

**STATE OF LIVELIHOOD OF TARAI DALIT
A STUDY ON THE MUSAHAR COMMUNITY OF
BIRATNAGAR METROPOLITAN CITY, NEPAL**

A Dissertation

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ANTHROPOLOGY

Submitted by:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this PhD. dissertation entitled **State of Livelihood of Tarai Dalit: A Study on the Musahar Community of Biratnagar Metropolitan City, Nepal** is submitted by me to the office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Nepal is an entirely original work prepared under the supervision and guidance of my supervisor Prof. Binod Pokharel and co-supervisor Associate Prof. Man Bahadur Khattri. I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The result presented in this dissertation has not ever presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other purposes. No part of the contents of this dissertation has ever been published in the form or a part of any book. I am solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Dilli Ram Prasai

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled **State of Livelihood of Tarai Dalit: A Study of the Musahar Community of Biratnagar Metropolitan City, Nepal** was prepared by **Mr. Dilli Ram Prasai** under our supervision and guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final evaluation by the research committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in ANTHROPOLOGY.

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ABSTRACT

Historically, Musahars are excluded and most disadvantaged community who are deprived of the basic needs and social services. Although their socio-cultural attributes resemble to the socio-cultural attributes of indigenous peoples of Nepal, they have been categorized as *Tarai Dalit* who are still treated as untouchables in a predominantly Hindu society of *Tarai*. According to the composite human development indices, they are ranked at the bottom of the social strata of Nepal. Traditionally, they depended heavily upon the daily wages of agricultural labour. But the recent changes in the land tenure system and land ownership patterns, rapid processes of urbanization and industrialization have threatened their traditional patterns of livelihood and further pushed them to the verge of absolute economic poverty. At present, they have been trying to diversify the bases of their livelihood and cope with the poverty, but their social status as *Tarai Dalits* and their political status as unequal citizens, who do not have participation even in the local politics, still restrict them from their access to socio-economic opportunities that prevail in the society. Hence, in this study I argue that the social and political participation of Musahar community should be ensured to ascertain their access to resources thereby to promote their socio-economic development in Nepal.

I also argue that in this thesis the lack of access to land and other productive assets in a changing context of social relation, very limited availability of non-farm employment and social constraints explain the persisting rural poverty in the context of Musahar community of east *Tarai*. In this study I have also been engaged with examining the underlying causes of landlessness of Musahars their other ways of

living. It will undertake a critical examination of how limited productive resources are accessed, utilized and contested under the context of rising vulnerability. In the substantial discussion I have addressed some fundamental research questions and appropriate objectives

This research is based on the descriptive research methods and qualitative information collected from primary sources applying anthropological methods, tools, and techniques, and garnered in the forms of anecdotes, comments, and narratives. The major methods and sources of data used through the interview, observation and life history etc.

Every society passes through some profound changes not only in its social structure, its economic system, its norms and values and modes of life but also in all sectors of its life. Therefore, the Musahar people of the study area are not far from this change. Now they have become more conscious and they have realized their social status and position and they began try themselves to uplift their living standard.

Musahars are practiced slash and burn cultivation as their means of livelihood. They supplemented their agricultural economy by hunting wild games and gathering wild roots and fruits. But neither had they owned lands collectively nor did they individually. Land was valuable for them to produce daily needs. But they were not aware of the future value of the land. For Musahars land was the fundamental source of livelihood, but they did not own any lands. Thus, there was an antagonistic relation of Musahars with lands, beside many other socio-economic and socio-cultural reasons I observed the poor economic life of Musahars in study area.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARE	=	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CARs	=	Capital, assets and resources
CPRC	=	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
DFID	=	Department for International Development
FAO	=	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	=	Focus Group Discussion
IDS	=	Integrated Development Society
NESAC	=	National Economic Social Advisor Council
NGO	=	Non-Governmental Organization
SAARC	=	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SLA	=	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SLF	=	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
UNDP	=	United Nation Development Program
VDC	=	Village Development Committee
WFP	=	World Food Program
WB	=	World Bank

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Overview of the Study

Livelihood is multi-faced and multi-dimensional Phenomena, it related to everyday life experience and holistic survivable approach. It is concerned with economy and survival needs for people. The concept livelihood is experience of possessions, admittance and actions carried out by people or groups of people for their everyday life survival practices. Livelihood is also changing and relative social substance which is detrmined by local knowledge, people perpeceptions and response, people ability,resources and viability and depends on others many more variables .

Many livelihood studies are found the sound support in the accepting people of the disadvantaged groups which is address by Conway and Chambers in their discussion Paper. The discussion paper, claimed that a livelihood refers to the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities; tangible assets, such as stocks and resources and intangible assets, such as claims and access (Chambers and Conway,1991). The definition provided by them, is most widely accepted definition of livelihood which has been followed by Carney (1998), Scoones (1998), DFID (1999) and Ellis (1999). According to them, livelihood as an asset, access and the activities equally found through the common people's knowledge, culture and survival strategy in household level. The concept of Livelihood has gained and support of community resources which is accommodating the factors that manipulate the people's living standards and living expences methods. It is understood as a way of life of poor people in the global south (De Haan, 2012). It denotes that the means of living includes what people do and what they achieve by making a living. People of the rural area of the developing contries expenses their life used to the nominal and basic amount of resources's

consumption through changing their behavioural pattern of livelihood. They do so with varying degrees of success according to their access to resources and employment and how they deal with pressures arising from social, economic and environmental change (Bernstein, Crow & Johnson, 1992). Poverty is perceived as being a state of wants and weakness or stage of deprivation. Poverty is associated with lack of incomes and assets, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness (Chambers, 1995). It is broadly recognized that the deprived are not poor only in terms of earnings but also in terms of exercising their voices to correspond their desires as acceptable arguments. Income poverty is, in part, a consequence of poverty of political and social power (NESAC, 2002).

The poverty level is a key criterion in the assessment of livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). Deficiency of people has been habitually assessed not only in favor of earnings or expenditure criteria. In this interpretation, a person is poor only if his/her income level is below the defined poverty line, or if consumption falls below a stipulated minimum (Farrington, et al, 1999).

Asset is greatly important entry point of livelihood. He suppose this argument and saying that livelihood is strong foundation for focusing on common rural people's assets and capabilities determining their strategies to respond risk and opportunities in a general context. Frustration and dissatisfaction with the income and consumption model gave rise to basic needs perspective which go far outside income and consist of the need for basic requirements like health, education, resident, food and other services that is necessary to stop poor from withdrawing into resources deficiency specially poverty. More recently, poverty has been defined not only in terms of the absence of basic capabilities to meet their physical needs, but also to achieve their goals of participating in the life of the community and influencing decision making processes (Farrington, et

al,1999) against dissatisfaction which may motivate them to diversify livelihood strategies. The situation of poverty and vulnerability of assets perceived by poor, pressure them to the diversification of livelihoods.

People do not have always to rely on similar activities, because it might not be capable to provide their household needs. Thus, they necessarily search alternative livelihood strategy according to time. This type of livelihood strategies of individuals or households shaped by local or distant institutions, social relations as well as by economic opportunities (Ellis, 2000). In similar vein, Ellis explores the multiple livelihood strategies and made distinction between diversification by necessity and diversification by choice. He further proposes the six determinant factors of diversification measured in the radiance of peculiarity. The determinant factors are: environment, labor potentiality, markets availability, assets, national policy and coping strategies which support to positive attributes for livelihood security in rural households. Ellis (2000) further suggests that the preservation of a diversified assortment of economic activities can also be understood as a more enduring strategies, for instance in order to minimize risk or to maximize the utilization of household labor during agricultural off seasons. This concept is based on a very pragmatic approach to the influential conditions and dynamics and the implication of living income diversification. Concerning the overview of livelihood philosophy from theoretical roots and theory to practical relevance, the education in the economic and growth theory, led to the livelihood approach. Benneet (2010) provides a definition that is more associated to economic thinking and framework for investigative livelihoods based on a stage of assets, which are modified by access govern through social relations, institution and organization in substance of trends and shocks. The livelihood strategies are composed of variety of natural source base as well as non-natural resource base activities that finally impact livelihood security and ecological sustainability.

He has further explored the dimension of determinants of livelihood diversification and its associations between livelihood diversification and poverty, agricultural output, gender, ecological sustainability, macro-policy and transforms agenda (Ellis, 2000). When rural livelihoods of farming people's income source of its own does not provide sufficient earnings of survival in rural areas, for this reason, most of the deprived families must find a diverse portfolio of activities and income sources (Bennett, 2010). Thus, livelihood diversification conceptualizes as strategies adopted by rural poor to cope with poverty and vulnerability. Therefore, poverty, a state of wants and disadvantage or stage of deprivation associated with lack of incomes and assets, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness (Chambers, 1995), is a key criterion in the assessment of livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). The situation of poverty and vulnerability of assets perceived by poor people pressure them to the diversification of livelihoods.

Diversification of rural livelihoods has started to dominate the discussion on rural development during the last four decades. Prior to this agriculture was seen as the predominant occupation of all rural households (Saith, 2006). The dominant theoretical discourses concerning the origin of the concept of livelihood diversification, its emergence as a major concern in poverty alleviation and the difference in views of researcher of different line of thought on the poverty has impact on diversification.

Livelihood diversification is a strategy and norms in developing countries. The diversity of rural livelihoods in low income developing countries is receiving increased attention in discussion about rural poverty reduction (Ellis, 2000). Very little people or households obtain all their earnings from a single source, where as more people derive it from multiple sources. It is the conceptualization of multiplicity sources used by people to

accumulate income or shift the area of resource accumulation from farm to non-farm activities. Livelihood diversification has gradually more twisted towards non-agricultural practices as a resource of earnings and people engagement. Non-farm activities have been found between 35 to 50 percent of rural incomes in sub-Sahara Africa (Reardon, 1997), 80-90 percent in South Africa and in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, around 15 percent of rural household incomes are accounted for by family members working in the Persian Gulf. The conclusion is different to predictable views of rural people occupied severely by a few peasants. Study conducted all over the state has exposed that occupation diversification is great spread and found in all locations as well as across agricultural areas and variety of profits and wealth. This indicates the diverse range of livelihood practices in arrange to produce via wide range of income of sources i.e. farm house, agricultural and non-agricultural activities in many countries. Livelihood diversification is often understood as a form of self-insurance through which people seek activities and income streams with different degree of risk, expected returns, liquidity and seasonality (Ellis, 2000).

On the contrary, in the developing countries, the majority individuals largely involve on agricultural sector, so there is highly valued of territory and land. Many and much circumstances the land becomes a crucial assets of livelihood. In almost all developing countries, agricultural production plays a crucial role in growth, employment and livelihoods (DFID, 2002). Land and rural livelihood have been paid too much attention by researcher and development practitioners (Deninger & Feder, 2009), they writes "in agrarian societies land serves as the main means for not only generating livelihood, but often also for accumulating wealth and transferring it between generations". Due to the fact, agricultural society to pay a major position in the livelihoods policies of local individuals. If the change of agricultural labours's relation, it results in significant impact on their livelihood. Due to the importance of land to livelihoods, a large number of studies have investigated and established

relationship between land and rural livelihoods in developing countries (Ellis, 2000; Rigg, 2006). Similarly, (Bernstein, Crow & Johnson, 1992) recognizes "agriculture farming is key to rural economy and livelihood virtually everywhere, as a direct source of employment and income and as an indirect source through a range of activities in farming" (p. 2). The other equally widespread characteristic of farming is its seasonality which has important effects on the distribution of agricultural employment and income which pressurized the livelihoods of more vulnerable rural groups.

There are also hidden assumptions that rural residence necessarily entails farming as the means of livelihoods and indeed, the basis of a distinct way of life (Bernstein, Crow & Johnson, 1992 (2). In contrast to this argument, there are also counter arguments which state that farming is not the whole of rural economy, as many rural people are unable to gain and secure adequate livelihoods from farming on their own because they are marginalized and landless farmers. (Bernstein, Crow & Johnson, 1992 (4). They may be marginal or landless for a number of reasons where livelihood study pays less attention to it. Evidences from developing countries show an important role of non-farm activities in the income generation of rural households (Barrett &Reardon, 2000) and the role of land has gradually declined in rural livelihood and poverty (Rigg, 2006). The other evidences, such as social, economic, political and environmental also indicate that land shortage or landlessness has driven many households to diversify non-farm activities for their livelihood (Davis, 2006). For the moment the density of population has been rising in rural areas, it has lead to a speedy decrease in farm land volume and landlessness people facing several difficulties to living standard in Asian countries.

However, the rising level of landlessness or land shrinkingsituation can be taken as a positive trend because this creates opportunities for diversifying livelihood strategy and mitigating dependence on farmland and their patron or landholders (Rigg, 2006). Rigg

(2006) suggested that land has lost its crucial role in shaping rural livelihoods and its role will be gradually replaced by other reliable sources like non-farm activities existing in urban sectors. The livelihood school is well matched to capture the many activities of rural dwellers that rely on their livelihoods (Rigg, 2006).

The livelihood experiences can be understood by their position and trajectories as Ellis (2000) says the assets, the activities and the access mediate by institutions and social relations collectively determine the livelihood gained by the individuals or households. Activities are the symptom of an individual's access and the belongings and the easiest way of speedily accessing an individual's livelihood achievement. Assets are always at the center of the livelihood approaches, but the social rules and norms that affect an individual's access are also considered to be critical and importance in livelihood approach (Ellis, 1999). In contrast to livelihood, sustainable livelihood (De Haan, 2012) offers a framework for intervention and changes in livelihood applicable for capturing to understand poor people's livelihood.

Regarding the synopsis of livelihood thinking from conceptual line and theory to practical relevance, the foundation in the economic and development assumption, led to the livelihood concept. Bennett (2010) provides a meaning that is more connected to economic philosophy and framework for exploratory livelihoods based on a policy of assets, which are customized by access governed through social relations, institution and organization in content of trends and shocks. The livelihood strategies are unruffled of a variety of natural resource base as well as non-natural resource base activities that eventually crash livelihood security and ecological sustainability.

Bennett (2010) has further explored the dimension of determinants of livelihood diversification and its relationships among livelihood diversification and poverty,

agricultural output, gender, environmental sustainability, macro-policy and development agenda. When rural livelihoods of farming people's income source of its own does not provide sufficient funds of survive in rural communities, for this reason, most of the poor households need to depend on a various set of activities and income sources. Thus, livelihood diversification conceptualizes as strategies adopted by rural poor to cope with poverty and vulnerability.

Diversification of rural livelihoods has started to dominate the discussion on rural development during the last four decades. Prior to this agriculture was seen as the predominant occupation of all rural households (Saith, 2006). The dominant theoretical discourses concerning the origin of the concept of livelihood diversification, its emergence as a major concern in poverty alleviation and the difference in views of researcher of different line of thought on the poverty has impact on diversification.

Large quantity of the world's inhabitants of poorer, particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa exist in agricultural. Household depend for their livelihood and food security on the productive use of land. In many emergent countries like Nepal land is central issues of ownership and remains highly tilted particularly in Latin America, Southern Africa, and some parts of Asia. When land is highly unequal, agricultural growth delivers fewer benefits for the poor, as profits are taken from the rustic financial system and economy. Even though, land is only one factor in the development of the rural economy (DFID, 2002).

Mahmud,et al.(2009) writes in there articles We know that mass of world's poor people are living in Asia especially in south Asia including Nepal, which is depending upon the natural resources, largely agriculture and employment work in different sectors. Farming has traditionally formed the heart of rural livelihoods. Agriculture has no significant improvement and the mechanization. Another literature also focused on literacy quantity is

small, educational values are comparatively low. Feudalism scheme is extremely strong and lots of natural resources are owned or forbidden by elite and forceful persons of the areas. Land is segmented in small segments and per person land is diminishing to enforce people to select the rotate livelihood. So diversification opportunities are helping people to help them to uncover their own exit routes out of poverty (Mahmud, et al. 2009). It is also importance to mention that livelihood diversification enables people to suit strong productive as they are competent to use more inputs for the lands (Adhikari, 2008). It is also found that mainstreaming people get more benefits than the poor. It can be verified from couple of studies from Asia, Africa, and some other countries (Chambers & Conway, 1991, Ellis,1998, 2000; Reardon,1997; Rigg, 2006 Scoones, 1998). In contrast to this argument, Reardon's (1997) large-scale study on many African countries in past decades, has indicated that urbanization and underperforming industrial sector growth have been unable to absorb the surplus rural labor available.

1.2 Livelihood Situation in Nepal

The issue of livelihood and socio-political participation of the poor and backward groups remained a significant problem in Nepal. These groups did not have significant participation or access to social, economic, or political sectors. They were marginalized from the mainstream of the state system and the development process (Upreti et al.). The government failed to guarantee their rights at the implementation level. The backwards groups faced numerous challenges in their struggle to achieve rights for making and managing livelihoods. Livelihood construction occurred not only within a physical environment, represented on natural capital and natural sources, but also within a socio-economic environment that presented certain opportunities and constraints (Gurung, 2019).

Seddon and Hussein (2002) articulated the situation of Nepalese rural people's livelihood, noting that over one-third of Nepal's population lived in poverty. Seddon (2005) examine these individuals, livelihoods concerned a invariable struggle for survival their control over and access to strategic resources were narrowed, their sources of earnings were precarious with generally low returns to efforts and risks, their social networks and stocks of social assets were of limited capacity, and their personal resources and quality of life were broke. These groups included rural poor and working-class individuals such as marginal farmers, rural artisans, small retailers, insecure non-agricultural employees, and agricultural laborers. Among them, roughly half of the bottom were regarded as extremely poor, although this ratio varied by region. The least well-off tended to have the least diversified income sources, often relying on daily wage labor with limited options. Most were in debt and suffered social and cultural discrimination due to caste, ethnicity, gender and age.

Nepal remained an unequal society where some prospered while many did not. Some enjoyed plenty of resources and opportunities, while others faced scarcity (Upreti, et al., 2012). Unequal resource distribution, gaps between policy and practice, and limited participation in development initiatives further exacerbated inequalities. Livelihoods in Nepal were largely based on subsistence agriculture, daily wage labor, and seasonal migration, making livelihood diversification essential for reducing insecurity. Upreti, et al. (2012) highlighted that tourism, eco-tourism, hydropower, non-timber forest products, and small-scale industries held significant potential for providing alternative income options especially for marginalized groups. The caste system in Nepal, rooted in the Hindu Varna system, continued to influence society despite being legally abolished in 1963. Dalits, in particular, experienced significant

poverty due to landlessness, poor policy implementation, and social exclusion. It is argued that livelihood security depended on access to affordable food and diversified income sources. Landlessness was especially detrimental, as it deprived individuals of social benefits and legal identity, reinforcing their dependence on upper castes for survival (UNDP, 2012). *Dalits* primarily worked as tenants, sharecroppers, and agricultural laborers, with nearly 75% of workers reliant on agriculture for their livelihoods (Labor Force Survey, 2018).

The agrarian relationship in Nepal evolved rapidly in recent decades due to various factors. Sharma (2010) observed emerging relationships among landlords, tenants, and laborers in agrarian society. Many bonded laborers sought alternative livelihoods to escape exploitative conditions. Singh (1999) emphasized that as land for agricultural expansion became scarce, opportunities for non-farm employment needed to expand to mitigate rural poverty. The notion of livelihood is multifaceted and multi-dimensional, interconnected, and holistic. It is concerned with poverty and survival needs. It emphasizes and conceptualizes assets, access, and activities accepted by individuals or groups of individuals for their daily survival. It responds to the growing modify and uncertainty, predominantly for the rapidly growing population of rural poor and the natural resources on which they depend Bennett (2010). Contemporary livelihood studies found their intellectual inspiration in understanding the lives of poor people, as advocated by Haan and Zoomers in their discussion paper. Chambers and Conway (1991) stated that a livelihood refers to the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible assets (e.g., stocks and resources), and intangible assets (e.g., claims and access). Their definition has become the most widely accepted, influencing subsequent works such as Carney (1998), Scoones

(1998), the Department for International Development (DFID, 1999), and Ellis (1999). According to these scholars, livelihoods as assets, access, and activities mutually determine the living gained by an individual or household.

The livelihood concept has gained acceptance as a valuable means of thoughtful the factors influencing people's lives and happiness. It is implicit as a way of life for poor people in the global south (De Haan, 2012). It denotes that the means of living include what people do and achieve to make a living. People in rural areas of the third world gain their livelihoods in diverse ways, such as different types of farming and a wide range of other activities, depending on their access to resources and employment, as well as their strategies to handle social, economic, and environmental changes (Bernstein, Crow & Johnson, 1992).

Poverty is perceived as a state of deprivation and disadvantage, often associated with a lack of income and assets, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness (Chambers, 1995). It is widely recognized that poverty is not only about income but also the inability to exercise one's voice to express needs and participate in societal decision-making processes. Income poverty has historically been a consequence of political and social powerlessness (NESAC, 2002). The poverty level is a key criterion for assessing livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). Poverty has often been assessed against income or consumption criteria, where a person is considered poor if their income level falls below a defined poverty line or their consumption is below a stipulated minimum (Farrington et al., 1999). According to Farrington et al. (1999), assets are a critical entry point for addressing poverty. Livelihood approaches at the low-level focus on poor people's assets and capabilities, determining their strategies to react to risks and opportunities in local contexts.

Dissatisfaction with the income/consumption model has led to a basic needs perspective that goes beyond income, incorporating the need for basic health, education, and access to clean water and other services required to prevent people from falling into poverty. Ellis (2000) argued that the maintenance of a diversified portfolio of economic activities is often a permanent strategy to minimize risk or maximize household labor utilization during agricultural off-seasons. Livelihood diversification is shaped by factors such as seasonality, risk, labor and credit markets, assets, and coping strategies. The livelihood approach, grounded in economic and development theory, emphasizes assets, access, and activities mediated by institutions and social relations, ultimately determining livelihood security and environmental sustainability (Ellis, 2000).

Diversification of rural livelihoods has been a prominent theme in discussions on rural development over the last four decades (Saith, 2006). Historically, agriculture was viewed as the predominant occupation in rural areas. However, evidence shows that many rural households now rely on a mix of farm, off-farm, and non-farm activities to generate income. For instance, non-farm activities account for 35–50% of rural incomes in Sub-Saharan Africa and 80–90% in South Africa, while in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, they contribute around 15% of rural household incomes (Reardon, 1997). Livelihood diversification is often understood as a form of self-insurance through which people engage in activities and income streams with varying degrees of risk, expected returns, liquidity, and seasonality (Ellis, 2000).

In developing countries, where agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods, land plays a crucial role. However, increasing population density has led to a rapid decrease in farmland size, resulting in challenges for rural livelihoods in

many Asian countries. Nevertheless, this land shrinkage also creates opportunities for livelihood diversification and reduces dependence on farmland (Rigg, 2006). Studies indicate that land's role in shaping rural livelihoods is being replaced by non-farm activities available in urban sectors (Bernstein et al., 1992; Barrett & Reardon, 2000).

Livelihood diversification enables rural households to address poverty and vulnerability effectively. For example, richer households benefit more from diversification due to better access to resources (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Ellis, 1998, 2000; Reardon, 1997; Rigg, 2006; Scoones, 1998). On the other hand, underperforming industrial sectors and limited urbanization have often failed to absorb surplus rural labor, emphasizing the importance of diversification (Reardon, 1997).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In developing countries like Nepal, land served as the fundamental basis of livelihood for the rural poor. Over recent decades, Nepalese rural poor suffered from continual food uncertainty and poverty. In rural areas, where land generally formed the primary basis for generating income, this serious resource came under force. Population growth caused by high fertility rates and Hill-to-*Tarai* migration, encroachment by people from Indian Border States, and land fragmentation were major reasons for persistent land problems (Dahal, 2010). These issues resulted in declining access to resources and rising livelihood vulnerability. The inability of agriculture-based livelihoods to generate sufficient food made farming livelihoods a recurring challenge. On one hand, limited farm and non-farm employment opportunities further complicated livelihood construction; on the other hand, rural

households struggled to create resilient livelihoods that could withstand shocks and stresses.

Nepal remained an agrarian country, with small peasant producers and wage labor predominating in the production system. Chaudhary (2018) found that approximately 76% of Nepal's total population consisted of agricultural households, of which 74% held land, while 2% were landless and lived in rural areas. Most depended on agriculture and were engaged in agricultural production activities for their livelihoods. Land was crucial for access to food, shelter, and income, yet nearly three and a half million rural people were food-deficit annually. Chaudhary (2018) also noted that *land ownership* was highly skewed, with unequal distribution perpetuating poverty and hunger in rural areas. Socially and economically disadvantaged groups, particularly Dalit communities, were most affected by this inequality, being deprived of fundamental rights such as employment, social security, and access to services.

Household access to agricultural land became a growing problem due to population growth and migration. Bhandari (2013) highlighted that increasing population pressure on agricultural land contributed to low productivity, as marginal lands were increasingly cultivated. The average landholding size in Nepal diminished to about 0.5 hectares due to cultural practices, such as dividing ancestral lands among sons after separating from parental households, and political factors (Dahal, 2011). Landless households consistently increased in the *Tarai* region, with production from small plots insufficient to meet the food requirements of growing families (Dahal, 1996). Mishra, Uprety, and Pandey (2000) observed that during peak agricultural

seasons, cultivating households often hired seasonal labor from India, displacing local labor and exacerbating livelihood challenges for the landless poor in the *Tarai*.

Agriculture formed the backbone of Nepal's economy, with most food production coming from small producers. However, traditional small-scale production faced mounting pressure and livelihood transition, questioning its capacity to address food security and poverty reduction. Thapa (2000) emphasized that skewed land distribution created agrarian classes characterized by patron-client, super-subordinate, and exploitative relationships. Pyakurel and Nepali (2008) noted that these power dynamics were maintained through economic, social, and coercive power, perpetuating hardship for landless communities, particularly disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, land elites continued to amass wealth at the expense of landless laborers.

Historically, poor and marginalized peoples had a special relationship with natural resources, which formed the basis of their livelihoods (Bhandari, 2013). In recent years, rural poor households faced greater hardship earning livelihoods due to population growth, natural resource degradation, and urban migration. Dulal (2010) pointed out that Dalits were particularly disadvantaged, facing restrictions on preferred work areas due to caste-based discrimination. Traditional occupations of Dalits were displaced due to globalization, and they lacked access to alternative job opportunities at the local level. Chandrakishor (2006) observed that government policies failed to increase alternative employment opportunities for *Dalits*. Mishra (2010) argued that livelihood systems had become individualized, rather than familial or collective, due to the decline of traditional feudal systems.

Musahars, a *Dalit* community in the *Tarai*, symbolized extreme poverty. UNDP (2013) described Musahars as agricultural laborers who worked as bonded laborers for landholders, performing tasks such as digging, plowing, and harvesting. Chaudhary (2008), Patel (2008), and Dhakal (2007) noted that these laborers earned wages far below their household expenditure, with employment lasting only three months annually. Rising food prices worsened their plight, placing immense pressure on their survival. The landless Musahars, with limited assets and access to resources, were hit hardest by these conditions, highlighting the urgent need for systemic interventions.

Musahar had no land registration under their name. They are too poor and marginalized. They have not sufficient food to eat, no income to wear cloth and no comfortable house to live. They are unable to provide basic needs (i.e. education, health) to their family. They are unable to domesticate livestock at their home due to lack of homeland and access to common pool resources (i.e. grazing land, forest). Most of the Musahar people have far access to pure drinking water, electricity and other state provided facilities. The majority of them do not have citizenship card due to lack of ownership of land (Dhakal, 2007). These critical situations create pressure on survival challenges as well as alternative way of living.

In rural Nepal, where land usually forms the primary basis for generating returns, Musahars have antagonistic relations with lands. They cultivate land, but they do not own any land which in turn has resulted in the scarcity of assets and rising livelihood vulnerability. Drawing information by livelihood perspective and livelihood diversification, this study therefore examines the complex relations among agriculture labor, landlessness, and livelihoods. The majority research conducted so far has focused to scrutinize either the

effect of population weight on land and food scarcity or linkage involving land tenure, agriculture productivity and land degradation, without integrating these complicated processes of landlessness into a broader historical and social system analysis (Holden, 2016). Almost all literature does not do systematic empirical research on the dynamic links between land access (landlessness) and livelihood relation which affect the livelihood generation. This antagonist relation (land cultivators without own land) has not explored in the light of historical process. In the light of such gaps, this study has to be examining the nexus of landlessness, livelihoods and diversification with a particular center on landless Musahar in Eastern *Tarai*. This research aims to establish relationship with social reality; to the farm working, assets access (landlessness), delinking from land works and livelihood diversification strategy of Musahar.

Many researchers argue that poverty always creates an opportunity to diversify the bases of livelihoods. But various factors mentioned above have influenced the access of poor Musahars to diversify the bases of their livelihood. So I argue that the livelihood status and their diversification strategy of Musahar guided by their past historical moments in local area (local history) has been deeply embedded in their social relations and political dominations as unequal citizens of Nepal. The change in the man-land relations forces them to look for livelihood diversification, but their social place as *Tarai Dalits* puts them to the margin of the social opportunities where they do not have their access, though the objective reality either motivates or forces them to look for alternative options livelihood.

Dhakal, (2016) also argue that the lack of entrance to land and other fruitful assets in a changing context of social relation, very limited availability of non-farm employment and social constraints explain the persist rural poverty in the context of Musahar community of east *Tarai*. In this study. I have also been engaged with examining the underlying causes of landlessness of Musahars their other ways of living. It has to be undertaking a critical

examination of how limited creative resources are accessed, utilized and contested under the context of rising weakness. In this contextual background discussion and an explanation of the research problems of this study, I have chosen to seek answers to the following research questions:

- a. What is the history of landlessness and of socio-economic life of Musahars?
- b. What is the present state of assets, access and activities of Musahar?
- c. What is the livelihood construction of Musahar and their life history in research area?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study is undertaken with an objective to explore the livelihood trajectories and diversification strategy of Musahar community of Eastern Terai Nepal. Therefore, the major objective of this study is to explore historical processes of their social and economic relations with land and landlords of eastern *Tarai* and find out the causes and consequences of their interrupted relations with land and landlords in a changing context. Other specific objectives of this study are:

- a. To delineate the history of landlessness and of socio-economic life of Musahars.
- b. To explore the present state of assets, access and activities of Musahars.
- c. To analyze the livelihood construction of Musahar and their life history in study area.

1.5 Rationale and Scope of the Study

In the past, Musahars heavily depended on land and land-related activities for their livelihoods. However, man-land relations changed significantly in recent

decades. As a result, Musahars adopted various strategies to generate income through different means. Their modes of earning ranged from farm to various non-farm activities. Reardon (1997) noted that rich people did not focus on livelihoods but rather on lifestyles, as they were already resourceful, accumulating resources predominantly from diverse areas, often in the non-farm sector. In contrast, poor people like Musahars lacked easy access to resources necessary for livelihood generation. The Living Standards Survey, Nepal (2011) reported that employment in the non-agricultural sector increased from 47% in 1994 to 65% in 2011, reflecting a growing shift toward non-farm activities. Musahars, too, began exploring alternative livelihood strategies, particularly in the non-agricultural sector. However, opportunities in this sector were not easily accessible to Musahars due to various influencing factors. Consequently, they remained reliant on farm activities for their livelihoods.

Ellis (2000) and Scoones (2009) focused their studies on farm resources within the framework of livelihoods but paid little attention to the social relations in agriculture, as well as the social history and trajectory of rural livelihoods. These aspects, particularly concerning landless people dependent on farm wage labor, received limited discussion. Therefore, this study examined landless *Tarai Dalits* in the context of their social history.

Previous research also lacked adequate information on the processes of landlessness, the assets, access, and activities that Musahars undertook for their livelihoods. This study addressed those gaps, contributing to the understanding of the history of landlessness among Musahars. It further assessed the effects of urban expansion on the socio-economic life of *dalits* in universal and Musahars in

particular. The findings aimed to assist the government and development organizations in identifying areas of intervention for the overall development of *Tarai Dalits*.

1.6 Theoretical Perspectives

In traditional thinking, livelihood was understood as everyday survival, daily activities of people, and their social relations with others. The history of such studies traced back to the classical sociological thinking of Mill (1959) and Durkheim (1893), who argued for the integration of society through solidarity, which maintained the context within which people's daily lives and activities occurred. Similarly, Weber (1964) conceptualized rationality for human action as being embedded in everyday activities. The anthropology of livelihoods informed that the historical standing of people within communities, dynamics of institutions, and societal processes were embedded in livelihood generation, determining motivational roles. Historical legacies, as noted by Weber and Marx, along with family migration events and social integration, shaped people's livelihoods.

Sztompka (1994) explored various theories, ranging from evolutionary perspectives to social movement theories, to understand social change. In his book *Sociology of Social Change*, he emphasized, “One of the most precious pieces of sociological wisdom is the principle of historicism. It is said that, in order to understand any contemporary phenomena, we must look back to its origins and the processes that brought it about” (p. xiii). Sztompka reviewed historical theories (from evolution to revolution), synthesized them, and conceptualized frameworks to explain social change, recognizing that these theories were partially or fully embedded in phenomena. He suggested that livelihoods could be analyzed within the context of

social change theories. The scope and depth of sociological imagination, as Sztompka (1994) argued, shaped society's fate. He stressed the importance of linking the present state of society with its earlier history, as the connection between a society and its past could never completely die out, being inherent in the nature of society. This bond formed the basis of tradition. Through Marxian theory, history was interpreted as a product of the complex interaction between human actions and structural conditions. Frank (1998), referring to Marx and Weber, asserted, "The really important lesson to be learned from Marx and Weber is the importance of history for the understanding of society" (p.1). Livelihoods and individual experiences influenced by historical moments and adverse circumstances, shaped people's survival strategies. Marx (1976) claimed that humans made their own history, while historicity analyzed and examined the historical effects on individual livelihood pathways and trajectories.

Anthropological conceptualizations suggested that a system consisted of two or more units related structurally and functionally interrelated (Francis, 2002). A livelihood system, therefore, represented a bundle of interdependent relationships that formed an integrated arrangement. Francis (2002) stated that such systems highlighted orderly integration and interrelations among elements. Chambers and Conway (1991) defined livelihood as adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs, understood broadly as the capabilities, assets, and activities of people. They emphasized that livelihood generation encompassed all activities undertaken to meet basic needs, with the outcomes referred to as livelihoods. Niehof and Price (2001) pointed out that the concept of a livelihood system allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of poverty contexts, integrating private and public spheres and highlighting individual and household strategies. In rural areas of third world

countries, the integration of household and farm activities was more observable in the private specialty. Ellis (2000) noted that rural livelihoods had experienced rapid changes due to increased human pressure on natural resources, money-making liberalization, structural adjustments, and climatic variations. These changes further increased the complexity of rural livelihoods, which saw a shift from farm-based to non-farm-based activities. Livelihoods, as Mishra et al. (2014) argued, sustained individuals in communities without causing negative externalities, requiring adaptation and recovery from poverty and vulnerability. Mishra et al. (2014) further highlighted that household and institutional arrangements made decisions within ecological and policy frameworks, emphasizing the need for integrated livelihood systems.

Ellison and Ellis (2001) stated that the livelihood approach focused on people's survival strategies, linking household assets, activities, and mediating processes such as institutional and regulatory frameworks. Appendini (2001) argued that the central objective of the livelihood approach was to identify effective methods for supporting people and communities in meaningful ways, avoiding pre-designed interventionist instruments. Murray (2001) emphasized the need to analyze the effects of past policies, structural conditions, and diversification over time to compare their influences on livelihoods. Ellis (2000) argued that diversification applied not only to survival strategies but also to improving standards of living. The livelihood approach, as Appendini (2001) described, emphasized people's strengths rather than their weaknesses, focusing on how individuals creatively adapted to their circumstances rather than being passive victims. It moved beyond aggregated economic measures of poverty to examine survival strategies within specific local contexts. Murray (2001)

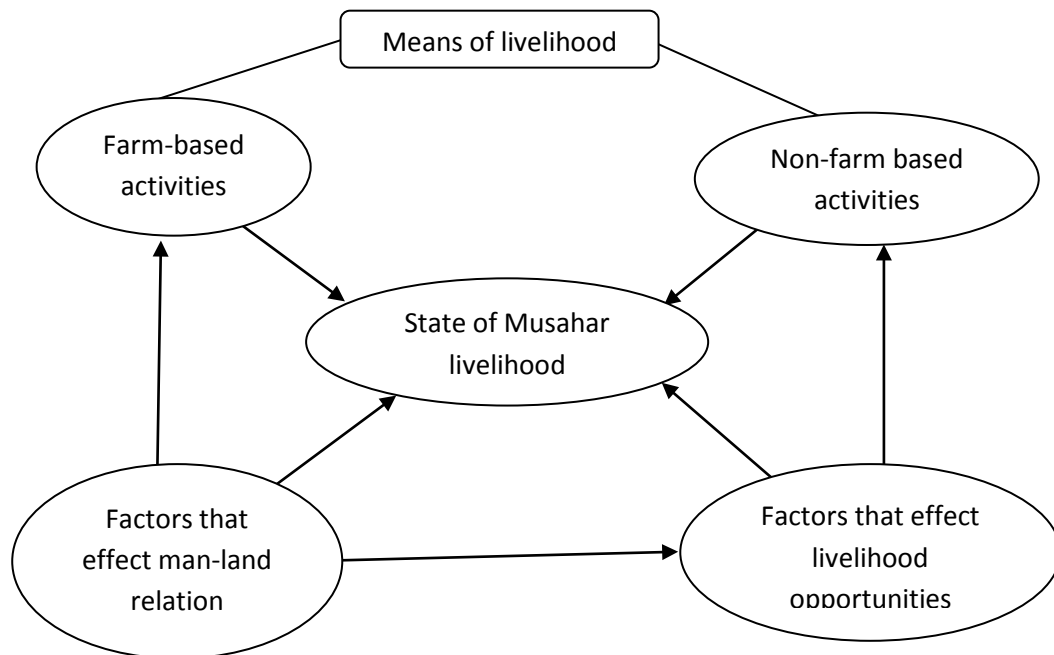
argued that this approach required attention to intra-household and extra-household relations, as well as the broader socio-political and economic structures influencing livelihoods. He further emphasized the empirical investigation of modes and relationships, addressing immediate needs, access to resources, and responses to shocks. In conclusion, the livelihood approach provided a holistic perspective, incorporating the complexities of human struggles and examining poverty through multiple dimensions. It linked individual and household survival strategies to broader socio-political and economic frameworks, offering insights into diversification, social relations, and resource access over time.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

Assets, access and activities are considered to be the major domains of livelihood for rural poor. But they are constrained by multiple factors. Historically, land has been the prime source of Musahar livelihoods. Although they do not own land in their name, they work in the land as tenants, daily wage laborers' and share croppers. The scarcity of land resources as a result of land reform program, population growth, migration, urbanization, industrialization has forced Musahars to change their mode of livelihoods from agricultural sector to non-agricultural sector. At present, Musahars are engaged in various types of non-agricultural activities to sustain their livelihoods. But they have a limited access to non-agriculture-based activities due to various factors which make them hitherto economically vulnerable. Keeping these factors in mind, I have presented various factors in the following conceptual framework and which reflects the status of Musahars livelihood in my study area.

Figure 1.1

Conceptual Framework



- **Farm-based activities:** Agricultural labor, bounded labour, lease farming, tenant, share cropping, livestock and poultry farming
- **Nonfarm-based activities:** Industrial labor domestic labor, construction labor, domestic worker, cleaner, rickshaw puller, rag pickers other services
- **Factors that effects man-land relation:** Migration, unplanned settlement, imbalance development, urbanizations, industrialization
- **Factors that effects livelihood opportunities:** Caste system, politics education, language, physical distance, feudalism, dominated psychology

Livelihood is at the center of the framework. The prime means of livelihood of Musahar's land and land related activities. But there are various interactive factors that influence the man-land relations and thereby the state of livelihood. The government policy of land reform program, uncontrolled migration, unplanned settlements, imbalanced development, urbanization, industrialization has adversely affected the man-land relations. So Musahars are forced to look for alternative means of their livelihood. There are limited opportunities of employment other than agriculture available in the markets. But Musahars

cannot have access to these opportunities, as these opportunities are influenced by many factors. The caste-based social relations, government's policy of land reform programs, lack of education, absence of political connection, physical distance, dominating attitude of other communities, language problem, dominated psychology the Musahar themselves are contributing factors that block Musahars from these livelihood opportunities. As a result, Musahars are further pushed back to the verge of extreme poverty.

1.8 Outline of the Study

This dissertation is alienated into eight chapters. The first chapter deals with the setting and backgroubd of the study, statement of the problem and fundamental research questions, objectives, theoretical frame work, rational and conceptual frame work.

Second chapter presents review of literature on related fields. This chapter consist of largely four thematic areas i.e., 1) theoretical context 2) livelihood language and understanding 3) livelihood perspectives 4) empirical studies by anthropologists.

Thirddchapter research methodology has been formulated to the study, the chapter mainly includes research philosophy, roots of anthropological research methods, research paradigm, data collection methods and data analysis techniques.

Fourth chapter presents the cultural history of Musaharand their prevailing migration and settlements system.

Fifth chapter is about explore the landlessness and poverty of Musahars in historical. This chapter describes land relation; assets status and livelihood issues, in response to the subject face by Musahar in broader theoretical ways.

Sixth chapter describes the livelihood diversification and state of human development. The chapter primarily deals with different dimensions of existing livelihood and other survival patterns of Musahar in the study area. This chapter also deals with the institutional structure, materialistic culture, power relations and social capital of Musahars.

Chapter seven narrates empirical field data, observations and respondents' views related to landlessness, livelihoods and life history. The chapter also highlights ethnography related to the study areas, and the final chapter eight is about the conclusions of research with its summary and findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter, I have reviewed significant literature on theoretical and empirical context of livelihood. The review facilitates to determine the actual gap between past and present studies and the anthropology based experience of previous research. I have also reviewed the approaches, framework and perspectives of livelihood and research gap.

2.1 Theoretical Context

This section discusses the fundamental theories background and setting of the studies on livelihood theory, approach and outline and their reviews on poverty and livelihood diversification. The aim of this review is to examine the basic issues in the rural livelihood whether they are relevant to my research work. I have found different scholars/schools of thoughts polarized in two paths livelihood and sustainable livelihood that have stated the livelihoods and livelihood diversification contrast and consensus to each other in their own ideological and theoretical underpin. These conceptual paradigms have been dominating the literature of livelihoods since a long after 1990s. The common discourse of assets, access and activities of the rural poor are conceptualized in the context of farm and nonfarm nexus.

This chapter also discusses the major theories and concepts that help place the research questions within the wider academic debate on livelihoods and diversification conversion and related issues such as farm/nonfarm, assets access, and nonfarm (rural/urban) interaction. Academic debate about these theories and concepts link the

research finding to support the exploration of the causes and consequences of assets access, capabilities and influential (opportunities and constrains) it upon activities derived by the rural people. The theoretical framework also is used to identify core/key arguments and research gaps and ways in which this research can contribute to the existing academic discourse/debates on related topics. There is very little research done so far to investigate Musahars livelihoods in Nepal in general and study area in particular. So the dearth of literature has created complexity to understand and analysis the Musahars livelihoods. To address these kind of relevant literature (books, journals, working papers articles, documents and online internet) have been considered important sources.

Various other related literatures from different sources, mostly library, market and institution/organizations have been scanned to conceptualize and accumulate the knowledge on poverty, livelihoods and diversification discourses relating to research topic. This study is concerned with the question of how poor people in rural area survive, and how their lives have been affected by the great change occurred since three decades. Throughout the large parts of the *Dalits* in general and Musahars in particular, their livelihood is in crisis, where economic growths has rarely been translated into commensurate expansion of livelihoods (Bernstein, 1992).

Studies on the economic system of preindustrial societies by early anthropologists like Malinowski (1922), Marcel Mauss (1967), Marshall Sahlins (1972) characterized early societies as homogenous. Technically, they were simple and socially they were undifferentiated. They were tied together by the obligation of exchange of goods and services which they produced collectively for their subsistence. The development practitioners also assumed the rural societies as homogeneous. In other words, there was no segregation between households in rural areas and that households had single-purpose economies that they had one way of creation a living. As a result, development agencies

tended to focus on narrow, sectoral, production-orientated strategies that often bypassed those most at risk and failed to recognize that poor households have multiple economic strategies (Niehof, 2004).

The understanding of livelihood has undergone considerable change over some decades. Nepal has been experimenting transform with deliberate development for more than six decades, but the results have not been entirely positive. During the same period, the country has gone through incredible and extremely visible political, social and economic changes (Sharma & Domini, 2011). However, there is no substantial change on poverty reduction. Poverty, social differentiation, and livelihood insecurities are still the most challenging issues the people as well as the policy makers and academicians face today. However Sharma (2021) emphasis the political economy of survival in rural Nepal has not changed radically. There has been no revolution at the intensity of livelihoods.

Sharma & Domini (2011) account shows that the poor remainder poor. Families getting remittances are better off, and, in some cases, can access land that traditional landlords have dumped. An overall land reform remains a distant ambition (Sharma, 2021). If the history is to be observed, the livelihood bases can be pointed out in different dimensions. The education pattern of literacy rate has been increased because of the accessibility to school, colleges, due to the transportation of roads and other fundamental infrastructural developments. Peoples have access to market, hospitals and business buildings. The infrastructural development has decreased the death rate, increase life expectancy and enhance the health services for all in the form of health post, clinics and hospitals. The rural areas are benefited by these infrastructural developments (Sharma & Domini, 2011). Sharma & Domini (2011) have highlighted the some changes occurred in livelihood resulted from remittance economy. However, the overall condition of land-based livelihood of some groups such as Musahar has not changed and it has not

been answered in their writings. For (Mishra, 2010), the development of communication, introduction of new technology, foreign trade and jobs has enlarged the livelihood criteria and its access. People with new ideas emigrant to this country have introduced new level of livelihood and growth of non-farm fields. The land-based people have choices to elaborate their livelihood boundaries. These changes not only reflect the socio-economic transformation, but also raise the living standard of the people. Besides this the per capita income and remittance too became the source of economic strength of the society. Industrialization, liberalization, urbanization and introduction of new scientific tools and technique in agricultural intensification have broadened the farm and nonfarm pattern of livelihoods (Mishra, 2010). The globalization has created labor opportunities for the people. It helps to create the demands of capitalist labor market in different parts of globe (Mishra, 2010). The demands of global labor emerged as the strong alternative source for maintaining livelihood for rural people as per the demand of labor work because of which some could be able to raise their livelihoods and reduce their poverty. But the close examination of Musahar economy does not support the writing of Mishra.

2.1.1 Livelihood and Neo-liberal Policy

Some scholars such as Tacoli (2001), Rankin (2004), Sharma & Domini (2011) have studied the impacts of neo-liberalism upon the livelihood pattern of the populations. According to them, liberalization policy helps to expand the urban areas where nonfarm (formal or informal) bases of economic opportunities have expanded and increased both rural and urban livelihoods. Whereas, urban dwellers created home-based livelihood opportunities not only for themselves but also for rural poor's survival (Tacoli, 2001). The liberalization and commercialization process brought a new form of livelihoods in rural area by which the poor land-based labor have the pressure to work harder to get access to this process. But it was not so easy for them due to different constraints. To owner, with those they were engaged, started to commercialize their farm and made their life harder. Neither their access to infrastructural development was possible to access nor they have their own land and other assets to work on to make their livelihood easier (Rankin,2004). The emigrant of the Hilly region started to utilize the infrastructural development and the forest areas were cleared to settle the emigrants, the capacity of the *Tarai* forest to allocate land for accommodating. Thus, farming labor population was almost saturated to forest resource-based livelihood (Sharma & Domini, 2011). The local people remained constant as they were in past and gradually declining. But the emigrants have improved their livelihood living with them. The land areas of *Tarai* is fertile and intensified as said bowl of rice, but due to the fragmentation and commercialization, the land-based wage labor or poor people are not getting any benefits of this as the agricultural lands are converted to commercial purposes (Blaikie, Cameron & Saddon, 2000). Particular the productivity constraint in the farming sector, households is compelled to search for other non-farming employment opportunities. Furthermore, in the absence of domestically available non-farming employment

opportunities, household members are only left with the option of searching for employment opportunities outside the rural sector (Sharma & Donini, 2011).

Livelihood diversification strategies practiced in *Tarai* region from past to present in different geographical localities, levels of infrastructural outcomes and developments, resources accessibility and consumption has created this level of variation in livelihood generation. The sudden and timely changes have made the livelihood of land-based labor harder and difficult even though huge varieties of opportunities were emerged to *Tarai* (Mishra, 2010).

2.2 Livelihood Language and Understanding

The concept of livelihoods is multifaceted and multi-dimensional in nature. It is interrelated and holistic understanding of its system in society. It is always concerned to the survival needs, mechanism and practice of individual and groups in their society. It is diverse of activities carried out by peoples or groups in their daily lives to survive themselves with the help of assets. It is said that, this is an art of living. The key arguments of livelihood is assets, access, activities and income earning through mediation from structure and processes against different shocks and stresses (Bebbington, 1999, Chambers & Conway, 1991, DFID, 1999, Scoones, 1998; 2009, Ellis, 1998; 1999-2000, De Haan & Zoomer, 2005, De Haan, 2002, 2012).

The concept of livelihood has evolved considerably since 1970s (Solesbary 2003). The modern livelihood studies have conceptualization to found their logical inspiration in the appreciative of the lives of the poor people advocated by Gordon Conway and Robert Chambers in IDS discussion Paper. Chamber and Conway, (1991), in their discussion paper said that, a livelihood refers to the means of gaining a living,

including livelihood capabilities; tangible assets; such as stocks and resources and intangible assets, such as; claims and access (Chambers & Conway, 1991, Pp.2-5). The definition provided by them, most widely accepted definition of livelihood which has been followed by (Carney; 1998, DFID; 1999, Ellis, 1999, Scoones; 1998) who define livelihood as the activities, the assets, access, process that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or household.

In the beginning 1990s the livelihood approach gained recognize among scholars of poverty, improvement practitioners, and policy makers (Ellis & DFID, 1998). It is an approach to poverty issues that is people centered, holistic and grounded in the multidimensional reality of daily life (Bebbington, 1999; De Haan & Zoomer, 2005). The livelihood approach looks at how people make a living under adverse circumstances and how people and communities can be supported in ways that are more meaningful to their daily lives, as opposed to ready-made instrument (Appendini & Zoomers, 2001). Ellis (2000) said, the livelihood approaches is well suited to capture the multiple activities of rural dwellers rely on in composing their livelihoods. The livelihood experiences can be understood by their position and trajectory as Ellis (2000), assets, the behavior and the access to these mediated by institutions and social associations that together resolve the living gained by the individual or household. Activities are the symptom of an individual's access and the assets and the easiest way of rapidly accessing an individual's livelihood accomplishment. Assets are at the center of the livelihood approaches, but the social rules and norms that effect an individual's access are also considered to be critical importance in livelihood approach (Ellis, 2000).

The livelihood concept has gained to acceptance as a valuable means of understanding the factors that influence people's life and well-being. It is a way of life

of the poor people in the global South (De Haan, 2012). Livelihood denotes that the means of living and includes what people do and what they achieve by making a living. It is material means where by one lives livelihood generation refers to the bundle of activities that people undertake to provide support for their basic needs (Neihof& Price, 2001). Livelihood definitions agree that, it is about the ways and means of making and living. Another feature is that this definition share in common is that livelihood deals the resources available in community and they are utilized. The concept of livelihood resources has been given by different authors in differently (Chambers and Conway (1991) define it as assets of two types viz. tangible (resources and stocks) and intangible (Claims and access) on the other hand Scoones (1998) has identified four different types of livelihood resources as natural, economic/financial, human and social capital. In addition to Scoones, Carney (1998) has identified one more capital assets i.e. physical capital as well as Baumann (2000) explains about political capital. In other valuable area of understanding definition of livelihoods, some scholars have agreed to limit livelihood activities within assets, access and resources (De Haan and Zoomers (2005) explain it as much as holistic understanding advocacy. In the other hand Bibbington, (1999) has been summarized the holistic understanding of livelihood as follows:

A person's assets such as land are not merely attached with which he or she makes a living. They also give meaning to that persons World. Assets are not simply resources that people use in building livelihood: They are that give them the capability to be and to act. Assess should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptive and poverty eradication; they are also the basic of basis of power to act and to reproduce, challenge the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources (Bebbington, 1999, De Haan& Zoomers, 2005), further explore that-

Livelihood is never just a matter of finding or making shelter, transaction of money, getting food to put on the family table to exchange on the market place. It is similarly a matter of ownership and transmission of information, organization of skills and relationships and the affirmation of personal significance and collective identity. They took of meeting obligations of security, identity of stocks, and organization time are as crucial to livelihood as brand and shelter (Wallmann, 1984; Appendini, 2001; De Haan & Zoomers 2005).

Moreover, the livelihood concept helps to uncover a number of dimensions of livelihoods that previously handout been very clear. It also helps to achieve a more holistic understanding of livelihood, showing that livelihood does not concern material wellbeing; rather which it also includes non-material wellbeing (Zoomers, 2011). The common sharing understanding of the concept and definition of livelihood is that it denotes the lives of the poor people.

2.2.1 Livelihood Approach

The livelihood approach findout the assets portfolios and resources available to households in which people gain their living. It is understood as a holistic development focus on people's strategy to survive. Livelihood approach emphasis links between individual or household assets, activities in which households can engage with a given assets profile, and the mediating processes such as institutions and regulations that govern access to assets and to alternative activities (Ellison & Ellis, 2001). According to Appendini (2001), the central objective of the livelihood approach is to search for more effective methods to support people and communities in ways that are more meaningful to their daily lives and needs, as oppose to readymade, interventionist instruments. This

approach is not restricted to the rural poor's instant environment or community, but is comprehensive to the political and economic situation, incorporating the macro-economic level, and the boarder cultural specialty. Murray (2001) states, it should include analysis of the effects of past policies, which are often haphazardly reproduce under different political regimes. State policy of poverty reductionist strategies automatically manipulates livelihoods; hence general structural situations may exclude or include the deprived people. Therefore, diversification over time has to be researched to judge against the influences. Diversification does not mean that people are better off. states, diversification applies not only to the struggle to survive but to advance the standard of living (Magistra, 2012). The livelihood approach focuses on people and the realities poor people face. Under this approach people strengths rather than their weaknesses and desires are emphasized. The livelihood approach is optimistic. It examines the ways that people have innovatively adapted to their circumstances, rather than considering people as passive victims bearing towards a poor future (Bennett, 2010).

Bennett, (2010) focused livelihood approach is fewer dependent on aggregated economic trial of poverty that have wide application transversely regions, and focuses more on people's endurance strategies in local and specific contexts. According to Appendini, "The central objective of the livelihood approach was to search for more effective methods to support people and communities in ways that are more meaningful to their daily lives and needs, as opposed to ready-made interventionist instruments" (Appendini, 2001). He also highlights, the livelihood approach seeks to understand altering activity combinations and the cause and result processes of livelihoods in a vibrant and historical context. This holistic viewpoint incorporates the intricacy of

human struggles and examines poverty from manifold dimensions. The livelihood approach strengthens and highlights the boundaries between conventionally antagonistic sectors: take accounts of formal versus informal work; urban against rural; economic disparities within one community, reasons why some individuals are comfortable than others even though the overall situation is still one characterized by continual poverty (Magistra, 2012). Murray (2001) claims that it implicitly recognizes the necessity to investigate the relationship between different activities that constitute household livelihoods, which in turn requires attentions, both intra-household and to extra-household social relations. It is basically carried out at the micro-level: household and communities It deals with the immediate environment, entitlements, assets, access to resources, helplessness, responses to shocks, and income generate activities (Murray, 2001). It involves empirical investigation of combinations of modes and relationships.

2.2.2 Livelihood Frameworks

The livelihoods framework is a way of sympathetic how households derive their livelihoods by sketch on capabilities and assets to increase livelihood strategies composed of a variety of activities. The framework defines and categorizes the different types of property and entitlements which households have access to. The structure examines the diverse factors in the local and wider environmental context that influence household livelihood precautions (Appendini, 2001). The framework looks at the links between the local or micro situation and actors, institutions and processes at work in the wider humanity.

The livelihood framework attempts to conceptualize the livelihood approach. The frameworks advanced by different researchers and organizations all look different,

but they are composed of the same key components: assets, access, activities/livelihood strategies, and outcomes (Carney, 1998; DFID, 1999; Ellis 2000; Rakodi 2002; Scoones, 1998). Several of the frameworks also characterise external conditions like policies, shocks and trends as part of the milieu that livelihoods are rooted. The household is generally used the primary level of examination in the livelihood framework. As an effective tool, it helps organizing and understanding complex livelihood systems. Ellis (2000) argues that to define the main factors touching livelihoods and the relationships between them has improved our appreciative of the livelihoods of poor people and manage their difficulty for identifying appropriate objectives and interventions to support livelihoods. Working with a framework requires considerate its different rudiments and the connections between them. Because people view the globe in different ways and theories the relations linking things differently, framework is continually contested, adapted and refined. Even where people consent on fundamental interior concepts, they may use different terms to explain them (Appendini, 2001). They may emphasize different elements or think about the interactions between the essentials in different ways (Ellis, 2000).

2.2.3 Sustainable Livelihoods

The concept of livelihood thinking is not a new concept. The chronological order shows it emerged during the 1960s and 70s when integrated rural development project existed as corrupt of agro-ecosystem analysis (Morse & McNamera, 2013). After 1980s, there were different research and development activities occurred in different sectors and agencies of the fields of economics and environment (Solesbary, 2003). After the works in mid 1980s, the concept was further developed by Chambers, Conway and others in the early 1990s. Since that time a number of development agencies have adopted livelihoods concept

and made efforts for its implementation (Haidar, 2008). The term sustainable livelihood came to be known as development concepts in the early 1990s drawing on advances in understanding of female poverty and food Insecurity during the 1980s (DFID, 1999).

The livelihood approach was much influenced by the work of Robert Chambers and Gordon convey in their writing in 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical concept for the 21st century (Chambers & Conway, 1991). Much of the livelihood literature takes an adaptation of Chambers and Conway's (1991) definition when they analyzed it.

A livelihood is sustainable, which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation, and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in the short and long term (Chambers & Conway, 1991). Over the past two decades, a number of development professionals have started acknowledging that all people, even the poorest of the poor, have the capabilities and assets required to make a living (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). To better understand the complex issues and challenges faced by the rural poor of developing countries, the framework employs a systematic analysis of five livelihood assets, the institutions that influence access to those assets, the composition of livelihood strategies, and the various vulnerabilities that affect an individual's choice of those strategies (Ellis, 2000; Ellis 1998; Carney, 1999). They place the people and their priorities at the center of development (Ashley & Carney, 1999). They focus poverty reduction interventions on empowering the poor to built on their own opportunities, supporting their assets and developing an enabling policy and institutional environment (Haidar, 2008).

Livelihood approach and its function have been well acknowledged in current years. Chambers and Conway (1991), Carney (1998), DFID (1999), Carney (1998), Ellis & Biggs 2001)

and Scoones (1998) are the main writers on the topic and give a comprehensive overview of the approach, framework, methods of application, tools and techniques, as well as practical experiences world wide. The idea of 'sustainable livelihoods' is primarily credited to both Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway since they presented sustainable livelihoods in their research as a connection between capabilities, equity and sustainability. The sustainable livelihood approach aims to make development more effective by putting people first (rather than resources, sectors or technology) analysis. The core issue of the approach is poor people who are the 'subjects' of development (DFID, 1999). The sustainable livelihood approach is usually set out in the form of a framework that brings jointly assets and activities that are thought to comply with the livelihoods definition and illustrates the communications between them. There are many different diagrammatic representations of this framework (DFID, 1999; Haider, 2009) though all of them demonstrate the interactions between principal components of livelihoods. The ways the different elements in the sustainable livelihood approach are linked together is shown in the various rudiments of the sustainable livelihood framework.

Sustainable livelihood analysis has become the determinant approach to the implementation of development intervention by a number of international agencies. Sustainable livelihoods approaches are not linked to any single organization. The research institute IDS/old, donor agencies, DFID, UNDP, UN system, NGOs e.g. CARE, Oxfam, Action Aid, has practiced more or less similar pathway of framework which is influenced by the DFID's guideline implementing in various Third World Countries. Upreti, (2010) provides development practitioners with articulate and flexible framework for programming, while also demanding to establish micro-macro linkages. Concrete practical experiences in the implementation of the approach have now been predictable, as have criteria and indicators of success and expected outcomes (DFID, 1999). These are useful in considerate sustainable

livelihoods approach as a development approach not adequate for outside intervention (Upreti, 2010).

2.2.4 Livelihood Strategy

Livelihood strategies are composed of activities that generate the means of survival. The strategies people adopt to attain livelihoods is highly influenced by their asset position (Scoones, 1998). According to Scoones (1998), a household located in a particular context and economy may choose between (or be constrained from choosing) three main clusters of livelihood options—agricultural intensification, diversification and migration. From this there, it has briefly described the diversification strategies as it helps to understand the policies employed in facing livelihood constraints at their place of origin and destination.

Anthropologists use the term conceptualizations a plan, method, or method of series of maneuvers of stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or results. It is a kind of consciously intended course of action. Anthropologist's recognition of strategy as an impart term in the contemporary discipline has a particular interest. Graham Crow (1989) a famous anthropologist's article is a useful attempt to survey the unreflective usage of the concept of strategy in Anthropology. Sociological writing that the term approach can be found in the analysis of phenomena at all levels of society and aocial groups. The mainly universal sense in which the term is used is where strategies are followed at the level of whole societies. Since that he uses of the term policy implies choice, it also raises question of authority exercise implementing to resource accumulation. Anthropologists furtherads that the concept of strategies in the anthropology of economic life linked not only to question of choice of power but also to pattern of interaction, which understood labor and survival strategy. This concept is reliable to understand livelihood strategies of the rural labor in

relation to interaction between resources and power holder groups into survival of accumulation.

2.3 Assets, Access and Activities in Livelihood Study

Assets are major components of livelihood study. Assets should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptations and poverty alleviation (Scoones, 1998). They are also the basis of an agent's power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern, control, use and transformation of resources (Bebbington, 1999; Scoones, 1998). According to (Bebbington (1999) access to means or resources is required to undertake activities that secure livelihood, i.e. it determines certain level of well being. Access to resources is socially mediated or it is shaped by social institutions that enable people to construct meaningful livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). Household assets are increasingly seemed as critical in poverty dynamics, both for reducing vulnerability and escaping poverty. Assets have gained increasingly importance in poverty analysis in recent decades. Within a livelihood approach, household and individuals are conceived to construct their livelihood strategies by drawing on a range of assets (Scoones, 1998). Assets, also referred to as resources that have been accessed (Bebbington,1999) from the starting point of the framework (Carney, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Scoones, 1998). Assets are the basic building blocks that can be used by households to generate their means of survival, well-being, and future security (Carney, 1998).

Livelihoods engage the use of assets in activities to create outputs, both to convene people's consumption necessities and aspirations and to invest assets and actions for the future. All this takes place in the context of an uncertain environment with various factors affecting the household's assets by their accretion, destruction or revision. The ultimate goal of livelihood strategies is related to smooth income and consumption patterns because

seasonality, temporary shocks and variations in production trends are intermittent and through employing various assets at different spatial and temporal levels, households effectively ensure a consistent stream of resources to allow their households to function (Bebbington,1999). It has always shown the dynamic relationship between assets and livelihood strategies. Assets have given way to a more critical appointment with the social and political question of gaining access to a means of livelihood. Whether ahead access to assets means that livelihoods will routinely improve.

According to Upreti, (2010) Assets are stocks of honestly or obliquely productive factors that produce a stream of cash or in-kind proceeds (or what economic theorists typically call “endowments”). Widespread examples include bank deposits, human capital land, livestock, machinery, stores, transport equipment, etc. Portfolio speculation, on which much of the diversification literature depends, emphasizes assets as the subject of instrument choice when trying to maximize expected income, minimize income variability, or some combination of the two. So assets are a rational subject for study of diversification behavior. Indeed, asset and income distributions are analytically inextricable from one another (Upreti, 2010). According to Barrett and Reardon (2000) assets can be usefully or crudely, divided into two categories: fruitful (Productive) assets and non- fruitful (Non-productive) assets.

In anthropological literature, assets have been conceptualized in micro level analysis and put contrast argument than other disciplines. Savage et al. noted that since the 1980s defenders of class analysis of sociologists have shifted their foundations away from this macro emphasis on the division of labor towards more micro interest in how the effects of class are produce through individual action. This concept, which we turn collectively CARS (Capital, assets and resources) litter recent works on sociology of stratification, but have rarely been subject to explicit critical reviews (Savage et. al. 2005). The concept such as

capital, assets and resources (CARs) are often used to explain how class inequality are produced in society, but there remains ambiguities and differences in how such terms are understood.

In a contrasting way Van Dijk (2011) suggests to differentiate among assets, capital and resources in his research article 'Livelihood, capitals and livelihood trajectories: a more sociological conceptualization'. He said "(A) livelihood requires things in addition to capabilities and motivations, and they are interrelated at times overlapping. In livelihood research capitals, assets, resources (CARs) are used interchangeably to refer to what different individuals or groups possess to analyze differences in socioeconomic outcomes (Van Dijk, 2011). Similar type of perception expressed by Annica (2007) in his interpretation focus on issues of assets and capitals. Annica, (2007) said why assets are not the same as wealth in order to argue that any conflation between the two concepts should be abandoned, because it distorts the direction of a livelihood approach. The nature of the approach is to know the developing properties of how people cope with vulnerability as the basis of successive livelihood strategies. Annica (2007) viewpoint claims that the starting point of a livelihood approach should be the actor's reality. This should not be annulled by reducing actors to different types of capital or the assets pentagon which spray back upon to the individual strategies to actors and their household. Although, there are contradictory arguments in the literature on assets, capital and resources, there is less theorization on it in the practice. So I suppose and use interchangeably these concepts in my research work. The important feature of the livelihood definition is to direct attention to the links between assets and the options people possess in practice to pursue alternative activities that can generate the income level for survival (Ellis, 2000). As to assets, Scoones (2009) argues that the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies is dependent on the basic material and social, tangible and intangible, assets that people have in their possession.. This means that

fundamental to the construction of livelihoods is the availability of assets or resource that may be tangible or intangible (Ellis, 2000).

Livelihood assets are generally considered of central importance to the livelihood framework. Which types or categories of assets to include, however, remain subject to ongoing debate (Chambers and Conway, 1991) ? Chambers and Conway (1991) divide assets into two groups: the first consists of tangible assets, including resources and stores; the second consists of intangible assets, including claims and access. Like Chambers and Conway (1991) also distinguish between tangible and intangible assets. However, the groups, labor, human capital, and less familiar productive assets, such as housing, under tangible assets and household relations and social capital under intangible assets (Chambers and Conway, 1991). Scoones (1998) identifies four types of assets or capitals: natural capital (the natural resource stocks and environmental services), economic or financial capital, human capital (including skills, knowledge, labour, health, and physical ability), and social capital. Bebbington (1999) differentiates between produced, human, natural, social, and cultural capital; the last refers to the reproduction of cultural practices. Rakodi (2002) adds another capital: namely, political capital. In a slightly different vein, Ellis (2000) differentiates between material and social assets. Despite these different categorizations, all authors look like to agree that people require a sort of assets to achieve definite outcomes. To this end, people try to access and enlarge, combine and change, and replace the different assets they have access to, ensuing in constantly changing asset endowments.

This does not automatically mean that to have more assets is to become less vulnerable or that household asset management determines vulnerability to adverse events (Ellis, 2000). Assets in Chambers and Conway's livelihood meaning include a number of components, some of which fit in to recognized economic categories or different types of capital, and some of which do not, namely claims and access. Addmore (2011) says there is

no difficulty in accepting capitals as crucial to any meaning of livelihoods; however, there remains scope for difference as to what types of capital or stocks can justifiably be included in the overarching explanation of capitals. In brief, natural capital refers to the natural resources base yield products utilized by human populations for their continued existence. The majority of rural people have accessed natural assets regularly as it is freely obtainable. Livelihoods of rural people have been centered on the operation of assets such as land, woodland, grassland, water bodies etc. Objectively capital refers to assets brought in to existence by production process, for instance, tools, machines, and land improvements like terraces or irrigation canals. Human assets refer to the education level and health status of individuals and population. Financial capital refers of cash that can be accessed in order to purchase either production or consumption goods and access to tribute might be included in the category (Ellis, 2000). Social assets refer to the social networks and association, institution in which people participate, and from which they can develop that contributes to their livelihoods (Addmore, 2011).

2.4 Livelihood Perspectives

Livelihood perspective is one of the key perspectives on rural development, poverty reduction and people centered development that has occurred over the past two decades. Livelihood perspective gained wide adherence as a guiding principal for rural development principal and practice (Scoones, 2009). Livelihood can be analyzed as a system (Niehof & Price, 2001) or as a process (Ellis, 1998, 2000; Scoones, 1998, 2009). DFID defines that livelihood comprises capabilities, assets, and activities required for a meaning of livelihood (DFID, 1999, 2002), system characteristics seems to dominate. A process perspective puts more emphasis on the versatility of livelihood assets or more specifically on the versatile modes of access to assets (Ellis, 2000; Bebbington, 1999).

The concept of livelihood has evolved considerably after 1980s (Solesbary, 2003). The current livelihood studies initiate their intellectual inspiration in the perceptive of the lives of the poor people advocated by Gordon Conway and Robert Chamber in an IDS discussion Paper in 1991. In general, the emphasis of a livelihood perspective is mainly on the importance of issues of access to productive assets and resources that are essential for increasing the productivity and reducing the vulnerability of rural poor people (Scoone, 2009). Therefore, what remains key in this approach is the concept of multiple and diverse livelihood that are built on the basis of a combination of capabilities (access), assets and activities required to cope with and recover from stress and shocks (Chambers & Conway, 1991)

Bennett (2010) explore and elaborate the concept of livelihoods. According to Gaiser, et al. (2011) livelihood is an integrating concept that is retort to the increasing change and uncertainty, mainly for the rapidly increasing population of rural deprived and the natural resources on which they depend and the defects of previous narrow conceptual modes of development philosophy which focused on production, employment and deficiency livelihoods need to be socially and environmentally sustainable. It requires novel concept and analysis for strategy and practice. Bennett (2010) reviews three practical and normative concepts of i.e. capabilities, justice and sustainability, result making upon which the sustainable livelihoods concept is based, and should be a focus for the 21st century and notice priorities for policy and research. Bennett (2010) paper forwarded the most often cited description for sustainable livelihoods, which suggested that livelihoods are made-up of people's capabilities and their available physical assets, intangible assets and activities which contributed to their overall means of livelihood.

Bennett (2010) further elaborate that the sustainability of livelihoods refers to their pliability and their ability to recover from pressure and shocks, maintenance and enrichment of capabilities and assets, provision of opportunities for future generation and long and short-term universal and local benefit. In this paper, livelihoods are seen as a being inner to overall excellency of life of the people. The writers suggest the several considerations for practical study including assessment of future livelihood. The strategy implications of the concept include decreasing rural poverty through attractive capabilities, civilizing equity, and rising social sustainability. This paper also provides a significant grounding in the theoretical and practical consideration that underline the livelihood theory.

Bennett (2010) stated that livelihood diversification refers to the process that rural families and households use to make diversification in livelihood actions and social supports. In this article Bennett (2010) brings jointly the prior literature on livelihood diversification in sub-Saharan Africa. This comprehensive evaluate explores concepts of livelihood diversification propose a need for increased pragmatic investigation of household income diversity, and examines potential determinants of diversification (i.e. survival, seasonality, socio-economic constraints, hazard, changing markets, coping, adjustment, vulnerability, strategic investment behavior, immigration etc.). This paper also explored earlier research on the relationship between diversification and poverty, income allotment farm productivity, non-farm enlargement, and gender. Bennett (2010) suggested that policy has an important role to play in diversification through targeting susceptible social groups by increasing safety nets, reducing risks, providing micro-credit, increasing the rural service sector, considering non-farm enterprise, focusing on rural towns, increasing communications and education and most importantly raising agricultural productivity. Bennett (2010) concluded that overview in livelihood research is not enviable because of the various nature

of the rural economy that policy should aim to diminish constraints to diversification. This reviewed article brought the notion of diversification to the front in livelihood philosophy and practice and set the stage for ever-increasing explorations of micro policy implications for rural livelihood diversification (Bennett, 2010).

However, Bennett (2010) provides with a definition that is more connected to economic thinking and framework for examining livelihoods. The book is based on a stage of assets, which are modified by access governed through social associations, institution and organization in substance of trend and shocks. The livelihood strategies are calm of a variety of natural resource base as well as non-natural resource base activities that eventually impact livelihood security and ecological sustainability (Bennett, 2010).

Bennett further explores the element of determinants of livelihood diversification and its relationships among livelihood diversification and deficiency, rural productivity, gender, environmental sustainability, macro-policy and improvement agenda. The Third Section of this book focuses on methods for examining livelihoods in order to impact on enlargement policies. He suggested the combination of survey and participatory methodologies of case study in South African Household for achieving effective information. The great asset of this book is that it summarizes the literature, and seeks to define terms in a way that facilitate further discussion to proceed from a widespread base.

In contrast to Ellis, Murray (2001) examines the vigor and fault of the different livelihood projects in Southern Africa. His stress on the point is that the situations of poverty and the reasons for poverty have to be implicit through detailed examination of social relation in a particular historical context. He outlined the contrasting and partly overlapping frameworks of exploration of livelihoods research and an emphasis on three key questions like; how is pragmatic research at the micro-level related to study of

the structural, historical and institutional component of the macro-context? What permutation of methods allows us to trace trajectories of change in different livelihoods over time and how are livelihood frameworks must beneficially deployed to probe and understand processes of differentiation, accumulation and improvement? Bennett (2010) highlighted some theoretical issues identified the lack of significance attachments to the vulnerable context and the tension involving participatory methodologies and development interference. He claims that sustainable livelihoods which prevail in much donor and institutional dialogue are problematic in research. Bennett sees the question of assets with assets to be mostly problematic. He argues that livelihoods need to be examined with hindsight (modify over time from past), circumspective (at a flash in time) and prospectively (far future strategy and action), and that trajectories need to be done for the various social classes. At the conclusion he emphasizes that a arrangement of method will be most useful in practice and suggest that small sample survey, participatory methods and deep life histories all have benefit and drawback in livelihood research.

In contrasting way to other scholars, Bebbington (1999) emphasizes on capital and capabilities while discussing livelihood. Bebbington (1999) mainly focuses on access and social capital is central elements to the framework. In this framework, Bennett (2010) places the question of individuals and household access to five types of resources assets (i.e. production, human social, natural and cultural).

Bennett (2010) asserts the ways on: (a) The combination and transform these assets in the construction of livelihood which possibly meet their material and experiential desires; (b) The extension of these assets through state, market and civil society determine contact with other actors, (c) The development of capabilities to make

life more significant and to increase levels of manipulate in the governance of resources and to transform resources in to income, (d) fastidious attention is paid to the significance of social capital as an assets during which people are able to widen their access to resources and other action. Though Bebbington (1999) give much emphasis on social capital is essential to the people's wellbeing.

Going beyond the capability approach, Scoones (1998), highlights on sustainable livelihood framework. Bennett (2010) suggested the sustainable livelihoods approach explain the operation of five types rudiments in order to study and understand local livelihoods suggest: (a) Micro and Macro-context, ritual and trends (i.e. strategy, history, demography, environment, social specialty, (b) Local livelihood assets (i.e. social, political economic, individual, natural capitals), (c) Extenuating institutional processes and organizational structures (equally formal and informal), (e) Secondary livelihood strategies (i.e. Amplification, diversification, immigration, and (f) Sustainable livelihood outcomes (i.e. enlarge working days, poverty diminution, wellbeing, capabilities, adjustment, vulnerability, flexibility, natural resource maintenance. Scoones (1998) suggests a mixed of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and participatory technique will be required to explore the various aspect of the livelihood framework. Bennett (2010) emphasized livelihood framework provides a holistic and incorporated synopsis for effective livelihoods scheduling and intervention. It emphasizes the decisive importance of examinations and intervention at the institutional and managerial level suggesting that will recover the usefulness of legal interventions that occur at the resources policies level. He suggests a multi-sector loom to the livelihoods expansion and encourages the active participation of multiple stakeholders in forceful process. In present time, Scoones's (1998) sustainable livelihood framework increasing important to development debate in the World.

Scoones (2009), further explains in his comprehensive writings provides an overview of the development of the livelihood frameworks and approaches, explores several identified shortcomings and challenges of livelihood opportunities, and suggest four areas where livelihood thinking could be improved. Scoones (2009) overview of the development of the approach discusses the ideological and political background that led to the popularization, operation and extensive application of approaches. Four areas with which Scoones (2009) suggests livelihoods thinking have failed to engage include: (1) macro level shift in global economics and politics; (2) Power, politics and governance; (3) Adapting to long-term stresses; and (4) Long term changes (10, 20, 50 years) in livelihood and economics. A revived research agenda, Bennett (2010) suggested that: (1) Focus other attention on politics and the framing of knowledge in livelihood thinking; (2) Make clear the relationship of livelihoods to power and politics; (3) connect with issues of globalization through examining linkages, relations, and dynamics transversely local and broader scales and (4) further observe the vibrant nature of livelihoods to increase the long term flexibility and sustainability of livelihood strategy. Pulling from various fields of related research in order to rethink livelihoods will enable intellectual and practical commitment with the framework of thoughts. To sum up, Scoones (2009) at hand proposes the hallmark in sphere of livelihood thinking.

In a contrasting ways Bennett (2010) have explored the worth of livelihoods approaches and examines several theoretical and practical obstacles inherent in livelihood dialogue. In meticulous, they suggest that the theory of access and the relationship among decision-making and livelihoods areas that need further kindness. Poverty can be conceptualized as collapse to access capitals. Assets are mediated by social relationships (inclusion or exclusion based on economy, gender, language, caste, ethnicity, origin etc.), institutions (social, legal, formal, informal, micro, meso, macro level) and organizations.

Besides, the authors suggest that authority relations are key mechanism of access. Decisions neighboring livelihood diversification are documented as being both strategic and unintentional, and the results of physical texture. De Haan & Zoomers (2005) suggested that the concepts and styles of pathways (historically and socially embedded livelihood patterns) might ignore our understanding of individual decision-making through the application of livelihood trajectories as a methodology. Bennett (2010) focused the livelihood trajectories go beyond life histories and investigate deeper into people's belief needs aspirations, limitations, and the social and institutional context.

The above discussion on livelihood theory and frameworks provided by Chambers and Conway (1991), Bebbington (1999), Ellis (2000), Scoones (1998), are substantially a hallmark literature of livelihood understanding. These frameworks are heavily influenced by the poverty, agricultural and environmental dynamism in the World context. These scholars explore the assets and access relationship and management in people's daily life. These framework of analysis concentrate in assets, structure, institution/organization, vulnerability context, policy and practice and livelihood strategies and outcomes through the livelihood generation of local people. These frameworks determine the more or less similar pathway of livelihood approach implement in rural area, which are considered and intervened and donor funded development program be focus. These frameworks are more complex, ambitious, over articulated networks of relations among diverse variables, which may create problem in the time of operational practice in rural community.

These frameworks provide wider idea in access to assets and resource accumulation, but, sadly saying there are salient to capture the ascribed determinant as well as inherent livelihood practices, which people themselves create/generate locally available resource management. In other words, sustainable frameworks could not

analyze and understand the perpetuate activities of the people at the end, Colin Murray himself do not offer a livelihood frameworks but he explore about the methodological framework for livelihood research. It provides a guideline of framework to rural livelihood research precisely.

Drawing the work of Bebbington (1999), Chambers & Conway (1991), Ellis (2000), Scoones, (1998), say that the concept of livelihood is understood as comprising “the capabilities, assets, (including both material and social resources and activities required for a means of living” (Carney,1998) The approach hinges upon the recognition of access to assets by the poor, individuals or households, as fundamental element to understanding livelihood options, survival strategies and vulnerability to adverse trends and events(Ellis, 2000) It put more emphasis explicitly on the different kinds of assets proposed by the rural poor that can be utilized or built upon to enhance the resilience and security of their livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999; Carney, 1998; Ellis, 2000, Scoones, 1998).

Similarly, Spoor, et al. (2012) explain about the key component of the approach explained the assets owned, controlled, claimed or accessed which are basic to households upon which production, engagement in labor markets and exchange take place. The material and social assets in rural livelihoods are classified into natural, human, physical, financial, and social capital (Carnay,1998, Scoones, 1998) and also political capital. Spoor,, et al. (2012) focused these assets are stocks of capital that can be used directly or indirectly to generate household’s means of survival.As stocks of capital, assets exists either as a stock (e.g. land), or they are the result of surplus generated between production and consumption, which enables an investment in future productive capacity to be achieved (Ellis,2000)In the same sense Bebbington (1999)

explained that assets or capitals “are not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods: they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act”. Spoor, et al. (2012) analysed of rural livelihoods based on access to a range of assets help to examine the role of different types of assets understands the means through which individuals, households and communities deal with poverty and vulnerability and to understand how the assets portfolios determines livelihood strategies pursued. More interestingly, Bebbington (1999) further explains the relationship between assets and capabilities particularly viewing “assets not only as things that allows survival, adaptation and poverty alleviation: they are also the basis of agents’ power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources”. (Bebbington, 1999). The notion of assess to assets, therefore extend to have far-reaching implications for rural people offering a means of living to vital roles in enabling people to have the power to question and challenge the underlying structures hampering livelihood security (Spoor,, et al., 2012).

According to Spoor,, et al. (2012) the next key component of the livelihoods approach is its emphasis on factors and processes that mediate access to a set of assets or resources that are required to construct viable livelihood strategies. The livelihood mediating factors and processes are categorized into different groups by different scholars (Carney, 1998, Scoones, 1998, Ellis, 2000) though more or less related. For instance, the mediating factors and processes can be categorized into context, condition and trend which includes history, politics, economic trends, climate, demography archaeology and social differentiation, on the one hand, and institutions and organizations on the other (Scoones, 1998). Similarly, it can be categorized between the vulnerability contexts and transforming process (Carney, 1998) in which the

vulnerability contexts encompass many of the factors mentioned under contexts provided by Scoones, but policies, institutions, laws, incentives, and social relations comprise the transforming process.

According to Ellis, (2000) social relations, institutions and organizations represent critical mediating factors and process that (re) shape livelihoods. Spoor, et al. (2012) highlighted about the critical in a sense that they comprise the agencies that enhance or constrain livelihood choices by individuals or households. The social factors and processes mediating people's access to resources and livelihood strategies are key elements by which they are examined under social capital in a livelihood approach. As access to different types of assets, opportunities and services form the foundations of livelihoods approach, it is defined and redefined by the rules, and social norms and relations that influence the differential ability of households to own, control, claim or make use of resources (Ellis, 2000a). Land, for example, is one of the crucial natural capitals, where access to this critical resources in rural areas is mediated by institutions and processes such as land tenure institution and policies (Ellis, 2000; Scoones 1998).

Spoor, et al. (2012) say, Construction of livelihood strategies depends on the assets that individuals or households have access as mediated by various factors and process such as social relations, institutional processes and organizational structures, and trends and shocks. Livelihood strategies tend to be dynamic responding to changing conditions of pressures and opportunities in order to better cope and adapt such changing contexts. Strategies are composed of a portfolio of activities that provide the means of household survival (Ellis, 2000). Based on resource availability and access, Scoones (1998) for instance, identifies three household strategies in rural areas which include agricultural intensification, livelihood diversification and migration. In the livelihoods approach, it is therefore

conceptualized that access to resources mediated by various factors in the process of constructing livelihood strategies result in a sort of livelihood outcomes that can be viewed as livelihood security (Spoor, et al., 2012).

The review of literature in the proceeding sections reveals the socio-economic conditions of Musahar. Their cultural interpretation and explanation highlight that Musahars are backward and poor and they are lagging behind the development. In this context, let me review some anthropological literatures of the early anthropologists and some empirical research studies conducted by Nepali sociologists and anthropologists in the recent times.

2.5 Research Gap

Economic Anthropology studies the economic life of society and community. It studies the production, distribution, consumption and distribution system of goods and services. Production deals with methods of getting a living, management of land and labour, modes of works and system of payment and rewards. The non-market or preindustrial societies have a kin-based production, need-based distribution and communal or collective ownership of production. Goods or objects of productions are exchanged among kin groups as per the principle of *reciprocity* (Malinowski, 1922) or they are presented to the kin groups as an obligatory presentation or *gift* (Mauss, 1967). Productive resources are owned collectively by the community. Individual ownership of productive resources such as land and forests and seldom happens in the premarket societies. In case of individual ownership, land alienation or ownership transfer are not allowed (Herskovits, 1952). Such societies are affluent and they enjoy a great deal of leisure (Sahlins, 1972).

However, the idealism of affluent societies depicted by conventional anthropologists no longer matches with the actual situation of Musahars and other poor *Tarai Dalits* presented by native anthropologists. If we look at the research studies done by

Nepali anthropologists Dahal (2010), Chettri & Dahal (1997), Gurung (2019), Dhakal (2007), Giri (2018), Rayamjhi (2015) and a number of Indian anthropologists such as Sing (1999), Kunath (2013) and Mukharji (1999) on Musahars's economic life and livelihood. There are also research small monographs prepared and published by the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology of Tribhuvan University in 2014 and research articles and books by social and political scientists, such as Dulal (2010), and Gupta (2011) which contradict with the studies of many agricultural societies presented by western anthropologists. Contrary to the popular anthropological notions of production, distribution, consumption exchange, reciprocity and affluence described by Malinowski, Herskovits, Mauss, Sahlins and many other early anthropologists, Nepali sociologists and anthropologists as well as other researchers present the linear trend of economic life of Musahars of Nepal *Tarai*.

According to the Nepali researchers, Musahars produce economic surplus, but they suffer from starvation and deprivation, as all production are controlled by their landlords. They till lands, but they do not hold any lands and other productive resources neither collectively (in the names of their communities or lineages) nor individually. They are *haruwa* (plowmen) and *charuwa* (herders). They exchange their physical labour with their landlords, but not as per the principle of reciprocity. Instead, they provide their labour to their landlords as a one-way obligatory gift without equivalent return. They have no idea of affluence and leisure, but they are long hour working poor's. They always struggle hard for their survival. In short, conventional anthropological and sociological studies have not been able to reflect true picture of Musahar economic life, because the conventional anthropological theories and methods are not political and historical. Studies done by them on Musahars are thus myopic, superficial, not ground breaking. Though their ethnographic studies provide very interesting information, they have not been able to reveal the economic and political realities of Musahars. Studies done by others focused on economic aspect of Musahar community, but they have not deeply contextualized their studies as per the social

and cultural conditions. However, the theories, concepts and methods used by them are very useful in presents study the economic life of Musahar people. Therefore I have used them in my research works on Musahar community of *Tarai* Nepal.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used for this research. This research is based on the qualitative information collected from primary sources applying anthropological methods, tools, and techniques, and garnered in the forms of anecdotes, comments, and narratives. The chapter presents the rationale of the selection of the study area, research design, research philosophy, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, the researcher's experiences in the field, and ends by spelling out some of the limitations of the present study.

3.1 Rationale of the Selection of the Study Area

I have chosen this research topic and research site for several reasons: my curiosity about the livelihood of Musahars since childhood, the existing research gap in the topic, and convenience. Reflecting on my past experiences, I decided to pursue this field. During my secondary school days, I encountered Musahar households in a neighboring village. These families lived in thatched huts with cramped single rooms on public land. As I visited their homes, I witnessed their children struggling nakedly against the cold weather. The elderly members would huddle around the fireplace during winter due to a lack of warm clothing. In the mornings, the adult male members would head out with their spades and Bhaar (a pole with cords for hanging soil used in digging). They tirelessly fought against poverty and vulnerability with these basic working tools. This long-standing exposure inspired me to

explore the current state of Musahar livelihood in Baijanathpur VDC (now Biratnagar Municipality-19) using my anthropological knowledge and research methodology. Additionally, I have conducted a review of secondary literature on *land ownership in Tarai*, which has contributed to the current situation faced by Musahars. Since I have personal experience with Musahars from my childhood, this study also serves as a reflection of the conditions faced by Musahars in my own area.

Until recent decades, the *Tarai* area was not an attractive place to study by national as well as international researchers due to unpleasant climatic conditions. However, there are few exceptions such as Gaige (1975) and Boli (2005). These days *Tarai* has been a hot spot of research works. These studies are conducted applying human rights and social inclusion/exclusion perspectives. There are few studies on Musahar focuses on political dimension of marginalization (Giri, 2018) and educational situation (Giddens,2001). Similarly, I have observed dramatic shift of livelihood of people in *Tarai*, which also attract me to study Musahar people as they are considered as *Dalit* and marginalized people of *Tarai*. Therefore, I have selected the then Baijanathpur VDC as a research field to explore the social and economic situation of Musahars who live next to my home town Biratnagar, As practically, this area is much more accessible to me for my study.

Then Baijanathpur is situated in eastern *Tarai* of south-eastern parts in the Morang district. The overwhelming majority of this VDC are Dalits and Musahars who occupy second largest population of the area and fourth largest population among other VDC and municipalities of the Morang district. The village borders Biratnagar metropolitan city and Tankisinwari model VDC-a major urban centre and industrial hub. Eastern *Tarai* is considered the most economically vibrant area of *Tarai* and has a slightly lower poverty level than the central, western parts of *Tarai* (UNDP, 2014). That is reflected by the fact that eastern *Tarai* is the rural area in Nepal with highest mean per capita income (As a whole it constitutes the

most significant parts of the region in terms of population, industries and a large concentration of *Tarai's* urban population (Iversen, 2013). But the irony is that Musahars are the poorest people in this area. So this agony inspired me to select this study as my research site.

Moreover, another rationale for choosing a field work in Baijanathpur was the population structure, resource access (man-land relation) and livelihood strategy in the study area. Approximately half of Baijanathpur population is *Dalits*. But these half of the total populations have no access to land in the VDC. These *dalits* mainly split in two groups; Bantar and the Musahar (Iversen, 2013). I have chosen Musahar to my study. The traditional occupation of the Musahar is agriculture wage worker. Many Musahars have not been able to attain Nepali citizenship, and thus been making unable to register land holding (Chaudhary, 2008; Dhakal, 2007; Iversen, 2013; Patel, 2008).

The condition of Musahar also sets the rural eastern *Tarai* separately from other *Tarai* areas in rural Nepal. Despite the low rural poverty rate and high area of fertile land, eastern *Tarai* region in general and Baijanathpur in particular with a large section of landless agricultural wage labors, a part of population where the Musahars suffer significantly over representation (Iversen, 2013). Agriculture wage labor typically endures low wages and a demand for their labor which is subject to variations in seasonal demand (Iversen, 2013). Many of them are also trapped in patron-client relationship and indebted with landlords (Dhakal, 2007). The landlords have traditionally been able to set contracts that leave only surplus to the labors and might also joint together with other people to restrict their outside options (Iversen, 2013).

The daily wage of Musahar agricultural worker is very low in the average of non-agricultural workers. Musahars still score considerably worse than other groups (Hatlebakk,

2012). Being landless in these parts of Nepal has its own set of woes that go beyond the lack of stable roof overhead, and involve a precarious livelihood that leads to taking up whatever work is available (UNDP, 2013). The very poor rely on recurrent jobs or run to village money lenders to cover everyday expenses.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a plan it is also called a blue print for any research that support for answering research question more scientifically. In fact my research is anthropological in nature as the study will seek out to explore phenomena that are affected by individual, institutions, norms, values and social influences. To achieve the aim of this research, I have applied exploratory and descriptive research. In this context my research design demands applying qualitative methods.

Descriptive study is basically a detailed description of the phenomena, group or community. The main objective of descriptive design is to acquire knowledge through detailed description. The study pre-supposes some prior knowledge of the problem that is being studied thus, researcher must be able to clearly define what he wants to measure and describe about the study matters. Descriptive research design describes phenomena as they exist. Such study involves the systematic collection and presentation of data to give a clear picture of a particular situation (Ghosh, 1992). This study attempt to obtain a complete and accurate description of a situation. Descriptive research is the method conducted to find the opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a given individual or population (Panta, 2014). It is concerned with relationship that exist, opinion that are held, processes that are going on, effect that are evident, or trends that are developing. It is a process of accumulation facts and primary concern with the present. An exploratory method is the initial stage of research

to find out causal relationship so I have used the descriptive and exploratory research in this dissertation.

3.3 Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology of the Study

This study is about the state of livelihood of *Tarai Dalit* the Musahar Community, which is contextual. The knowledge constructed for this study is relative to people, space, and socio-political context. The Musahar in the study area surrounded by diversity of heterogeneous caste, ethnic and *Dalit* communities with heterogeneous attributes. In contrast to it, Musahars exist with homogeneous attributes amid domination, isolation, and discrimination phenomena of behavior showed by other caste/ethnic (and their own inter Dalit) groups into the practices of livelihood activities since long historical moments. Dalit epistemology has both critical and constructive dimension has been seen changing since some decades. Research on locally valued ways of thinking, learning and organized knowledge in Musahar community (indigenous epistemology) has contrastingly emerged against high caste domination, orthodox feeling over systems (Local epistemology-Knowledge, perception to look Musahars). However, Musahars are struggling over local epistemology (Longino & Lenon, 1997) versus indigenous epistemology (Quanchi, 2004) led by themselves regarding to Caste embedded over systems into livelihood generation from past to present context, which is relevant and useful today for their communities whom they belongs. Ontology concerns with the reality and beings related to the matter of existence. Grix (2002) has defined ontology as “the basic image of social reality upon which a theory is based. Ontology relates to the way in which an individual views the world” (Grix, 2002). He further said that ontology is connected to how a person’s find out generate knowledge. The ontology in research means the purpose for which the study is being undertaken Ontology is an important part of research, but, the definition, fundamental components, and the question with which it is concerned are different in each philosopher according to their

social world perspective. The informant's opinion and ideas about cultural realities are important information for this study, however, secondary sources of information are also applied equally. Epistemology as a philosophy of knowledge is useful to understand how knowledge is generated, analyzed, and presented. Crotty (2003) has defined "epistemology as the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology" (p. 3). A similar definition is also provided by Grix (2002) as "one of the core branches of philosophy, is concerned with the theory of knowledge, especially with regards to its methods, validations" (p. 178). Regarding this view, the epistemology of this study is considered as subjective relationship and interpretation between the researcher and subjects. I have adopted both the emic-etic approach to balancing the perspective of insider's emotions and outsider's biasness. The knowledge gained can be subjective and objective, however, I have considered knowledge to be subjective. I have acknowledged the history of Musahars life world and relative reality towards becoming landlessness. This is because landless Musahar have their own life world, sets of beliefs and values which cannot be discovered by carrying out experiment. It may be of single reality or multiple realities, researcher needs to develop the ontology before starting research process. It will help researcher select the appropriate epistemology to get deeper and clear understanding of purpose in life and in their research. In contrast, I examine different sources to gain indigenous knowledge about Musahars living strategies and livelihood methods and production relation through the context of local epistemology like history, experiences, belief, feelings (perception and knowledge on Musahar) etc. to use qualitative method; life history, key informant interview, in-depth interview helps to generate knowledge about Musahars livelihood and diversification strategy. Constructivists adopt relativist ontology in response to multiple realities. I have followed Constructivist paradigm which is supports to explore Musahar's history and influential factors of socio-culture practice over livelihood

generation. The axiology of this study is to be free from biases. I have tried to be free from bias to my subject of study. However, I am influenced of research subject, and my discipline.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The study is based on the primary data. Several methods such as in-depth interviews, observation, focus group discussions, and life history methods were systematically applied to generate the required information. In order to supplement the primary data, I have also used secondary data collected from published and unpublished documents.

3.4.1 Interview

Interview has been one of the basic qualitative data collection methods in social sciences and anthropology in particular. Interviews take different forms but a "key feature is their ability to provide undiluted focus on the individual respondents. Interviews provide opportunities for detailed investigation of people's personal perspective, for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which research phenomena are located and detailed subject coverage can be found (Denzin, 2002).

In-depth interviewing is founded on the notion that investigates into the subject's 'deeper self' and produces more authentic data. Johnson (2007) lists some of the assumptions of in-depth interviewing. As Johnson puts

"In-depth interviewing begins with commonsense perceptions, explanations, and understandings of some lived cultural experience and aims to explore the contextual boundaries of that experience or perception, to uncover what is usually hidden from ordinary view or reflection or to

penetrate to more reflective understandings about the nature of that experience". (Johnson, 2002, p.106)

I have used this method to gather information pertaining to the livelihoods of the Musahar. For that I selected elder Musahars who were knowledgeable and were able to provide the detail about the socio-economic and political fate of the Musahar communities of Nepal. For in-depth interview, I tried to make open and friendly environment to allow them to talk freely and independently without intervention. Musahar elders described clearly their past experience of livelihood and their present endeavor to attain their living. During interview period, Musahar informants expressed their economic challenges, their shocks and stress. From in depth interview, I was able to gather information on their experience, feelings, their perception, their suffering, their shock, desires, and hopes. Shocks, stress and frustrations are the strategies of survivals among Musahars.

3.4.2 Observation

In anthropology, observation is considered the most conventional and the most popular data collection method. This method facilitates anthropologists to collect qualitative data. I have made both extensive and intensive use observation to collect ethnographic information from my research sites. I used this method to observe the daily life of Musahar community and their day-to-day lives. I participated in their significant cultural and social events and collected essential data. I observed their settlement areas, their housing conditions, daily household chores, and economic activities in farm and non-farm sectors. With their due permission, I participated in their community meetings and collected important information. I also used photography as a tool to record events in the field. I also tried to observe how people react to their economic situation that developed over a period of time.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus group discussion was done to collect data in an interactive situation. Group interaction helped me to generate data that was less accessible without the interaction of a group. The main benefit of this method was that informants felt greater confidence in a group. Because they were in a group that encouraged them to offer comments and discuss the matter they were not doing in a one-to-one interview. It also facilitated for triangulation of data with higher confidence in their perception and experience of state-induced economic hardship. I conducted four semi-organized focus group discussions. The participants were of both sexes of 25-60 years. The topics of discussion were particularly on their state of livelihood, their relations with lands and landlords, their access to economic opportunities, education, their access to government services and facilities, political participation, changing condition of works and diversification of livelihood and their social relations with other communities.

3.4.4 Life History

Life history research, which has its strongest roots in anthropology, such as historical anthropology. It is said that comparative historical study is a field of research characterized by the use of efficient comparison and the analysis of processes over time to explain large scale outcomes. It can be distinguished from other approaches within historical sociology (Mohaney, 2004). In this context, he has sharply conceptualized the relationship among history, society and individuals. According to Mills:

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It is the idea that the individual can

understand his/her own experience and judge own fate only by locating herself within her period. (Mills, 1967, p.5).

Mills argued that to have a comprehensive understanding of their personal troubles there was a need to situate themselves within their period, according to their history, and make the link between their private ordeals and the public policies of the society in which they live. Another understanding of this is the link between biography and history. By understanding the intersection between the two elements, individuals are able to grasp what is going on in the world and understand what is happening in them. Mills argued that without the sociological imagination, most individuals are unable to cope with their personal troubles in such ways as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them. The acquisition of this intellectual quality brings along the promise of a higher enlightenment (Mills, 1959). The sociological imagination is the most fruitful form of self-consciousness.

Musson (2004) mentioned life history method focuses on the ways in which individuals account for and theorize about their actions in the social world over time. The subjective interpretation of the situation in which people find themselves, past or present, is its cornerstone. It is predicated on the fundamental assumption that "if men define those situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Musson, 2004, p. 36). Musson (2004) further said that method prioritizes individual explanations and interpretations of actions and events, viewing them as lenses through which to access the meaning that human beings attribute to their experience. The method is useful for gathering information about changes in the material and social networks within which people construct their lives.

In contrast to the historical Anthropological method, an age based model emerged from the 1960s in a theory of age stratification which relate age cohorts to social structure

over the life span. Writers explore that by placing people in birth cohorts that permit analysis of historical effects the theory advanced a view of age graded, life patterns embedded in cultures, institutions, and social structures, and responsive to social change (Musson, 2004). The contribution of life course studies, it can be traced to the Anthropology of age stratification, an anthropological perspective focusing on the role of age in social structure as well as in the life course of individuals. This conception of life course orientation emphasizes the importance of anthropological meanings attached to life events and the social context with which they emerged and are reorganized. In the life course, the focus is often on 'turning points when the social process undergoes changes' and age-related transitions that are socially created, socially recognized and shared in the process of trajectories (Keith,1980).

For some, life history research reflects a turn away from objectivity and a privileging of subjectivity and positionality (Riessman, 1993). For others, life histories provide a rich source of data that enable researchers to explore the life course and to examine the relationships between cause and effect, and agency and structure. This renewed interest in the individual reflects a wider populist shift and is associated with post-modernism (Paerregaard, 1998). In the social sciences, this shift, and the surge of interest in the life history method, can be attributed to a number of factors, which Roberts (2002) outlines in the following way; biographical research, case history, ethnography, case study, narratives, life story, oral history, life history, narrative inquiry, testimonial (Annica, 2007).

In the more traditional view, life histories are largely considered beneficial during the 'exploratory' phase of study, when data are restricted and conceptualization is limited. Life histories is used as one of the methods in this study. In this study, life history method is one of the reliable tools of gathering information as qualitative research. "Growing sociological roots and interest in the timing and sequencing of important life events

continues to fuel the development of sophisticated analytic method" (Annica, 2007, p. 2). It is also increasingly begun utilized in a number of substantive numbers of areas. Life history designed as a method of data collecting detail individual level events, timing and sequencing of life history which through the light to the research objective (Annica, 2007). Francis (2002) explored by using life history as primary source of information of livelihood change in South Africa.

I conducted life history interviews to explore the trajectories of accumulation and impoverishment amongst the rural households. I found life history interviews as a useful path for looking back into the past which Murray (2002) characterizes as the 'retrospective approach'. The retrospective approach ('looking back') involves "pushing to the limits of their potential various methods of understanding the changes that have taken place over a much longer time scale" (Murray, 2000,p.490). According to Buck, Ermisch and Jenkins (cited in Murray, 2002 : 500), life history interviews are "carried out at one moment only, whose emphasis is on reconstruction of key moments, events, decisions, changes of trajectory, etc.in the lives of individuals" and constitute retrospective analysis. The use of life history interviews in this sense allows for the study of divergent trajectories of both men and women and the systematic analysis of both intra-household and extra-household relations as they change over time (Murray, 2002). The primary aim of the retrospective approach is to "analyze household or family trajectories of accumulation or impoverishment over time" (Murray, 2002: 490) and life history interviews are a good research instrument to achieve this.

Life history as a tool of my study is a heuristic device to elucidate and understand the state of Musaharslivelihoods. I selected two persons (one key informant & one household head) who narrate the Musahars population of the village. In this life history study, a cohort group has been formulated. Though it was difficult to select representative

parts of the cohort group for a qualitative analysis, a small size individuals belonging to two different generations provided me with historical events and experiences related to objectives.

- 1) The individual unit of this study is below 40 years (younger), who can realize and perceive present social changing context and answer the responses to coping strategy of living.
- 2) Hereafter it referred to as the older individual unit who belongs to above 60 years. This unit has much stocks of history and experience of livelihood trajectories related to landlessness, farm wage labor with production relation.
- 3) Within the generation unit, both of father and son was selected to capture the experiences and feelings of livelihood trajectories as well as an areas and opportunities of diversification strategies in their own generation as cross sectional process.

The individuals were chosen to cover particular historical events that have deeply affected their lives. The older unit was chosen because it was one of the affected group by patron-client relationship during the time of working in land and experiences they were facing in changing context (Nilsen, 2014). Similarly, the young individuals were chosen because it is this unit who should wereaffected by unprecedented change in socio economic factor and land-labor relation in society. The age vacuum exists between cohort group due to dangerous of overlapping similar experiences and feelings.

According to Nilsen (2014) the idea of combining the study method is located individuals temporarily in relation to social change. This will allow us to study the same life cycle but in successive periods. The study of events experiences by the cohort groups at a particular life phase, at different points in time, will facilitates inters cohort comparison of life phases. This will be important for the comparison of livelihood trends and trajectories

over time, particularly for studying the young adult life phase, which is subject to, frequent and radical changes, for instance, getting access to resources, feeding a family and getting employment.

3.5 Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation

This research is mainly qualitative in methods. I have collected qualitative data through observation, interviews, focused group discussions, and life history methods. I have coded, transcribed, classified, and categorized the data manually as per the concepts of categories or themes and sub-themes of my research and presented them in chapters. Because of the qualitative nature of my research, I have followed interpretive process of data analysis on historical context of land and labour relations. There are few quantitative data which I have analyzed with the help of simple description and short analysis. I have also used required photographs, charts, maps, tables and figures as supplementary information. The informal conversations with my informants called *Kuragraphy* and life histories of selected informants have been analyzed and presented to depict their perception and experiences.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

All social science researchers have an ethical obligation to protect the privacy and welfare of the people they study. Anthropologists follow ethical values relating to their subject. As being more sensitive to social and cultural norms and values. I am fully aware of the do no harm principle of anthropology which I have sincerely followed. I have avoided exposing my informants. I have no intention to benefit individually from the research work I have undertaken. I have treated all my respondents equally. I have not been prejudiced to any of my informants. I have a high respect to the norms and values of my studied communities. I have taken adequate measures to protect the confidentiality of my

respondents. Although overall research results may be presented publicly, I will not identify my respondents or respondents associated with their individual responses. I have properly acknowledged all my respondents who gave me important information required to my research work. I have also shared these findings to the local people of Baijanathpur where I conducted my research. I myself have not used any derogative terms that would hurt their feelings.

CHAPTER 4

THE SETTING AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF MUSAHARS

This chapter discusses the social, cultural and historical context of the study area. It also highlights the demographic, socio-economic conditions and kinship relations of the Musahar people including settlement patterns, migration and life cycle rituals. This chapter narrates the history of origin and mobilization of Musahars in the study area and territory. Society, local knowledge, culture, economy and everyday survival practices of Musahars' narration also highlights in this section.

4.1 History of Origin and Migration

Musahars are the second largest group of *Tarai Dalits*. The etymological meaning of Musahar is rat eater. They catch rats and eat them as their delicious meal. They raise domesticated pigs and use for meat, cash and other purposes. Both rats and pigs are ritually impure food stuff in Hindu society. Therefore, both rat eaters and pig raisers are ritually impure and therefore Hindu caste society degrades them to low social status as *dalits* or untouchables. Musahars admit that they had eaten rats just not to satisfy their hunger, but to cool down their temperament when rats ate their foods. Later rats were attached as a social stigma to Musahars as *Dalit's*. But Musahars activists deny this social stigma. They claim that they do not belong to Hindu caste community. They claim that they are indigenous peoples, as many of their physical features and social-cultural traits of Musahars are similar to those of indigenous peoples. On the basis of their social and cultural traits, they are considered the offshoots of tribal people of Chhota Nagpur. Musahars are compared with the Bhil or Munda tribe

of India on the basis of their physical proximity from cultural proximity they are closer to Tharu (Kumar,2005). Some other scholars portray them as Bhuiya or Koli tribe of India. But whoever they may be, they are tribal peoples in India like the indigenous people of Nepal. They were made *Dalit's* by the *jamindars* (landlords) of Bihar who had made Musahars as agriculture bonded labours before they entered into Nepal.

Musahars have various mythical stories about their origin. One of their mythical stories tells us that like other creatures, Musahars were born from the soil (earth) and grown up in the soil. So soil is everything for them. Soil provides them with foods, shelters, medicine and all essential items which they need for their survival. Therefore, Musahars worship soils to please it. They have physical, economic and emotional attachments with the soil and worship the soil. According to this myth, Musahars were created by the earth. Another myth tells us that Musahars are descendants of Dina Bhadri and Dina Ram who was born from a woman named Sabari who used to live in the jungle of Saptari. Once Shri Ram, the epic hero of Ramayana met her in the jungle when he was there to spend 14 years as a hermit. When Sabari met Ram, she gave him wild fruits as a token of her hospitality. In return to her hospitality, Ram asked the woman what she really wanted to have from him. While answering to Ram's question, the woman told him that she would like to have two brave sons like him and his brother Luxman. Ram blessed her for two sons. With the blessings of Ram, Sabari gave birth to twin sons named Dina Bhadri (Patel, 2008; Saelay, 2013). These two sons were physically very strong and stout and psychologically very brave and bold from their early childhood. They were endowed with heavenly power. When grown up, they fought to liberate many Musahars from the bondage of the *jamindars* (landlords).

Because of their heroic deeds, they later became freedom fighters. There are many other myths which repeat more or less the same narratives.

Many scholars, who did ethnographic research on Musahars are of the opinion that Musahars are found mainly in India. In India they live in Bihar, Uttarpradesh, Jharkhand and North Bengal where they are identified by different names, such as, Sada or Saday in Northern Bihar, Manjhi in central Bihar, Musahar or Mandal and Bhuiya or Bhokta in Southern Bihar. Based on their state of socio-economic development, they have also been classified as scheduled tribes in some states and scheduled caste in other. In Nepal Mushahar is a common name categorized a *madhesidalit*. These days, they are also called as Rishidev, Sada or Saday.

Some of the Musahar activists claim that Musahars are the *bhumiputra* (son of the soil) of Nepal. They were born and raised in Nepal, particularly in the jungle of Saptari district, for time immemorial. But their claim does not have scientific evidences. Other scholars say that Musahars came to Nepal from North India as early as the 18th century. Some scholar even goes further back to the 300 AD. Some believe that Musahars came to Nepal during the time of Rana regime when Britishwere ruling in India. The main purpose of their arrival was to cut the *salandisau* tress for the expansion of railway lines towards the north-east India and to cultivate the lands to produce food grains. So originally, they were Indians, but they became Nepali after they migrated and permanently settled down in Nepal *Tarai* (Gauge 1975 &Regmi 1977). Both Nepali people and the government still treat them as Indian. One of the indicators of treating Musahars as Indian is the denial of citizenship certificate to them by Nepal government (Dahal et al. 2014).

4.1.1 Settlements

Traditionally, Musahars were forest dwellers. They were hunters and gatherers. As a nomadic people, they moved from forests to forests, hunted wild games and collected edible fruits and roots for their livelihood. So they did not erect houses for their permanent settlements. They lived in an isolated area either at the river banks or forest edges where they could find natural resources in abundance. At present, nomadic life is not practical for them to survive, as there are no forests and river banks with plenty of resources to survive. Available forests are under the control of the government and the government does not allow landless poor to encroach into the forests for their settlements. So they have to live a sedentary life and look for land and land related activities as their professions to subsist. Yet, they still prefer to live in isolated areas where people from other communities cannot easily encroach and interfere them. At present, we can find their settlements mostly at dry river banks and marginal lands.

Musahars are found mainly in Rautahat, Dhanusa, Siraha, Sarlahi, Saptari, Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa districts in the east *Tarai* of Nepal. They are also found in Bara, Parsa, Chitwan, Nawalpur, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilbastu districts of west *Tarai*. According to the National Census of 2011, the total population of Mushahars in Nepal is 234,490 which accounts the second largest group of *Tarai* Dalits. Of the total population, they are confined mainly in Siraha (39,929) Saptari (38,625), Morang (28,863), Sunsari (25,787) and Mahottari (22,364).

Table 4.1

Musahars households and population in study area(Baijanathpur)

Ward no	Households	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
3	30	77	78	155	11.42
5	60	199	174	273	27.50
7	25	69	55	124	9.14
8	105	274	269	516	38.02
9	35	101	88	189	13.92
Total	255	694	663	1357	100

Source: Biratnagar Municipality Profile, 2075

From the table 4.1 it becomes clear that male are slightly higher than the number of female in the studied area of Baijanathpur. A large number of Musahars lived in Ward no.8 and 5 while the Musahars are found to be living in almost all areas. The Musahars have less households in ward no.3 in comparison to other wards

In Morang District they live in Baijanathpur VDC in large numbers. At present, this VDC falls under ward number 19 of Biratnagar Metropolitan City. In this ward (Baijanathpur VDC since 2072) Musahars are the numerically dominant ethnic group. The total population in this area is 1375. These number of Musahars populations have a compact settlement called *Musaharbasti* or Musahar villages. In one *basti* or village, one can find up to 255 households. The settlement pattern is very distinct. They build one story long rectangular house built with muds, supported by Bamboo poles and thatched with straw. The walls are made of bamboo sticks called *tat* and plastered with mud's mixed with cow dung's. Some well-off Musahars thatch their houses with plastic sheets and some with jute sacks. Very few

houses are built with bricks and thatched with tiles or corrugated iron sheets. Inner part of the houses is divided into two parts; one small room for worshipping their deities and big one for sleeping purposes. They keep cattle in the sleeping. There is no porch or verandah, but each house has small courtyards where children can play during the day time and elder people sit there during the day of the winter to take sun bath and sleep there at night to escape them from the summer heat.

4.1.2 Society and Culture

The Musahar is a patriarchal and patrilineal religious group. The descent is traced through the father's line and ancestral properties are inherited by the sons. Daughters are not the owners of parental properties. So they do not get the share of parental properties. But parents and brothers support their married daughters/sisters to make their houses and buy cattle or household materials.

There are mainly two major groups of Musahars in Nepal *Tarai*. They are *Trihutiya* and *Maghadiya*. They are further divided into three major sub-groups, *Trihutiya*, *Bhaget* and *Sakataya*. Each of these group is endogenous (Khattari, 2006, p. 534). There are no vertical social hierarchies among these groups and sub-groups. All Musahars are equal in the society. Musahars do not know about the further segments of their community into clans and lineages. But they have both joint and nuclear type of families identified by various names. Family is considered an important unit of social structure. Father is the head of the family and as a head of the family, he takes the major decision on family affairs and he plays active role in managing household activities. He assigns the status and roles of the family members and according to their assigned status and roles, each member of the family fulfills his/her duties.

Musahars are staying with patrilineal practices in their household. The descent is traced through the line of the father. Their parental property ownership and title is also transferred from father to sons. Daughters are not regarded as owners of parental property, though parents or brothers have to give financial support to the married daughters or sisters to make new homes and set up. At birth both boys and girls take their social identity from the father and are placed in his agnatic group and familial unit (Giri, 2018). In patriarchal society, women always have a subordinate position in the family. The *Miathili* folk lore "I am a bird taking shelter in a tree in father's home yard. I shall fly away one day" depicts the impermanent situation of a daughter in the Musahar family (Giri, 2018). According to the folk lore, a son is the permanent member of a family, but a daughter is a transient or impermanent member. But this is not applicable to all spheres of their life. Economically, Musahar women enjoy greater freedom, as they both men and women work together outside of their home to support their family economy. Their freedom is attributed to their poverty. It is a fact that in an economically poor society both men and women need to work equally for their livelihood and those men and women who work equally for their food, they enjoy equal rights and freedom. In many cases, women take their newly married husbands to their natal homes and settle near the house of her parents.

This type of practice is partly because of their traditional culture and partly because of the poor economy. Usually, parents of the girl erect small huts for their married daughters near their home and give them some cooking and eating utensils and a cattle to start their independent family life.

Musahars are profoundly influenced by the Hindu religion and culture. Though they claim that they are non-Aryan people, they believe that they are descendants of *Sabiri Sadhu* who was living an ascetic life in the forest and who with the blessing of

Shri Ram, the mythical hero of Hindu epic Ramayana gave birth to Dina *Bhadri* and Dina Ram. They believe in Hindu religion and practice Hindu caste system and Hindu culture. They think Musahars are ritually superior than the *Chamanar*, *Dushad* and Dom as they do not eat the buffalo and cow meats. They also strictly follow the practice of purity and pollution with these *Tarai* communities. Their belief in Hindu religion and their adherence to Hindu culture can be more clear if we examine their life cycle rituals, their commensally rules and other ways of life.

4.1.3 Birth Ritual

Birth is an important cultural event in Musahar society. Newly married women are not allowed to go out for labor works for sometimes. They remain at home looking after household chores. Pregnancy of a married woman is considered an omen of fertility and it is always welcomed. But Musahars do not perform any rituals of pregnancy. Some Musahars do their *vakal* (promise to the god for special offerings if everything goes well with the pregnancy). Traditionally Musahars do not have son preference culture. So both son and daughters are equally preference. But these days, they also have a choice of a son due to the dowry system.

During the time of birthing, Musahars do not take pregnant women to the hospital for a child delivery. Instead, they call a *sudeni* (midwife or traditional birth attendant) from the *Chamar* community from adjacent villages to handle a birth of a child. Musahars observe birth pollution for 6 days by the family members, but they remain impure for 12 days. During this period, new born baby and mother are kept separate from the family members and they are not touched by other members of the family. During this period, the mother of a new born baby does not touch the kitchen,

cooking and eating utensils, water ponds and well, as her touch pollutes them. Musahars have a certain food taboo during this period. Traditionally, Musahars do not feed goat meat and rice to the birthing mother for 6 days. During this time, they provide the mother only with the juice of ginger and sugarcane and lentil soup of *kurtiko dal*. This is of the several reasons that most of the birthing mothers and children suffer from malnutrition. But these days, they feed a variety of food and drinks, such as *khichadi* (rice cooked in oil or butter with the mixture of black lentils, ginger, garlic etc), *taruwa*, *bhauwa*, meat of chicken and pigeon and homemade slurry called *jad* of rice. Oil massage to both birthing mother and a newly born baby for about two weeks is a common practice among the Musahar community. They hire a *sudeni* particularly experienced in oiling and massaging the mother and a baby. The mother is also fed a special food called *sauhaura* (mixture of spices, gander powder and coconut flour, pieces of date or *khajur*) and a body is fed oily paste of local *jhapar* fruits to tighten the head and develop the brain.

On the sixth day of the birth of a baby, Musahars perform a ritual called *chhaithi*. This is also called the naming ceremony, because the baby is named on this particular day. On this day, both the mother and a baby take bath and wear a deep yellow clothes. A variety of good foods are prepared at home and the mother needs to taste all types of food. After the taste of food, the birth pollution is over. The senior women who help the birthing mother during child delivery along with other relatives are invited for the *chhaithi* feast. Some family invites a priest on the auspicious occasion for naming the baby, but most of the family does not invite any priests. Instead, a senior or elder person of the community lights the oil lamp and gives the name of the new born baby. A group of participating women in the celebration chant

hymens of Hindu religious text wishing the baby for the good fortune. Musahars believe that the prophet mark the fate of the baby on the sixth day of the birth of a baby. Therefore, they evoke goods and goddesses and worship them with oil lamps.

4.1.4 Naming System

Naming the child according to their personal behavior or physical characteristics is a common practice among rural communities. Musahars also follow this practice. So they name their children according to their actual behavior and physical characters. For example, a child who defecates a lot is named *haguwa*. An angry child is named *jhokilal* or a child who does not speak much is named *lataorlathuwa*. Naming is also done by certain festival or events. For example, if someone is born during fagu or holy festival, the child is named as *phguwaorif* a child is born during the time of earthquake, the child is named *bhuichale*. There are two main reasons to name in such a way. The first is the practical reason. If they name by certain events or personal behavior or physical characteristics of a child, it is easy to remember. The second reason is that they do not use Hindu priests during *chhathito* name their child who otherwise could have named the child according to the horoscope of the child. Musahars also do have certain belief system to name their child. If someone's previous children could not survive after birth, they usually give the derogative name of so called *dalit* caste to their next child. Musahars believe that the derogative name of so called lower caste group protects the child from evil spirits which otherwise might cause his/her premature death. This is a common practice even among other communities of Nepal. But this tradition is no longer in practice among the new generations of the Musahar community. The young generations prefer to name themselves according to their liking. So they pick-up the name of some mythical heroes, or real hero of the cinema or name of some celebrities.

Because of economic poverty, Musahars do not have weaning and hair cutting ceremonies, as a lot for performing rituals and organizing feasts.

4.1.5 Marriage Ceremony

Musahars are endogamous caste groups but deity exogamous. They marry within their own community. But they do not practice cross-cousin marriage. Marital relations are established on the basis of their family deities. If two or more families worship the same gods, such as *sursar*, *lokeswar*, *bamat*, *kali* and *gaiya-pachin*, they belong to the same agnatic groups and marriage between these groups are prohibited. In such family groups, they observe incest taboo for five to seven generations. After seven generations, they can marry within the same groups. There are at least four major criteria to select a bride for a marriage. These criteria are color, face, age and height. Usually they choose similarities between girls and boys. This means, if a boy is black, he needs to select a black girl as his life partner or the vice versa. Musahars say that if they do not match the color, they might have a conflict after their marriage, as the fair colour boy or girl has a tendency to dominate his/her life partner. By face, they mean the structure of face, dentition, eyes and nose. Musahars marry a girl at an early age. The marriageable age for a girl is 12-14 and for a boy is 14-18 in Musahar community. It is very difficult for a girl and a boy to find a suitable partner after 20 years of age. Age indicates the height of a girl and a boy. So old people take a measuring stick to measure the height of the girl. But these days, this is not a strict criteria. Instead, they have added education as additional criteria of a girl for marriage. But it is also a problem to find an educated partner for the girls and boys, as there are not many educated people in their community.

Like among much other community, the parents of the boy take initiative to arrange a marriage of their son. The parents visit the family of the potential bride to propose a marriage of their daughter with their son. On this occasion, the parents of the boy take *sanes* (gift) of meat, sweet and local liquor to offer to the parents of the girl. The family of the girl extend their hospitality to the visiting guests by washing their hands and feet, serving water with sugar and putting blankets on the mats for their guests to sit. The parents of the boy give the gift to the parents of the girl. If the parents of the girl accept the gift and eat and drink with together with the parents of the boy, it is considered that they agree to give their daughter to the boy. This is called *chhekka* or to block the girl for others to come for next proposal of marriage. This binds both the parties for not to violate the proposal. If anyone breaks the promise, their community organization called *jatsamaj* or *panchayat* sits together and punishes violating party morally as well as financially. If they do not accept the gift and do not eat them, it will mean the rejection of the proposal of marriage. After meeting the parents and looking for the girl, the parents of the boy return to their home. Then comes the turn of the parents of the girl to visit the home of the boy. The parents of the boy and girl invite a Hindu priest Thakur to fix the day and date of the marriage. In the past, payment of bride price was a customary practice of marriage among the Musahars, but now a days, the payment of bride price in no longer in practice. Instead, the culture of dowry system has intruded upon the Musahar society.

Marriage is completed in several stages in several days in Musahar community. After fixing the day and date of the marriage, both parties prepare all the essential things for the marriage. The boy buys pairs of clothes, *tika*, *sindur-pote* and

silver ornaments for the girl. The parents of the girl send betel nuts to the relatives as a token of invitation and prepare feast for the invitees.

A group of Musahar women start signing the marriage song called *sariyari* for 3-5 days. On the first day of the marriage, parents of the both parties clean their houses and plaster and smear the floor with mud. Both the bride and the groom are applied the paste of oil and turmeric powder on their bodies by their sisters or elder sister-in-laws of their own families. This ritual is called *aptan*. While applying the paste, they sing a love song. On the second day, the bride and bridegroom worship water sources with rice, vermilion powder and oil. *Matkor* (also called *homiyat* or *chaukapujan* and *lahachhu*) is a kind of ritual bath in which both the bride and bridegroom take bath in the pond and take a basket of mud from the bottom of the pond which is later used to make *chauka* or altar for marriage.

On the actual day of the marriage, a group of women take the bridegroom around the village and ask the groom to visit 5 neighborhood households for their benediction to the bridegroom for the successful completion of his marriage. This group is called *belauki*. During this time, the groom wears a crown like cap decorated with the feathers of peacock and white paper attached with small pieces of glittering mirror. Among the group of women who chant the benediction, one holds mango leaves containing a water pot and the other holds a bamboo basket with unhusked rice, betel nuts and *sachhram*. When the *belauki* reaches at the door of the neighbors, they give a gift of money, rice and sweets. After this visit, *belauki* return to the groom's house.

On the same day, the groom starts walking to the bride's house with *bariyati* (marriage procession). The number of *bariyati* depends upon the demand of the bride's family. In early days, *bariyati* used to walk on foot to the house of the bride. But these days, they rent tractor and other vehicles to commute the *bariyati*. Before involving in the marriage ritual, some village people from the side of the bride take the groom around the village partly to familiarize him with the village and introduce with the bride's relatives and partly to make a fun out of his visit. At that time, the relatives of the bride have a chance to make a judgment of him. This ritual is called *duhailagaune*.

The actual marriage takes during the night with various types of *puja* (worshipping) performed on the *mandap* (altar). Mango leaves, betel nuts, *lawar* (puff of paddy rice, alcohol and *dubo* flower are the major items of the *puja*. After the *puja*, the parents of the bride give a set of clothes to the groom and the groom also gives a set of clothes to the bride. Both the bride and groom hold one bowl with curd and the relatives of the bride take the curd from the bowl of girl and boy to sprinkle over their head with blessings. They part the hair of the bride and cover with a piece of white clothes through which the groom put vermilion powder over the forehead of the bride for five times. This is called *sindurhalne* which is considered the most important ritual of the marriage. The *bariyati* spend three days in bride's home and return to groom's home.

Before returning to groom's home, the relatives of the groom give some gifts of *supari* (nuts) to the female singers and relatives of the bride. Then they return to the groom's house with the bride. At groom's house, the bride stands in front of the main entrance of the house. A bamboo basket with full of rice and oil lamp is placed

in front of the bride. The groom's sister does not allow the new bride to enter into the groom's house unless the bride gives her some gifts. So she closes the main door of the house. When the bride gives the groom's sister some gifts, the sister washes the feet of the brides and opens the door for her to enter into the house.

The bride is accompanied by her 5-12 friends and relatives called *lokniya* or *sariyati* and stay at groom's house for 2-3 days. They have dual purposes to come to groom's house. The first purpose is to train the bride for practical life and to familiarize her with the new family and new environment of the groom's village. The second purpose is to observe the houses of the groom and cross-check his social and economic status. To give a good impression, the groom's family feed them delicious food until they return home. After *lokniya* return home, the groom looks of a special and an auspicious day to visit the bride's natal home. With his visit to his wife's natal home, the marriage ritual is complete.

4.1.6 Death Ritual

Death is considered a natural event by the Musahars. Immediately after the death of a person, the dead body is taken out from the home and the relatives and villagers are informed about the death. All kin groups are involved in death ritual and play specific roles. The relatives and villagers find a green bamboo and prepare a *khat* (strature) to take the dead body to the crematory. While the son in-law moves around the corpse four times, the daughter oils the heads of the brothers who need to carry the corpse and go to the crematory. All Musahars participate in the funeral procession. But people other than the Musahars cannot participate in the funeral without formal

invitation of the bereaved family for social and economic reason. Only male folk can participate in the funeral procession.

Traditionally, Musahars practice burial. In order to bury the dead body, the participants of the funeral called *kathiyari* dig the ground. They removed all pieces of clothes from the body of the dead person and place death body straight in sleeping position and bury the dead body with mud and stones. But these days, Musahars practice cremation as firewood's are easily available from the community forests. For cremation, the *kathiyari* are free to collect firewood from community forests. They can cut even green trees for cremation purpose. They prepare funeral pyre, put the dead body on the pyre and burn it by sons from four corners. The *kathiyar* cannot return home before the cremation is over. Then a senior man leads to way back home. The son of the dead person called *karta* (main actor) follow the senior person then by other *kathiyars*. The son holds hoe and axe at his hands and cut the ground in each turning of the road to pave the way for heaven for the dead person.

When the *kathiyars* reach the near the home of the dead person, they all take bathes at the ponds. The *karta* also takes a bath and cleans the hoe and axe. The women are waiting there for *kathiyars*, and they also take bathes. After the bathing ritual, the *kathiyars* reach to the yard of the dead person's house. There they find a pan and a *lohora* (stone mortar for grinding spices), chilies, fire and a hoe at a corner of clean place. Each *kathiyar* should hold the *lohora*, touches the pan and hoe by moving clockwise and eat the drychilly. Then *kathiyar* are free to go their own residence.

Musahars observe death pollution for 12 days. During this period, the *karta* should wrap pieces of clothes in his neck and waist and stay away from the touch of

other people. He is prohibited to touch and eat something's, particularly drinking, smoking and meat eating. He can drink milk and eat vegetables and rice once a day. Other relatives observe dead pollution and mourn for four days. And only male relatives can be mourners. For four days, they do not use hoe and axe, because they are also counted as human beings. So on the fourth day, a separate food offering is done for hoe and axe. On the fourth day, the son of the dead person organizes a big feast and invites all *khathiyars* to eat. Musahars believe that the feeding the *kathiyars* will make them free from the sin. Those *kathiyars* who become absent on the fourth day feast, they are invited on another day.

On the 7th day, another ritual called *satlahan* is done. On this day, the *karta* should go to river or a pond to take a bath. After bathe, he does *puja* with barley, sesame seed and fire on a banana leaf. He prepares 5 balls of rice and offers to the dead spirit by throwing them to the pond. At home he prepares a small feast and invited at least 7 persons (usually married sisters and other relatives) for the feast. The 9th day of the deceased is *naukesh* in which barber cut the hair and nail of the mourner. On that day all close relatives shave their hairs. A small feast is organized again at this day and at least for nine relatives is invited to eat the feast. The 12th day ritual is called *pitarpacha*. With this ritual the dead pollution is over for all relatives as well for the family at home. On this day, 12 rice balls are prepared by the *karta* and they are offered to the dead spirit. Another big feast is organized on this occasion and all relatives, villagers and children of the village are invited to eat the feat. On the 13th day, the mourner caste off the white clothes and wears his normal clothes. He eats usual food including meats and drinks alcohol and returns to the normal life.

4.1.7 Kinship System

Kinship is very important system in Musahar community, as it governs the descent, determines the heirs of inheritance and regulates the social relations and social obligations. Musahars address their relatives by using various kinship terms that exist in their society. There are kinship terms to differentiate the immediate family, such as father, mother, brother and sister and other relatives. Kinship relations is found activate during mortuary ritual of the Musahar. They also have joking relationship with certain kin relatives. For example, younger brother can have a joking relationship with the wife of his elder brother. Some kinship terms used in Musahar community are provided in following table.

Table 4.2

Musahar Kinship Terms

Musahar	Nepali	Types of relation
babuji	Father	Highly respected
May or mai	mother	Highly respected
Baba	Father's father	Highly respected
Dadi, dai	Father's mother	Highly respected
nana	Mother's father	Highly respected
Nani	Mother's mother	Highly respected
Bhaiya	Elder brother	Respectful and cooperative
Bhai or by name	Younger brother	Cooperative

Didi	Elder sister	Respectful
Bahin	Yonger sister	Compassion
Puto, or gamwali or kaniya	Son's wife	Responsibility to care
Pota	Parental grandson	Responsibility to care
Poti	Grand mother	Responsibility to care
Nati	Maternal grand son	Compassion
Natini	Grand daughter	Compassion
Bhabiprbhauji	Elder brother's wife	Joking relations
Bhaujiya	Younger brother's wife	No physical touch
Dewar	Husband's younger brother	Joking relation
Bhaisur	Husband's elder brother	No physical touch
Jija/pahuna	Elder sister's husband	Respectful
Jwai/mehman	Younger sister's husband	Respectful
Sali	Wife's younger sister	Joking relation
Bhatija	Brother's son	Care
Bhatiji	Younger brother's daughter	Care
Dada/kaka	Brother's brother	Respectful
Kaki	Father's brother's wife	Respectful
Pisi/did/phupu/	Father's sister	Highly respectful
Pisa	Father's sister's husband	Highly respectful

Mausi	Mother's sister	Highly respectful
Mama	Mother's brother	Highly respectful
Mami	Mother's brother's wife	Respectful
Bhagina	Sister's son	Compassion
Bhagini	Sister's daughter	Compassion
Sasur	Husband's father	Highly respectable
Sas/Saus	Husband's mother	Highly respectable
Sasur	Wife's father	Highly respectable
Sas/Saus	Wife's mother	No physical touch
Jethasas	Wife's elder sister	No physical touch
Jethasas	Wife's elder sister's husband	Respectable
Sala/bhai	Wife's younger brother	Care
Jethan/bhaiya	Wife's elder brother	Respectable
Jamai	Daughter's husband	Love and care
Bhiya/bhai	Mother's brother's son	No joking relationship
Bahin/didi	Mother's brother's daughter	No joking relationship
Samdi/Mejman	Son's wife's father	Highly honorable
Samdhini/Mejman	Son's wife's mother	Highly honorable
Dost	Ritual brother/fictive kin	Equal status

Source: Adapted from Dahal et al. Mushar of Nepal 2014

4.2 Language and Literature

Musahars do not have their own language distinct from others'. They speak a derivative language of Maithili called *thetias* their own *Musaharilanguage*. But the tone and the style of *Musaharilanguage* is different from Maithili. They speak their language at home with their family and with the community during the community gathering. The youngpeople can interact with other people in Nepali. The elder and children cannot speak and do not understand Nepali language. It is difficult for the school children to understand Nepali language in their school. So the failure and dropout rate in the school is very high from among the Musahar students. They can speak and understand Maithili language. In Morang, some Musahars also can speak other language, as some of them work as *haruwa-charuwa* (bonded labour) at Tharu's home (Giri, 2018).

Musahars are rich in their traditional myths, folk songs, folklores. They sing folk songs during birth rituals and marriage ceremony and recite religious hymens during death rituals. Musahar women hasound skilled in signing folk songs. Their songs do have both denotative and connotative meanings (Dahal et al. 2014). The songs depict their history of origin, their identity, and their past, present and future life. They express their sorrow/grief, pain/sufferings, domination and exploitation. Most of the songs are related to the suffering of women and over burden of patriarchy on them. They also sing songs during paddy planting and harvesting. Some examples of Musahar folk songs are:

<i>Trihut raj, magadhnagariya</i>	<i>Trihut state magadh town</i>
<i>Saibarikasantanyai</i>	<i>we are sabari'sdescendents</i>
<i>Kuldevkedhanjaadekhu</i>	<i>look at the standing bomboo of kul deity</i>
<i>Musaharkapahichanyai</i>	<i>it is Musahars' identity</i>
<i>Bachajanma din dhamiojha</i>	<i>shaman and ojha during child's birthday</i>
<i>Bolakelabiya chi sodha</i>	<i>call them for assistance</i>
<i>Parewapathiaurphulpati</i>	<i>pigeon, female goat and flower</i>
<i>Magaichiladdupannyai</i>	<i>sweet betel nut are demanded</i>
<i>Panchgharkedaibhaimilke</i>	<i>brothers of five households gathered</i>
<i>Thalipitedhamsanyai</i>	<i>beat the plate to make child aware</i>
<i>Kuldevkebalbibahbahubibah</i>	<i>child marriage, polygamy</i>
<i>Vela Musaharkebhabishyatabah</i>	<i>future of Musahars is destined</i>
<i>Janmailekihnmatabhagyabidhata</i>	<i>fate writer has written at birth</i>
<i>Aurlikhalkaibhagawanyau</i>	<i>what other the gods write</i>
<i>Najaruthakedekhuyaubhaiya</i>	<i>look brother deeply</i>
<i>Kucha ne chai pramanyau</i>	<i>you do not need proof</i>
<i>Kuldevkedhanjaadekhu</i>	<i>look at the standing bamboo of kul deity</i>
<i>Mushaharkepahichanyau</i>	<i>it is the identity of Musahar</i>

In another context Musahar women sing a song related to the sexual harassment of the zamindars/landlords. The stanza of the songs goes like this;

<i>Bachpnamebabujihamarkanyadanbibha</i>	<i>While young, my father got my marriage</i>
<i>Pia, kahalenropadhaa</i>	<i>my husband said, let us go to plant paddy</i>
<i>Ropadhana ham geligrihat me</i>	<i>To plant paddy, I went to zamindar's field</i>

Grihatpapiyahanikarlagalhamarbadan Thecruel master looks at my body

Another song reveals their sexual exploitation by the zamindars. The song follows;

*Bain laabgeli ham grihatkeagan to collect my wage, I went to
landlord's yard*

*Ekahaataagrihatpapiyabatolovamajduri the cruel master weighed wage
by one hand*

*Dosarhaatasatottaapan man he looted my chastity with
another hand*

Another song reflects the poverty of Mushahars in the following stanza:

Deswa main ajabkaisa re

Jyotle bane unkar

Jhankennirdhanbechara

Hamrepaasnahinkuchdhanaurdhartiya

KhetwapadatyaDeswa me garibsatuakemauhtazba

Gulamika hum nahinbajabio

Azadiya humor kebhavela

The meaning of the song is that

The strange butchers in this world live in great expectation

The penniless, the piteous, we (Mushahars) have no wealth and no land

Their land (of Zamindars) is not tilled and left barren.

We (Mushahars) are forced to work for free, we the penniless and ...

4.3 Economy and Everyday Survival Practices of Musahars

Early economy of Musahars was based on land and forest resources as described by western anthropologists around the world. But it is not clear whether the

Musahars owned their natural resources collectively or individually or owned by their village community or by their lineages. However, it is clear that the Musahars were forest dwellers and depended upon land and forest products for their livelihood. They were nomadic hunters and gatherers. They moved from forest to forest in search of wild games, edible roots and fruits. They did not stay permanently in one particular place, but halted for sometimes either at the edges of forests or river side's. They remained in isolation for many years. When they arrived in various parts of Bihar in search of food, they were contacted by agricultural communities who made them agricultural laborers. Thus, they started land cultivation and became agricultural farmers. But they do not own any lands in their names. They work in other's land either as tenants or sharecroppers or daily wage laborers'. Though they do not own any lands in their name, they adopted agriculture as their main occupation of their livelihood. This is the reason that they prefer to identify themselves as agriculture farmers of Nepal *Tarai*.

Many Nepali and Indian anthropologists (Chettri & Dahal, 1997, Dhakal, 2007, Rayamajhi, 2015, Pyakurel & Nepali, 2008) have done ethnographic research on the Musahar community of Nepal *Tarai* and they unanimously agree that Musahars were landless people from long time, though they are closely attached to land. They dig the land, they plow it and harvest the crops. But the irony is that they never owned land in their name. They always cultivated the land of the *Jamindars* as tenants without tenancy rights. They are share croppers and daily wage labourers. Similar studies have been done by Singh (2013), Kunath (2013), and many other anthropologists in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of India. They also write that Musahars did not own lands even in India. The *jamindars* had made them bonded labourers to work in their field. In addition to land cultivation, Musahars had domesticated a small number of some cattle and pigeons. With the exception of cattle and

pigeon, Musahars did not own other properties as their own. So the local people have made a proverb about the state of their property and other assets. They say *Musaharkajan*, *kabutarkajan* meaning Musahars do not have any properties. They are so poor that every day they need to go out to look for food like pigeons, which fly everywhere to look for grains. In this way, the economic status of Musahars is equated with the *kabutar*.

Table 4.3

Land holding pattern of Musahars in study area (Baijanathpur)

Ward no	Landless	0-5 Katha	6-10 Katha	11-20	21-60 Katha
3	37	0	0	0	0
5	136	0	0	0	0
7	81	0	0	0	0
8	120	0	0	0	0
9	116	0	0	0	0
Total	490	0	0	0	0

Source: Field study, 2076

It is very tragic to learn that almost all the Musahars are landless in Baijanathpur village. This means the Musahars have been treated as slaves and wage laborers. The government of Nepal has not managed any legal provision to provide land and shelter for those poor landless Musahars.

In study area an average size of landholding is 0.5ha, but the above table shows that Musahars do not own any lands in their name. As said earlier, they work as *haruwa-charuwa* (land tillers and animal herders) of the *jamindars* and support their livelihood. Some of them

work as tenants and share croppers. If we look at the field scenario of community of Baijanathpur, we can observe cases of tenants and share croppers and most of them belong to the Musahar community. Besides, agricultural labourers, they also work in agriculture related sectors. They cut the soil, prepare farm fields, dig irrigation canals, look after domesticated animals, collect fodders and haul animal dung to the agricultural fields.

The men plow fields, harvest paddy and thrash them. Women plant seedlings, harvest paddy and store them in the granary for which they get daily wages that support their family economy.

Table 4.4

Patterns of Land Cultivation

Ward no	Cultivation by agricultural wage labourers	Cultivation by farmers	Cultivation by Tenants or sharecroppers	No. of Landless Households
3	25	4	10	35
5	95	11	19	130
7	34	0	27	81
8	37	5	26	119
9	48	6	31	109
Total	379	43	189	685

Source: Biratnagar Municipality Profile, 2075

Table 4.4 demonstrates that maximum Musahars cultivate land or agricultural land as wage laborers. In Ward number 5, 95 households cultivate land as wages laborers. At the same time, 130 households of the Musahars are landless in Ward no. 5. The number of landless households of the Musahars is far greater than those

Musahars who have land. The number of Musahars who cultivate land as farmers and owners is quite low. In Ward number 7, there are no such Musahars. Likewise, there are some Musahars who cultivate land as tenant sharecroppers. The data give us a hint that the Musahars possess almost none or very little land. Most of them work as wage laborers or tenants.

Currently, the man-land relations have changed. There are no more agricultural lands available for agricultural production. This has forced them to look for alternative sources of livelihood. So they have started to work as industrial laborers, domestic workers, rickshaw pullers, fuel wood sellers, rag pickers, office cleaners and many other menial workers. But all these jobs are not permanent. So sometimes they spend a reckless time with the problems of hand to mouth. The livelihood problem sometimes pushes them to include in unsocial activities, such as lying, cheating and stealing out of which other community people develop a bad image towards them.

CHAPTER 5

TRAJECTORY OF LANDLESSNESS AND POVERTY

This chapter relates the scenario of landlessness and the path of Musahar's journey from past to present. It tells how poverty affects the development of Musahars and its impact on the trajectory of life. The chapter also describes land relation, assets status and focuses on livelihood issues of Musahars and land tenure system of the country today.

5.1 Situation of landlessness

Land is the most valuable common natural resource available in abundance everywhere on the earth. Until the development of the concept of private property, land was not owned by individuals. Rather, land was used, owned and managed collectively. *Land ownership* was based on local custom rather than legal legitimacy. Traditional customs determined the nature of *land ownership*. Land is a matter of social prestige for every individual for individual and households to own a piece of land from a place where their ancestors had their abode. A family or households without a share of ancestral land perceived it as landless and deprived of various socio-economic opportunities. Land both cultivated and forest was the base from which the people derived their subsistence and most of other materials they required for survival. More importantly, individuals without lands become citizens of nowhere and they lost not only their social dignity and community identity, but also their political rights (Gurung, 2019). In the past, land was known as a symbol of property, wealth and power. Each individual or households desired to have a piece of land as a share of their ancestral estate. Ancestral land was respected and protected from being alienated and destroyed by sale or other forms of exploitation.

Until recent decades, arable land in Nepal was in abundance. So there was no problem of lands and therefore no disputes over land issues. When land became scarce as a result of population growth and individual landownership, many indigenous communities developed various devices to protect land from being fragmented. For example, some communities such as Rai and Limbus of east Nepal practiced communal land tenure system called *kipat* (Regmi, 1976), Himalayan communities like Nimba of Humla practiced polyandry marriage and the Loba communities of Upper Mustang practiced *Dhongba* system (inheritance of ancestral land and other parental properties only by eldest son) to protect lands from being fragmented at the multiple hands (Khattari, 2021; Khattri & Pandey, 2023). In order to secure a piece of lands for their family use, members of these communities were required to fulfill certain community obligations. In case of land disputes, the customary community courts were able to settle the cases. These customary practices were in vogue until recent decades. But the intervention of the state in the name of land reform programs disrupted the customary practices of land and other natural resource management with irreversible impact on the local economy and the environment.

As discussed in previous chapters, Musahars came to Nepal from Bihar and North India during the 18th and early 19th centuries. There are at least three speculations of their arrival in Nepal. Nepali anthropologists and economic historians write that their arrival to Nepal was inspired and facilitated by the British India and Nepal governments. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, the British-India was expanding the railway lines towards the north-east India, So the British Indian government needed large quantity of timbers to expand the railway lines. They also needed a large quantity of seasoned *salandsisau* timber to manufacture war materials for mutiny in India. So the British Indian government sent Musahars to Nepal to cut down the timbers by adopting coercive measures. At the same time, Nepal government wanted to clear the forests in Nepal *Tarai* and establish new

settlements to appropriate the land taxes. But the hill peoples were reluctant to come to *Tarai* to reclaim the land and establish permanent settlements due to unfavorable climate and fear of malaria and other communicable diseases. So the Nepal government not only invited, but also encouraged people from India and Tibet to reclaim lands free of cost for four years and establish new settlements. Musahars came to Nepal during this period as loggers and cultivators and settled down in *Tarai* permanently. Moreover, the Musahar themselves fled voluntarily to Nepal to escape from the labour exploitation of Indian landlords.

According to the migration history of Musahars, they first arrived in Saptari from Bihar and spread to Morang, Sunsari, Dhanusa, Sarlahi and Rautahat in the east *Tarai*. Similarly, they arrived first to Rupandehi and Kapilbastu, Banke and Bardiya from North India and spread to farther west of Nepal. When they first came to Nepal, land and forests were in abundance in Nepal *Tarai*. So Musahars did not practice intensive agriculture and live a sedentary life. They practiced shifting cultivation and lived a nomadic life. Because of the abundance of lands and forest and their nomadic life style, Musahars did not require to hold lands in their individual names. But slowly and gradually, land became scarce due to government policy of land grants and immigration from India. In the following sections, I have discussed various forms of land grants and immigration from India. I have also discussed the impact of land reform policy of the government on the tenancy rights of the Musahars and other poor peoples.

5.1.1 Birta Land Grants

Birta is a corrupt form of Sanskrit word *vritti* meaning livelihood (Regmi 1976). *Birta* therefore is an assignment of the land by the state in favor of a certain social classes as a means of livelihood. In Nepal, there are certain groups of privileged social classes who by

virtue of their religious tradition and political role do not need to work physically for economic pursuits. Their livelihood depends generally at the cost of agrarian classes who work hard at the agricultural fields and the state takes the primary responsibility for the maintenance of their livelihood. The privileged social classes include the Brahmans, religious teachers, military officers, members of the nobility and the royal family. *Birta* ownership not only insured the stable source of income to the beneficiaries from these privileged classes, it also symbolized their high social and economic status.

Birta system has a long history in Nepal. Historical evidences suggest that various forms of *birta* system, such as religious *birta*, *guthibirta*, *chhapebirta*, *tiruwabirta*, *kushebirta*, existed in Nepal even before the mid-18th century when the country was divided into many petty states (Regmi, 1963). But *birta* system was practiced extensively after the annexation of many petty states into Gorkha kingdom by Prithivi Narayan Shah. There were three-fold objectives of *birta* land grants; earn religious merits, increase economic revenues and consolidate their political powers. Therefore, the Shah rulers made *birta* land grants primarily to the Brahmans, religious teachers, military officers and members of the nobility and the royal family. It was a traditional belief that the land grant in the name of *birta* invoked the blessing of the recipients for the spiritual well-being of the donors (Regmi, 1963). In other words, *birta* land grant to the Brahmans would bring religious merits in their next life. Therefore, *birta* land was not confiscated once it was granted to the Brahmans and religious teachers. In 1356 AD, the King of Dullu who made *birta* grant to Brahmans stated that any person who bequeathed land to the Brahmans would dwell in heaven for 60,000 years, while anyone who confiscated land grants would become a worm living in human excreta for the same period (Regmi, 1976).

The land is a source of income and a symbol of social status. *Birta* land was major source public revenue. *Birta* assignments were a form of revenue generation of the state. It

could enrich both the state and the ruling classes. So the Shah rulers distributed as many lands as they could to certain groups of peoples as a *birta*. *Birta* lands also benefited the recipients. *Birtalands* holders did not cultivate *birta* lands by themselves. Rather they gave *birta* lands to the tenants for cultivation and collected rents from them. The *birta* holders could enjoy unquestioned rights over the *birtalands* for generations. They could sell *birta* land under specified circumstances, increase rents, evict tenants and/or transfer tenancy rights to others.

The main objective of the *birta* land grant was the political consideration. In order to establish a strong foundation of a new political authority, Shah Rulers wanted to win the favour of the Brahmins, Chhetris and members of nobility. *Birta* land grants were an important strategy to withhold their favours. So the Shah rulers made lavish distribution of the *birta* lands to the people from these class and communities. On several occasions, the Shah rulers made *birta* grants to various military officers and other nobilities in appreciation of their assistance to their military campaign. They distributed *birta* lands to various military generals to reward to their services or win over their favours to new authority. In addition, the Shah rulers also granted *birta* lands to those officers, civil servants and the members of the nobility who were loyal to the Shah rulers. In certain cases, land grants were also made to the chieftains and members of the nobility of some of the hill principalities which were annexed in the processes of political unification (Regmi, 1963). Particularly, the rajas of Jumla, Dailekh, Doti and Gsalkot received *birta* land from the Shah rulers who had helped the Shah rulers during their military campaign. Thus, *birta* system constituted the bedrock of the political and administrative system introduced after the political unification of Nepal (Regmi, 1976). But Musahars are not benefited governmental policy due to unclear laws and their ignorance.

The emergence of Rana regime in Nepal in 1846, heralded a new phase in the history of *birta* system in Nepal (Regmi, 1976). After the *kotparba* massacre, the composition of nobility changed fundamentally. So the Rana rulers followed a policy of enriching the new nobility through substantial Birta grants. The Rana rulers also followed a policy to enrich their own family who constituted several new classes. These new classes were the great *birta* land holders during the period of Rana rule. For more than a century of autocracy, Rana rulers, their relatives and well-wishers exploited the *birta* system lavishly. The frequent political friction within the family rules, *birta* lands were also confiscated from those who revolted or tried to revolt against the Rana regime. But in practice, they seldom confiscated the *birta* possession from the Rana family.

Birta land holders enjoyed certain privileges. They were exempted from the payment of land taxes. The *birta* holders were authorized to extract the labour services from the peasant at no cost, as the government authorized them to use the unpaid labour. *Birta* holders were also authorized to discharge the Police and judicial functions. The local people were under the obligation providing their unpaid labour. The *birta* owners were entitled to appropriate not only agricultural rents, but also revenue from non-agricultural sources, such as customs and market duties, judicial fines, and escheats (Regmi, 1976). In this respect, the *birta* holders were not only *land owners*, but also a land like a Manor in England during the middle ages. The state provided legal rights to protect *birta* lands. In return, some kinds of *birta* holders, such as *chhape* and *tiruwabirta* holders were made obligatory to supply men and materials during the time of war and other emergencies. This obligation was manifested during the time of Nepal–Tibet war in 1856 (Regmi, 1963).

As discussed above, *birta land ownership* was of exclusive character. The religion and politics were the determining factors to make the *birta land ownership* exclusive in nature. This means, people only from certain caste and classes were entitled for *birta*

landownership. The state confined *birta* land only to few selective classes and communities. Thus, the most part of *birta* land grant was made to Brahmans, Chhetris and other classes of Indo-Aryan origin (Regmi, 1963). The state excluded indigenous peoples and *Dalits* from their claims to *birta* lands. Only a few Newar elites of Kathmandu valley were successful to receive *birta* lands due to their close connection with the Rana rulers through their participation in the civil services. Brahmans were the largest *birta*-owing classes during the Rana rule in Nepal. Due to religious consideration, their *birta* holdings were not only fairly secure but also steadily expansive. Thus, *birta* was a privileged kind of *land ownership*. It served the social, economic and political interests of the ruling classes in Nepal during the Shah and Rana period (Regmi, 1963). This kind of *land ownership* enabled the Shah and Rana rulers to exploit the land resources of the nation. Therefore, *birta* system is synonymous with inequality and exploitation. It created feudalism and class division in Nepal (Regmi,1976)

5.1.2 Guthi Land Grant

Guthi is another form of land grant by which land endowment is made to the religious institutions and charitable trusts, such as temples, monasteries, schools, hospitals, orphanages and poorhouses, for their establishment or maintenance. *Guthi* is thus an institutional *land ownership* on which the state relinquishes its control. *Guthi* is like a *birta* land tenure system. But the difference is that whereas *birta* system created a privileged class of individuals who extended their support to the regime, *guthi* system helped to satisfy the religious propensities of both the rulers and common people (Regmi, 1963). *Guthi* system is common among the Hindu, Budhist and Mushlim communities in Nepal and India. In Nepal *guthi* system existed even before the Lichchavi period in the 7th century AD. The primary objective of the *guthi* land endowments was to acquire religious merits. *Guthi* land endowments were made to prevent drought, famine, diseases and epidemics and to bring

prosperity in the country. It was also made to propitiate local deities, pacify evil spirits, receive divine power and prolong human life. For these purposes, the Shah rulers made *guthi* land endowments in the name of temples, religious shrines, sacred bulls of the Pashupati areas and sacred money in temple areas. The spiritual motivation of *guthi* endowments has been explained clearly in the *mulukiain* (legal code). Religious acts, such as *guthi* land endowments make the country prosperous and ward off diseases and epidemics. Famine is averted and the country becomes beautiful. Local artisans and craftsmen develop their skills, and poor people are able to maintain themselves by earning wages. In case any person makes a *sadavarta* endowment (regular supply of cooked or raw food to poor people, travelers and mendicants his family obtains spiritual deliverance for seven generations (Tucker, 2019).

Unlike the *birta* land grant which could be made only by the state or the ruling classes, *guthi* and endowments was made by both the members of royal families and the ordinary *land owners*. On the basis of their authorship, there are two major types of *guthi* endowment; the *raj guthi* made by the members of the ruling families and *duniyaguthi* made by the private individuals. Previously, *Raj guthi* was managed by the government and now it is managed by an autonomous body called *guthi* Corporation. But the *duniyaguthi* is managed by the committee of the religious institution and religious trust, schools, hospitals and other respective *guthi* land recipient organizations. On the basis of administrative management, *Raj guthi* endowment has been classified as *amanat* and *chhutguthi*. Whereas the *amanatguthi* system was under the direct control and supervision of the government management, the *chhutguthi* system was managed by the private individuals. *Chhutguthi* lands were transferable and inheritable. During the Rana regime, the surplus lands of *Raj guthi* were assigned to the relatives and favorites of the Rana rulers in the name of *chhutguthi* which enabled them to appropriate the surplus income of the *guthi* lands.

According to Zaman (1973), of the total cultivated land of 1,927,000 hectares, 40,000 hectares of cultivated lands were under *guthi* land tenure system in 1950. Another 70,000 hectares of cultivated *birta* lands were also used as *guthi*. Information about the accurate data of the area and location of *guthi* lands is not available, but it is estimated that approximately 4 percent of the total cultivated land was under *guthi* land tenure system and the majority of the *guthi* land endowment was concentrated in Kathmandu valley and eastern and central *Tarai* districts of Bara, Parsa, Rautaht, Sarlahi, Dhanusa, Siraha, Saptari, Morang and Sunsari. As a center of Hindu temples and Budhist monasteries, the Malla and Shah rulers made substantial amount of land endowments to the *guthi*. Once the east *Tarai* was the domain of the Sen Kings who built many Hindu temples, monasteries and shrines there and made vast tracts of land as endowments to various *guthis*.

Guthi land endowments, once made, cannot be revoked. It is protected by law. Those who try to revoke *guthi* land endowment would be prosecuted by law. The permanence and irrevocability of *guthi* land have major economic implications for the state and the people. *Guthi* land itself is economically unproductive, as it does not produce valuable crops other than paddy and yield substantial amount of revenue to the state. Though the *guthi* is managed by religious institutions, but human agencies like revenue collectors and *guthi* managers are involved in management. So *guthi* revenue collectors and *guthi* managers are the ones who might be benefitted from the income of the *guthi* endowments. *Guthi* land endowment is more concerned to protect and preserve cultural heritage. So its primary focus is on non-material culture rather than material needs of the peoples.

5.1.3 Jagir Land Grant

Jagir is a land assigned as emoluments to the government employees and functionaries for their services rendered to the state. *Jagir* system was commonly practiced in India from where Nepal borrowed even before the unification of Nepal. *Jagir* system in Nepal evolved mainly because of fiscal, administrative and political reasons. By that time, Nepal did not develop monetized and centralized fiscal system. But the state needed to support the rapidly growing administrative and military establishment during the period after the political unification (Regmi, 1963). During that period, land tax from the hill region and Kathmandu valley was collected in kind which created a problem to transport, store and sell. Therefore, instead of assuming the burden of land tax collection directly, the government mitigated such burden by assigning lands to its employees as their emoluments (Regmi, 1963). The expansion of administrative and military recruitments on the one hand, and the lack of cash economy and centralized public finance system on the other, necessitated the government to assign lands to its military and civil service employees under *jagir* system. During the process of unification campaign, the number of military increased steadily. The government even could not assign the limited amount of cultivated lands to them as their emoluments. So the government had to confiscate *birta*, *guthi* and *kipat* lands and assigned them to the military personnel. The government used the waste lands for this purpose as well. This led to an unprecedented expansion of the area covered by *jagir* land-tenure system. (Regmi, 1976).

Jagir land tenure system helped the state to increase the fighting forces of the government during the unification campaign. It also provided the government employees and nobility as well as martial caste and communities to derive economic benefits from territorial expansion of Prithivi Narayan Shah (Regmi, 1963). The land grant also made the government employees free of worries about their family for their food and shelter, as they have now agricultural lands to produce food for their families and homestead to build home

to stay. *Jagir* system also attracted a large influx of western hill peoples, particularly from Gorkha to Kathmandu. Thus *jagir* system constituted a mechanism through which government service was utilized to acquire land. For the government, the *jagir* system served other purposes as well. For instance, *jagir* gants occasionally involved the obligation to supply troops, weapons and military supply whenever required (Regmi, 1963). *Jagir* system was also encouraged to appropriate the resources and promote land reclamation and resettlement in strategic areas where they could establish military base.

Like *birta* grants, *jagir* assignments authorized the beneficiaries to appropriate agricultural rents and other income from the lands covered by the assignments. But unlike the *birta* grants which were inheritable and transferable, *jagirdars* could not enjoy the rights to resume lands for personal residence or cultivation. *Jagir* rights were limited to the individual use of the assignees so long as he remained in the service of the government (Regmi, 1963). *Jagirdars* could sell or mortgagize rents on his *jagir* lands, but *jagirdars* could not sell the land itself. However, the *jagirdars* had the privileges to collect land taxes, custom and market duties, forest revenues, but the centralization of the administrative system gradually limited the *jagirdars* with the rights to collect agricultural rents and not the non-agricultural revenues.

Jagirdars did not collect the rents from the cultivators directly by themselves. For this they received documents called *tiraj* (tax collection certificate) on an annual basis. The *jagirdars* sold his *tirja* to the intermediary person called *dhokres* who were permitted to collect agricultural rents from the cultivators. With the land tax collection certificates, *dhokres* collected agricultural rents from the cultivators in cash rather than in kind. They collected the rent in higher amount than the amount indicated in the *tirja*. They collected the agricultural rents sometimes in advance and sometimes late summer when the cultivators were in a situation of food and financial crisis. So the cultivators could not pay

agricultural rents in time. Those cultivators who could not pay the rents in time, were evicted from the *jagir* land. Therefore, the untimely collection of agricultural rents in cash by the *dhokres* put the agricultural farmers in economic hardship.

After the emergence of Rana regime in 1846 AD, the Rana rulers's paramount goal was to control over the civil and military administration at their hands. This needed highly centralized administrative machinery composed of landholding *jagirdars* who were virtually autonomous feudal lords. These autonomous feudal lords were the major obstacles to the centralization of administration. At the same time, the Rana rulers's primary objectives were to exploit the country's resources for their families and relatives. So they wanted to abolish the *jagir* assignments and replaced the assignment of lands as *jagirs* by the cash-salaries. So they reorganized the land tax collection system by prohibiting the assignment of lands as *jagir*. Chandra Shamsheer abolished the land assignment as *jagir* first in 1923 and then in 1935 in the eastern hill region and Kathmandu valley. Finally, land assignment as *jagir* was abolished after the downfall of Rana regime in 1951 (Regmi, 1976).

5.1.4 Rakam Land Grant

Rakam is a land grant. It is a compulsory and unpaid labourservice from cultivators on *raikar* lands, *raj guthi* lands and *kipat* lands owned by communities other than Limbus (Regmi, 1976). The majority of the cultivators of this category of lands were required to discharge both fiscal and labour obligations in order to retain their landholding rights. This system originated when the state discharged their rights to exact compulsory and unpaid labour from its subjects for public purposes. Thus *rakam* workers were taken into army, employed in amunitions factories or forced to work as porters for the transportation of military supplies, construct or repairs forts, bridges, irrigation cannels, reclaim waste lands, capture wild elephants, supply fuel woods, charcoal, foddors and other materials required

by the royal households. Under this system, which is known as *jhara*, people could be employed without wages in any manner required by the government (Land Act, 2021). They worked for 6 days a month totaling 72 days in a year. But they worked up to 75 days in a year. For their unpaid labour services, they were exempted from the payment of tax due on home stead and they were not evicted from the paddy lands so long as they made the prescribed payments and performed the prescribed labour services (Land Act, 2021). But the *jhara* was for nonrecurring purposes, such as the constructions of roads or repair of bridges. But *rakam* was for recurring purposes to supply regular needs, such as fuel woods or charcoal for the royal or Rana families and the transportation of mail. Under the *rakam* system, the services of inhabitants of particular villages areas were assigned on a regular basis for the performances of labour according to the requirements of the government for which they were given lands were converted into *rakam* tenure (Land Act, 2021).

After the emergence of Rana regime, the *rakam* tenural system underwent considerable changes as a result of technological, administrative and economic development. The use of modernization of Nepal army and the use of machinery no longer needed the *rakam* labour to produce gunpowder. But these changes did not automatically abolish the compulsory *rakam* labour services. Instead, *rakam* services gradually diverted to meet the personal needs of the members of the Rana family (Tucker, 2019). The *rakam* land cultivators continuously supplied fuel wood and charcoal to Rana households and fodder to royal herds. They transported timbers to construct the palaces for the members of the Rana family and their relatives. They were used as porters to transport essential goods during the personal tours and hunting expeditions of the King or Rana Prime Minister (Land Act, 2021).

Rakam system was an extreme form of physical and economic exploitation of the peasants. Under this system, peasants were required to pay double taxes; they paid land taxes in cash or kind and they provided compulsory free labour services. They were

exempted from the payment of land taxes on the homestead, but they required to pay full land taxes on their *rakam* land. Because of the heavy pressure of the taxes, some *rakam* land cultivators relinquished their *rakam* lands. During the Rana regime, the state also did not benefit from the *rakam* tenure. So they tried to abolish the *rakam* system from time to time after the overthrow of Rana regime without success. Finally, this system was abolished in its entirety by the legislation enacted in 1963 AD (Regmi,1976).

5.1.5 Raikar Land Grant

Historically, all public lands belong to the state and owned by the state in Nepal. So state could levy taxes on public land and the land on which state levy taxes is called *raikar*. Raikar land is a large source of revenues for the state. In order to maximize the amount of land revenue, the state encouraged the cultivators to reclaim the waste lands and establish the new settlements. For the state also distributed *raikar* land to various individuals and institutions in the forms of *birta*, *guhti*, *jagir* and *rakam*. In order to levy taxes on *raikar* lands, lands were categorized into *khet* (wet land) and *pakho* (dry land) and taxes were assessed on the arbitrary basis of the amount of land that could be plowed by a pair of oxen. So if a pair of ox plow a land in a day, it was named *hale*, if a pair of an oxen plow a land in half a day, it was named *pate* and land is too small to use the oxen to plow, that was named as *kodale* and taxes were assessed accordingly. The taxes were also assessed on the basis of the amount of seed the cultivators sow in his lands and on the basis of the types of crops they grow. Thus, taxes on wet paddy land were levied little more than the taxes on wheat, maize and millet they grow in dry lands.

There was no uniformity of the kind of taxes. In far western hills, and *Tarai* region, taxes were collected in cash. In Kathmandu valley taxes were paid in the amount of rice. However, taxes on paddy land were collected in cash from everywhere. In order to collect

land taxes, the government appointed tax collectors known as *talukdars* in the hills and *Jimidars* and *Chaudhary* in the *Tarai*. *Jimidars*, *Talukdars* and *Chaudhary* were appointed from the big *land owners* who later became *jamindars* or landlords. They were very rude to the peasants and they did not consider the conditions of peasants even in crisis period. They squeezed the peasants while collecting the land taxes.

Birta and *Jagir* landholders were conferred ascriptive rights of landownership. Therefore, they were able to appropriate rents on their lands, because the state had alienated its sovereign authority of taxation in their favour. Until the middle of the 19th century, a landlord tenant nexus existed almost exclusively on *birta* and *jagir* land. On *raikar* land, a direct relationship between the state and the actual cultivator prevailed in most parts of the country (Land Act, 2021). Therefore, peasants did not have permanent rights on their *raikar* lands. They could pay high amount of rent in terms of kind. The reorganization of central administration and an enactment of new legislation protected the rights of *raikar* land cultivators and prescribed the level of rents permitting them to pay rents in cash. This provided the peasants with the rights to sell their *raikar* lands and progressively reduced the amount of rent they paid. This upgraded the status of cultivators from occupancy to owners of the land.

The political changes of 1951 had far reaching consequences on the nature of *raikar* landownership rights. The interim constitution promulgated in August 1951 declared the right to acquire, use and sell property to be a fundamental one. The 1957 Land Act was the first important legislative measure aimed at upgrading the status of *raikar* land holders (Land Act, 2021). This legislative measure upgraded the status of *raikar* landholders from a mere tenant farmer to real owner. The Act defined registered *raikar* landholder as landowner and mentioned rent receiving rights as an essential aspect of landownership

rights (Land Act, 2021). Thus, the rights on *raikar* land were a progressive development in the land tenure system in Nepal.

However, the emergence of property rights in land and opportunity to acquire such rights through money created a number of problems (Land Act, 2021). It created economic differentiation in the community, cleavage between *land owners* and cultivators. In a situation where landholding rights were circumscribed by the need for subsistence and direct use, the size of holdings was perforce limited by these factors (Regmi,1976) When landholding became a field of monetary investment and a source of income without the obligation to cultivate it personally, the limit of the land size depended only the amount of money. Land, thus, became not a means of subsistence, but a commodity of profit through purchase and sell. Due to alienated character of land after 1951, small farmers could put land as collateral for agricultural loans. When they could not pay back the sum of loan with high interest, they had to relinquish their legal rights on on their landholdings to the money lenders. This often made them landless. Therefore, the rights to *raikar* lands enabled prosperous or wealthy farmers to purchase as much land as they could find from the *raikar* landholders, making them much more prosperous and the small farmers ultimately landless and poor.

5.2 Migration from the Nepal Hills and the Indian Plains

Until 1951, migration of hill people to *Tarai* was in a limited number for two reasons. First, the pressure of population growth on cultivated lands was not critical in the hill region. Therefore, hill people did not require migrating from their places to *Tarai* to reclaim arable lands for their subsistence. Second, hill people were not attracted to reclaim arable land in *Tarai* due to fear of hot and humid climatic conditions as well as the malarial and other communicable diseases. Therefore, government invited and encouraged people from India

to immigrate to Nepal. In order to attract immigrants from India, the government provided them with facilities and concessions. The government provided them with land free of cost for three years and other construction materials for constructing huts. The government also appointed immigrant Indians as *jimidars* (land revenue collectors). Available evidences suggest that the main objective to provide facilities and concessions to the Indian immigrants was to reclaim lands and appropriate resources. But these facilities also accelerated the process of land alienation in Nepal (Regmi, 1976).

Available historical evidences suggest that Nepal's *Tarai* was a hot spot for immigrants from India. For a long time, the land and forest of *Tarai* were not reclaimed. So the immigrants from India came to Nepal's *Tarai* to reclaim lands and supply logs. According to the British civil servants William Kirkpatrick (1811) and Francis Hamilton (1814), the first comers to Nepal *Tarai* from India were plain tribal peoples, such as Tharus, Rajbanshis, Meches and Gangais. The Tharus spread throughout Nepal's *Tarai* from east to west. But Rajbanshis, Meches and Gangais settled in the far eastern *Tarai*. They practiced slash-and burn cultivation, shifting their location every three or four years when the land lost it fertility. Similarly, the first plain caste people to come to Nepal *Tarai* from India were Ahirs (cattle herders from plain India) who came to Nepal to graze their cattle during the dry season. Other early arrivals from India were agricultural farmers from lower caste groups called *Dalits*. Musahars might have followed them to Nepal from India.

After 1951, people from hill region started to migrate to *Tarai*. The population growth, scarcity of arable lands, lack of employment opportunity and economic poverty in the hill region pushed them to migrate either to India or to *Tarai* for the quest of better economic opportunities. The governments made plans for economic development in *Tarai* to settle hill people in Tara. The construction of high way, the eradication of malaria after 1951 and the availability of agricultural lands in relatively cheaper prices attracted hill

people to *Tarai*. Thereafter the flow of migration from hill to *Tarai* steadily uninterruptedly grew each year. One of the remarkable features of migration to *Tarai* is that migrating people from the hill are mostly from the so-called upper caste group, whereas migrating people from the plain or India are mostly from the so called lower caste groups. The upper caste people were educated and assertive in social and political fields. They had (and still have) access to political power and connection with the local level government officials who could influence them for their sympathy or passive support. They have investment capital and thus they could acquire many lands. They penetrated and encroached the *Dalit* and indigenous peoples' areas and put pressure on their land.

After the introduction of *Panchayat* system in 1961, the government planned a resettlement program in east and west *Tarai*. The resettlement program was motivated by the economic and political thrust. Therefore, with the financial and technical support of Israeli and Australian governments, the government of Nepal started a resettlement program first in the central inner *Tarai* first and later in the Banke district of the far western *Tarai* for the *Gurkha* soldiers from the hills who were retired from the Indian and British army services. It is reported that more than 50,000 acres of land were distributed to these retired *Gurkha* soldiers. Later more lands were distributed to the political leaders and supporters of *Panchayat* system under the resettlement program. The compelling reason to distribute lands to *Gurkha* soldiers and resettle them in the border areas of Nepal *Tarai* was justified on security ground, as *Gurkha* soldiers as paramilitary forces could prevent the smuggling and frequent raids from the bandit gangs from India (Gaige, 1975). Distribution of land to political leaders and other hill people was justified on the ground of their loyalty to the *Panchayat* system and their political contribution to the nation.

5.3 Land Reform Program and Its Impact

In order to protect the rights and interests of the agricultural workers, land reform program was soon after the overthrow of Rana regime in 1951. At the outset of the program, the government envisaged that the land reform is primarily an instrument to social justice. Therefore land reform was aimed to ameliorate deteriorating condition of the peasantry and improve their economic condition. Land reform program was urgent, because the disputes between the *jimidars* (landlords) and *mohi* (tenants) were leading to the rise of agricultural revolution in several districts of western *Tarai*. Therefore the government formed a commission and sent them to several districts to study and recommend measures for resolving the landlord-tenant disputes, particularly the unauthorized appropriation of ownership rights of the *jimidars* and the sharing of the crops. The commission recommended a ban should be imposed on the eviction of cultivators, conditions of tenancy should be stipulated, and landowners should issue receipts for rents they paid to them by their tenants (Tucker, 2019). But the recommendations of the commission did not have significant impact on the system of landownership and tenancy (Regmi,1976).

The first major land reform program was initiated in 1957. The objective of the program was to define the relationship between the landlords and tenants without introducing any structural changes in the agrarian system. It tried to grant security of tenure to tenants, regulate the rents and prohibit extra payment of money or labour (Land Act, 2021). But in the absence of implementing agencies at the local level and lack of records of the tenants, the measures remained ineffective. After 1961, land reform was considered crucial to achieve economic and political goal of Panchayat system. Land reform is also necessary to provide agricultural services to the peasants. Therefore, the government introduced a full-fledged land reform program throughout the country in 1964. In order to ensure the equitable distribution of cultivated land, ceilings were imposed on landownership

and tenancy holdings. Tenancy rights were provided to all farmers who were cultivating land during the time of enforcement of the program (Land Act, 2021). The rents were fixed at the rate of 50% maximal. The scheme was first applied on *raikar* land, then on *raj guthi* of the major crops the tenants produced. In addition, efforts were made to mobilize capital by introducing compulsory saving scheme (Land Act, 2021).

During the post 1961, it was realized by the government that the big proportion of cultivated land is owned only by a small number of people, while the majority of the people own small portion of land and therefore, they are exploited and poor cultivators. This was contradictory to both economic development and democratic rule. Therefore, attempts were made to diffuse rights to use land by imposing ceilings on the holdings of both landowners and tenants. Therefore, the Land act of 1964 prescribed that a family (husband-wife and unmarried daughters below thirty five years of age) would be permitted to own not more than 25 *bighas* of land in any parts of the country, in addition to prescribed areas of land for residential purposes in different parts of the country. Land Act also imposed ceiling on tenancy holding in various regions. These ceilings amount to 4 *bighas* of land in *Tarai* and inner *Tarai*, 10 *ropanis* in Kathmandu valley and 20 *ropanis* in the hill region. Tenants were not entitled to own additional land for residential purposes (Tucker, 2019). The surplus land was acquired by the government at the prescribed rate of payment as compensation to the *land owners* for redistribution to the poor and landless tenants. By 1972, the government acquired a total of 50,000 hectares of surplus lands (approximately 3 percent of the total cultivated land) under this program. Only 22,000 hectares of the total land acquired were redistributed to the 10,000 peasant families. The rest of the acquired land could not be redistributed to the peasant families due to technical and administrative problems (Regmi, 1976).

In many respects, land reform was a progressive program of the time. The Land Act of 1964 imposed the ceiling of land holding. It defined tenant as peasants who actually cultivated land obtained from landowners on any condition. The provision of the Act secured the tenancy rights and made tenants as free man (Regmi, 1976). The Act reduced and controlled the amount of agricultural rents payable to the *land owners*. However, the land reform program had many loop holes. Despite the imposition of ceiling on land holdings, land owners were allowed to keep extra land in their residential areas. They transferred the tenancy rights to their family members and relatives. In many places, land owners themselves land cultivators. Large areas of land were cultivated personally by the land owners themselves. Land still became profitable field of investment. So acquisition of lands in excess of prescribed ceiling did not change the nature of the land holding system per se. The Act of 1964 also strengthened the position of land owners as rent receivers without imposing any obligations on them beyond collecting rents after crops are harvested (Tucker, 2019). One of the most unfortunate consequences of the land reform program was the eviction of many tenants' families from land they had been cultivating (Gaije, 1975). This type of transfers resulted in the replacement of tenants by owner-cultivators. Many transfers resulted in the replacement of tenants by laborers' paid on a daily basis without minimal security. The tenants were converted into poor and landless laborers.

The compulsory savings scheme, initiated in 1965 under the land reform program made the farmers discontent against the government. Though the scheme was designed to generate capital reserves for investment in agricultural improvement and small scale industries, most farmers looked upon the scheme as simply another form of taxation. This led to the widespread resentment among farmers particularly in the western *Tarai*. As a result, compulsory saving scheme was stopped in 1969 in Nepal.

The land grant policy of the Shah and Rana rulers and the land reform program of the Panchayat system did not benefit the Musahars people. They did not receive any lands by the Shah and Rana rulers, nor their tenancy rights were secured by the *panchayat*. Rather, Musahars became the most victims of land grant policy and land reform program. They were evicted from the tenancy rights of the land cultivation of the landowners and converted from the tenants into unsecured daily-based agricultural labourers. The conversion from tenants to daily wage agricultural laborers put the Musahars in a dire economic situation. It was very difficult for them to sustain their livelihood. The compelling situation has forced Musahars to adopt various legal and illegal means of their livelihood. As a result, Hindu caste people have given Musahars various types of derogative names, such as great lyres, idle, cheaters, deceivers, stealers, bandits, murderer and so on (Singh,2013). These are constructed images of high caste Hindu people and these images have been social stigma of Musahars.

The conventional economic anthropologists study the economic life of simple society. Their studies focus on the production, distribution, consumption and distributive system of goods and services. Production deals with methods of getting a living, management of land and labour, modes of works and system of payment and rewards. The non-market or preindustrial societies have a kin-based production, need-based distribution and communal or collective ownership of production. Goods or objects of productions are exchanged among kin groups as per the principle of *reciprocity* (Malinowski,1922) or they are presented to the kin groups as an obligatory presentation or *gift* (Mauss, 1967). Productive resources are owned collectively by the community. Individual ownership of productive resources such as land and forests are rarely happens. In case of a need to individual ownership of land or other natural resources under unavoidable circumstances, they are decided by the lineage heads (Herskovits, 1952). Otherwise they are not allowed to

alienate agricultural land or transfer of land ownership is not allowed (Herskovits, 1952). Such societies are affluent and they enjoy a great deal of leisure (Sahlins, 1972).

Contrary to the popular anthropological notions of production, distribution, consumption exchange, reciprocity and affluence described by Malinowski, Herskovits, Mauss, Sahlins and many other early anthropologists, Nepali sociologists and anthropologists as well as other researchers present the linear trend of economic poverty of Musahars of Nepal *Tarai*. According to the Nepali researchers, Musahars produce economic surplus, but they suffer from starvation and deprivation, as all productions are controlled by their landlords. They till lands, but they do not own any lands and other productive resources neither collectively (in the names of their communities or lineages) nor individually. They are *haruwa* (plowmen) and *charuwa* (herders). They exchange their physical labor with their landlords, but not as per the principle of reciprocity. Instead, they provide their labor to their landlords as a one-way obligatory gift without equivalent return. They have no idea of affluence and leisure, but they are long hour working poors. They always struggle hard for their survival.

CHAPTER 6

LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION AND STATE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

This chapter primarily describes with different dimensions of existing livelihood and alternative survival pattern of Musahars community in study area. It also highlights the materialistic culture, power relation and social capital of Musahars.

6.1 Scenario of Livelihood Diversification

Prior to 20th century, agriculture was considered as the prime means of livelihood of all rural households (Saith, 1992). At present, diversification of rural livelihoods has started to dominate the discussion on rural development for the last four decades. The dominant theoretical discourses concerning the origin of the concept of livelihood diversification, its emergence as a major concern in poverty alleviation and the different views of researchers of different lines of thought on the poverty has impact on diversification of livelihood. When rural livelihood of farming people's income source of its own does not provide sufficient means to survive in rural areas, most of the poor households are compelled to depend on a diverse portfolio of activities and income sources for their livelihood. Thus, livelihood diversification is conceptualized as strategies adopted by rural poor to cope with poverty and vulnerability, as the households with poor economic condition necessitate to search alternative livelihood strategies according to time and situation. This type of livelihood strategies of individuals or households are shaped by local or distant institutions, social relations as well as by economic opportunities (Ellis, 2000).

Ellis (2000) further explores the multiple livelihood strategies and makes distinction among diversification by necessity and diversification by choice. He proposes the six determinant factors of diversification, such as seasonality, risk, labor market, credit markets,

assets strategies and coping strategies which support to positive attributes for livelihood security in rural households. He suggests that the maintenance of a diversified portfolio of economic activities can also be understood as more permanent strategies. For instance in order to minimize risk or to maximize the utilization of household labor during agricultural off-seasons, poor households look for diversified options of livelihood. This concept is based on a very empirical approach to the determining conditions and dynamics and the implication of livelihood diversification. Livelihood diversification takes place among the people who mostly rely on land and other natural resources and face the problem of frequent food insecurity. Therefore, their primary focus is to find diversified sources of income and financial support. Bennett (2010) has further explored the dimension of determinants of livelihood diversification and its relationships between livelihood diversification and poverty, agricultural productivity, gender, environmental sustainability, macro-policy and reform agenda.

Livelihood diversification is a strategy and a norm in developing countries. Ellis (2000) has said, "The diversity of rural livelihood in low income developing countries is receiving increased attention in discussion about rural poverty reduction. Very few people or households derive all their income from a single source, whereas more people derived their income from multiple sources. It is a fact that people derive to accumulate their income from multiplicity of sources or they shift the area of resource accumulation from farm to non- farm activities. In other words, livelihood diversification has increasingly turned towards non-farm activities as a source of income and employment. It is a worldwide phenomenon. The available statistics show that non-farm activities have been found between 35 to 50 percent of rural incomes in sub- Sahara Africa and Southern Africa (Reardon, 1997). In Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 80-90 percent households derive 15 percent of their income from off-farm activities and labour works in the Gulf (Ellis, 2000). Research conducted around the world has revealed that livelihood diversification is wide

spread and it is found in all locations as well as across farm sizes and range of income and wealth. Diverse array of livelihood activities in order to generate income from wide range of sources such as farm, off-farm and non-farm activities are found worldwide. Livelihood diversification is often understood as a form of self-insurance through which people seek activities and income streams with different degrees of risk, expected returns, liquidity and seasonality (Ellis, 2000).

The poverty level is a key criterion in the assessment of livelihoods. Poverty has most commonly been assessed against income or consumption criteria. In this context, a person is poor only if his/her income level is below the defined poverty line, or if consumption rate falls below a stipulated minimum (Farrington et al. 1999). Assets are much important entry point of poverty analysis. This argument considers that the livelihood is stronger at micro-level that focuses on poor people's assets and capabilities shaping their strategies to react risk and opportunities in a local context. Dissatisfaction with the income/consumption model gives rise to basic needs perspective which goes far beyond income, and includes the need for basic health and education, clean water and other services which are required to prevent people from falling into poverty. More recently, poverty has been defined in terms of the absence of capabilities not only to meet their basic needs, but also to achieve goals of participating in the community life and influencing decision making against dissatisfaction and motivating them to diversification strategies (Farrington et al. 1999). The situation of poverty and vulnerability of assets perceiving by poor Musahars and pressure them to diversification of livelihoods.

Analyzing the livelihood status of Musahars from this perspective, let me examine the early form of livelihood of Musahars and their shift to diversification of livelihood. In the past, land was the fundamental resource not only as economic assets, but as an essential element in the formation of their individual and group identity. Historically, their livelihood strategies of the Musahars were closely attached to land and land-based manual labor

service (soil cutting, digging in garbage land, pond construction, repairing canal, soil carrying etc.). Women were also engaged in harvesting, threshing, winnowing and grain storing activities (Chaudhary, 2008; Patel, 2008). However, they did not own and register lands in their names. Lands were in abundance and they used without restriction. After the land grant policy of the Shah and Rana rulers, lands were accumulated and controlled by the *jamindars* and *jagirdars*. This converted them from free and independent land cultivators to tenants and bonded labourers as *haruwa-charuwa*. The introduction of land reform policy of panchayat government, the tenancy rights of Musahars was evicted and the independent land cultivators and tenants turned progressively into landless laborers. Still at present, more than 90% of the Musahars are landless (*Sukumbasi*) and wage laborers in study area.

Landlord or landlordism was a powerful institutional practice in the eastern Terai. In the past, some Musahars used to own a small plot of land. All of them were not landless. But, before introduction of Land Reform Act 2021 B.S., the rich *Jamindars* had already encroached their land. Musahars sold their lands to the rich *jamindars* either to support for household expenses or to pay government tax. Thus all agricultural lands in this VDC (now part of metropolitan city) were controlled by limited number of landlords who enjoyed the privileges of landlordism and exercised power over the territory. I estimated that each landlord owned more than 200 hectare (300 Bigha) of land in the past. But they did not cultivate the lands by themselves. Their lands were cultivated by bonded *haliorharuwa* (plowmen). For that they needed as many *haliorharuwa* as they could find for the cultivation of their lands. Similarly, landlords required 15 to 20 pairs of bullocks and parallel numbers of plowmen to plow lands. Landlords also maintained other animals like Cows, Buffalos and Goats for their household. In order to raise a large number of animals and birds landlords required *gothala* or *charuwa* (herders). Certainly Musahars were among many other marginalized communities to work as *haruwa-charuwa* for the landlords. Usually, the adult male folks worked as *haruwa-charuwa*

and their wives and young children did other household works. The landlords paid their workers in kind or they allocated a piece of land to cultivate for their livelihood. It was established pattern of labour work and their payment. Thus land and landlords were the secure sources of livelihood of Musahars for a long time in eastern *Tarai* in general and Baijanathpur area in particular. With the exception of agricultural labor, *terai* has not been able to offer any other opportunities of livelihood for poor people since the long past. Government does not have any kind of encouraging policies and programs to raise alternative job opportunity in local level apart from agricultural sector. Contrasting to the government responsibility, land and landlord are at the center of livelihood for poor people.

The people of *Tarai* region including Musahar called Madhesi people are the actual inhabitant of this plain region of the country. Before the history of the Prithvinarayan Shah these people lived in Rautahat, Bara, Parsa and some part of district Sitamarhi land is the state Kanatta and the king of this state was Sebai Singh whose capital was Simrourgadha now in Bara district of Nepal. During the period of unification Prithvinarayan won this land. From that period this part of *Tarai* is governed by Nepali king. After the eradication of Malaria from *Tarai* the king's kinsmen (king's representatives) were *Tarai* as landlords. At the time most of the lands belonged to the actual owner. After the occupation of *Tarai* by king's kinsmen the land belonged to them. They appropriated high amount of land taxes. At the same time Musahars suffered from feminine. Therefore, they could not pay land tax to kinsman or government. One respondent said that his forefather was punished by the kinsman; he had fallen in a gutter which was full of leech. He died during this punishment. The one who could not pay land tax gave his land to the kinsmen of the king to escape from punishment. The appropriation of land taxes made the poor people landless. The most victims of this process were Musahars and other *Dalits* people who were depending upon land. From that period of time Musahar became landless. Since then, the parents of

Musahars do not have land, so as their children. This is one of the most important causes of landlessness of the *Tarai Dalits* like Musahar.

Gaige (1975) has written that after the eradication of malaria from the *Tarai*, the king's kin families were seen very active to register the *Tarai*-plain lands in their own home. After that time the plain dwellers or the real consumers of the land fell in shade. They were treated as slave by the new pseudo owners of the land. The ones who knew the Nepali language, got the land in their own home, but most of the plain dwellers became landless. With the change of the time, administrators of local government changed. The change in the administrative system gave opportunities for the powerful plain dwellers to get land in their own home. But the Musahars who were fully dependent upon physical labor could not get land. Musahar were getting their wage in a very little amount. They spend their all wages in the everyday livelihood. They couldn't save their wage for future. It is better to say that a Musahar family never gets enough money/grain in which all their family members can survive the whole year. Therefore, they had a big debt with big amount of interest in their whole life. They were not able to clear the given debt in one or same year and in the next year they again needed extra debt for their survival. The interests were up in a very big amount. So the Musahar never paid the debt in their life and they died leaving the burden of debt to their children. Therefore, after the death of the father, the son inherited the debt and if he could not clear the debt, it was further transferred to his children. In this way, the chain of debt goes from one generation to the next. Musahar born in debt and die in debt. This is the situation of Musahars' economic life.

6.2 Haruwa-Charuwa and Forced Labor

Haruwa-charuwa is a secured form of livelihood. *Haruwas* are persons who ploughed land for landlords in exchange of either land or annual payment in cash or kinds or

to pay the debt. They are often males, not the females. *Haruwas* are usually adult members, especially head of the household. *Haruwa-Charuwa* and *Kodarwa* are the local terms in central and eastern *Tarai* in Nepal to denote a type of agriculture labor. They are employed by a landlord for ploughing, and digging lands and herding the cattle. *Charuwas* are those who are mainly employed for herding of cattle. 'High caste', middle and rich landowners are the employers of *Haruwa-Charuwa*. With the exception of a few cases, *haruwa-charuwa* are employed mainly by the landowners. *Haruwa* are agricultural laborers, but it is quite different from a free labor in agriculture. In the latter system, a person works for wages in his or her will to satisfy his or her needs and can leave at anytime whenever the worker gets better opportunity. In case of *haruwa*, they have *laguwa* (an oral or written contract agreement) that binds the workers to work at least for a certain period of time in the agricultural farms of the landlords.

Once a worker does *laguwa* with a landlord, he is obliged to work in the landlord's land till the work is not completed. His family members are also sometimes compelled to work for landlord. The *laguwa* system is the same for other types of labor, such as *charuwa* and *kodarwa* as well. *Charuwa* is a person who herds cattle for landlords. *Charuwa* can be children, women, old aged people or physically weak adult men who cannot work as *haruwa* or *kodarwa*. *Charuwa* are often the sons or widows of the *haruwa*. A *charuwa* can work for a single landlord or he can be employed by four or five landlords. *Charuwa* mostly live in landlord's house and are equivalent to domestic servants. A survey held by ILO (2009) in 12 districts (seven district from central and eastern *Tarai* and five district from far western hills) revealed that 11 percent of the total 0.55 million households which borrowed money as loan are affected as forced labor. Similarly, a total of 143,000 or nearly 9 per cent of the estimated working adults of 1.6 million are in forced labor. Ten per cent of the adult males, 5 per cent adult females and one-fourth of the *Tarai Dalits* are in forced labor. Of the

estimated 90 thousand working children, one-third constitute for forced labor with 30 per cent in the *Tarai* and 4 per cent in the far-west hills. Proportionally, more girls over boys and children in the age range of 10-14 years over any other group of children are in forced labor. Among the social groups, *Tarai Dalits* contribute 17 per cent of the total working children in forced labor alone. Incidence of loan is nearly universal in the households of target group and households affected by forced labor (more than 80%). The incidence is 55 per cent in the households of control group not affected by forced labor. Proportionally, more number of households affected by forced labor has loans for longer duration and the main source of loan is the informal institution.

The loan is mainly used for daily household consumption not for investment by households which are more affected by forced labor. Four inferences can be made by looking at the prevailing occupational patterns and sector of employment of adult workers. First, the incidence of forced labor prevails across the economic activities except in some professional activities. Second, despite incidence of forced labor across the economic activities, persons working in some occupations like *haruwa-charuwa* and *haliya* (same like *haruwa*) have high incidence of forced labor. More than one-half of the forced laborers are engaged in *haruwa-charuwa* and *haliya* and another some numbers in elementary occupations.

The patterns of mode of payment seem to be exploitative among forced labor vis-à-vis free labor. While more than two-thirds of free laborers have been working on daily basis, the major modes of payment for the forced laborers are annual wages in kinds, granting a piece of land, working in lieu of interest reduction including for food. Despite the low wages across the laborers, the monthly earning among those who were paid on daily/weekly/monthly basis of the forced laborers is considerably lower than that of free laborers. More than two-thirds of the free laborers have monthly income of Rs. 2,000 and

above against only about one-third of forced labor. Denial of labor rights is much persistent among the forced laborers compared to the free laborers.

There is relatively higher proportion of forced labor whose payment is delayed (14% vs. 11%), wages have been deducted (4% vs. 0.4%) and wages have not been paid at all (1.4% vs. 0.8%) compared to that of free laborers. Further, more than one-fifth of the forced laborers have been compelled to work during their serious sickness/injury. Similarly, impact of parental situation in forced labor (households affected by forced labor) on children's education and health has been evident clearly. Thirty nine per cent of children from the households affected by forced labor miss school against 16 per cent for households not affected by forced labor. Children from *haruwa* and *haliya* families have low school participation rates, e.g., enrolment, regularity and achievement. Household poverty including the employers' coercion is the major reason that children miss school in case of households affected by forced labor while for households not affected by forced labor, it is parents' lack of awareness on the long-term advantage of education. With low school participation rate of children, discrimination, rampant household poverty and persistently strong patron-client relations patron being landowner and client being *haruwa* and *haliya*, the reproduction of *haruwa* and *haliya* has been continuing generation by generation. According to a survey held by ILO (2009), overall one-third of the *haruwa-charuwa* households have residence arrangement other than own land or house, 37 percent households are landless, and another 40 per cent are nearly landless. Further, *haruwa-charuwa* households' members lack livelihood skills (2% of households' members received skill oriented training) and they have also low participation in development and social activities (only 8% households' members are involved). Illiteracy is persistently high especially among female. Some of the studies undertaken by Dahal et al. (2002), Bhattachan et al. (2009) and ILO (2005) state that Dalits are synonymous to landlessness and this

problem is concentrated and also acute in the case of Madheshi *Dalits* such as Mushhar, Dom, Dushadh, Chamar, Bantar, etc. Similarly, Badal Commission Report (1996) also focuses on landlessness of Madheshi *Dalits* in *Tarai*. Jha (1998) claims all the sampled households owned 4 of less Katthas (0.13 ha) of land in Saptari district which was insufficient to meet a month's food supply. According to the NDC (2005), a study of six *Tarai* Districts showed that 53 percent of the *Dalits* landlessness is more acute in *Tarai* (70-80 percent) than in the hills (10 percent) and similar was the condition of food sufficiency. But, this study reveals that only one fourth Madheshi *Dalits* are involved in attached labour such as *haruwa-charuwa* in the local level. In addition, I found that more than 80 percent of respondents are landless in study area. Most of the backward Madheshi *Dalits* such as Dom, Musahar, and Chamar etc. are associated with this category.

The individuals who have registered land also are compelled to engage in labor of landlords and others because they have very few land just for their habitants. But the development of carpet factories where the great number of workers is employed and bulk of their wages are paid has attracted the poor and landless people to shift from land to carpet sectors. Moreover, the introduction of tractors for plugging from the early 1980s and upward mobility trend from farm labor to off farm labor has resulted in the decline of *haruwa-charuwa* system in the *Tarai*.

6.3 Grain Collection

Collection of paddy grains after the harvest is a supplementary job of Musahars. During the time of threshing the paddy (*katani*), Musahar used to broom the left grain in the field or dug the hole of rat in which the grains were deposited by rats. One of the key informants informed how their livelihood was in the past:

We Musahars dig the hole and catch the rats and collect all the grains which are kept by rats. But the use of pesticide has killed a huge numbers of rats. Therefore, those parts of grains are also unavailable for the Musahars. Landlords use oxen and calf for threshing the paddy. After threshing the grains the landlords or the owner of the grains collect all grains from the threshing ground to their home. But some grains are left in the threshing ground mixed up with the urine of oxen. Musahars used to collect those types of grain. In the past, the bundles of paddy are left in the threshing ground for 4 to 5 months. But nowadays the *Harramma* (threshing machines) have come in the villages. The machines thresh the bundles of paddy in a day. The machine has replaced the labor of Musahars. Because of the machines, Musahars have lost the chance to broom and collect the leftover grains from the threshing grounds.

Based on the description above It can be said that livelihood strategies and outcomes are not just dependent on access to capital assets or constraints by the vulnerability context. They are also transformed by the environment of structures and processes.

6.4 Poverty and Lack of Regular Income Sources

Musahars are marginal *Tarai Dalit*. They are victims of strikes, *bandas* and other protest programs of the workers, students and political parties. They do not have accesses to any kind of government employment opportunities. Their sole basis of the source of income is physical work. They earn grains and some money from physical labor only in the fixed season. According to my Musahar and non-Musahar respondents, they work only for 5 - 7 months in a year. In other months, they cannot work due to shutdown of markets, industries and shops. The usual working months also decrease often due to general strikes of workers and Nepal banda program of the students and political parties. The most victim of the Banda are the most exploited groups like Musahars who sell their physical labor for livelihood. Therefore, a huge number of young Musahar male persons go to India for additional income. They spend 3 months in India where they are easily cheated by Indians and other clever people. On their return to their homes from India, they are cheated by bandit groups and robbers in the train. Sometimes they fall injured by them. SitabiMajhiMusahar, (37 years) said that 5 years ago when he was coming by train from the Punjab (India) to Nepal, he had ten thousands and six hundred I.C. rupees which were earned by wage labor in 4 months. In the train he felt thirsty; he wanted to go to drink water at a station, but a stranger, who was travelling together with him in the same train, told him not to go for water, because he had water for him. He gave water to drink. He drank the water from unfamiliar or stranger after that, he fell into deep sleep. When he felt weak, he found himself ruined. His all money was robbed by the robbers. Some Musahars work as Palanquin carrier, during marriage ceremony. From this service they earned 4 to 7 thousands in a year. It happened only during the marriage season. But nowadays the importance of palanquins is also decreasing day by day due to modernization. People use motors, cars, jeep in the marriage procession.

6.5 The Present Status of Livelihood

Musahars have adopted multiple resource trapping strategies for their survival. Earth work, agricultural labor and digging ponds are considered their traditional livelihood occupations. Fishing, earth work. Firewood selling, animal husbandry (cow, goats and ducks), rickshaw pulling, brick factory labor, transportation labor, *haruwa-charuwa* and seasonal labormigration to India are the major livelihood strategies of Musahars. They have also *haruwa-charuwa* relationships, a kind of patron-client economic relationships with the *jamindars* or landlords and money lenders. But these types of relationships are not based on the principle of reciprocity. Their patron-client relationships havewakened their face to face bargaining power with their landlords or money lenders (Gurung et al. 2014) as they are shy and timid in front of their masters. They are unequal, as the Musahars are not able to bargain The reciprocity of economic relations is unequal. The adaptation of new agricultural technology such as tractors and plow, harvesting and thrashing machines have displaced the human labors and bullocks.

The collection of firewood's from the public forests and their sale to the weekly markets called *hatiya* are no longer in practice, as the public forest management committees do not allow Musahars to collectwoods from the public forests and sell to the *hatiyas*. So labor migration in India has been popular among the Musahars for their livelihood.

6.6 Material Assets

Musahars have no abundant material properties. They lack productive assets such as land and livestock and house. They live in a marginal lands and erecting small huts supported by bamboo poles, thatched with straw and thatched with either straw or plastic or poor quality iron sheets.

All Musahars do not own their home. Only 25% of the Musahars own their houses in their names. Only 1.3% Musahars have access to improved houses. Since many of the Musahars do not own houses in their land, they do not have citizenship certificates. Because they do not hold citizenship certificates, have no access to public service opportunities, and land. Therefore citizenship certificates have a symbiotic relationships. Musahar houses are unhealthy and unhygienic from modern health and environmental perspectives. Improved toilets (flushed toilets) are indicators of improved sanitation, hygiene, health and environment (Gurung, et.al 2014). But all Musahars households do not have access to improved toilets. Some households use pit latrines. But many of them use open field for urination and defecation which are unhygienic and unhealthy. Piped water, tube well and covered wells (protected water) are considered safe sources of drinking water in the *Tarai*. Only 75.7% Musahars have access to these types of safe drinking water. They use animal dung cakes and fire woods for cooking and heating. None of the studied households have access to clean energy for cooking and heating. Households with access to electricity is 34.2 percent and access to television is 9.9 percent. However, 49.3% of the Musahrs households have access to mobile phone. This indicates the fast development of communication and its massive use.

6.7 Other Options of Livelihood.

The distribution of lands in various forms, such as *guthi* and *jagir*, the land reform program, the introduction and application of new agricultural technology, eradication of malaria and rapid growth of *Tarai* population as a result of migration exerted great pressure to the agricultural lands in *Tarai* and thereby the economic life of Musahars and other poor and marginalized people. The interdependency of Musahars on lands and landlords for their livelihood was interrupted after the eviction of their tenancy rights. Their *haruwa-charuwa* relations was broken due to introduction of new technologies in agriculture system such as tractors and other agricultural harvesting and threshing machines. As a result of all these factors progressively converted Musahars from tenants, share croppers and agricultural laborersto poorest people. Musahrs were then forced to look after other economic opportunities for their livelihood.The new livelihood strategies includes the sale of vegetables and firewood in *hatiyabazaars*, labor work in brick kilns, migration to India and scavenging became new sources of their livelihood.

Birtanagar as a commercial city offers many job opportunities for its peoples. There are also government job opportunities for educated people. But Musahars and other *Dalit* people do not have access to these opportunities. Many studies show that Musahars do not have access to community services. They are not represented in the user groups. The lack of their representation in the community forest user groups affect their access to forests and the sale of firewood in *hatiyas*. They do not have access to government job. They do not have access to financial institutions. So they cannot get financial support from these institutions to start new enterprises. So only option oftheir livelihood is their physical labor. This study shows that more than 82% of Musahars depend upon their labor as main source of livelihood. There are various structural barriers that restrict their access to new economic opportunities of livelihood. The major structural barriers are discussed below:

6.7.1 Problem of Citizenship Certificate

Musahars look like stateless people. They migrated long time back from India and reside now in Nepal. But they have not been recognized as the citizens of Nepal, because most of them do not have citizenship certificate. Citizenship bestows the right to participate in the governing process. It grants access to power. It is a symbol of legitimacy for people living within their national territorial boundaries. Citizenship is a bond between the individuals and the government of a nation and, therefore, important for national integration (Gaige, 1975). Many of them understood that citizenship cards are necessary only for selling and purchasing lands. Since they are landless people, they did not try to get the citizenship certificates, as they do not hold *land ownership* to sell and no money to buy new lands. Now they know the value of citizenship certificates. But they cannot get them so easily. Due to lack of citizenship, blinds, handicaps, single women and elderly people are not receiving social security benefits from the government. They also cannot get government jobs without citizenship certificates. They cannot vote and they cannot get elected for any positions. They are unable to register child birth and get certificates of their children and in the absence of birth certificates; they are unable to take admission in school for their children.

6.7.2 Education

It is commonly believed that education provides greater possibilities of livelihood. Many sociological studies show a close connection between education and occupational advancement and opportunities for social mobility (Barber, 1957; Coxon & Jones, 1975). Education is backbone of human development but the Musahars community is deprived of education. The uneducated people do not get job in the market. When they do not get job and cannot meet the daily needs of their households, they are forced to go to the extent of

committing crime and violence. Unemployment results in getting less nutritious food materials, and continuously their health becomes so weak and poor that they don't like to participate in any social activities and a sense of self-humiliation grows in them. They face economic poverty, human deficiency and psychological depression. They don't get even loan to improve their social status because they don't have land as collateral to be kept in the financial credit office. And ultimately they are bound to involve in low earning profession and survive in poor living standard and ill health.

Education opens the door of opportunities. It is one of the major indicators to measure the status of development. According to the CBS 2011, literacy rate of Hill dalits (6 years and above). There are only 72.4 percent (82.3 male and 62.8 female) and *Taraidalit* is 49 percent (59.8% male and 36.7 % female) in 2011. But the literacy rate of Musahar and 21% (26.8% male and 13.4% female) in 2011. It is far less than the average literacy rate of Nepal (65%). The literacy rate of Musahars was only 7.3% (9.8% and 3.8% female) in 2001. Though the literacy rate of the Musahars have increased trebled from 7% in 2001 to 21% in 2011 over the last 11 years, there are only 3 students to complete SLC and one student being studied at the Bachelor level (CBS, 2011) .

The low level of literacy rate among the Musahars is associated with social, cultural and economic factors. Until recent decades, education was parted only to the so called high caste Hindu hill and *Madhesi Bahuns* and *Chhetris*. Musahars as *Dalits* were not allowed to go to schools to educate their children. If ventured by some *dalits*, they were punished by law. Languages are another factor to restrict Musahars from their access to education. Musahars speak their own language called *theti*. It is a corrupt form of Maithili language.

Musahars do not understand other languages. But the medium of education in Nepal is *Khasa Nepali* which the Musahars cannot read and write. So they do not prefer to

go to school, as Musahar students cannot communicate with their teachers in *Khasa Nepali* language. By far the biggest problem of Musahars for their education is economic poverty. As said earlier in many places, Musahars are the poorest people of the country. They cannot afford education to their children. Though the basic education is free for all in Nepal, Musahars cannot send their children to school due to lack of educational expenses. They need to pay for snacks, school uniform and stationary. More importantly, school going age children need to assist their parents in domestic works, such as taking care of their siblings, looking after their cattle and working with their parents as wage laborers. So (economic) poverty has been a great obstacle for education to Musahars. As a result, "education for all" policy and program of the government has been futile for Musahars children.

6.7.3 Caste System and Musahars

Caste is a social structure based on the *Varna* system of Hindu religion. It divides the Hindu society into hierarchical strata and divides them into ritually pure and impure. Caste also prescribes the roles and status of Hindu communities. As *dalits*, Musahars fall at the lowest strata of the hierarchical segment and they are considered ritually impure. As per the division of works, they are supposed to do cleaning, digging, leather working which pollute high caste Hindus. Although caste system is already abolished legally, it still persists in ideology and practices. So caste system kills the capabilities restricts them from their access to social opportunities As Musahars are categorized as dalits have no access to public and religious places and private houses. They have no access to government jobs. Musahars are looked down or down-trodden people.

Relatively, *Tarai Dalits* have easy physical access to government health services due to short walking distance (up to 30 minutes walking distance) which might not be possible in the hill dalits, 61% of the Musahars still experience discrimination in health services as a result of their caste status. Similarly, discrimination for Musahars exists in public services. In addition to the caste related factors, language is additional barrier for job opportunity in the government services. Musahars do not have access to Nepali language. They speak their own language which is not accepted by the employers for offering government job. So proficiency in Nepali language is a prerequisite for job opportunity. Musahars have lost job opportunity due to their inability to speak Nepali languages.

6.7.4 Political Power Relations

Political power relations is most decisive factor to influence overall aspects of human lives. Without political power relations, human beings are most deprived and denied of the basic political freedom and civic rights. Political freedom and civil rights expand the

peoples' capabilities and provides for opportunities for participation and representation in decision making processes. Exclusion from the process of governance and political participation is indeed an impoverishment of human lives. If you look at the political life of Musahars from this perspective, Musahars are the most powerless peoples. They do not have any political power. With the exception of the political election time, Musahars are no one's people. They are left politically unattended. In order to examine the status of social inclusion, Lynn Bennett and Dilip Parajuli (2013) measured the social, economic, political indices of 80 caste/ethnic groups of Nepal and they found Musahars, along with other *Tarai Dalits*, politically non participatory and non-representative. Further to their studies, the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Tribhuvan University conducted a social Inclusion Survey Study of 97 social groups to examine the nature, extent and causes of their social exclusion and to identify ways for promoting social inclusion (Gurung, 2019). The survey study report prepared by Gurung, et al. (2014) revealed the similar situation of Musahars and other *Tarai Dalits*. Similarly, the analysis of 2011 census report made by Das et al. (2014) also found the same condition of Musahars and other *Tarai Dalits*. From the analysis of their report, it has been found that Musahars do have no representation in the major political parties is none nor are they have representation in the Council of Minister and in national bureaucracy. Without political representations, they are voiceless people. Their voices are not heard. They are shy and submissive and they cannot make any claims to the political parties and the government. They also cannot put their demands and raise grievances. On the contrary, we look at the vote casting pattern of Nepali people in last election of the federal parliament, 96 percent of the Musahars have cast their votes. This means Musahars are only the vote bank of political parties and their leaders.

Musahars are politically not aware. They do not have minimal level of political/social awareness on current political/public issues. They do not have knowledge about federalism

and proportional representation. They do not know about social inclusion and reservation system. They have no opportunities to participate in right-based social organizations including NGOs and INGOs. They have not much idea about right-based movement. However, since 2000 they have started to get organized themselves for various social and cultural organizations of their own. In March 2010, the Musahars of all Nepal *Tarai* organized the first national conference in Lahan to set agendas of their reorganization and constitutional inclusion (Giri, 2018). They organized a rally of thousands of Musahar participants from Siraha, Saptari, Dhanusa, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Bara, Parsa, Morang and Sunsari with play cards to end economic exploitation, political domination, social marginalization and cultural discrimination. They demanded their cultural rights and a new cultural and social identity of indigenous peoples, as many of their social and cultural attributes resemble to indigenous people. For that they invited Indigenous leader Om Gurung, then General Secretary of Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and political leader Giriraj Mani Pokharel from Kathmandu as their special guests (See Giri 2018 for details). These two leaders oriented them about their socio-political and constitutional rights. Since then Musahars have been very assertive to their cultural and political rights. They are now active in their community organizations, such as Nepal Rishikul Saday Kalyan Samaj, Nepal Musahar Utthan Sangh, Sabir Sankalp Samaj and Mushahar Saday Sammittee and have started to participate in their community organizations and organize social awareness campaign.

CHAPTER 7

LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION OF MUSAHARS

This chapter narrates qualitative data and respondents and key informant's views. In this part, I have highlighted migration women engagements, food supply situation and transformation of occupation etc. Some life history and ethnography of Musahar's also have been included in this chapter.

7.1 Present Situation of Livelihood of Musahar in Baijanathpur

Musahar people have a long history of reside in Baijanathpur, Morang. They are landless laborers who have not own land for household settlement. Musahars traditionally are reluctant characteristics. They work hard and collect around 500 to 700 Rs. daily remuneration. When Musahar finishes his work and returns home, they enter into wine-shop and mostly finish their earning, how much it remains it takes a kilo of rice and come back home? The next morning he takes a moldy rice and go to work place. When it is going to evening, you can see a Musahars celebration in wine shop and thunder among them about future plan for making more money. He does not have any trouble when he is in celebration with liquor, but when he is free from intoxication; have no rice in his pot. Most of the Musahars in Baijanathpur are carefree when they do not finish their's earning in wine drinking, they have not any regret to finish their income. This is the inherent character of Musahar which is not corrected still.

In the study area (Baijanathpur), Musahars have lived here since a long past. Some Musahars said they spent 3 to 4 generations. Shubu Rishidev (one of the Musahars) informant angrily disguises the statement that 'Rajbanshi landlord borrowed them to cultivate sugarcane'. Some Musahars have a tenancy land but they have no power to

register in their name because they have neither money nor citizenship. Most of them are terrified by government and other elites. Local landlords dominate them. They are deprived of many rights. Local landlord argued that they all are Indian, come from India thus have no right to enjoy here. They are always disagreeing to accept Musahar as native people and belong to this area. Local Musahar said they cannot pay the tax of land due to poverty so the throw away from land. In contrast to it, an old local Tharu people argued that they came here to cultivate land. They have no own land to cultivate but have some tenant rights. When landlord sell their land or distribute among brothers, Musahar have also disappointed from their tenant rights and slowly they become detached to farm working, otherwise all the Musahar family have been engaged in agriculture activities mostly as *haruwa* labors, some are tenant/sharecropper, and some are free labors. Musahars are historically drunkards. They have no tension about future. One respondent said about their poverty that "if both legs are weak, how people could stand strongly" so Musahar have no strong structure, they have lack of economic and other resources to sustain livelihoods. Regarding the relation between Musahar and landlord have dual accepted wisdom. On the one hand some support them with the sympathy for Musahar for their living on the other hand some argue against the landlord like abuse (*gaali*) and nuisance (*sarapnu*) due to exploitation and oppression behavior upon Musahar whenever they suffer.

One of the child education teachers argued that most of the education materials provided by government and support by NGOs albeit they do not send children in child club center to read. The parents worry about wage works. When child have above 10-12 years they drop out from school and go to wage earning. Parents have no concern regarding the future sustain and gainful livelihood opportunity. Musahar children also leave school when it is far reaching home and parents do not take seriously for this matter and say "what to do for reading study". We are *dalits* to stay in *dalitism*.

The cultural practice of Musahar is unique and reciprocal to Indian citizen in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Most of the Madhesi in general as well as Musahar in particular support this system of "*roti beti relation*". Most of Musahars get their daughters married with Indian boys and son married with Indian girls. In several years of relation and up and down to India and Nepal, the Indian married daughter and other blood and kin family migrate to (Baijanathpur) Nepal in search of safe shelter and better livelihoods.

This is an account of the formation and expansion of local Musahar settlement in local place who share common resources of the local native kin as well as government and public resources. This process is ongoing and continual since a long historical period regarding to open border as low level of social security in Border state of India to emerge as new local relation. The triangulate interaction among native local Tharu, hill migrated and new comers of Indian migrant shape a conglomeration locality, where antagonist relationship with high caste landlords and reciprocal with *Dalits* have practiced. It is challenge to those *Dalit* academician, activist and leaders who are suppose to be the high caste exploitation of landless to *Dalits*. I do not agree to their arguments which they propagate in public forum that the high caste people exclude them to land rights. I claim that this ideology is not equally applicable to all *Dalits* in Nepal particularly to the *Tarai Dalits*. Regarding this fact the landless problem is not resolved in *Tarai*, but is increasing day after day. Musahar strong physical build and the nature of their traditional occupation have close connection. Where the hard physical work is required, they are almost instantly remembered and their labor force is used. The fast occurring changes in intercommunity relationship and occupation have not affected their life or nature of their work. They continue sticking to their work as manual labors.

There is unemployment and underemployment in the Baijanathpur village. Musahars are landless and unskilled labor. Physical strength is their sole sources of

livelihood. They have never been large land owners. They have received in kind or cash which earned their daily bread. Their ancestors were agricultural labours, their parents lived the same life and they know very well that their children would live and die as labours working in others field and others from generation to generation, the tragic and unfinished story of Musahar.

Though main economic activities of Musahar in study area (Baijanathpur) are farm and agriculture, it is supplemented by trade, animal husbandry and wage earning. They are also engaged in other activities such as crafting, fishing and digging mud. In household, female members are engaged in works such as making the Chatai, Dhakki (bamboo baskets) etc. They sell some of the goods in the market and use some for themselves in their households. Beside this, some male members migrate to the Panjab (India) and Kathmandu for employment in agriculture-off seasons. Usually they do hard work such as plugging or going to the forest and cutting wood. Even they migrate to city for employment, they only get chance to get work as manual labor due to lack of education or skill. Animal husbandry and domestic works such as cooking, washing dish and cleaning the house are women and children job. Majority of Musahar women and children employ as agriculture wage labor at local area surrounding Biratnagar and Inaharuwa (Morang and Sunsari district). Some of Musahar children work as household servant at upper caste proprietor house. They also look after the animal of upper castes. Male members of household are involve in both agriculture and non-agriculture wage labor.

7.1.1 Wage Labor

A remarkable section of respondent of Musahar community in Baijanathpuris wage labour in non-agriculture labour. More than 41 percent of Musahars are engaged in other economic activities such as wage earning activities, working as industrial labour,

construction labour, tractor labour, sand and gravel collector etc. Their daily activities include doing a hard work in the agricultural fields of their masters. In return, they only get 4 kg paddy or 50-60 rupees per day. That is sufficient for feeding their children so they try to earn some more money by working as a labour in the field of constructions and other kinds of work in the cities of Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and India (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh), usually such kinds of work are done by the male member. Women and children are engaged in household works and sometimes children live as servants for the rich people. Though the Musahar people of Baijanathpur are not directly linked in trade, they sell their agricultural products such as rice, vegetables and other things in the market and buy cloths and other necessary items of daily use such as salt oil spices etc so their main source of subsistence is agriculture rather than trade.

7.1.2 Migration and Remittance

In study area now, remittance from gulf countries is emerging as important source of economy after agriculture. There are only seasonal employment opportunities in agriculture sector. Almost all Musahars depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The seasonal employment are agriculture based such as ploughing and leveling the field for planting the rice, maize, millet, wheat, tobacco, farming, making ridge in fields, cutting and threshing the harvested crops etc. which is available only for 6 to 7 months from June to December. For the rest of period they usually go to the Panjab (India), Kathmandu and elsewhere in search of seasonal employment.

7.1.3 Women and Children's Engagements

In study area among the Musahar women, some of them were found involved in house and agricultural work and the rest doing seasonal work as laborers like planting rice, millet and other seasonal crops and harvesting etc. Usually they go to landlords home and

make the cow dung cakes for fuel purpose. Their work include sweeping the courtyard, washing cloths of landlords families, carrying paddy, millet, wheat and other consumable goods for grinding, beating and threshing in local mills. Children also look after the buffaloes, cows, goats, etc of the landlords and masters. They get food, clothes, and other consumable goods in exchange of their services. Some of them live in the landlord's home as a servant on salary basis. Some of Musahar women and children go to forest (Kanepokhri and Pathari Jungle) to cut trees and bamboos, collect firewood, leaves, and take them to sell in the market for extra income, whenever they have leisure.

7.1.4 Food Supply Situation

Below table presents the food supply situation in the study area. Among the 255 household of Musahar more than 80 percent are suffering from insufficiency of food grain. Food grain needed to feed the family members for one year is not sufficient with any Musahar household. The percentage of household with less than 3 months are 14 percent of total likewise 4 percent have sufficient to feed 6 months. No household have sufficient food for whole year in study area.

Table 7.1

Food sufficiency among the Musahar in Baijanathpur

S.N	Food consumption	No. of HH	Percent
1.	Insufficient	210	82
2.	Sufficient for 3 months	35	14

3	Sufficient for 6 months	10	4
4	Sufficient for 9 months	-	-
5	Sufficient for 12 months	-	-
Total		255	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

According to one respondent Chandeshwar Reshidev:

We need schooling for our children in order to make them able to understand what others have said, what is happening in the world, where can we get better living, but we are desperately poor to provide food for our children. So we could only send them to school until they become able to go for Majduri (wage earning).

Therefore, drop-out from school rate is very high among Musahar community.

Usually the families keep their children at home for assistance in house hold activities, especially in the field and to look after the children. The most important perception among uneducated families towards girls that it is not necessary to provide education to girls as they marry off and become property of other. Distance between home and the school has played a vital role in determining the girl's education in the study area. The unemployment of educated Musahar is one cause for unwilling of Musahar toward education. According to one of female respondents ManishaSadaya:

Most of the schooled people are star of "no where" from an employment perspective. They are socially alienated, economically failures, unable to cope with a market economy and unable enjoy or be satisfied with a subsistence village economy. In all the schooled person remains in a slippery place and the economy around them continues to limp.

Inequalities in education have occurred as a result of a variety of factors that can be interpreted in a number of ways. There is clearly some debate as to the extent to which barrier to participation and achievements are individual or institutional. There is significant interaction between both the institutional and individual causes of inequalities and these

tend to be mutually reinforcing. This interaction reflects one of the key characteristics of social exclusion itself. It is a dynamic process that results from a combination of factors including social, cultural and institutional ones, as well as those more closely associated with the individual as a result; intervention is required at a variety of levels.

7.2 Landlessness of Musahars

Globally, land is a multifaceted issue that is entangled between diverse socio-political and cultural dimensions and livelihood strategies. Musahar community of Baijanathpur one of the marginalized *Tarai Dalits* of Morang district. Landless Musahars who follow traditional livelihood strategies in Baijanathpur, they have unique and indigenous knowledge of resource. The extent of land issues for the Musahars spans back from the historical era when they were gradually devoid from their occupational rights including fishing and boating over the years in the Morang district.

The Tharu and Khabas are only the native *Aadhivasi* in this place contrast to the claim of *Dalit* politician and activist. Early after 1990 B.S., there was 52 dense forest clusters which were allotted to cutoff. Meanwhile Musahars have come here after 1990 B.S. The age of 200 years they claim is controversial because there was not any option to do jobs in this place at that time. Musahars were brought here for working to slash and burn Jhora/forest by a land owner called Dev Raj Chaudhari (*Woda Adhchaya*), who held the 350 Bigha land in Baijanathpur. There was approximately 15 household of Musahar had been in existence in Baijanathpur in the past. Other households of Musahar came here one by one in search of works for secured livelihood regarding the process of social network of kinship relation with older Musahar family in Baijanathpur. Musahar used to work here as land digger and soil transporter from one place to other to make cultivable land. After clearing jhora they settled

hare as Haruwa and Charuwa within the territory of landowners land. Only a few Musahars could get the land after the jhora cleaning but most of them did not so.

It is interestingly acknowledged that the two antagonist group's i.e Madhesi jamindars and other is hill migrated Pahade prevail in agriculture on Baijanathpur (study area). Both have antagonist ideology, contrasting characters but in some cases had a reciprocal relation in agricultural system. On the one hand Madhesi Jamindar have a strongly embedded historical legacy of feudalist cultures and habits, practiced since a long past in Baijanathpur as well whole Morang district. Most of jamindars had more than two wives, daily used liquor and meat; take parts in gambling and other useless expenses in entertainment against to the saving. They themselves did not directly enter in any type of agricultural works in land but manage buy haruwa-charuwa and hired wage labors. The all family of jamindars acknowledges the farm work is against their status, it is against jamindari system. Jamindar family has required more economic resource to maintain their social and cultural practices and other obligation. They continuously endeavored to maintain their jamindari status. Regarding to maintain this habits and practice jamindar sold their land to the Hill migrant *pahade*, for the reason that fulfills needs. It has long been observed in Baijanathpur that there was no alternative source of income, no other occupation had flourished apart from agriculture. Land selling was only a consistent alternative of *Madhesi Jamindar* to maintain their family obligation and his daily entertainments.

Jabai Musahar (Musahar elder citizen of Baijanathpur) narrates hill migrant *Pahade* is also very hard worker in land. Most of *Pahades* are peasant, tenant and sharecropper rather than landlord. *Pahade* people are greedier than *Madhesi Jamindar*. They continuously work hard in the farm, sometimes they used to do *jamindarss* harecropping also. In the nexus of hard working they save money against their obligation control needless expenditure. With this saving hill people can purchase the *Jamindars* pieces of land. These

contrasting events resulted that the most of *jamindars* have sold their land and transfer lineage. Due to fragment land, *Tarai Jamindars* shifted into small peasant, tenants, sharecroppers, wage labors (job seeker than giver) and some are landless but hill pahade make a strong position in small farmers and investors in small business in urban/semi-urban areas provide job supports who were the previous Haruwa-charuwa of *Tarai Jamindar*. This tells how the *Tari Dalit* Musahars becomes landlessness in Baijanathpur area.

Today's the specific context of Baijanathpur is that most of land holders in this area lived in Biratnagar city but their land is still in village. Two decade ago they all used Musahar for cultivation but now most of Musahars work in Biratnagar city. It is contrasting that land holder comew to villagewhile Musahars go to city. Landlord stay in city came to land management in village for cultivation. Musahar stay in village but work is in city. Two decades ago both were in same place and interact face to face in farming. Before time landlords had a much land area and needed more reserve labor force, passage of time land has been fragmenting in small pieces so, and labor has been used seasonally not mandatory for reserve. Jabai Musahar says 'we all are mobile workers, urban employee but rural identity'.

7.3 Transformation of Musahar: From Agricultural Workerto Urban Labour

Bashu Dev Rajbansi (Former Chairman VDC) narrates his observation about Musahar.

'We Musahar people were fully dependent on their MAALIK for their livelihood in the past. But now the scenario has been changed a lot. They somehow became independent . They are now following many ways to sustain their livelihood as only one strategy is not enough to sustain their daily needs of their family hence they have been adopting many alternative

livelihood ways. Most of the Musahar people in Baijanathpur follow animal husbandry and wage labor however migration also covers large numbers. They usually migrate to India for their living and urban cities of near like Biratnagar, Inaruwa, and Duhabi (Sunsari). It was also seen that they have been to Gulf countries and doing small business but in very small numbers this is because they have not enough money to do business or to go foreign countries however this number is better than the past.

Livestock is inevitable part of Musahars in Baijanathpur for both economically and cultural values. In the past, they were attached with agriculture, they reared different animals because livestock keeping is the base of livelihood. They used to rear animals to support their family economically which is still in practice and now it has replaced other activities. The Musahar tole is far from the forest. So, there is some sort of problem of fodder for animals in the Baijanathpur area, Musahar of Baijanathpur are receiving the fodder for animal from nearest open grassy land of field and stream. Therefore many households had good number of cattle, goats, pigs, hens etc.

Today Musahars in Baijanathpur are also changing their occupation. They are involved in domestic business and earn small cash through goat, buffalo, pig and poultry farming and they convert their product in cash. Most of the members of household sell their labor (in the form wage laboring) to derive livelihood. This includes household who use it as primary occupation and who use it as secondary occupation. However, all the labor of the Baijanathpur areas is not equipped with required skill. Most of the young Musahar people earned from laborer works such as goods loader in trucks, wage labor of houses and other as per needs of the market. Now some youths have seen in learning new style and design though they work throughout the year in the city area or in Panjab, Hariyana, Delhi and Patna in India. It was seen that some few numbers of Musahars are involved in rural business like

table-shops and foreign employment. The large number of youth is jobless and expend more leisure time in Baijanathpur because they do not have money to start their business or to go abroad. Labor is most important assets for the Baijanathpur's Musahars, basically in urban and semi-urban setting. If one has adequate skill, they have better chances for the job. It is also likely to have more income. In the reverse condition manual labor that does not have necessary skill is paid less.

In Baijanathpur most of the Musahars household sell their labor (in the farm wage laboring) to derive livelihood. This includes household who use it as primary occupation and who use it as secondary occupation. However, all the labor of the study areas is not equipped with required skill. Most of the young Musahars earn their income from laborer works such as goods loader in trucks, tractors and wage labor of factory and others as per needs of the market. In Baijanathpur most of the Musahars are unskilled labor people are traditionally associated with wage earning. Now some youths have been seen in learning new style and design though they work throughout the year in the city area or in India. Adequate skill is not sufficient itself, they also should be healthy. One may have required skill, knowledge, but if their health is not sound, they will not be able to earn livelihood using this strength. Though these areas have physical access to health from health post of their own community or from the hospital and medical facilities of the city, it is not far. The economic poverty or lack of money cannot get access it. The case of SufalSada (A poor person of Musahar community) of Baijanathpur, support these instances.

Sixty years of age SufalSada is now sick. He is almost landless. He cannot fulfill any requirements of family now. He used to work very hard for his family. But due to his illness he cannot work further more. He remembers the past days when he was strong and goes for work. During his work tenure he had been able to fulfill the needs and wants of his children. All the family members were happy. Sufal was very proud thinking that he was a very good

father. But now the time has changed he is not able to work anymore and cannot contribute his family now he is totally dependent on the other member of the family, now his family economically devested and his everyday life became more complicated.

Tursa Rajbanshi (key informant) says about land and its ownership according to him "15/20 years ago, more or less 1 percent households had the registered land in Baihanathpur area, 8/10 percent had land with Mohi Authority and 90 percent were landless. At present this situation has been changed and some Musahar households have their own registered land also. Before one and half decades ago Musahar people of Baijanathpur had not food sufficient because they only rely on their Maalik hence they had to sleep with empty stomach if they had not any work. But now the scenario has changed so far now there are so many other ways of earning money and they are able to feed their family. So now the situation is stronger than ten years ago.

Before 10/15 years, almost all the Musahar households in Baijanathpur used to depend on agriculture activities of their Maalik to maintain food deficiency, very few numbers on animal husbandry, and other wage labor and on debt. At present, 70 percent households depend on wage labor activities, 20 percent on animal husbandry, 5 percent on debt taking, 5 percent depend on business. Ten years ago, the income from agriculture was high. They were somehow able to feed their family but now as the effect of modernization the level of income through agriculture is very low. The modern tools and techniques have killed their physical labor. Before Ten years, the number of livestock in Musahar community in Baijanathpur was very small. Now there are significant numbers of chicken and other animals in Musahar households. Among 60 households, almost all have got at least one items. The income of the Musahars from animal husbandry is slightly changed than before. At present, the average income from animal husbandry of each family is 10 thousands. The income from the each household size was 4 thousand before 10 years.

7.4 Relation between State and Musahars.

In this section, I examine the relationship between the state and the Musahars. The relationship between the state and its citizens is influenced by the concept of citizenship. Citizenship represents more than just a card; it represents the legal entitlement of an individual within a state. In Nepal, possessing a citizenship card is a requirement for financial transactions and opening a bank account. Under the previous citizenship act, land entitlement was necessary to obtain citizenship. From my observations, it became evident that many Musahars in the study area did not possess citizenship.

In this regard, Raghu Nath Musahar, 56 year inhabitant of study area (Baijanathpur) narrates about citizenship issues and empowering process's experiences own his way:

When I was around 10 years old, I was almost mature Charuwa in Bhim Rajbanshi (former state minister) a Rajbanshi Family in Biratnagar. Later I became Haruwa for long time in his family. I did have neither *land ownership* nor citizenship. I am not sure how many years passed in the Ranjbanshi family because you know Musahars do not remember date. When the family sold land, there was no work for me. Then I came out means I started wage labourer at different places Biratnagar areas. It was almost 20 to 25 years ago. I was free to choose work whichever I like. I have tested Riksa pulling, brick kilns, seasonal migration in Punjab and other. Then I learned carpentry with other caste fellow workers in the Kanepokhari jungle. Then I got good wage during building construction in Biratnagar. I have saved some money too. The problem was security of the money. You know, Musahar is not only place of starvation but also there are open door one story huts. If all family members would be out anyone can enter in it. My friend advised me to deposit money in the bank. I went to bank accordingly. The bank asked me citizenship. I did not have it. Then I

spent some amount of that money to make citizenship. District administration office demanded land certificate. I did not have land. I realized that being landless was not only limited to deprivation to food but also deprivation from legal socialization of state. I requested my previous Rajbashi (when I spent long time as Charuwa) family to help. They supported me and I got citizenship. Then I have saved money and bought small piece of land to build house. Now, I have my own house. My son is in Hariyana, India. I am thinking to send him to Qatar or Malesiya when he returns from India. I have interactions with politicians, fellow workers and other people at the market. I came under open sky to make decision about my family. I would be still Haruwa if the family had not sold land.

The above description shows that the Musahar has dependent relationship with other groups of people. They work as tenants in the *land owners*. If the owners sell the land and migrated from the area, they have to face challenges for livelihood.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Summary

This study deals with the state of livelihood of Musahar community of Baijanathpur village of Biratnagar Metropolitan city in east *Tarai* of Nepal. The over arching objective of this study is to explore the historical processes of their social and economic relations with land and landlords of eastern *Tarai* and find out the causes and consequences of landlessness on the socio-economic life of the Musahars. In this study, I have demonstrated that various forms of land distribution, the government policy of land reform program, eradication of malaria, development of transport and migration of hill people are major factors of landlessness of Musahars. On the contrary, caste-based discrimination, extremely low literacy rate and lack of political power relations are the parceling barriers of their access to social and economic opportunities. These barriers have contributed to make Musahar as the *metaphor* of poor in Nepal. In short, landlessness is the root cause of weakest livelihood system or poverty of Musahars, the majority of whom still depend upon land and land related activities.

Musahars came to Nepal towards the middle of 18th century and settled down in different parts of *Tarai* region. There are various speculations about their coming to Nepal. But it is an acceptable fact that they came to Nepal from India either as an agricultural laborers to reclaim agricultural lands for cultivation or forest cleaners and wood cutters to supply timbers to India to expand railway lines towards the Northeast of India during the time of British rule. In early times, lands and forests in Nepal *Tarai* were in abundance. So they practiced slash and burn cultivation as their means of livelihood. They supplemented their agricultural economy by hunting wild games and gathering wild roots and fruits. But

neither had they owned lands collectively nor did they individually. Land was valuable for them to produce daily needs. But they were not aware of the future value of the land. So they were not tempted to accumulate the vast tracts of land neither in the name of their community, as usually found among the preindustrial agricultural people in preindustrial societies (Herskovits, 1952) nor in their individual names, as found in capitalist societies. Later, the Shah and Rana rulers granted the agricultural lands and distributed them to their kinsmen, such as members of Royal family, nobility, religious teachers, priests and military officers in the forms of *birta*, *guthi*, *jagir*, *rakam* and *raikar* with an objective to generate state revenues, gain religious merits and consolidate their political powers.

The distribution of lands in various forms to members of Royal family, nobility, religious teachers, priests and military officers created a class of *jamindars* or landlords who were privileged to hold and own the vast tracts of lands in their names. But Musahars and other *Tarai Dalits* who actually cleared the malarial jungle, cultivated and made barren lands to fertile and established settlements in the malarial area did not get land grants from the Shah and Rana rulers. *Birta* and *jagir* holders did not cultivate their *birta* and *jagir* lands by themselves. Rather, they gave *birta* and *jagir* lands to the tenants for cultivation and collected rents from them. For that, landlords needed massive labour forces to plow their land and look after their cattle for milk, manure and draft services. Musahars thus served as agricultural tenants and bonded labourers called *haruwa-charuwa*. Though exploitative in nature and unilateral in labour services, the relations of tenancy and bonded labour was a secured means of livelihood of Musahars for many years during early Shah and Rana period. For Musahars land was the fundamental source of livelihood, but they did not own any lands. Thus, there was an antagonistic relation of Musahars with lands.

With the political change of 1951, the government of Nepal initiated land reform program in Nepal to protect the rights and interests of the agricultural workers. At the

outset of the program, the government envisaged that the land reform is primarily an instrument to social justice. Therefore land reform was aimed to ameliorate deteriorating condition of the peasantry and improve their economic condition. Land reform program was also urgent, because the disputes between the *jimidars* (landlords) and *mohi* (tenants) were leading to the rise of agricultural revolution in several districts of western *Tarai*. Therefore the government formed a commission and sent them to several districts to study and recommend measures for resolving the landlord-tenant disputes, particularly the unauthorized appropriation of ownership rights of the *jimidars* and the sharing of the crops. The commission recommended a ban should be imposed on the eviction of cultivators, conditions of tenancy should be stipulated, and landowners should issue receipts for rents they paid to them by their tenants. But the recommendations of the commission did not have significant impact on the system of landownership and tenancy.

The first major land reform program was initiated in 1957. The objective of the program was to define the relationship between the landlords and tenants without introducing any structural changes in the agrarian system. It tried to grant security of tenure to tenants, regulate the rents and prohibit extra payment of money or labour. But in the absence of implementing agencies at the local level and lack of records of the tenants, the measures remained ineffective. After 1961, land reform was considered crucial to achieve economic and political goal of *Panchayat system*. Land reform was also necessary to provide agricultural services to the peasants. Therefore, the government introduced a full-fledged land reform program throughout the country in 1964. In order to ensure the equitable distribution of cultivated land, ceilings were imposed on landownership and tenancy holdings. Tenancy rights were provided to all farmers who were cultivating land during the time of enforcement of the program. The rents were fixed at the rate of 50% maximal. The scheme was first applied on *raikarland*, then on *raj guthi* of the major crops the tenants

produced. In addition, efforts were made to mobilize capital by introducing compulsory saving scheme.

In many respects, land reform was a progressive program of the time (Zaman, 1973). The Land Act of 1964 imposed the ceiling of landholding. It defined tenant as peasants who actually cultivated land obtained from landowners on any condition. The provision of the Act secured the tenancy rights and made tenants as free man (Regmi, 1976). The Act reduced and controlled the amount of agricultural rents payable to the landowners. However, the land reform program had many loop holes. It did not equally benefit the agriculture farmers. Despite the imposition of ceiling on landholdings, landowners were allowed to keep extra land in their residential areas. They transferred the tenancy rights to their family members and relatives. In many cases, landowners themselves became land cultivators. Large areas of land were cultivated personally by the landowners themselves. Land still became profitable field of investment. So acquisition of lands in excess of prescribed ceiling did not change the nature of the landholding system per se. The Act of 1964 also strengthened the position of landowners as rent receivers without imposing any obligations on them beyond collecting rents after crops are harvested. One of the most unfortunate consequences of the land reform program was the eviction of many tenants families from land they had been cultivating (Gaige, 1975). This type of transfers resulted in the replacement of tenants by owner-cultivators and other laborers paid on a daily basis without minimal security. As a result, tenants were converted into poor and landless laborers.

The land grant policy of the Shah and Rana rulers and the land reform program of the Panchayat system did not benefit the Musahars at all. They did not receive any lands by the Shah and Rana rulers, nor were their tenancy rights secured by the *panchayat* Raj. Rather, Musahars became the most victim of land grant policy and land reform program. They were evicted from the tenancy rights of the land cultivation of the landowners and

converted from the tenants into unsecured daily-based agricultural labourers. The conversion from tenants to daily wage agricultural laborers put the Musahars in a dire economic situation. It was very difficult for them to sustain their livelihood. The problem was later aggravated by the factors like saving scheme, resettlement program, flux of migrants from hill region and plain India, population growth and social encroachment. The economic suffering of Mushahars has contradicted the popular anthropological notation of Marshall Sahlins (1972) who presents non-market integrated communities as more affluent and more leisure free. But Musahars have been suffering from starvation and deprivation despite their heavy engagement and continuous struggle for survival.

The economic anthropologists who are engaged in studying economic life of simple societies argue that people who depend upon land and other natural resources are able to satisfy their material needs with many difficulties. Because of their kin-based production, need-based distribution and reciprocal exchange (Malinowski, 1922) system, they satisfy their material needs without troubles. But the Musahars work hard and produce enough materials goods. But they do not distribute as per their needs. They produce for landlords. Their productions are controlled by their landlords. They extend their labour as their prostration or gift (Mauss, 1967) to their landlords. But the landlords do not reciprocate their gift of labour on an equal basis. In stead their gift of labour is an one-way obligation to the feudal landlords. This clearly shows that conventional anthropological theories and methods which focus on small scale preindustrial communities cannot cover the dynamic nature of changing societies. I have used political economic theory and methods to study such dynamics of Musahar communities. This has been exemplified by the native anthropologists who have depicted the poor economic life of Musahars.

There are also non-anthropological theories and methods which are helpful to understand and analyze dynamic economic life of the Musahars. Many researchers of these

theories say that poor people in developing countries derive their income from multiple sources. For them to do so is a rational choice of alternatives found in human society. Under this notion, livelihood diversification is a strategy and a norm in developing countries. In other words, livelihood diversification has increasingly turned towards non-farm activities as a source of income and employment. It is a worldwide phenomenon. The compelling socio-economic hardship of Musahars pushed them into the open market to diversify the bases of their livelihood and they have adopted various occupations to sustain their livelihood. In addition to agricultural labourers, they now work as fuel wood sellers in local markets, construction workers, domestic servants, hawkers, scavengers, rickshaw pullers, migrant workers, rag pickers, cleaners and so on. But the unequal labour relations in a caste society, Musahars find it very difficult to get labour services in the markets. Their social status as *Dalits*, low literacy rate, inaccessibility to Nepali language and inaccessibility to politics and governance prevent them from their access to the government services.

Yet, another mode of exploitation comes in the garb of market forces. Being unaware of the market situation, they often fall into the clutches of middlemen who, by providing them with false information on market demands, force the Musahars to sell their product at throwaway prices. Shankar says: We collect "*shikakai*" from the forest, but not at our own will who will buy? When the contractor gives an order, only then do we do it. He gives us Rs.20 for two baskets of *shikakai* the work continues for two months. In one season we earn Rs.5000-6000 only. Now it is not done on such a wide scale. We do not get order; they tell us that there is no demand in the market for *shikakai*. These cases clearly show their resignation, and the way the Musahars have become almost habituated to their suffering over generations. They are aware of their own marginality, but see no avenues of either escape or confrontation. Many of them continued to survive through their link with the feudal structure. This was especially true of the older members of the community, who

found it difficult to snap the ties of patronage that defined their very identity and existence, as exemplified by Raghunandan. Under such conditions, if one is offered work, there is no room left for bargaining. Wage rates become immaterial, as any negotiation might incur the wrath of the employer. No grudges are held either, as the employer appears as a savior at that moment.

There are various researches undertaken by the NLSS (2010/011) DFID (1999, 2002) and World Bank (2013) and Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology of Tribhuvan University (2014) reveals that the fact that Musahars are the poorest communities in Nepal. Their precipitate consumption rate is Rs. 109,000 which is far below the national average of Rs. 209,613. They live in marginal lands erecting small huts supported by bamboo poles, thatched with straw and thatched with either straw or plastic or poor quality iron sheets. All Musahars do not own their houses. Only 25% of the Musahars own their houses in their names. Only 1.3% Musahars have access to improved houses. Since many of the Musahars do not own houses in their land, they do not have citizenship certificates. Because they do not have citizenship certificates, they do not have access to public service opportunities, as land and citizenship certificates do have symbiotic relationships. Musahar houses are unhealthy and unhygienic from modern health and environmental perspectives.

Improved toilets (flushed toilets) are indicators of improved sanitation, hygiene, health and environment (Gurung, et al. 2014). But all Musahars households do not have access to improved toilets. Some households use pit latrines. But many of them use open field for urination and defecation which are unhygienic and unhealthy. Piped water, tube well and covered wells (protected water) are considered safe sources of drinking water in the *Tarai*. Only 75.7% Musahars have access to these types of safe drinking water. They use animal dung cakes and firewood for cooking and heating. None of the studied households have access to clean energy for cooking and heating. Households with access to electricity

are 34.2% and access to television is 9.9%. However, 49.3% of the Musahrs households have access to mobile phone. This indicates the fast development of communication and its massive use. But the literacy rate of Musahar and 21% (26.8% male and 13.4% female) in 2011. It is far less than the average literacy rate of Nepal (65%). They have no lands, they have poor housing condition. They have, no access to credit and they have uncertainty and insecurity of employment. The analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the sample households reveals that the Musahars fall at the bottom of the composite human development indices.

8.2 Conclusion

The livelihood of other people affected the livelihood of Musahar. They shifted mode of production, using modern technologies and the the Musahar has to find new job as technology displaced them. They have been neglected in all aspects of social life. Economically, they are not only poor, socially they are backward and under developed people they have less chance in every aspect of social life. There are many economic opportunities for others, but not for Musahars. They are most disadvantaged groups of the rural society. These Musahar households can be regarded as the weaker section of the society and any programs to alleviate poverty is to be directed towards them. Governmental or non-governmental program has not been directed to Musahars to improve the economic conditions of the Musahar community. In the context of caste conscious Hindu society, the Musahars are faceless people and they are only remembered as a rat eater, or more recently as reluctant laborers. Musahars are perceived as lazy people who are uninterested in work until their last penny has been spent.

The Hindu caste people construct such social images and they try to justify their exclusion and marginalization from mainstream society. However, at the same time they can

be, and are, used in the village society for menial jobs. But that is not enough to integrate them within the village society and economy. While meat-eating is popular in the area, the flesh of a rat has its own stigma attached to it. The regular practice is for Musahars to collect the leftover grain scattered in the field after a harvest. Their only competitors in the field are the rats, and they are at times compelled to follow the rodents and gather grain from their burrows. They have even learnt to justify the discrimination they face in their own minds; as Ramvilassays, "We were *vanmanush*... surviving on wild fruits and animals... we were dumb and gullible with no sense of the world and its ways (*budbak*). Therefore people also maintained social distance from us". This image of Musahars as dumb and gullible were reiterated by many others in the community. They also presumed that it was precisely these traits that had led to their land being cornered by the intelligent and dominant people of the village.

The oral history of the Musahars, as passed down from one generation to the next, reflects their own marginality in the region. They informed us that during the colonial period, this area was covered with dense forests and was used by some British officials for hunting purposes. The Musahars were brought into this area by the British to clean some patches of land for the latter's recreational activities. An old dark bungalow, called Kath Bangla in the local parlance, still stands in the middle of the forest as a testimony to their history. In order to make a living, the Musahars also cleared some forest land for themselves and began practicing shifting cultivation. Raju, a Musahar, says, "Only a Musahar could have done it as we have the traditional skill of judging the property and quality of soil; and then it requires hard labour to clear forest land. Not everyone can survive in the deep forest... only a Musahar body can sustain such hardship". This reflection of strength and skill is in stark contrast to the image of a unwilling laborer more interested in leisure than in hard work. While the villagers consider Musahars *vanmanush* (persons living in the forest), with a

limited appetite for worldly pleasures and thus fit to remain only at the limitations, they consider it a source of pride, ownership and strength. Their own understanding of marginality lies in their declining control over the forest land, which had been taken over by more informed outsiders. Since the land is fertile and the Musahar population settled in the area relatively small, there was enough for everyone to eat unless hit by a natural calamity. Other forms of forest produce would also supplement their diet. Although they are poor, they must surely have greater control over their lives. However, this fertile land slowly began attracting people from neighboring areas, who managed to acquire large chunks of land by holding out petty, yet alluring, gifts (a piece of cloth, for instance) to the Musahars. With the passage of time, ownership of landholdings became concentrated in the hands of the upper castes.

The study found that most of the Musahar households are landless. The origin and evolution of the process of landlessness of the Musahar has its strong association with the historical socio-economic and political situation under which they were highly exploited by the then rulers. The problem was later aggravated by the factors like resettlement program, government rules & regulations, socio-cultural interaction, population growth. Encroachment into public lands, poor housing condition, no access to credit, uncertainty and insecurity of employment, low literacy etc. are the major effects of landlessness in the study area. The analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the study area concludes that the landless belong to the lowest stratum of the society and they are followed by the landless.

In conclusion it can be said that Musahar are very poor people. They all live in poorer standard way of life. They have been ignored in all aspects of excellence life. Financially they are also enabling and poor. They can be called backward and under developed people who have less chance in every aspects of squality life. But now due to the improvement of their economic condition and cultural influences of other caste groups they are undergoing some

changes. Every society passes through some profound changes not only in its social structure, its economic system, its norms and values and modes of life but also in all sectors of its life. Therefore, the Musahar people of the study area are not far from this change. Now they have become more conscious and they have realized their social status and position and they began try them selves to uplift their living standard.

Now they are engaged in different type of occupations, like domestic and outside works, industrial laborers and so on. Before this they were dependent on agriculture in rural area. The Musahar people of the study area are more receptive to modernization, through their social norms and values on purity and pollution are very regied. But some changes have occurred in their social and cultural life, particularly their outlook towards other lower caste people. In one word it can be said that financially and economically Musahars are poor but culturally they are rich. But still they are least developed and lesser known group of people.

APPENDIXES

Appendix : 1

Interview Checklists:

Institutional structure and Culture of Musahars

1. Housing pattern
2. Farming lands and ownership
3. Super structural belief and worship god .
4. Sanitation and food
5. Relation to forest and other natural resources

Musahar Social History

1. Social mapping of the study area (caste/ethnic composition, distributions, religious sites, social infrastructures)
2. Existing social institutions i.e. marriage practices, family and kinship pattern

Occupations & Livelihood Practice of Musahar : Change and Continuity

1. What were/are the main occupation & sources of livelihood in study area ?
2. What are the main crops & land holding pattern in study area ?
3. What have been changed in the agricultural system over the last 30 years?
4. What are the causes for the changes?

Knowledge, Perceptions and Responses Musahars (Group discussion and Key informants)

1. What is the causes of backwardness?
2. What is the condition of women and children ?

3. Why the importance of religion in Musahars ?
4. Are there any changes in the duration in their areas over the last 10 years?
5. What are the impacts of change in their knowledge system

Life management and general information (key informant)

1. How do we realized livelihood diversified in MushaharCommunity ?
2. What are the material values of livelihood diversification ?

Other information (group discussion and key informant)

1. Agricultural wages and people shifting in industrial sector .
2. Feeling backward cast group and group identity
3. Division of labour in agriculture and livestock management pattern

Observation

1. Settlement patterns; residential pattern of the villagers, house structure, community infrastructure
2. Daily socio-economic, cultural activities of people, division of labour at household and outside household activities
3. Farming activities and livestock management activities
4. Life cycle rituals and community and household rituals
5. Social interaction between/among households, kin, neighbor, community members

Appendix : 2

Some photos with Key informants



Mr. Bhim Raj Rajbanshi, local intellectual Prof.Dr. Ganesh Chhatri, talking and & politician describing about Musahars. Providing Musahars related literature.



A rich person who represent Musahar community in Housing and settlement pattern of study area study area.

Musahar's Children



Women Involved in Cooking



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