

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

“In my village as well as in the cities, there were local bars in every nook and corner. Roaming around those places, I formed the habit of drinking and I became a drunkard. If only those places had libraries and book shops, today I might have been a different man altogether.”¹

Manu Brajaki, quoted in an article *Katha Pustakalayako* by a famous Nepali Litterateur, Devendra Bhattarai is a very significant reality in a Nepali society. This also has been a truth for a long time. Besides this, there has been many reasons behind the late establishment of the libraries in Nepal. And when it comes to children libraries, many hadn't considered it essential which means children were not given importance in our society until recently (Shrestha 2025 v.s.; Adhikari 2068 v.s.b; Shantadas 2066 v.s.). The significance of child education remained sidelined for a long time. But education for children are emphasized today and they are looked upon as possible good-doer of the society in a present world (Adhikari 2068 v.s.b).

When we talk about the history of the library in Nepal it actually goes back to few centuries, (Malla Dynasty) when kings like Pratap Malla used to collect large numbers of scriptures and book (Acharya 2065 v.s.; Adhikari 2068 v.s.a). Then the collection passed on to Shah kings, Jung Bahadur and Bir Shamsheer who opened Bir Library in 1957 v.s., the collections of which now rests on Rastriya Abhikhalaya (Adhikari 2068 v.s.a). But these were not accessible to general public. The time came when people started raising their voice against it and demanded to open libraries for the public. They were all caught and punished for their demands in the year 1987 and the act became famous as “library coup.” It was only after 2007 v.s. when many people realized the importance of the library and slowly the number of libraries increased over years and these were opened for the public (Acharya 2065 v.s). The first of such public library is National Library.

¹ For more detail see an article in The Kathmandu Post: City Post. November 15, 2005, p. 6.

Though library and education were restricted for public before 2007 v.s., many people have access to these after the restoration of democracy. Many have access to these facilities these days. Yet again there are many who cannot have privilege of using these facilities? Why so?

The power rested on Royal Families' or Prime Minister's hand then, but today all those with 3 Ps: power, prestige or property are the most powerful people in the society and lots of things opened for public are only accessible to them. Society changed but the discrimination remained unchanged, only the nature and purpose has changed (Hurst 2007).

Children libraries have been opened long after the public libraries opened. It is yet to know which one is the first children library opened in Kathmandu but interview with few librarians show that AWON Library was first to open Children Section in their library. They say their library has been serving children from or few years ago from 1984, which means it has been more than 27 years now. Similarly, some other libraries like Nepal National Library (NNL) opened its Children Section in 2052 v.s., Kaiser Library Children Section in 2063 v.s., Nepal Japan Children Library (NJCL) in 2001 and then few other libraries like Kaiser Library, Dilli Raman Regmi Library, Kathmandu Valley Public Library, etc also opened Children's section. Some other Children Libraries include Room to Read (in 2000) and READ Nepal (in 1991), both of which was opened by an John Wood and Dr. Antonia "Toni" Neubauer. These foreign citizens have opened more than 1,000 libraries in different parts of Nepal under the organizational name of Room to Read and READ Nepal. They have also been establishing schools and giving scholarships to the poor children.

I have only selected three of the above mentioned libraries for my study, NJCL, NNL and AWON library and I will be giving brief scenario of these libraries in chapter two.

1.2 Focus of the Study

Libraries are for the public. So it is most essential for us to know that everyone can go there and access whatever available. If we talk about library's history, it takes us to Mesopotamian civilization where their civilization was evidenced in tablets and later these tablets were copied and preserved in libraries. Such libraries dates back about a century in Nepal (first such library

was opened during Rana regime, formally on 1869 vs²) and it took pace after the library coup (*library parva*) in 1929.³ But when we come to children libraries, it's not much long. Children libraries are some places where they can learn and entertain at the same time. Their encounter with books in their childhood helps in making them more serious about the study in future and makes them believe there is nothing more important than knowledge. But it seems, not many in Nepal has considered this important.

Libraries are the only place that has a huge collection of knowledge, both historical and contemporary. So, when we talk about libraries, be it public or private we should know that it's always meant for public to use that resource of collection. When we talk about children's libraries, it is obvious that they are meant for the children so it is essential to see how much they have been able to access such libraries and enrich their knowledge. It means we should know about the children's right to the libraries, their access, availability and consumption. Thus, it is important to look over the stratification and their effect on the children and children's libraries.

The important part of my study includes people from different backgrounds from different parts of the city in regard to easy accessibility to the library (people living near the libraries) and far from the libraries. All the attempt I've made in my study began with one question: Does class/caste has any impact upon the library user children? While working on to find answer to this question, I learned many facts about children library, its users, school libraries, etc. All the details of my findings are in following chapters.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Today the world is changing in a rapid speed and people have easy access to the things around. When we talk about libraries, including children libraries and their uses, we don't yet know if it has not been used as much as it should be. And has every community people been able to use it so far? One of the other objectives of my study is to look for the possible answers for the question. If the community people and children are being excluded it would be very essential

² Pundit, Sheshkanta. 2007. Pustakalaya Niti Banaune Kram Suru. *Gorkhapatra*, March 2, p. 10.

³ The Himalayan Times. August 2, 2005, p. 12 and Bimali, Sabita. 2005. *Annapurna Post*, October 23, p. 7.

for me to find out what actually hinders them to use the libraries meant for them. The other main objectives of this study will be:

1. To have a brief look at the history of children library in Kathmandu.
2. To analyze if children from different categorized groups (class and caste) create have barriers in accessing children library.
3. To look for the impact of education in an assumption of a children library and barriers created by class and caste if any.

It is also important to see how much it has affected children's lives socially and culturally. What makes them come to the library and what kinds of books they prefer reading.

1.4 Theoretical Statements

According to the stratification theory by Max Weber and Morton Fried, there are many strata or class in a social structure where high class dominate over the low class and have access to every social infrastructures, or say they own it (for these in detail, see, Weber 1964, 1978, 2010; Fried 1967). It makes them powerful so they enjoy social prestige and can have access to whatever they want. Back in 1967 Fried identified three basic types of inequality: egalitarian, ranked and stratified. His theory of stratification talks about inequalities between strata (class and caste) in access to all three kinds of rewards: wealth, power and prestige. He talks about the social accessibility according to these three rewards. Those who have one or all of these things have the access to anything that society provides for the luxury of life including essential thing like education (Fried 1967). "Weber argued that power can take a variety of forms. A person's power can be shown in the social order through their status, in the economic order through their class, and in the political order through their party. Thus, class, status and party are each aspects of the distribution of power within a community." (Hurst 2007: 202). It is not much difficult to see "who-to-get-what" theory being applied in the societies. People regard that society has become much open to all the communities than the earlier period but after the rise of capitalism, the class division has become more strong and stratification more justified. The rich are becoming rich and the poor are becoming poorer. Marx in his book Capital (2007) says, "I

found the man with his family sitting in a little back room. The room was not bare of furniture, and there was fire in it. This was necessary to keep the naked feet of the young children from getting frost bitten, for it was a bitterly cold day....The man worked in the stone yard of the workhouse for certain ratio of food, and three pence per day. He had now come home to dinner quite hungry, as he told us with a melancholy smile, and his dinner consisted of slices of bread and dripping, and a cup of milkless tea...Such desolation, such hopelessness was about these people and their little room, as I should not care to witness again” (p. 735). Similar is the situation of many poor Nepali who depend on per day working payment as a laborer. They hardly earn living for themselves and cannot afford good education for children, let alone sending them to the library.

Education is what makes a lot of difference in the society. For the relation between education and class, the most essential theory to look for would be Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on social stratification and (sociology of) education. Bourdieu says in the Introduction of his well known book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), “the relative weight of home background and of formal education (the effectiveness and duration of which are closely dependent on social origin) varies according to the extent to which the different cultural practices are recognized and taught by the educational system, and the influence of social origin is strongest—other things being equal—in ‘extra-curricular’ and avant-garde culture. To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of ‘class.’” He further talks about the cultural capital and its transformation in middle class culture. “Bourdieu in 1971 reckoned that middle class students had the kind of cultural capital, the language, skills, knowledge and attitudes to do better in life than working class. He believed the more cultural capital you have, the more successful you will be in education and in the workforce. He believed working class pupils do not have access to cultural capital.”⁴ Middle class families pass on cultural capital and expectations from parents to children; this is called cultural reproduction. Every class and their process of socialization reproduces similar group of people in their own community. And the learned habits during the process of socialization is

⁴ Available at: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/class_education.htm.

known as *habitas*.⁵ “Bourdieu (1984, p. 100) sustains his theory of class cultures by holding that even when objectively identical products are consumed by different classes, they are appropriated and perceived differently according to their respective *habitas*” (Gartman 1991). Every class have their own choices and selection according to their accessibility and affordability. People from their own classes follow what they have learned so far in their own community and act accordingly. It is a normal behavior inside the community. Other classes’ perception towards the same thing might be different and that ratio to look at the same thing also might vary. “In *Distinction*, Bourdieu distinguishes three broad classes, each of which is unified by similar tastes and life-styles: the bourgeoisie, the petite bourgeoisie, and the working class (peasants and industrial workers). The bourgeoisie possesses a high volume of capital, which distances it from the economic necessities” (Bourdieu 1984 in Gartman 1991: 424).

I already mentioned above that according to Bourdieu, working class people do not have access to the cultural capital and most of the time they remain excluded from the socially provided public services (for the detail of Bourdieu theories, see, Mudimbe 1993; Wacquant 1990; Tabb n.d. and Bourdieu and Passerson 1990). Education is one among them and under this system comes libraries. When one do not have much access to other social services, library becomes optional choice. If parents are from a poor family, the “learned habit” would not be developing a culture of reading habit as it has very less essence among such parents who work for others in a minimum wage. My study is very much based on the theories and arguments described above. Though class and education themselves have vast definitions and we’ll need a lot of effort, time and other supporting factors in studying them in detail, the link between these two needs to be analyzed very well. Not all the units that come under these terms could be analyzed in a short span of time but I have tried to step on one of the units under education, children library and show how they effect each other in ways. Uses of libraries are directly related to the education as it contains a collection of popular thoughts and ideas in a medium of books. So the use of libraries makes man enrich their knowledge. But has everyone been able to grasp this opportunity of gaining this knowledge? Is it that the more prestigious and wealthy and powerful one’s family is the more chances of uses of libraries are?

⁵ Habitus is the set of socially learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting that are often taken for granted, and which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Related to Children Library

“A library is more than a storehouse for books. It’s availability makes a difference to a quality of child’s life” (Seymour and Layne 1979).

Children library is very essential for the further development of children’s mental growth and knowledge, and that is why we should study more of children’s literature and children library to analyze and to know how sufficient it is for them (Adhikari 2068 v.s.b). As my research is focused on the similar subject, it is important to see other such researches that has been done on the children library. This chapter will focus more on similar literatures and things that are discussed there about the children library.

Childhood is a phase of life where children make sure what they want to be, or at least they dream, dream about what they want to be. Similarly, at the same time they develop different kinds of hobbies and learn to invest some part of their time in it, like drawing, reading, or doing other creative works. If parents can also provide some of their time in helping their children with their stuff and make them learn and love to read, that would be the most beautiful thing ever from them (Shantadas 2066 v.s.; Manandhar 2067 v.s). By reading more of the children books, children can gain practical knowledge and learn to develop decision making power (Bhandari 2067 v.s.). But it is impossible to get all the children books that are available in the market. And here children’s library plays a vital role (Pokharel 2065 v.s.). It is the place for all the children from ritzier or pauper family.

My consideration for the definition of children is all those who are below the age of 19, though “International law defines a child as any person under 18 years of age...” and Nepal’s “Children’s Act 1992...define a child as a person under 16” (Terre dos hommes Foundation 2010). I believe unless they cross their teen age, they should be free of any kind of burdens and should be provided with all their requirements. And this is also the time of their mental development. After they cross their teen age, they have to bear more responsibility. May be by

then they will be more matured enough to take decisions and work all by themselves. “The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. The child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society...in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).⁶

As per the child right act, “Every child has a right to their childhood – a hopeful existence free of exploitation, violence, neglect, and extreme poverty. Children need education, health services, consistent support systems as well as love, hope and encouragement; all these things and more are required in order to experience childhood to the fullest, and to eventually develop into healthy, capable adults.”⁷ Even “Psychologists have affirmed that childhood is the most impressionable period of life. Child Development, physical intellectual, social, and emotional changes that occur from birth to adolescence” (Chandrama 2008). It is not untrue that change is inevitable in life and it occurs whole our life but most of the essential changes takes place in childhood. This is one of the main reasons that childhood should be handled properly and children should be given all the opportunities in life that can help in their positive growth and development. And one of the main things that helps them to be a capable child and later creative adult is education. This is when Children Library can be a big help. Children library not only provides them with books but also with the basic education that can enrich their childhood with information and help them become more creative and imaginative.

“Most public libraries feature children’s rooms, where children’s librarians and guest storytellers read stories to children to encourage a love of books and reading” (Encarta Reference Library 2002). There are only few such libraries in Nepal like Nepal Japan Children Library, Room to Read, etc. who are providing similar kind of services. Nepal Japan Children Library organizes such programs every Saturday. And it is the best day for children too as they don’t have school that day. Other libraries are also thinking to do something like that.⁸ There may be many reasons for this that can be resolved once recognized. It should also be kept in mind that the librarians the library hires should be well trained for the Children Libraries. It’s

⁶ See <http://issues.tigweb.org/youthrights> and <http://boes.org/un/engun-b.html>.

⁷ For more information please visit <http://issues.tigweb.org/youthrights>.

⁸ Fieldwork; August 2011.

not only librarians but also parents, teachers and elders who should have knowledge about the importance of child growth and a right way to lead them in a right way.

2.2 Library, Education and Class

Class is a hierarchy that separates people from different groups according to their economic status. “Classes are social categories sharing subjectively-salient attributes used by people to rank those categories within a system of economic stratification” (Wright 2003). These categories are divided in such a manner that it promotes social inequalities and favors only particular groups. The more of miserable lives sticks to the low classes (Marx 2007) who are deprived of many facilities provided by and for the society.

Education is a privilege that people get in a society along with other luxuries of life (Fried 1967). It means one’s class determines on what type of educational facilities you will get. If one is from a low class, the most discriminated and dominated, s/he is sure likely to get low and minimum level of education. “Ball in 1981 found that the pupils in the top band were from higher social class. Teachers had higher expectations of them and they were taught in different ways to those in a lower band and therefore were giving more hope and a better label to prepare them for a successful future.”⁹ The similar view comes from Bourdieu (1984) the middle class always have a good culture and better future compared to low class people. “Hasley, Heath and Ridge (1980) found that a boy from a service class compared to a working class boy had: four times more chance of remaining at school at 16; eight times more chance of remaining at school at 17; ten times more chance of remaining at school at 18; eleven times more chance of going to university.”¹⁰

Class stratification is directly related to educational attainment. In particular, it has been argued that the subcultures and the distinctive norms and values of social classes influence performance in the educational system.

The research work by Hasley, Heath and Ridge (1980) on three classes based on fathers’ occupation shows:

⁹ Visit: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/class_education.htm.

¹⁰ Visit: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/class_education.htm.

The service class worked as professionals, administrators and managers; the intermediate class were clerical or sales workers and the self-employed; the working class includes manual workers in industry, which is ditto to what has been said by Marx (in most of his works), Fried (1967) and Bourdieu (1984). What all their work indicated is that the more powerful, weathy and prestigious you are, the more chance of getting good social services and other facilities. Only having one of the above mentioned quality can also give you some priviledge compared to working class people who have nothing at all. They are excluded in every sector, including education and library uses.

There is another argument that says library is a middle class institution, opened by middle class people (Peteman 1999) and been serving mostly middle class people. Similarly, Usherwood (1981) says “for too many ordinary working people, the public library appears as an irrelevant middle class institution.” The other author puts forward his argument saying, “as a middle class professional, the librarian may prefer to work with his (sic) own kind and find it more rewarding” (Jordan 1972).

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

I loved libraries and have been visiting one since I was 14. Like for many people library has been one of the most the appropriate places for me to spend. I would be surrounded by different kinds of books and I could choose any book I liked (which mostly ended with children adventures). I frequently visited libraries like AWON and British Council Library (British Council closed its library few years back). Both these libraries had many children books, both fiction and non-fiction. As I grew, I realized many of my friends did not go to libraries. Some of the parents did not allow my friends to visit libraries and few loved playing more. May be my interest in children and library was rooted since then. I remember observing kids that visited libraries and imagining who they might be or where they might have come from.

I do not belong to a high class family with a benefit of accessing things I wanted to (compared to others from low classes). In this case, I consider myself lucky. Our dad raised us working so hard. He used to drive taxi to give us a better future. My friends around were poor too. Many of them used to help their parents in either agricultural work or other manual work. They went to different school than I, and it was a government school. They had morning sessions and were free for a whole day, which meant they had to work with their parents. Two of them completed +2, while others dropped out when they were still in a school. Today I think I can relate their studies to their family's poor economic condition. I used to tell them stories. This was one among other reasons to choose class and relate it to the library.

When I thought of conducting my research on this, I selected libraries like AWON and National Library because these were the libraries I had used many times, especially AWON. I knew these places well. Selection of NJCL was an intention to know a children library as a whole. It was a new environment for me and the only library dedicated to children. I wanted to see how children are making use of the library that only contained books for children. After all the

preparation, I finally visited these libraries as a researcher for the first time. For a few weeks, all I did was observation. I noted down everything I thought was relevant for my study. It was worth spending my time observing things around as it helped me a lot in identifying the first time library users and distinguish them from the old users. I engaged in informal talks with some of the old timers and first timers. I also started talking to parents in order to build a rapport and to know when usually they managed visiting these libraries. I kept a journal where I wrote about things I have experienced and people I thought could be useful for my study.

3.2 Identifying the Informants

One of the most difficult tasks during my field visit was identifying the potential informants who could really be helpful for my study. It was also difficult at the first phase to categorize them into the class they belonged. It was a long process before I really could separate them with their respective classes. The other challenge was that because many of these informants I talked to were kids, many of their views regarding library and library uses kept changing. As they were growing kids and learning new things everyday it was obvious but it took a lot of effort to verify things they told me. I spent days with these kids in order to reach a conclusion about what they really felt and thought about these libraries. Similarly, talking to librarians, parents and teachers were no easy task. Many of them weren't much sincere about their answers as they wanted me to identify them as a good and liberate people.

3.3 Obtaining Information: Technique, Challenge and Experience

It was difficult to talk to informants, as I was a complete stranger to them. Besides everything, obtaining correct information was usually problematical due to skeptic adult informants. In order to make them believe I was one among them, I started to take parts in different library activities, especially in NJCL. I volunteered in tasks like book shelving in order to get close to librarians and spent a lot of time with children as a storyteller. With this it was little easy to talk to them about what I wanted to know. I also spent a good lot of time with parents coming to libraries with their children. Some of them were so outgoing and helpful while others didn't want to talk. Most of the parents showing unwillingness in talking were from around the neighborhood. Their children went to NJCL and they introduced me to their parents. But they were not happy about their children going to libraries, be it for reading or for fun. They would

respond like, “Why should I talk to you? I don’t care if he goes to any library and what difference does it make?” or “It would have been better if my son worked with me, at least he would have earned something for the family.” After talking to some, I realized their frustration wasn’t me, it was the poor condition of the family. But despite such circumstances some of them were very polite and responded my queries very well.

I used key anthropological research tools like observations, semi-structured questionnaires, case studies, and unstructured interview during my study. I observed children coming to library, parents who helped them get to the library and librarians serving these kids and attained some knowledge about children’s book choices, functional aspect of the library, and expectations of the parents. After I was successful in identifying my possible informants, I distributed the questionnaire I prepared. I was standing aside while I let children fill it. I helped them with questions they got confused with. I also distributed my questionnaire to students from different selected schools, which was very helpful. The schoolchildren’s perspective and library user children’s perception towards library in their school was very similar. But many of the children had no idea about the libraries outside their school. I interviewed librarians, parents and teachers. Most of them believed library to be important for the children but hadn’t yet made much effort from their sides to help. I recorded most of these interviews and later transcribed them. Similarly, I did a case study of few kids who had an experience of rejection on using school library from their teachers and headmasters. The children these days have become very smart. They know school library is for them and they should be allowed to use it.

3.4 Identifying Background of the Informants

This was one of the difficult part to accomplish. “How would you categorize the backgrounds? On what basis?” This was the question everyone were asking when I shared my concept with them. How can we differentiate class of the people? Their financial/economic status and lifestyle, to say broadly. I have categorized the number of these children on the basis of few things like: a) parent's occupation and income; b) whether they have their own house or are they renting?; c) how many rooms and how many family members in a family?; d) what are their travelling alternatives? Do they own any vehicles?; e) what school are they enrolling their children into, can they afford demands of their children including clothes, books (apart from

course books) and playing materials; f) what accessories and gadgets are these children using, etc. Not all the children who visited the libraries were only from one one background. Few numbers of children might have been misplaced, but it will not bring significant change on my calculation, the difference might be of one or two percent.

Table 1

Number of Children with a Different Backgrounds

Class	Numbers	%
High	38	33.62
Middle	59	52.22
Low	16	14.16
Total	113	100

Among my little informants 33.62 percent were from high class, 55.22 percent were from middle class and 14.16 percent children were from low class (see Table 1). There were children who came to the library in big Toyota or Hyundai along with their parents, wearing expensive clothes, carrying iphones, communicating in English and asking whether she should take five books or ten (I mostly saw such children coming in AWON library).¹¹ And there were children who were not even properly dressed and coming by in slippers, who were unaware that library is a peaceful place, a collection of knowledge and not a place only for playing. The number of such children exceeded in NJCL. Others were the type of children who visited all three libraries quietly, sat in a corner with some books, made a selection and returned back home. There were small kids visiting libraries with their parents and listening carefully to what their parents were reading out for them.

¹¹ September to December 2011.

3.5 Managing and Making Sense out of Information

The journal I kept during my observation and informal talks was very helpful to me while I was trying to interpret the information I collected through various methods. Similarly, the transcribed interviews and questionnaires helped me a lot to make sense of the information. While managing the information, what I first did was to bring together information that dealt with similar issues. For example, information from children with similar experiences who had difficulty in accessing their school library, information dealing with children who never had any experience using a library, information indicating parents who had not idea about the existence of children library, etc.

Making sense out of the field notes—observations, reflections, conversations, and interviews with and from many people—into an authoritative text with a single authorial voice was a very difficult task, sometimes overwhelming while frustrating the other times. To do this I went through the field notes repeatedly and at the same time I started exploring and going through relevant literatures exploring various aspects of the issue I was dealing with. I have applied descriptive and comparative methods in my writing.

3.6 Being Ethically Conscious

I was ethically conscious about taking consent of each informant before I conducted interviews and before recording them. I respected changing themes and questions when my respondents and informants requested to do so. I maintained confidentiality of those who didn't want others (specially school teachers who didn't want the principal of the school) to know what they were talking to me about. Similarly some of the librarians were not much open at first as they were not sure how I would use the information I obtained from them. It took me some time to make them believe I wouldn't use it anywhere else with out taking their permission. And if I used these information somewhere, I wouldn't use their real names. Therefore, considering all these I used alias names of many informants I have interviewed. I was always aware that my actions could bring negative impact on my informants so I constantly maintained to be on my best behavior.

Chapter Four

BRIEF HISTORY OF LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL

4.1 Historical Development

To talk about the development of library in Nepal, we have to take a quick look into the medieval era, when Malla Kings were ruling the country. Many of Malla kings including Pratap Malla, had a huge library as they were fond of reading (Acharya 2065 v.s.; Adhikari 2068 v.s.a). Kirkpatrick, who visited Nepal then, was very much influenced by the collection of books at Bhaktapur; one of the libraries there contained more than 14,000 books (Adhikari 2068 v.s.a). After the Shahs winning over the Mallas, they collected all the scriptures, books, records, etc. from all three cities of Kathmandu and Gorkha, and assembled them at Hanumandhoka. In few years it became a Royal Library. In 1904 v.s., when Jung Bahadur was just rising in power, he shifted most of these books at Thapathali Durbar and announced Khadgaram Joshi as the librarian. When Bir Shamsher was a Prime Minister in 1953 v.s., he moved library in Durbar High School. The library was then shifted to the then newly build building at Ghanta Ghar in 1957 v.s. as “*Ghanta Ghar Library*” and it was named “*Bir Library Sarkari Pustakkhana*” in 1962 v.s. After a long time, during 2023 v.s., when *Rashtriya Abhilekhalaya* was established in Ramshah Path, all the books and scriptures were moved there.

Libraries were not accessible to the general public before 2007 v.s. as Rana rulers had banned education for the public. If anyone was known of involving in activities like teaching or opening libraries, these rulers arrested them and punished them instantly. But people who went abroad for the studies and those who were active in literary field were struggling to open libraries for the people. *Pustak Padhne Dhalan* was opened with the public effort in 1983 (which was forced to close in a year). Later when it opened again, it was named *Dhawal Pustakalaya* (Singh 2068 v.s.; Adhikari 2068 v.s.a). People who raised their demand to open libraries for the public were all caught and punished for their demands in the year 1987, which is widely known as “library coup.” After 2007 v.s. many libraries opened for the public. Libraries like AWON, National Library, Keshar Library, Kathmandu Valley Public Library, Dilli Raman Regmi Library, etc opened one after the other after 1950.

Children Library's history is not as long as other public libraries. It was only in late 70s and early 80s, when library for children started opening. AWON library was the first one to open a children section around early 80s though it had a good collection of donated books for children from the beginning of the library's establishment. It was followed by National Library-Children Section (2052 v.s.), Nepal Japan Children Library (2001), Kathmandu Valley Public Library (2065 v.s.), Kaiser Library-Children Section (2065 v.s.), recently Dilli Raman Regmi Library-Children Section, and so on. Libraries established and funded by the the foreigners like John Wood and Dr. Antonia Neubauer established Room to Read (2000) and Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal (1991) respectively. These organizations hasn't only been serving in the valley but in many parts of the Nepal. They have opened more than thousand libraries, established schools for unprivileged children, provided scholarships for girl children and doing many other social service practice (Baral 2063 v.s.; Adhikari 2068 v.s.b.).

Below is the brief explanation of children libraries I have selected in my study.

4.2 Nepal National Library-Children Section

Nepal National Library (NNL) was first opened in 1957 A.D. when the personal collection of the then King's Spiritual Preceptor, the late Hem Raj Pandey, was brought by the government. At present NNL has a collection of more than 86,000 books and periodicals, including those brought in as a result of the amalgamation of the Central Secretarial Library. The collection has been classified according to Dewey Decimal Classification. Until 1960, it functioned only as a Reference Library and from 1961 it was opened to the general readers.

They have been serving children with their Children Section since 2052 v.s (1995). Until 2002, they were managing it from the main building but as they were able to separate a different budget for the section they shifted it to the new building, beside its main building. They have a collection of more than 5500 books in Nepali, English and some other languages. Their reference books include dictionaries with pictures, encyclopedias, Guinness books etc. The English books have been classified according to the Dewey Decimal Classification and Nepali and other language books are color coded. A catalogue of the books in this section has also been published. They were organizing different video films shows, CD-ROM demonstration, story telling, origami, quiz and tips for using reference books time to time for the younger users but

from some time now they have minimized (or stopped) it due to the decreasing numbers of children coming there.¹²

4.3 Nepal-Japan Children Library

Nepal-Japan Children Library is located at Lainchour, near British Council. It was established in 2001 with the funding by Joho Roren, one of the largest industrial unions in Japan. Land for the building has been provided by Kathmandu Metropolis City (KMC) and is managed by Osaka International Club-Nepal, and assisted by various advisory committees with in the framework and policies of the club. The library reflects the deep friendship between Nepal and Japan.

It has three sections, the first section consists of books for the children from class 1 to 5, second section from 6 to 10 and the third is a reference section. Books from the reference section are not for borrowing. There are around 11,000 books. And the library is purely meant only for the children, from class 1-10, others cannot get membership there. The impressive thing about this library is it is for free! You just have to deposit Rs 100 for the membership, which you will get back as you no more want to continue your membership. Library hours are 12 to 5:30 in the winter and 12 to 6 in the summer, except Wednesdays. For the adults who wants to read there, they charge Rs 10. They are planning to open the library for the college students also and to charge Rs 1000 for a year. For the renewal of the membership they will again charge Rs 1000. But it has not been implemented yet.

Every Saturday they used to organize some program/activity for children for an hour from 12:30 like storytelling, arts and drawings, movie showing and science related activities for which one teacher from Siddartha Vanasthali School used to come and facilitate.

We can find any kinds of books from stories to science, geography, encyclopedia, history and many more there. Most of the encyclopedias (cause they are expensive ones mostly were donated) are in the reference section so they cannot be borrowed but one can stay there and read them as long as they like. There are Japanese story and history books translated in Nepali and

¹² Personal communication with one of the informants, September 2011.

Newari. Other languages in which books are found consists of Japanese and English (widely used language).

The books that have not been entered in the library records can also be borrowed but they will charge Rs 1 per day which means if we keep it for 5 days we will have to pay Rs 5.

4.4 AWON Library

Active Women of Nepal Library, widely known as AWON library is among one of the oldest public libraries in Nepal. It was established in 1955 as an organization opened by a group of five American woman living in Nepal. The initiation was taken by Dr. Bethel Fleming as they all came up with an idea to start a club.” They named it AWON (then called American Women of Nepal) with a vision to promote interaction, fellowship, and understanding among expatriate women living and working in Nepal.”¹³

¹³ For more details pls visit: http://www.ecs.com.np/feature_detail.php?f_id=271. Accessed on March 24, 2012.

Chapter Five

CHILDREN LIBRARIES: A SCENARIO

"Children Library is for all the children, but we haven't yet been able to include children from all the backgrounds..."¹⁴

Visiting libraries and making a selection between them wasn't an easy task as most of them weren't studied seriously before. I have my own reasons for selecting these three libraries. AWON Library is one of the oldest public library opened for general people. All of their collection is a donation by some organization or people who use the library themselves and as it has a larger collection of English fictions (both for children and adults), it is one of the popular library among youngsters and college students. And they claim themselves to be the first one to open a different section for the children—which seems true till now—caught my attention in a first place. Nepal National Library is a national library that supports other libraries in Nepal and it almost has all the books published in and about Nepal. It's concern about children readers and opening a different section itself is a good thing and I wanted to know how they were managing their Children Section, and if it has as good collection as their main library. Nepal-Japan Children Library is a wholesome library for the children with their own building and resources from small kids to 16 years student. More importantly, I was very keen to find an answer to my question, who are their users?

Similarly, I selected an old government school Nava Adarsa and a private school New Zenith English Model School, with an average fees of Rs 1500 a month. Some other students I talked with were from various schools like Ratna Rajya School, Green Peace School, Pragya Higher Secondary School, Shanti Vidya Griha, etc.

Directly asking about things didn't help me much unless I got myself involved in a library, as a volunteer storyteller for quite a while. It was easy then for me to talk to both the library staffs and the children who visited library on Saturdays. It helped me much. I interviewed them, made them fill the questionnaires, and participated with them in some activities.

¹⁴ Personal conversation to Urmila Manandhar from Nepal-Japan Children Library; February 14, 2011.

5.1 Selected Libraries

Under this heading, I will be talking about the users, structures of the libraries, books, etc. of the three libraries.

5.1.1 Users

All these libraries' main target readers included small aged children to teen aged ones. But the difference is that NJCL only includes books suitable for the students from class 1 to 10. For others who exceed the agegroup of 14 or 16 maximum, the library is not of much use. But they have their own rules on the users. It is not that the adults cannot use the resources there but they have to pay Rs 10 before having access to anything. Parents with small kids, who cannot themselves read stories, are allowed to sit in a corner and read out stories for them. Few months back users were mostly from middle class families. Now, most of the users are from a poor neighborhood community behind the library. NNL invites children from all age groups. Mostly the children who visit there are from 10 to 15 years of age. Most of the users there are from and around Jawalakhel and others from places like Lazimpat, Jorpati, New Road, etc. AWON library has a mixed readers from small primary level students to Higher Secondary levels. Most of the students who visit there are from well-to-do families. In my observation period most of the children I encountered with came with their English speaking parents, with a family membership cards and all of them borrowed books for themselves. Some others, who didn't speak English were also fluent in English and could easily answer the question I asked in English.

5.1.2 Books

One of the larger section at NJCL consists of books from Japan, some in a Japanese language and others translated ones. Similarly, their collection includes text books for the children from all the grades. They also have picture books and block games with a separate room for small kids. Their Reference Section consists of expensive books what they don't lend but children are allowed to take a look at them. NNL has a good collection of Nepali books, stories as well as essays and poems. They also have colorful dictionaries and encyclopedias for the children. The library is small so it is yet to add a huge numbers of books being published for the children from

many publication houses. AWON Library is quite known library for their English collection. We can get books from almost every genre and subjects like fiction, geography, astronomy, children mystery novel collection, short and easy version of some very popular books and novels like Gulliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift. There is no doubt that children are attracted easily with this huge collection of books. The only problem they have is with the quality of the books as they are already second handed when they first get it. Though they have managed shelving books in a good condition, some old books with torn pages, can also be found inbetween.

5.1.3 Furniture, Playing Materials and Design

Among these three libraries, the well concerned and little managed library is NJCL. They seem to have planned it for the children as their furniture are designed accordingly. Each step in their ladder are with a minimal height (which makes it easy for the children to climb up and down) though one of the staffs there said it was not planned when they were building it, it was because of the workers who didn't work well.¹⁵ But it has been a plus point later for both the librarians and children. They have a good collection of videos and games for the children. They have a big room where they show videos (specially cartoons) almost every Saturdays. The room is also used for other activities and programs they organize. They also have few computers that worked well some time back but now they just rest there occupying a larger space of the library. NNL are also concerned about their young readers. Shelves are not much tall but the tables and chairs are not bought putting these readers in mind. They say their users are allowed to use computer e-resources for various purposes. AWON library has half of the shelves of medium height and others little higher. Only newly added shelves are appropriate for the children. They don't provide computer or e-library facilities but they do have a few collection of playing materials for the children.

¹⁵ Based on conversation with Ms Sapana; December 23, 2011.

5.1.4 Location of the Library

It is obviously true that the location of the library brings a huge difference in the number of the users. For eg. Nepal-Bharat Pustakalaya situated at RNAC has around 300 users everyday.¹⁶ Has it anything to do with these children libraries?

As a matter of fact, all these libraries are located in a city area near and around a locality of middle class families. Obviously, most of the users I talked with were from the same or near by area except few big children and those who came there with their parents. But when we talk about the number of children, they are very low. They are even less than the count on our fingers. What are the reason behind this? I will be talking about it in my next chapter.

School library I visited was in more deprived condition. It didn't had enough books, there were no tables or chairs for the children, even many books were old, torned and dirty. This seemed like the only abandoned place in the school. Few other schools I visited didn't have any library and some had a library but children weren't allowed to use them.

¹⁶ According to one of the informants and a regular users of the library, Mr. Shyam Prasad Wagle; September 12, 2011.

Chapter Six

CHILDREN AND CHILDREN LIBRARIES

I distributed 150 questionnaires among the library users and school students, among which I got back 113. The children who filled these questionnaires are from different backgrounds, class and castes that included Newar (Pradhan, Shrestha, Maharjan, Kasaju, Rajbhandari, Maharjan, Tuladhar, Malakar [Newar low caste], etc.), Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Lama, Sherpa, Muslim, Brahmin, Chettri and Pariyar and Bishwokarma (the last two castes are listed in low castes according to Hindu caste system). Everyone were very excited to talk about the library, they had their appreciation and complain regarding the libraries they were using, both at school and independent children libraries they were using.

6.1 Children, Child Right and Children Library

Though some public libraries opened in between 1950 and 1960 for the public (Koirala and Bird n.d.), children library was out of focus until late 1970s and early 1980s. Those public libraries contained no materials for children. AWON library is among one of the public libraries that opened during that time. They say their main target was/is women and children and they had a collection of children literatures from that time. But the manager of the library, Ram Manandhar, says he doesn't exactly remember the date of opening a different children section, but is confirmed about that the section existed some time back from 1984.¹⁷ His say seems true as "49 years later the organization is bigger and better than ever, 'Making a difference to the lives of Children and Women in Nepal' as their motto reads."¹⁸ But the question "has every child, from every region and background been able to benefit their right to education?" is yet "no." Many children don't know much about their rights. The thing that made me wonder was that even the children from the Capital, studying in good government and private schools didn't know much about the children libraries and their right in using it.¹⁹ Almost half of the samples I studied were unknown of the fact that there are children libraries for them in the city (for the total numbers of samples from selected libraries and schools, see Table 2). Samples from

¹⁷ Personal conversation with Ram Manandhar.

¹⁸ Availave at: http://www.ecs.com.np/feature_detail.php?f_id=271. Accessed on March 27, 2012.

¹⁹ Fieldwork; October 2011.

schools knew about the school library and except 5 students, none others knew about the other children libraries. If we assume the sampled part as a whole, we can guess about the condition of the children and children libraries in Nepal.

Table 2

Sampled Bodies

	Samples	Percentage (%)
NJCL	20	17.70
NNL	15	13.27
AWONL	20	17.70
Schools	58	51.33
Total	113	100

The total number of samples I collected is 113. Among the total samples, 20 are from NJCL, 15 from NNL and 20 from AWON Library. Remaining 58 samples are from the schools that I selected for my study.

6.2 Children’s Library: Children’s Say

"Children library is very important for us. They provide us knowledge and our general knowledge becomes good."²⁰

Not all had similar views about the libraries they were using. For most of the children it is a place where they can make friends and read beautiful stories. For some it is a place where they can play and watch video games.²¹ Though on asking most of them said children and school

²⁰ One of the child informant from NJCL; September 24, 2011.

²¹ Fieldwork/observation; October 2011.

libraries are good for children, many of them had no answers for what good. The different thing I found while I was participant observer among the little library users was that the library wasn't a place for them to study, rather it was like a play zone to them. Playing is as significant for brain development of children as doing other activities like reading but what mattered was what they were playing and where.

Scene: Children Playing

Place: NJCL

It was one Saturday afternoon on December 2011. There were about 15 children in the library. They were playing games (*choi dum*) outside the library building. Apart from them there came few other children who spend some of their time suffling books, issuing one or two of them and returned. One, about 16 years old, came to learn about the library and if they provided text books. After that none other children visited the library the whole day. The children played for around one hour and in 12:45, they went inside in the hall. There was a table, some chairs, cushions, a 21" TV, and lots of cds and dvds about children movies and animated series. One of them, whom they called captain, selected one of the cds and inserted it in a CD/DVD player. An animated film "*Astro Boy*" began. For whole one and a half hour, there was a pin drop silence except sometimes when they whispered about what might happen next. As the film finished, 30 percent of them left the library and remaining 70 percent began playing again. This time inside the library, "kids zone." They were playing hide and seek (*lukamari*). Some of them were hiding under the table while others behind the shelves and one was hiding his eyes behind his hands and counting 1-50. And as soon as he finished counting, he started looking for his friends. They were very excited and anxious at the same time. The place was as noisy as a playground! As they were taking rest after some play time, I sat among them and started talking to them. They said they were all from the same locality, behind the library and they loved coming there to watch a video and play games with the friends. On asking, "this is a library with so many books, don't you want to read books?," one of the boy replied, "yes, we do sometimes. We read stories and look into picture books, they have such nice pictures in them!" "Ohhh..." I was very dissappointed after talking to most of them. I thought about talking to the librarians, who stayed upstairs and hadn't interfared them from "making a noise in the library and

playing.” It is better I do not mention her name but her answer made me open my mouth wide, “what?!”

She explained, “these are the poor kids, who live outside the residency area, in small and rented houses on the way behind our library. They don’t have much knowledge about how to use the library. As there is little space outside their homes to play and no TV to watch at home so they come here. They also come here to see books with lots of colorful pictures that their parents cannot afford. But they do not read it, rather, if they like some pictures, they tear the page and take it with them. I found it myself. These kids, because of them children from high class, from the area in front of our library, had stopped coming to our library. Such children don’t like noisy environment and are only concerned on reading and borrowing books. These poor kids have been coming here from sometime now and the others have stopped coming. We sit in our office above and don’t have time to come down to make them stop. We are in a short of staff and volunteers who can help us manage these things, we also don’t have enough budget...”

“Wou...wou...” I wanted to stop her. Yes the fact is the library has gone so unmanaged on the recent days but the kids had nothing to do with that. They will do anything if you do not tell them the real purpose of library and how to use it and get benefitted. There are no one who can guide children on such things in the library. There is a volunteer, who is himself in his late teens and enjoys children playing.

6.3 Decreasing Number of Small Library Users

“The number of Children exceeded 20 most of the days, but these days the number has reduced to 3 or 4. Bad thing is, sometimes, not even a single child visits our library,” says Urmila Manandhar from NJCL.²² The condition of the other two libraries is not quite different. NNL has hardly 1 to 3 visitors and AWON Library has around 5 to 7 visitors on average. The number of children increases slightly on Saturdays but the number is not satisfactory at all. Once “around 70 to 100 children used to visit library every Saturday.”²³ That was the time when NJCL used to organize programs like Story-telling, paintings, Science Experiments and Video shows each Saturday with the help of different experts. Similar was the case with NNL, who

²² Personal conversation.

²³ Based on a conversation with Ms Sapana, NJCL.

used to organize programs like Quiz and Origami²⁴ on Saturdays. But in the case of AWON Library, they have never organized any such activities ever. According to Ram Manandhar, Manager of the AWON Library, as their library is one of the oldest ones, people know about it and they come there all by themselves by knowing about it from friends or relatives.²⁵

Librarians from NJCL and NNL said, when their libraries were just opened, they had such an enthusiasm that they did whatever they can to attract the children to their libraries. Then they also had a good budget to spend on many things but these days, they don't even have enough money to hire an extra staff. Library today, has remained so abandoned that it seems like a place with no people. Children libraries are for children, and if they don't arrive there, what's the meaning of opening it? Now the question is, what's the cause of such a decrease? Is it because of stopping or minimizing the number of such program or it is just the opposite. There are many reasons behind it, which I will discuss in the chapter 6.

²⁴ The Japanese art of paper folding to make varieties of things like birds, flowers, insects, animals, etc.

²⁵ Personal conversation; July 17, 2011.

Chapter Seven

SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

"Nepal was ruled from 1846 to 1950 by an oligarchic dictatorship of the Rana clan, which sought to maintain its monopoly on power and actively discouraged public education. A British Army surgeon in the Kathmandu Residency stated in 1877 that ‘... to find schools and colleges in Nepal is like finding snakes in Ireland’” (quoted by Parajuli, 2009).²⁶

There were very few schools and only some had access to it before 2007 v.s. Today, it has become difficult even to count numbers of schools mushrooming all over the city. But when we deeply look at the standard of the schools, their prices and the facilities they are providing, we come to know that not each of them are good. There are numbers of government and private schools that claim that they are serving students with quality education. What surprises me the most is that “howcome they not consider school libraries” as one of the means to offer a good and knowledgeable education. This doesn’t apply for all the schools in Nepal but many of them are not much concerned about school libraries.²⁷ They have many facilities in their schools like dancing, art classes, yoga, music, etc., and these are all very good for children’s mental and physical well-being. On asking “what facilities you have in your school?,” They take names of all these in a single breathe. “And library?,” with this question some seems nervous while others have many answers like, “we are planning to make it little bigger, and add books...but first we need to manage budget for it,” or “children already have so many textbooks so why do they need to study other books? They have to do homeworks and read things their teachers have asked them to...they cannot waste such precious time by reading other books...they can use libraries after they pass SLC.”²⁸

7.1 School Library in Private and Government Schools

Condition of school libraries I visited is pathetic. Not all the schools had similar amount of the books and facilities but all of them did not have enough number of books. Most of them had many old, torned, dusty books. Except for few, others didn’t have recent publications of books.

²⁶ See Koirala and Bird (n.d.).

²⁷ From a fieldnote.

²⁸ Fieldwork and fieldnotes.

There were very less or no chairs and table where the students could sit and study during their leisure time. In some of the schools, students were allowed to borrow books once or twice a month, or only when teachers were absent while one of the schools didn't even lend books to their students. One of the senior teachers in the latter school told, "books are to be kept safe...children don't know how to deal with books, they can torn it and make it old."²⁹ Students themselves had many complains regarding their libraries. Many of them wanted to use libraries once a week and some wanted to access it whenever they wanted to. Students like Ankita Maharjan, Praful Rajbhandari, Devendra Bishwokarma and Anil Kumar Rai from New ZEMS thought their school library to be one of the unmanaged places in the school where children made so much noise and left the place very dirty after it's use. Many other students wanted their Principal to visit the library see things for himself. They expected may be after that he would take some action.

The schools I talked about in the previous paragraph are all private schools. The sad thing about the government schools I visited was there were no school library at all. "We have very limited budget to spend on so many things that we haven't yet been able to take an initiative to open one...even we do not know of any government policy regarding school library..."³⁰ which meant students from those schools were yet to take any benefit from school libraries.

7.2 Student's Knowledge Regarding School and Children Libraries

Almost all the students I talked with believed that school libraries are very important for enhancing their knowledge and get new ideas on and about many thing happening around the world. Though none of them were satisfied with their school libraries many of them enjoyed visiting libraries and reading stories and other things available there. These children didn't have any idea regarding library management and their rights to use it. The only things they knew were about insufficient number of books, lending system and time period, only few new books and other infrastructure of the library. It is very dissappointing to know that more than 95 percent of these students didn't know about the children libraries in different places of Kathmandu and even 5 percent remaining, who knew about a library, had either not visited or

²⁹ Conversation with one of the Ram P. Wagle (name changed to hide the identification) from E.H. Secondary School.

³⁰ Conversation with a senior teacher in Nava Adarsa School, Basantapur.

visited there once or twice. They didn't have any idea regarding how the children library looks like, and what kinds of facilities they provide such little users. Despite these, they have their own ideas of how their school library should look like, which was a very positive response. They say, there should be lots of shelves with thousands of books from every subject, a big table and chairs is the must, it had to be a quiet place and clean place, and so on. Few of them said the image of the library they had in their mind came from some of the movies they watched (it is very nice to know that children are concerned about such things even when watching a movie!).

Chapter Eight

ROLE OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN/SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Only by opening an library is not a job done in the case of children and school libraries. Children are in a phase of learning things (they are very fast in copying things!) and are easily influenced by the things around. This means it won't be much difficult for the elders to make them use to the books and libraries. All we need to do is make them curious and leave them on their own with books, either at home or in the libraries to search for the answers. Such reading habit will last long, and they will always be learning something.

8.1 Parents' Concern

Parents are the first influence and home is the first school for the children. Socialization begins at home so it is the utmost duty of parents to try to teach children learn good habits (eating, sleeping [along with other etiquettes], reading, etc.). Parents are always concerned about their children and want them to turn out to be a good human being. For the good educational environment and make them learn reading habits, parents play a vital role but how much have they been able to do that?

8.1.1 Sampled Parents

Not all but many didn't know about children libraries in Kathmandu and almost half of them had no idea regarding school libraries except that they paid some amount in school for that kind of service in the name of "extra curriculam activities." There were only few parents who had taken their child to the children libraries and read out stories and other things for them. 79 percent of them had never talked to their children or the school administration about it which means they never asked their children if they use their school libraries properly and didn't concern much until their children are reading something. 15 percent parents didn't want their children to read books other than their course (except dictionaries and encyclopedias). Ram Nepal, one among them, said "I want my son to get 90 percent in SLC, only getting distinction has no value these days, and for that he just needs to concentrate on his course books, not other

outside books.”³¹ And only 6 percent parents were little aware of such libraries among whom 3 percent had even taken their children there.

8.2 Efforts of Children/School library Administration

Children and School libraries are opened for the children. And because of that such libraries are always meant to be working on inviting as more children as they can. Children libraries I visited in Kathmandu had their own ideas, excercises and efforts for that.

8.2.1 NJCL

NJCL is one of the the largest children libraries with their own building and infrastructures only meant for children. In order to attract children in their early years, they used to organized various kinds of activities like story-telling, art classes and some others along with the experts in the field (every Saturdays). Today, the only ongoing program is video shows on Saturdays. And the number of children that visit the library doesn't even take up the count in a single hand. Why is it so? What is the main reason for this? Ms Sapana says, “Previously, we had a budget and a good number of staffs here. We used to work so hard and we even went to some schools to promote our library. Some of the schools also made their students visit the library. Today, we are in a short of budget as well as staffs. I am always busy with my own stuffs in my office and get a less time to get involved in all these...many children knows about us...I wonder what makes them not visit here.”³² There is one other librarian (Urmila Manandhar) handling things with children and other stuffs. Looking over the library the staffs are really not enough.

The children play materials and furniture are also somewhat better compared to the other libraries I sampled. And apart from this the library is also providing their service free of cost to help children from all the backgrounds.

8.2.2 AWON Library

Being one of the oldest public libraries with only English books, the non-English readers would not get what they want there which means many children, reading in government schools and

³¹ As said by Ram Nepal, father of Nikhil Nepal, one of my child informants.

³² Personal Communication.

who don't know much of English won't enjoy much of the library visit. But despite this, it was the library with the flow of more children compared to the other two. They have never ever tried on their own to get to the public and let them know about their library and the functions it provides there. All the sources who make others come visit the library are the ones who had already used the library or are still using it. Besides this, they have a larger collection of children mysteries, and other books that covers history (earth's, human ancestors' (pre-history), astrological, geographical, political, etc.), picture books, short and simple versions of world famous novels, etc. Many of the children I talked with mentioned they loved reading and looking at the pictures of such books the most. The other unique thing about the library is that it is providing it's service with the help of people and organization that donate them books. Anyone can donate their books there, and till now they never had a short of books. People can become single member, student member (with a discount) or get the family membership. It is quite exciting that the membership fees for a whole year is so cheap and one can renew their card with half the price next year. Single and student members are allowed to take 5 books a time and family members can take 15 books a time for whole three weeks. All these might be one of the sources of attraction for the new users or the users using it from a long time.

8.2.3 NNL

NNL has also been providing their service free of cost. Despite this, they also offer free copies and pencils to the young readers who go there to read.

They, as NJCL, were very enthusiastic when they opened their children section for the first time in 2052 v.s. They were also organizing various kinds of activities similar to what NJCL were doing. And it was going very well, there used to be so many kids during their school vacation and on Saturdays. But these days, it is even difficult to encounter few children using the library. NNL Head, Dashrath Thapa thinks the cause might be their inability to increase good numbers of books and other stuffs like games and videos. Hilariously, he says, may be the kids get scared to enter inside the library because there are so many security officers standing by the gate due to the ministers residence just in front of the NNL compound or may be they feel uneasy entering into such a huge building (see, Kantipur 2063 v.s.). They have similar problems in their library, budget and staff.

Below are some of the pictures from international libraries like BCI Children Library and City of Santa Maria Library, California.

Picture 1: BCI-Children Library



Picture 2: City of Santa Maria, California, Library



Picture 3: Sample of Infrastructures in from other International Libraries

Picture A



Picture B



Picture C



Though public Children Libraries in Nepal might not afford all the things shown in the pictures, at least they can include some of the selected things that they think might be one of the sources to attract children to their libraries.

Chapter Nine

BARRIERS

It is not untrue that children libraries in Kathmandu are facing problems. And there is not a single obstruction, there are many. Does that mean we will never get these solved and the libraries will get down one day? We cannot be certain of anything in the future, but we can definitely identify such barricades and think of our own ways to deal with it. Many of such problems will minimize itself in the coming years as people here are also getting aware on the role of education and its relation with library. Many children are getting enrolled in schools and we can see changes in the records of literacy rate of the people and how they are increasing every year. Literacy rate in 2007 v.s. was just 11 percent, by the year 2063/2064, the percentage increased to 47 (Adhikari 2064 v.s.). In a recent time, more than 50 percent of the citizens are literate and more than half of them clear their school level. This is a way to a progressive society.

The following are some of the problems I identified while I was ongoing with my research:

9.1 Class/Economic Factor

Though Nepal is considered as one of poorest countries in the world, all the people in the country are poor. Nepal is a country of people with many groups based on hierarchies, and class in one among them. And class is one of the most important factor in determining “who gets what?” It not only separate groups on the basis of the economic status but also limits accessibility to loads of things for many. This also applies for education. “Consistent research shows that the higher the social class, the higher the levels of educational achievement are likely to be. Children from a higher social class are most likely to stay in post-compulsory education and they are more likely to achieve better examination passes. They are also more likely to gain university entrance... (sic).”³³

Among my informants only 16 percent of the low class students had access to these libraries and though they were getting to use the library, the environment wasn't as friendly for them as

³³ Visit: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/class_education.htm. Accessed on March 22, 2012.

it was for the middle and high class students. They were being “ignored” inside the library as they were outside. They were very happy to use library on Saturdays, not because they would get chance to read many exciting books but because then they would get to watch a cartoon movies. Most of these kids didn’t have TV at their homes, and even those who had, didn’t had access to channels other than Nepali. Affording extra books for the children was a dream for their laborer parents. There is a kid I talked to who is very interested in reading, but his father is in jail and his mother works at other’s home. He says, usually he doesn’t get time as he also has to help his mother. He visits NJCL, sometimes on Saturdays, with his friends and enjoys playing and reading a moment or two.

There wasn’t only one of such kids, there were many, from the schools and those residing near the library. These kids have been deprived of what we call their human rights to education and access to other things. And one of the reasons is their low status in the family, where they hardly earn for their living. Their parents have no idea of such libraries, and almost 90 percent of them also didn’t have any idea regarding what a Children Library is and how is it helpful for their children.

Many of the other middle class and high class children I talked to had no any problem in using the libraries. They were allowed by their parents to visit these libraries either alone or with themselves and helped in many ways. This doesn’t mean all of them were using libraries. About 60 percent of middle class and 3 percent of high class children weren’t using any library. Some of them had their own small library at home, which according to them, was enough for them and some had a collection of books enough to read for now without visiting the library.

9.2 Caste

Though class is “believed to be” an outcome of the capitalism and has gained much acknowledgement since the Karl Marx used the word, it has a lot to do with a caste system in a country like Nepal where Hinduism has the utmost influence. The caste division—*Brahmin*, *Chettri*, *Vaishya* and *Sudra*—is based upon occupational differences. The higher caste, *Brahmins*, is preserved with the most prestigious jobs, followed by *Chettris* – the warrior groups (who have the closest relations with *Brahmins*), *Vaishyas* – the occupational group, *Sudras* – skilled and unskilled manual and other laborers (some of whom are touchables “*pani chalne*”

and some untouchables "*pani nachalne*"). As we can classify, High Class, Middle Class and Low Class or First Class, Second Class and Third Class, or White Collars, Blue Collars (and newly "emerging and growing in both popularity and support," Green Colors³⁴), these caste groups could be categorized in a similar way, Brahmins and Chettris in High Class, Vaishyas in Middle Class and Sudras in Low Class. Both Sudras and Low Class people are among the excluded groups in the society. But we should keep in mind that "not all socially excluded people are poor, and not all poor people are socially excluded, but most poor people are socially excluded" (Miller 1998 in Peteman 1999). In other words, we cannot deny that "there is a direct link between social exclusion and class. This doesn't mean that all working class people are socially excluded. But it is likely that those who are socially excluded are also working class" (Peteman 1999).

Exclusion is everywhere, including library. The reason for this is not only the agency, but as a whole it depends on the structure. Many believe that, "librarians are classified as middle class. This has a major impact on public library policy and practice. The service is predominantly run by middle class people for middle class users. Services and stock are influenced by middle class attitudes and values. This can present a major barrier to library use by working class people...and the 'undeserving poor'" (Peteman 1996; Black and Muddinan 1997 in Peteman 1999). And this applies to Nepali libraries as well, including children libraries. The highest number of children using libraries I included in my study (59%) were from middle class families and many of them were *Vaishyas*. And almost 95 percent of the children from low class families (which were 16% of the sampled population) belonged to low caste.

Many say that caste, what once worked as a hierarchical system is minimizing these days. But the truth is that it is colliding with class. What caste functioned before is functioning effectively as class these days. With the rise of capitalism all over the world (Nepal is also highly influenced by it, we can take big shopping malls, QFX cinemas, restaurants, hotels, exported goods, etc. as an example of it) the class division and caste division is functioning more effectively together. And it is again playing a great role in excluding many groups for having access in countless of things including libraries.

³⁴ Please visit: <http://www.alternative-energy-news.info/white-blue-green-collar/> for more information. Accessed on April 9, 2012.

9.3 Education

"A survey of more than 2000 pupils in Nottinghamshire concluded that educational attainment reflects the social class background of the pupils. Using a points system based on GCSE grades, the pupils of parents with manual jobs averaged 18.5 points ; those from clerical backgrounds averaged 29.2; and those from a professional background averaged 41.7 points (Sociology Update, 1993). Schools, then, are part of the problem rather than the solution: and the same applies to libraries" (Peteman 1999).

Education is one of the major factors that excludes many people from accessing libraries and other services provided by the government and people themselves. And the above mentioned things truly resemble the worldwide scenario. Nepal is no exception. The more one has power and position in the society the more s/he gets to grab the opportunities. Almost all of the children from low class families had parents with no education or very little education. Educated parents are more likely to enroll their children in good schools and provide every facilities that can help better the studies. They can themselves be a great help when we talk about the studies of the children at home. Parents with less education cannot help their children with their studies and though they want these kids to do better, they have many obstacles to face first that it doesn't become their first priority.

About 67 percent of the children from low class families told me that they help their parents with their work in the evening and those who went to morning schools also provided their assistance in the day time. Many of such parents were street vendors (who sold vegetables and cosmetic items) and some of the mothers worked at others' houses for the extra income, while few did manual labors. Definitely they earn very little and are low paid, not more than Rs 3000 a month in an average, which is not enough for doing anything. With such little income source, one cannot promise a better future for the children. And as the child grows and steps the teen age, the situation might be that they will have to leave their school and start working full time themselves as their parents income will not be sufficient for supporting all the family needs. And then again without a better education, they will miss many opportunities to get a well paid and better jobs.

The situation will not be improved unless every children gets their share of education.

9.4 Reading Habit

Reading habit of the children as well as parents is one of the main problems when we talk about using libraries as a knowledge resource center. The situation will not improve unless we appreciate such culture and all of us begin it right away. The problem doesn't only rests at home, it revolves around schools and colleges, where these children and students spend most of their time. When children are not encouraged to develop more of such habit in their early childhood, it is more likely that the habit will never become a habit, or it dies out soon after. "Schooling has taught the population to read but has imparted no sense of appreciation of literature and arts, and has failed to give the ordinary man (sic) the wish—or the ability—to go on with any form of self education"(Hoggart 1958). Desire of self education is much important in this case, and unless any such feeling overcomes ones thought, one cannot possibly develop a reading habit.

Reading culture in low or working class family is beyond improving. There are many reasons for this. One, when parents are not educated they cannot help their children in reading and though they tell their kids to get themselves involved in reading, that cannot influence them much. Two, Educated parents are themselves involved in some kind of reading one way or the other. Children are very fast in copying and copying this means developing a reading habit. Three, most of the parents from a low class family are busy either with the labor works or household chores, they have very little spare time which means they cannot spend much of their time with their kids.

The following comment [quoted in Corrigan and Gillespie (1978)] states that, "school is in origin quite alien to working class life. It does not grow from that life. It is not our school. The government forced them on us. School in working class life expresses nothing of that life. It is an institution clapped on from above." In Nepal, when I talked to these low class children, both using and not using the libraries, expressed the similar distress. Many of them, whose parents recently admitted them to some private schools, said they felt humiliated in front of the kids who brought new books, tiffin boxes with delicious foods, wore new shoes and clean ironed clothes, etc. According to them, such kids from well-to-do families also teased them making them unable to concentrate on their studies. They had few friends and not a single of their

friends are like above mentioned, and none of them are interested in reading. This is a very bad scenario and it is totally beyond helping children grow the reading habit and do better in their studies.

9.5 Awareness and Efforts

It is very miserable that among 51.33% of the total sampled children from schools, more than 95 percent were unaware about the children libraries in and around Kathmandu. And even those who knew about these libraries were not regular users of the library. They have only been there once or twice with their brothers, sisters, friends, parents or some relatives. Except few, many parents believed textbooks were enough for their children and they didn't need any extra books. Apart from that more than half of the parents I talked to informally³⁵ told me they had no idea about children libraries themselves. This really is a very critical situation which needs to be improved if we want to better the educational scenario of Nepal. Raju Maharjan³⁶ was one among the aware fathers who had issued a membership for his daughters at British Council before it closed its library few years back. After that he had always provided his two daughters with as many children books available in the market and both are excelling in every subjects in their class. They have never gone beyond 3rd rank in their classes. But again, he is from a high class family, owns three schools in Kathmandu (one of which is based on Montessori education and he is a principal in one of the three) and even his wife Bima Maharjan runs another Montessori school. He has fulfilled all his duties as a father but as a Principal he is yet to explore his students and help them visit libraries (other than the school library in his school) as a school trip.

No one seems taking initiative to promote the children libraries, neither librarians nor school administration. Though few of the libraries organized various programs and visited varieties of schools to promote their libraries in the early years of their establishment, they have stopped doing that in recent years. And none of the teachers I talked to (or my little informants) suggested students to visit the library. Schools organized field trips to other districts, picnic, and

³⁵ I talked with 20 parents about the education system and children library (Durga Nepal, Tara Maharjan, Subhadra Shahi, Ranjita Maharjan, Urmila Pakwan, Geeta Ranapal, Jenny Rai, Anita Maharjan, Gita Shrestha, Poonam Kunwar, Raj Yadav, Rakesh Budhathoki, Tirtha Baniya, Tony Sherpa, Rajkumar Chettri, Sunil Tamrakar, Raju Maharjan, Suraj Khadka, Kishore Agrawal and Uttam Tuladhar).

³⁶ One of my child informant, Binju Maharjan's father with whom I had a conversation on 21 October, 2011.

other programs inside and outside schools (musical programs, dance, quiz, sports week and many more). They also permitted their students to participate in various programs outside the school as a competitor but they have never explained their children about the children libraries and their importance in children's life (apart from asking questions in an examination about "Importance of Library") which is again not helping in improving the situation.

9.6 Budget

"We are so much in a short of budget...without which we haven't been able to do much to improve our library and promote it in a way..." was the typically same answer I got from the librarians and teachers I visited in schools, and independent and public library sections for the children (except AWON Library).

It is really very difficult to develop something, be it a library without a budget but does that mean all the malfunctionings are just because of it. I have found that they are not even appropriately using what they have. They have not maintained library regulations and haven't done anything to attract children in their libraries. I think it has anything to do with the budget.

It is true that to develop things as required we need a lot of strong financial support. Without these things might get insufficient. Library is a place that demands new books everyday. Hundreds of books gets published every year, furniture get old, had to buy new toys and playing materials for the children, and computers and internet are most required things for the children library. And fulfilling all these means requires a lot of money.

The government and other associated organizations provide a help of around Rs 70,000 to 200,000 a year.³⁷ This is truly not sufficient for doing anything for the library development. This has remained the problem not only in library advancement but also in many other sectors that are providing community services.

³⁷ Conversation with Ms Sapana and Urmila Manandhar on 2011.

9.7 Library Policy and Librarians

Lack of Library Policy has resulted in an unmanaged mushrooming of libraries as there is no certain place where these libraries could be registered. And this means it lacks record keeping system and no one exactly knows how many libraries have been opened in Nepal. The assumption is that there is over a few thousand libraries in Nepal (Pandit 2063 v.s.; Nepal Samacharpatra 2063 v.s; Gorhapatra 2062 v.s; Pandit 2062 v.s. and Nepal Samacharpatra 2062 v.s.). This has also led many people open library in their own initiative and then because of the lack of knowledge to run it further close it in few years. Also (some) librarians in all children libraries do not have full knowledge about what s/he has to do. They are there doing their jobs as the librarians but they themselves know very less about how to handle children and what exactly children librarians need to do. We can say not all the children librarians are fully qualified as their designation demands.

The following are some of the qualification required in a Children librarian as published by City of Woodland:³⁸

QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Principles and practices of library science.
- Children's services as a specialized part of the library field; children's literature.
- Modern office procedures and methods including automated library systems.
- Principles of personnel training and supervision.

Skill to:

- Take complete responsibility for a major functional area in the library (Children's Services).
- Relate well to children; present and perform programs.
- Exercise creativity in program development.
- Learn the operation of a computer for various structured library applications.

³⁸ Please visit, <http://www.cityofwoodland.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=2799> for more information.

- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Establish and maintain effective work relationships with those contacted in the performance of required duties.

Education and Experience:

- Any combination of education and experience that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities would be:

Education:

- Possession of a Master of Library Science Degree from an accredited college or university.

Experience:

- Two years of experience as a professional librarian, one of which involved
- children's services.

Chapter Ten

CONCLUSION

Nepal is developing everyday in terms of infrastructures, roads, schools, colleges, libraries etc. But this does not mean it has become a place to live for all in a same way. Nepalis were dominated on the basis of caste stratification for a long time and slowly, with the rise and effect of capitalism, the hierarchy based caste was replaced by class, hierarchy on economic basis. Things are opened for the public, including libraries, but the sad thing is that it is not accessible to all the people from every background.

The children from low class families haven't been able to use libraries much compared to those from middle class and high class. There are many reason for that, one of main being the economic status of the family and the culture children learn from them. The low class families have their own problems to deal with and work hard for living. Most of them do manual labors, and from early mornings to late evenings, which means that they have very little time to spend with their family, specially children. Many of these children doesn't even get to meet their parents as they go out for work before the kids wake up and come back home when they are already slept. Such parents cannot guide their children in their studies not only because of time limits but also because they themselves are not much educated. High class and middle class children learn "reading habit" from their elders at home and are among the frequent library users. They don't usually have much problem regarding their studies as they are enrolled in good schools and their family members, including siblings, relatives, or parents themselves always stand by their side in their support and help them throughout their school and college life.

Neither school owners nor librarians seemed much concerned about making children aware about the children libraries, and why one should use the library. It is very sad to learn that more than 95 percent of the school children didn't know about the children libraries apart from their school libraries. Even children using libraries from all three children libraries knew only about the one they were using and haven't heard about or been to the other children libraries. This is not only a children's fault. Parents, teachers and librarians are totally responsible for what our kids know and want to know in their life.

Most of the rich kids have their own libraries of a huge collection of books at home, which means they necessarily don't need to go to other children libraries. Middle class children are the frequent users of the libraries and they are totally supported by their families. The last and least numbers using libraries, low class children don't have much knowledge about libraries and its use. Such kids have been in a children library, to play, rather than to read and it's also because the library is very near to their locality. They haven't been much far than their household area and have very little access in the facilities provided in and for the public.

There are many barriers that restrict them from these services, class (their economic status), caste, educational background of the family, awareness, etc. are some among such factors. If we want a equal society for all, we need to identify such problems and try to locate the ideas in at least minimizing them if not stop.

Children library is for all the children, beyond any caste, religion, or class. If that is so, let it be so and let all the children bloom around the libraries in search of knowledge which can change their lives good in the future.

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