

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Nepal is a landlocked country situated in the lap of Himalaya and is located between the latitude 26° 22" to 30° 27" north and longitude 80° 4" to 88° east and elevation ranges from 60 to 8848 meters. The average length being 885km east to west and average breadth is about 193km north to south. The country is bordering between the two most popular countries of world the republic of India and the people republic of china with area 1, 47,181 sq. km which is 0.03 percent of the world area and 0.3percent of Asia region.

The population of musahar is spreaded in South Asia. The total population of musahar in world is 2,586,057. They are spreaded in India (Bihar,Uttar Pradesh,Orissa, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand). In Nepal they are spreaded in eastern and mid terai. The total population of Musahar in Nepal is 234,490(0.76%) (census2011, CBS)

The Mushahar is the second largest group in terms of population size among the Tarai Dalits. In the 2001 census, they numbered 172,434 in the total Dalit population of Nepal. The Musahar population with more than 10,000 is found in six districts but their heavy concentration is noted in Siraha and Saptari district the population is 31,519 and 29,739 respectively. See table 1.1

They are economically exploited and backward, politically voiceless, socially humiliated and treated as untouchable.Nepal is recognized as cultural diversity, multicast, multilingual country in Asia. In the geographic diversity and varied climatic condition, 248 million people of more than 60 caste/ethnic groups are accommodated in the country. They have own social cultural organization with which maintain their need and necessities. There is no legal division of casts however it is isonomy of social system that same communities are treated at low caste/untouchable caste and regarded as second class human beings.Their lack of participation in governance and development activities raised the serious question of democracy and

human rights. Some of such communities are Kami, Damai, Sarki, Badi, Kumal etc in hill and Musahar, Chamar, Majhi, Dusad, Khatwe, Dhobi, Dom etc in Terai.

Table 1: Musahar Population by District

District	Total Population	Male	Female
Siraha	31519	16032	15487
Saptari	29739	15076	14663
Sunsari	21398	10885	10513
Morang	17852	9195	8657
Mahottari	18226	9331	8896
Dhanusa	15744	8131	7613

Source: Census 2001

Nepal's history is one of syncretism of different culture, religions, languages and people. According to Prof. Bista, it doesn't have an example of deliberate formal domination of one by another.

Nepal's caste system is a part of the caste system of the Indian sub-continent that originated thousands of years ago. Twenty five hundred years ago Gautam Buddha fought against caste-based discrimination, including untouchability, in the Indian subcontinent. Caste system in Nepal began to develop with the restructuring of the Newar society of the Kathmandu Valley by King Jayasthiti Malla in the 14th century. Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana, the founder of 104-year long autocratic Rana rule, promulgated the Muluki Ain ("National Code") of Nepal in 1854. It divided all the Nepalese people in fourfold caste hierarchy: (1) Tagaddhari ("Sacred thread wearing" or "Twice-born"), (2) Matawali (Liquor drinking), (3) Pani nachalne choi chhito halnu napanne ("Water unacceptable but no purification required, if touched" or "Touchable Low Castes"), and (4) Pani nachalne choi chito halnu parne ("Water unacceptable and purification required, if touched" or "Untouchable Low Castes"). The Muluki Ain (National Code of Nepal) of 1963 abolished caste based untouchability, but in practice it remained unchanged. After the People's Movement-I of 1990 and People's Movement-II of 2006, Prime Minister, Cabinet and Parliament/Legislature passed several resolutions to abolish it, but its practice remain unchanged. Scores of terminologies, including derogatory, in Khas Nepali language

are used to refer to Dalits. These include "paninachalne" ("water polluting"), "acchoot" ("untouchables"), "avarna," "doom," "pariganit," "tallo jat" ("low caste"), "Harijan" ("god's children"), "uppechhit" ("ignored"), "utpidit ("oppressed"), "pacchadi pareka" ("lagging behind"), "downtrodden," "oppressed castes," "low caste," "minorities," "excluded group." In the National Dalit Commission's Proposed Bill, 2003 (page 2) it is stated:'Dalit community' refers to communities identified in Annex 1, who have been left behind in social, economic, educational, political and religious spheres and deprived from human dignity and social justice due to caste based discrimination and untouchability.

Dalits are discriminated on the basis of caste for centuries. Due to the centuries discrimination they are still backward not only from the economically, socially but also educationally. Caste discrimination is vertically and horizontally. Dalits are discriminated by the so-called upper class vertically and within dalits there is discrimination horizontally. Society has divided Dalit community into two categories as Hill and Terai Dalit. Within the Terai Dalit community Musahar community is considered in 5th rank in the social practices (see table1.2). Though, Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 considered caste discrimination as a punishable crime

Table 1.2:Social Order of Dalits

Social Ranking	Caste Groups
1st	Dhobi
2nd	Tatma
3rd	Khatwe
4th	Bantar
5th equal	Dushad
	Chamar
	Musahar
8th	Pathharkatta
9th	Dom
10th	Halkhor

Source: NNDSWO: 2006

Educational status of Dalit community is very low compared to the national literacy rate. They are marginalized in terms of social, economic and education.

Representation of the Dalit community is almost nil in the state machinery. Poverty is one of the identities of them. Within the Terai Dalit community Dhobi has high literacy rate 33.6 (male-46.5 and female-19.1) and Musahar has lowest literacy rate 6.9 (male-9.8 and female-3.8) for details see table 1.3

Table 1.3:Percentage of Literacy rate among Dalits

Caste Group	Literacy Rate		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes
Dhobi	46.5	19.1	33.6
Halkhor	38.1	21.7	30.1
Bantar	35.9	10.2	23.4
Tatma	33.0	10.2	22.2
Dushad	28.5	8.6	19.1
Chamar	27.9	9.0	18.9
Khatwe	26.3	7.1	17.2
Dom	14.9	5.2	10.3
Musahar	9.8	3.8	6.9

Source: Census 2001, Central Bureau of Statistics

Following the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal in 1990, voice was raised in favour of the subdued and oppressed sections of the society. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal in 1990 declared discrimination on the basis of caste as punishable. Subsequently, a Committee for the Upliftment of the Dalits Upekshit Utpidit Dalitbarg Bikas Samiti under the chairmanship of the Minister of Local Development was established. In addition, the Dalit Committee was formed at the national level in 2002 for the improvement of the conditions of the Dalits.

1.2Statement of the problem

Nepal is a country based on agriculture. The increase in population and decrease of cultivation land every year is limiting their employment in the country.

Every country has its own language, religion, culture and traditions prevalent among the people. The country identity is based in the cultural identities of peoples who live in her territory. Many community of Nepal are still backward. It was in 1963 Nepal introduced the Law of the Land (Naya Muluki Ain) and with it the caste system got

formally abolished. However, the hierarchically structured caste system has not changed much. The prevalent practice of untouchability substantiates this very fact. Still castes are arranged hierarchically—according to the extent of their purity and the purity is expressed in terms of pollution, interdining and intermarriage. Dalits (untouchables), who are mostly Hindus, are still discriminated against by the upper caste Hindus because of the deep-rooted beliefs fostered ironically by the religion itself. They have the lowest social status in the Hindu social structure. They cannot be called a homogenous group as their heterogeneity extends to language, religion and culture. They are divided into three broad regional groups:

1. Hill Dalits (Kami, Sarki, Damai, Gaine and Badi)
2. Terai Dalits (Tatma, Musahar, Bantar, Dushad (Paswan), Dhobi, Chamar (Ram), Chidimar, Dom and Halkhor)
3. Newar Dalits (Kusule, Kasai, Pode, Chyame and Halahulu).

However, studies show that the life of the Dalits in the Terai region of Nepal, including Dom, Dusadh, Musahar, Chamar, Tatma, Khatwe and Dhobi is even more deplorable than the life of the hill Dalits. They are lagging far behind the hill Dalits in education, health and several other sectors. Of the Terai Dalits, the socio-economic conditions of the women are even worse. Virtually, they are Dalits of the Dalits.

The caste discrimination appears to be relatively less in the Eastern Region than in Western Nepal. A close look, however, reveals that untouchability continues to exist in this part too. Terai districts and some districts in the hills and mountain like Illam and Taplejung are found to be more open and liberal in this respect. Untouchability exists at Fidim Bazaar also in Panchthar district. It is practised much in this district, which is dominated by Chhetri and Brahmin population. In Limbu settlements, untouchables are not allowed to enter a house but they are not much discriminated. Some Limbus like Angadambe and Nembang are, however, much orthodox like Chhetris and Brahmins. In Dasai, untouchables have to clean Mukhiyas' (Headmen's) houses and courtyards. Damais have to play musical instruments during Prasad at Phoolpati and at funeral processions.

The untouchables of Terai origin including Doms and Mehtars ("Sweepers") are treated inhumanly. Even at towns like Bhadrapur, Biratnagar, Rajbiraj and Janakpur they cannot enter restaurants, while the untouchables of the hills are allowed to eat inside them.

Three general elections of HoR were completed after restoration of democracy in 1990. In the first General Election, out of the total 1,345 candidates for the 205 seats of HoR 18 (1.33%) candidates were the Dalits. Only one (0.48%) Dalit candidate won the election. In mid-term election in 1994 out of the total 1,442 candidates, 19 (1.31%) dalit candidates contested the election; none of the Dalit candidate won the election. In General Election of 1999, Dalit candidates comprised 4% of the total candidates but again none of them won the election. Clearly, insignificant number of Dalit candidates contesting election from party tickets and independent Dalit candidates comprising 27% of Dalit candidates is discouraging. It is evidence that political parties are not willing to provide tickets to the Dalit political leaders/workers. Dalits are invisible in the Parliament. Except a Dalit member of HoR in 1991, there was always a zero representation of Dalits in the HoR in General Elections of 1994 and 1999. Dalits representation in executive body of the state is not better than in the legislative body. Dalits are in zero in leadership position in scientific and professional organizations/associations, civil society organizations, humanrights organizations, media, councils, industrial and commercial corporate sector, district administration. Dalits are invisible in central committees of all political parties.

Some NGO/INGOs have attempted to conduct researches on them but have failed to capture their anthropological aspect. The Terai Dalits constitute over 35 percent of the total Dalit population, which is no doubt a sizable population. This suggests the need for extensive researches from an anthropological perspective. Researches can pave the way for raising the living standards of these communities. Without uplifting their socio-economic status, overall development of the country will remain a mere illusion.

The Mushar community is such group of lesser known and backward minority people of the country. So it is essential to undertake a study about this community. The lack

of scientific research and timely intervention to bring about improvement in living standard of musahar community it is observed that their socio-economic condition is rather degrading day by day. If the situation is not improved the existence of Mushar will be at stake

Although the present study might not be sufficient to cover all aspects of Mushar community, it can be hoped that this study will be able to identify some of their problems and various other dimension of the community of the study area.

1.3Rationale

The Musahar community also known as backward people are marginalized, backward, exploited, illiterate poor, unclean, politically voiceless and considered culturally inferior to higher castes or communities. They settle at places which are at considerable distance from the house of other castes. In their locality they live by themselves with not even a single household of other higher castes.

In most of the villages, the Dalit castes of people are made to live in separate tole (counte) and thus a barrier is created in communication between the so-called Dalit and non-Dalit caste people. They have been marginalized in the administrative and political structure of the country, including in the Royal Nepal Army and the police. They do not have any place in judiciary and in decision making process. There is hardly any representation of the Dalits in the lower house of the parliament called House of Representatives. In the Upper House called National Assembly various political parties and the king nominated only 3 Dalits. Representation of the Dalit women in the political parties and administrative structure is almost non-existent.

Owing to illiteracy and ignorance, people believe in superstitions like previous birth and rebirth. They think they are born untouchable as a result of their pre-birth. They dream that if they observe religious discipline and serve high-caste people in this birth they will be born as touchable in the next birth. In this context, it is important that the government try to make them educated and conscious. The untouchables suffer from inferiority complex as well as economic adversity. As a result, they have no positive attitude towards education. Hence, the government needs to implement special

education program for the uneducated and provide reservation of jobs in government/semi-government agencies to the educated in this community. They have come down to the level of untouchable for sticking to their traditional professions. Hence they should be imparted training in the country or abroad by the government to modernize their professions, make them competitive and income-generating and render them respectable.

It is necessary to bring in change in the national educational policy and make education easily accessible and vocational. Reading materials which encourage caste discrimination should be banned. Radio, TV and other mass media should not carry programmes which may give rise to caste animosity and segregation. They should not broadcast or publish things related to untouchability and detrimental to caste equality. Divisive quotes like "four classes and thirty-six castes" should be omitted. The untouchable castes could not fight against slavery to high-caste people owing to unscientific and orthodox values, launch organized movement for caste liberation and vanquish feudal practices. As a result, they are lost in religious illusion. To promote them through education and awareness meetings, documentary films, posters and other activities should be organized in different localities. The problem of untouchability is found to be more acute amidst people deprived of interaction owing to the lack of transport and communication. The programmes mentioned above can prove more effective in such a situation. It is necessary to develop transport and communication in remote areas and provide people facilities like hospitals, high schools, libraries, clubs, post-office and telephones. These facilities may help them get rid of evil manners and customs.

Constitution

Article 14 of the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 has guaranteed right against untouchability and caste discrimination and declared caste discrimination as a punishable crime. Article 17 has guaranteed education right to free from the State up to secondary level. Article 21 has guaranteed right to social justice for dalits who are also economically, socially and educationally backward, to participate in the state mechanism on the basis of proportional inclusive principles.

Article 33 (h) has posed responsibility upon state to pursue a policy of establishing the rights of all citizens to education, health, housing, employment and food sovereignty.

Article 35 of the Interim Constitution has categorically outlined state policy of raising the standards of living of the general public through the development of infrastructures such as education, health, transportation, housing, and employment of the people of all regions, by equitably distributing investment of economic resources for balanced development of the country.

The existing constitution and laws guarantee caste equality and freedom. Only if column No 10 (ka) of civil code is strictly enforced to punish the act of discriminating persons on caste ground in utilizing public places, caste equality can be achieved to a great extent. In addition, it is also desirable to make legal provisions for strictest punishment and payment of compensation if someone practices untouchability and makes discrimination on caste ground.

The feeling of mutual goodwill is not found to exist among untouchables owing to caste discrimination within the community. It has weakened their struggle against the discrimination made by high-caste people and also the government. Instead of fighting for their liberation some of them claim themselves superior to others. The educated and conscious among untouchables should explain to their fellowman that they are not untouchable by their traditional professions. They should try to organize them, help them in getting rid of conservative and unscientific social traditions and establish equality and freedom. The untouchables should also try on their own to give up inferiority complex, get educated and inculcate moral sense within them in order to compete with high-cast people in every field.

Most of Musahar inhabit in the area of Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Rauthat, Bara,

Generally Musahar houses are made of locally available materials such as bamboo straw, khar. Most of the houses have single large room. This single room is used for cooking, sleeping and storing their lives stock. Their houses are small and low in height. Their daily life is different from that of other caste. They wake up early in the

morning and go to open field for defecation around the village early in the morning. They don't wash their hands and mouth. They are still very far from the development and most of them are illiterate. They don't send their children to school. So the NGO and GO should launch an effective programme to raise the literacy rate among them. They should also be trained to participate in economic activities so that their living standard will be improved. With this view I wanted to undertake the problem of musahars by taking this municipality as the study area.

1.4 Objectives of the study

I General Objective

The general objective of the study is to explore the socioeconomic condition of Musahar community of Rajbiraj Municipality of Saptari.

II Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To analyze the socio-economic condition of Musahar community of Rajbiraj Municipality.
- To examine the cause of backwardness of Musahar community.
- To assess some strategies for the well-being of Musahar community.

1.5 Limitation of the Study.

The study has following limitation

- I. The study is based on small sample size of Rajbiraj Municipality. Thus the finding may not be generalized to the district and national level.
- II. The study had financial constraints
- III. Simple statistical tools were used to analyze the data.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one has presented the introduction, Background, Rationale, Objectives, Limitation of the study. The second chapter deals with Literature Review. The chapter three is related to methodology of the research report ,study area, Research Design, Nature and Source of data, Sampling procedure, Techniques and tools of data collection, observation technique ,informants interview technique, Focused Group Discussion, Questionnaire. The four chapter is related to data analysis and interpretation. The fifth chapter consists of summary, conclusion & recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-lingual nation exhibiting cultural diversity. Nepal Over the centuries, has developed a rigid hierarchical society based on “high” and “low”, “touchable” and “untouchable” castes and dalits occupy the bottom of Hindu caste hierarchy(NHRC, 2003).The total dalit population of Nepal is 3,030,067 with 1,500,367 male and 1,529,700 female which is 13.33% (Census report,CBS2001). According to Dr. Bidyanath Koirala, “Dalit” refers to a group of people who are religiously, culturally, socially and economically oppressed. He believes that Dalit is not a caste group but a politically coined group used to refer to a socially backward community in Nepal. Similarly, National Dalit Commission (NDC) has defined dalit community as racial community who is the most backward in social, economic,educational and political as well as religious sector due to the racial discrimination and untouchability and is abstained from enjoying the dignity and social justice.

A number of the Dalit castes exist in Nepal. In the hills, the major Dalit castes are Kami, Damai, Sarki, Badi and Gaine. On the other hand, the major Terai Dalit castes include Dom, Halkhor, Dusadh, Halkhor, Chamar, Tatma, Khatwe, Musahar and Bantar. The National Dalit Commission has identified the following 22 major castes in the Dalit category of which 5 castes exist in the hills and the remaining 17 in the Terai.

Dalit Castes of Hill Origin

1. Gandharb (Gaine)
2. Pariyar (Damai, Darji, Suchikar, Nagarchi, Dholi, Huduke)
3. Badi
4. Vishwokarma (Kami, Lohar, Sunar, Oda, Chunara, Parki, Tamata)
5. Sarki (Mijar, Charmkar, Bhool)

Dalit Castes of Terai Origin

6. Kalar
7. Kakihaya
8. Kori
9. Khatik
10. Khatwe (Mandal, Khang)
11. Chamar (Ram, Mochi, Harijan, Rabidas)
12. Chidimar
13. Dom (Marik)
14. Tatma (Tanti, Das)
15. Dusadh (Paswan, Hajra)
16. Dhobi (Rajak)
17. Pattharkatta
18. Pasi
19. Bantar
20. Musahar
21. Mestar (Halkhor)
22. Sarbhang (Sarbariya)

Musahars are like nomads who migrated from Chhotnagapur plateau of Bihar and have been staying in Nepal for 6-7 generations. The culture they follow is more or less similar to that of the Munda tribe of Chhotnagar. However, some Mushars of the some area disagree with this belief and claim themselves to be an indigenous community living in Nepal for thousands of years. (NNDSWO; 2006)

Some Musahars trace their origin to the legend of the low caste woman Sabari a devotee of god 'Ram' in the great Hindu epic the Ramayan. By virtue of her love and devotion of Lord Ram who is regarded as in carnation of Lord Vishnu, she came to occupy an exalted position in the galaxy of great devotees (Moktan; 1997).

In the initial Vedic period, there was hardly any concept of 'untouchability' between one *varna* with the other. In regard to untouchability, the noted enlightened master Swami Vivekanand used to say quite frequently that the so called *don't touchism* is a

form of mental disease and the more he grew older the more he was convinced about this truth. Therefore, to get rid of this problem he often suggested that the Hindu ethos should be guided by *Atmavat Sarvabhuteshui*.e. looking upon all beings as our own self.

Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and Pacific (CIRDAP) has carried out a study on the issue of landlessness in the following developing countries of Asia Pacific region like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand. The study has stated that the speedy decline in the economic condition for a particular group of the rural is due to the decline of the control over land by this group, commenting upon importance of land asset in these countries.

The study concludes that most countries of south and south east asia agriculture is predominant sector of the economy. Thus access to land is a crucial factor in terms of livelihood, wealth and living standard of rural households. Historically, man's influence or prosperity solely depends upon his control over farm land.

Landlessness is often considered to be both the cause and sympathy of poverty and financial indebtedness. On the basis of data and study in the above countries there is increasing trend in rural landlessness in these countries.10.4% people are landless in Nepal.(Acharya, 1997).

There are very few studies on national level to tell the magnitude of rural landlessness in Nepal. Whatever are there are also not very clear to explain therefore is confusing.

The study regarding the cause of landlessness and rural poverty in Nepal argues that defective land tenure system, unbalanced economic development and poor resource endowment of the landless households could be identified as the principal cause of landlessness and poverty in Nepal.

Moreover the study points out that the migration of people from the hills to the Terai in search of arable land has further aggravated the problem.

Nepal is a land of cultural diversity; it is recognized as multicast and multilingual country in Asia. In this context, Nepal is usually called a 'ethnic turn table' in Asia(Gautam & Thapa, 1994) . The racial religious, cultural social systems etc. are diverse

according to the diversity in geography on the basis of body structure, language, progeny, resident of Nepal is assumed to be 'Tibeto-Nepalese' and 'Indo-Nepalese' (Dahal and Chhetri, 2051)

Shrestha & Singh (1984) have presented the Musahar as illiterate, hardworking simple and peace living. Though they are farmers by occupation, they don't have land of their own and therefore they work in the field of landlord. Their ways of living is still primitive. They further argue that Musahars have monogamy joint family system.

Musahars are agricultural labourer working in others land and also working as house servant living in small huts and very backward in education (Upadhyaya, 2041).

Musahars are least known people. There are very few study carried out by the Nepalese and foreign scholar. On Musahar prof. bista has mentioned little on Musahar people on his monumental volume of 'people of Nepal.' Similarly in his slim volume of the 'sabai jatko phulbari' has mentioned that Musahar Community is a tribal so called low caste community. Majority of that community are involving in agricultural sector as wage labours and some of them as tenant. Some of them are involved in non-agricultural sectors such as industrial labour.

There is no concrete existence related to historical ancestor but according to their oral history they claim that they were migrated from India to this region approximately 400 years ago. There is no evidence of actual period of their migration to Nepal from India. It is believed that they started to settle permanently in this region two centuries ago.

Musahar house pattern is very simple huts. They are very low in height and made from locally available material like bamboo straw, mud, khar(thatch) etc. Supporting the fact, it can be referred to the book written by Indian scholar Rabindranath Mukherjee, the social anthropology. Mukharjee suggested categories of Musahar community into two parts according to their life style. Some are still nomads and mobile for hunting animal birds and collecting foods for survival and some other who began to settle in permanent form.

Musahars are divided in two distinct group according to their genealogy; Maghaiya and Tirhutiya. One major difference between them being that Maghaiya bury the dead body while Tiruthya perform cremation of cadaver.

According to the Nepal Government formal office concerning ethnic and minorities, the national committee for development of Nationalities, there are 60 ethnic/tribal minorities. Each such tribal minorities have their own cultural practices, ritual ceremonies, tradition, custom, religious belief, folklove etc.

Every community have their own norms, values, customs, language test and festival reward and motivation for maintaining social order and harmony or the system of dynamic equilibrium and reciprocity in society.

Nepal is the land of cultural diversity; it is recognized as multicast and multilingual country in Asia. There are very few studies on national level to tell the magnitude of landlessness in Nepal. According to the National Planning Commission Survey (1976/77), out of 4037 rural sample households 10.35% were entirely landless. The Survey found the magnitude of landless households was lowest (2.75%) in hills and the highest in the Terai (18.25%). The Asian regional team for employment promotion (ARTEP) mission report of 1974 reports that 23% of the sample households in the terai and less than 1% in the hills were landless.

The Nepalese *Muluki Ain* (1854) was written by Jang Bahadur Rana after his European tour. It codified social codes in practice for several centuries in Nepal that was rooted in *Vyavahāra* (traditional Hindu legal procedure), *Prāyaścitta* (avoidance and removal of sin) and *Ācāra* (the customary law of different castes and communities). These three are collectively called *Dharmaśāstra*. A traditional Hindu king was duty-bound to put these precepts into practice.

Muluki Ain divided Nepalese citizens into two castes "the caste whose water is allowed to remain pure" and "the caste whose water is defiled". Chiefs of the various castes were entrusted with sorting out issues related to their own castes. The heads of *Kamis* (blacksmiths) and *Sarkis* (tanners and cobblers) were called *Mijhars*. Similarly the head of *Damai* (tailors and musicians) was called *Nagarchi*. Castes of the first

(non-defiling) category also had their chiefs. In this way community members might not need to go to courts or government offices to settle minor legal matters. Mijhars and Nagarchis, however, added to injustice and exploitation meted out to their respective communities. They were obviously influenced by their masters' natures. Like their masters, they never hesitated to do injustice against their own communities. No appeal was heard against them.

Constituting some 20 per cent of the total population in Nepal, the untouchables, popularly known as Dalits, remained exploited for centuries. The Dalit communities have not only been discriminated in the Hindu caste hierarchy but they have also been suppressed by the State. In the Nepalese history, an account of the exploitation of the Dalit communities by the State dates back to the mediaeval period in the 13th century when King Jayasthiti Malla formalized the caste system. Because of the State support to discriminatory practices, the Dalits forfeited their right to education and they were denied of the right to acquire property. They were discouraged from constructing good house and touch persons of higher castes. So much so that certain sections of the Dalits were almost forced to live either in the outskirts of the villages or in the filthy slums.

Despite the efforts made by the State to improve the conditions of the Dalits, literacy rate among these people is as low as 10 per cent. Among the women, the literacy rate is merely 3.2 per cent. Life expectancy of the Dalits is as low as 42 per cent. Half of the Dalit children are victims of malnutrition.

Caste system is also a form of exploitation. Hence, the problems of untouchables cannot be studied separately from the exploitation. It is the poverty which compels people to become untouchables and accept this status and live a neglected, humiliating life. According to a survey made by an international non-government agency (INGO), 42 per cent of the population in Nepal is below poverty line; of them 35 percent belongs to untouchable caste groups. It is time for the government to formulate and implement effective measures to promote the economic situation of the untouchables who cannot fulfill even the minimum basic needs of their life and are facing extreme poverty.

Musahars are a so-called low-caste community, who have been given the name “Musahar” because of the fact that they used to maintain their living by catching and eating the rats (local name “Musha”) found in the open field. After the construction of the road connecting East-West highway to Siraha Headquarter, the Mushars were resettled in around 70,000 square feet of land in Sanaitha Village with the help of Mr. Krishna Charan Shrestha (Social Worker) and German Nepalese Help Association (GNHA). During re-settlement, some land was given and small huts were made for them.

According the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003/04, Terai Dalit has the highest rate of incidence of poverty, which is 49.2%, followed by the Hill Dalits with 44.9%. In the past land yielded power and power yielded land. Even now land is the main capital asset in Nepal. Landlessness is high among the Dalits. Dr. Shiva Sharma, an expert on labour, estimated that 85 to 90% of Madhesi Dalits are landless. Among the Musahar, only 3 to 5% of them may have a piece of land. Ownership of both irrigable and dry land is highest among the "high caste" (5.63 Ropanis of irrigable and 6.64 Ropanis of dry land) and least by the Dalits (2.05 Ropanis of irrigable and 4.76 Ropanis of dry land).

A study done by the Team Consult found that majority of Dalit households have food deficiency. The percentage is highest in mountain with 89.66% in mountain, followed by 56.73% in the Hills and 53.61% in the Terai. A report prepared by the Team Consult revealed that 60.4% of wage laborers comprise Dalits and percentages of Bahun-Chhetris (Tagadhari) and indigenous peoples (Matwali) are quite low. During fieldwork for this study, respondents reported that Dalit women belonging to 8 Dalit castes are discriminated and exploited by non-Dalits by paying them low wages. Respondents from Chidimar community reported about sexual abuse of Dalit women laborers.

Pokharel Bhabani in his study '*An Ethnographic Study of the Musahar of Kharji Kovara of Morang District*' (1997) focused on the ethnography of the Musahar community. The study said that Musahar are back warded people. They all live in lower standard way of life. They have been neglected in all aspects of social life.

Economically they are also poor. They can be called backward and under developed people who have less chance in every aspect of social life.

Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO) has done an *'Ethnographic Study of Terai Dalits in Nepal'* (2006). The study is focused on the Terai Dalits with emphasis on their ethnography. The study also includes the ethnography of Musahar community. It shows that adult literacy rate of Musahar community is the lowest (6.9 percent) among all groups in Nepal. The dropout rate among the children belonging to this community is very high and is more so among the girls. But the study doesn't focus on the causes of the low educational participation.

Manish Pokharel's study in Paklihwa Nawalparasi District (1998) to identify the social, economic conditions of the Musahar and to find out the educational status showed that male domination is deeply rooted so that women do not have authority and right of inheritance. They are very backward in the education sector but now they have started a new trend of sending sons to schools but they think that sending daughters to school is merely the wastage of time and money. They believe that daughters are born to serve others and not to be educated. The study shows that there is a huge gap between male and female education.

A book written by Madhusudhan Pandeya entitled *'Nepalka Dalitharu (Dalits of Nepal)'* (2062 B.S.) has explained about their ethnography of Musahar which simply includes introduction, occupation, population, surnames, tradition, culture, educational status. He further writes that Musahar community has the perception that to study is the main function of the elite group who has well economic condition. Due to such perception to education, most of Musahar are still illiterate as well as representation in the state machinery is almost nil and they are limited to the peon, guard, sweeper etc. level. He has revealed that landlessness, unemployment, low income, etc. are the main cause of poverty among the Musahars.

Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO) has done a *'Demographic and Socio-economic Survey of Dalits'* (2006) in selected six districts which covers all development regions of the country. The survey report focused on

the demographic and socio-economic status. The report shows that more than 72 percent of the Dalits are illiterate in Saptari. Finding of the report indicates that adverse economic condition is the main cause of the not attending school.

A study conducted by Foundation for Economic and Social Change (FESC) in Saptari district of Nepal shows that 78 per cent of the Dalits are in extremely difficult situation for the lack of adequate land for housing, food, education, employment, ability and capacity to spend on treatment. The study result shows that the Dalits do not even hold 1 per cent of the agricultural land. In order to supplement the family income, the Dalit women have to work in agricultural and in various other sectors. In the rural areas, the food grain that a *Chamain* earns ranges between 10 kg. and 20 kg. per household per year which is too little to scratch a living. Of the total population below the poverty line, the majority belongs to the Dalit castes.

Dalit Human Rights Organization (DHRO) carried out a sample base line survey in the year 2005 to understand trends of offence of untouchability taken up by the police administration. The report revealed that about 46 % of the total respondents were not aware about legal provisions on caste based untouchability; 48 % respondents opined that law enforcement officials ignored offence against Dalits due to their prejudices; 74 % of the respondents had no idea about the procedure and where to go for the justice; 4.3% of the respondents said that they go to police administration; and one-third of the respondents of the eastern parts of Nepal and 14.3% of the western parts of Nepal took initiative by collecting First Information Report (FIR) from the police.

The literacy rate of Dalits was 17% in the census of 1991 and it has doubled to 33.8% in the census of 2001. The national average of S.C. education and above education is 17.6% but Dalits average is 3.8% only. National average of Bachelor and above degree is 3.4% but of Dalit is 0.4%. Problems for low enrollment and drop out of Dalits include caste based discrimination and prejudice against Dalits and economic and social problems. Many Dalit students dropout from schools and there are various reasons for doing so. Some Dalits students drop out from schools because of discrimination in renting rooms. Generally schools and colleges are located far from

the Dalit settlements. Wherever renting rooms without caste based discrimination is difficult, Dalit students get depressed and frustrated and discontinue schools. Most of Dalit children dropout as then-parents force them to do household chore, take care of their younger brother(s) and/or sister(s). The number of Dalit graduates is low but these graduates are jobless. The government policy is not proactive to ensure Dalit entry in public service and other sectors. Respondents belonging to 3 of the 18 Dalit castes reported that Dalit students are denied of eating together by non- Dalits students. Similarly, respondents belonging to 4 of the 18 Dalit castes reported that non-Dalit students do not allow touching food, water and body by saying that they carry untouchable things with them." Concerning intra-Dalit untouchability amongst Dalits students, respondents belonging to only one of the total 18 castes, reported that they have experienced untouchability among Dalits students while eating together. Respondents belonging to 2 of the 18 Dalits castes reported that they were not allowed to touch when others carry "untouchable things" with them. There is no problem in sitting together in the classroom and while playing. During the fieldwork for this study, respondents reported that the Dalits belonging to 4 of the 18 castes are forced to use words that show respect to non-Dalits but non-Dalits use words that show domination and disrespect to Dalits.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study Area

Saptari has 86°25" to 87° 30' in latitude and 26° 25' to 26°57' longitude covering an area of 1363 sq km. It has 114 Village Development Committee, 1 Municipality and 6 Election Constituencies. The district is surrounded by Sunsari in the east, Udaypur in the north, Siraha in the west and Bihar state of India in south. According to Central Bureau of Statistics, Saptari district has total population of 6,39,284. The population of Musahars is 32,794 (5.21%) (Census, CBS 2011).

Located around 18 kilometers north of the border between India and Nepal, the town of Rajbiraj is the administrative headquarters of both the Saptari District and the Sagarmatha Zone in Eastern Region of Nepal. It is also the headquarters of the Sagarmatha Zone, as well as Saptari district. It is the first planned municipality of Nepal. It was planned as Jaipur City of India.

In the year 1994/95 B.S., Hanuman Nagar the then headquarter of Saptari district was being invaded by Saptakoshi river, Rajbiraj was established to form the new headquarter. Rajbiraj is distributed in total 10 wards spreaded in the area of 11.96 sq. km.

Saptari is the district where Musahars can be found in large number. Beside most of the Musahars reside in remote area; there is significant number of Musahars in Rajbiraj municipality also. The area is selected as to find out the condition of Musahars in relatively developed area.

Figure 3.1: District Location of Saptari District

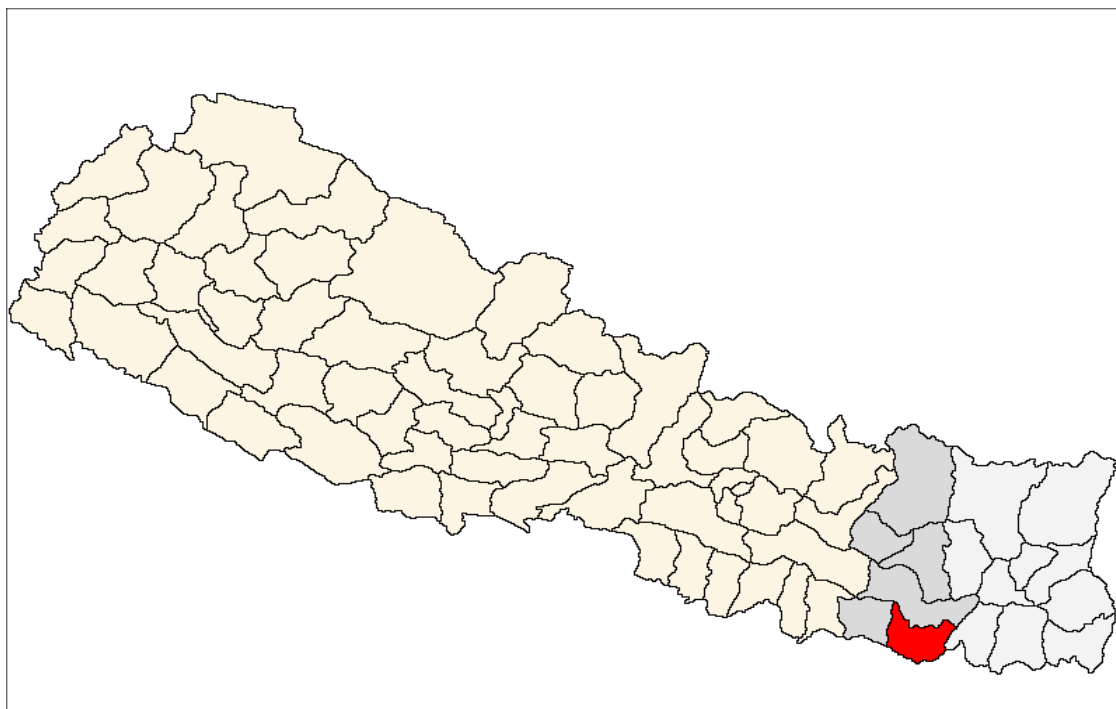
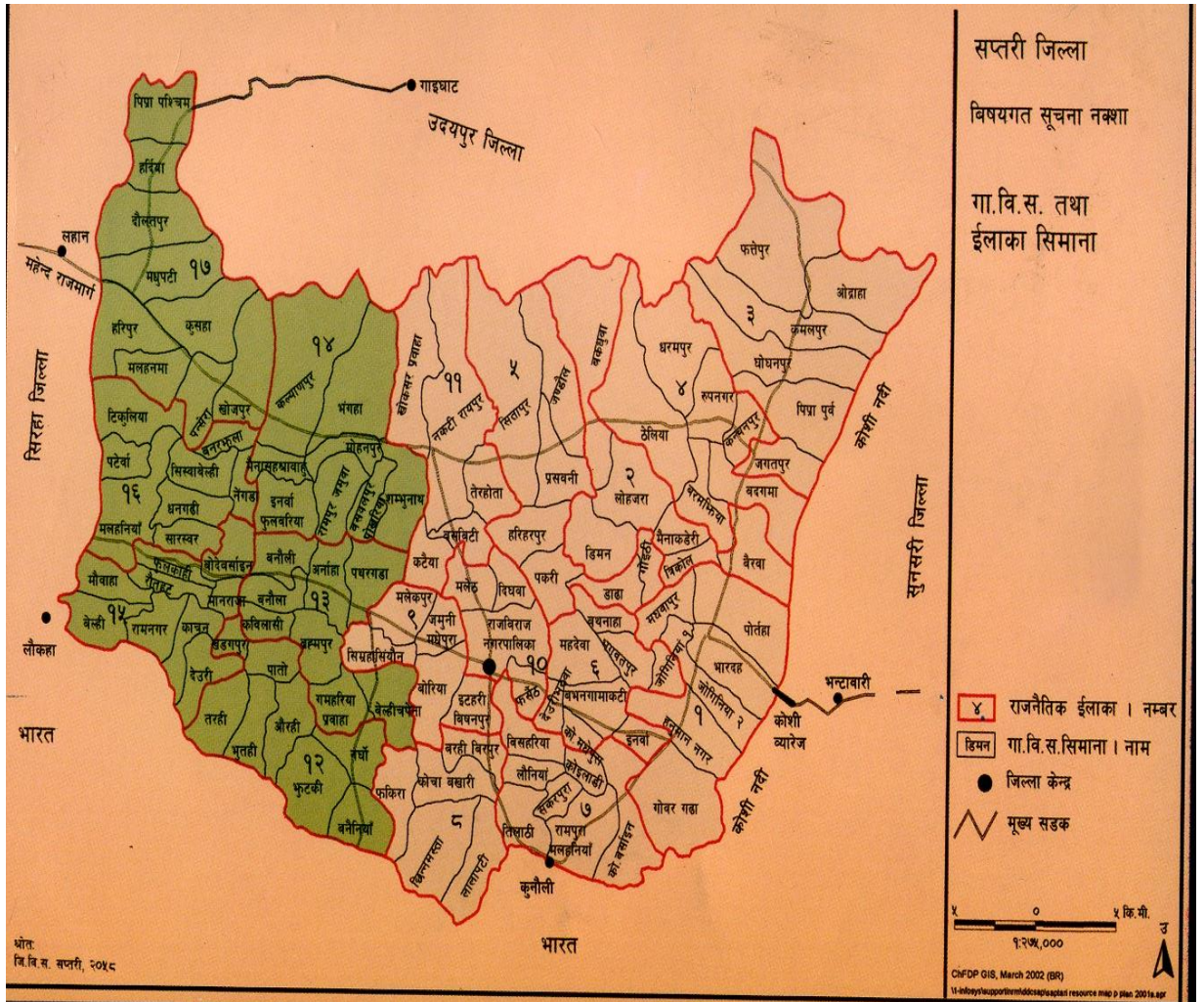


Figure 3.2: Political Map of Saptari District



3.2 Research Design

The research is qualitative and descriptive type. It describes the socio-economic condition of Musahar (landless) people. The research is mainly focused on cause of backwardness and effect of landlessness.

3.3 Nature and Source of Data

The primary data was collected from field survey and interview with a pre-structured research questionnaire. The references were taken from secondary data from various sources like central bureau of statistics, Rajbiraj Municipality, District development Committee Saptari.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The random sampling technique was adopted to determine the household in wards no 10. The primary data of mushars was collected from Rajbiraj Municipality Office and District Development Committee shows that Mushars are residing only in ward no 7 of the Municipality.

They resided in only one bunch in about 40 households. Random sampling was done and 30 household were surveyed with prestructured questionnaire.

3.5 Techniques and Tools of Data Collection

Household survey was conducted in the Musashar community of Rajbiraj Municipality. The technique applied got personal identification, population, family size, religion, education, ethnic distribution, occupation, land holding, family income, and types of livestock.

3.5.1 Observation

Observation of the home, food habits, life style dresses, agriculture practices, surrounding condition of their settlement was observed. In this technique checklist was used.

3.5.2 Key Informants Interview

The technique was applied to get historical data, to gain better understanding of the cause and process of landlessness to get information that why they were poor, what process could be conducted to improve their living standard etc. The interview was subjected to Musahar people who was involved in various NGO related to Musahar upliftment. In this technique key informant interview schedule checklist were used as a tool.

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Qualitative information such as culture practiced by the Mushar Community was obtained from focus group discussion. The topic guideline was used as tool.

3.5.4 Questionnaire

The Questionnaire survey methods were employed to collect data from sampling units. The interview with the sample household was conducted with the guidance of structured questionnaire.

3.6 Analysis of Data

The qualitative data been analyzed in a descriptive way and the quantitative data has been analyzed with the use of simple statistical tools like percentage, table, figure and graph. Similarly the results were interpreted dividing into different headings and sub-headings as per the nature of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Household survey was carried out in 30 household of musahar community in ward no 7 of Rajbiraj Municipality.

4.1 Age Distribution

Life expectancy of the Dalits is 61.3 years against 66.51 years at the national level. About 50 per cent of the Dalit children are the victims of malnutrition. Trafficking among the Dalit women is a matter of concern. Gynecological disease such as prolapsed uterus is most common among the Dalit women. Birth control and spacing is still unknown to them. Many of them become pregnant each year.

The age distribution of the respondent were majorly from 15 to 45 as shown by the bar diagram.

Figure 4.1: Age Distribution of the respondent

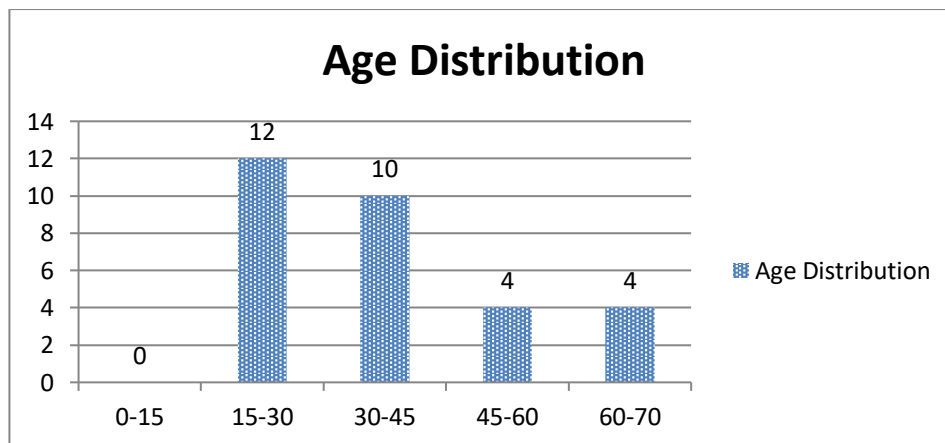


Table 4.1: Age Distribution of the Respondent

Age Group(years)	No. of Person	Percent
0-15	0	00.00
15-30	12	40.00
30-45	10	33.33
45-60	04	13.33
60-70	04	13.33

Source: Field Survey 2011

Of the 30 respondent 40% lied in the range of 15-30 years, the table shows that there are very few people of advanced age in the Musahar community. Musahar people had low average life expectancy. The data is justified as the Musahar people have very low socio-economic status. They have to work hard for their livelihood. They don't have enough money to get access to health services.

4.2 Population distribution by sex

Though women comprise 50.05% percent of the total population, gender discrimination prevails in the society from the family to the national level. Status of women in Nepal with regards to their access to knowledge, economic resources, political power, and personal autonomy in decision making is generally desolate. Owing to gender based discriminations that have restricted their access to the state's resources (such as markets, productive services, education facilities and health care) and decision making structures, they face multiple discrimination and human rights violations.

In the son-preferring Nepalese society, girls are considered unimportant as "the birth of a daughter is a fatality" is a common saying in rural as well as urban community. Malnutrition and poverty have hit women the hardest. Female children are usually given less food than male children, especially when the family experience food shortages. Women's common property rights have also been limited in many ways. Daughters lose rights over parental property after marriage. Despite the high average work burden of women, which at 16 hours a day is much higher than the global

average, women still lack access to and control over productive resources. Only 10% of women have land ownership while a meager 5.5% own a house of their own.

Respondents were asked about the importance of male child in the family. 21 (70%) of the respondent said that male child is essential in the family. Majority thought that son was important to complete the social ritual. While significant number (9, 30%) said that birth of male child was unimportant and there was no difference between male or female child.

Figure 4.2.1: Is Son Essential for the Family

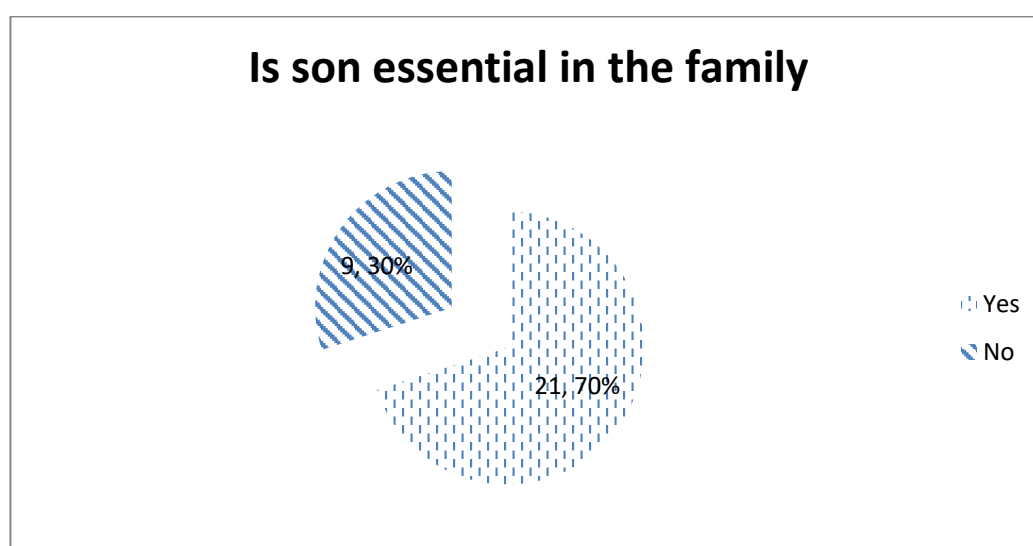


Table 4.2.1: Is Son Essential for the family

Yes	21	70%
No	9	30%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field Survey 2011

It is evident from the table 1.1 that among the Terai Dalits the number of female Dalits is less as compared to the male Dalits. Stopping giving births to the girl child after the requirement of the boy child is met, growing mortality of the girls/women due to carelessness, etc. are some of the major factors responsible for the decline of female population among the Terai Dalits.

Though the patriarchal structure, prevalent in the Nepalese society, is responsible for the discrimination of women and has placed them in a discriminated position regardless of class, caste, ethnicity, religion and age, the important specificities of class, caste, ethnic, age and other cross-cutting divides have been ignored, which is validated by the scarcity of sex disaggregated data related to different caste, ethnicity and region. This has made it difficult to accurately compare gender disparity in different groups.

Of the total 30 respondents only 3 were females. The females were reluctant to respond to the questionnaire. This was because of the *parda* system for the new comers. They wouldn't interact with new people.

Figure 4.2.2: Population Distribution by Sex

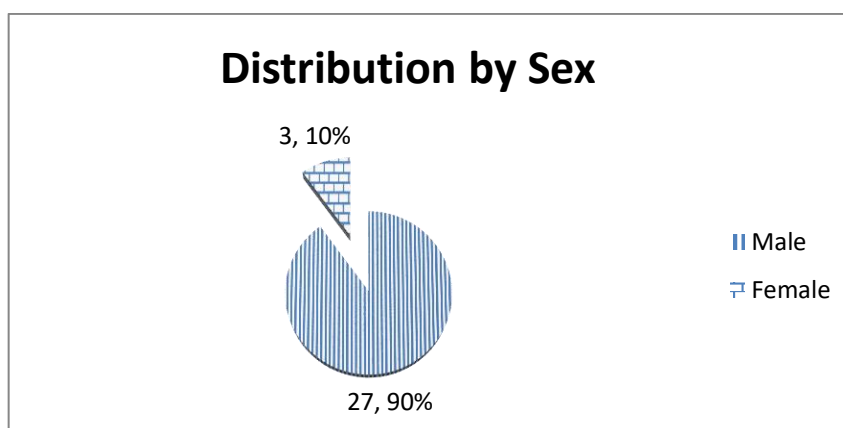


Table 4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by sex

Male	27	90%
Female	3	10%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field Survey 2011

4.3 Educational Status

Literacy rate among the Dalits is as low as 10.7% whereas at the national level literacy rate is over 65.9%. In certain Dalit communities such as among Musahars the literacy rate is 4% till today. Literacy rate among the Dalit women is as low as 3.2%. The Dalit children find it difficult to receive education in the schools partly due to the social discrimination and partly for their inability to pay for tuition fee and textbooks.

Educational status of Dalit community is very low compared to the national literacy rate. They are marginalized in terms of social, economic and educational. Representation of the Dalit community is almost nil in the state machinery. Poverty is one of the identities of them. Within the Terai Dalit community Dhobi has high literacy rate 33.6 (male-46.5 and female-19.1) and Musahar has lowest literacy rate 6.9 (male-9.8 and female-3.8) for details see table 1.3

Of the total of 30 respondents 20 were illiterate and remaining 10 were literate. Of the literates 7 had passed the primary level and rest 3 was adult literate. None of the respondent had passed S.L.C.

Table 4.3: Literacy rate of Musahar Population

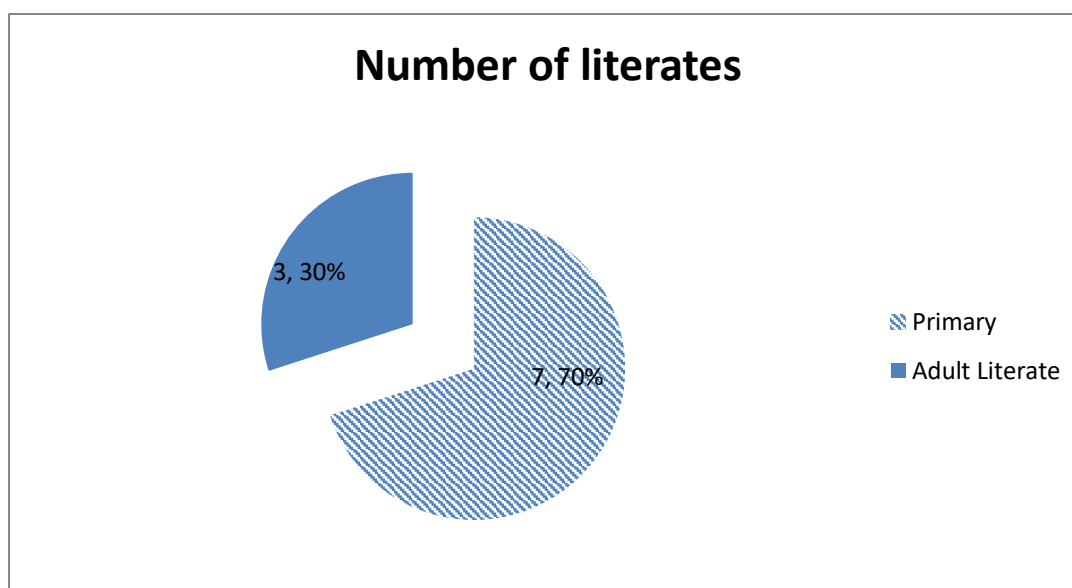
S.No	Educational Status	Number	Percentage
1	Primary	7	23.33
2	S.L.C	0	0.00
3	Above S.L.C	0	0.00
4	Adult Literate	3	10.00
5	Illiterate	20	66.67
	Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey 2011

The Musahar people sent their children to school although most of them were illiterate. Twenty-five household had sent their children to school and rest five house

hold didn't have children of school going age. But there were no children studying in secondary level.

Figure 4.3: Literacy rate of Musahar Population



Source: Field survey 2011

4.4 Occupation

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Nepal. Though much of the agriculture depends on monsoon and its uncertainty extensively affects life. The distribution of population and lack of any alternative of income generating activities has made people almost extensively dependent on land.

The distribution of land has been uneven, some people own large areas of land; a few have enjoyed the privilege of inheriting large farms and agricultural estates while other are landless.

The land reform program initiated in the 1960s was originally an attempt to help change the social order by taking away the surplus land beyond fixed ceiling. There were several other measures stipulated with it, however beyond initial endeavors, it failed to achieve its goal. This hardly affected the land ownership of the rich. The poor have remained poor, the landless have remained landless.

The Dalits are the victims of the feudal political structure where they prove 'voiceless' and 'choiceless'. Unequal distribution of resources and exploitative relations of production have compelled most of the Dalits to live as paupers, landless and homeless. The problem of untouchability does not allow them to improve their economic conditions as many of them are not allowed to sell milk or engage themselves in tea stalls, hotels, restaurants, etc. It is also due to the inequality in caste system that the Dalits are left to engage in polluting occupations. This is so because the Chamar or Sarki is entrusted with the function of tanning of hides, removal of dead animals, scavenging and shoe-making. Similarly, the Dhobi is made to wash the clothes and the Dom/Halkhor caste of people sweeps the streets and removes the filths.

Musahars strong physical built and the nature of their traditional occupation have close connection. Wherever hard physical work is required, they are almost instantly remembered and their labor force is used. Their occupational activities can be broadly divided into the following four categories.

1. Traditional occupation: Agriculture, Agricultural labor and Animal husbandry.
2. Earth work
3. Craft
4. Modern employment opportunity.

This section basically concern in dealing with the general economic activities of Musahar peoples' life in agriculture, supplemented by trade, animal husbandary and wage earning. They are also engaged in other activities such as crafting, fishing and digging land. In household, female members are engaged in works such as making Chatai, Dhaki(bamboo basket) etc. Some are in services in industrial estate nearby the study area. They work in rice mills and similar industries, animal husbandry and domestic works such as cooking washing, making the chatai/Dhaki.

Figure 4.4: Occupational distribution of Musahar Population

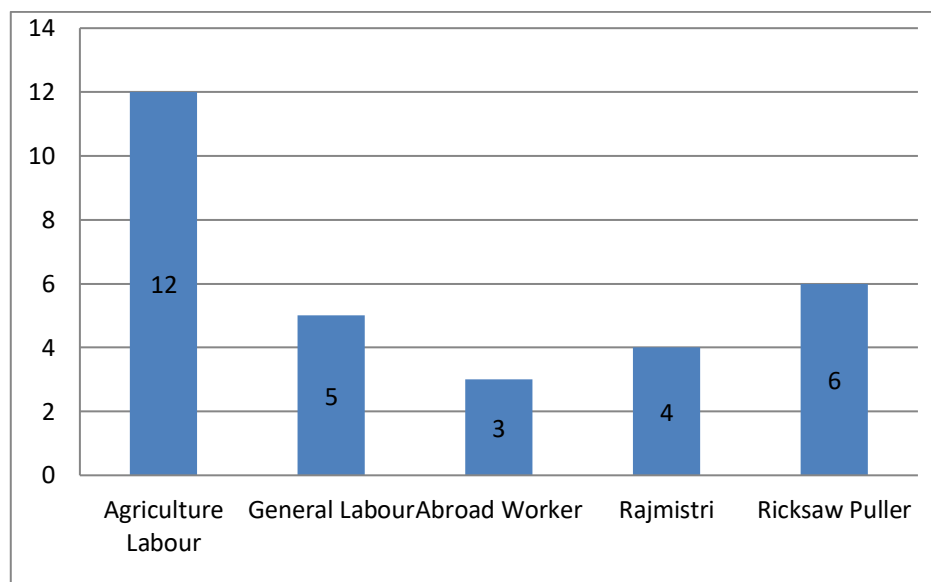


Table: 4.4: Occupational Distribution of Musahar People

S.No	Occupation	Number	Percent
1	Agriculture Labour	12	40
2	General Labour	5	16.66
3	Abroad Worker	3	10
4	Rajmistri	4	13.33
5	Ricksaw Puller	6	20

Source: Field Survey 2011

The majority of the respondent (12, 40%) was Agriculture labour. None of the people involved in agriculture ha land of their own. They became landless due to not getting opportunity to register their land during the time of land survey because these Musahar people were not educated and the land were taken away by clever high caste people.

10%(3) were abroad (India) for the earning. People go to India during harvesting season. 20% were rickshaw puller. Rickshaw puller had bought rickshaw through installment from bank.

They worked in industries as sweeper, coolies to take load from trucks and tractors in mills. Some of them are engaged in construction labour. They gradually learn the skills of construction and promote to Rajmistri.

4.5 Hierarchy

Musahars have their own hierarchical system. There are many clans among Musahars such as Maghaiya, Tirutiya, Rishikul, Bhuniya, Dholpitta, Sinauriya, Kanjaniya and Kathariya etc. Among them Tirutiyas are in majority are placed at higher level. Majority of Musahars living in study area are Rikhikul. Most of the Musahars are Hindus. However, they are lowest and downward than the other Hindu communities like Brahmin, Chhatry. They worked as a labourer of upper castes landlords. They are suffering from inferior feeling and think themselves backward and isolated among them. They are socially, culturally, economically and educationally weaker than other groups.

4.6 Language

Musahars speak the Maithili language. Musahars communicate by Maithili language at home, community and with other people.

4.7 Religion and Festival

To understand a society, it is important to understand their culture which is base of human being. Like many others societies, Musahars regard nature as supreme god. They also believe in supernatural power. They also believe in the normal conventions of Hindu religion like swarga (heaven), narka (hell) and Dharma (good) and Paap (sin). They strongly believe that god is the maker of fate and destiny. Musahars believe in ghosts, spirits and witchcraft as well. These ghosts and spirits are believed to be the soul of the people who have died in an unnatural way or accidentally or of them

whose funeral rites are not properly performed. Though witches are living people, their identity is never disclosed due to fear of revenge. The witches are said to perform witchcraft by using putla. Musahars believe that they are capable of doing anything using black magic OJHA, DHAMI, JHAKRI and supposed to be the witch doctor who fights against the witchcraft. The deities and the gods of Musahars are similar to that worshiped by Hindus.

Table: 4.7 Religion of Musahar People

S.No.	Religion	Number	Percent
1	Hindu	30	100%
Total		30	100%

Source: Field survey 2011

They seem to be more inclined toward DEVI (mother goddess) or Shakti (power primordial). The puja or worship is done by the dhamis who must be Musahars. Prior to puja, these dhami sing a song and this ritual is called the jhummar. Their greatest deity DINA BADRI is worshipped once a year or any month suitable for them. However Ashad, Mangsir and Magh are the ones when the worship is performed. It is performed in the fields, flat spaces or chaur and even on the threshold of the main door where it is cleaned with a mixture of mud, dung and water and a mound is erected. Musahars have their own style of celebrate the festivals. Despite their economic condition, they celebrate all main festivals. The main festivals of Musahars are SANKRANTI, DASHAIN, TIHAR, CHHATH, JITIYA, JURSITAL and GHADI PAWAIN.

Dhoti and Kurta are the clothes worn by the male while female wears the usual sari and cholo. But a new generation Musahars boy wears modern pants and shirts while girls wear Kurta Surwal. The main source of entertainment is playing card and drinking alcohol. They also enjoy killing musa or rats. The female members also enjoy by smoking bidi (like cigarette), drinking alcohol and puffing huka. At the same time, they enjoy by singing songs and puffing HUKAS. At the same time, they enjoy

by singing songs performing programs in wedding, births and festivals. Their musical instruments are dholak, harmonium and jhail, etc.

4.8 Type of Family

Family is a basic and universal social structure. Family is a group defined by sex and blood relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children .Lund berg enumerate the following basic function of the family:

- The regulation of sexual behavior and reproduction
- Care and training of a children
- Co-operation and division of labour
- Primary group of satisfaction

There are three types of family units in existence

1. Nuclear family
2. Joint family
3. Extended family

There is no strict adherence to one or the other kind of family- nuclear or extended. Both type of family are found in Musahar community. Some families have members from two-three generation living together.

Table 4.8 Statement of Family Structure

S.No	Particulars	No of Households	Percentage
1	Nuclear family	25	83.33
2	Joint Family	3	10

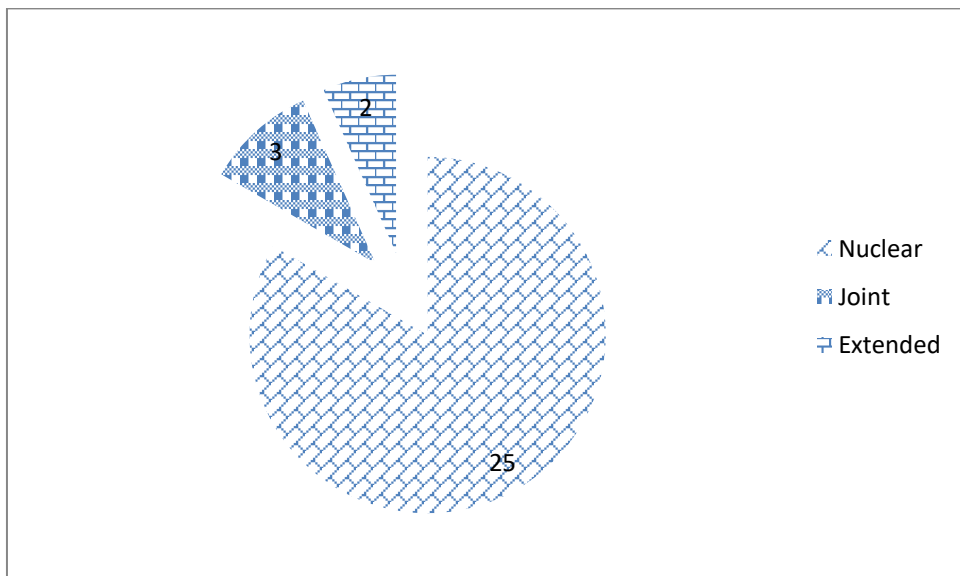
3	Extended Family	2	6.67
	Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey 2011

Family is the basic unit of human society; it is worldwide socially sanctioned and culturally approved social institution. Family is group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood adoption, constituting a single household and interacting, intercommunicating with each other in their respective social rules of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister creating a common cultural system.

Previously Musahars used to live in an extended family. Nowadays, they are living in both joint and nuclear family. During the survey, it revealed that the choice of nuclear family is widely accepted in the community due to many reasons. The main reason is comfort and peaceful living of individual life. As large the family is, the women have to pass through more tensions.

Figure 4.8: Chart of Family Structure



83.33% of the total household had nuclear family. Only 16.67% of the total household had either joint or extended family.

4.9 Authority and Decision in Family Affairs

Among the Musahar an elderly person, usually the eldest male in the family, control over others and take pleasure in respect and authority to decide the social, economic and religious affairs of the family. In all matters, the opinion of the headman is sought. When a call, message or invitation is given from someone it is always in the name of the head of the family. The woman does not attain any formal position in the family affairs. However, in some cases, women, usually the mothers control the family affairs. The headman has a simple dominant position over the rest of the family members. But in practice it has not always been like this. It is because of their simple living that the head usually counts the advice of his son or family members who, are grown up. Mutual understanding, co-ordination and co-operation are some of the characteristics of the Musahar households. In setting the children's marriage both father and mother are expected to feel equally responsible to find suitable matches. In Musahar family all the family members have a fixed and well-divided share of work. In spite of this sometimes the family members such as married brother or married sons show their interest in family separation. At that time generally, the headman permits them to be separated by distributing the properties among them. A Musahar usually separates himself only after the construction of his own house.

4.10 Marital Status

Marriage is among the top priority activities of musahar. The child marriage is normal among Musahar. Hindu ideology, in particular, attributes high value to virginity relating it with purity of women's sexuality and dictates that girls are married early even before puberty.

Figure 4.10.1 shows that 25(83%) are married, 2(7%) are unmarried, and 3(10%) are widowed. None of the respondents were divorced or remarried.

This is validated by the fact that 33.5 percent of girls, falling in the age group of 15-19 years, are married as against only 11.8 percent of boys of the same age.

Though the mean age of marriage has increased from 16.8 years in 1971 to 19.5 years in 2001, indicating a slow but steady change in social perceptions, the mean age of marriage for girls is lower (19.5 years) than boys (22.9 years)

Figure 4.10.1 Marital Status of the Respondents

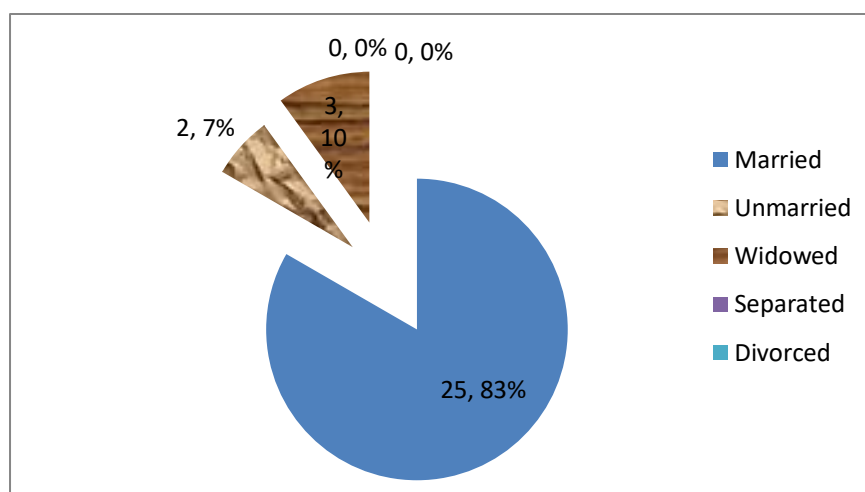


Table 4.10.1: Marital Status of the Respondents

S.No	Particulars	No of person	Percent
1	Married	25	83.00
2	Unmarried	2	7.00
3	Widowed	3	10.00
4	Remarried	0	0.00
	Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey 2011

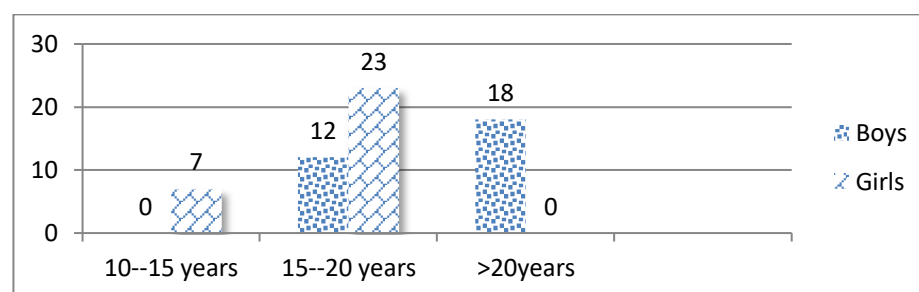
In order to avoid sexual activity outside one's own caste, the marriage used to be arranged between the baby bride and baby groom. Usually such marriage used to be arranged before the puberty of the baby bride. It was after several years of the marriage and puberty that the bride used to go to her husband's house during the

second marriage called `gauna.' Many of the bride or groom did not even know whom she or he married. Though over the years the marriageable age between the girl and boy has increased in all the castes, the traditional practice of marriage between `baby bride' and `baby groom' is not very uncommon, particularly among the Dalit caste groups in the Terai.

Though the patriarchal structure, prevalent in the Nepalese society, is responsible for the discrimination of women and has placed them in a discriminated position regardless of class, caste, ethnicity, religion and age, the important specificities of class, caste, ethnic, age and other cross-cutting divides have been ignored, which is validated by the scarcity of sex disaggregated data related to different caste, ethnicity and region. This has made it difficult to accurately compare gender disparity in different groups.

The attitude of Musahar towards marriage is changing. This may be because they are residing in the municipality. The respondents were asked about the marriageable age. Of the 30 respondents 18(50%) said that marriage age for boys should be more than 20years. While 12 said that marriageable age should be 15-20 years. For the girls 22 respondents said that marriageable age should be about 15 to 20 years.

Figure4.10.2 Age at marriage of Boys & girls



4.11 Structure of household

The clustered Musahar settlement is separated from that one of other castes in the Terai village. They settle at a place which is at a considerable distance from the house

of other caste. They live by themselves with not even a single household of any other caste.

Nowhere, they live with other caste in the same settlement area. They live in a separate corner of the village known to everybody but little visited by other caste.

The house hold of Musahar is very peculiar. They use natural resources while building houses. The houses are generally made of wood, straw, and bamboo, khar and plastered by mud. The Musahars build their house close to each other and generally don't make windows. The house contains only a single room. The corners are used as kitchen and passage in between as bedroom, living room or dining room. Musahar's house roof generally comprises of khar and supportive poles are made of tree trunks. One monogamous family sleeps in one single room. After the son gets married, Musahars generally construct another house. The majority of study population had hut with roof made by khar and rest had hut with tiled roof (tin). There was no R.C.C building. The musahar community had no access to electricity or drinking water. None of the household had the facility of toilet. They used open field for defecation.

Table:4.11: Condition of housing pattern

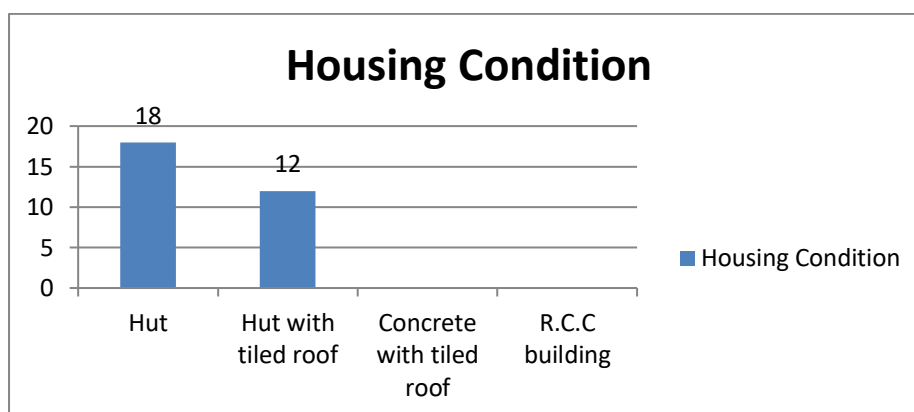
S.No	Particulars	Number	Percentage
1	Hut	18	60.00
2	Hut with tiled roof	12	40.00
3	Concrete with tiled roof	0	0.00
4	R.C.C building	0	0.00

Source: Field Survey 2011

Table 4.11 shows that most of the Musahar people of the study area are settled in huts(60%) and 40% live in huts with tiled roof. They have 'taati'(walls made of bamboo sticks) are after plastered with mud. The earthen floor is at times cleaned with thin coat mud and cow dung in most cases.

There is no correlation between the development of infrastructures and settlement patterns of Musahar community. Road accessibility or inaccessibility doesn't seem to be any consideration for Musahar community settlement. The principal consideration is its separateness, sufficient distance from main village settlement to avoid contact with other communities what might be called cultural pollution.

Figure 4.11: Condition of housing pattern



4.12 Access to Land

Land is important natural resources. But the Musahars are mostly landless and they are earning their living bread and butter by working as labourer either as agriculture labour or any other sector. They don't possess any cultivable land of their own. They usually work for rich persons on daily wage basis of Nepal. Most of these castes have very few lands (ailani) and their economic condition is very bad in every sector of society.

Table4.12: Assess to land

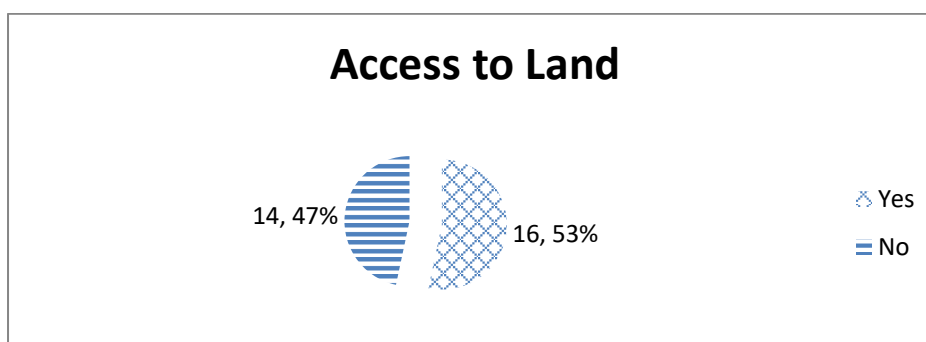
	yes	no
Asses to land	16(53%)	14(47%)
Total	16(53%)	14(47%)

Source:Field Survey 2011

Studies show that the Dalits are the most disadvantaged and poorest community in Nepal. Most of the Dalits in the Terai are landless and their share in agricultural land is only 1 per cent (Jha, 1998). Only the lucky ones among the Dalits in the Terai have land, though the situation is comparatively better in the hills.

Of the study population all were residing in a land. 16 households were given laal purja of 4 dhur where they have built their houses and rest of the household were yet to be provided with laal purja.

Figure 4.12: Access to Land



4.13 Monthly Income of Musahar People

Nearly 80 per cent of the Dalits has to live below the poverty line. Per capita income of the Dalits is US \$ 39.6 against the per capita income of the nation of US \$ 210 (Nepali, 2003).

There is certain upward mobility in caste system. For example, the *Sudi*, *Teli* and *Kalwar* – three main business class people - in the Terai used to be treated as untouchables. Over the years, they have fared well economically, received better education and demonstrated their unity during the elections. As a result, they are least regarded as untouchables. This creates an impression that the upward mobility of a caste is possible provided the people fare well in education, economic and political arena.

Encouragingly, certain Dalits have been able to improve their socio-economic conditions by engaging in agricultural activities, though on a marginal scale. In the project area of CARE Nepal in Bharatpur VDC of Mahottari district, the Chamar caste of people, who by tradition work as scavenger and engage themselves in skin tanning, grew vegetables for marketing purpose. Similarly, these people gave up eating the meat – whether of fresh or of dead animals. By tradition, these people were used to taking meat from the dead animals.

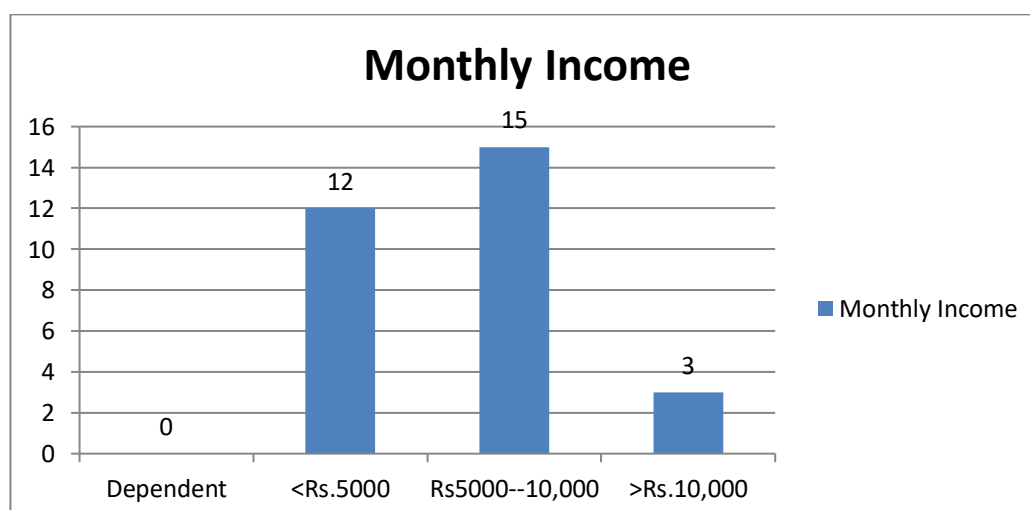
Table 4.13 Monthly income of Musahar people per annum

Income	No/Percent
<5000(NRs)	12(40%)
5000-10000(NRs)	15(50%)
>10,000(NRs)	3(10%)
Total	30(100%)

Source: Field Survey 2011

The income of the Musahar people in Rajbiraj Municipality is better than that of village inhabitant. This is because they have multiple option of working. A person at times works as agriculture labour is busy pulling rickshaw or working in construction in non-harvesting season. So they never run out of job.

Figure 4.13: Monthly income of Musahar people



Although they didn't have enough money for saving, they neither had difficulties in running their household.

Of the 30 respondent 15 household had income Rs.5000-Rs.10000. And 3 household had income more than 10,000 per month.

4.14 Animal Husbandry

Another source of subsistence of Musahar people is animal husbandry. But in Rajbiraj Municipality it was less in number. This may be because of land required for the purpose was not available. No household had bigger animals like cow or buffalo. Very few household had Goat. 10 households had no animal in their family

The list of cattles is presented in the table.

Table 4.14: Cattle holding of the Respondents

S.No	Name of Cattle	0	1to 3	>3
1.	Duck/Hen		3	7
2.	Goat		11	
3.	None	10		

Source: Field Survey 2011

4.15 Material Holding condition of Musahar

The material condition shows the very severe condition of consumption of the materials of living. Musahar people's income cannot afford the material prosperity. The clothing condition shows very low standard of life. Similarly, the domestic appliances are very low quality. Only aluminum materials are used and steel material is rarely used.

As early mentioned in housing patterns, they live in huts, so they did not use any better material.

Table4.15:Material Holding condition of Musahar

S.No	Name of Appliances	No of persons		
		0	1-3	>3
1	Plate/Thal of steel		12	18
2	Plate/Thal of brass		11	19
3	Dekchi	2	28	0
4	Karai	1	29	0
5	Radio	21	9	0
6	Khat	22	8	0
7	Chair	30	0	0
8.	Table	30	0	0
9	Daraj	30	0	0
10.	Television	30	0	0
11	Bicycle	30	0	0
12	Gold	30	0	0
13	Silver	27	3	0

Source : Field Survey 2011

4.16 Access to Right Provided by State.

Of the 30 respondent 28 had received Citizenship. 2 of the female respondent didn't have citizenship card.

Table4.16.1 Ownership of Citizenship

Yes	28	93.33%
No	2	6.67%
Total	30	100%

Source: Field survey 2011

28(93.33%) of the respondent had the citizenship card. All were males who had the citizenship card made. 2(6.67%) didn't have citizenship card, and both

of them were females. They didn't have card since they were from India and were residing there after their marriage.

All the 30 respondent had registered the vital information(Birth, Death, Marriage.....)

All the 30 respondent visited hospitals for the illness and none of them believed in traditional healing.

Table 4.16.2 Treatment of Sickness / Illness

Treatment	Number	Percentage
Dhami/Jharki	00	0.00
Heaith post/Doctor	30	100

Source: Field Survey 2011

Most of the Musahars people believe on traditional healer for treatment of sickness. But the residents of the municipality didn't believe in Dhami/Jhakri. This may be due to the fact that they are residing in the area where the health facility is quite good. They are aware of the fact that disease is due to infectious agent rather than supernatural powers.

There is a zonal hospital with quite satisfactory services. Since the medical treatment is within their reach, their belief towards hospital has strengthened.

4.17 Cause of Backwardness of the community

Nepal is home to a mosaic of ethnicities and languages. More than 61 ethnic groups and diverse nationalities reside in the country. Despite the socio-cultural diversity, Nepal is facing a vicious cycle of poverty which mainly is the cause of spatial heterogeneity and structural inequalities.

Although anti-discrimination provisions are contained in the 1990 Constitution, caste discrimination remains ingrained in Hindu- dominated Nepalese society. Poverty, lack of social services (health, education, water and sanitation, etc.) remain pressing problems for rural, lower castes and indigenous peoples, despite economic

development and poverty alleviation having been the primary objectives of the Nepali budget for the past years.

The musahar are the victims of the feudal political structure where they prove 'voiceless' and 'choiceless'. Unequal distribution of resources and exploitative relations of production have compelled most of the musahar to live as paupers, landless and homeless. The problem of untouchability does not allow them to improve their economic conditions as many of them are not allowed to sell milk or engage themselves in tea stalls, hotels, restaurants, etc. It is also due to the inequality in caste system that the musahar are left to engage in polluting occupations.

The problem of the musahar should be treated as a national problem and not the problem of any specific community. Such problem could be resolved in an integrated manner by focussing on their education, health, income, political participation and other core issues.

Musahars are very victim in various fields like Religious based caste discrimination employment, social hierarchy status, education, political powers. There is no even access participation in most of the command or government institutional. They are always treated as marginal people by the others. Their main source of income is physical work. They earn grains and some money from physical labor only in the fixed season.

Indigenous people face consequences in terms of discrimination, because of their small population and due to historic and current discriminatory treatment by the state and society. Some of the pressing problems relevant to the Janajati groups are: Linguistic discrimination, Religious domination and cultural imperialism, Abolishment of land rights,

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

Nepal is land of various castes, creeds and different ethnic settled in different parts of the country. The nation is divided in three different geographical regions i.e. mountain, hill and terai region.

The present study focuses on the socio-economic condition of the Musahar Community of the Rajbiraj Municipality. The objective of the study was to provide a short insight on socio-economic condition and causes of backwardness and landlessness in Musahar community. Both primary and secondary data are used. The data collection instruments are non-participant observation, household survey, interview with key informants.

The descriptive and analytical research design has been followed for the purpose of the study. The musahar respondents were selected by using random sampling techniques for the data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used.

The educational status of the Musahars is very poor. Most of their children do not go to school due to lack of financial and awareness problem. Even the literates have not passed the primary school. None of the school going children are at the secondary level. This shows the fact that even the school going children don't continue their schooling beyond primary level and there is high rate of dropout.

Musahars have no land at all for the purpose of cultivation they are land less. They even don't possess the land for residential purpose. They are settled in the ailani land. Recently some of them are provided with lal purja of their residential place of 0.4 dhur.

Poverty in general cannot be treated as an economic phenomenon only. It is also an outcome of the social interactions among various social group. It is closely interconnected with the problems of the caste system. The Musahar like other lower

caste are treated as inferior being not fit for any higher social role except the traditional assigned to them in the present social structure.

The residential patterns and types of house found in Mushars was of peculiar type made of wood, straw, bamboo, khar and mud plastered. Their houses have thatched roof.

Mushars were found to live in only 1ward, ward no 7 of Rajbiraj Municipality. Mushars are always found to live in their own community.

From the field survey, it was also observed that most of the people spent a large proportion of their income on liquor consumption.

5.2 Conclusion

Musahar is one of the indigenous communities in the country. They live in a terrible plight both socially and economically. They are victims of economic, racial and social discrimination. The Musahars of the study area are marginalized from the mainstream of development process of the nation. They have no access to any natural resources, technological knowledge, and educational opportunities. They are suffering from malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, landlessness, unemployed, low income and upper castes discrimination. Social awareness is also lacking in this community.

5.3 Recommendation

- In view of the low interest of the Musahar in education, the need to adopt measures to motivate them towards education is very great. Individual efforts have serious limitations. Therefore an awareness campaign with special emphasis on interior Musahar villages should be launched.
- The government should implement its reservation policy effectively and give due share to the Dalits as per its commitment in education, employment and

other sectors. 'Dalits' even among the Dalits should get priority in the reservation.

- Access to the means of production is importantly associated with both status and empowerment. In the Nepali context, land is the most important means of production. The State should determine the magnitude of landless among the Dalit people and it should also determine the amount of land under its control. The surplus land should be distributed to the landless Dalits.
- The discrimination against the Dalits might also be reduced if the political parties make it a pre-condition that only those people will be entitled to become their members who oppose discrimination on the basis of caste.
- Categorization should be made among the Dalits considering their socioeconomic status i.e. 'Dalits' and 'Backward Terai Dalits.'. All possible efforts need to be made by the planners, policy makers, government, NGOs, INGOs and donor agencies to see that special programmes are launched to develop leadership among the Terai Dalits.
- The Government should take immediate action for the enactment of laws and bi-laws as per the letter and spirit of the Constitution of 1990 with a view to eliminating the caste system and to punish those who indulge in caste discrimination in public places and in the utilization of public services. Derogatory words used for the Dalits in the Muluki Ain need to be removed without any further delay.
- Non-formal Education will help enlist greater number of members of the Musahar community-schools' dropouts and adults. Therefore, the non-formal education programmers with provision of skills such as agronomy,

horticulture, use of fertilizer, insecticide, animal husbandry, poultry, cottage industries, sanitation, health and opulation education should be introduced.

- Every programme should be participatory in nature. The active participation of the Musahar population is necessary. Programme should be for the Musahar, by the Musahar and of the Musahar community.
- They should be made aware from the suppression, oppression, injustice and exploitation from traditional social structure. They should be empowered to bargain in negotiation with government which make them to raise standard of living, better health facilities, education and political, economic, social and cultural aspects.
- Spending on alchohol, smoking and traditional festivals should be reduced by conducting some public awareness programme to avoid economic vulnerability.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-I

Questionnaire

Socio-economic Status of Musahar in Rajbiraj Municipality

S.no.

Date:

Name:

Age/Sex:

Family (type):

Religion:

Occupation:

Ward. No.

Name of Family members	Age/sex	Relation with household head	Occupation	Marital Status	Education

Indices

Marital status

U—Unmarried

M—Married

W—Widow

S—Separated

D—Divorced

Education

I—illiterate

L—Literate

P—Primary education

S—Secondary Education

HS—Higher Secondary

B/M—Bachelor/ Master

Occupation

A—Agriculture

B—Business

S—Service

C—Others

ST—Student

L—Labourer

AW—Abroad Worker

I. Education

I. Literacy

- i. Can read
- ii. Can write
- iii. Can read and write
- iv. Can neither read nor write

II. Schooling

- i. Primary
- ii. S.L.C
- iii. Above S.L.C
- iv. Adult Literate
- v. Others.....(specify)

II. Occupation

I. How many children in your family?

II. What do your children do?

- i. Agricultural labour.
- ii. Industrial Labour
- iii. Fishing/Construction/Transport
- iv. Government Job
- v. Student
- vi. Others.....(specify)

III. Economic Status

I. Land

- i. Do you own Land? (Yes/No).
- ii. If yes specify the area(Bigha__ Kattha____ Dhur_____)
- iii. Are you tenant of landlord on the basis of crop sharing.(yes/no)

II. House

- i. Do you own house.(yes/No)
- ii. If yes, where house is built on
 1. Others' Land
 2. Own Land
 3. Ailani
- iii. House Built of
 1. Hut
 2. Hut and tiled roof
 3. Concrete but tiled roof.
 4. R.C.C. building
- iv. Do you have a toilet.(Yes/No)
 1. If no where do you urinate/defecate.
 - a. River nearby
 - b. Open land
 - c. Others._____

III. Total average monthly income of the family during harvesting season.

- i. In cash
 1. From Agriculture Labor._____
 2. By doing other jobs_____
 3. Total value in Rs_____
- ii. In form of subsistence materials
 1. From agriculture Labor_____
 2. From other sector_____
 3. Value in Rs._____

IV. Total average monthly income during non-harvesting season

- i. In Cash.....
 1. From agriculture labor_____
 2. By doing other jobs_____
 3. Total value in Rs._____

ii. In form of subsistence materials

1. From Agriculture labor_____
2. By doing other jobs_____
3. Total value in Rs._____

IV. Total monthly average expenditure of the family

I. On food

.....

II. On clothing

.....

III. On Health/Medicine

.....

IV. On education

.....

V. On loan payment

.....

VI. On Entertainment

.....

VII. Others

.....

Total value in Rs.

.....

V. How do you offset the deficit(If any)

I. From Loan

.....

II. From other Sources (specify)

.....

III. If from Loans from whom do you take loans (specify)

.....

IV. How much is the Loan

.....

i. In cash

.....

ii. In 'Kind

.....

VI. Material Assets:

S.No	Materials	Yes	No	How much (specify)
1	Plate/Thal of Steel			
2	Plate /Thal of brass			
3	Dekchi(cooking pot)			
4	Karai			
5	Pressure Cooker			
6	Chair			
7	Table			
8	'Khat'			
9	Radio			
10	Television			
11	Bicycle			
12	Ornaments (gold/Silver)			
13	Cotton made 'shirak/Dasna''			

VII. Cattles

S.No	Name of Cattle	Yes	No	How many
1	Duck/Hen/Cock			
2	Pigeon			
3	Pig			
4	Goat			
5	Cow/Ox			
6	Buffalo			
7	Horse			

VIII.Social Status

1.You consider yourselves higher/lower than

- a. Muslim.....
- b. Yadav.....
- c. Haluwai.....
- d. Sonar.....
- e. Lohar.....
- f. Hajam.....
- g. Khatwe.....
- h. Dhanuk.....
- i. Teli
- j. Chamar.....
- k. Kalbar.....
- l. Dom.....
- m. Dusad.....

2. Are you allowed to enter in temples where higher caste people worship. (Yes/No)

3. If no where do you worship.

a. Have separate temple for the community.

b. Don't worship in temple

c. Others (Specify)

4. What is the most important festival of your community?

a. Dashain

b. Deepawali

c. Others _____ (specify)

5. How much do you expend in local festival.

a. Specify _____

IX. Attitude

1. If your children marry a spouse of a caste you consider lower than you, what could be your relation.

a. If son marries a low caste girls.

i. Would expel from house. (Yes/No).....

ii. Would expel from house as well as from caste. (Yes/No).....

iii. Would let them live in home but won't accept food, water etc from the daughter in law (Yes/No).....

iv. Will accept in home but won't let daughter-in-law to workshop and participate in festivals etc. (Yes/No)

- b. If daughter marries low caste boy:
 - i. Would expel from house(Yes/No).....
 - ii. Will expel from home and caste as well
(Yes/No).....
 - iii. Will let daughter visit home but not for son-in-laws.....
 - iv. Will not take food at their house when you visit them.(Yes/No).....
 - c. Who takes decision in 1(a) and 1(b)
specify.....
2. Do you accept food/ water/Hukka/Tobacco from caste lower than you?(Yes/No)
- a. Food.....
 - b. Hukka.....
 - c. Water.....
 - d. Tobacco.....
3. What Should be the age of marriage?
- a. Of Boys.....years
 - b. Of Girls.....years
4. Is birth of a Son essential in a Family.(Yes/No)
5. If yes, why
- a. To look after in Old age
 - b. Social cause
 - c. To complete the rituals
 - d. Others.....
6. Personal Hygiene
- a. How often you take a bath
 - i. Daily
 - ii. Twice a week
 - iii. Once a Week
 - iv. Others.....

- b. Do you brush your teeth
 - i. Daily
 - ii. Twice daily
 - iii. Once a week
 - iv. Never
- c. What do you use to brush your Teeth
 - i. Tooth brush & Paste
 - ii. Coal
 - iii. Dativan
 - iv. Others.....
- d. Do you use Slippers(Chappal)
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

X. Miscellany

1. Where were you born
 - a. In this village(Yes/no)
 - b. If not where.....
2. Where your father was born
 - a. In this village(Yes/No)
 - b. If not where_____
3. Where was your grandfather born?
 - a. In this village(Yes/No)
 - b. If not where_____
4. Have you taken citizenship of Nepal?(Yes/No)
5. Have other members of your family taken the citizenship card.(Yes/No)
6. Have you registered birth,deaths,marriage etc your family (Yes/No)
 - a. Birth_____
 - b. Death_____
 - c. Marriage_____

7. How many times you eat daily?_____
8. Do you eat fish/Meat? If yes how many days a week_____.
9. When ill whom do you consult
 - a. Doctor/Hospital
 - b. Indigenous curer
 - c. Others_____
10. Do you have saving.(Yes/No)
11. Where do you save
 - a. Bank
 - b. Others_____
12. Are you interested in current affairs of the country? (Yes/No)
13. If yes , how do you know about them
 - a. By listening Radio
 - b. By Viewing Television
 - c. By reading newspapers
 - d. By asking others
 - e. Others_____
14. Is any of your family member outside the country for earning purpose.(Yes/No)
15. If yes where
 - a. India
 - b. Arab Countries
 - c. Others_____(Specify

