

SHORT NOTE

Indigenous Knowledge in the Livelihood of Lepcha Tribal Community of Sikkim

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Introduction

The availability and diversity of livelihood options are influenced by a complex interplay of natural as well as human-induced factors across different geographical regions. Most tribal communities, however, rely heavily on agriculture, natural resources, and indigenous knowledge systems for sustaining their livelihoods. Indigenous knowledge inherited by these communities is crucial in shaping their livelihood activities. The Lepcha of Sikkim is a prime example whose livelihood largely depends on nature. This note delves into the various forms of livelihood practices and activities that are derived through indigenous knowledge adopted by the Lepcha tribe in the Dzongu region. In addition, the note provides a nuanced examination of the challenges and opportunities associated with livelihood practices in the face of modernization.

Humans gather knowledge for survival and growth. Indigenous people have developed their form of knowledge for survival needs and managed natural resources thereby preserving it for future generations. Indigenous knowledge (IK) plays an important role in sustaining livelihoods accumulated over centuries (Rao 2019). It is a systematic body of knowledge acquired by the local people through experiences, informal experiments, and an intimate understanding of the environment (Rajasekaran 1993). Such knowledge covers flora, fauna, land, soil, water, forest, and technologies like architecture, agriculture, and foraging (Rao 2019). Indigenous communities have deep knowledge of their local ecosystems and biodiversity making them efficient users of natural resources rendering protection to natural sacred spaces (lakes, rivers, caves, and groves). This type of knowledge is intricately linked to the historical and cultural repositories of knowledge held by local populations. This knowledge is developed to adapt to the natural conditions for their survival needs (Trung, Quynh and Hieu 2007). Communities whose livelihood relies on natural resources have in-depth

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