



Centre for Professional Journalism Studies, Nepal

Social Inclusion What really achieved?

*(Study on Conditions of Dalits in
Siraha, Saptari, Tehrathum and Surkhet)*

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Social Inclusion: Situation in four districts

Varnadharma or caste system that divides and discriminates human being on the basis of caste and creed has been a fundamental character of Hindu society. It reduces the lower caste people, popularly known as dalits now-a-days, almost to the position of slaves, denying them the most elementary rights of ordinary citizens. Since the ancient age, they were prevented to hold properties. When the ancient state became a defender of *varnas* it enforced the iniquitous *varnasramdharma* at the point of the sword to detriment of the lower classes. Thus, it was based upon social injustice.

The reformers of Hinduism deny this explaining the virtues of Hindu culture. But, active existence of caste system and general behavior of so-called upper caste people towards lower caste, has remained as one of the major obstacles to accelerate the process of modernization of Nepali society. Ruled under the primitive feudal system since the formation of society, the ruling class of Nepal has been promoting and exploiting this inhuman system to establish illusionary status of superiority. Not only has that, the dangers and evils of this system of social classes developed into a rigid stratification based on concentration of power, authority and economic reward for the higher classes. The so called dalits may have been granted certain beneficial rights and privileges, but that would be wrong to suppose that they stands in a beneficial position as compared to other upper caste people. Rampant division and discrimination under the basis of caste among the human beings has become a chronic problem of Nepali society. Because of this system, segregative tendencies within the society are on the rise.

Greater evil of the caste system seems to be a product of uncompromising rigidity of the heredity system of governance. The idea of rank and status has been complexly attached to it. This negates the very fundamental idea of modern society that the basis of cohesiveness among the human being depends upon cooperation and equality. Cooperation between the mankind based on the dignity of labor in accordance with natural capacities and aptitudes will preserve

the essential social energy to keep the pace of human development. But, the governments, policy makers and politicians never considered this universal concept. They never realized that social utility, and not class dignity, should be the principal governing methods.

The dalit problems of present day Nepal are very rudimentary in nature. Unequal treatment to dalit community in various services provided by the government and other agencies, discrimination in society depicting the dalits as untouchables and various other behaviors that are not compatible to modern civilization are the major anomalies. Equality of status should not to be confused with identity, calling or vocation. Any honest occupation is as worthy of respect as any other. But, the so-called ruling elites in Nepali society always tried to associate particular caste and vocations with respect and particular caste and vocations with disrespect. Equal status in the eyes of law and morality and equality of opportunities has no meaning within the hierarchy of Nepali society.

After the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in 1990, the wide ranging thinking process to enhance the reform of dalits has been started in the policy level. But, these thinking were inadequate as they did not challenge the prevailing status quo. Even then, a process of reform has been started that spread the message clearly and loudly. This established the issue of dalits in proper prospective. Systematic study and identification of dalit problems began. Now, the problem is in the center stage of the society. The concern has been raised.

This study conducted in Tehrathum, Surkhet, Saptari and Siraha districts is based on the information provided by grassroots people, NGOs and other institutions and groups working for the upliftment of dalit community. The study has focused on present status of dalits and examines the level of development. The study was conducted from January 10, 2006 to March 10, 2006.

Dalit population in Nepal is around to 4500000 that is 11% of total population. This number has been divided in 28 different castes and sub castes. Some 60 to 70% of dalits are living under below poverty level.

From the national perspectives, Nepal's Terai region is well ahead in terms of human development. But, that will be unfair to say as dalit population of Terai region is hugely underdeveloped and deprived.

Siraha: Inclusion and confusion

Siraha is a border line district of eastern development region, where the pace of development is very slow. Many of the villages of this agriculturally rich district are without the basic infrastructure of development. Known as Mithilanchal, its proximity to Bihar, India is a curse and boon at the same time. Most of the Muslim members of Siraha district have been working as unskilled labor in various gulf countries. The remittance they send back home has become the major earning of the district in recent time. But, this money is being spent in non productive things like real state purchase and other consumable items. There is no system to reinvest this money in productive process.

Problem of citizenship

In Siraha, Dalit population is about 110349, according to census of 2002. But, these people have been marginalized. Most of them are landless, living in the wasteland and scattered across the district. These citizen, who are the real son of the soil are facing the problem of citizenship. It is very difficult for them, specifically for Madhesi Dalit, to register as Nepali citizen as they have no access to the officers of district headquarters. In many cases, VDC (Village Development Committee) refuses to recognize them as Nepali citizen. Untouchability is another biggest problem among Madhesi dalits. During this study, we saw a typical case in Balahi village where Naumi Lal Yadav, a non dalit, accepted *prashad* of god Satya Narayan from a dalit family. When his community people learned the fact that he took *prashad* from a dalit he was boycotted by the community.

In Siraha, even god has been divided as touchable and untouchables. In October 2006, township of Lahan, the only prominent market center of the district, was swept by communal tension when 23 dalit family of adjoining village Bhadaiya entered the local temple ignoring order of 'superior' class people not to enter the temple. The incident took a worst turn when superior class people imposed 'blockade' on dalits for a week. The law enforcing people sided with superior class.

Dalit people want to maintain cordial relationship with Janajati people. But, this relationship seems quite unnatural as the Janajatis are more rigid on their religious behavior than the upper caste people. Janajatis do not allow Dalits to enter the temple and monastery of Janajatis. Janajatis' behavior towards Dalits is strangely different from that of the upper caste Hindus. Janajati people talk against discrimination, the similar color of blood of everybody and oppose the suppression of Dalits. But, they do not practice what they preach. They are very conservative and possessive in religious matters. Dalit people cannot use even the source of water and water taps meant for superior classes of Janajatis.

Lahan town's ward no. 1, 2 and 10 are dominated by Dalit population. In ward no. 10 members of Dalit community were elected in all the positions in last democratic local election.

Strange Caste Division:

It is strange to note that, this untouchability exists even among and within Dalit communities in Siraha district. Over the years, substantial number of Dalits from hill region migrated to Siraha in search of livelihood. They have assimilated with local Terai Dalits in public affairs. But, their caste and cultural behavior have not changed. The hill Dalits consider themselves more superior than Terai Dalits. For hill Dalits, Terai Dalits are untouchables and not worth to social interaction. This division remains the same even within the hill Dalits of Terai region. For example, marriage between Kami and Sarki is prohibited. But, there is no other restriction in eatables and water sharing among them. People from both castes do not entertain relationship with Damai. Kami and Sarki are allowed to enter Damai's home, but Damai cannot enter Kami-Sarki's home. This suggests that the hill Dalits are maintaining social behavior of hill region in Terai also. There is no major shift in the caste equation among the hill Dalits.

Madhesi Dalits are divided into 22 different castes and sub-castes. This social customs and manners are strong among Madhesi Dalits. They seem more conservative in their caste behavior than their

hill counterparts. While hill dalits are divided in the three major castes (Damai, Kami and Sarki), terai dalits are divided in a dozen caste and sub caste like Chamar, Musahar, Paswan, Mestar, Halkhor, Khatwe, Dom, Dhobi, Bantar and Uraw etc. These castes are hooked to their own traditional profession. Chamar is equivalent to hill Sarki in many respects. Their social 'responsibilities' includes collecting carcass, collection of bone and skin of animal from butchers, cobbler work etc. The Paswan profession is to dig tomb for the burial of dead body. Mehattar, Halkhor and Dome are responsible for cleaning works, and Musahar and Khatwe are farm labors. Their caste name is different as per the social status and grouping, but their works are similar. Within this system, Chamars feel that they are superior to other caste. In Siraha, Chamar's are socially and economically in a better position as most of the members of the community are relatively literate. Chamars are sub-divided in to Ramdasiya, Satnami and Raidas. Satnami chamars do not eat meat while all other chamars eat meat. Satnami do not food and water touched by other castes. They work as wages labours and stitch shoes. They worship Shiva, Parvati, Ram, Krishna, Sita, Vishnu, Laxmi, Durga and Kali. They are considered lower than other Dalits for because they touch and throw carcasses.

But, the Dom, Halkhor and Mehattar are in very precarious condition. In Siraha, combine number of these three castes is very few in numbers. Officially, there number is 1000 which is unbelievable. The dalit community considers them as 'very mean' castes and they are not included in main stream dalit community. Dalits treat them as dalit.

Ram Chandra Malli, President of Dom Utthan Committee of Dhanagadhi Village, feels that lack of unity and community sense in dalit society is the main hindrance for their development. In most of the villages of the district the Dom and the Mehattar are not in talking term while they are the most oppressed people within their own community. Social relationship like marriage has been cut off between them. Relationship strained further when the parents from Tona village arranged a marriage between a four year old Dom boy with a young mehattar lady. Dom community feels superior to Mehattar community as the Mehattar do the latrine cleaning job.

Changing behavior:

But, in recent times, dalit people are raising their voices against social discrimination and untouchability. In 2005, local dalits of Dhanagadhi, Ramchandra Marik and Bishnu Marik organized a protest meeting demanding that the people of Dom, Mehattar and Holkhar community should be given right to purchase and drink tea in the teashops of the area. The meeting successfully attracts the attention of society. But a few member of upper caste community, with say in the village affairs, manhandled them. They were chased out from Majhaura village where they were living. The upper caste people prevented them from fetching water from public tube well. They refused any concessions to dalit people. Though the protest fizzled out after a day or two, the fire of that protest has not died down.

These people, who were more or less depending on part time farming, are being displaced from the profession. Their rights over the land have not been established by the government. The relevant government agency is asking them to present 'traditional ownership' evidence and citizenship certificate. But, the process to obtain this evidence is very difficult and a complex one. According to a sample survey, in Siraha alone, 95 dalit people do not have citizenship certificate out of 300 people from five Villages. Dukhi Paswan of Bastipur complained that he could not get citizenship certificate even after furnishing necessary documents. His name is registered in voter list.

Insecurity in Jobs:

Some dalit people are employed in government establishments, hospitals and municipality. But their job is not secured and they are working under temporary arrangements. Said Sonu Dom, "They issue appointment letters every six months. My father was a permanent employee, but was sacked to adjust someone else. He appealed to the ministers and big officers. But they all charged him that he was disobedient and a drunkard.

Money as Symbol of Status:

Money has become the symbol of status among dalit. Once a dalit becomes rich, he forgets his background and surroundings and tries to avoid the mainstream of his own society. Social behavior of 'rich' dalit towards poor is also unequal and incompatible. Those rich dalits also get recognition from non-dalit of the society as with their money their manipulative powers also increase. Said Ramchandra Malli of Dhangadhi village, " We dalit are backward because of our own selfish attitudes. Once a dalit becomes rich and powerful, he forgets his background, his relatives, kith and kin and friends. He behaves like a non-dalit. His attitudes changes drastically. He cuts himself off from the society. This is the most unfortunate part of our life."

Somehow, untouchability seems intertwined with economic status of dalit. This trend has helped to generate self-employment among dalits. They are being attracted to skill development program. Some of them are making household goods using cane and bamboo. Some are engaged in pig farming. They are getting support from cooperatives and community saving schemes.

Activities of NGOs:

Dalit Sewa Club is engaged in income generating activities in various villages of Siraha. According to the vice president of the club, the club has been providing jobs to 150 dalits. The programs of the club are supported by Poverty Alleviation Fund. The Fund has granted more than 9100000 for the program.

Sahendra Paswan of Bhudi Village got NRs.10000 loan from the Club to buy a rickshaw. He earns NRs 200 per day. He has to pay back Rs.25 a day to the Club. For him this is good earning. Sahendra said, "I cannot read beyond class one. But, my brothers and sister are going to school. I have some saving also. I spend Rs. 30000 in my elder brother's marriage. Now I am thinking to marry myself. This must be good."

Sita Ram Chamar of Bastipur Village was thinking once to go abroad for the employment. But, he dropped the idea when the club handed over two machines to him to make shoes. Now, he is earning minimum of NRs 3000 a month and seems quite satisfied.

But, every dalit is not as satisfied as Sahendra and Sitaram. Some of the members of community are engaged in animal husbandry. But, the shopkeeper refused to sell milk supplied by dalits.

There are more than two dozen NGOs working for or working in the name of dalit empowerment and development. They are putting hoarding boards with slogans and messages of equality, in dalit villages, organizing community luncheon, initiating debates and several other activities. In the meetings organized by the NGOs, victims express themselves and demand legal action against the culprits. But, their voice evaporates in the meeting hall itself. Back to village, a dalit has to face the same reality he is facing everyday. Once a dalit reach his home after attending the workshop and seminar, he forgot what he learned there as he has to face different realities. The programs are focus on dalit empowerment, but preaching dalit to stand against oppressive behavior is not sufficient. In such programs, non dalit participation is negligible.

This type of advocacy has not been successful enough. Impacts of these activities are seemingly nominal. Many NGOs are engaged in advocacy classes that offers same pattern. It is like parroting the same theme everyday. Lack of imagination in crafting such programs has become a real problem. Many NGOs are worried about evaluation and reports that they have to submit the donors who will fund them after looking at those reports. Participants are young dalit. But, the knowledge these participants gain from these classes is very limited. It is just like a programmed knowledge. The learner cannot expand his ability to defend himself beyond a set point of argument.

Too many NGOs have been registered with district administration. Prominent among them Dalit Janakalyan Yuva Club, Lahan, Dalit Jagaran Kendra, Gol Bazar, Dalit Samaj Sewa Sangha, Lahan, Samagra Bikas Kendra, Lahan, Dalit Mahila Sangha, Mirchaiya, Tri Shakti Yuva Club, Gautadi, Indreni Sewa Samaj, Jamadaha Musaharniya, Srijana Samudayik Bikas Kendra, Choharwa,

Bhawani Ekikreet Bikas Kendra, Bhawanipur, Jagriti Samudayik Bikas Kendra, Gol Bazar, Janajyoti Sewa Samudaya, Chandralalpur and Mahila tatha Balbalika Hit Kendra, Mirchaiya - are working actively among dalits. Most of the NGOs are involved in literacy programs, collective savings and loan disbursement, community empowerment and small farmer's activities. Most of these NGOs have representation of Dalit community in their management.

Dalit people have no access to the services provided by the state. These services are monopolized by non-dalit. Dalit representation in state-supported schemes and programme are nominal. Most of the decisions on the welfare and social services for dalit are taken by non dalit government workers. According to District Forest Office of Siraha, the government has transferred ownership of 74 forests to the community. But, inclusion of dalit in the management committee of community forest is almost non existent. Dalits neither have access in community forest nor have they received any benefit from this. They are in the same condition in cooperatives. They have no representation in any cooperatives of the district. Their participation in local development works is limited as wage earners. They cannot put their voice on decision-making.

Can Manage The Things:

Given the opportunities, dalit people can skillfully manage thing for themselves. Musaharnia Khola Community Forest Consumers group is one of the best examples of management. In this group there are 33 dalit (sardar) members, 31 Chaudhary (tharu) and 7 members from other family. The group chairman is Mrs. Janari Devi Sardar. This group is managing the community forest skillfully. Though there are problems, they solve all the problems unanimously.

Dalits are also excluded from the political process. Only 23 Madhesi dalit individual are involved as active party workers in different political parties. They are elected as the ward chief in some of the villages. Dalit women's participation in politics is unimaginable. Their presences and influence in district level position is ignored.

The government, donors' community and NGOs are unanimously involved in the process of creating awareness among dalit community of the district. They have conceptualized the idea that without creating awareness and environment for education among the community, dalit cannot be accommodated in the mainstream of national development. The effort has been initiated accordingly. But, the results are depressing. Terai dalits are very receptive to new idea. They listen to the message, but fail to practice those. Marginal economic condition of these people is responsible to prevent change in the community. Says Lakchhima Khatwe, a young dalit woman of Siraha Township, participating in a seminar organized to focus the condition of dalit women, "*Hijo sir aaunu bhayo ra hamilai bolaunu bhayo. Hami tyasaile aayeko. Hami yeha kura sikna ra sunna aayeko. Bhat pani khan diyo sir le. Khan payo,ramro chha*" (Yesterday, sir came to our village and asked us to come. We came here to listen and learn. We got food. It was good.) For Lakchhima and many others, the most important part is food. Food and Shelter are biggest problem of Siraha dalit. They are preoccupied with basic problems. In this context, relevancy of advocacy and awareness campaign could not be established.

In Siraha, dalit children are facing very adverse situation in the field of education. According to District Education Office, 45.77% dalit children from age group 7 to 16 years have joined the school. The trend is encouraging though it is very difficult for them to continue study even up to the higher secondary level. Dalit children leave school before they reach middle or higher middle level. Many NGOs are aware of this fact. But, they have not initiated any action to facilitate these children to continue their study. Said Ramananda Gupta, a senior journalist of his district: most of the NGOs are self-centered. They are doing not substantive but demonstrative work. Their horizon is limited. Their activities are like going to a seriously ill person and suggesting him some preventive formula while the patient is in need of medicine.

Umesh Bisunkhe, Vice President of Dalit Jana Kalyan Yuva Club, explained the educational condition of dalit in the district. He said, "Dalits are facing economic problems and they are not able to send their children to the school even though they do not have to pay

money. There is not a single high school passed dalit in Bhadaiya VDC. Our club is opening children's classes in four VDCs of the district and these classes are mostly to create awareness."

The club has opened 13 child care centers and organized 26 women groups. But, their experiences are not satisfactory. Bisunkhe said that the Musahar community is the most backward in terms of education. Out of 172434 Musahars only 0.4 percent are literate.

According to Ram Narayan Sadaya, in Musahar community almost fifty percent have no citizenship certificate. Most of them go to India as wage earner and comeback with earned money which they deposit with local merchant. They can not open account in the bank to deposit their money as they have to produce citizenship certificate to open an account.

Social relation between dalit and non dalit is not very cordial. Musahar dalit's relationships with Janajatis are more strained. According to Pradhwan Sadaya of Gudee Village, traditionally, Chaudhary and Dalit consider themselves as enemy of each other. In Gudee Village, these everyday community quarrels turn into small incidents. Coexistence between them is very difficult. Chaudhary people have organized a committee comprising 151 members of their community 'to protect the religion and culture' from dalits. These so-called upper caste people have objection to dalits in the temples.

Ramji Shah of Bhawani Integrated Development Centre says though there has been no change in the standard of living, awareness level has been enhanced. More than a dozen NGOs are active in Siraha not to promote the cause of Dalits. Shah says, "We make environment for children to go to school." School dress and stationeries are being provided to 2,100 children of Bhawanipur, Hanumannagar, Pradha, Mohanpur, Kamalpur, Pipara, Ayodhyanagar, Pugrapati and Pokharabinda after the establishment of savings and loan co-operative. However, there is a growing tendency among children to go to school only to receive dress and stationeries. This organization has been serving the Dalits for the last three years. According to him most of the Dalits are extremely poor. So their whole attention is on how to feed the family and not to educate

children. Ten Dalits who have passed SLC have been employed in local school on a monthly salary of 2 thousand rupees per month.

Dalits students in school

Class	Boy	Girls	Total
1	38	56	94
2	12	25	36
3	2	12	14
4	20	4	24
5	6	1	7
6	3	6	9
7	3	1	4
8	5	—	5
Total			199

This figure of students shows the conditions of Dalits in schools. At the beginning, admission rate has increased suddenly but the drop out rate increases gradually. The reason is they can not get promoted at the rate of non-dalits children and as they advance in age they are ashamed to study in smaller classes and leave the school. Although it looks like an ordinary problem the tendency of most Dalits' increasing drop out from school is a serious problem.

According to headmaster Arun Kumar Chaudhari only 140 quotas out of 226 scholarships has been provided to the school, which might create controversy. The government does not give Dalits food grain, edible oil, clothes and money. Dalits stopped sending children to school. "If the government does not give anything why should we send our children to school?" Sita Kumari Biswokarma asks.

They also use the money given to children as scholarship for household expenses and drinking alcohol. Many do not send children to school fearing that they may get married and elope from school if they are educated.

Similarly, 150 households live in Lahan Municipality -1 Matiarwa, whose job is Rickshaw pulling and agriculture. Most families consist of 10 to 15 members while there are only 2 to 3 earning members. None of the NGOs have ever worked in this settlement.

Inadequate efforts:

Although more than a dozen NGOs are involved here to bring about social, cultural, political and economic changes in the lives of Dalits, they have failed to attend the desired results. Awareness level has undergone a gradual change, but the majority of Dalits are still living in traditional style. Those who have learned skills have not utilized them as they have no employment. They can now ventilate their grievances, but there has been no change in their lives. Regarding income generation activities, nothing much has been done apart from small saving, distribution of a few pigs and goats and encouragement to rickshaw pullers.

Untouchability has been abolished in seminars and meetings in Siraha district but not in other places. Although they are attracted to new skills, they have to depend on traditional profession due to lack of fund. Domes produce baskets, hand fan; cage etc. as in the past and raise pigs and poultry but their main job is related to sanitation. They clean government, public and private toilets but they hardly pay attention to their one cleanliness and sanitation and consequently their settlement are stinking. They eat meat, drink alcohol and make merry in festivals. Due to absolute poverty they are unable to educate their children. Similarly, Chamar and Uraw castes also follow traditional profession. They engage themselves in leather works and sanitation related works.

Three minority caste of Siraha need immediate attention as their condition is quite precarious. No agency has given attention to the problems these communities are facing.

Khatwe is one such Dalits community in Siraha. They carry doli (marriage palanquin) of bride and bridegroom but Tatma's Doli is carried by Musahar alone. Now they have left this job and started to undertake agricultural job, according to Sadbal Khatwe. Child marriage is widespread in this community. Marriages take place since the age of 2 or 3 years.

Musahar is the Dalits community with the population of 40 thousand in Siraha. There is the system of parda (covering face by woman before senior males) but young generation does not believe in this system; 33 % of them are landless and all sorts of labor to earn

daily wage. They are mostly uneducated and do not send children to school. Therefore, they have not progressed beyond peons, Watchman, guards, Sweepers etc. They are called Musahar because they killed and eat rat (Musa).

Similarly, Mehattar is a minority community in Siraha and their profession is just like that of Dom. Toilet cleaning and burning the corpse are their main jobs. They are economically weak and landless. Despite formation of many commission for landless, they have not received any benefit so far. Most of the school age children are seen playing, making cow-dung balls or greasing pigs. Though education is free they can not provide dress, bags, shoes and admission fee for their children.

Saptari: Too many problems

Saptari district composed of 114 VDCs, one municipality, 17 Ilaka and 5 election constituencies is inhabited by a large number of Dalits. Out of the total population of 570, 282, there are 60, 384 Dalit men and 58, 494 Dalit women in the district. There are in all 130, 231 Dalits in Saptari which is 21.08% of the total population. This is the district with the highest number of Dalits in Nepal. The caste pattern of dalits is also different from other districts.

The government had, however, not been able to implement any of the effective programs for the development of dalit people. Several programs in this regard have been announced, but dalit people's living standards have not been changed. As in the other districts of the country, Musahar, Khatwe, Dhobi, Paswan, Mandal, Satar, Chamar, Dom, Tatma and Halkhor are regarded as Dalits in this district too.

In the Raj Biraj Township, dalit people from Khatwe, Mandal, Paswan, Biswokarma, Chamar and Dhobi caste have some access to 'institutional' employment but other Dalits have been entirely excluded. Participation is very limited on civil service and technical field.

Same plight everywhere:

Almost 70% farmers are landless and landlord's rule is still rampant. Petty conspiracies are being hatched to evict Dalits from their land. Dalits are beaten up, their women raped. They face maximum injustice, exploitation and discrimination and treated as untouchables. Wage earning agricultural labour are the main support of more than 70% Dalits. They earn 3 to 5 kilograms of paddy per day and have to work with or without refreshments. Chamar, Musahar, Batar, Paswan, Khatwe and Mandal work in the landlord's field as agricultural labour. Doms follow traditional occupation of bamboo basket-waving and selling and also pig-raising to earn their living. Halkhor or Mehattar dispose garbage. Around 380 Halkhor live in the hallow land within the municipality area.

In the town, these people work for the municipality and government offices and also in private houses. For their services they

get Rs. 5000 to Rs. 8000 per month. Although they are economically sound they are socially deprived and humiliated. According to Bindra Kumar Mehattar, their educational condition is very weak. As agricultural workers they are engaged mainly in the sowing and harvesting of paddy and wheat. A ploughman earns 6 to 8 kilograms of paddy for both men and women.

Dalits are exploited by the village Mukhiya and rich people. They are paid 3 to 4 kilograms of paddy as wages for the day long labour which amounts to 30 to 36 or 40 to 48 rupees because the price of paddy fluctuates from time to time. When the paddy season starts it falls down to 6 rupees per kilo also. So, at this rate 3 to 4 kilograms or 18 to 24 rupees is too insufficient to meet their other daily need like salt, edible oil, soap etc. In some places 5 to 10 kathas of land is given to the labour to cultivate as a wage for ploughing their field round the year. So their year-round labour is also insufficient to meet their needs and they incur loans of paddy. Ram Lakhan Mandal of Hardiya - 8 says they have to pay 10 kilogram extra for every mound of paddy every year. They have to pay the loan by working in land. Thus the man who has taken loan is unable to pay the loan and his entire family members have to work for the lender without wages. Daij Kumar Paswan says when production is poor they are asked to pay 20 kilo per mound as interest or half a mound extra for one mound of paddy.

Dalit of Pipara Paschim - 8 collect fuel wood and sell them at the market for their livelihood. The load carried by a woman fetches 80 to 90 rupees. People also go to several towns of India and other towns of the district for job.

Some Dalit men, women and children also work in brick factory and earn 100 to 150 rupees per day. The job is available for six months along the highway in some VDCs.

Thus the 70% of the landless Dalits in Saptari district have to work hard for the whole day. Since the 3 kilo food grain wage they receive is insufficient to meet their household expenses apart from two daily meals they cannot save anything. They also need expenses for festivals. So they are compelled to incur loan from landlords. This is common to most of the landless Dalits here. Therefore the unequal distribution of land and ownership of land by those who do not

participate in production process is the root cause that has adversely affected the entire Dalit community and exploited them.

Due to feudal exploitation and oppression a large section of Dalits are becoming poorer and are treated as untouchables. Says Mukesh Biswokarma, "Dalits are exploited from all sides economically, Socially, Politically and culturally. They have been denied all opportunities of development."

Seventy-five percent Dalits take loans from land owners as they cannot take loan from the Banks because they have no land to use as collateral. They live on the banks of streams, rivers and fallow land. Although they depend on land they hardly own a single plot of land.

A local resident Dharma Dev Mandal, 88 says, "Nobody has been able to capture the true picture of Dalit of Saptari and the exploitation of landlords on them. Nobody has heard our voice. Nearly 45% Dalits are land less in this VDC and they have to work for the landlord as Haliya, Kamaiya or Kamalari, as their permanent servant simply because they were compelled to take food grain loan as they had no land. They have to work lifelong as their Haliya who has to work generally 12 to 16 or more hours a day as required by his land owner, from 6 to 12 months. Yet they do not get the minimum wage of 60 rupees (8 hrs per day) fixed by the government. The Dalit have not been freed from labour exploitation.

Caste discrimination:

The upper class people have adopted a policy of caste discrimination, injustice and oppression against Dalits and keeping them in isolation from the social affairs, from participating in state resources, policy formulation and implementation is intact even today. Though many NGOs and INGOs are spending millions of rupees for the up lift of Dalits, there are little changes in the grassroots situations. Settlements of Dalits have not shown any changes. Various government and non government initiatives have put emphasis on education to bring about changes peacefully. But dalit communities of Saptari district has not received any substantial benefits. This can be seen from the following table:

Caste	Literacy	S.L.C. or more	Graduate of more
Total Population of Nepal	53.7%	17.6%	3.4%
Brahmin/Chhetri	67.5%	24.7%	24.7%
Dalit	33%	38%	0.4%

The Ministry of education has earmarked 10% quota of MBBS students for Dalits. Dalit Development Committee has been giving scholarship to Dalit students for higher education every year. But Dalits are deprived of these facilities. Especially, scholarship to Dalits up to class five has been misused by teachers themselves. It was said that Dalits from class six to ten will receive education for free but they are also compelled to pay exorbitant monthly fees. According to a data, eight million 195 thousand rupees was spent in Saptari as Dalit's scholarship from class 1 to 5 for students of class 6 to 10 another, 1 million 307 thousand has been spent but the number Dalit of students who benefited from the scheme is very small.

Ganesh Paswan of Kanakpur says as long as untouchability is not completely abolished from the society Dalits will have no access to education. Even teachers treat the Dalit students as untouchables and behave with them differently. Many Dalit students are reluctant to go to school. Ram Narayan Thakur, a teacher say: Dalit students come to school for the sake of scholarship only. They lack an aptitude for going to school. That is yet to be developed in them.

Following table of dalit children's admission rate in Srijana Primary School, Basalpur will present a sample:

Class	Number of Students
1	43
2	11
3	7
4	8
5	3

This table shows Dalits condition in education. Drop-out rate increases along with the promotion from one class to another.

Apathy to wards education:

Dalits think they can gain nothing by educating their children. Their attitudes are rudimentary regarding the education. Most of them think that educating their children will make their life more miserable. The educated children will marry early and follow the 'modern path'. Indra Dev Mandal says, "If we send them to work, who will work ? Without sending them to work the family members can not have a meal in the evening." Dalits of Madhurpatti locality also do not send their children to school. Instead, they send them to graze their pigs. It is very difficult to find a dalit boy who had completed S.L.C. The circumstances are also depressing. A dalit boy who passed his SLC examination applied for the post of teacher in a school of Kanakpur. But he could not get the job he could not compete his non dalit counterpart.

Poverty, lack of awareness and employment opportunities, traditional oppression from non - Dalit and inferiority complex are some of the elements that is responsible for Dalit people's under development. Educated Dalits failed to get jobs which also disappointed them. Some example from Kanakpur: Beli Devi Ram who has passed S.L.C., could not found a job; Bhoj Bikram Paswan, Dev Raj Ram and Ram Lakhana Ram, who have passed got intermediate level education but failed to get job. This has adversely affected Dalits approach to education.

In Hardiya - 8 65 households of Dalits composed mainly of Biswokarma (BK), Musahar and Ram have no access to education. Collecting and selling firewood is their main occupations. They collect firewood from Chure hill range. These landless people have taken shelter in the land of a colonel.

Even if Dalit are nominated Chairman in the management committee of a school or a community forest, they cannot discharge their duty properly as they have no proper knowledge of management. Chhedi Lal Ram has been designated chairman of Bhaluwahi community forest group, comprising 236 households. But he was unable to take all his responsibilities. Duties of that position are performed by a non-dalit member of the group on Chhedi Lal's behalf.

In Saptari, attitude of dalit people towards development and self reliant is quite negative. They think that the various programs launched by NGOs and government agencies are useless. Laddar Ram of Ram Basti says without attaching economic incentives the programs meant for Dalits can not be successful. Any program meant for the welfare of Dalit must incorporate the package of food, clothing and shelter to become successful.

A school has been opened for free education to 65 Dalit children in Hardiya Kamalpur. But only 10 children have joined the school. Ram, who is also chairman of the school management committee, complains the school is outside the vicinity to please non dalit people. This is great disadvantage.

Among Dalits of Saptari, condition of Dom and Saday is miserable. Their main occupation is toilet cleaning and work as the servants of upper class. Some are involved in pig farming. They have very little access to education. Among the Dom community, Ram is higher than Saday and Dom. People belonging to Ram community do not even touch pigs, let alone raising them. They consider themselves as the highest among Dalits. However, they are in miserable plight. They earn their living by raising cattle, goats and poultry apart from agriculture which is their economic mainstay. Locally based Saraswoti Community Organization has distributed 25 goats for the uplift of Dalits.

Sukhi Lal Ram of this locality became famous among Dalits when he studied up to class IX. But as he failed to get a job and was unable to support himself he left the school. Out of the 140 Musahar children, only one has been successful to reach class six. Three children each from Ram and Saday communities are also reading in class 6 apart from one Musahar student.

In Pipara Paschim - 8, a school has been established for Dalit children. Land for the school was managed by the community of 24 households. Every household contributed 16 dhur of land. With the assistance of Rs.30 thousand from Samagra, the school became functional. They purchased the land of Rambilas Khetan for the School.

They now depend on daily wage-work and selling firewood. Saraswoti community organization has provided two goats to each of the 24 families. Dhani Lal Musahar says, "Government did not take care of us."

Sukri Dev Saday of Basalpur - 2 says "We have, with our own initiative, opened Mahadeveswor Samajik Pariwar to uplift our condition." They are collecting 10 rupees from each of the 46 Dalit households every month and are running an adult literacy class with this amount. Apart from this they also spend the fund for empowerment works, human rights awareness messages and training. Three people from this settlement have passed S.L.C. All three - Bijali Ram, Kusheswor Ram and Ashok Ram work as labour. "Why should we read if we don't get job according to our qualification ?" Local guardian Bhuwan Saday asks. Such examples discourage Dalits to educate their children.

Kanaki Sada, 22 could not read beyond class 8 owing to financial problem. She is now married and support single-handedly her 17 member family. She has five children, and interestingly, they all are reading in same class (Class one).

Osiya Devi Ram 43, of Basalpur is unable to read and write but she leads a 180 people's group in her village that is active to create awareness and improve sanitation situation among the dalit people. She works spontaneously with dedication to uplift her community. "Dalits have lagged behind due to lack of awareness," she opines.

To a question regarding foreign employment for dalits, Osiya said, "if few of educated Dalits left the village for foreign employment how can the community improve ? That is why people like her had to take leadership in the village. So far none of the government and Non-government organizations have reached this village. When they fall ill, they depend on traditional healers. Some Dalit who visited health posts had returned home without treatment when they knows that it was not possible to meet the expenses.

Bhima Devi Saday of Basalpur has seven children but she is unable to educate them and wish somebody would help educate her children, "If so, I would earn some wages and feed them. Not two

meals but perhaps one meal a day." She is not alone to face such problem. This is the problem that 65 other Dalit families face as well.

Bal Dev Ram, 55 of Madhurpati VDC - 6 says the problem of untouchability is widespread in rural areas. Educated up to class 5, he is now actively engaged in the task of removing the evils of untouchability. Ram who heads Dalit Chetan Sangam, a dalit awareness assembly and Bhumi Adhikar Manch (Land Rights forum) is currently busy holding interaction and meetings among different Dalits. "The primary task is to make the Dalits aware of their rights," he says.

Traditional Practices:

The traditional practice of untouchability still exists between dalits too. They don't drink the water touched by each other. This is also pushing Dalits backwards. Different communities like Dom, Mehattar, Ram and Chamar always argue which of their caste is higher and which is lower. "How will this system be abolished as long as is vexing the Dalit themselves?" asks Karna Abhun Ram.

The Dalits have no access to education. Both government and non-government organization's programs have get to be implemented in this area. A few educated Dalit youths have started to implement awareness programs in the Dalit settlements.

On the other hand, nearly 40 households of Madhurpatti – 5 have started to lay emphasis on the need to remove untouchability. They have made a rule that a Dalit cannot treat another Dalit as untouchable. Says Bal Bahadur Ram, "When there is unity among all Dalit it will be easy for us to fight against non-dalits about untouchablity and discrimination."

All Dalits of Saptari follow different occupations therefore it will be appropriate to classify them on the basis of their profession as given below:

Sarki, Chamar:	those who throw carcasses, produce leather goods and stitch shoes
Gaine:	entertain by singing songs

Badi:	to separate animals' skin, make drum (dholak), to dance and play on musical instruments
Dhobi:	live near burning ghat, wash clothes
Pode, Chyame:	do sanitation – related job
Butcher:	do meat business
Paswan, Dom, Dusadh:	bury corpse, prepare bamboo products, do sanitation-related job
Mehattar, Halkhor:	Toilet cleaning, hospital sanitation-related job
Khatwe, Tatma, Musahar:	kill and eat rat, agriculture wage labour.

According to *Upekshit Utpidit Dalit Utthan Vikas Samiti* (Neglected Oppressed Dalit Uplift Development Committee) the following 23 castes belong to Dalit: Lohar, Sunar, Damai, Kami, Sarki, Badi, Karsarah, Kusule, Kuche, Chyame, Pode, Chamar, Dhobi, Dusadh, Tatma, Dom, Batar, Khatwe, Musahar, Satar, Santhal and Halkhor.

The languages of local Dalit are Nepali, Maithali, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. The mother tongues of Terai Dalits are Bhojpuri, Maithali and Awadhi. The mother tongue of Sangati Dalit is Newari. Dalits here accuse that high class Brahmins wish to perpetuate the system of untouchability. It appears true because Brahmins have not given up such tendency.

In the rural area like Rampur, People Claiming to have given up the practice of untouchability, if they have touched Dalits, enter home only after sprinkling gold water (Water where gold is dipped to purify). Those who have eaten in the joint feast of Dalits go to the kitchen only after they sprinkle kush water, put tika on forehead of kanya (Virgin girl). They can not take the revolutionary measure of inviting a Dalit to their kitchen. Although some organizations have been involved in the drive to remove untouchability, they have

confined themselves only too speech-making against caste system and untouchability are as strong as they were in the past.

A Sarki does not eat the food touched by a Kami and vice versa. A Gaine does not eat the food touched by Pode, Kumal and Badi. A Dom does not eat the food touched by Halkhor and vice versa. Khatwe, Musahar and Paswan do not eat the food touched by Dom and Halkhor and so on. Thus Terai is terribly affected by the practice of untouchability. This internal untouchability among Dalits is difficult to banish because of ignorance, culture and economic crisis rampant in the community. It is easy to remove discrimination in the educated society but it is very difficult in an uneducated society.

Socially, in some areas, dalits have already made significant achievement over the last few years. Their children can read with children of non dalits at school. Milk touched by them is accepted by the collection centers of Dairy. They have already entered temples collectively, people representatives also campaign against the practice of untouchability now.

Problem of Social exclusion:

Some of the main problems of dalits are socially oriented. Prohibition to enter temples by dalits should be removed. Discriminations should be ended in government offices and schools. Traditional occupation should not be imposed on them. The old attitude of hesitating to allow them to enter homes on grounds of their being Dalits should be removed. They should not be punished for touching any food. Provision of reservation should be made. They should not be prohibited to deliver religious talks.

Dalits are mainly oppressed in social, economic, religion and political areas. They can not have easy access to hotels, restaurants and other public places. They are not easily allowed to fetch water from well, water taps, ponds etc. Their settlements are kept at a distance from those of elites. Even today, there are many people who will not eat food sold by them. They can not enter temples, hear religions lectures and invite priests in their homes. They are not politically active and do not occupy any political positions. Ward chairman and members are all non-Dalit people.

During the one year direct rule of the king, Dalits of Siraha and Saptari had to bear the oppression unprecedented manner. Oppression continued on them for entering temples, touching wells and disobeying the orders of the upper class people. The royal government which was obviously dominated by feudal Hindu Varnashram dharma (castes and occupational division of society) did not take any action against the oppressors. The royal government increased the tax on import of sand and crushed stones from Khutti Kholra by Rs. 1165 that adversely affected the employment of 1600 Dalits of Bhadaiyra, Bastipur, Bedana and govindapur in Siraha district.

Dalits like to be called Dalit due to the temptation of facilities and reservation they might get as Dalits. No matter whether they are rich or poor, they always compete with each other to receive facilities. Clever and well-to-do Dalits also use their 'source', 'force' and connection with their non dalit masters to avail the facilities while uneducated Dalits are ignorant of such facilities. They are angry when they are called Dalit by non Dalit people.

Dhan Bahadur Lamsal, coordinator of Dalit Sewa Sangh, Saptari say Dalit now require empowerment program in which there is also provision of employment. Dalit empowerment and Inclusion project is underway but it has not moved beyond group formation. Income-generation and awareness programs have been launched after forming 32 groups in 9 VDCs. The program has covered 1,722 women and 1,793 men of 651 households. Various programs like chili buying and selling, Umbrella and Bicycle repair, Banana trade, mobile vegetable shop, goat buying selling duck raising, rice trading, firewood buying and selling, tea shop, pig raising and dairy business under the income-generation program.

However, the dairy business and tea shops run by Dalits have been shut down due to financial constraints. Dev Kumari Saday of Majhauta – 4 says "the shop opened at an investment of 6 thousand rupees was closed because it could not run for want of customers." Non-dalits did not come to the shop and Dalits are not financially able to spend money in tea shops.

Dalit Sewa Sangh Saptari organized various programs like to promote Dalits' capacity. It has distributed a few goats after forming

groups. Lankadevi Ram of Basbiti – 6 says, “Not much improvement has been made here than group formation and savings collection. Bhagawati group consisting of women and 16 men is regularly conducting village cleaning and community meetings.

Says Chandra Shekhar Mandal of Dalit Sewa Sangh, “We had to organize a joint feast for intermingling of various Dalits and non-dalits.” After the joint feast it was hoped the feeling of untouchability among Khatwe, Ram, BK and Batar communities would end permanently. But, it failed to translate into reality. The organization conducted a lot of program to abandon the practices of untouchability, but there has been no change in practice.

In Prasawani – 3 Nayatol, 25 Dalit households have formed Saraswoti group and a community forest for their uplift.

Coordinator of Samagra Vikas Sewa Kendra Durga Mahatwa says the organization has carried out various programs to promote the cause of Dalits. As most of the Dalits are landless, it has attempted to provide land. In Madhurpatti – 3 of Saptari 11 households have received a landlord’s land at the rate of 5 Kattha each. Similarly, skill development training was given to 15 in Hardiya VDC and 27 goats were given to 27 people in Pipara Paschim and Hardiya VDCs.

Although more than a dozen organizations are busy in these areas, they have not been able to produce the desired result. Many of the Dalits have not even heard the names of any of INGOs and NGOs. Kanaki Saday of Mahadeveshwor Samajik Parivar says “there has been neither social nor political and economic change.”

When Dalits become aware of their realities they are ashamed to write castes like Sarki, Kami, Chamar etc in their names and instead write non-caste titles like Badal, Garjan, Chitkar, Tuphan, Nath, Prasad etc. As long as they are not united to face the reality and face to protect their culture, untouchability will not be removed from the society.

Tehrathum: Marginalized People

Being a hilly district the Dalit community in Terhathum is scattered in all the VDCs. Only 18 percent of the total 10,581 Dalits are literate. Of the total 1643 households of Dalits 83 percent are very poor and landless families. Only 11% of Dalits have access to government and NGO services and policy-making works. No dalits have reached in leadership positions.

Of the total 10,581 households in the 32 VDCS of Tehrathum district there are 1,643 households of Dalits appear to be literate and 3,153 capable of reading and writing. As for their education 670 have completed primary level, 217 lower secondary levels, 119 S.L.C. 17 graduations and 3 master's level. From the viewpoint of health and sanitation, they are still backward. The landlers families number 91 all 582, 495, 295, 44 and 227 families have incurred loan's in exorbitant interest rates for agriculture, daily use, social purpose. Trade and foreign employment respectively from merchants. As for as their participation is concerned, 824 persons were victims of untouchability and 819 are flood victims. Only 16 of them are members of community forest users, 11 are members of school management committee and 254 are associated with different organizations. Fifteen Dalits are employed in government jobs, 15 in private offices and 222 in foreign countries.

Since the district has rugged terrain the land is not fertile and food production is not sufficient for their family. Food is sufficient only for two months in 798 families, for six months in 551 families for nine months in 241 families and more than nine months in 53 families. There are 627 families of Dalits under absolute poverty line, 411 families are poor, and 552 families are medium level and 53 rich families. Prominent among the Dalits of Tehrathum are Kami, Sarki and Damai and are still following their traditional occupation. However many of them have escaped to different towns in search of jobs.

Scarce Jobs:

Traditional jobs are getting scarcer these days for both Kami and Damai. The paying Damai their wage in Kind (paddy) once a year has stopped. They have been unable to improve their skill. Trainings organized to increase their ability to use the skill are wasted because of financial constraints.

Population of Dalit community in the VDCs of Tehrathum:

S.No.	VDCS	Household	Women	Man	Total
1.	Maynglung	106	317	306	623
2.	Tamfula	36	111	106	216
3.	Piple	49	147	144	291
4.	Sabla	43	131	126	257
5.	Ambung	61	183	182	36
6.	Jirikhimti	34	110	97	207
7.	Solma	82	283	286	567
8.	Sungnama	15	48	43	91
9.	Bashantapur	54	179	163	352
10.	Pulek	9	28	25	53
11.	Dagarpa	36	109	104	213
12.	Sudap	46	142	135	277
13.	Okhre	81	271	266	537
14.	Panchakanya	36	127	124	251
15.	Phakayamara	73	241	242	483
16.	Humarjung	79	277	270	547
17.	Anghidum	25	91	86	177
18.	Moharang	7	226	217	443
19.	Shreejung	29	67	62	197
20.	Pouthad	31	97	90	187
21.	Hwaku	83	179	260	549
22.	Ewa	46	154	145	299
23.	Chhatedhunga	53	107	169	339
24.	Chuhandada	57	191	186	377
25.	Thoklung	39	137	130	268
26.	Sankranti	86	299	294	593
27.	Khamlalung	47	176	157	333
28.	Sampu	29	89	85	174
29.	Ishwibu36	36	121	113	234
30.	Simle	46	163	156	319
31.	Jaljale	39	119	118	26
32.	Oyakjung	77	267	255	522

Of the total 8865 Dalits, 80 percent go out of their homes to work as wage works to make both ends meet. Apart from poverty and unemployment problem they have also health and drinking water problems. Although NGOs like Dalit Awareness Society, Helvetas and Action Aid are engaged in awareness programs, they have not been so much successful. Financially dalit have not made any progress. Not a school has been established in Dalit settlements. Their condition is all the more pathetic in education sector.

Access to education

		Age							
		6-10	11-14	15-24	25-35	35-45	45-59	60-	Total
Uneducated	Women	67	103	175	306	603	676	665	2698
	Man	49	98	160	280	550	674	682	2493
Educated	Women	17	47	156	286	460	578	371	1015
	Man	22	58	176	303	485	658	434	2138
Primary	Women	277	37	-	-	-	-	-	314
	Man	307	49	-	-	-	-	-	356
Lower Secondary	Women		77	37	-	-	-	-	114
	Man		82	39	-	-	-	-	103
S.L.C.	Women	-	-	53	141	-	-	-	194
	Man	-	-	149	62	-	-	-	211
Higher Secondary	Women	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	6
	Man	-	-	6	4	-	-	-	10
Graduation	Women	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
	Man	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	7

On the whole the access of Dalit to education is found negligible. Moreover, the number of students leaving the schools increases as they are promoted to higher classes. Of the 100 households of Dalits in Myaglung, headquarters of Tehrathum, 47 women and 37 men are illiterate. Eighteen male and 10 female students have dropped out of school. In Sable VDC, 20 women and 17 men out of 43 households are illiterate and 6 girl students and 3 boys have left school. In Sakranti VDC, 67 women and 55 men out of 87 households are illiterate. Similarly, in chhatidhunga VDC, 41 women and 44 men out of 53 households are illiterate. The following data of

Tribhuvan Higher Secondary School clearly show the negligible number of Dalit students in different class.

Class	Girls	Boys	Total
1	1	2	3
2	2	2	4
3	-	-	-
4	-	1	1
5	1	2	3
6	6	3	9
7	-	2	2
8	1	3	4
9	2	2	4
10	1	-	1

This shows a true picture of Dalits in Terhathum's schools. In class 12, there is only one female Dalit student. Dalits have ascribed various reasons for not sending their children to school. Ambika Pariyar of Sakranti VDC- says, I have not sent them because the school is far away. Similarly, Meharman Biswokarma says. "I have not sent them because I need their help in agricultural activities." Sajan Pariyar of Myanglung -7 says "I did not send my children to school because I did not like to," When 10 students were asked why they left school, one student said there was no place to read, 2 said because it was too expensive, one said it was too far from home, 3 said to help family in agriculture works, 2 said they did not like to read, 2 said there was no money and one said parents did not send him. Similarly, out of the 26 students interviewed, 4 said there was no place to study, one said it was too expensive, said school was too far, 13 said to help in agriculture, 2 said they did not like to read and 3 said parents did not send them to school.

Kamis have different other caste such as Kalikote, Dhote, Agri, Aphal, Koirala, Koli, Khadka, Khati, Gajmer, ,Gadal, Gadaili, Gotame, Gahate, Giri, Ghimire, Gharti, Ghamghole, Chilime, Jandkami, Tamata, Thungorna, Thoki, Darlami, Darnal, Dhamala. Nagarkoti, Pahari, Pulami, Pokharel, Portel, Paudel, Baskota, Biyali, Bhatta, Bhattarai, Bhusal, Mijar, Rasaili, Lamakarki, Lamgod, Lohani, Lamichhane, Sapkota, Sunchari, Silwal, Sijapati, Setisurwal etc.

Kamis are known as Biswokarma, Damai as Darji and Sarki as Mijar. Damais have also different casts such as Khadka, Khulal, Rimal, Baral, Sapkota, Silwal, Rana, Katuwal, Pokharel, Khatri, Darnal, Sewa, Hingmang, Sunam, Khati, Pariyar, Mothe, Tharu, Khopatari, Ghimire, Bhandari, Shiwakoti, Basnet, Bhusal, Negi, Darlami, Ghale, Sundas, Thatal, Rupeli, Barewa, Panchakoti, Chhar, Tripathi, Karkidholi, Das etc.

There are also different castes within Sarki community such as Bisunkhe, Ramtel, Magarati, Rokaya, Bogati, Brahamasakha, Bayalkoti, Basel, Parkoti, Dudhmagarati, Ghurammagarati, Dulal, Tolangi, Paheli, Achhami, Bhuke, Rokka Dhankute, Gauripipale etc.

Problem of Unemployments:

Over 80 percent of Dalits are unemployed in this hilly district where more than 65 percent Dalit depend on wage-earning. They earn a daily wage of Rs. 100.00. Many Dalit families send their children to rich people's house to work as a cowherd to plough the field or to work in agriculture rather than sending them to school. They are deprived of employment because it is a hilly area and prospects of employment are very scarce. Very few are involved in civil service. As for leadership development, their condition is very weak. Member of Terhathum Biswokarma Community Forest Harka Bahadur Biswokarma says there is no presence of Dalits in areas other than community forest. Of the 103 community forests in the district, 235 Dalits are ahead in leadership. It has made provision that there should be 35% women and 25% Dalit. In the community forest of Sakranti VDC 19 houses belong to Dalits. Because of the majority of Dalits it is called Biswokarma Community Forest. Harka Sunar is chairman in Ratmate Community Forest and Tikaram Biswokarma is chairman in Biswokarma Community Forest.

All 19 Dalit households in Sakranti VDC are illiterate. Due to lack of arable land, they are involved in wage-earning and also produce khukuri at home. They are unaware of their problems and can not express what exactly are their problems. Nand Darnal is educated and a teacher in Krishna Higher Secondary School. Harka Sunar is a businessman. He is a businessman in Sakranti Bazaar and regarded as

an upper class man. He has also made arrangement for food for non-dalits at his home. That is why he is regarded as a person of higher level than other Dalits. Educated Dalits hesitate to write their caste in their names.

For the development of Dalits, 1600 Dalit identity cards have been distributed by the local bodies but no other achievements have been made so far. Health centers are far away and Dalits depend more on faith healers.

Although Dalits are powerful they can not assert their rights. Their relation with janajati (ethnic people) is not intimate. Followers of Kirant culture are orthodox. They are stronger than Dalits from social, economic and political viewpoints. Among Sarki, Kami and Damai, Damai is the lowest level Dalit and is not allowed to enter homes of the other two. The feeling of Untouchability runs very high among these Dalits also. Even Sarki and Kami do not eat the food touched by each other. The economic condition of Biswokarma (Kami) is slightly better than that of the other two.

There are 15 Dalit households in Kaliya VDC of Tehrathum but none of them is Literate. In Sakaranti VDC Radhika Nepali study in class 12 and 3 others in class 9. Her brother and sister have given up studies and are involved in field and women carry out all sorts of other agricultural jobs.

District member of Kirant Yakthum Chumlung Dambar Bahadur says if Dalits were given practical education, they could earn a living. But theoretical education has not helped people other than those in higher levels. This might be one reason why Dalits are not interested in education. Education should be suitable to different occupation casts and language so that they could promote their occupation.

However the Janajati (ethnic) people still treat Dalits as low level people. Indications of change are appearing in young generation. Untouchability is an orthodox tradition which the society should give up. Only laws formed by the government will not be able to remove this discrimination, Dalits themselves suffer from inferiority complex. Every one wish that they should continue to uphold their culture. But

there should be no discrimination. For this, Dalits should, first of all give up begging, he added.

In Sakranti VDC Gita Pariyar her two sisters and a brother had joined school. Though she has continued her study other three have dropped out from school due to financial constraints. She also faced great problem in paying fees, sometimes she sought help from different people including teachers but with little success. She missed classes for some day but still continues undaunted. The school is near her house to inspire her. They allege that scholarship means for Dalit was given to Janajati students.

Similarly in Khamlalung - 4 Dalit have opened a school for their children and 65 children are reading in the school. As children of 48 Dalit households did not get an opportunity for education it was opened with the help of welfare.

In Ewa VDC there are 23 Dalits, all of whom work as wage-earners. Men earn Rs. 120 and women Rs. 90 per day. Say Dhana Maya Biswokarma, "We earn bring home and eat. We could not do more than that." The VDC is one and a half days walk from the district headquarters and none of the NGOs has reached this VDC. Similarly, Bishnu Kumar Nepali of Ewa - 6 who followed the additional occupation of stitching clothes has started to work as wage-earner. He had 60 households in the past but now he works for only 15 households which are far too insufficient an income. He gets around twelve kilo of rice at the end of the year for stitching clothes for all members of a household.

Ishwori B.K., 58 of Ewa - 6 who has 12 children, is so sick that she cannot work. Eight grown up children already left her but she has to look after the remaining smaller children who are reading in class 1 to 3. She would be happy if somebody educated her children. Her husband has gone to Jhapa to earn money.

Dalit in rural area are not free from untouchability. Well - to - do Dalit also regard poor and untidy Dalits as untouchable. Rich Dalit behaves as if they were like non-dalits but the poor ones are weak and powerless. According to Kedar Man Rasaili of Sable Alcohol and local beer are found spilled and flies roaming in the house of some

poor Dalits. This lack of sanitation makes them untouchable in the eyes of others who keep their home neat and tidy.

Kami, also known as Biswokarma and Sarki do not allow Damai to enter their homes. They do not eat food sitting together in the same table. There are instances in which Damai have been beaten when they entered the house of Kami. The upper level Dalits consider lower level Dalits as their slaves and the problem of untouchability still remains deep-rooted in the society, including among Dalits themselves.

If the discrimination is so strong among Dalits themselves, it will be difficult to abolish untouchability. Dhyan Bahadur Pariyar was not allowed to enter their houses by Tikaram, Keshav and Purna Bahadur Rasaili in Sable VDC. Machhindra Maya Pariyar, 41 of Sakranti VDC - 4 was beaten up when she entered the house of Dhan Bahadur Biswokarma. Similar incident had occurred in Oyakjung VDC also in which a Damai had entered the house of a Kami and was beaten up.

The chairman of Tehrathum based Dalit Sachetan Samaj admits the organization has not been able to do much for Dalits within the last five years. But the Organization has raised some awareness in them. Awareness programs should also be linked with economic benefit to draw their attention. Otherwise they would prefer economic opportunities and activities rather than attending awareness programs.

Surkhet: A Little Progress

Surkhet is well - known as a district with plenty of Dalits. This is the third district with largest number of Dalits in the country. In all 26.69 percent of the total population is occupied by Dalits in this hilly district that lies in mid-western region. The Dalit population of the district is 71,583 out of the total population of 281, 574 in Surkhet. Dalits inhabit in large numbers not only in the rural belt but also in Birendranagar Municipality.

The government has categorized that there are 22 castes of Dalits out of whom Surkhet is inhabited by Kami, Sunar, Damai, Sarki, Satar, Musahar, Badi, Teli and Harijan. Damai, Sarki, Kami, Gaine, Sunar and Badi are found in large numbers.

As for as Birendranagar municipality is concerned, Dalits are found living in large numbers in Solighopte, Bangesimal and Maseritol of ward no. 1 Shreenagar of ward No. 2 Khokekhole of ward No. 4 and Shantitol of ward no. 6 Likewise remarkably high number of Dalits are found living in VDCs like Maindada Pokharikadam, Rokam, Tatopani, Taradga, Uttaraganga, Salkot, Mehelkuna, Ghumkhahare, Ghoptagaon, Khanikhola, Dharapani.

Of the Dalits of different castes living here, Kamis are in highest number which form 53 percent of the Dalits or 40,463 in number. Kamis number 1,821 in the municipality alone. Similarly the second position is occupied by Damai with population of 10537 followed by Sunar numbering 8,688, Kami 5,347, Badi 873, Jain 459, Teli 3376, Harijan 226 and Kumal 153. Similarly Dalits whose caste has not been identified number 4,260.

List of Dalit Population

Location	Total Population	Kami	Sunar	Damai	Sarki	Satar	Badi	Gainee	Teli	Harijan	Nkhuleko	Kumal	Total Dalit population	Percentage
Binapa	31350	2821	1162	1500	1003	18	-	93	86	5	976	-	6685	21.3
Agagaun	2714	340	65	57	54	-	13	29	-	-	-	-	569	20.96
Babiya chour	7063	1082	8	433	414	-	19	-	12	-	33	-	2006	28.40
Bejedi chour	3852	1070	-	46	12	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	1135	29.46
Betan	2838	377	-	109	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	497	17.5
Bidhaypur	5279	709	7	220	10	-	6	-	-	-	119	-	1076	20.23
Bjjura	4889	848	27	272	40	-	-	-	57	-	11	-	1255	25.66
Chapray	3066	385	17	135	-	-	-	-	14	-	18	-	569	18.88
Chhinchu	10911	1038	500	555	306	5	94	-	7	28	354	-	2887	26.46
Dahachour	3273	815	103	69	82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2887	26.46
Dantakali	616	25	51	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	107	17.37
Dasharathpur	4444	796	77	192	-	5	17	-	-	-	-	-	1087	24.4
Dharapani	2905	894	11	92	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1032	35.52
Gadhi Bayalkada	3413	68	167	66	6	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	332	9.72
Garpan	2063	100	13	14	53	-	-	13	-	-	21	-	214	10.23
Ghatgoun	4358	1268	-	286	-	-	-	-	-	-	647	-	2201	50.5
Ghoreta	2814	508	23	107	9	-	43	-	-	-	58	-	753	26.75
Ghumkhahare	3743	830	21	122	40	-	-	23	-	-	-	5	1041	27.8
Gumi	6535	284	543	144	-	-	10	9	5	-	106	61	1162	17.78
Guthu	6590	1484	65	372	-	-	9	-	-	-	134	-	2064	31.3
Hariharpur	4132	461	227	216	-	-	37	-	-	-	-	14	955	22.56
Jarbuta	6573	554	345	189	253	-	-	44	32	-	80	-	1497	22.77
Kajalkot	3563	97	-	183	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	295	8.2
Kalyan	4467	273	147	164	149	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	733	16.4
Kaprichour	634	8	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	208	-	221	34.85
Khanikhola	2373	536	82	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	648	27.3
Kunathar	6234	699	277	253	73	-	13	-	-	-	150	5	1470	23.58
Lagam	4937	626	69	159	33	-	6	-	-	-	8	-	901	20.49
Latikoili	12380	978	416	385	135	-	152	6	-	-	82	-	2154	17.39
Lekgarja	5564	701	798	130	-	-	-	-	63	-	34	-	1726	31
Lekgoun	4897	1105	-	85	73	-	-	-	-	-	35	7	105	26.64
Lekamjul	7192	682	635	292	138	-	53	26	-	-	-	-	1926	26.77
Maintada	10520	3104	382	412	947	11	63	18	28	-	499	-	5464	51.93
Malarani	4650	580	12	106	24	-	-	-	8	-	30	-	760	16.34
Mehalkuna	9030	4113	106	347	132	-	50	87	-	-	-	-	4837	53.56
Neta	3632	286	-	116	29	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	442	12.16
Pamka	2286	216	-	72	94	-	6	-	-	-	8	-	336	17.32
Pokharikada	3632	956	-	229	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1265	17.82
Rajena	2311	317	-	74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	391	16.91
Rakam	3526	800	76	165	112	-	190	-	12	-	51	10	1416	40.15
Ratu	1639	120	-	47	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	-	239	14.58
Ramghat	6894	1129	766	197	324	-	27	25	-	-	76	-	2544	36.9
Sahare	9348	1867	39	352	53	-	42	45	8	193	45	-	2684	28.71
Salkot	6717	1139	7	451	-	175	10	-	10	-	120	25	1939	28.86
Sathakhani	8434	190	170	331	105	-	-	20	86	-	82	-	1424	18.88
Taranga	5308	1197	110	263	97	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	1680	31.65
Tatopani	4786	1727	60	286	33	-	-	-	8	-	105	5	2224	46.46
Uttarganga	10200	742	1097	193	244	-	-	21	-	-	14	-	2311	22.65

The majority of Dalit living here are economically weak with no access to education. Health and drinking water problems are common to all Dalits. Although it is said that District Development committee and Birendranagar municipality have been carrying out programs for the uplift of Dalits, positive results are hardly seen. Even Non-Governmental organizations are also reported to have spent a lot of money, but the outcome is almost nil.

Several Initiatives:

About a dozen governmental and non-governmental organizations including Dalit Sewa Sangh based in Kathmandu, DFID based in Nepalgunj, Samudayik Sewa Karyakram, Save the Children Norway, Social Awakening Center (SAC), Nepal Rastriya Dalit Samaj Kalyan Sangh, Nepal Samaj Vikas Sangh, Water for Health and Nava Jyoti Training Centre funded by Srilanka carry out their programs. They spend substantial amount of money for public awareness, education, health, drinking water, and physical development of school, development and construction work every year but there are hardly any signs of their problems being resolved. Although they claim that Dalits have increased access to education and their participation is higher in development activities they prove false when we study their settlements. The levels of poverty, illiteracy and superstition have not declined. There are no schools health posts drinking water facility introduced in their localities. On the country Dalit women have been attracted to decoration goods and costly costumes though they can hardly make both ends meet.

Bal Bahadur Sarki engaged in the uplift of Dalit Since 1971, admits that millions of rupees spent for Dalits have not produced the desired result as the program was not really targeted to Dalit reality.

Dalit Sewa Sangh based in Kathmandu was opened in 2056 BS to make Dalit self-reliant. Its first and second chairman was Prabha Nepali and Bal Bahadur Sarki respectively. It has now mobilized 50 communities with the help of Swiss NGO Helvetas. Educational programs have been launched in Dalit community. These organization has been carrying out various programs in thick Dalit hamlets with the

cooperation of different donor agencies, present Chair Person Sanju Biswokarma said.

The dominant caste among the Dalits is that of Kami in this district. The Kamis found here belong to Biswokarma, Kadara, Mijhar, Baraili, Baral, Darnal, Raji, Lohar, Pahadi, Pulami and Giri groups. Kamis form 53% of the total Dalit population of the district and number 40,463. Their largest concentration is in Mehelkuna VDC where 4,113 Kamis live out of the total population of 9030. The second VDC with highest Kami concentration is Maintada VDC which is inhabited by 3104 out of the total population of 10,520.

No more Untouchability:

Now a days, these people are not so much affected by the system of untouchability which was rampant in the past although the evils of untouchability can be found to some extent in Salkot, Taradga, Pamka, Malarani, Dahachaur, Gumi, Kaprichaur, Hariharpur, Dandkali and Gadhi Bayalkanda VDCs. In these villages dalits are still considered untouchable, they cannot enter temples and houses of other people. Lack of education among Dalit and their small number in these VDCs was attributed as the main reason of various problems they had to encounter. However, those who reside in the vicinity of the municipality are not required to face such problems. They can enter and worship in the temple and use public water taps and wells.

Due to educational and economic backwardness they do not enjoy high prestige in society. Except a few educated ones most of them do not have any identity in general. They want to live separately in their own community. In Birendranagar municipality the Kami population is concentrated in Shreenagar ward no. 2 where. There are 119 households who have received some small plots of land from the government. Their locality was called Kami Tol in the past but it has been renamed now as Shreenagar.

The traditional occupation of Kamis is to make utensils, agricultural tools like spade, sickle etc. They also design and make gold and silver ornaments but since they have lost these traditional occupations now, they are mainly daily wage earners. They carry out all sorts of works such as stone-crushers, porters carrying goods,

carpenters; this applies mainly to those living in the vicinity the municipality while the people of the VDCs go to different cities of India to earn their living.

The number of highly educated Kamis is negligible. Lacking of economic resource has compelled them to live in abject poverty and hampered them to educate their children. Only there Kami people have received higher education from Surkhet district and half a dozen have received education up to Intermediate level. In Shreenagar located in Birendranagar municipality an infants' class has been recently opened and 24 infants are studying now.

An NGO named Water for Health has provided drinking water for people of this community in the new settlement of Shrinagar. Ten taps have been distributed for them. However, in remote villages there is lack of water sources. Women go to the rivulets to fetch water. Health facilities are also scarce and people depend on traditional faith healers rather than hospitals and health posts. Citizenship certificate is another big problem. Many of them do not possess landed properly. They cannot obtain citizenship certificates.

Damai is the second largest caste among Dalits numbering 10,537 in all. They are divided into different sub-groups including Pariyar, Darnal, Darlami, Negi, Thatal, Bharal, Hudke, Auji, Dhoti, Sundas etc. Damais number 10537 in Surkhet. 14% of the total populations of Dalit are of Damai. There are 1500 Damais in Birendranagar municipality followed by 555 in Chhinchu VDC, 451 in Salkot, 412 in Maintada, 347 in Mehelkuna and 347 in Babiyachaur. They inhabit even in remote VDCs except Kaprichaur. It is said they were called Damai because they played a drum like musical instrument in the marriages called "Damaha." They play "panche Baja" (five musical instruments) on the auspicious occasion like marriage even today in some rural areas, but the practice has been extinct. The town area has replaced by musical bands. There traditional occupation of tailoring has also come to an end. Previously, they would charge food grain for tailoring works at the end of the year. There occupation was threatened as they did not learn new skills to suit the needs and tastes of the modern customers. Many of the new generation people do not know how to stitch clothes or to play on

musical instruments, which are their traditional occupations. Unlike the Kamis they live separately in scattered areas. As they have almost entirely lost the traditional occupations raise poultry and pigeons, carry out labour jobs, carpentry, stone-crushing and so on. Men work as masons, carry stones, work as labours while women work as fuel wood cutter, stone-crushers and sand shifters. Some have started vegetable farming while many of them like the Kamis go to India and neighboring districts in search if job.

These are also backward people like other Dalits. Out of 100 Dalit households in Solighopti VDC there are 30 Damai families of whom only 30 percent send their children to school. Financial problem was one reason while the second reason for not sending children to school was that the school was located too far away. One of the Damais who sent his three children to school said some Damai people who were economically well -off were not sending their children to school. Some women who could not educate their children joined adult literacy classes in maseritol.

Social Awakening Center (SAC) has constructed a drinking water project for 100 families in Solighopti. But drinking water is not accessible to them in Ramghat, Uttarganga, Malarani, Alaga, Tatopani, Pamka, Dharapani and Ghumkharhare where people fetch water from a distance river one to six miles far.

In remote VDCs health post facilities are not available. When people fall ill, they believe their Kul Dewata (deity of their clan) is angry and worship the deity. As they believe in traditional faith-healers, they are reluctant to visit hospitals and medical centers. Superstition has gripped the uneducated people as they do not take care of their health, according to some NGO staff. As they have been staying at the same place for a long time, they have not face citizenship problem. Among the other dominant Dalits are Sunar and Sarki whose total number in the district is 8688 and 5347 respectively and 1162 and 1003 in the municipality area. There are 1097 Sunars and 306 Sarkis in Chhinchu VDC but there are 543 Sunars and not a single Sarki in Gumi VDC.

These people do not live in their own clusters and are found living in a scattered way in different VDCs and the municipality. They

generally live near the streams and outside the towns. Sarkis are poor and backward. Sunars are traditionally associated with gold ornament making. Unlike other Dalits, Sunars are rich in Surkhet and face very little problems in comparison to other Dalits. Their concentration is in Shantitol of Birendranagar municipality. Out of the 200 households there, 20% are Sunars. Although the settlement is near the town there is drinking water problem.

The number of Badi community is small but it has a different identity. They are found living separately on the bank of stream in Shantipur ward No. 1 of Latikoili VDC. One can see their 35 houses standing on a row on the bank of the Bheri. There were 97 houses until three years ago but as the flooded river started swept away the houses many of them deserted the place.

In the past they used to provide entertainment by playing on musical instruments, singing and dancing in different celebrations but no more. They used to make earthen ware used for various purposes but now they prefer labour jobs. Many are now engaged in stone-crushing, sand shifting. They refute the charge that they are engaged in flesh trade. They admit that although a few have under economic compulsion, carried out the profession.

Conclusion:

It is not an easy task to abolish the inhuman caste system that is deep rooted in the Nepali Society. The problem can not be solve legally or constitutionally alone. The main problem is the patronic behavior of Upper class people who have an influential role in the government and the society. Another problem is active religion practice by the state.

The centralized system of government is chiefly responsible for social exclusion of Dalits. The education system also oriented towards the services of so called upper class people. There are several restrictions and hindrances that will vanish only after the total restructuring of the society.

In recent times, the rebels have become instrumental in restoring social status of dalits. But, as there means for the social change is violence, the impact has been limited. Once the process of

institutionalization of reforms, incorporating the idea of rebels, will start, then these humiliating irritants like caste system will be eradicated from the Nepali society.

One should pay attention to the following facts for dalit uplift in the present status quo of the society:

1. Develop the feeling of “we” instead if “I”
2. Root out untouchability from among Dalits
3. Strengthen Dalit unity
4. Enhance educational awareness
5. Create environment to send children to school
6. Employment opportunity should be available to Dalits.
7. Identify one’s culture and protect it
8. New programs should be implemented based on the needs of Dalits.
9. NGO should monitor their projects regularly.
10. Tendency to seek only jobs should be discouraged.
11. Programs should be launched in villages, not in town.
12. Employment along with skill development training should be insured.
13. Income – oriented and agricultural program should be encouraged.
14. Not to deceive by any non dalit groups.
15. Include in prestigious posts and give responsibility.