apparent from the above mentioned description that horses and ponies are still providing a great help to people who dwell in inaccessible places. The places where there is no facility of road transport they are the only means of transportation. These animals are of a great utility in bhotia dominated region. Similarly in plains, horses are used for riding and pulling carts that is why their availability is still in existence in trade fairs of Kumaon.

[C]-SHEEP AND GOATS

Since ancient times the herders of Kumaon have been famous for tending high quality breeds of sheep and goats and production of fine wools. It's worth mentioning that 'Khas' were so expert in bringing up and ostracizing of rams that till today the word 'Khas' & 'Khassi' is commonly used for rams. The sheep tending region of Garhwal and Kumaon is called 'Khadwal' region (Dabral, S.P:74).On the slope of the greater Himalayas of Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Pithoragarh just below the winter line, there are splendid buggies. In these regions where no agricultural practices exist, sheep are reared and tended. The people of this region are called Khadwal (sheep herders) (Dabral, S.P:23).sheep and goats are assets of the theKhadwals. In their community an individual' sprosperity, wealth and position in society are determined by their livestock (Dabral,S.P:67).The Khadwals inhabiting on the either side of Pindar and Danpursell their goods and articles in the fair of Bageshwer (Dabral,S.P:74).

The main sale articles of Khadwal's would be sheep and goats in the fairs held nearby.

Bhotia people carry their lighter goods like food-grains, salt, jaggery&borex on the backs of sheep. They purchase sheep from Kangra people of Chamba Valley and Danpur(Atkinson,2003:131). In the past, sheep of the Danpur plateau called ' Ranku Sheep' and were famous for their fine quality wool across the country while rams of Danpur are considered as the best carrier of goods. The blankets made of the famous fine wool of ranku goats were sent to royalaties. Besidesthis Bhotias were also engaged in business of birds of prey such as eagle ,hawk, pageant and Quail (Pant,D,2005:210).The prominent trader of Gaddi and Danpuri's rams & goats were bhotiyas those used them to carry their goods and luggage(Dabral,S.P:73). The goats used by Shauka traders to carry their loads and goods are called 'Shauki-Bakra.' (Joshi, A.K, 1983:13) Goods were carried on the back of goats and sheep on the inaccessible routes leading to Tibet(Joshi,A.K,1983:93).The tending of sheep and goats have attributed them a unique identity of 'nomadic-traders'. Besides, the attachment and interest of Bhotiyas in rearing sheep and harvesting wool, this ancient sheep Trade has always been a matter of interest and excitement in their community, as they were very helpful in carrying out merchandise through the extremely difficult trade routes of theHimalayas(Negi, Singh, Das,1926:57).Shaukatraders used to carry commercial goods in small packets which used to slung on either side of their back. These special packets are called 'Karvachha'. It has an outer covering of animal skin (Negi, N.P& V.D.S, 2008:9495).Usually a sheep carry 5 to 8 sheer and a goat carries 8 to 10 sheer. (1 Sheer= 80 Tola). They used to pass 5 to 6 time across the mountain pass (Atkinson, 2003:131).

Thebhotiya used to purchase 'Ranku' sheep at the fair of Bageshwar from traders of Danpur. Whenbhotiyas people come down from the high land to the foothills along with their cattle on their way they sell medicinal –herbs, woollen clothes,sheep and goats in the fairs of frontier regions such as-Thal ,Bageshwar and Jauljeebee(Joshi,A.K,1983:94).

Goats are also purchased for flesh and their cubs are used for offering to deities. Offering of goats is also in practice at various places of Kumaun like-Chaitifair of Kashipurwhere aajbali(Sharma,D.D,2008:154) is offered and Aathwar(offering of six goats)(Joshi ,N.B:17) in the fair of Devidhura.

[D]-BHOTIYA DOG

Tibetan dogs are called 'Bhotiya- Kukur' in Kumauni (JoshiA.K, 1983:13).Fame of bhotia dogs was spread far and wide outside of India. Venerable people were gifted bhotiya dogs on special occasions. The trade of bhotiya dogs persist in the fairs of mountainous region (Pant, D,2005:210).Still today the cubs of bhotiya dogs are brought for sale in the fair of Bageshwer&Jauljeebee. The cubs of bhotiya breed are carried in the perforated cradles made of Ringal. In Uttarayani fair of Bageshwer their cost range from 500 to 1,000 Rupee. There is a remarkable description given by Greek Historian-

Herodotus, Strabo and Pliny about gold digging ants those were as larger as dog in size and used to pounce upon the person nearby (Joshi.A.K, 1983:24).According to description of famous historian-Herodotus the trade of Tibetan dogs was spread as far as to Babylon. The famous survey or Pt. Nain Singh Rawat has thrown light upon the myth of the gold dust extracted from the high mountains of Tibet in his travelogue. He saw Tibetans in skin out fits in jal or region who had been working in deep pits digging gold dust and making heaps of gold. Those heaps of gold were guarded by ferocious dogs (Joshi, A.K, 1983:25).These very same dog have been described as gold digging ants by Greek historians. Livestock of bhotiyas are also guarded by Bhotiya dogs. These dogs are ferocious in nature, and efficient to endure extreme cold and are equally liked by bhotiya like their goats and sheep. Even today whenever bhotiya family migrate to their summer or winter residences these dogs too like goats, sheep and Jheeboo, be a part of their 'caravan'(Joshi,A.K,1983:93. When a herd of goats and sheep reach up to high land Buggyal, they are guarded by these bhotiya dogs. These dogs have their own characteristics: they act as faithful guard at night and remain healthy in drastic climatic condition.

They are abound in frontier regions and still draw dog lovers from far and wide to the fairs held in the valleys of Kumaun. As the fair celebrated in the border region – Bageshwar & Jauljeebee are close to inhabited places of Bhotiya- Sauka traders. People could be still seen asking cost of bhotiya dogs in these fairs.

Conclusion: -

It is therefore has been concluded that with passage of time immemorial the use of livestock has been changed in the lives of the people of kumuan region of Uttarakhand. Now in the present context in comparison to ancient times the value of livestock has brought a vital change in monetary terms.

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