

# **CHAPTER - I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. The Background of Study**

The Terai region is divided into two regions i.e. outer Terai and inner Terai, where Brahmins, Chhetris, Rajputs, Danuwars, Tharus, Majhis, Satars, Yadavas, Muslims, Musahars, Chamar, Halkhors, Doms etc. dwell. The Terai consists of forest and was once unhabitate due to malaria. Now it has acquired greater economic importance with new shelters and reclamation of agricultural by clearing forest. (Gaize, 1975)

As the people of Nepal live in different physical conditions, naturally, they have developed in course of time different types of customs and manners. Their food habits vary from region to region. They differ from one another in language. They differ tribe-wise and place-wise. For instance, the Newars of Kathmandu valley differ from the Newars of the rest of the country in their culture, language and so on. (Bista, 1991)

The role of women in household decision making is reflection of the social well being and economic strength of the people it is lighted by various factors, such as the level of income, standard of living, housing, sanitation, occupation, education, employment, health care delivery services, religious belief and cultural acts. Therefore, the word socio-economic includes various meaning of social and economic characteristics which affect human behaviour in all respects.

In the context of Nepal due to conservative tradition, illiteracy, poverty and superstitious beliefs women are considered to be born to serve

their male counterparts. The social myth also indicates that women were basically inferior and their labours, efforts, social rights, role in decision making are less valuable than men (Dhakal 1995).

In developed countries women are equal to men. Mostly they are educated and employed. Therefore, their social status is also very high. But in the context of developing countries like Nepal, the socio-economic status of women is not equal to men. Women are less educated, under employed and have lower social status in comparison to men. Low health status of women, low awareness of family planning devices, low cost of bringing children etc. are some of the leading factors of high fertility. The major cause of high fertility is socio-cultural norms of Nepali society and compulsion for women to give birth to at least one son to take care of her during old age. Women have no access to the level of the parental priority; their access to property in their husband's household work is conditional on her reproductive behaviour and her capacity to breed sons. There is no social or economic incentive for women to desire to control her fertility.

After the political change in 2007, the situation of women has certainly changed but not to the extent it should have been. The fact is that Dalit women also consist of one-fourth of the total women population. The whole women community is the victim of gender discrimination in the society. The basic difference between high caste women and Dalit women lies on the ground of caste based discrimination and untouchability, which Dalit women have to face. In comparison to other high caste women, the Dalit women have been forced to live in most vulnerable conditions. They constitute the major workforce doing hard manual work and engage in agricultural operations. Dalit women are thrice alienated on the basis of

class, caste and gender. The whole Dalit community has to struggle for survival. Thus they need helping hand from their women. Through this perspective, Dalit women deserve better position than those of higher castes. But high caste people/women perpetrate caste based discrimination and untouchable against Dalit women. (*Bishwakarma, 2004*).

Nepal is a multi-ethnic society with a complex caste structure sustained by age-long traditional and a civil code (Muluki Ain). The Caste originally represented the occupation of the group of people, but superstition and hereditary traditions in the Hindu Society have led to a rigid vertical Caste structure with the Brahmins on top followed by Chhetris, Vaishya and Shudras. Brahmins were supposed to perform priestly function, the Chhetries were rulers with a propensity to fight, the Vaishyas were craftsmen, tradesmen and cultivators and the Shudras were to serve the people higher caste. (Sharma, 1994) But in the course of perverse traditions the Shudras have been severely mistreated and sighted as untouchable by the higher castes. Cox (1994) has also explained in his article about Hindu Caste system that there are four Varnas including Brahman, kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. In the Nepali caste system, however, there are only three categories: Tagadhari (twice born), Matwli (liquor drinking), and Pani Na Chalne (untouchable) caste. According to the rules of orthodox Nepali Hinduism Brahman, Chhetris and Thakuris cannot accept cooked rice or water from an untouchable. He has divided the untouchable castes of Nepal into three different categories.

- i. Living primarily in the southern plains of Nepal (Terai) including Dum, Teli, Sundi, Musahar and Dusadh etc.

- ii. Castes that are predominantly found in the middle hills. These include Kami, Damai and Sarki.
- iii. Newar untouchable castes known as an ethnic group. These include kasai, Pode, Chyame.

Among these untouchable, Musahar is the indigenous people dwelling found in the Terai belt of Nepal from very beginning as an indigenous group. In the traditional Hindu Caste hierarchy they belong to Shudra class and they are treated as untouchables. They eat rats; speak Maithali, Bhojpuri, Abadhi, Hindi and Nepali. Some Musahar take Maithali as their native language and do not ever know Nepali (Cox, 1994).

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Musahar community is developed on the basis of Hindu culture and Hindu society where the society is male centered. As other Hindu society, in Musahar community also female has to follow the decision of male without any objection even though they don't agree with them.

Musahar meaning mouse eater in the name of Utter Pradesh who are categorized under untouchable caste as Harijan of Bihar (India) and known as a field labourers (Grurey ,1992).

The mushahars have no land registered under their name. Their main source of subsistence is working in others land on lease and as hired laborers. They dig mud for construction of houses, roads and work in farming fields as laborers. In addition, cleaning roads/rivers/canals are also considered traditional occupation of Musahars. These are their main source of earning a livelihood. But basically, the community derives its livelihood from agriculture. Usually hard field work such as ploughing, or going to the

forest and cutting firewood etc, are men's jobs. Animal husbandry and domestic works such as cooking, washing dish, cleaning of houses engage the women (Gautam and Thapa, 1994).

The Musahar women also work hard as labourers and add to the family income. They are employed on daily wage basis by landowners for various domestic works, as making cow dung-cake, planting paddy, harvesting crops and threshing and so forth (Verma, 1991).

The role of mushahar women in household decision making is highly affected by their illiteracy, early marriage, food deficiency, malnutrition and other various Socio-economic factors.

The conditions of Musahar women are more critical. Generally they are house wives. Few women help their husband as a labor, and few work as a maid servant in the houses of their land lords.

Unfortunately, however, many of the communities are still backward and little known. The Musahar community is such group of the lesser known and backward caste of the country. So it is essential to undertake a study about this community because the socio-cultural study represents the study of living body of a particular community and their role in decision making.

Due to the lack of adequate research and timely intervention to bring about improvements in the living standards of the Musahar community, it is observed that their socio-cultural and economic condition is not improving as intended. If this situation is not improved the existence of Musahar will be at stake. Therefore, the problem is narrowed down and specified in form of following research questions.

- (a) What is the role of Mushahar women in household decision making at Janakpur-7?
- (b) What is the socio-cultural and economic condition of Musahar women?
- (c) In which environment Musahar girls are growing in Musahar community?
- (d) What role Mushahar women play to fulfill their basic needs?
- (e) What are the changes in the role of Musahar women after the restoration of democracy (After 2046) in Nepal?

Being born and raised in Terai, I am familiar with their culture, customs and languages as well as their problems. So I think that the role of Musahar women in household decision making should be a better for me to do research work.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of is study to know the role of Musahar women in household decision making of Dhanusha, District. The specified objectives of the study are the following:

- ) To study the present socio-economic condition of women in Musahar community.
- ) To identify the role of Musahar women in household decision making.
- ) To identify the changes occurred in Musahar women's life after the restoration of democracy in Nepal.

Musahar Women's role in household decision making is affected by various social, economic and demographic factors such as level of

education, social position, economic affluence, age at marriage, caste based tradition etc.

The socio-economic status of a community shows the living condition of people in that community. With the great changes in the field of technology, communication, transportation, education and interaction with different cultural groups, they must have undergone certain changes. Thus, the Musahar community is also affected by these factors and is going to change in their subsistence economy, changing occupational composition, changing social and cultural patterns and life style and also change in women's role in household decision making of Janakpur-7 Musahar tole. The Musahar women is one such group of the lesser known and backward people in the Terai region. It is chiefly for this reason, it was essential to undertake a study about this community. It is observed that the role of Musahar women in household decision making at Janakpur-7 of Dhanusha District is not improving as intended. Present study is not sufficient to cover all aspects of Musahar community; it identifies some of their problems and various dimensions.

This study is mostly focused on role of Musahar Women in household decision making at Janakpur-7 of Dhanusha district. It is expected that this study will be useful for them who are interested to know about the role of Musahar women in household decision making. It will be a preliminary work for the planners and policy makers to uplift the Musahar women in this area. It is hoped that the data of the study will serve as a basis for further research in this area.

## **CHAPTER – II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The systematic and scientific study of discrimination persisting in the society since the ancient time between male and female in various fields and the ways to minimize such unsocial discrimination and their conclusion on such factors is called feminism.

Before the establishment of feminism, nearly all the theories which were established to run the society were mainly male centered. Although male and female are two sides of a coin, the society was male centered and female were merely considered as the member of society. In 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is clearly seen that the population of female is more than half the population of the world. This clearly indicates that to run the society smoothly, the old concept of viewing the society should change. Old norms and values should be renewed. Male and female should be evenly treated. Female should be given equal right to make decisions and participate in the society. The concept of female being a birth machine and sex object should be changed. The perception of viewing female should be directed in right and positive direction.

Since the ancient time, the scientific and social theories existing in the society are male centered. Due to all these discrimination, people from Liberal feminism, Marxism feminism, Psychological feminism, Radical feminism and Socialist feminism are protesting against them.

According to Jessi Bernard, she has said in her book entitled “The Future of Marriage (1992 A.D.)”, women after marriage becomes dependent



and has to live according to their husband where as male becomes dominant and gains the power of even deciding the future of female compatriot. Female are considered as a birth giving machine and sex object who has to satisfy her husband. She also emphasize on females having no right to think about their own life and look dreams. According to her, such type of discrimination can be eliminated only by providing the rights to women such as education, good health facilities, right to take own decisions and equally provide the respect to their status and income as given to men in work.

According to Betty Friedan in “The Feminine Mystique” (1963 A.D.), she has said that if women are not only limited in the household activities and are given the opportunities to work outside the house and prove their potential, then the sex discrimination can be ended. This will create the environment of equality and provide women the freedom to work and fulfill their dreams. Such environment will also increase the feeling of brother and sister which will surely minimize the inequality. In this way he has given a different and new ways to improve the condition of women in the society.

#### **1.4. Women’s Empowerment**

The word “Empowerment” been frequently used since 1980 A.D. Various studies show that it was proposed mainly by the women who struggled for women’s right. Now a day, there are many NGOs and INGOs established which are conducting different activities to minimize social discrimination and change the ill cultured society of male dominant to a more generous society having equality. The rise of women who can fight for their rights of their own and speak in front of the society is what women empowerment is all about. (Creshberg, 1992 A.D)

Women empowerment is to remove the obstacles in the field of women development and provide equal rights to women. It is based on problems related with women's socio-economic, psychological and political aspects. It is about developing the self belief and makes them realize their self esteem. It helps women to understand their talent and work accordingly which could help them to realize that they are not a penny less than men. It encourages women to fight for their rights and remove the ill-cultured practice from our society. This also helps women to get socialized and tackle the difficulties they face in the society to uplift their status.

According to McWhirter (1991 A.D.): "The process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of other (d) supports the empowerment of others in the community."

Similarly Sara Langwe: "Empowerment is a process of enabling people to take change of their own lives and escape from poverty which arise root from lack of productivity but form oppression and exploitation."

These saying emphasizes that empowerment is all about making a person powerful and independent of others so that they can work according to their own will.

Women empowerment is a thought and a wave rose from the east feminist movement. Encouraging each other and work together in the development of women and thus the society and the country. Women empowerment has been working as the main cause to minimize the discrimination between male and female. This shows that educated and

skillful women also can help men in decision making effectively. This helps in developing the feeling of working together between male and female which in wide contest helps to improve the society and the country in socio-economic, psychological and political aspects.

### **1.5.Feminist Movement**

The institutional, social value system, believes, activities, practices and identity are mainly based on sex. Feminist Movement is focusing in eradicating such sex based system. The main objective of feminist movement is to raise the status of women in the society and get considered as equal as men in each and every aspects of the society. Though feminist movement started from 18<sup>th</sup> century, sex discrimination is still major problem. Women are still not considered as potential and qualified as men in decision making and other activities of society.

1<sup>st</sup> wave feminism refers to feminist activity during 19<sup>th</sup> century and starting of 20<sup>th</sup> century. It mainly focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women by their husband. But by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, it focused primarily gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activities beginning in the early 1960s and lasting through late 1980s.it saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures. 3<sup>rd</sup> wave feminism begun in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response to the backlash against initiative and movements created by the second wave. It seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the 2<sup>nd</sup>

wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which over-emphasize the experiences the upper middle-class white women.

### **1.6.Global Context**

After the publication of Marry Wollstone's book "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" in 1792 A.D., the problems of women were addressed. She noted that women are used as an object to make men happy. She also raised voice against the ancient norms and values and emphasized on importance of women in the society and the requirement of women's right in socio-economic, psychological and political field.

After the industrial revolution, feminist movement broke in USA and European countries. The reason why women have to be dependent upon men was acknowledged. They came to know that no involvement of women in any major activities of society such as socio-economic, psychological and political aspects was major cause of backward of women. Then after number of organization were established in order to secure women's right. Just after this in 19<sup>th</sup> century, countries like USA and European countries started revolution against slavery. Number of organizations was established to aware women about voting right, own property control, earning, employment etc. They also protested for women right. Finally they were given voting rights. But they could not get political right and right to work i.e. employment. Still women had to work in the houses.

Simonede Behavior emphasized women's independency as men's dependency in "The Second Sex" in 1953 A.D. After "The Feminine Mystique" by Friedon in 1962 A.D., the rights of male and female in a house was understood to be equal. It said that women need to get out of their house to prove their talent and show that women also have got potential. Then only

women can move in positive direction. In 1966, in the leadership of Betty Friedon, National Organization of Women (NOW) was established in Washington DC. The organization did the required research on the legal rights of women and also about the legal provinces about the equality. It helped to legalize the women movement. So after this, women movement was considered as social movement. It also focused on providing equal education and health services to women as that of men.

Nearly after two years, “Women’s Equality Action League” (WEAL) was established. This organization fought for constitutional rights of women. After this both the organization NOW and WEAL worked together to move the women’s movement forward. This bought the wave of awareness among the women. This caused the start of struggle of women, fight of women for their rights. In the meantime, number of organization was established. Among the several organizations established, Berklay Women’s Liberation Group, Women Radical Action, Women Action Project, New York, Radical Women are few form which Women Liberation, Marxist, Radical and Socialist were the main feminist that were emerged. The establishment of such organization was to focus on women’s participation in politics, family planning, equal education, media representation, equal involvement of women in social and family decision making. From 1920 A.D., its effect was seen in sociology, history, psychology, education, politics and religions. As a result, in different universities women education was introduced. There was drastic change in the social behavior, decision making and society.

First International Women’s conference was held in Mexico in 1975 A.D. Thus after many conferences were held in Copenhagen 1980 A.D., in Kenya 1985 A.D., and in Beijing 1995 A.D. The decade of 1975 A.D. to

1985 A.D. was named as Women's Year. The conference was focused on the discussion of solving the problems women were facing due to sex discrimination. It focused on providing women with socio-economic and political rights. During this time, different programs related to the awareness of women's right were held. In 1979 A.D., a bill was passed in order to eradicate the discrimination between men and women. In the start of 1970 decade, Women in development (WID) and in the end of 1970 decade, Women and Development (WAD) approaches were developed. But WID & WAD approaches were not that successful for women's needs. After that in 1980 decade, a new approach Gender and Development (GAD) was developed, which has been developed as the most successful approach and in the present time it has been further more successful than the earlier days. GAD acts as the major agent for the equal development of male and female. It has emphasized on equal participation of male and female for socio-economic, cultural, political, empowerment, sustainable development and decision making about their life & home as there is no development in family without the help of both husband and wife.

### **1.7.Nepalese Contest**

Nepal being primarily considered as Hindu country, its society is based on Hindu culture. Thus, the development of Nepali society is based on Hindu norms and values. Though women's contribution in the development of society during the ancient time is significant, the society moved forward, but it left women behind. The society progressed with the norms and values made more appropriate for men. Men became the one to decide the norms of the society. Due to this, while regulating the norms and values to run the society smoothly, there was seen the sexual discrimination. This resulted in

the favor of men and then men were considered as the main member of the society whose decisions were to be followed. Then women were considered as the second person and their thought and decisions were not considered. Now women had to sacrifice for the happiness of their husband. They had to first think of their husband and their family. Women started to be considered as the one to stay at home and do the works as cleaning, cooking, washing etc. Women had no rights to make decision about the family and not even for themselves. Rather they were considered as the toy whose life was totally in the hand of their husband. Women had no right to dream and think about themselves. In the contest of Nepal, in the high caste of Hindu religion, women have to play a dual role in the society; Bennett (1983 A.D.). The unmarried women in such high caste society i.e. Brahmin and Chhetri are considered as a purified and respected personality but the married women in same society is considered as low grade whose self respect is of no significance. She has considered such discrimination is due to the paternal system of the society. Such discrimination caused women to revolt against the discriminated society. The women movement taking place in the world also had some effect in Nepal.

In 1974 B.S., by the combined effort of Divyadevi Koirala, Durgadevi Koirala, Tulaja Devi, Malewa Devi and Yogmaya Koirala first women organization “Mahila Samiti” was established. In the leadership of Chandrakanta Malla, “Nari Jagaran Kendra” (2002 B.S.) was established. In the leadership of Rewanta Kumari Acharya, “Adesh Mahila Samaj” (2004 B.S.) was established in Jayanagar of India. Similarly in the leadership of Mangaladevi Singh, “Nepal Mahila Sangh” in 2004 B.S. was established. These organizations worked against Rana regime, child marriage,

uneducation and for the name of women in voter list. In 2006 B.S, in the leadership of Taradevi Sharma, “Nepal Mahila Sangh” was established in Raxual of India. Similarly in the leadership of Punyaprava Devi and Kamaksha Devi, “Akhil Nepal Sangh” and “Nepal Mahila Sangh (2007 B.S.)” were established respectively.

After the democracy, in 2008 B.S., Advisory Assembly was established. Among the 35 members in the assembly there were not a single women. Due to this, women protested against it. As a result, in 2011 B.S., four women were included in the assembly. In 2015 B.S., Dwarika Devi Thakurani won the seat in the Representative of House and became the first female minster of Nepal. Then number of women organizations were established which fought for the rights of women and also organized awareness programs. After King Mahendra dissolved the democratic government in 2017, all the political parties were banned. During such crucial time, along with other parties and organizations, women’s organization also remained underground. Being underground these organization continued their protest. In the leadership of Bimla Maskya, “Nepal Women Organization” was established. This organization fought for women’s right and security. Due to the effort of this organization, for the first time UN Conference of Asia and Pacific Region was held in Nepal. Women from Nepal also participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Women Conference held in Mexico 1975 A.D. After this lots of events were organized in the country to spread the awareness about women’s right. In the process, four training centers were developed in different development regions. “Nari Sewa Samiti” was established in 1977 A.D. The organization also fought for the women education, employment, agriculture and other



fields too. Women were given various training to expertise their skill. The bill of unmarried women of age above 35 also getting some amount of paternal properties was passed. In the combined effort of Panchayat and local committee, “Mahila Bikas Sakha” (1982 A.D.) was established. Community development programs were organized. In 1987 A.D., “Mahila Bikas Sakha” was established in Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

After the revolution in 2046 B.S., multiparty system was introduced. It also introduced “Interim Constitution”. In this government Sahana Pradhan was elected as a minister. She was the only female minister in the government. The main function of this government was to introduce constitution. In order to do so, it created a suggestion committee. But the committee had no women in it. Due to this, there was unbalance in the committee and the interim constitution that was proposed had lots of flaws and was actually a sexually discriminated law. Women were not considered during the making of constitution. Though it was said that there would be no sex discrimination and women would get equal right, women were not given equal right. Though the government tried to mend its flaws, there were still discrimination between male and female. 5% of the seats in the Parliament of government were compulsorily allotted to women. In Upper Parliament of Government, among 60 seats only 5% were allotted to women.

Then underground and banned women organization started to work openly. With the help of different NGOs and INGOs, programs related with awareness about women’s right, domestic violence against women, girl trafficking etc. were conducted. For such social cause, NGOs and INGOs started to invest lots of money. In 1990 A.D., the bill against the women violence was passed which assured punishment for those who does such

crime. In 1992 A.D., “Women’s Security Pressure Group” (WSPG) was established. This organization worked on women’s security. This organization was established on the leadership of Parliamentary Members. Similarly different other organizations are also actively involved in the protest of women violence such as rape, sexual harassment etc. These organizations also help to put forward the voice of victims of women violence and fight for the justice. In 1994 A.D., “Gender Watch Professional Interest Group” (GWPIG) was established. This organization worked to make plans to increase the participation of women in different social work being held in the society. By showing the active participation in Beijing Conference, Nepali women showed their excellence in women movement.

It seems that political parties in Nepal are actually giving the seat of their parties to fulfill the requirement of the election. Though there are women in parliament of government, ministry of government, participation of women in the rising political topics is minimum. In 2047 B.S., there was only one woman in the ministry of the government and this pattern of having only one woman in the ministry of government continued since 2048 B.S. Though Sailaja Acharya became the Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal, she was the first female Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal. Likewise, in Nepal too there are some positive changes regarding the women’s condition. New mediums also arose regarding the steps to improve the condition of women in the society.

### **1.8.Previous Studies on Dalits (Untouchables):**

Dalits are the deprived, dispossessed and dehumanized segments of Nepali society. They are deprived of the basic minimum facilities of life like education, housing and health and also dispossessed of access and control

over resources. It is a historically proven fact that dalits are the productive classes of the Nepali society, but their very products have been alienated from them by the dominant castes.

Different sociologists/Anthropologists both indigenous and foreign have carried out various ethnographic studies in Nepal. Among them, Caplan has given a lot of contribution on the field of ethnographic study.

Caplan (1972) wrote in his book “Priests and Cobblers” that how the people of high caste (Brahmin) uses the untouchable and low caste people (Sarki) as slave for the benefit of their own. This way he has clearly mentioned the discrimination of high caste people and low caste people in socio-economic and political aspects of society.

Gautam, R. and Thapa Magar, A.K. (1994) have traced about some untouchable castes of Nepal. Badi, Dom, Gaine, Kami, Musahar Sarki, Halkhor etc. untouchable castes are tried to describe in their book.

Sharma, Chhetri and Rana (1994) have stated about caste based discrimination and its related matters.

Some heart touching types of discrimination based on caste is given in the book. For example one is given below:

*“An untouchable teacher in Kailali was sent away from his village school to Dangadi on deputation because he ordered students of higher caste and untouchable caste to sit together in the luncheon provided under the Nutrition Food Programme. The school inspectors were satisfied with his teaching quality, but the headmaster, a Brahmin, who did not accept this value, influenced the District Education Officer against the teacher.*

*Later, the luncheon programme itself was dropped.” (Sharma, Chhetri and Rana: 1994)*

The above example shows that there is so much discrimination against the untouchable and study should be done about them. But unfortunately, this is not happened. Unless their real situation is carried out, the exploitation and discrimination on untouchable remains forever.

Some, foreign writer has tried to write about untouchable caste but they all are not ethnographic study. Caplan (1972) is an example which is a study of about a social change in a Hindu village of western Nepal. Similarly, Macdonald (1975) has written a book in which he has written about some untouchable castes.

Although, special books are not available, some dissertations/thesis of master's degree of T.U has written on untouchables.

The article demonstrates how gender and caste divisions of labor in rural western Nepal have been historically linked with practices of social hierarchy and land distribution. Because of their low status in two hierarchies-caste and gender-untouchable women serve as handmaidens to the community's changing economic needs. Over the past century, their primarily artisan-related production has been replaced with a variety of paid agricultural and nonagricultural work in the increasingly capitalized agricultural economy. The consequent breakdown of secure inter-caste patron-client relationships and increasing poverty are countered by women's increasing economic power. (Mary M. Cameron, 1995)

### **1.9.The Musahar Caste Group/ Ethnic Group**

Musahar is the lowest untouchable cast in Terai region. Their name is derived from two words meaning "rat catcher" and is likely attributed to them for their tendency to eat rodents in times of dire need. They are short in stature with a long narrow head shape and broad nasal features. The Musahar believes that they are the descendants of saints and sage called "Rishis". Nothing is known about the time when they came to Nepal. But there is belief that part of them entered to Nepal from Magadh (India) and the others from Tirhut (Mithala) partly in Bihar, India. Therefore, the Musahars are divided into "Magadhia Musahar" and "Tirhutiya Musahars". Most of the Musahars have "Sada" as their surname.

The Musahar claims to have entered the Terai region, which earlier used to be a large and extensive jungle, in search of fruits, tubers and roots. Such eatables were easily available for the nomads to gather in the jungles of what lies in the present-day Nepal. The argument that the Musahars were nomads or hunting and gathering people of caste in the ancient period sounds quite convincing. But now a day, they completely forgot about the wild fruits and roots as they began to eat food grains some 2 centuries ago. In fact, around this time clearing and cultivation of lands for food grains had already begun. They are believed to have permanently settled in the region 4 centuries ago (Gautam & Thapa, 1994).

Musahar's manual work is digging. Because of this quality, Musahars play an important role in agricultural activities. Yet they have no good houses to live in. What they commonly have is a small hut barely enough to protect them from the rains. The population of Musahar varies between fifteen and twenty districts. However they are concentrated more in districts

like Morang, Jhapa, Sunsari, Siraha, Saptary, Dhanusa, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat etc. Usually, these people have black complexion. They are backward mainly due to illiteracy and poverty. Because of lower status in caste hierarchy, they are treated as untouchables.

It is widely known that the Musahars are fit for difficult jobs. Only they can dig big ponds since they have expertise in digging. Many people compare them with rats. They dig mud for construction of houses, roads and working in a farming field as laborers. The conditions of women are more critical. Generally they are house wives. Few women help their husband as a labor and few works as maid- servant in the houses of their landlords. Kantipur, Daily a newspaper (5 May, 2005) has stated the Musahars are occupational caste. Their traditional norms and customs allow marrying in childhood.

If any member of the high caste Hindu group is ever touched accidentally by them, he/she must purify either by sprinkling "gold water" or taking bath in the pond as well. Even today, Musahars are not allowed to fetch water either from the private or public tube-wells. They have separate tube-wells for their own use or go to the nearby stream to fetch water.

From the available literature on the Musahar, their origin ancestral residence, who they one, where come from in which part of Nepal they used to live, what they do and what is the position of their community in the society can be addressed.

Through there are no historical documents about Musahars dealing their origin and migration, yet per oral tradition and stories which exists these people, they migrated several centuries ago and settled down permanently in Terai region of Nepal.

Grurey G.S (1992) in his book “Caste and Race in India”, claimed that the Musahars ancestral tradition suggest that they are the descendants of great sage Valmiki, the author of religious epic Ramayan.

Dhakal, K (1995) in this study “Fertility and the status of Women of Baijnathpur VDC of Morang district” has pointed out that female education helps to reduce fertility level, but very low literately rate was found in this VDC. Among the Musahars in this VDC, 92.6% women were found illiterate. Musahars woman were illiterate had more children and less awareness of using family planning methods. Musahars are not aware about education and fertility. Their socio-economic status is very low compared to other ethic group. He indicated that lower cage at marriage, farm occupation and preference for son, helps to increase fertility level of women.

Gautam and Thapa (1992) in their book “Tribal Ethnography of Nepal” gave thrown light on the Musahars. But no analytical research has been done in health status for Musahars in general and Musahar women in particular. However, a study conducted on current socio-economic situation of the lowest the children us, included Musahar as untouchable caste group. This study concluded that education, economy, health and caste based discrimination are major interrelated variable which play a vital role to deprive to access a higher social status for lower caste people.

Bista (1976): provides only the general information of Musahars. Their health aspect has not been studied.

Karna V.L. (1993) has thrown light on the social, economic, education and religious aspect of Musahars. He has explained that the Musahars women are very laborious but they are treated as inferior and second class (about by local landlords and village masters).

Verma A.K. (1991) in his study about “A Social economic and cultural study of the Musahars of Nepal Terai” has reveal bed that landlessness unemployment, low income etc. are the main cause of poverty among the Musahars. The vicious circle of poverty, malnutrition, disease and ignorance impedes their progress for a better future. However, he does not talk about the meal the aspect of the Musahars.



## **CHAPTER - III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The socio-economic condition of the Musahar and their women is very weak. Due to poverty, educational backwardness and socio-economic factors their living always deteriorates. Therefore, the Socio-economic factors itself affecting the role of Musahar women in household decision making.

This chapter has presented a discussion on the research methodology that was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data for the study. The chapter is further divided into many subjects such as site selection, research design, nature and sources of data, sampling procedure, techniques/instruments of data collection, reliability, and method of data analysis and limitations of the study.

#### **3.1 Study Site and Its Rationale for the Selection**

The proposed site for case study is Janakpur of Dhanusha District. This study site is underdeveloped due to poverty, educational backwardness and socio-economic factors. Dalit groups have no any position in society. Many castes are living there such as Brahmin, Chhetri, Teli, Suri, Yadav, Haluwai, Hajam, Muslim, Musahar etc. A little modernization impact is seen there. The total population of Janakpur municipality is 97,776 (Male-51,838, Female-45,938) and the total population of the Musahar Community in Janakpur-7, Musahar tole is 130 (Male-64, Female-66) according to Dhanusa district profile, (2011).

Based on the nature of the study, Janakpur ward no.-7 Musahar Tole is selected for the study, where majority of the dwellers are Musahars. Being born and raised in Terai, I am familiar with their culture, customs and languages as well as their problems. So I think that the role of Musahar women in household decision making should be better for me to do research work. This study has tried to analyze the role of Musahar women for socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Musahar community of Janakpur-7 Musahar tole. A large number of Musahars live in Janakpur ward no.-7 in one tole i.e. called Musahar tole. Besides this, the area is also located in researcher's home town, making it more easily accessible for the researcher to carry out this study. The following criteria are used to select Janakpur-7, Musahar tole as a study area.

- (a) Because of the easy access of the researcher in the neighborhood.
- (b) The majority of the Musahar community is higher in that area than the other neighboring ward or VDC.
- (c) Being in the researcher's neighborhood, the respondents were more forthcoming.
- (d) Moreover, no study had been carried out about the Musahar community of this area.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study is based on exploratory as well as descriptive research design which may consider as appropriate and the best for the analysis of this type of research study. This study is exploratory because it makes attempt to explore the role of Musahar women in household decision making. It is descriptive because it is attempted to describe natural condition

of the study site and the socio-economic status of the women of Musahar community.

### **3.3 Source of Data Collection**

The researcher must be careful about the source of the data collection. Generally there are two kinds of source of data collection, which are known as **Primary and Secondary** sources. Both the primary and secondary sources of data are used to find the facts and figures about the Musahar community of Janakpur-7, Musahar tole.

**(a) Primary data:** Primary data are collected from the field survey through observation and interview.

**(b) Secondary data:** Secondary data are collected from the published and unpublished documents articles and books about Musahar and other similar communities to understand the cultural patterns of Musahar.

### **3.4 Census Method**

The nature of the population is homogeneous and small. Therefore the Musahar women respondents are selected by using women census method. In Janakpur-7 Musahar tole, there are 29 households of Musahar where 29 women (one person from each Household) are interviewed. The researcher did not include the girls below 15 years because they are often unable to provide comprehensive answers to the question asked about their ancestor and their culture. So, the higher priority was given to the middle aged (30 yrs) and old aged (65 yrs) Musahar women of the study area for interview.

### **3.5 Method of Data Collection**

In the course of this study the researcher used scientific method of data collection like field survey, observation, interview schedule.

(a) **Interview Schedule**: The researcher prepared a set of question before going to the field for the study. With the help of the interview schedule, the researcher gathered the information about Musahar's socio-cultural and economic condition and about their family size, marital status, occupation, sex, age and education and the role of Musahar women in household decision making. Structured questions are used to interview the selected women of specific age group which included both open and close questions to find out their age at marriage, fertility history, concepts on the child bearing and rearing, decision making power, health condition, knowledge and use of contraception sex preference for baby etc. To obtain essential information from respondents structure, unstructured, crossed and mixed questions were used.

It is used to collect data of qualitative nature. It is used for collection of the information on the origin and history of Musahar and about their marriage, family, religion, life cycle ceremonies etc. It is taken from women of Musahar community.

(b) **Observation**: The observation is used in this study. This method is used by the researcher to gather intensive information about the settlement pattern, food habits, life style, dresses and ornaments and so on of the Musahar community.

### **3.6 Method of Data Analysis**

Most of the collected data are analyzed descriptively and statistical methods were applied where necessary. So, different statistical as well as logical tools were used to analyze data in this study.

### **3.7 Constraints of Data collection**

In every type of field study and research, the researcher has to face some obstacles and difficulties. In the same way, during the period of field survey, the researcher had to face some difficulties. In the early stage for a few days women are reluctant to provide the researcher with sufficient help, because they hesitated for they belonged to the lower level group who carries human manure. They thought though many researchers came to study their culture and socio-economic, political and psychological status, there has been no improvement in their old poor status, so it is worthless to help them. But, later on, the researcher establishes rapport and understanding with the study group. This relation helped the researcher to elicit information from the subjects.

### **3.8 Limitations of the Study**

For any such study, it is necessary to specify its limitations. The most important parts of such a study are the time factor and financial consideration. And these factors constitute the limitations of the present study. Although present study might not be sufficient to cover all aspects of Musahar community, it can be hoped that this study will be able to identify some of their problems and various other dimensions of the community of the study area. It is simply not possible to study all aspects of a particular community in one particular place, a few months' time and little effort and money. So this study has been limited to only one ward, i.e. ward no. 7 of Janakpur municipality where Musahars are found. However the study is only an attempt to study the role of Musahar women in household decision making. The present study has focused on a limited number of aspects like family, marriage, religious and life cycle ceremonies, food habits, the

economic condition of Musahar and also the role of Musahar women in household decision making. By dint of its limited scope, the study may not be sufficient as a document for the entire socio-culture profile of Musahar, a community spread in many parts of Nepal.

**CHAPTER - IV**  
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF MUSAHAR WOMEN**

In this chapter, the analysis and discussion of empirical data obtained from the field survey are focused. Demographic features of the study site, socio-cultural life and economy of the Mushahar’s Women are analyzed in detail.

**4.1 Demographic Aspect of Musahar**

This section includes age and sex structure of the total population of the Musahar of the study site and their marital status, educational status, occupation and religion status respectively. The following table (See Table 1) gives socio-demographic characteristics of the population of the Musahar of the study-sites.

**Table No. 1: Demographic Status of Surveyed Households**

Age Group	Sex		Total	Percentage %
	Male	Female		
0-4	2	1	3	2.31
5-14	21	9	30	23.08
15-24	14	22	36	27.69
25-34	10	18	28	21.54
35-49	10	8	18	13.85
>50	7	8	15	11.53
<b>Total</b>	64	66	130	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

As shown in the table no. 1, there are 3 children (i.e. 2.31%) in the age group 0-4 in which 2 are boys and 1 is girl. This age group cannot help in

any productive work. Similarly the number of children in the age group 5-14 is 30 (i.e. 23.08%) in which 21 are boys and 9 are girls. Among the boys of this age group, 13 boys are having primary level education whereas 4 have left their study for contributing their family income and among the girls in this group, 4 girls are having primary level education and 1 has left to study. In the age group 15-24, there are 36 people (27.69%) in which 14 are male and 22 are female. In this age group, 9 boys and 4 girls are in the primary level whereas 1 boy and 8 girls are in secondary level. The people in this community having higher education belongs to this age group i.e. 2 male and 2 female have got higher degree. In this age group we can find that most of the male and female who have started their study have stopped their study to contribute in the family income. It is found that the age at which most number of boys and girls who has stopped their study is 12-18 because either they get married or are bound to work to resist their living. The age group 25-34 consists of 28 people (21.54%) in which 10 are male and 18 are female. There are 3 boys and 1 girl who are in primary level whereas 1 male is S.L.C. graduate. This age group boys and girls do contribute in family income and are considered as the most productive age group. Most of the male and female in this age group are uneducated as they are the one who works and has major contribution in the family income. The number of people in the age group 35-49 is 18 (i.e. 13.85%) in which 10 are male and 8 are female. In this age group, 4 male are educated till primary level whereas only one male has secondary level education and there is one man, who passed I.sc in forestry and doing government service. There is not a single female who is educated in this age group. Most of the people in this age group do labour work in the factories or do the household chores in others house as housemaid. There are 15 people of age above 50 year in which 7



are men and 8 are women. There are not a single people of old age who are educated. There are some people who have also got prodh education. Nearly 5 people are with prodh education in which 3 are female and 2 are male. These people are mostly of age group 35-50 year. But due to lack of practice they forget to read and write. There are 4 widows who have to work to earn for their and their family's living.

This shows that the awareness about the importance of education has been spread but it is still reached the required result. The number of uneducated mature people shows that how education was ignored in the previous time but with the increase in the number of children going to school has shown the progress and awareness about the importance of education. Though there are many children who want to study, they are forced to leave their study due to their poor economic status. Due to poverty, these children have to leave their study in small age and work for the food as their daily work is the only source of income and food. If they don't work daily, they won't be able to eat even once a day. So among the 130 people who are in the site of study, nearly 75-80% is working for their daily wages. Since they have to work in the day time, there are only few who are going to school and educated.

## **4.2 Socio–Cultural Life of the Musahar Community**

### **4.2.1 Family Structure**

In the Musahar community, it is found that they are patrilineal families. Their descendants are traced through the line of father i.e. to sons and not the mother. The Musahar male is the functional head of the family

who does outer activities. After the death of the family head, his position is taken by his eldest son or his wife.

In the Musahar community, family property is commonly shared and managed. When the family breaks up, the property is equally divided among brothers. There is no any rigid rule of family separation. According to respondents the causes for the breakdown of the joint family are: conflict between two brothers, conflict between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-laws, conflict among brother’s wives etc.

When asked about the main reason of family separation, most of the respondent’s response is that after marriage, they want to live with the income, which they earn. It means that because of the lack of the sufficient income sources, physical labour and skill of person are the major cause for family separation. Therefore, after marriage a person wants to live separately from their parent.

**Table No. 2: Distribution of the Households on the Basis of Family Type**

<b>Family Type</b>	<b>Household Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Nuclear	28	85.18
Joint	1	14.82
Total	29	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Among the total 29 households of the Musahar community in the study site, basically two types of family, nuclear and joint have been found. The family type of Musahar community is shown in the table no. 2. The study shows that out of 29 households, only 1 household (i.e. 10%) were joint and 28 households (i.e. 90%) were nuclear. It shows that the joint

family system is undergoing change gradually. The Musahar community of the study sites prefers to live in nuclear family.

#### **4.2.2 Settlement Pattern**

Musahar communities, settled in Nepal, have their own tradition and culture still alive. That these people were nomads can be seen even today in the way their houses and huts are built. They are small, low in height and made of local materials like bamboo, straw, mud, khar (thatch), etc. Their bamboo walls constitute a lattice-work plastered from both sides with mud and cow-dung. Most of these houses have only a single large room; in one corner they keep their cattle, in another they cook their meals. It is yet another corner they sleep. Usually the fourth corner is empty. A Musahar village is in reality a close-built cluster of 20-30 thatch-roofed houses. For a keen observation, their life style appears queer. Their faces, dresses, chores and customs are distinct. The dresses they wear are normally lungi, dhoti, pajama, kurta, sari, and blouse. Their ornaments are sindoor, chhuri, malla, sikri, jhumka, bali, thop(phuli) and nathiya. Their household work normally revolves as other house but since they live in hut, they don't have enough space in their house, so are bound to spend their time sitting on the roads chatting with their family members, playing cards. So it can be said that the main characteristic feature of the Musahar settlement is separate clusters.

#### **4.2.3 Birth Right (Delivery System) Of Musahar Community**

Among the Musahar community of Janakpur-7 Musahari tole, when the member of the family know that one has become pregnant they begin to prepare for the day of delivery. They start to collect more chickens for feeding to the mother after delivery. During pregnancy, no special care of

mother is taken. With regard to food, there are not set rules. The pregnant woman is required to eat enough rice, meat, pulses, green vegetables, sag, milk, ghee, ghonghi, doka etc. but because of poverty, they could not get special type of diet.

During the time of delivery, they take help of a woman called Sudeni-chamain (a local chamar woman) who knows about delivery, but not about special health care and who gives birth to a baby is called Sutkeri (parsauti) and her family or clan members observe birth pollution for 6 days. As against this service, they are paid with rice, cloths and cash. Interestingly enough, the Chamains ask for more payment if it is the birth of a baby boy than that of a baby girl.

**Table No. 3: Delivery System**

<b>Type of Delivery</b>	<b>Number of Delivery</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Sudeni	8	27.59
Hospital/ Sub Health Post	18	62.07
Home	3	10.34
<b>Total</b>	29	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table no.3 indicates that among the total delivery in the study area, 10 % takes place at home without any help while 28 % with help of Sudeni and remaining 62 % at the hospital or health post. The study shows that there have been some improvement in the awareness of town area in Musahar women as nearly half of the delivery have been conducted in the hospitals. Still there are women whose deliveries were conducted in home or with the help of sudeni. Due to the various superstitions and unawareness, there are women who are afraid of doctors and nurses and believe something might go wrong in the hospital. Now days, the government has started to give Rs. Five

hundred per women delivered at hospital. So, the no. of delivery at hospital has increased.

#### **4.2.4 Marriage**

Marriage is a universal organization. It is socially recognized institution for having legitimate sexual relationship between a man and a woman for the protection, upbringing, maintenance and socialization of the children through establishing a family. It is a strong institution in Hindu society and perhaps every other society. According to social rule and regulations and their belief system, types and forms of marriages vary widely. In the Janakpur Municipality, Ward No.7, Musahar community, especially one type of marriage systems is in practice i.e. Mangi Bibah (Arrange Marriage).

##### **4.2.4.1 Mangi Bibah (Arrange Marriage / Traditional Marriage)**

In the arrange marriage system among Musahar, the initiative is supposed to take place from the bridegroom's side or bride's side both. When the parents of a boy or girl want to marry their son or daughter, they request to other parents who have a son or a daughter and then they do connect them to get marry. Generally, the Musahar marry their children at the age of adolescents.

They practice marriage by negotiation and elopement. Marriage with one's mother's brother's daughter with one's father's sister's daughter and with one's elder brother's widow is permissible. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence and the bride's party hosts the marriage feast. The marriage rituals include sagun, lagan, kalsa, samdhi, dhoti and

bidai. The nuptial ceremony is performed at the bridegroom's residence. Yellow saree, vermilion, bindi, dholna (mala), glass-bangles and aalta are the marriage symbols for women. The monogamy marriage is seen in practice in this community. Some clothes and utensils are given to the bride as dowry and cash, pigs, different kinds of assets etc. are given to the bridegroom as dowry.

**Table No. 4: Average Marriage Age of Women**

<b>Age of Marriage</b>	<b>Number Of Women</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
9-14	14	29.79
14-19	29	61.70
19-24	4	8.51
<b>Total</b>	47	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

As shown in the table no. 4, it is clearly visible that most of the women in Musahar community get married at very young age. The study shows that 14 (i.e. 29.79%) women got married at the very young age of 9-14. 29 women (i.e. 61.70%) got married at the young age of 14-19 and 4 (i.e. 8.51%) women got married at the age of 19-24. This shows the lack of education in the people of Musahar community. People in this society think that girls are the member of others family (Praya Dhan). So they get married sooner, as their family income is also saved. As they get married in young age the boy with whom she gets married will also be small boy which means that less money will be needed to find such boy. But as the girls get older, more money has to be spent for their marriage as older boys are qualified and demand more money. So they marry their daughter at very young age. The girls who gets married at such young age enjoys the marriage as some

cultural function since they even don't know what marriage is and what being married is like.

#### 4.2.5 Education

In the past, the Musahar (Dalits) did not send their children to school. Before the establishment of democracy in 1950, no Dalits were given a chance to enter the school education. Therefore, the majority of the Musahar and lower caste are still far behind in the field of education.

Hence, the Musahar community is Dalits (backward and depressed) caste. The community was deprived of education before the promulgation of New Civil code 1964. Even today, they lag behind in the field of education.

**Table No. 5: Educational Status of the Musahar Women**

<b>Educational Status</b>	<b>No. of the Female Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Illiterate	47	71.21
Literate	19	28.79
<b>Total</b>	66	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no. 5 shows that among the 66 Musahar female, only 19 (i.e. 28.79%) women are literate. The study shows that the number of literate female is very less due to the wrong concept of people of this society. People here think that women are Paraya Dhan i.e. goes to others house after marriage, so why should they spend money in the study of girls. Rather they save that money for the further study of their son. And on top of that they think that the alternate work are more beneficial and give quicker returns than the education

**Table No. 6: Level of Education of the Musahar Women**

<b>Educational Status (Level)</b>	<b>No. of the Female Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Primary Level	9	47.37
Secondary Level	8	42.11
Higher Secondary Level	2	10.52
<b>Total</b>	19	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no. 6 shows that among the 19 literate women, 9 girls (i.e. 47.37%) are studying in primary level, 8 girls (i.e. 42.11%) are studying in secondary level and 2 girls (i.e. 10.52%) are having higher secondary level education. This shows that slowly the number of girls getting education is increasing. Now people are sending their children to schools as a result the number of girls in primary level has increased.

#### **4.2.6 Change in Socio – Cultural Life of the Musahar**

Change is universal fact, so socio-cultural life of the Musahar community is being changed gradually. In the past, the Musahar community used to live in joint family, but the joint family system is now being declined at the study site. Only one family out of 29 families lives in joint family and rest of all (i.e. 28) families live in nuclear family.

The cause of breaking joint family system is mainly economic. During the fieldwork, it was asked them why they liked to live in nuclear family, they replied that they liked to live in nuclear family because they liked to live with income which they earned. They do not like to give their income to others. Similarly, marriage system is also changing. In the past, early marriage (child marriage) was in practice but now it is reducing gradually.



Rites of the Musahar community are also changing today. Due to the poverty, they are leaving to celebrate Chhathi or Nwaran. The father or mother himself/herself gives name to the baby.

Mortuary or death rite is also changing. Nowadays, the Musahar community of the study site prefers to bury rather than burning because burning is expensive there. Poor Musahar cannot afford the wood for burning purification ceremony of death rite is being simple because of poverty. Celebrating different festival is a character of Nepalese people. The Musahar community also celebrates different festivals, but the celebrating style is changing. Nowadays, the Musahar community of the study site is too much affected by the neighboring castes. They celebrate Dashain, Deepawali, Chhatha, Maghe Sakranti, Holi, Jur Sital and Chaurchan.

Dressing pattern and ornaments are also changing. In real, more changes can be seen in dressing pattern in Musahar community of the study site. It is very difficult to identify the Musahar community both male and female at the study site seeing their dresses. They now wear as upper castes. Shirt, Pant, Sweter, Jacket are popular among male Musahar. Saree and Blouse are popular among married females and Suruwal, Kurta, Shirt, T-shirt and Maxi are popular among unmarried females. But because of their poverty the quality of dresses is always low.

Ornaments are simple although they do not wear traditional types of ornaments. Musahar women wear Malas, Mangalsutra, Ring, Earring, Thop(Phuli), Nathiya, Bindi, Aalta (Nail polish), power, Bangles as ornaments. But because of their poverty, they are made of silver, aluminum and plastics. They wear cheap and low quality ornaments.

Educational status of the Musahar community is being changed at the study sites. School enrollment is being started. Now, the parents like to send their children to school. Change in the study sites can also be seen on the religion. Now, their ways of worshipping of Gods and Deities has become quite flexible. They do not follow their religion more rigidly. Although they are Hindu in religion, the changes can be seen in performances. Young Musahar is not more interested in worship of Gods and Deities.

### **4.3 Economic and Traditional Life of Women**

#### **4.3.1 Traditional Occupation**

It is already mentioned that traditional occupation of the Musahar community is labor works as grave digging, plugging, planting, harvesting etc. But the situation has changed a lot. Now-a-days young Musahar men as well as women like to do work as a daily wage in brick factories, GOs, NGOs, or INGOs where as old women do work as a housemaid in their neighbor.

#### **4.3.2 Occupation**

The Musahars in general are very hard working people having specialization in one art / craft or other. They have nothing but small huts to live. They live mainly on wages for their livelihood. They scratch their living by plugging land for their landlords. They work in brick factories, agricultural work and working in the industrial units. The women on average work for 14- 14 hours while the men work for 11- 12 hours. Many of Musahar women work in the road construction, building construction and in brick factories. Occupational status plays vital role in the promotion of individual and community's status. The small children of most of the

Musahar start working as child labors and, they become assets to their families. They work as domestic servants and work in brick factories. The following table gives a glimpse of the occupational status of the Musahar community of the study site.

**Table No. 7: Distribution of the Respondents by Their Occupation for Female**

S. No.	Types of Works	No. of Female	%
1	Farming	6	10.71
2	Domestic labour	10	17.86
3	Road & Building construction	23	41.07
4	Brick Factory	17	30.36
	Total	56	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no.7 shows that the main occupation of the Musahar female are the work of road & building construction which has occupied the highest number 41.07%. It was followed by brick factory which has occupied 30.39% female, similarly 17.89% and 10.71% of the total respondents were closely related to domestic and farming work of female respectively. One of them i.e. Chandeshwor Sada's family have higher education of all children in that community. His two daughters have higher level of education, one is studying in I.Sc. nursing and another is in B.A. second year. It shows that women are hard worker than men. In this community women were compelled to do any kinds of hard works due to their poor economic conditions. It shows that women are hard worker than men. Women play a more important role to support the fulfillment of their family's needs.

### 4.3.3 Land Holding

In an agrarian economy, the extent of ownership of land is the main indicator of relative economic status of people. Most of Musahars have own land where they are living. The following table gives the land holding pattern of the Musahar community.

**Table No. 8: Land Holding Pattern of the Musahar community**

Land (in kattha)	No. of HHs	Percentage
Landless completely	1	3.45
<1 kattha	28	96.55
Total	29	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no.8 shows that most of the Musahar have land. Among 29 households, 1 household were landless and 28 households among them had less than 1 kattha. During the observation, it is found that the land owned Musahar is used for building house for their shelter. Since the land owned by these people is very few i.e. nearly half kattha or less than that which is actually not enough land to build a house, they don't have land for agriculture which they could have used their source of family income. Therefore, most of them are dependent on daily wages for their livelihood.

### 4.4 Health Status

Health care system of a society is influenced by the various factors e.g. cultural practices and belief, income, education, accessibility, awareness and attitude. Backwardness of the Musahar people is reflected from the fact that the Dhamis are still given preference over the modern health institutions like sub health posts, Nursing Home or hospitals. Among the Musahar communities, the diarrhea, skin diseases, tuberculosis and tooth ache are common health problems. Many of these people put on dirty clothes and

keep their courtyards dirty. Most of them drink water from the tube wells, though they have access to water-supply pipe. The respondents of the Musahar community asked about their preference in health care services and information is put here in the table.

**Table No. 9: Distribution of the Respondents by Their Preference on Health Care**

<b>Health Services Providers</b>	<b>No. of the Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Traditional Healer ( Dhamis)	31	24.14
Medical Centre	27	20.69
Clinic	9	6.89
Govt. Health Institutions	63	48.28
Total	130	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no. 9 shows that out of the 130 respondents, most of them i.e. 63 went to governmental health institutions which is followed by 31 who went to traditional healer for health care. Similarly, 27 and 9 of the total respondents went to medical centre and clinic for health care services respectively. It is concluded that due to poverty and lack of health care knowledge (awareness), they did not get proper health care from these health care providers. The study shows that still there are people in Musahar community who goes to dhamis for health care. Though it is seen that the number of people using hospitals and clinic has increased, there are still some going to dhamis. They have superstitious belief that dhamis can cure any disease faster and efficiently than doctors and other health care assistants. Due to unawareness and illiteracy, they go to dhamis.

#### 4.5 Access in the Political Participation and Local Resources Management

Political aspect is one of the most important parts of the social life of human being which is inseparable with man/women directly or indirectly. Similarly, all the people of the society have the right and responsibility to handle and manage the local resources (i.e. school management committee, public works/affairs).

**Table No. 10: Distribution of the Respondents by Their Political Participation**

<b>Political Affaires</b>	<b>No. of the Respondents(Female)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Polling in Election	38	57.57
Member of a party	4	6.06
Candidate in Election	1	1.51
No participation	23	34.86
Total	66	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no. 10 shows that out of the total 66 female respondents, 38 respondents participated in polling in the election. The study shows that among the women voting in the election there are few who were forced to cast vote by the political parties. There are 4 women who are member of different political parties and 1 woman who gave her name as the candidate in the election. But there are still 23 respondents have not shown any participation in election. Among these 23 respondents, 17 are not eligible to cast vote in the election due to underage. Remaining 6 women who are eligible to participate in the election has not participated in the election because they consider election useless as the political parties do nothing for the improvement in their poverty. Though the study shows that the number

of the women participating in the election has increased, there are still few who don't participate in the election.

**Table No. 11: Distribution of Respondents by their Approach in Local Resource Management**

<b>Local Resource Management Affairs</b>	<b>No. of the Respondents (Female)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
School Management Communities	1	1.51
Public work/ Affairs	18	27.59
No Approach	47	71.21
Total	66	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no.11 shows that out of the total 66 female respondents, only 1% women are involved in the school management communities, 28% respondents have approach in local resource management and 71% respondents have no approach in any local resource management. This shows that the women in Musahar community have still been bounded in their houses. There has been lack of effective participation of Musahar women in different public affairs as most of the women have no right to speak in the public affairs.

#### **4.6 Relation of the Musahar with Other Community**

According to Hindu caste system, the Musahar caste belongs to untouchable. Therefore, they cannot get all social opportunities in the Hindu society. None of the clean castes get food or water from them and avoid physical contact where possible. But the constitution of Nepal theoretically forbade caste based discrimination in Nepal.

Now-a-days, it is found a satisfactory relationship between the Musahar community and other castes. The other castes people had have necessity to come in close contact with the Musahar community for various reasons (i.e. to buy basketry products).

#### **4.7 Efforts of the NGO / INGO and Government**

There are different types of COs, NGOs/INGOs which are working to improve and enhance the life style of Dalits, but there is little seen positive sign of the improvement of the Musahar community life style. There are handfuls of NGOs working in this area but their role has not been effective enough. Likewise, after the dawn of multiparty democracy, the political parties have not been able to show their presence. Gradually, social awareness is improving and enhancing among the Musahar community.

#### **4.8 Comparative Study on Musahar Female and Non Musahar Female**

The basic difference between high caste women and Musahar women lies on the ground of caste based discrimination and untouchability, which Dalit women have to face.

In comparison to other higher caste women, the Musahar women have been forced to live in most vulnerable conditions. They constitute the major workforce doing hard manual labour and engage in daily wage like work. Musahars women are thrice alienated on the basis of class, caste and gender. The whole Musahar community has to struggle for survival. Thus they need helping hand from their women. During the interview, some female Musahars told that they had experienced double discrimination – she had been treated with disdain by the higher castes because she is a Musahar and



had been regarded as inferior by their own community because they were women. From the field visit, it was found the high castes people didn't take food and water from them. The Musahar community had its own tube-well.

The Terai Dalit women are the least educated group, but culturally they are more free, open and receptive group than the high caste Hindu women of the Terai. A widow among the Terai Dalit (Musahar) can remarry without problem and there is less social stigma attached to mix up with men within or outside of the community. They can do the wage labor job outside home sharing hands with males in various activities. Women also have a significant role in all economic and income generation activities; they go to the market to sell goods and buy consumer items. They also play an important role in social functions and ritual matters. Generally they have a lower social status than men and only few women have decision-making powers within the community. Although, the position of the Musahar community in caste hierarchy was still low, the feeling of untouchable is not rigid as it was in the past. Therefore, it can be said that the social status of the Musahar women in the society is gradually improving.

The health of Musahar women is in very bad condition. Many of Musahar women work in the road construction and in brick factories. They are discriminated by their husband in their family as well as the Dalit in the society. Most of the woman was illiterate or didn't got any level of education

Above table shows that the condition of health, education, participation as well as social status of Musahars women is very bad compare to non Dalit women.

**CHAPTER-V**  
**ROLE OF MUSAHAR WOMEN IN HOUSEHOLD**  
**DECISION MAKING**

**5.1 Preamble**

Women constitute half of the population of the world. Hence their equal participation in any development activities is not only desirable but essential as well as speed up the development process. The Slogan of Development remains in paper only unless women participate equally in sharing the Fruits of the development.

Gender inequality still exists in Nepalese life where women lag far behind the men in economic, social and political position. Women's traditionally disadvantages status in the areas of education, health and on economic participation has restricted their mobility and divided them the basic needs/tools necessary for political participation.

In the Nepalese society the status and position of women depend on their economic condition. Women play significant role in the development of the nation. In the past women were considered a second grade citizen in most of the countries including Nepal.

Women cover more than half of the country's population but socio-economic and political condition of Nepali women is very poor due to the traditional values, which gives higher importance and favors to male. The Hindu ideology holds a rigid and discriminated concept about the roles of women unlike in Hindu communities. Women's activities are generally connected with inside the house, and men's in the outside sphere. The role of

men and women are interdependent, but women's overall burden is higher than that of men.

Women are relegated to lower status than their male counterparts. This subordination of women has been further perpetuated by the system of patriarchy. Bhasin(1993).

The status of Nepalese women has been deeply affected by various religious and traditional ill customs. Social norms and ill practices have seriously affected the role and status of Nepali women. According to Nepali belief birth of girl is the birth of bad luck. If a boy is born, the family rejoices, but if a girl is born the family laments. There is a general belief that if a man is not blessed with a son, the door to the heaven will not be opened to him. There is saying that "let it take time but let a son born" (Ghimire, 2009). A girl is not a desired child and so she does not get chance to education, bears low social and moral values in the society, performs the most arduous jobs throughout her life and, often possess a lower self image than her male counterparts.

Addressing the practical gender needs and strategic gender needs of the women has come to the fore for the fact that their status vis-à-vis men are relatively low in Nepal. This status of women can be attributed to the fact that Nepal is a male-dominated society, which has given way to innumerable disparities between men and women. According to a recent survey carried out, it showed that men are twice likely to be literate as women, with rural women and men being less literate than their urban counterparts (New Era, 2001).

The participation of women in decision making activities would definitely enhance the gender awareness status of women in the family and

society. Equality in society cannot be achieved either through slogans, demands, conflicts or through wishes and blessing along.

Women have very low participation in decision-making process, 70% of household related and external decision are entirely made by male member house.

According to Acharya and Bennett, Nepalese women are not only silent workers who take direction from men. Their marginal role in agriculture production also appears to be commensurate with the level of their labour input. According to Acharya “confinement to the inside domestic sphere does reduce women’s status measured by her input into the important category of decision while access to the outside increase it”.

The economic, demographic and social factors are found as the most important factors which directly or indirectly affect the decision making process. Musahar women’s involvement in the market economy lands them greater power in important matters. This can be attributed to the contribution of women towards the house hold income.

Low literacy rate, higher maternal mortality, lesser average age and malnutrition low wages for some work, negligible presence in the key post or politics administration and technical field are the few examples to justify the backwardness of Musahar women.

Marital status makes a woman totally dependent upon her husband because her right upon the family property is only through husband. Women are bounded by socio-cultural norms. Evens parents discriminate against the girl child. This is because of lack of knowledge, awareness and education.

Women and girls often receive less health care, education and training than men.

The average age at marriage for the Musahar women is 14-16 yrs. Most of the Musahar women are far behind in every walk of life. Musahar women are not allowed to talk, move, and join school or campus according their own choices. Dowry related crimes are very common in Musahar community. Most of Musahar women are married in their teen ages. They depend upon their husbands and very few of them are independent economically. They are tortured too much if they give birth of daughter only. Most of women are considered as machine of child production. They are not involved in decision making.

Musahar women, as elsewhere, hold the triple work responsibilities of reproduction, house holding and farm work. However, reproduction is not treated as work and house holding is not considered as productive work by government system. They are also suffering from the discriminatory practices in opportunity for education, personal mobility, which is required among other for skill development and independent decision making.

The fact is that women are immensely oppressed and supposed in our society. They are discriminated in all sectors of decision making and are not considered as main parts of development activities. Though men and women have equal right to live but there is social injustice due to which, women have weak decision making power. The status of women is low which reflects the weak decision making power in house hold as well as in the society. Decision making is an important factor which measures the relative status of household's members. Women are still excluded from the active role of decision making. Men have major role of decision making inside the

household as well as outside. Men ask women only for formality and their decision has not prominent part in any activities in household and in the society. Only very few women get opportunity to be leading decision maker.

Women are not getting opportunities to share their views and experiences in important forums. Women have to be exposed to income generation activities to make them dependent. Education can be one of the successful tools to fight against all sorts of discrimination and injustices. So the future generation needs to be educated and their skills have to be promoted to make them politically conscious and take various important responsibilities.

Gender issue currently is perhaps something most written, talked and heard about. Women have been the target group till now. Women should be the subject and the center of development because historically even today women have the triple role of reproductive, productive and community managing activities while women are involved in productive, reproductive and community politics activities. The reproductive role refers to child bearing and rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks within the home. The productive role refers to work payment in case or kind. It includes anything with a potential exchange value, whether for market or the home.

But in recent years people have started realizing the importance of women's participation in the economic as well as social development. The socio-economic standard of women greatly enhances the progressive development of a nation.

It is sure that women are capable and they have efficiency of making important and effective decisions if they are given a chance. As they are the

providers of basic household needs, they can bear the closest association with it.

## 5.2 Role of Musahar Women in Household Decision Making

### 5.2.1 Decision Making in Family Household Work

Women's main role is confined within the limited territory of agricultural and domestic activities. Although the men tend to consult with the women on many household matters, the final decision is ultimately be made the men. The rearing and caring of the child is usually done by women but men also help in it. The variety of food to be cooked for the meal is generally according to the husband's choice. In Hindu culture, women can only eat after serving meal to their husband. Women have to cook meal for their family in which the participation of men is generally nil. Most of the work in the house is done by women. So women are the one who does all the hard work but men who do nothing in the house are the one who makes decision.

**Table No. 12: Decision Making in Livestock Purchase**

S.N.	Decision-Maker	Final Decision maker	
		No. of Household	%
1.	Husband	16	55.17
2.	Wife	4	13.79
3.	Jointly	9	31.04
Total		29	100

Source: Field Work, 2012

As we see in the table no.12, both the husband and wife a household 55.17% and 13.79% each as the initiator of the idea of livestock purchase

whereas 31.04% of the household purchases with mutual agreement of both husband and wife. Most women do not have any role in the purchase involving huge sense of money.

### 5.2.2 Decision Making in Education

The literacy rate of Musahar community is very low. Due to poverty, boys have to start working from their early days. So they can't complete their study. Usually girls have to do household works so they were not sent to school. Due to various awareness programs, now a days girls are also sent to school. Though girls are sent to school, their higher education is decided by the parents. So the number of girls going to school has increased.

**Table No. 13: Decision Making In Education**

S.N.	Decision-Maker	Final Decision maker	%
		No. of Household	
1.	Husband	7	24.14
2.	Wife	4	13.79
3.	Jointly	18	62.07
Total		29	100

Source: Field Work, 2012

The table no. 13 shows that children enrolled in school are mostly i.e. 62.07% by mutual agreement of both husband and wife. This shows that Musahar people are also aware about the importance of education. So they have started to send their children both boys and girls to school.

### 5.2.3 Decision Making in Occupation

Musahar people mainly do labour work. They work in the brick factories, farm, construction work etc. The decision of division of work



between men and women of a family is taken by men. Mainly men works outdoor and women are bound to work inside house. Due to the poor economic condition, women also work outdoor. Though the burden of work done by women is more, from their household work they don't earn money whereas since men works less earns money. But now since women also work outdoor and earn money, the men tend to consult with the women on many household matters before taking decision.

The household head (male) alone have a greater control over household cash required from the members of the household. The female members however, show little control in this matter.

**Table No. 14: Decision Making In Occupation**

S.N.	Decision-Maker	Women Worker	%
		No. of Household	
1.	Husband	12	57.14
2.	Widow	4	19.05
3.	Forced (economic condition)	5	23.81
Total		21	100

Source: Field Work, 2012

The table no. 14 shows that among the 21 household having women working outdoor; most of the households i.e. 57.14% are usually with the permission of their husband. There are 19.05% widows who have to work to earn for their and their family's living. Some women i.e. 23.81% are even forced to work even though their husband doesn't want them to work due to poor economic conditions.

#### 5.2.4 Decision Making In Cultural Aspects

Musahar women have their own culture. Though they have own culture, they have started to follow the cultures of high caste people. In order to improve their social status, they have started to participate in the cultural functions of high caste people. Though they have started to participate in such functions, women have to ask their husband to participate. Even the decision of participation of women in their own cultural functions is made by men.

**Table No. 15: Women Participation in Cultural Activities**

S.N.	Yes/No	No. of Households	Percentage
1.	Yes	11	37.93
2.	No.	18	62.07
Total		29	100.00

Source: Field Work, 2012

The table no. 15 shows that women from 11 out of the 29 households participate in cultural activities. This shows that women of 62.07 % households don't participate in any cultural activities.

#### 5.2.5 Decision Making in Health

Due to lack of education and unawareness, Musahar people prefer Dhamis to doctors. Their blind folded belief on God and superstition is the major reason of people going to Dhamis than hospitals. Due to awareness, now number of people visiting hospitals has increased. The decisions regarding various health related problems of women are made by their husband. The condition Musahar women's health is still poor as their health is not given importance. The decision to take a pregnant wife to the hospital at the time of delivery of child or call sudeni at home is taken by husband.

Even after giving to birth a child, women is not given proper health care instead they have to go out to work for the earning of family. So their health status is very weak. The number of child to give birth i.e. family planning is decided by their husband. There is very little family where decision of having the number of child is taken by mutual understanding.

**Table No. 16: Decision Making on the Delivery in Hospital**

S. N.	Decision Maker	No. of Household	Percentage
1.	Husband	8	44.44
2.	Wife	3	16.67
3.	Both	7	38.89
	Total	18	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2012

The table no. 16 shows that among the 18 households going to the hospital for delivery, delivery of the child in hospital is decided by husband in 44.44% of the household of the study area whereas in 38.89% of the household the delivery in the hospital is decided by mutual agreement of both husband and wife. There are very few households where the decision for the delivery in hospital is taken by wife. This shows that most of the decision of delivery is made by male i.e. husband.

## CHAPTER – VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Summary:

According to the Hindu religion, people are divided into 4 major classes i.e. Brahmin, Chhetri, Vaishya and Shudra. Musahar is considered to be in Shudra class. Musahar is considered among the back warded group of Terai region. Actually Musahar people are considered as untouchable. It is too that extent that even people don't use the goods touched by such people. These people are lacking behind in all the fields i.e. in socio-economic, psychological and political aspects. On top of that, Musahar women are facing different problems, among which the major one is gender discrimination. In the society where even high caste women are lacking behind, the condition of Musahar women is even worse as they are from the untouchable group. Though there is democracy in our country, women are still not allowed to take decisions; rather their decisions are taken by men. The right of decision making of women is hindered by men. Worldwide, there have been different organizations conducting various awareness programmes to improve the condition of women. In this process, WID, WAD, GAD was established. There have been many INGOs and NGOs established to help women from gender discrimination and also encourage them to use their talent as a weapon to improve their social status and minimize the effect of gender discrimination. Likewise in Nepal, organizations have been established to improve the awareness among the women. Different programmes are being introduced to increase the participation of women and thus improve the socio-economic, psychological

and political status of women. These Musahar women have been considered as the topic of research. Such research has helped to understand the situation of Musahar women and thus conduct programmes accordingly to improve their socio-economic status. Such programmes have helped to bring change in the thinking of Musahar women regarding the importance of education, health, politics and sanitation. This has also brought confidence in Musahar women. Due to such awareness campaigns, Musahar women have started to send their children to schools. The number of girls going to school has also increased. With the time, it is seen that there has been some positive change in the living of Musahar women and thus helped to improve their status in the society to some extent. The sanitation has also improved. Now Musahar women are participating in the public affairs and express their opinion on the topic. There are few Musahar women who have also represented their community. Thus the research shows that slowly the status of Musahar women has improved and thus the progress of Musahar community is moving in the positive direction.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The women of Musahar are virtually overlooked in the society. Therefore, they remained backward. Empowerment of Musahar's women is possible only if they become conscious of their social, economical and political rights.

### **6.2.1 Musahar as a Terai Dalit Group**

The common features among the Terai Dalits are: i) They are Hindus and ii) They speak Maithili as their mother tongue. The Nepali, the national language of Nepal, is the second language for most of the Dalit groups of this site. Within this larger Terai Dalit category, the Musahar community is

living in the Terai areas, especially in the eastern and central region of Nepal.

### **6.2.2 Population**

The average household size of Janakpur municipality is higher (5.21 members and above) than the national level (4.88 members) & Musahar community of study site (4.48 members and above).

### **6.2.3 Economy**

In the study site, most of the households are agriculture landless. In terms of food sufficiency, 95% of the Musahar community of the study site has got chronic shortage of food throughout the year.

Women have a significant role in all economic and income generation activities; they go to the market to sell goods and buy consumer items. Many of Musahar women work in the road, building construction and in brick factories. However, large portion of such income are spent on unproductive activities like smoking, alcoholism, dowry etc. In the Musahar community, they take different types of domestic animals but in very few numbers. Old Women do more household work. The wood and domestic animal-dung are the main fuel resources even today. The women on average work for 13- 14 hours while the men work for 11- 12 hours. They are discriminated by their husband in their family as well as in their society. Attitude towards saving is minimal. When they earn little money some portion of that money goes to drinking domestic wine and so on.

### **6.2.4 Degree of Caste – Based Discrimination**

Though untouchables has been abolished by law in Nepal in 1963, our study shows persistence of untouchables in relation to the exchange of water

and food with communities considered to be higher in social hierarchy. In some cases the communal norms have been weakened at public places such as market areas, etc.

There is virtually little discrimination in schools in sitting together or while sharing and drinking water to each other. The intra-Dalit caste - based discrimination is very high, keeping intact their own vertical nature of caste hierarchy and maintaining strictly their own sense of superiority and inferiority in dealing with people of different communities.

Musahar women also play an important role in social functions and ritual matters. Generally they have a lower social status than men and only few women have decision-making powers within the community.

#### **6.2.5 Education**

Except for the other Terai Dalits the Musahar women has no level of education as a whole but it is moving towards the positive trend; in the study site there are two girls who was getting higher secondary education. The literacy rate of the Musahar women is the lowest than other Terai Dalits and thus poses a great challenge for the government to provide education for all by the year 2015.

#### **6.2.6 Health Status**

The health of Musahar women is very bad condition. There is biasness for the son in the society, the parents stop giving birth to child as and when their desire for the son is fulfilled. Certain mothers undergo under abortion on the suspicion of having conceived girl child. Some girls also die premature death on account of diseases and malnutrition as they are not given adequate care.

### **6.2.7 Sanitation**

A majority of the households of the Musahar community of study site have access to drinking water from tube-well and they have their own tube-wells on the basis of private or public within the community because they are not allowed to fetch water from private or public wells from other caste peoples. Out of 29 household there only 2 of the households of the study site have toilet facility. Most of them use an open space, bank of pond and road side areas for defecation. Most of the people of both adults and children use water only for washing hands before meal and after defecation. Nearly half of the total households in all areas throw household waste close to the household surroundings.

### **6.2.8 Traditional Leadership**

The Musahar community has its own traditional leadership locally known as "Mainjan" in the study site. In fact, the local leadership at the village level is known as "jawar" and many jawars made one Mainjan. Mainjan controls over all the jawars' activities and guide them about their role and functions. The Mainjan can decide on social matters and impose punishment for crimes and offenses like adultery, elopement, disputes over land and water, disrespect for traditional customs, etc.

### **6.2.9 Political Representation**

The representation of Terai Dalits groups in the local; district and national body were very low. Less than one percent of the total population of Terai Dalits was represented in the local body in the study site. Only two number of Musahar women has representation in the local level politics.



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**APPINDEX-1**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Role of Women in Musahar Community**

(A case study of Janakpur Municipality, ward No.7, Mushar Tole Dhanusha  
District)

**A. General Information**

1. Name: .....

2. Marital Status:

a. Married       b. Unmarried       c. Widow       d. Separate

3. Education:      a. Literate       b. Illiterate

4. If literate, level of education

- a. Non formal
- b. Primary (up to class 5)
- c. Lower secondary upto 7
- d. Secondary upto 10
- e. SLC pass
- f. Intermediate
- g. Bachelor and above

5. Husband's literacy:

a. Literate       b. Illiterate

6. If literate, level of education

- a. Non formal
- b. Primary (up to class 5)
- c. Lower secondary up to 7
- d. Secondary up to 10
- e. SLC pass
- f. Intermediate
- g. Bachelor and above

7. Your occupation:

- a. Agriculture
- b. Business
- c. Service
- d. Household work
- e. Others .....

8. Husband occupation

- a. Agriculture
- b. Business
- c. Service
- d. Household work
- e. Others.....

9. Types of family: a. Nuclear  b. Joint

10. Total no. of family member in the household

Year	0-9	10-14	15-59	60 above
Male				
Female				

11. How many children do you have?

a. Son

b. daughter

c. None

### Information Regarding Household Decision Making

#### B. Economics Aspect

1. Landholding Cultivated:

a. Khet land (in kattha).

b. Bari (in kattha)

2. How many hours do you work in *khet* or *bari*/other work per day? .....

3. How many hours do you husband work in *Khet* or *Bari* /other work per day? .....

4. Cropping pattern

	Summer	Winter
Area	.....	.....
Crop	.....	.....
Production	.....	.....

5. If food sufficient for the whole year

a. Yes

b. No.

6. If not, for how many month, it is enough from your own production?

a. less than 3 months

b. upto 6 months

c. upto 9 months

d. Whole year

7. If surplus, do you sell it?

a. Yes

b. No.

8. If there is food deficit in your family, how do you cope with this situation?

- a. Agri-labour       b. Wage labour   
c. Others specify .....

9. Number of Livestock:

- a. Cow       b. Ox       c. Buffalo   
d. Goat       e. Chicken/Hen       f. Sheep

10. Who invests for livestock's?

- a. Self       b. Husband       c. both       d. others.....

11. How much do you earn yearly in total?

- a. Upto 1000       b. Upto 5000   
c. Upto 10,000       d. Above 10,000

12. Who keeps you income?

- a. Self       b. Husband   
c. Mother-in-law       d. Father-in-law       e. Others (specify).....

13. Do you save some part of your income?

- a. Yes       b. No.

14. If yes, how much saving do you have monthly?

- a. Up to 100       b. Up to 500   
c. Up to 1000       d. Up to 5000       e. Above 5000

15. Who keeps this saving?

- a. Self                       b. Husband                       c. Others.....

16. How much do you have to spend per month in total?

- a. Up to 100                       b. Up to 500   
c. Up to 1000                       d. Up to 5000                       e. Above 5000

17. In which sector, do you spent most part of your income.

- a. Health                       b. Education   
c. Food                       d. Cloth                       e. Others.....

18. Do you have any property in your name?

- a. Yes                       b. No.

19. If yes, what types of property?

- a. Land                       b. Cash   
c. Housing                       d. Investment

20. If there is saving, where do you invest your savings?

- a. School                       b. NGOs   
c. Training institutes                       d. Livestock                       e. Bank balance

### **C. Health Aspect**

1. Where did you get treatment, when you suffered from illness?

- a. Health post                       b. Private clinic   
c. Nursing home                       d. Government hospital   
e. Dhami/Jhankri (Guruwa)

2. Do you use family planning measures?

- a. Yes                       b. No.

3. Where did occur your delivery?

- a. Home                       b. Hospital

**D. Educational Aspects**

1. Do your children go to school?

- a. Yes                       b. No

2. Are boys given priority over girls to go to school?

- a. Yes                       b. No                       c. Equal

3. Do you think that girls should go to school?

- a. Yes                       b. No.

4. If not why?

.....

5. Are you participating in Adult literacy classes?

- a. Yes                       b. No.

**E. Social Aspect**

1. What kind of marriage does you had/like?

- a. Arrange                       b. Love                       c. Other.....

2. Are you a member of any community groups?

- a. Yes                       b. No.



3. If yes, which group?

a. Mother group

b. User Group

c. Community Group

d. Others .....

4. What types of membership have you got in your community group?

a. Common membership

b. Executive membership

5. Do you express your opinion in the meeting of community group?

a. Yes

b. No

6. Is there any discrimination in the society?

a. Yes

b. No

7. Are you people treated as second class citizen in the society?

a. Yes

b. No

8. Do you suffer from mental, physical assaults when you go to fetch water from public water tapes or wells?

A Yes

b. No

## **F. Training**

1. Have you received any training?

a. Yes

b. No

2. What types of training .....

3. Did you receive income generating trainings?

a. Yes

b. No.

4. Where did you get that training? .....

**G. Political Aspects:**

1. Are you involved in any political party?

- a. Yes                       b. No

2. If yes, who suggests to involve?

- a. Self                       b. Following members                       c. Husband

3. Have you know been participated any political programme?

- a. Yes                       b. No

4. If yes, who encouraged your to participate?

- a. Self                       b. Others .....

**Program Level Issues**

1. In your opinion, what is the important factor for equal opportunity of husband and wife in household level decision making?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. What should be done by the family member to create equal opportunity in decision making?

.....  
.....  
.....

3. What should be done by the government policy for creating equal opportunity in decision making?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**Decision Making Activities**

<b>S. N.</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Other male in the family</b>	<b>Other female in the family</b>
1.	No. of Children to give birth					
2.	Buying food (deficit)					
3.	Spend in your home					
4.	Treatment (Family)					
5.	Family planning method					
6.	Occur your delivery					
7.	Children's education					
8.	Children's marriage					
9.	To take training					

## APPINDEX-2

### PHOTOS



Researcher with respondents



An old Musahar with family member



An old Musahar women with family



A couple with small family living in bamboo +mud + thatched house



A couple with their big family members and Researcher