

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nepal is a mountainous country situated in the south central Asia. It extends about 885 km from east to west and 193 km from north to south. Nepal is a land locked country. The border of Nepal is adjoined on the west, east and south with India and on the North with the Tibet region of the Republic of China. Its area is 147181 square kilometer. It is located between 26⁰ 22' and 30⁰ 27' north latitudes (CBS 2003).

Geographically the country can be divided into three broad regions stretching from the east to the west. The high Himalayan region is covered by snow. The hill consists of Mahabharata and Churiya ranges and the Terai plain is supposed to be a granary of Nepal.

Nepal is a multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic nation. When we go back through the Nepalese history, we can find that syncretism of various cultures, languages, mosaic society in a real sense. Nepal is a garden of a number of castes and ethnic groups. The constitutions of 1990 of Nepal explicitly declares, Nepal a Hindu kingdom on the one hand and on the other allows practices, of traditional religious ways in the form of religion impartiality.

The people of Nepal are socially segmented along the lines of caste, sub-caste and ethnic sub-caste groups. The members of such groups cannot be slated with sufficient precision because such a decoding depends on the definition employed. The 1991 census records more than 60 such groups and 20 major Languages. The National Ethnic Group Development Committee has identified 61 such groups and the National Policy Advocacy Commission lists 60 living languages (HDR 1998). The National Census 1991 indicates that *Dalit* communities represent 15.57 percent of the total population of the country. *Dalits*, however believe that they are under enumerated for several reasons. It is estimated that the *Dalit* community constitutes about 20 percent of the total population of the country i.e. the presents population is 4.8 million (Sagar 2001: 51).

In Nepal the three major occupational castes like the *Lohar*, *Damai* and *Sarki* are traditionally artisans. These three castes have their specific work in the villages. *Damais* are the tailors and they sew and mend the clothes of the village people. *Sarkis* are the leather worker. They make and repair the shoes. The *Lohar* are the blacksmiths and goldsmiths of the villages. The blacksmiths who handle the work of repairing instruments of all the untouchable castes occupy a higher position within the traditional castes hierarchy. The *Lohar* (blacksmith) and the *Damai* (tailors and musicians) for example, regard bodily contact with each others as polluting. The same is true of sexual intercourse between the *Lohar* and *Damai*. A *Lohar* does not allow a *Damai* to enter his house and would never accept '*bhat*' (rice) or *pani* (water) form him (Hofer 1976:110), *Lohars* are an occupational caste.

Scattered all over the Nepal along with the settlement of the high castes power change, the *Dalits* are defined as those castes of people in Nepal who are categorized as untouchables in society. They live both in the Terai and in the hill areas. The major *Dalit* caste groups in the Terai are *Musahar*, *Chamar*, *Lohar*, *Damai*, *Sarki* live in the hill areas. The major *Dalit* caste groups in Kathmandu valley are *Pode* and *Chyame* among Newar castes.

Lohars are the members of the occupational and untouchable caste groups locally called by different names such as *Bishwakarmas* *Sunars*, *Kami*, *Sobh* and *Snehi*. (INSEC 1993:355, Parajuli B. 2000:35). The physical characteristics of *Lohar* include dark colour, bonny feature, semi flat nose, heaving jaws (Parajuli 2000:34) .

In Nepal, workers are from the *Lohar* caste. The *Varna* system according to the Hindu religion ranks *Lohar* as an inferior caste and its members are often treated as untouchable. They are not allowed into the house of the upper caste Hindus and water is said to become impure if they touch it. According to the Muluki Ain of B.S. 1910, the *Lohar* belong to the group of *Pani Nachalne* castes. Here *Pani Nachalne* means that one must not accept any food cooked in water from these castes. A neglect of this rule entails ritual pollution. The *Pani Nachalne* group comprises a sub-group beginning with the *Lohar*, *Sarki* and ending with the *Chyame* respectively. The castes of this sub-group are called *Chaichito Halnuparne* castes. They are classified as untouchables. As the term *Chhoi-Chhito* indicates, anyone having been touched by a member of these castes needs ritual purification by water. But of the untouchable castes, the *Lohars* occupy the highest position with in the traditional castes hierarchy

The inferior castes such as *Lohars* seem to be relatively poorer than the upper Hindus. They possess very little land which they cultivate for food grains. They also work as agricultural wage labourers. The *Lohars* have to turn to the upper castes Hindu land lords for any financial help during emergencies and hard times. The *Lohar* will have no option but to accept the high interest rate set by the money lender. It would come as no surprise if the amount paid on interest exceeded the actual loan and if someone is unable to pay back the loan, he will have no alternative except facing sequestration. Like most lower castes the *Lohars* have every now and then been oppressed and suppressed by the upper caste Hindus.

1.2 Caste System in Nepal

Caste system is the basic foundation of the Hindu society. Caste system is based on the *Varna* system. Nepalese social structure is based on the *Varna* system where different caste groups and individuals interact and are interdependent upon each other. The caste or *Varna* system is based on four primary social classifications. These are, the *Brahmin* (Preist), the *Kshatriya* (warrior or administrator), the *Vaishya* (merchant), the *Sudra* (laborer) and the untouchable or polluted. In the history of Nepal, the caste system first came into existence during the early Lichhavi period. The Lichhavi king divided people into four *Varna* and eighteen castes under certain beliefs and criteria. During the medieval period (1880 A.D. - 1760 A.D.) Jayasthiti Malla further

structured the caste system that was formulated during the period of social injustice. The caste system was legalized for the entire country in the code of 1854 (Bista 1990).

During the modern period, Prithivi Narayan Shaha addressed the Nation, "Nepal is common garden where four castes and thirty six sub caste blossom fourth", To describe the caste hierarchy code formulated as the Muluki Ain, the totality of this caste universe has been paraphrased in the code as *Char Varna Chhittis Jat* (Four *Varna* and thirty six castes). This phrase shows the familiarity of the Nepalese with the *Varna* model and its being the main basis of social division. But the multiplicity of castes has already replaced the validity of the *Varna* model for all functional purpose. All recognized castes can be grouped into four categories that are follows.

Twice born Caste literarily thread wearing castes) (*Updhaya Brahman, Rajput, Jaisi Brahman, Chhetries* etc.)

Drinking caste (Newar, Gurung Magar, Rai etc).

Castes from whom water could not be accepted but whose touch does not require purification by sprinkling water.

Untouchable castes (*Sarkis, Kami, Damai* etc).

Source:- (Sharma 1977)

Castes like namely *Brahman, Chhetri, Vaishya, Sudra* and untouchable castes are included in the Nepalese society as follows: -

-) The upper castes always dominate the lower caste. Upper castes are economically, socially and politically higher compared to the lower castes.
-) Untouchable castes are *Sarkis, Damai, and Kami*. To see the antiquity of these castes, we need to go thoroughly about the Vedic origin of *Varna* and caste system.
-) As described in the myths of Hindu religion, the *Brahman* were divinely created from the mouth, *Chhetri* from the arm, *Vaishya* from the waist and *Sudra* from the foot of God Brahma and therefore *Sudras* are

considered to be lowest in caste hierarchy. Later on this category of the *Varna* system took the form of caste system (Parajuli 2000 A. D).

These castes were further subdivided into many sub castes, which help to stratify the Nepalese society. This process by which individuals and groups are ranked in a more or less enduring hierarchy of status is known as stratification.

Occupation was prescribed according to their castes such as *Brahman* (worshipping and religious rites), *Chhetris* (warfare and administration), *Vaishya* (trade and agriculture), *Sudra* (land service). These were the social rules of the Nepalese society. Among these castes, *Sarkis* fall in the category of *Sudra* considered to be lower, untouchables and impure.

Each caste under caste system tries to maintain its hold over its members and control their behavior. Castes provide rules of social behavior, which cannot be violated. In the context of Nepal, the caste system is rigid between interdependent and cooperative. The function of *Brahmin* caste is to perform various religious and ceremonial rituals, birth rituals etc. *Brahmin* gets money, food grains etc in return for his service. *Vaishya* were the ones to provide service as warriors to protect the country, work in administration and do the trading work. *Sudra* e.g. *Chamar*, *Sarkis* generally carry the work of shoe making, repairing. Their services are required on other occasions too. They do the menial work like sweeping the animal sheds and looking after the animals. They also remove carcasses. They also work as agricultural labourers. They receive payment in the form of food grain or cash. Even though they work very hard, they still do not receive a respectable position in the society. *Damai* play musical instruments in wedding ceremonies; *Sarkis* make leather shoes, bags and other leather accessories.

For the continuity of the society and the existence of the society, all castes perform their work in a co-operative manner. This system has divided Nepalese society into many layers earning some merits, but in the other hand even larger amounts of demerits. The described status is the one, which an individual gets at birth. It is conferred to him by his group or the society. It is impossible to change one's caste. Within the caste group it is easy to do work but lower caste group are prohibited to enter the high caste group.

There are boundaries for them, hatred and suffering to the *Sudra*. The characteristic of caste system stratified people into various ranks who live and work in the same society. Intra caste marriage system gets the most priority in the Nepalese caste system. There are restrictions on marriage and occupations; marriage should only be done within the own caste groups also known as isogamy. In the context of Nepal, if the *Brahman* son marries the daughter of *Sudra* there are severe punishment for him. He was degraded from his caste. *Brahman* can only marry an *Aryan* and only *Brahman* of an own sub caste. A marriage of a *Vaishya* with a *Brahman* is socially unapproved (Adhikari 2000)

In caste based society, the social status and occupation are determined by birth for an individual. Lower castes have been providing various services such as, skinning a dead cattle, making tools of iron, pot making, carpentry,

shoe making. Similarly in return of these services people of the high caste have been providing them cash and food grain. Such relationship can be mutual occupational linkage. According to the Hindu caste hierarchical system, the *Brahmins/Chhetries* are considered as people of high caste and of great traditional status. The *Sarkies* are considered as people of low caste and of little traditional values. According to the Hindu myth *Brahman* being created from the mouth of Lord Brahma is considered to be pure and regarded to be high status unlike the *Sudras* who are supposed to be created from the legs (the lower part of the body, (regarded impure). Thus, *Sudras* are placed in the lower category in the society. The base of the modern caste system is provided by previously known *Varna* system. Untouchables are considered to be ritually unclean. They have low status for being associated with activities such as skinning the dead cattle. This means that none of the clean caste will take food or water from them and will avoid physical contact where possible. They are dominated from the early beginning by the higher castes since the caste system came into existence in Nepal (Caplan 1970).

In the context of Nepal, *Dalits* are categorized in four groups, which are as follows.

1. Pahadi *Dalit*: (*Damai, Kami, Sarkis, Gaine* are the main)
2. Madhise *Dalit*: Terai *Dalit*: (*Dusahat, Mushar, Chamar, Dome, Halkhor, Khatwe, Tamata, Bhadhi*)
3. Janajati *Dalit*: (*Newari Dalits-Kasai, Pode, Chame*)

The mother tongue of Pahadi *Dalits* is Nepali, whereas the mother tongue of Terai *Dalits* is Maithili, Bhojpuri and Abhadhi. Newar *Dalits* use Nepal *Bhasa*. The majority of *Dalits* are Hindus. Till now *Mijhar, Bhiswakarma, Pariyar* communities are working together. Rest of them are still to be united (Bhattachan 2001).

While looking from the sociological point of view as well as from the structural functionalism model for the existence and the continuity of society, untouchables have played a vital role. For example, from time immemorial they have served people in the order of "give and take" through their occupational work like cobbling and tailoring. Thus untouchables have been necessary for the proper functioning of society since they have been providing services that the so-called (upper caste) persons are precluded from performing. Their contributions to the society have thus been very important. However, this delicate balance of 'give and take' has now been challenged by the changes that have come about in society as it slowly moves into the modern-industrial state. The only form of livelihood of the 'lower-caste' minority groups has been challenged by competition brought about by the industrialization process.

The *Bhaun* caste consists of only of Indian *Brahman* migrants, While they may have maintained their own levels of ritual purity, it is not at all clear whether their new Nepali clients have some similarity labored to maintain caste purity (Bist 1991: 35). However it is also believed, a majority of the *Bahun* priests are the descendants of caste *Brahmans* who come mainly from plains,

though with some smaller groups from the decent during the medieval period. A few may have come to the Nepal region of purposes of proselytizing. But most were forced to immigrate from hostile invasions of the plain states. In particular, there were to be many who were running away religion mission with them but an excessive concern for self preservation which was to affect their relations profoundly with the inhabitants of Nepal and Nepali culture. The preservation of caste culture required that they did not succumb to Nepali influence nor in any way diminish the purity of their cultural treasures. The defense of their culture leads readily the depreciation of the cultural lifestyle of the Nepalese. Nepali people in general and an exaggerated adulation of fatalistic caste culture of the plains with their religions centers. This denigration of Nepali culture has become an inherent aspect of the developed Nepali form of Hinduism with fatalistic caste hierarchy is interpreted by *Bahun* Priests (Ibid:39).

During the latter part of the fourteenth century, king "Jayasthity Malla" tried to purify religious practice in the Kathmandu valley by introducing caste principles and conducts according to the Manusmriti (Lamsal 1966:38). He developed many rules for the meaning of certain types of clothing and ornamentation and for the constructions for houses, different rated according to caste levels, and made it punishable for any one to violate rules prescribing professional activities for different castes. He did this as a measure towards modernization little realizing that it would lead the society regression rather than profession.

Another attempt as imposing the caste system was made in the nineteenth century by Jang Bahadur Rana and to secure Rana control over the land. He succeeded in introducing the caste system to a much greater degree than the Malla Kings had done just over four hundred years before him. In the nineteenth century the *Khas Bahuns* now called '*Parvate Bahun* (Hill *Bahun*), divided to put all Newari speaking people into single caste category at the lower level, known in local parlance 'as *Matwali*' meaning liquor drinker (Bista 1991: 41)

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Nepal is a very rich country from caste, language, culture, traditional and natural resources point of view. Majority of the people here live in the rural areas. Therefore, rural life is very important from traditional and cultural point of view. According to census 2001, people of more than 70 castes live in Nepal. Among these castes, some are of Nepali origin and some have migrated to Nepal from other neighboring countries in different period of time.

Nepal is a small but heterogeneous society. Among the untouchable castes, not only the Hindu orthodox, discriminate the '*Lohar*', but they are also discriminated politically, socially, economically all over the Nepal. Most of them are discriminated and dominated more in village than in urban areas.

But, yet there is the prevalence of caste system in Nepal. "Untouchable is access to economical, educational and political power is limited in Nepal. The is main-stream political social, cultural life is dominated by high caste

Hindu groups" (Hoper 1976:205-7). Untouchable efforts to find jobs are also often hampered by their lack of kinship or social connection with other caste people in positions of authority. In many cases untouchables who have a college degree are unable to find a professional position. Thus they end up working in their traditional caste occupation (Cox 1994).

The constitution of Nepal 1990 guaranteed all untouchables access to education to primary and secondary government schools. But most of the *Dalits* have still been unable to afford an adequate education for their children because of lack of the money and socio-economic discrimination by high caste group. Among untouchable community of *Lohar* of the Ghuyaghat, the children's parents have not been able to pay of enrollment fee and to buy books, note books and stationary for their children leading to them drop out. However there is not just a single cause for untouchables to leave school but there are numerous causes. Untouchables comprise of the group of poorest of the poor. Because of social hidden apartheid, *Lohar* people of Ghuyaghat are constantly, suppressed marginalized and discriminated from various opportunities.

In this context, among all ethnic caste groups, people of these occupational caste groups are also living at Ghuyaghat of Kailali district in Seti Zone. Apart from the municipality of Kailali, where majority of inhabitants are higher caste groups, untouchable groups like *Lohar*, *Damai* also inhabit as minority. In this municipality, *Lohar* people are fully dependent on other high caste, because they are performing various types occupations/activities i.e. blacksmithing, carpentry, ornament polishing, tailoring etc, for their own livelihood and substance for the assistance of the high caste people. These occupations are considered their ascribed occupations and their duty is to serve the people of high caste by performing these occupations.

Numerically, a small number of population of low castes people have to serve and assist the large number of people of high castes, like 'Bista'. Their socio-economic condition is very poor than other caste/ ethnic groups on the one hand they have not enough land for agriculture and cultivation in the other hand. Their traditional occupation is in a declining stage.

Nowadays rural area is changing day by day because of the urban effect i.e. process of modernization and westernization. A number of development activities initiated for the perspective of commercial development and progress have also prolonged the increment of sophisticated changes of *Lohar* people. Many studies of economic change in south Asia related that development has led only to worsening of the position of lower caste (Caplan P. 1972:90). After restoration of the democracy, many people have raised voice for the self-identify and awareness. The research tries to find out the socio-economic status of *Dalit* community. This research will answer the following questions.

1. What is the identification of *Lohar* community?
2. What is the socio-economic condition of *Lohar* community?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to find out the socio-economic condition and to assess the level of social discrimination of the *Lohars* of Dhangadhi municipality ward no. 10 Ghuyaghat, Kailali district. The specific objectives are categorized broadly as follows:

1. To find out the social condition of *Lohar* community.
2. To explore the economic status of *Lohar* community.

1.5. Importance of the Study

Nepal is a small but ethnically and culturally diverse land. The story of *Dalits* is very important in materializing the unity in diversity, a significant characteristics of the country. *Dalits* occupy a substantial part of the country's population. They should not be treated as separate from the other people. They are also very rich in their culture and tradition. As the society is changing and is becoming complex day by day, *Lohars* are facing big challenges to protect their social custom, traditions and existence. The *Dalits* of Dhangadhi municipality ward no. 10 Ghuyaghat have their own culture and tradition and existence. They live along with other castes in the area. This could be useful for many academicians, interested individual development, workers social workers, NGOs, INGOs and GOs interested or involved in the area of unlifting the *Dalits* such as the *Lohar* of Dhangadhi municipality ward No. 10 Ghuyaghat.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The research work has been limited due to constraints of time and resource. The limitations of this study are:

1. This study has been limited to the Dhangadhi Municipality ward No. 10 Ghuyaghat in Kailali district. So findings might not be applicable for another wards.
2. Required information has been achieved by using interview and observation.
3. The study focuses on the social and economic aspects of the *Lohars*.

CHAPTER-II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Concept of Caste/Ethnicity

There are many racial, religious and social causes of untouchability in Nepal. The major cause is the caste system. The caste system is attached with a sense of high and low, which is the fundamental cause of untouchability. Another cause of untouchability is the prevalence of many taboos in the caste system. There are taboos for inter-caste marriage, eating and mixing with the lower castes. In the same way taboos were created for preventing, touching and even seeing of the lower castes which did the dirty work, as a consequence of the feeling of superiority and inferiority. On the basis of these taboos castes came to be called as the untouchables. Actually it is difficult to formulate the definite and permanent definition of caste and untouchability.

According to Green (1997), caste is a system of stratification in which mobility, movement up and down the status ladder, at least ideally may not occur. A person's ascribed status is his lifetime status. Birth determines one's occupation, place of residence, style of life, personal associates and the group from whom one must find and mate. A caste system always includes the notion that physical or even some forms of social contact with lower caste people is degrading to higher caste persons. The caste system is also protected by the law and sanctioned by religion.

Khanal (2002) points out that the various castes in the Hindu social organization are divided into a hierarchy of ascending and descending one above the other. In this hierarchy Brahmins have the highest and the untouchables the lowest position. The sense of superiority is also conjoined with the law of untouchability. The feeling of superiority is much exaggerated and manifested in the rural part of country. The very touch and sometimes even the shadow of the members of lower caste are enough to define an individual of a higher caste. The straight observation of the custom of untouchability has resulted in some low castes of the Hindu society being called untouchables who were consequently forbidden to make use of place of worship, cremation grounds, school public roads and centering into the house of higher caste groups.

Caste system has been operating since ancient period in Nepal. This system shows a major obstacle for the holistic development in the Nepalese context. This is the 21st century, but Nepal is moving under the caste-based society, which is the vital hindrance for improving socio-economic condition of the country. The over all development process gives undermining touch to this system. Social freedom has vanished in the name of different perspective like religious worship and drinking water system mainly in the *Dalit* community. Without the eradication of this system, the holistic development is not possible. Economic and Political development is not only sufficient for the prosperity of

the nation but social development is also necessary (Nepal Samacharpatra 2005:4).

Bista is a pioneer researcher in the sociological field. In this book "*People of Nepal*" he has quoted "*Brahmins* rank highest in the caste hierarchy and along with *Chhetri* they formed a majority of the influential wealthy people of traditional Nepal. They are also the most widely distributed through the country. Nepali, Indo-Aryan language, is their mother tongue and has been adopted as the state language. Nepali is also the mother tongue of the small number of occupational caste. The *Damai* (Tailor), *Sarki* (Cobbler), *Kami* (Blacksmith) and *Sunar* (Goldsmith) caste and other castes like *Sanyasi* and *Gharti*" (Bista 1996:10).

Similarly, in *Sabai Jatko Phulbari*, Bista (2003) has given the ethnography of different people. A short ethnography study of the people of *Sarki* is also included in the book *Mechi Deki Mahakali* However, there is a lack of detailed information about the socio- cultural status among the *Sarki* as well as other untouchables.

Nepal is facing the problems of high fertility especially in different caste and ethnic groups characterized by distinct characteristics. The high fertility is also more pronounced in back work and depressed communities such as *Damai*, *Kami*, *Sarki* and lower caste groups. These communities who are backward in the context of economic, social, cultural, educational and all other condition are known as *Dalit* communities and are supposed to be untouchables among the total caste, ethnic group of Nepal. About 20 percent are within the *Dalit* community (Shahi 2003:17).

The status of *Dalit* women is even lower in the society of Shudras: *Damai*, *Kami*, *Sarki* and other lower caste groups. The communities who are backward in the context of economic, social, cultural, educational and all other condition are known as the *Dalit* community who are supposed to be untouchable, of the total population of Nepal, about 20 percent are *Dalit* (Rijal 2001: 2).

Varya states that the Parbatiyas constitute the people of Aryan race in the hill region of Nepal and they include the *Brahmins*, *Thakuris*, *Khas* and some other occupational castes like *Damai*, *Kami*, and *Sarki*. According to him, food, drink and hubble-bubble taboos are strictly observed in Nepal in the domain or caste system but the people of urban areas are comparatively liberal in matters of caste system than in the rural areas (Varya 2042:37-79).

The constitution of Nepal has declared not to make discrimination to any caste or ethnic group, yet the status of *Dalit* is still lower in Nepalese society, socio- economically, religiously, culturally and politically. They are dominated by other castes and ethnic groups. The discrimination is gradually decreasing with the development of the country. *Dalits* are basically occupational castes. In Nepal, many sub- caste/ethnic groups, such as *Damai*, *Kami*, *Sarki*, *Gaine*, *Kumale*, *Mushar* and *Jhangad* are within the *Dalit* communities. Among them *Damai*, *Kami*, *Sarki* are in large numbers than others. Their socio- economic

status should be upgraded and discrimination should be legally ended for national development (Rijal 2001:2,3).

Similarly, Mac Donald, stating about the social behavior of *Sarkis* observes that the barriers between lower *Jat* (caste) are crumbling down and this behavior between the lower and the higher *Jat* is being modified both in theory and in fact (MacDonald 1983:281). According to him, the descendants of *Sarki* or *Kami-Sarki* will be of the *Kadara Jat*. The *Damai* will accept water from their hands but they do not accept water from hands of *Damai* and *Sarki* and *Damai* do not accept water from each other. They accept grilled or roasted food from each other. So it is known that the *Sarki* have a higher social prestige and that *Damai* are lower status than others (Mac Donald 1983:282).

Hitchcick (1966) states that the *Magars* (Mongoli) of Byanyan on hill are accepting the Hindu values and changes are occurring gradually. Similarly, Haimendorf (1966) takes the case of western Nepalese non- Hindu groups who have accepted a caste concepts and he further states the distinction of adoption and assimilation with other caste people. In the same way, Haimendorf (1981) highlights more about the social structures of *Thakali* community and also mentions about ongoing social mobility among the *Thakalis* of western Nepal.

Gaig (1975:164) points out that the untouchable are now working as employers of the public administration even though in the lowest pay scale. But loosing their economic dependence upon higher caste has not brought any substantial change in their traditional caste system.

When the five fingers are not equal, how can an individual be equal to others? with these word Nepali legitimize social inequality by drawing upon a folk formula to explain it. Thus is expressed the live tension of being socially equal or unequal, a tension which is manifested in many different forms of Nepalese religious and cultural values that some are born high caste and some low caste, some are born with a silver spoon in their mouth and others with a hand to mouth problem for minimal survival.

The caste system in Nepal was conceived by religious and cultural values and in most cases a class system is blended with the caste hierarchy. In both the advantaged and disadvantaged castes, there is a word *Karma* (action and fate) to legitimize this inequality. The affluent castes use the word *Karma* implying good action of previous birth and it is a source of their affluence, while for the poorer low castes the some word *karma*, now implying socially and religiously unacceptable actions, translates into fate echoing poverty, negativity and untouchability (Koirala 1996:1).

The caste culture is seen as originality in the increasing social differentiation, segmentation and stratification of the Hindu society. Its history dates back to the Vedic period (6000, 4000B.C). According to Saraf (1986:170) the Aryans are a homogeneous and cohesive group in the early Rigvedic period. The group was divided into *Brahmin* and *Chhetries* on the one hand and *Vaisya* on the other. In the late Rigvedic period, the group further divided giving birth to a *Shudra* caste by the end of *Brahmanic* period. And, in the post-Vedic

period some of the Shudra's were classified as Asprishya (non touchable) and Sprishya (touchable).

Khatri and Dahal explain the development of caste differently. In addition to it, the *Bhagwat Geeta* made clear that *Sanskritization* (Srinivas 1977:6), process by which a low caste person changes custom, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of high caste. There is away is the only way to upward mobility in the *Varna* system. Thus *Bhagwat Geeta* introduced the idea of *Karma* (work, good works) as the means of keeping a person in a particular *Varna* or ensuring inter-*Varna* mobility (Koirala 1996: 11)

Various social groups have their own away of earning livelihoods, but their achievements may not be same in terms of social and economic value. In Hindu *Varna* system, there are four principle *Varna* . There are the *Brahmins* (Priest and teacher) the *chhetri* (ruler and artisans). In Nepal, The Muluki Ain of 1854 B.S. includes four fold caste hierarchy where the bottom of the hierarchy was '*paninachalne*', '*Chhoi-Chhito Halnuparne*' or the untouchables. They are also known as occupational caste group with their traditional occupation and *Dalit* is used to refer to this group. *Lohar* (in hill) and *Kami* (in Terai) is one of the occupational caste whose major duty is to serve upper caste by doing different iron works and are not allowed to touch or consume food with higher caste. Due to the nature of work, literally they are known as *Bishokarma* also. Although they have low status, they are found being involved in this occupation to make a living.

Similarly, Caplan (1972) takes the realities of interrelationships and tendency in between priests and cobblers (*Brahmin* and *Sarki*) that existent in Hindu society of western Nepal. Moreover, highlight the changing patterns of social life with conflicts among them.

Caplan (1970) picturizes the historical context of land holding pattern of *Limbus* and change in it from conflict perspective along with the changed government land reform police. He also includes other socio-culture changes occurring in them especially the acceptance of Hindu norms and values in the Hindulization process.

Srinivas (1952), as propounder of *Sanskritization* theory, has analyzed the upward mobility of untouchable caste of south India in the direction of twice born castes. It was the first presentation as well as an application of *Sanskritization* process, used to observe the socio-cultural change occurring among untouchables (coorge) of south Asia. Similarly, in 1972, he gave a sound definition of *Sanskritization* with some revision in earlier concept and presented other examples of imitative change among the untouchable of India.

Neupane (2001) carried out the detailed study of different caste groups. Categorized into different blocks/ladders like *Brahmin*, *Newar*, *Kirant* and *Dalit* to shed the light on the contemporary socio-economic condition directly based on the caste orthodox. In the same way, Neupane also states that the *Dalit* including *Kami*, have been excluded from access into different institution of government as well as private organizations. He also has tried to give some

inventory notes and data about the caste and ethnic groups including *Dalits* such as *Kami (Lohar) Damai* and *Badis*.

According to the Hindu caste system the *Lohar* occupies in the rank of untouchable community whose primary occupation is working in the field using iron and wood. *Lohars* are found in all parts of Nepal. They have migrated to India, especially the districts of Champarna and Darjeeling where they are known as *Kami*. They are known by different names due to the different localities.

In Nepalese social structure *Tagadhari* or the twice born caste is ranked the highest in the hierarchical order. Below the *Tagadhari* or the twice born caste, the code has accorded place to all Nepals ethnic groups under the name of the *Matawalis*. Untouchable castes group is stretched to the lowest rank of all.

Lohar is the name given to for a group that has involved from different communities and castes holding the same occupation, working on Iron. The word '*Lohar*' means metal and *Lohar* might be evidently a derivative from that root. They do not positively belong to the same caste or community. This fact also might account for a different name as it applies to *Lohar* living in different parts of the country.

The development of Nepal as a nation is not possible without the prosperity of *Dalits* and ethnic people. For the upliftment of socio-economic status of *Dalit* people, the government has to be highly sensitive. Caste discrimination must be eradicated to bring *Dalit* people into the mainstream of development. *Dalit* problem is not an ethnic bias, but it is a major challenge for the government. Socio-economic status of *Dalit* people is very low compared to all other upper caste people. *Dalit* people can contribute a lot for the progress and development for the nation if they do why not use that potentiality in development process. Society with discriminating practices can never achieve the goals of development. Society should not to be caste based, but it should be based on class. For this purpose modernization pattern should be established in occupational system (Gorkhater 2005:4).

All round development is possible only if the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual groups and communities within the country develop in proportionate manner. Such type of development utilizes their inherent skill, ability and knowledge in the nation development process on the one hand and assists the upliftment of the living standard of the *Dalits*, neglected, downtrodden and oppressed classes by creating employment opportunities through the mobilization of local resource on the other (NPC 2002: 213-17).

Dalit are those Hindu people who do not wear the holy thread (*Janai*) even though their religious practices are similar to those who wear '*Janai*'. For example, *Sarki, Kami, Damai* and *Gaine* are the *Dalits*. In our context, they are behaved as '*Achhut*', untouchable though such behaviour is illegal according to the constitution of Nepal.

2.2 Untouchability

One important and rather a dangerous legacy of caste system is unsociability. It is a serious problem of the caste system in which our society is sinking down. It is a system, which has invited wrath of social reformer and has been legally abolished. It has become a social curse. So many steps have been taken to end this system from society, but so far all efforts in this regard have not yielded desirable results. The untouchability imposes certain restrictions on the untouchables that stand on the way of their social, economics and political development.

As Sorokin has pointed out, all permanently organized societies are stratified. Most societies of world have had their types of what Ward calls 'the lowly'. The Roman had their 'plebians', the British their villains, the Americans the Negroes. So the Hindu, have but 'untouchabilities' (Rao 1990-60). Slavery and serfdom have all vanished, but unsociability still exists. Nepal is a class as well as a caste ridden society. Hence these lower caste members suffer from economic as well as non-economic, social, religious and educational disabilities.

The practice of 'untouchability' is a stigma attached to the *Hindu* society. It has its roots deep down in our social and religious system. It is very difficult to give a clear definition of untouchability. The untouchability prefers groups of prejudices and discrimination the social inhabitation of touch emerging from the characteristic of *Hindu* caste system. The definition given by Dr. Majumdar, terms untouchable caste as those who suffer from various social and political disabilities, many of whom are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes.

2.3. Untouchable Caste System in Nepal

In Nepal the untouchable caste, include the *Lohar* (Blacksmith, Goldsmith), *Damai* and *Sarki* in the entire mountain and hill regions. They include *Kasai*, *Pode*, *Chame* and *Kusle* in the *Newar* communities of the Kathmandu valley. In the Terai, these include *Dum*, *Teli Satar*, *Mushar* and a number of local tribes. A part from these, hill tribes like *Gaine*, *Kami*, *Badi* and a number of local small tribes are also regarded as untouchables.

The people of untouchable castes are regarded as impure castes. They are called '*Jutho Jat*' and water is not accepted from them. Dalit is a term that refers to a number of untouchable castes in Nepal. The term *Dalit* is derived from Sanskrit nomenclature and is used by the political and social scientists of Nepal to identify or categorize a group of people who are religiously culturally, socially, economically oppressed. The 1991 census lists such castes and tribes to constitute about 15 percent of the total population of Nepal, but many local varieties are listed with in other categories.

Among the untouchable castes *Lohars* are one of the occupational castes. They are black-smiths and gold smiths. They are scattered all over Nepal. In the traditional reference they are regarded socially at the top of the untouchables. Presently goldsmiths are economically better than blacksmith

(Sharma 1994). Their traditional occupation is metal working. *Lohars* living in villages usually make and repair agricultural (tools), chains, locks and other hardware, whereas in bazar areas they often make and sell jewelry. Since the later period of classification of *Varna* in Nepalese society, they are given a low-social status. *Lohars* do not enter the houses of the high caste people. Indeed, they do not even sit at the doorway. If an untouchable does a day work for a high caste household, he/she is given a name. He either has to use his own plates or else is given a leaf plate, which he then throws away. Sometime by sprinkling water and giving a touch of fine, pots and purified by the upper caste people.

There are very few studies made on untouchable castes of Nepal. Untouchables are very poor and too much exploited by the higher caste. We can hardly find a single book written on a single untouchable caste of Nepal. Bista (1996) in his book '*People of Nepal*' has given some account of untouchables. He has put them in occupational castes and has given a description of some untouchable castes of the Terai.

Similarly, Gautam and Thapa's 1994 book *Tribal Ethnography* (Vol I and II) are also books on ethnography. These books have traced the following untouchable castes of Nepal: *Badi, Dom, Gaine, Kami, Musahar, Sarki*.

A research prepared by Sharma, et. al (1994) entitled "*A modes study of the current socio-economic situation of the lowest status caste and tribal communities in Nepal*" is a book in which all types of problems of untouchables are given well. In the book, caste based discrimination and related matters are given well.

2.4 Disabilities and Untouchables

(a) Religious Disabilities

Especially in the rural and underdeveloped parts of Nepal, where the people are illiterate and living in the darkness of superstition and bad traditions, the untouchables are subjected to various religious disabilities. They are prevented from entering religious places and are not permitted to make use of them because it is believed that these places would become impure by their touching them. In this way, they are not able to worship in the temple as their presence is considered sufficient to defile the God.

(b) Social Disabilities

Social disabilities of the untouchables can be summarized in the following parts.

-) Prevention from the use of public roads: The shadow of the untouchable is enough to defile the numbers of higher castes. Thus upon seeing the numbers of higher castes the untouchables should adopt a prostrate posture upon the ground so that their shadow may not fall on them.

- J Prevention from the use of public wells: In almost all Nepali village, the untouchables were forbidden the use of well for drawing water.
- J Preventing form entering school: The children of untouchables are not allowed to enter the school because if they sit down to study beside other children, they would defile the children the higher castes (Sapkota 2004: 15-17).

c) Economic Disabilities

The disabilities of untouchables are not restricted only to the social sphere, but they are extended into the economic sphere too. Due to their social disabilities, they can not retain any interest in or enthusiasm of occupation. They do not have the permission to engage in the profession of the higher castes. As their conventional occupation is dirty, they live in dirty slums in which new diseases are always making their life miserable. But in urban areas, life of untouchables is slightly better than rural areas. There children generally go to school. This trend is increasing day by day. Many organizations are involved for the welfare of this caste group. The feeling of touchability and untouchability is slightly decreasing. The occupation for various castes is no longer fixed. A member of any caste group takes to any profession that he or she desires. The traditional old caste system has been gradually changing.

The report of UNDP (1999:15), '*Condition of Dalit in Nepal: Assessment of the impact of various development intervention*' presents the health status of *Dalit* community. It is reported that most of the *Dalits* were landless, and their economic, social and political status was lower than the non-*Dalit* castes.

Smita (1992: 21) in her book *Broken People*, observes that *Dalit* Communities are backward in all aspects of development. They are suffering form social discrimination. They work in the field using hard manual labour. Their economic, sociologic, psychologic, education, health and sanitation situation is very pitiable.

Mukti Ko Awaj, found that *Dalit* communities are backward in political, social, economic, education at and health spheres in Nepal. Most of the *Dalit* are poor, landless, suffering from the communicable disease, have high morality rate, low literacy rate, and the infrastructure of development. The education, sanitation, economic, social and political condition of the *Dalit* community is backward. *Dalits* have low per capita income and low expenditure capacity for consumer goods such as clothes. Their sanitation and health status has been poor (*Mukti Ko Awaj* 2002:7).

Jha (2003), has described the religious status of *Dalit*, the issues of *Dalit* upliftment, the economic status of *Dalit*, and the untouchability problem in democracy. According to him, 23 castes are *Dalits* in Nepal. The main reason of caste discrimination is the traditional concept of religion. *Dalit* people have not reached the top level of the state mechanism like administration, policy-making, bureaucracy, and judiciary. They are backward in all sectors of the country. Only 18 percent of the *Dalit* are literate in the Terai. Presenting the

solution to *Dalit* problems, Jha has advised that the government should provide reservation for *Dalit*. *Dalit* people should try to be aware and improve their health and sanitation.

Due to the expansion of modernization people were able to know about their rights and about how to raise their voices for rights. Due to caste discrimination, *Dalits* were left behind in social status, economic condition and educational status. For their upliftment, the government formulated the *Muluki Ain* (2020) and formed a an oppressed, *Dalit* Upliftment Development Committee under the HIMG/Ministry of Local Development. But it could not improve their condition due to the carelessness in the implementation of the government programme.

CHAPTER-III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodological approach adopted in the study area in order to achieve its objectives and it discusses the procedural, technical and the methodological parts of the study.

3.1. Research Design

This study is mainly based on two types of approaches: descriptive and exploratory. Descriptive research design describes the general pattern of *Lohars'* life, rituals, economic condition, the changes taking place among them, voluntary and involuntary contact with upper caste people and the break down of stereotypical traditional culture.

3.2. Rational of the Selection of Study Area

Kailali District, a part of seti zone, is one of the seventy five districts of Nepal, a landlocked country of south Asia. That covers an area of 3,235 square Kilometers and has a population of 616, 697 (2001).

These study area is Ghuyaghat of Dhangadhi municipality ward no. 10. Which is 2 km far from Dhangadhi. This area is backward socio economically and culturally and *Lohar* community living there is very poor. The study area has been selected taking into consideration its poverty, illiteracy and discrimination. No one has done any research about *Lohar's* socio, economic condition of this particular area. The total population of Dhangadhi Municipality was 74,835 in 2060/61 and the population of Ghuyaghat is 1500 according to the census 2058. There are altogether 300 households. The study has selected 30 households through random sampling.

3.3. Source of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data have been collected for this study. The primary data have been collected through field survey in the study area. The Secondary data have been collected published and unpublished materials such as research articles, books, seminar paper, research reports, journals, magazine, bulletin, pamphlets, internet and different other source.

3.4. Data Collection Tools and Techniques

There are mainly two methods of data collection one is qualitative and another is quantative. Both methods were used for collecting data from the field. Data collection tools and technique are used to collect the necessary data that are described in the subsection that follows.

3.4.1. Household Survey

Basically, household survey was conducted to obtain quantative data such as population characteristics, age and sex composition, education status,

landholding size, livestock numbers and types of social position of *Lohar*, the survey helped researcher to familiarize with communities and to conduct interviews.

3.4.2 Key Informants Interview

Key informants interview was conducted with literate, mature *Dalit* individuals person. Being very familiar and conscious about both past as well as present socio-economic condition of *Lohar*, they informants revealed information about *Dalits*. Dhana Devi *Lohar* age of 50 and Ram Kumar *Lohar* 45 were selected as informant and took detail interviewed. Key question ask for informally were about socio-economic condition now and them, discrimination and change patterns of livelihood strategy.

3.4.3. Questionnaire

Structured Questionnaire

One set of structured questionnaire was used for each household. The questionnaires contained both open-ended and close questions. Questionnaires consisted of different variables i.e. source of income, expenditure, education status, traditional occupation, household structure, landholding size, food sufficiency, livestock holding, status of indebtedness and social exclusion.

Unstructured Questionnaire

During the period of field work, unstructured questionnaires were also used wherever needed. Several cross questions were asked to get reliable information.

3.4.4. Observation

Participant observation is one of the main ways of obtaining primary data. The researcher was familiar with the *Lohar* community of the study area. Therefore, she already had some knowledge about these people. The field survey was conducted for one month. House structures, settlement pattern, and social behaviour were included into data through observation method. This long interaction with the community provided the researcher with abundant knowledge about the *Lohars*.

3.4.5. Data analysis

According to the research design in this study, descriptive method was used to presenting collected data. After completing the field survey, collected data during field visit period were edited and tabulated as per the need of report in order to make the report more precise. Maps and figures have been enclosed with this thesis. Similarly, the research has been divided into chapters and sub-chapters.

CHAPTER-IV

THE SETTING OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1. Settlement Pattern and Household Structure

The settlement is an indication of the ethnic compactness of the different communities in Nepal. The settlement of *Lohar's* are generally situated near the high caste people is settlements. Due to increase in population in the *Lohar* households in the settlement area, it is now going to be insufficient. Therefore, construction of new houses is necessary. Most of the houses are made of wood. The houses are found to have only one floor with small windows. They keep their chickens, pigs and other livestock in the same house during night time. The small size of the houses is the result of their poverty.

4.2. Natural Resources

Land, forest and water resources are important natural resources of Nepal. The villages of rural areas are very rich in natural resources. A large number of people of the study area depend upon land for their subsistence. Fertile soil is available in the area they live. There is an intimate relationship between natural resources and people of study area. But *Dalit* people are not able to exploit the natural resources as compared with other people do. Till now, forest is the major resource for all the efficiently as the study area. From forest, they get firewood, building materials, all the materials for agricultural tools, fodder for animals and pastures for grazing.

4.3. Population Composition of *Lohar* in the Study Area.

In this study area the population of *Lohar* is 1500. Out of them 877 are females and 623 are males. The number of houses is 300.

4.4 Age and Sex Composition of the *Lohar*.

Table: 4.1 Age and Sex Composition of the *Lohars*

Age	Female	Male	Total	Percent
0-15	170	100	270	18
16-30	260	197	457	30.47
31-45	300	227	527	35.13
46-60	90	59	149	9.93
60+above	57	40	97	6.46
Total	877	623	1500	100.00

Source:- Field Survey 2009

The total number of households is 300. Table 4.1 presents the age and sex composition. The (31-45) age group accounts for the highest proportion (35.13 percent) of the total population. The 60 and above age group has the lowest proportion (6.46 percent) of the total. Likewise (0-15), (16-30), (46-60) age group rank second, third and fourth in proportion.

4.5. Caste and Ethnicity

There are various caste and ethnic groups of people in the area. *Chhetri*, *Lohar*, *Chaudhari*, *Thakuri*, *Sarki*, *Damai* and Brahmin are the main inhabitants. *Chhetri*, are in majority followed by *Lohar* and then a certain percent of other caste groups.

Table 4.2 Caste and Ethnic Group in Ghuyaghat

Groups	Population	Percent
Chhetri	560	37.33
<i>Lohar</i>	350	23.33
Chaudhary	200	13.33
Thakuri	170	11.33
<i>Sarki</i>	100	6.67
<i>Damai</i>	75	5.00
Brahmin	35	2.33
Others	10	0.67
Total	1500	100.00

Source: CBS 2001

From the above table we learn that the highest population of Ghuyaghat is Chhetris and the second highest population is of *Lohars* followed by *Chaudhary*, *Thakuri*, *Sarki* and *Damai*.

The Chhetris population is 37.33 percent where as *Lohars* population is 23.33 percent. The lowest population in the municipality is that of *Brahmins*, 2.33 percent. In this municipality, the Chhetris have dominated the other ethnic groups in population and in other aspects.

CHAPTER-V

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter is the main part of the study. It focuses on the analysis and discussion of empirical data obtained from the field survey. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the household, population, age, gender, educational attainment, major occupation, size of land and level of annual income, expenditure of the respondents have been analyzed in details here.

5.1. Economic Status

The economic condition and the living standard of the *Lohar* is very poor. The lower castes people still carry out their traditional work. *Brahmin* and *Chhetri* households need their help only for the repair of Iron tools. Readymade new tools are now brought from the market. But some *Lohars* make the iron tools and sell them in the surrounding village. Their traditional occupations have been declining.

Lohars are mostly dependent upon their occupation of making and repairing iron tools. Their traditional occupation has declined considerably, because of difficulty in obtaining charcoal from the forest. Except these, they are dependent upon animal husbandry and wage labour.

Another income source of the *Lohar's* caste is the animal husbandry. They raise domestic animals like cows, buffaloes, goats. Cows and buffaloes are raised for milk and goats and hens for meat to earn money.

Some of the *Lohars* are busy as a manual workers for their livelihood or income. The males are busy in ploughing, digging land, porters carrying loads as while females in fields during time of paddy plantation and harvesting wheat.

5.1.1 Land Holding Pattern

Land is one of the main means of production in the rural area. All of the land owned by *Lohars* is unirrigated.

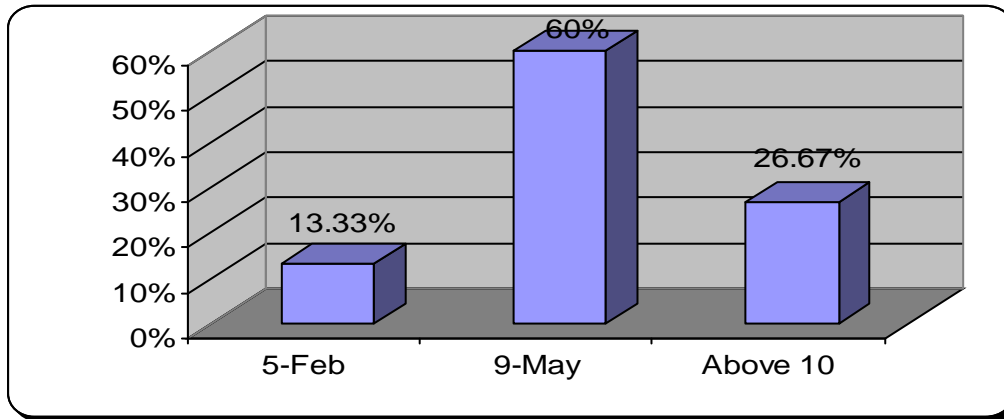
Since most of the land is unirrigated the production of agricultural crops is poor. The whole production system depends on the monsoon. Favourable monsoon brings about good production, while the failure of monsoon creates miseries.

Table 5.1: Landholding by Household Respondents

Landholding kattha/household	Respondents	
	Number	Percents
2-5	4	13.33
5-9	18	60.00
Above 10	8	26.67
Total	30	100.00

Source: Field Survey 2009

Figure 5.1 Landholding by Household Respondents



This table shows the distribution of respondents according to land holding size. Out of the total 30 *Lohar* HHS, 4 hold 2-5 kattha of land each, 18 of them (60 percent) hold 5-9 kattha and 8 of them (26.67 percent), 10 more than 10 kattha each in average.

So all *Lohars* have got some land but not enough for them to meet these needs. Only a few of them are able to make some money from their land use.

5.1.2. Traditional Occupation

The source of income of '*Lohar*' is a specific type of occupation of metal working. They are mostly dependent upon their traditional occupation of making and repairing iron tools.

Metal working is carried out exclusively by the indigenous craftsmen. *Lohars* conventionally make agricultural implements and other types of tools and get certain '*Bali*' (grains) from upper castes in return.

A *Lohar* works around the year for his client and receives about five – six sacks of grains (paddy and wheat). The generosity of his lord may bring some more food grains and vegetables for his consumption. A blacksmith may

have numerous households as his clients. One such craftsman of the study area had about 6-7 clients. The amount of food he receives grains depends on the number of individuals in the client family.

5.1.3. Food Sufficiency

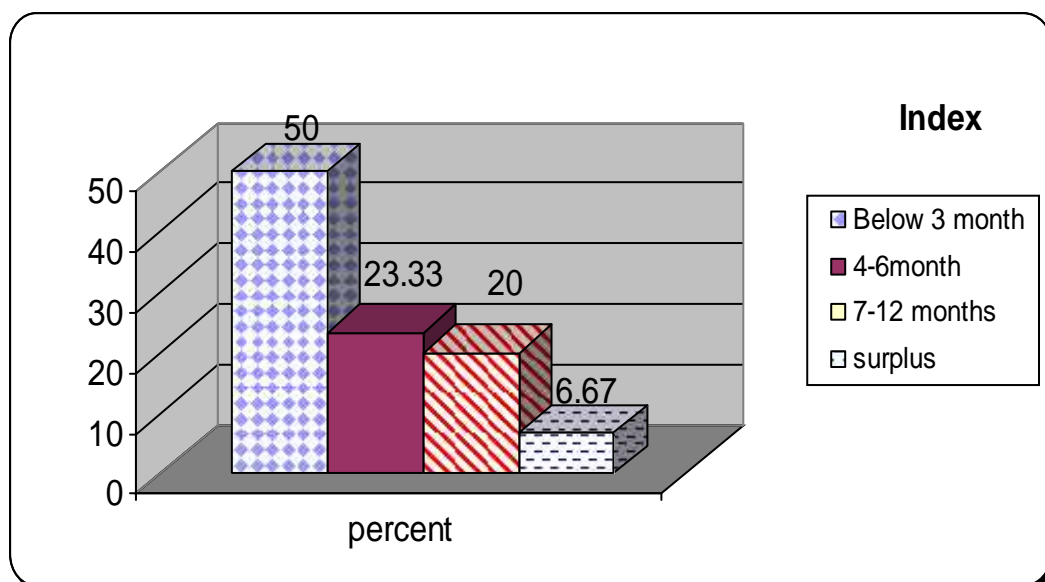
Food is very essential elements for human being. We cannot live without food. Man can produce food through farming system. In the context of Nepal the balance of food is inverted. The *Lohars* of the study area faced food insufficiency and deficits, the following table shows such deficiency. Only 6.67% *Lohars* do have surplus food supply.

Table 5.2: Food Sufficiency

S.N	Groups	No.	Percent
1	Below 3 month	15	50.00
2	4-6month	17	23.33
3	7-12 months	6	20.00
4	surplus	2	6.67
	Total	30	100.00

Source: Filed Survey 2009

Figure 5.2: Food Sufficiency



The above table shows that among the total households of *Lohars*, 15 households (50 percent) can only provided less than 3 months of their food requirement from their own agricultural production. Out of 30, there are 7 household (23.33 percent) who can meet upto 4 to 6 months of their food

requirement from their own agriculture production. There are 6 households (20 percent) who can meet upto 7 to 12 months, fodd requirement. Only 2 households (6.67 percent) do have surplus agricultural production which they can sell. Thus it is clear that *Lohars* cannot survive only on their own agricultural production.

5.1.4. Livestock Rearing

Livestock is also an important source of income and livelihood for rural people. It supports the farming activity. It is also a source of nutrition for people. The importance of domestic animals is not limited only to economic aspects. Some animal are socio-culturally and religionly more important in Hindu society.

Lohars raise different types of domestic animals but in a small number. The number of domestic animals and birds the *Lohars* of the study area have raised has been given in the following table.

Table 5.3: Livestock Keeping in *Lohar* Society

S.N.	Livestock	No.
1.	Cow	25
2.	Ox	30
3.	Buffalo	10
4.	Goat	20
5.	Pig	4
6.	Chicken	45
	Total	134

Source:- Field survey 2009

The above table shows that the number of livestock per household is limited. Six different types of domesticated animals are raised only for domestic consumption not for commercial purpose. Ox is raised for ploughing land, cows and buffaloes for milk and goats, pigs and chickens for meat.

The number of domestic animals is not large because there is not enough forest nearby for cattle raising. Some respondents explained that for cattle raising the limited land holding was a severe constraint. It was also found that livestock product like milk and ghee would not be bought in market from untouchable people like them. So *Lohars* do not like to raise domestic animals in a large scale.

5.1.5. Income

Income the main asset to sustain household expenditure

Table 5.4: Distribution of Respondents According to HH Income level

S.N.	HH income Rs. per year	No. of respondents	percent
1.	300 -1000	22	73.33
2.	1000-2000	6	20.00
3.	2000 +above	2	6.67
	Total	30	100.00

Source:- Field survey, 2009

The table 5.4 reveals that 73.33 percent respondents (22) fall in low income size and 6 (20 percent) have middle income and only 2 (6.67 percent) have high income.

Hence, we can see that the majority of respondents are living in a low income situation.

5.1.6 Expenditure

Table 5.5 Distribution of respondent's expenditure

S.N.	HH expenditure Rs. per year	No. of respondents percent	
		Number	percent
1.	<1000	24	80.00
2.	<2000	4	13.33
3.	>2000	2	6.67
	Total	30	100.00

Source:- Field survey, 2009

We can study the distribution of respondents by expenditure in three groups, low expenditure (less than Rs. 10000 year) middle (less than Rs. 20000) and high expenditure (more than Rs. 20000).

Out of the total 30 respondents, 24 spend less than Rs. 10000 per year, 4 of them (13.33 percent) have yearly expenditure of Rs. 10000 to Rs. 20000, While only 2 of them (6.67 percent) have yearly expenditure of more than 20000.

1.5.7 Loan

Table 5.6: Distribution of Respondents Loan situation

S.N.	HH Loan Rs. per year	No. of respondents percent	
		Number	percent
1.	5000	8	26.67
2.	5000-10000	12	40.00
3.	10000-20000	6	20.00
4.	20000+above	4	13.33
	Total	30	100.00

Source:- Field survey, 2009

All the 30 HHs of the respondents, *Lohars*, had taken loans. This shows the poor economic condition of the *Lohars*. Due to lack of source of income, they are compelled to take loans.

The range of loan taken by different HHs is shown in table 5.6. Out of 30 HHs, 8 (26.67 percent) had borrowed less than Rs. 5000 each, 12 (40 percent) of them had borrowed Rs.5000 to 10000 each and 6 had borrowed (Rs. 10000 to 20000 each, and 4 of them (13.33 percent) had loan of above Rs. 20000 each in average. The above data shows the unemployment problems among *Lohars*.

5.2. Social Condition of *Lohars*

5.2.1 Family

Family is the primary institution of the society. It is a system of organized relationships that involves workable and dependable ways of meeting basic social needs. It is the most multifunctional of all institutions. Family plays a vital role and has tremendous influence on the individual, his behaviours and his actions. A child learns various social values form the early childhood through the family. There are only 2 types of families consisting of husband, wife and children and joint family founded on blood relations.

In the *Lohar* society, it is found that they possess patrilineal families. Like other Patrilineal societies, the male *Lohar* is the functional head of the family and other activities. After the death of the family head, his position is taken by his eldest son.

In *Lohar* society, family property is commonly shared and managed. When the family breaks up, the property is equally divide among brothers. There is no any rigid rules of family separation. According to respondents, the

causes for the break down of the joint family are conflict between two brothers, conflict between a mother in law and daughter in laws.

While asked about the main reason of family separation, most of the respondents gave a simple answer that they want to meet their needs with their income. It means that the lack of sufficient income source, physical labour and skill of person are the major means for livelihood. So, after marriage a person wants to live separately from his parents.

5.2.2 Distribution of total population according to family type

Among the total 300 of *Lohars* households in the study area, basically two types of families nuclear and joint have been found from observation. The family type of *Lohars* is shown in the table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7: Distribution of *Lohar* Population According to the Family System.

S.N.	Type	No. of HHs	Percent
1.	Joint family	6	20.00
2.	Nuclear	24	80.00
	Total	30	100.00

Source:- Field survey, 2009

The table given above shows that out of 30 families 6 (20 percent) are joint and 24 (80 percent) are nuclear. It shows that the joint family system is undergoing change gradually. The *Lohar* community in the study area prefer to live in nuclear family.

5.2.3 Education

Education is the main factor which changes behaviour in every aspects of life. The *Lohars* are backward in comparison to other tribes. Their economic condition cannot support education of their children. In the study area, there are 4 private school and one government school. But very few *Lohars* children attend these schools. This is because, those people are happy with their main occupation. Thus there are a few organizations helping *Lohars* for the education in Ghuyaghat.

In this study, educational status is classified into 5 categories: illiterate, literate, primary level, secondary level and higher level. Table 5.8 shows the member and percentage of educational level of respondents.

Table 5.8 Educational Status

S.N.	Educational Status	Male	percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
1.	Illiterate	6	40	7	70	10	52
2.	Literate	4	26.66	1	10	7	20
3.	Primary level	2	13.33	1	10	4	12
4.	Secondary level	2	13.33	1	10	3	12
5.	Higher Level	1	6.66	-	-	1	4
	Total	15	100.00	10	100	25	100

Source:- Field survey, 2009

The above table shows that the illiteracy rate of females is higher than the males. Total male illiteracy rate is 40 percent while female illiteracy rate is 70 percent. The data show that 52 percent respondents are illiterate and 20 percent are literate. It is also found that 12 percent respondents have attained primary level education, 12 respondents have completed secondary level, 4 percent respondents have passed higher level education.

If we see literacy rate of male and females, females are more backward than males.

5.3. Social Discrimination against the *Lohar*

Discrimination operates the denial of opportunities and rights to certain groups on the basis of race, sex and castes. Discrimination is a learning process that takes place in circular basis. Discrimination can be either intentional and conscious or unconscious and can be practiced by an individual, a group of individuals or by institutions. Main form of discrimination is given below.

5.3.1. Social Discrimination

Social discrimination consists of social inequalities of various social-groups. Some superior caste groups deliberately impose certain legacies, over inferior groups. In the name of caste system; caste discrimination has been existing all over the Nepal. However, theoretically the caste discrimination is abolished by new Civil Code of 1990 constitution of Nepal. But age-old practices persist in rural areas where untouchables are often debarred from sharing public facilities or entering into the temple. *Dalits* are made by Hindu: *Lohar, Damai, Sharki, Badhi, pode* etc. are also known as untouchables. They occupy the lowest rank in the caste system created and dominated by one priest of Brahmins in the name of the caste. Upper caste groups thus (*Brahman, chhetries, Newars* etc) succeed to discriminate against *Lohar*.

Historically, in Dhangadhi *Lohar* people are neglected as they comprise into untouchable people, their ascribed status. Being superior castes, *Brahamin Chhetries* and *Thakuri*, do not accept water, liquid things (accepted ghee, oil etc) and cooked food from *Lohar*. Traditionally, they are considered polluted by the contact of them. Even *Lohar* people are not allowed to enter into the temple. *Lohar* people are kept away from common tap until other high caste people use it. If unintentionally a *Lohar* happens to touch the high caste person, he/she is blamed and victimized in prejudiced way and is sometimes harassed physically and mentally. They are kept near the door and permission is not given to enter into high caste people's houses and rooms. The caste discrimination can be observed even in education sector. Schools children of *Lohar* are always neglected in comparison to other high castes children by the teachers. In this municipality, educated people still humiliate the lower caste people rather than raising a voice against caste hierarchy.

5.3.2 Economic Exploitation and Discrimination

Economically, a large number of *Lohars* have been considerably exploited, suppressed, rather discriminated, since the ancient structuring of the Hindu society. Hindus manage hierarchy system under which untouchables are ascribed a lower level. So, traditionally they have to perform very specific types of manual occupations, such as metal work, sewing, cleaning of toilet that affords them low income. With in Specific types of occupations are managed on the basis of caste division. Such a system indicates discrimination in society.

During the field visit, social discrimination, exploitation deep rooted religious practices, development of religious beliefs and compulsory menial jobs. Given to *Dalits* are found to be the causes of their depravity. They get low status and advantages in comparison to other high castes. As they have a low status, many factors confine them to utilize limited resources and opportunities. Even though *Lohars* do have some kind of resources, they cannot compete against the high caste people because they are serving under poverty and lack of education.

All of the available means of resources are controlled by high caste people. They are reluctant to enable the untouchable castes to use various means of resources. Besides, the rising economic and social exploitation and discrimination do not allow any chance for the rise of *Lohars*.

The existing economic structure of Nepal is directly comparable more or less with medieval (12-14th century) Japanese feudalism. In the name of the caste hierarchy, upper caste people perpetually unfold various conspiracies to exploit and suppress the lower caste ones. In addition, traditionally economic structure of Hinduism is unfavorable towards lower castes people. *Lohar* people's economic and social activities have been badly influenced, and so the economic and social structures of *Lohar* lead to negative determinant. In this situation, a *Lohar* cannot make his economic decision and is always subordinated by upper caste. More than 50 percent respondents answered that they are bearing a burden of loan from different money holder, landlords of upper castes people.

CHAPTER-VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Summary

Lohars, mostly live in the remote areas of the country. They are residents of mountain region. This study has to found out the social and economic status of *Lohar* in Ghuyaghat of Dhangadhi municipality ward no. 10, Kailali district. The basic objectives of the study was to asses their living standard, social condition, economic condition and social discrimination and to analyze the ways which can bring positive changes in their life.

In order to fulfill the objectives 30 households were chosen as sample and one senior person from each household was interviewed with an objective of getting key information. Different activities of *Lohars* were also observed. The data collected from the study covered various aspects of their life, such as household size, educational status, occupation, income, expenditure and discrimination. The major findings of the study are summarized below.

- Among the total population of sampled households, the population of male was found to be slightly smaller than that of female. The majority of the people belonged to active age group (15-59) years, so the household depends on their active age group members for livelihood.
- The occupation is a major aspect that determines economic condition of a person. Most of the *Lohars* in this municipality are found to be dependent on agricultural labour. They cannot make a good living even through their traditional occupation. So many others have also adopted agriculture and traditional occupation such as iron work.
- Most of the *Lohars* in the study area have low income. Due to divided sources of income they cannot make good income. Hence, they are pushed backward in society and are compelled to take loans.
- Joint families have been seen a tradition in Nepalese society, but nuclear or small families are being popular nowadays. Most of the *Lohars* have nuclear families.
- *Lohars* are backward in educational sectors as well. Most of them are illiterate. Only 48 percent are literate in the *Lohar* community. In addition to it, females are too backward in education compared to males. Poverty and lack of public awareness may be pointed out as its reasons.
- Although the younger generation is leading toward new types of occupation and modernization, the old people still are involved in traditional occupation. Normally, they are not allowed to touch the upper caste people. We can say that this kind of domination and behavior by upper caste people is a major cause of their degradation.

6.2. Conclusion

Lohar is an untouchable lower caste in Hindu religion and is taken as a *Dalit* (backward group) by the Government of Nepal. There is a wide status gap between *Lohars* and the high castes. They are not allowed to approach the temple although they also follow Hinduism and have desire to visit temples. They are not allowed to use the same tap in the municipality with higher castes. They have their own separate tap. They are not permitted to enter higher caste people's house. When touched by *Lohars*, some higher caste people use urine of cow (*gaunt*) to purify themselves. Higher caste people keep *Lohars* as labourer and food is given separately to them. *Lohars* do not possess good social status in the municipality.

Over the years there has been negligible development in the condition of *Lohars* of Ghuyaghat Dhangadhi municipality ward no. 10. They have been pushed, rather more and more backward. None of them is in the government services. They have not got sufficient land for cultivation. Hence they depend on other occupations.

The main factor responsible to make *Lohars* backward in the society is the caste based discrimination. Neither a *Lohar* is hired as a worker in public office, nor can he start a hotel or a teashop. Livestock product is not accepted from them. Hence, it is very important to eliminate the discrimination faced by them in order to improve the social and economic condition.

6.3. Recommendation

Lohar is one of the backward community of Nepal. The people in this community are poor and illiterate. The following recommendation is made to improve their position.

-) The *Lohars* of Ghuyaghat Dhangadhi municipality ward no. 10 of Kailali district are backward and depressed. So to unlift them from the present condition, first of all awareness generating activities, such as basic education, should be provided through government and non governmental organization and institution. Due to their poor economic condition most of the *Lohars* do not send their children to school. Hence, scholarship should be provided to their children.
-) Economically, the *Lohars* of this municipality are very poor and living under absolute poverty. So to improve their economic condition they should be provided with vocational and skillful education/ training. Income generating activities and skill developing training, like tailoring, plumbing and carpentry should be provided to them. Along with this training, they should be provided with appropriate institutional credit and market facilities.
-) Health and sanitation situation of the *Lohars* of Ghyaghat is very poor. They are attacked by different types of diseases and illness. Ultimately, many of them have to lose their life. Hence it is very necessary that they should be made aware of the cause of different disease.

-) There should be an intensive review of the implementation of legal measures adopted for the termination of caste based discrimination which can be tackled only with government intervention.
-) Most of the *Lohars* earn their livelihood from agriculture. But they do not have knowledge about improved seeds, fertilizers, insecticides and new techniques of agriculture. They follow traditional methods of agriculture. As a result, they cannot get good quantity of production in their small land holding. Therefore, the J.T.A. should offer them timely training about agriculture.
-) Female literacy rate is far below rate of male literacy. Therefore, the parents should be encouraged to send their daughters to school. And non-formal education programme should also be conducted. Emphasis should be given on educating both male and female adults along with school going children.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Detail of Respondent:

Name:

Address:

Age

Education:

Date

Sex:

Occupation

Ward No.:

Religion:

Family Status:

1. How long have you been residing here and why?

2. How much land do you have?

Land ownership Kattha	Household No.	Percentage
0-1		
1-2		
Landless		
Total		

3. What is your income?

Types of Occupation		Income in Rs.	Remarks
S.N.			
1.	Agriculture		
2.	Service		
3.	Labour		
4.	Other		

4. What is your yearly expenditure?

5. Livestock structure of Respondent?

S.N.	Types of Animals	Number	Before	After
1.	Cow			
2.	Buffaloes			
3.	Ox			
4.	Goats			
5.	Pigs			
6.	Sheep's			
7.	Ducks/Chickens			
8.	Others			

6. What is the level of education that you want to provide to your children? If not then what is the reason behind it?

7. How much food is produce through agriculture?

8. Do you have a toilet?

Yes []

No []

9. Who financed to make the toilet?

a) Self []

b) Donor agency []

c) Other []

10. Where do you take your family when they are get ill?

a) Hospital []

b) Local Baidya []

c) Jharphuk []

11. Is there any health post in your area?

Yes []

No []

12. Have you got any training?

Yes []

No []

13. Do you have shop?

c) Because socially it has low value []

23. Do you want to change your occupation? If you want which sector do you choose?

a) Business []

b) Agriculture []

c) Wage of labour []

d) Other []

24. In which fields untouchability is deep rooted?

a) Tea shop []

b) Temple []

c) School []

d) Tap []

