

Historical Context of Tarai politics

1.1 Background

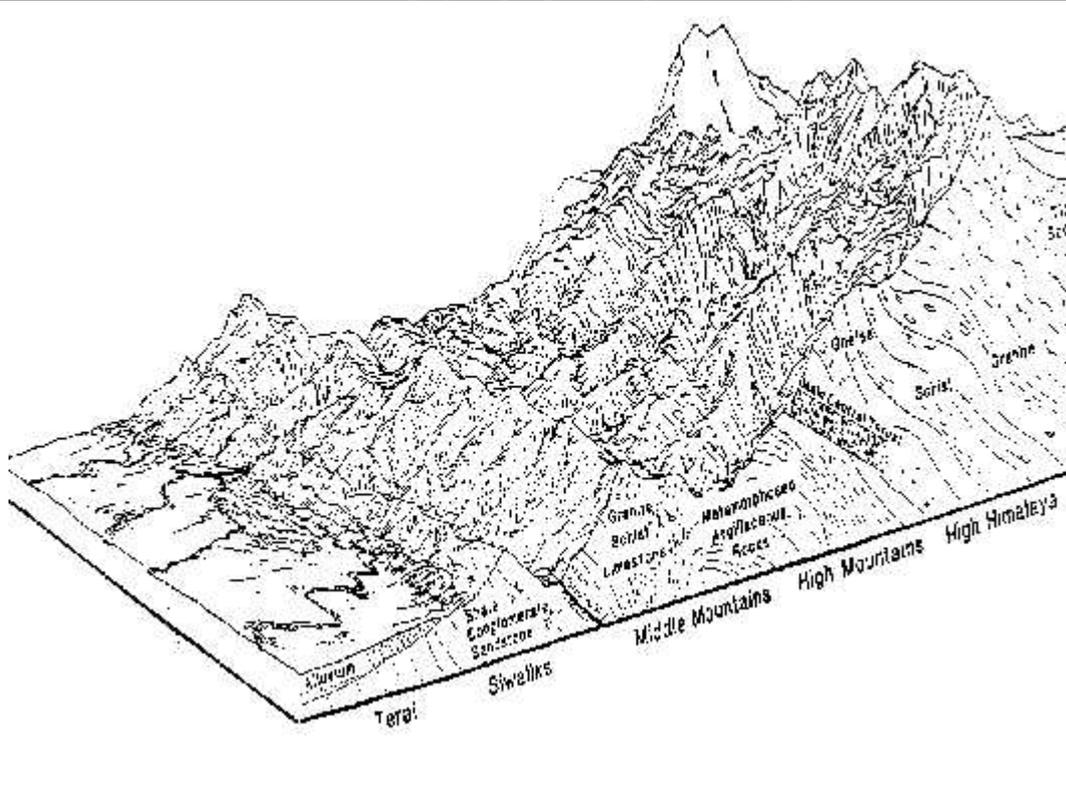
Tarai (also spelled Terai) is region of “northern India and southern Nepal running parallel to the lower Himalayan ranges” (Encyclopaedia of Britannica 2004). It is a strip of land that stretches from the Yamuna River in the west to the Brahmaputra River to the east. The Terai is a plain region of southern Nepal that occupies about 23 percent of the land where about 48 percent of the Nepalese live. Hills and mountain areas of Nepal are called *Pahad* and plain area of *Tarai* is called *Madyahesh* but usually called *Madhesh*.



The Tarai includes twenty districts of Nepal from east to west which are Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilbastu, Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur. This region has a rich cultural history. According to

Malangia (1997) history of central Terai dates back to the kingdom of Videha or Mithila. Hindus believe that Sita the manifestation of Hindu Goddess Laxmi was born in Videha /Mithila kingdom in present day Janakpur city of Nepal. Similarly Siddhartha Gautam Buddha was also born in Kapilavastu district which is also in Tarai region of Nepal.

Table 2: The physiographic regions of Nepal



Source: Ministry of Water Resources (2009)

The Muslim invasions in India (12 to 14 century) pushed various groups of people to present day Nepal. The Hill people excluding indigenous ethnic groups migrated from various parts of India. Till around the 12th century there was eastward migration of people speaking a Sanskrit-based language – which later on developed as Nepali language. Another push factor was that the relatively harsh western hills with continuing overpopulation pressed the both

the migrants and the indigenous hill people towards the eastern hills (Clark 1963).

Between 1860s and 1951, government encouraged and made efforts to vertical migration of hill people in Madhesh region (Shah 2006: 5). The response of hill people was not much favorable because of the alien climatic conditions in *Madhesh*. As "land, water and forest resources were abundant in Madhesh, people from the densely populated Indian districts bordering Madhesh region having similar cultures, tradition, practices and languages migrated to various parts of Madhesh between 19th and the mid 20th century "(Shah 2006: 5). The increasing population pressure, low amount of agricultural land, famine, lack of economic opportunity and government's policy encouraged many hill people to migrate to Terai areas. "Hill people established settlements and farming areas along East-West Highway under construction" (Shah 2006:5). Nevertheless "here were settlements in Madhesh region south from the dense forest area and *Vitri* Madhesh was inhabited by indigenous Janjati people" (Shah 2006).

1.2 Politics of Tarai from 1950 to 1990

Nepal before early 1950s was a closed country but Tarai region that borders India¹ was not fully under the control of the government hence major Nepalese political parties expanded their activities in this region. With support from local population in Tarai the parties launched uprising against Ranas till 1950 and against Panchayat regime (1962-1990). However the policies of the parties were national and did not focused on the grievances of the local residents of Tarai.

¹ Tarai borders West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh states of India.

To put local issue on national level according to Gaige (1975) a distinct, identity-based political consciousness emerged and Nepal Tarai Congress under Mr Vedanand Jha was formed in 1951. Core demands of Tarai Congress included recognition of Hindi as a national language, adequate representation of *Madheshis* in the civil service and above all establishment of an autonomous Tarai region (Gaige 1975:109).

In 1951, National Education Commission recommended Nepali language as the only medium of instruction in educational institutions (HMG 1953). The people of Tarai were against this recommendation because Hindi was largely in use as medium of instructions in schools and colleges in Tarai. In 1956 the movement in support of Hindi language were launched in different parts of Tarai after “KI Singh led United Democratic Party (UDP) Government articulated to pose certain challenge to Hindi by issuing a government directive which aimed at the removal of Hindi from the school education” (Dahal 2000). The language issue became more serious after 1956 when systematic steps were taken to develop Nepali as a national language. *Nepali Pracharini Sabha* was constituted to promote Nepali language. This sparked protests causing clashes in several towns of Tarai. As a reaction “Save Hindi” committee was formed by Hindi speakers and they held protests across the region. “Save Hindi committees were formed to support Hindi Movement which was supported by important political parties during the 50's - Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), and Nepal Praja Parishad (NPP)” (Dahal 2000). In 1957, Vedanand Jha, the leader of the Nepal Tarai Congress stated that “we will not allow the removal of Hindi from the medium of education” (Dahal 2000) but the 1959 constitution declared

Nepali as the national language (HMG 1959). This was the state-induced process of ‘Nepalization’ with the norms and values of the elite male of hill originated Hindu high caste population (Lawati 2005:126). This attack on the very way of life must have infuriated *Madheshis*. In 1959 elections, the issue of Hindi language was raised in Tarai but it could not influence the electoral politics strongly. With the 1960 royal takeover, more emphasis was given on developing Nepali language as a symbol of nationalism. The Second Education Commission recommended Nepali as the sole medium of instruction in 1961 (Borgstrom 1980:17). In 1964 The Nepal Company Act made the use of Nepali language compulsory in business. The use of Hindi in radio broadcasting was also abandoned and language issues raised by *Madheshis* and other marginalized community became further ineffective after the installation of party less *Panchayat* system. The Nepal Tarai Congress that was rebellious against this language discrimination raised several issues of *Madheshi* community of Tarai but it “failed to win a single seat in the 1959 parliamentary elections” (International Crisis Group 2007:6). During the *Panchayat* era, other languages except Nepali remained neglected and the *New Education Plan* introduced in 1971 discouraged the use of other languages except Nepali; as the medium of instruction in educational institutions but Hindi however was still prescribed as optional subjects in both in school and colleges.

Another cause of social tension in Tarai was the rising trend of hill migrant to Tarai after the control of malaria in 1950s. The government of Nepal realized the economic importance of Tarai therefore; hill migration to the Tarai region was encouraged. After 1960, the government of Nepal intensified the campaign to

encourage hill migration to Tarai. The major languages spoken in Tarai are Maitihli, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tharu, Hindi, Bengali/Bangali, Urdu, Nepali, Santhali and Rajbanshi. The Maithil constitutes the largest linguistic group in Tarai. These languages are widely spoken in the bordering Indian regions as well. The Hill settlers speak their own language-Nepali - the official language. The social complex such as style, social values and dress (Kurta and Dhoti) of Tarai people is different from hill people. The migration to Tarai put people with different language, dress and culture competing to control land could have created conflict of interest between migrants and locals. *Pahadhi* Nepalese and *Madheshi* Nepalese are different in many ways. *Madheshi* people's lifestyle, food habits, dress, language and culture are extremely similar with people who live across the Indian border in Utter Pradesh and Bihar according to Gaige (Gaige 1975:12) and Jha (1993) while the hill migrants in Tarai have different life style. People with different life style living together evidently caused the development of cultural antagonism between hill migrants and the *Madheshis* (Gaige 1975:12).

Action of the Nepalese state that further infuriated the already alienated *Madheshi* community was that the Panchayat government divided Nepal into various constituencies. The division of constituencies was carried out from north to south rather than east to west "with a view to including hill people and thereby working against the possible dominance of Tarai peoples in any given constituency"(Sinha 2008). Nepal was divided into five development regions and fourteen zones that were seen by many *Madheshis* as "a ploy to maintain *pahadi* domination because it forced hill and plains areas into single units" (International Crisis Group 2007:7). Constituencies according *Madheshis* were

“delimited to dilute the Madhesi vote (many on a north-south strip pattern that introduces a sizeable hill electorate)” (International Crisis Group 2007:6). Protests against this discriminatory act was however never strong “and many members of the politically influential Madhesi landowning elite joined the royal council or other government bodies, accepted district and regional administrator positions and had no interest in destabilising the situation”(International Crisis Group 2007:7). The common people in the Tarai region however showed their resentment against the state when “in the 1980 referendum on the Panchayat system, there was higher support for multiparty democracy in the Tarai” (International Crisis Group 2007:7).

1.3 Politics of Tarai from 1990 to 2006

The Nepali Congress Party (henceforth NC) and Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist Leninist) (hence forth UML) were the two largest Parties in Nepal (from 1990 to 2008)². They both had strong organizational structures and support base in the Tarai³. The voting trend in Tarai showed that “In the first general election (1959) and in post-1990 elections, a large majority of Madhesis has voted for the major national parties, especially NC” (International Crisis Group 2007:7) and not for Nepal Sadbhavana⁴ Party. According to Burket (1997) “Sadbhavana party expresses the feelings of Maithil people that the government does not represent the interests of Tarai people, but the Congress party has a long history in Janakpur”. After the movement of 1990, “people of Janakpur believed that

² In 2009 Constitutional Assembly Election the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) became the largest party. Nepali Congress Party became the second largest and UML became the third largest party.

³ But in 2008 Constitutional Assembly Election the newly established party –*Madhesi Janadhikar Forum* (MJF) became the largest party from Tarai region while Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) won in large part of the Tharu areas of western Tarai.

⁴ Also spelled Sadvavana meaning of which having good feelings for others.

democracy, and the subsequent success of the Congress party was as much an outcome of their efforts as it was the efforts of those in the Kathmandu Valley” but Congress MPs who won a majority of seats nationally did not, duly represented Tarai” (Burket 1997:255). Resentment against such 'use and throw' attitude of NC and UML was bottling up in Tarai. The Electoral politics before 2007 *Madheshi* People’s Movement were not focused on the issues of *Madheshi* identity hence the *Madheshi* leaders in NC and UML did not feel the need to raise the issues of *Madheshi* people within the parties they were in and were content with the position they held within these powerful national parties.

NC and UML were aware of *Madheshi* people's sensitiveness and hence raised the issues that appealed to them at least during election campaigns. For example “Hill-origin leaders give speeches in Hindi and other local languages during village meetings and door-to-door campaigning” (International Crisis Group 2007:8). With the rise of politicization of *Madheshi* identity the main stream parties established *Madheshi* fronts. Loktantrik Madhesi Sangathan (Democratic Madhesi Organisation) is the Madeshi Front of UML, while the Krantikari Madhesi Morcha (Revolutionary Madeshi Front) is Madeshi Front of ultra left Janamorcha (People's Front) party.

During Panchayat regime (1962-1990) to launch a political party based on ethnicity or identity was prohibited in Nepal hence Gajendra Narayan Singh was unable to launch a political party for *Madheshi* cause. Instead in 1983 he registered Nepal Sadbhavana Parisad, as a cultural organization “that demanded political and cultural rights for Madhesis” (International Crisis Group 2007:9). After the introduction of multiparty democratic system however this

organization in April 17, 1990 was transformed into a political party as Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP). Gajendra Narayan Singh was its founder and undisputed supreme leader. Among various reasons one of the immediate reasons Sadbhavana Parisad was registered was:

Well-known demographer and planner Harka Gurung's categorisation of Madhesis as people of Indian origin helped trigger the NSP's formation. Gajendra Narayan Singh was arrested while campaigning against Gurung's stance; he established the NSP on his release. (International Crisis Group 2007:8)

Even in the republished version of Gurung's book he still wrote that "the population increment in Tarai was contributed both by settlers from the hills as well as from India" (Gurung 1989). Core demands of NSP during 1990 were not very different from the demands of MJF in 2007 and 2008. NSP's core demands were "reformed citizenship laws" (International Crisis Group 2007:8) "official recognition for Hindi" (International Crisis Group 2007:8), "federal system" (International Crisis Group 2007:8); and "greater Madhesi representation in the civil service and security forces" (International Crisis Group 2007:8). NSP opposed the 1990 constitution, and in the past had constantly demanded a constituent assembly. Despite participating in political system of 1990's democratic constitution they also "burnt copies of 1990 constitution" (International Crisis Group 2007:8) being dissatisfied with the constitution that ignored their plea for federalism. In 1991 parliamentary elections they won six seats that is 4.1 per cent of the votes. In 1994 parliamentary elections they won three seats that is 3.6 per cent of the vote. In 1999 parliamentary elections they won five seats that is 3.18 per cent of the vote. The NSP candidates have won seats in only in Tarai districts such as Morang, Saptari, Sarlahi, Nawalparasi and

Rupandehi but none from the west, mid-west or far-west districts. Nepal Sadbhavana Party however could not win much support among the large Maithali or Maithil community and was not popular among the ruling elite of Mithila community of eastern Tarai because according to Burket (1997) Mithila ruling “elite are first Maithil and secondly *Madheshi*” and they regarded that “they are not all-Tarai they are Maithili with a legendary boundary which separates them from other Tarai communities” (Burket 1997: 256). Nepal Sadbhavana Party always urged for the “ recognition of Hindi as a national language, but this is not an issue for those Maithis whose identity is strongly centred on speaking Maithili, a language they view as far superior to Hindi” and “Maithili speakers would rather not be clumped with Bhojpuri speakers or Tharu speakers in an all-Tarai party” (Burkert 1997:256).

Gajendra Narayan Singh the charismatic and authoritative leader of NSP passed away in 2002 that led to the split in NSP into two factions, one was lead by Badri Prasad Mandal who supported the king’s October 4, 2002 move (decision to sack Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba) and another was lead by Anandi Devi, Gajendra Narayan Singh’s widow. The two factions reunited under Anandi Devi in June 2007 but Rajendra Mahato formed his own Nepal Sadbhavana Party and Anandi Devi led faction was renamed as Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi). Hridayesh Tripathi a party strongman left the party and joined pro-*Madheshi* party Terai-Madhesh Loktantrik Party (TMLP) that further weakened the party. In 2008 CA Election, NSP (Anandi Devi) failed to win even single seat in First Past the Post while NSP (Mahato faction) and newly formed TMLP won more seats than them.

1.4 Maoist insurgency and the radicalization of ethnic *Madheshis*

The radical ultra left political parties of Nepal especially Communist Party of Nepal Unity Center who later became Communist Party of Nepal Maoist mobilized ethnic communities in early 1991 by raising the issues of ethnic communities of Nepal according to scholar Harka Gurung and formed different ethnic organizations:

All Nepal Nationalities Association (1994), adaptation of Ethnic Policy (1995), ethnic right to self-determination (1997), and establishment of Ethnic Department at the central level as well as formation of 11 ethnic /regional fronts (1998), Ethnic and Regional Coordinating Committee (May 2001), and United Revolutionary People's Council (September 2001). (Gurung 2007: 81)

According to Deepak Thapa the Post 1990 democratic government was not sensitive about ethnic issues and grievances of different ethnic communities of Nepal (Thapa 2003:86-87). On the other hand when according to D.B Gurung Maoist insurgency began in 1996 they raised these issues and attracted people from ethnic community to Maoist armed struggle (Gurung 2007:170). In the year 2000 to attract ethnic *Madheshi* the Maoists opened a *Madheshi* ethnic front called *Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha* which in English is translated as *Madheshi* National Liberation Front (henceforth MRMM). MRMM was led by a charismatic *Madheshi* intellectual named Jai Krishna Goit who had a reputation of being an extremist. Mr Goit's passion for Tarai was so extreme that even Maoist felt threatened by his agendas. In July 2004 the Maoist leaders appointed Matrika Yadhav as the head of MRMM while Goit was "was shifted to the position of senior adviser" (International Crisis Group 2007:9). Goit was not happy with this decision and left MRMM and Maoist party and formed his own secessionist group called Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (henceforth JTMM) whose prime objective was to secede Tarai

from Nepal(International Crisis Group 2007: 9). JTMM and MRMM violently competed with each other till 2006 to attract *Madheshi* recruit which drove both of them to further radicalize their *Madheshi* agendas. MRMM persistently propagated their radical *Madheshi* agendas and acted as a major front of Maoist to recruit *Madheshis* during the insurgency (2000-2006).

The goal of MRMM was distribution of citizenship to *Madheshis*, use of *Madheshi* mother tongues in local government offices and protection of *Madheshi* cultures. They also demanded end of caste based discrimination, dowry and exploitation of women in Tarai. The most radical demand of MRMM was however the demand for autonomous Tarai region, reinvestment of tax collected in Tarai in Tarai itself and implementation of revolutionary land reform (International Crisis Group 2007: 9).

1.5 Communal violence in Nepalgunj city

“The Terai lowlands are home to about half of Nepal’s 27 million people, and the residents of the region, known as Mahadthesis, have long complained of being looked down upon by the Himalayan nation’s hill communities” (Bhandari 2007).*Madheshis* played an important part in People’s Movement of 2006. The new interim constitution made by the interim parliament that was established with the power of People’s Movement (2006) however shocked and annoyed many *Madheshis* because they felt the Nepalese state despite being democratic still did not address the *Madheshi* issues.

People's Movement of April 2006 brought down the dictatorial monarchy, revived the suspended democratic parliament and brought the insurgent Maoist rebels into the peace process which officially ended a decade (1996-2006) long

armed conflict that was responsible for more than 13,000 deaths. Seven Party Alliance that spearheaded the People's Movement of 2006 and erstwhile rebel Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) formed a coalition government. New constitution of Nepal was decided to be made only after the Constituent Assembly Election hence in the interim period this alliance made an interim constitution. *Madhesi* groups were dissatisfied with the interim constitution because it did not address many of their issues among which the core one was the issue of federalism. *Madhesi* Members of the Parliament across party line protested against the interim constitution.

Nepal Sadhvawana Party a major *Madhesi* political party and a member of SPA called a strike on 26 December 2006. They were protesting against the incompleteness of interim constitution and they wanted to build pressure so that *Madhesi* issues could be added in it. During the strike there were sporadic communal clashes between *Pahadi* and *Madhesi* community in Nepalgunj city of Banke Disitric. After the communal clashes the CDs that contained anti-*Madhesi* rampage led by the police were distributed across Tarai region fuelling anger among ordinary *Madhesis* (International Crisis Group 2007:12).

1.6 *Madhesi* People's Movement of 2007

In January 16, 2007 the leader of MJF Mr Upendra Yadhav and other MJF leaders were arrested after they burned the copy of interim constitution of Nepal because it was silent on federalism and had in it an inequitable electoral system. Their supporters immediately declared general strike in Tarai until they all were released. During their strike a teenage MJF activist was killed by the Maoists in January 19 and on January 22 five *Madhesis* protesters were gunned

downed by the police which flared-up the movement. The Maoists who were the first ones to characterize the exploitation of *Madheshis* as internal colonization could not politically reap the benefit of the movement because they were a part of the alliance which made the interim constitution which MJF and *Madheshis* despised (ACHR 2009). The movement forced the state to relent and amend the interim constitution.

The primary issue underlying the Madhes movement was the re-definition of Nepali nationalism, which has rested on pillars like one language (Nepali) and one dress (daurasaluwar). While a hill person - irrespective of nationality in the case of Nepali speakers from Indian Himalayas - is considered Nepali, Madhesi citizens have long been treated as the fifth column because of their geographical, cultural, linguistic and kinship ties with people across the border in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This has manifested itself in various forms - from deprivation of opportunities to insinuations about their 'patriotism' and prejudiced comments about dress, language and colour. It is in this regard that a distinction can be made between the different socio-political movements that engulf the country. The quest for representation is common to all of them, but there are subtle differences as well. The Janajati movement is a fight to end the cultural oppression of the Nepali speaking, Hindu, upper castes; the Dalit movement is against the oppressive caste structure and challenges the hierarchy inherent in it; the women's movement is a battle against patriarchy. The Madhes movement challenges the very basis of old Nepali nationalism and thus is considered politically the most dangerous and subversive. Kathmandu has been forced to change its assumptions about Madhesis 'as Indians' and share power, but issues of who is a Nepali continues to lie at the heart of contemporary debates. (ACHR 2009)

MJF led *Madheshi* People's Movement a powerful event. According to Hari Bansha Jha it was the Madheshi People's Movement that "forced the then government led by G.P. Koirala to amend the Interim Constitution 2007 twice within a very short period time to address such issues as federalism, proportional representation (PR) based on population size and increasing the number of seats from 43 per cent to 49 per cent in Terai constituencies" (Jha 2009).

1.6.1 *Madheshi* Jana Adhikar Forum (MJF)

Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum (henceforth MJF) a *Madheshi* organization sometimes worked with MRM and at other times competed with MRMM to

recruit Madheshis in their respective organizations was established in 1997 as an organization to discuss and promote *Madhesi* issues. Being a grass-root organization it was able to penetrate deep into rural areas of Tarai disseminating information, raising awareness about *Madhesi* issues, publishing several research papers and books and holding discussion with *Madhesi* intellectuals from various fields and party. They also organized seminars and training programs to promote *Madhesi* issues. MJF also created activists across Tarai whose ideology was pure *Madhesi* nationalism and they played an important role disseminating the message of *Madhesi* nationalism.

MJF sees internal colonization, racial discrimination against *Madheshis* and regional discrimination against Tarai as the main causes of *Madhesi* grievances. To address *Madhesi* grievances MJF have demanded a secular federal democratic Nepal with single *Madhesh* province made out of all the districts of Tarai, inclusions of *Macheshis* in all state organs, proportional electoral system, citizenship certificate to all Madheshis and investment in Tarai with the major portion of the tax collected there(International Crisis Group 2007: 9). They have also demanded the use of mother tongues of *Madheshis* in parliament and government offices.

A split occurred in MJF in September 2007 as it announced that it expelled the former Vice-Chairman Kishor Kumar Biswas and three other leaders from the party. MJF stated that it took action against them for their anarchic activities, for being “irresponsible”, “indisciplined” and being “active in groupism within the party” (kantipuronline 2007). The expelled MJF members including Bhagyanath Gupta and Kishor Kumar Bishwash had opposed the 22-

point deal with the government, demanding fully proportional election system and declaration of republic before the election. They had also disagreed with Yadav's recognition of Nepali as the national language through the 22-point deal, and demanded that both Nepali and Hindi be declared national languages (Nepalnews 2007). The expelled leaders formed a party of their own called Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Madhesh and Bhagyanath Gupta became the party's chairman. The party was one of the last parties to be registered with the Election Commission of Nepal ahead of 2008 Constituent Assembly election. Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Madhesh lost its morale when in Constituent Assembly Election (2008) MJF became the fourth largest party in Nepal and the largest political party from Tarai region.

1.7 Exclusion and discrimination

The rise of different militant ethnic armed groups is also contributing in the radicalization of *Madhesi* identity. There are 109 armed groups in Tarai and most them have ethnic causes to pick up arms (Russell Lee 2009). Due these groups and owing to the counter insurgency move made by security forces the security situation in Tarai has become explosive. The reason for such a large scale ethnic turmoil in Tarai could be because many *Madhesis* “feel that the entire Madhesh region and its inhabitants do not practically exist in Nepal's consciousness and certainly in the consciousness of much of the outside world” and “they face serious humanitarian problem i.e. of their true identity in their own native land” (Shah 2006:1). Anthropologist Rajendra Pradhan (2002) also wrote:

The Madhesi have equal, if not more cause for grievance with the state and the ruling groups. As with the hill ethnic groups, their languages and cultures are

devalued and they have limited access to the economic and political resources at the centre. However, unlike the hill ethnic communities, their very loyalty to the country and even their nationality is suspect among the hill-centric establishment as well as among Pahadi population in general.(Pradhan 2002,17)

Lawoti (2001) reported a very low level of *Madheshi* people (11.2%) in the integrated index of governance with none in culture, academic and professional leadership. Considering more than one in three Nepalese is a *Madheshi*, they are under-represented in power. During 2007 a *Madheshi* campaigners had said that there were not a single *Madheshi* employed “at the Royal Palace; that only one of the 75 district chiefs is a *Madheshi*; and there are very few in the army” (Haviland 2007). *Madheshis* despite being one third of Nepal’s population had a very little presence in judiciary, civil service and military and their employment rate in private and multinational organizations is very low as well(Shah 2006:11-12). *Madheshis* according to Shree Govind Shah (2006) face economic exclusion which means unemployment, income, economic opportunity, social and support services such as health and drinking water and basic infrastructure. There is positive relation Layachi (2001) stated between social exclusion and economic exclusion; illiterate and poor individuals are even more excluded because their low ability to read and write prevents their adaptation, professional conversion and their social mobility and in case of *Madheshis* this proved dangerously true.

Even media that is said to be the fourth organ of the state seems to have shown prejudice towards the grievances of *Madheshis*. Tara Nath Dahal (2007) wrote the following:

The inability among the Nepalese mass media to understand the diversity prevailing in the country as well as the seriousness of the problems within it led to the 'Hrithik Roshan episode'.When the daily *Chitwan Post* published false news regarding the episode by using words denigrating the Nepalese *Madheshi*

community, it not only had impact on Nepal-India relations but also led to the spreading of ill will within the country between Madhesi and the hill peoples. Some time ago the daily *Kantipur* was burnt continuously for 4-5 days in newsstands in the areas of Janakpur and Birgunj. Youths belonging to Madhesi community burnt the newspaper in protest against *Kantipur's* disregard of news about the movement ongoing at the time vis-à-vis the issue of citizenship certificates for Madhesi. (Dahal 2007:121)

Similarly Dharendra Premarshi (2005) wrote on how the Nepalese media portrays Terai:

Studying the electronic and printing media of the country the materials on Terai is plenty however most of the materials portray Terai as a savage uncivilized society. Victimization of women due to dowry, torture of women in name of witchcraft, story of dacoits, murder, irrationality, communal/caste discrimination triggered violence are the main information the Nepalese media usually presents on Terai. (Premarshi 2005:6; my translation)

However not every one was ignoring the issues of *Madheshis*. Issues of *Madheshi* community were raised by Jha (1993), Lawoti (2001), Shah (2002) Yadav (2003), Gupta (2004) and few other persistent journalists like CK Lal from time to time. *Madheshis* have a very strong case. They are discriminated socially, underrepresented despite being one third of the population. On top of that the growing influence of militant ethnic nationalism and escalation of ethnic separatist armed insurrection makes Terai a fertile ground for civil war. In Terai “Maoists, ex-Maoists, separatists and moderates all see a Nepal polarised between hill and plain” (Pradhan 2006). CK Lal in 2003 had warned that mistreatment of *Madheshis* could make Terai a ground for a “flashpoint of even more ominous proportions than the Maoist war” (Lal 2003). CK Lal (2003) predicted about the conflict in Terai way before the establishment of either JTMM in 2004 or the success of *Madheshi* People’s Movement of 2007 but such voices were ignored. In 2003 he further diagnosed that even CPN Maoist's “revolutionary agenda of forging an inclusive Nepali identity has suddenly receded into the background” (Lal 2003) when dealing with *Madheshis*. Long

back in 1992 Anthropologist Dilli Ram Dahal also warned that some “Terai leaders, particularly those representing the Hindu caste groups in Sadhavana Party, have started a Pahadia Hatao campaign to physically remove the hill peoples from the plains-which might be considered a disturbing trend in national politics” (Dahal 1992:17). He further warned that “The complex pattern of Tarai politics does not end with the tussle between ethnic groups, hill communities and Tarai caste groups, however. Conflicts within castes is emerging rapidly, in close coordination with caste politics of neighbouring Bihar and Uttar Pradesh” (Dahal 1992:18). However these warnings and views were ignored thanks to which Tarai now is in the verge of ethnic violence.

1.8 Violence in Tarai

Between 1996 and 2006 the violence due to armed conflict between erstwhile Maoist insurgents and state security forces affected almost all parts of Nepal including Tarai plains. Unlike in other parts of Nepal however the impact of armed conflict in Tarai led to the rise in ethnic tensions. During conflict especially after 2002 the security forces of Nepal with the support from the government gave arms to various anti Maoist groups in Tarai. Some of these groups were responsible for massacres, disappearance and displacements of hill migrants in the area of Tarai they controlled (Newar 2005). Before 2004 there were also news reports about the clashes between Maoist insurgents and *Madheshi* armed group in Tarai called *Madheshi* Tigers but such clashes intensified after *Madheshi* Maoist leader named Jaya Krishna Goit left the party and formed his own secessionist armed group called JTMM in 2004 (Bista 2005). The scale of violence in Tarai amplified even further after *Madheshi* People’s

Movement 2007. After this movement the scale of ethnic violence escalated and eclipsed other forms of violence in Tarai. One of such violence took place in Gaur town of Rautahat district on March 21, 2007 in which the clashes between Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum (henceforth MJF) activists and Maoist cadres resulted in the death of 27 Maoist cadres according to Poharel (2007) and OHCHR (2007). Some see ethnic reason for the clashes between MJF and Maoists in Gaur:

There may have been a caste component to the clash, for Gaur has sizeable Rajput and Yadav populations. Angry with the Maoists for mobilising lower castes, they used this as an opportunity to assert local dominance. (International Crisis Group 2007: 14)

About eight months after *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 a gruesome communal riots broke out in Kapilbastu district of Tarai following the assassination of Mohit Khan on September 16, 2007. Mohit Khan a local landlord was an influential politician who had armed villagers to resist Maoists insurgents during 10-year-old Nepalese armed conflict (1996-2006). His killing sparked a deadly communal riot in which at least 20 people were killed (BBC 2007). Human rights organization INSEC's report described the scale of the riot:

Eighteen people have been killed till 21 September in the violence that flared up following the killing of Mohit Khan, 60, a resident of Kudarwetawa Birpur VDC-4 and leader of Loktantrik *Madheshi* Morcha on 16 September. But, the details of the deceased are not available yet. About 16 are undergoing treatment at Lumbini Zonal Hospital and Bahadurgunj-based Shivaraj Hospital. About 50 persons are out of contact. Their fate is yet to be known. Billions worth property has been destroyed.

Likewise, about 500 houses have been either vandalised or torched or looted. About 5,000 people have been displaced from those places. Violence and counter-violence, resulted from the communal tension is continuing on the sixth day. Several places of the district are under environment of increasing terror and fear. The fact finding team found that some of the persons were severely tortured before being killed. (Informal Sector Service Center 2007)

Nepali Times newspaper reported that after riots broke out "Over 2,000 Nepali madhesi have fled to Duduniya village of Uttar Pradesh, 3 km from

Krishnanagar, uncertain whether they can ever return home” (Pun 2007). Nepali

Times further reported:

There are at least 1,500 displaced families in Kapilbastu alone, many have fled to the hills of Argakhanchi. Hundreds of people, both madhesis and pahadis are still missing. In Bisanpur alone, more than 61 families out of 126 are missing, according to local Muslim leader Ahmed Abdul. Almost every house has been burnt.(Pun 2007).

Integrated Regional Information Networks reported the following about the riot:

Over 5,000 people have been displaced over the past week in southeastern Nepal due to violence between Pahade and Madhesi ethnic groups, according to a report released on 24 September by the Human Rights Treaty Monitoring Coordination Committee (HRTMCC), a joint forum of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Nepal working in the field of human rights.

The incident that took place in the Madhesi-dominated Kapilvastu District, some 285km southeast of Kathmandu, is one of the worst incidents of ethnic violence so far in the Terai region, according to local rights activists. (IRIN 2007)

Ethnic violence that intensified after *Madhesi* People’s Movement was not limited to Terai regions of Nepal alone where majority of the *Madhesi* community lived. In September 2, 2007 time bombs exploded at three busy areas in the capital of Nepal killing three people and maiming and injuring more than two-dozen others. Nepalnews reported, that “two little known Terai-based outfits have claimed responsibility for the bomb blasts” (nepalnews 2007). Australian Broadcasting Corporation quoting Reuters reported that “The Terai Army, a little-known group of ethnic rebels in the southern plains, as well as the previously unheard of Terai Utthan Sangat, claimed responsibility for the attacks” (The Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2007). BBC also reported that “three little-known new rebel groups from the restive *Madhesi* region of southern Nepal” claimed responsibility for the explosions (Phuyal 2007). The September 2 serial blasts targeted civilians. Underground groups claiming to

represent *Madheshi* cause owned up responsibility for this act of terror. *Madheshi* armed groups exploding bombs in the public areas of Kathmandu could have sparked communal riots in Kathmandu as a retribution for these attacks and could have caused similar chain reactions in Tarai region but this did not happen. Laitin (1995) and Fearon and Laitin (2003) argued that the would-be insurgent groups often hope that their attacks on the state will provoke harsh, indiscriminate retaliation that will increase anger against the state and thus support for their cause. Perhaps that was the aim of these blasts.

1.9 Mushrooming of ethnic armed groups and ethnic militias

There are many *Madheshi* armed groups operating in Tarai region who are involved in assassinations, abductions, explosions, extortions and enforcing *bandh* or closure of cities and districts. *Madheshi* Tigers the armed *Madheshi* group focused mainly in Saptari district of Tarai has been fighting for almost a decade but their influence in *Madheshi* politics is little. On the other hand the formation of ATMM⁵ (erstwhile JTMM⁶) has radicalized ethnic *Madheshi* politics in less than four years (2004-2008). ATMM is an armed *Madheshi* militant group formed in July 2004 after Jai Krishna Goit broke away from the CPN (Maoist). ATMM approve the use of violence and have been responsible for abductions, extortion, physical attacks and murders. “Goit’s faction identifies the Tarai issue as one of colonialism and has demanded independence” (International Crisis Group 2007:11). Goit “refuses to call himself a Nepali citizen and believes that Nepal has no legal claim to Tarai” (International Crisis

⁵ Akhil Tarai Mukti Morcha (All Tarai Liberation Front)

⁶ Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front)

Group 2007: 11). This group is involved in scores of attacks against non-*Madheshi* residents of Terai. Within four years (2004 to 2008) ATMM have evolved from a petty armed group to an insurgent force that runs parallel government in several parts of eastern Terai. Their radical ideas of making Terai an independent nation through armed struggle have undeniably radicalized *Madheshi* identity politics. International Crisis Group (2007) reported that during *Madhesh* People's Movement of 2007 along with NC and UML "both JTMM factions" had "played a major role"(International Crisis Group 2007 :13) in organizing the movement.

Jwala Singh led JTMM was formed after it broke away with Goit led JTMM. Jwala Singh like Goit claims that his group's "main aim is independence" (International Crisis Group 2007:11). Besides ATMM and JTMM there are many *Madheshi* armed groups in Terai claiming to be fighting for *Madheshi* cause but their actions are aggravating communal tension between *Pahadis* and *Madheshis*. Matthew Russell Lee citing Karin Landgren, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Nepal wrote in Inner City Press that "There are 107 armed groups in the Terai region of Nepal, and human rights defenders there feel more at risk now than at the height of the civil war"(Russell Lee 2009). Most of these groups are directly involved in attacks against people from *Pahadhi* community. Ajit Tiwari reported from Terai in 2007 that armed *Madheshi* groups are involved in displacing *pahadhi* communities:

Here in the tarai, the threat of ethnic cleansing is now real. The trouble is, it is difficult to tell who is in charge and who to negotiate with. An extremist pamphlet from the self-styled 'Terai Tiger' group issued two weeks ago gave hill-ethnic civil servants one month to leave the madhes. On Nepali New Year's Day on 14 April the underground JTMM -Jwala also threatened action against hill-ethnic officials who didn't quit, and then the JTMM-Goit in Bara issued a similar threat but gave only a week's deadline. (Tiwari 2007)

According to Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) a project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):

Among the newly displaced, those most at risk are the hill people, also known as Pahades, who have lived in the Terai for generations, according to a new IDP report jointly prepared by OCHA, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC)" (IRIN 2007).

The number of *Madheshi* militant groups in the Terai has been increasing and they are involved in spreading fear among the *Pahadhis*. Among *Madheshi* insurgent groups “the most feared are the Madhesi Tigers, Cobra Group, two factions of JTMM and nine other similar groups who are bent on cleansing the Pahades from the Terai region” (IRIN 2007). Many *Pahadhis* in Tarai are also forming “anti-Madheshi groups” which increases the risk of more “inter-ethnic tension and possible further displacements” (IRIN 2007). Such polarization of communities makes situation more disheartening because a number of social scientists have noted that violence can have powerful effects on the politicization of ethnicity. Violent attacks made along ethnic lines have often caused rapid and extreme ethnic polarization in societies in which ethnicity had not been much politicized (Laitin 1995; Kaufmann 1996; Mueller 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2000). Horowitz (1985) maintains that conflicts along ethnic lines are more likely to turn violent than are conflicts along ideological and other political cleavages. He further warned that because ethnic brethren are understood as metaphorical family members, ethnic conflicts engage intense emotions and a sense of existential threat. Killing then may appear a more a reasonable and justified reaction.

1.10 Tharu revolt

Tharu community of Tarai has been opposing the ordinance that recognizes them as *Madheshis*. On March 2009 they launched Tarai wide agitation programs to revoke the ordinance. They are also opposed to the single Madhesh province in Tarai which is one of the main demands made by three major *Madheshi* parties and non-separatist *Madheshi* insurgent groups. Under the heading *Tharuhat Liberation Army is formed* Nepalnews (2008) reported that “Autonomous Tharuhat National Council has formed Tharuhat Liberation Army in Kailali district in the far-western region”. Their demands are “an autonomous ethnic Tharu province called Tharuhat that encompasses 22 districts in the Tarai” (Republica 2009). The Tharuhat Liberation Army warned:

“If our demand for the declaration of Sovereign Tharu State is not fulfilled by the government more than One Lakh Tharu fighters will begin their struggle”, declared Mr. Laxman Tharu. Mr. Laxman Tharu- a former Maoists leader also made it clear to the incumbent government under the Maoists that unless the sovereign right of the Tharu people is guaranteed over the Jal, Jameen and Jungle (Water, Land and Forest), the Tharu population will be forced to declare yet another revolt. (Telegraph Nepal 2009)

In some parts of western Nepal Tharuhat cadres are running weak but resilient parallel state. On July 16, 2009 under the heading *Tharuhat district honcho caught* Kantipur’s website reported that “Issuing a public notice some two weeks ago, the Tharu body warned people not to pay tax to the government, declaring itself as the only authentic body to collect tax on the district’s natural resources”(Kantipur 2009). Tharu militia and *Madheshi* armed groups who oppose each other’s demand both operate in Tarai region which makes Tarai prone to further ethnic violence.

Chapter II

Statement of the problem

Regional and ethnic identity based challenges are found in many countries across the world. These differences have sometimes led to large scale violence like that in Sri Lanka and at other times had even led to the breakup of a nation like the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The huge uprising of ethnic *Madheshi* community of Tarai region in 2007 signaled that Nepal with its diverse ethnic communities was not immune to theregional and ethnic tensions anymore as it was during the past. The Terai lowlands are home to about half of Nepal's 27 million people, and the residents of the region, known as *Madheshis*⁷ who led the 2007 uprising, had long complained of being marginalized and discriminated by the ruling hill communities. With relatively good infrastructure, fertile land, industrial development and easy access to India across the open border, the Tarai is vital for Nepalese economy but the rising ethnicity based political turmoil in this region is seriously affecting Nepal's politics and economy hence it was urgent to study the emerging dynamics and trajectory of *Madheshi* uprising in terms of what it said about *Madheshi* identity politics and how it relates to the broader social transformation in Nepal.

2.1 Importance of understanding *Madheshi* People's Movement

Nepal is rich in ethnic diversity and the recent wave of ethnic violence that has sporadically erupted in different parts of the country after 2006 makes Nepal a good place to study politicization of ethnicity. The *Madheshi* People's

⁷ Many non-Madhesis (both indigenous ethnic groups and recent migrants from the hills and from India) also live in Tarai.

Movement is one of the major event that escalated and magnified the issue of ethnicity in Nepal. Understanding how *Madheshi* People's Movement evolved, what took place during this movement and what impact it made in different sectors of society would enhance the academic knowledge about *Madheshi* people and the complex issue of ethnicity itself.

2.2 *Madheshi* People's Movement and fear of secession

Federalism was the agenda that was relentlessly carried out by erstwhile rebel The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)⁸ but it was the *Madheshi* People's Movement that forced the powerful government of seven major political parties and Maoist to amend the interim constitution they themselves made and add the provision of federalism in it. Keshab Mainali a *pahadhi* activist residing in Tarai told the researcher that “federalism benefits only *Madheshi* community and not other backward communities of Nepal like *Dalits*, *Janajatis* and women”. He further added:

Once Nepal becomes a federal state then *Madheshis* would force all *pahadhis* to leave Tarai region. Then with the help of *Madheshi* armed groups they would force Tharus and other indigenous groups out of Tarai. After that with the help of India they would do election of referendum and would declare Tarai as an independent country.

Tharu activist from Tarai Dr Laxmi Chaudhary also agrees with the view of Mr Mainali and he told the researcher that “*Madheshis* want Tarai to secede from Nepal with the help of referendum election. He further added that “*Madheshis* want *Tharus*, Muslims, *Dalits* and other indigenous people of Tarai to unite under the *Madheshi* banner so that during referendum all would vote for an independent *Madhesh*”. Anil Jha a prominent *Madheshi* politician however

⁸ The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was previously the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) until it formally unified with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre-Masal) in January 2009, resulting in its full, current name: the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

told the researcher that “federalism that *Madheshis* want is not at all based of ethnicity”. He further explained that *Madheshis* were not planning for ethnicity based division of Nepal:

Madheshis want federalism so that the centralized power of the government could be decentralized. When power is decentralized then people would be able to experience power. They would be directly able to experience the work of provincial ministers they has voted for and if he or she is not doing well for the province then people will vote him out and replace him with someone better. This decentralization of power would strengthen democracy and accelerate the development of Nepal. Federalism would not only develop Nepal but it would also preserve various indigenous language and culture hence this is economically practical as well as morally sound demand. Our definition of *Madheshi* is anyone living in Tarai. For us Tharus, Muslims, Tarai idegenious communities as well as migrants from hills are *Madheshis*.

Sociologist Dr Krishina Bahadur Bhattachan who is also an activist for the rights of indigenous communities of Nepal told the researcher that “if federalism is not given according to ethnicity then civil war will erupt in Nepal”.

He further added:

Ethnic indigenous communities should be given autonomous state within Nepal with the rights of self declaration. If this does not happen then Nepal could disintegrate according to ethnic lines. If federalism in Nepal is not implemented according to ethnicity then such federalism would be useless for indigenous population and it could lead to ethnic conflict. What Nepal should learn from Sri Lanka is that the ethnic Tamil minorities there in the beginning wanted Sri Lanka to be a federal state with an autonomous Tamil state within Sri Lanka. When this Tamil demand was ignored then Tamils started an insurgency for a complete independence. To have an autonomous province or state within Nepal is the right of every indigenous and ethnic communities of Nepal.

There are however people who advocate that devolution of state could lead to the disintegration of a country. Sarah Lyall a London correspondent for the New York Times wrote in International Herald Tribune putting her own view and quoting Guy Lodge that decentralization or devolution is what pushed Scotland toward independence:

The current era in Scottish-English relations began in 1997, when Tony Blair's Labour government addressed the persistent irritant of Scottish nationalism by giving the Scots more power to settle their own affairs. Scotland got its own Parliament, with responsibility over areas like health, social services and education.

Devolution, as this transfer in power is called, was supposed to “kill Scottish nationalism stone dead,” in the saying of the time. But instead, it has only magnified the Scots' differences with the English.

“What you’ve had since devolution is that England and Scotland are starting to drift apart culturally and politically, so they seem like entirely different countries,” said Guy Lodge, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, a left-leaning study group in London. (Lyll 2008)

Sociologist like Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan are of the opinion that not giving provincial /state autonomy to ethnic communities in federal Nepal could lead to secessionist violence. On the other hand senior Public Policy Researcher like Guy Lodge and journalist Sarah Lyall are of the opinion that devolution could “magnify” the ethnic difference and lead to secessionist thinking. *Madheshi* People’s Movement have brought Nepal between these two contradictory thoughts.

2.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research was to describe and understand the causes and impact of two ethnic uprisings in Tarai region of Nepal which in this research is referred to as *Madheshi* People’s Movement of 2007 and 2008. A minor objective of this research was also to diagnose and predict what may happen in future to the drivers of these movements and to the movement itself.

During *Madheshi* People’s Movement of 2007 and 2008 hundreds of thousands of people came out in the streets across Tarai. One of the main objective of this research was to explain how the movement occurred and to find out who these protesters were and why so many of them were out in the streets during these two uprisings risking their very lives when curfews were imposed and when police were firing live bullets at the protesters who defied these curfews and to analyze the role of major organizations and actors involved in this

uprising. This research attempted to know the grievances of these people who were courageous enough to confront the powerful government that was made by an alliance of seven major political parties of Nepal and former rebel Maoists. Since one of the objective of this research was to understand the causes of these two uprising hence the researcher not only had to study the grievances of these people but also had to identify some of the events that contributed in building up these two uprisings.

Another major objective of this research was to identify the impacts made by these two ethnic uprisings. The impacts made by these movements on state, political parties, social relationships between various ethnic communities and the impact it made on the *Madheshi* issues itself were part of this research objective.

The last objective of this research was to construct a hypothesis on what could happen to the drivers of these uprisings and what could happen to the achievements made by these two uprisings.

2.4 Chapter conclusion

Ethnicity/identity based politics “has a tendency to take on life of its own” (Shah 2004:220). The sudden rise of *Madheshi* identity politics according to Sarita Giri is “very much in defense of democracy and *Madheshi* nationalism” (Giri 2007). However she warned that a “correct approach towards” the *Madheshi* ’s aspiration “will keep the country intact and pave way for economic development and sustainable democracy” but a “wrong or biased approach might lead the country towards bloody ethnic conflict”(Giri 2007). Almost fifty percent of Nepal’s population lives in Tarai region which is the economic heartland of Nepal where most of the industries, agricultural land and transit

areas are. After *Madheshi* People's Movement this region faced instability due to the rise of ethnic nationalism and ethnic violence. Research on *Madheshi* People's Movement enhanced the understanding of issues which gave rise to this popular ethnic movement. The research also helped in identifying the impacts these movements made on *Madheshis*, non-*Madheshi* ethnic communities of Tarai and on Nepalese society itself. Conducting research on these two ethnic uprisings improved sociological knowledge on some of the core features of ethnic identity based politics of Madheshis and ethnic identity based movement in general. The finding of this research would be useful for scholars who wish to understand ethnic nationalism based politics.

Chapter III

Literature review

Fearon and Laitin, and Brubaker and Laitin, in their reviews of the literature on ethnicity, emphasized two major approaches to the explanation of ethnic/nationalist conflict in general, which they label as primordialist and social constructivist (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Fearon and Laitin 2000). Furthermore, Brubaker and Laitin, also discussed rational choice, international relations, and game theory approaches which they argued were directly related to the topic of violence. From the reviews of the literature offered by the above authors, one can detect three major propositions, corresponding to the primordialist, social constructivist, and what they summarise as “rational choice approaches”.

3.1.1 Primordialism

The first proposition is that ethnic/nationalist violence and movements towards secession are inevitable in multi-ethnic or multi-identity nations. This proposition comes from primordialist conception of ethnic and national identities, which posits that people are naturally emotionally attached to the ethnic and national groups to which they belong and that this attachment necessarily implies feelings of antagonism towards other groups that sooner or later express themselves through violence, or in plurinational states, in movements towards independence. Of course, this conception is, as Fearon and Laitin point out, a sociologist’s construction, a simplistic perspective found in the public sphere but rarely taken seriously by scholars. Regardless of the descriptive merits it may have, the primordialist approach is inadequate to explain violence and

secessionism, for the number of multi-ethnic nations with ethnic/national conflict and even violence.

3.1.2 Social constructivism

The second proposition is that ethnic/nationalist violence and movements towards secession vary depending on how much antagonism towards other ethnic/national groups characterises an ethnic/national group's identity. This is the proposition that follows from the social constructivist approach that prevails in the social sciences and some of its advocates are Brass (1997), Prunier (1995), Deng (1995), Kapferer (1988), Woodward (1995).

Social constructionists disagree with the primordialist thesis that ethnic/national identities unavoidably prescribe antagonism towards other groups. Instead, they study variation across ethnic/national groups and thus potentially account for observed contrasts in levels of ethnic/nationalist conflict across these groups. Social constructivists however fail to discuss the causal mechanisms linking antagonism towards other groups with conflict. Moreover, the dynamic character of ethnic/national identities leads to the expectation that conflict move hand in hand with ethnic/national discourses that emphasize antagonism and hence it becomes impossible to demonstrate a causal link between the content of these identities and conflict/violence.

Social constructionists emphasize three sets of factors when explaining the level of antagonism towards other ethnic/national groups contained in ethnic/national identities:

Ethnic segregation models predict that levels of ethnic antagonism increase with levels of ethnic segregation (Hechter 1975; Hechter 1978). In

contrast, ethnic competition models predict a sharpening of antagonistic feelings when ethnic segregation breaks down (Hannan 1979). Explanations focused on the role of intra-group competition emphasize that the greater it is, the greater the tendency of competing factions to demonize other ethnic groups (Horowitz 1985; Gagnon 1994–96; Kaufman 1996). Finally, explanations focused on the role of the stability of ethnic/national boundaries advocates that unstable and controversial boundaries provide a favourable context for the construction of ethnic identities that stress antagonism towards other ethnic groups (Deng 1995).

Ethnic identities emphasize the antagonistic element in ethnic relations when the groups constructing these identities have more resources at their disposal than have their more moderate competitors in their own or other ethnic group. Many factors can determine the level of discursive resources available to different groups and thus create information asymmetries that eventually determine the dominant self-understandings among the population (De Figueiredo and Weingast 1999; Fearon and Laitin 1996). Language differentiation between ethnic groups is one of them. If two ethnic groups speak different languages and cannot understand each other's language, those speaking the same language as the population to which their discourse is addressed will have a greater capacity to make their definitions of ethnic identity prevail than will those who do not master this language. The level of ethnic segregation, also determines the different amount of resources available to different groups. Discourse producers have less access to the population of another ethnic or national group when there is a higher degree of ethnic segregation. The level of concentration of the population can also affect the relative discursive resources

of different ethnic or national groups. Members of an ethnic group can better define another ethnic or national group and have a better chance of penetrating the group that they define when this group's population is clustered in large cities than when it is scattered in small villages. In rural areas, ideas are disseminated through personal acquaintance and micro-power dynamics while in cities medias and other modern techniques are used for large-scale indoctrination such as control of the media. Above all the economically advanced ethnic or national groups to have more resources than their less economically advanced counterparts.

The main hypothesis advanced by scholars who focus on the dynamics of ethnic relations is that indiscriminate repression against an ethnic/national group generates more antagonism and violence among the members of the groups that are subjected to this violence than does a judicious and targeted used of public-order measures (Díez Medrano 1995). The former creates the impression that the whole ethnic or national group is targeted, whereas the latter makes clear that it is not the ethnic or national group that is targeted but, rather, particular individuals.

3.1.3 Rational-Choice-Approach

Neither the primordialist nor the social constructivist approaches explains how ethnic/national/identity antagonism is manifested and translated into violence. Explanation of it becomes crucial for an adequate understanding of the causes of ethnic conflict, violence or even secessionism and Scholars in the rational choice tradition stand to accept this challenge. Their approach has consisted in combining the problems of ethnic/national conflict/violence into the

more general themes of violence and exit. Perceived costs and benefits of various courses of action are the causal mechanism that, according to scholars in this tradition, determines the political strategies followed by different ethnic/national groups (Fearon 1995; Hechter 1995). According to these authors, when the problem under examination is violence the utility that individuals try to maximize is their personal security. When the problem under examination is secessionism, the utility on which authors in this tradition have focused is economic well-being. In other words, the main propositions advanced by the rational choice tradition are that members of an ethnic/national group will choose violence only if it is perceived to bring more security than not relying on violence and that members of an ethnic/national group will opt for secession only if it is perceived to yield a better economic situation than remaining a part of the nation in which they find themselves into.

3.2 Concept of ethnicity and ethnicity based identity politics

Ethnicity is the state of being ethnic or belonging to a certain ethnic group (Kellas 1998:6). An ethnic group is defined as “a group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and/or the others as a distinct group, with such recognition based on social or cultural characteristics” (Farley in Cornell 1998:17). Thus, “when a subpopulation of individuals reveals, or is perceived to reveal, shared historical experiences as well as unique organizational, behavioral and cultural characteristics, it exhibits ethnicity” (Aguirre and Turner in Cornell 1998:17). Smith refers to six main attributes to define an *ethnie*, a group sharing the same ethnicity: a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an

association with a specific “homeland”, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (Smith 1991:21).

Since all the above-mentioned attributes of ethnicity give the group its individual characteristics and distinguish it from the others, ethnicity could be considered in a way synonymous to the notion of “identity” or, to set it in a different way, “identity is that sense of ethnic distinctiveness”(Cornell 1998:18). This definition “ethnicity is a highly inclusive group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily through kinship and typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness” (Horowitz in Vuckovic 1997:1) can link identity and ethnicity.

Ethnicity is highly linked to the concept of nationalism, since the latter is based on real or assumed ethnic ties (Cornell 1998:37). However, nationalism has more ideological and political dimensions (Kellas 1998: 5), as “it refers to the expressed desire of a people to establish and maintain a self-governed political entity” (Cornell 1998: 34). When ethnicity becomes nationalist, the result is the emergence of ethno-nationalism, which in turn can prove threatening for the existence of the state and lead to ethnic conflict and disintegration, as in the case of Yugoslavia.

The term “ethnic conflict” is therefore “the result of 'cultural incompatibility' of groups, coupled with a sudden rise in awareness of one's identity vis à vis another ethnic group” (Roessingh 1996:17). In such a conflict, at least one of the groups will define its goals in ethnic terms, i.e. it will claim that its distinct ethnic identity and the lack of the opportunity to preserve, express and develop it, is the reason that its members do not have the same rights,

and cannot realize their interests. It is thus made clear that ethnicity and ethnic identity play an important role in conflicts of that kind, as they can provide a power that is capable of arising passion and nationalistic feelings that thereof are used by elites for pursuing territorial and political power.

Ethnicity is important for people for many reasons. Ethnicity is *politicized* when political alliances are organized along ethnic lines, or when access to political or economic benefits depends on ethnicity. However as CK Lal said “The sociology of identity conflict is much more complex than that of class contestation” (Lal 2008). Studying history of ethnicity one comes to know that Europe was ethnically diverse especially according to linguistic line; Weber (1976) shows this in the instance of France. However during 19th Century the European states launched programs to politicize nationality at war footing through various organs of the state. The result was a success and according to Gellner (1983) the success of nationalist doctrine is now so complete that almost no one questions whether cultural groups and in particular “nations” understood as ethnic groups form the proper basis for political community. However ethnicity was still important for Europe, at least during the communist era when the allocation of political and economic benefits was often formally structured along ethnic lines in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Slezkine 1994; Suny 1993).

After the end of Cold War and disintegration of USSR, processes of democratization began which opened many suppressed issues including linguistic, religious, racial, ethnic and cultural differences. In some nations this sudden new consciousness led to conflict based on ethnicity. The ethnic feelings

which had previously suppressed under the totalitarian non-democratic communist states suddenly found space in new democratic nations hence ethnic cleavages came to the surface, as a threatening force. Many scholars view that the post cold war era was an era based on identities:

...the world was entering a period of ethnic conflict, following the relative stability of the cold war. This could be explained. As large formal structures broke up, and ideology lost its hold, people would revert to more primal identities. Conflict would arise based on these identities. (Vuckovic 1997: 3)

Balkan states of Yugoslavia are example where in modern time the historical animosities between various ethnic groups became a factor for ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing and finally disintegration. It is an example where ethnicity, finally, became “politicized” (Grillo in Roessingh 1996:5) for the exacerbation of nationalism, the manipulation of which was in turn the underling force of the conflict.

3.3 Ethnic problem in global context

Ethnicity based political parties and ethnicity/identity based conflict is not peculiar to developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Many developed countries in Europe and North America are also facing ethnicity based problems and even violence. Below are some of the countries that are facing ethnicity based problems.

3.3.1 Belgium

In Belgium there seems to be conflict between French speaking and Flemish (Dutch speaking) communities. Belgium's Flemish majority feels they have been marginalized since the country was formed in 1830 "when French-speaking aristocrats, merchants and bankers set up Belgium as a unified, monolingual state"(The Wall Street Journal 2008). Since 1830 till today Belgium has not yet been successful in ending the identity/ethnic social conflict.

In 2008 the ethnic polarization in Belgium was such that the Belgium as a country looked at a verge of split between French speaking and Flemish communities. According to Davies (2008) “celebrations of Belgium’s national day have been overshadowed by renewed fears of a permanent split between the country’s French and Dutch speakers” and further writes:

Relations between the inhabitants of Flanders, who speak Dutch, and those of French-speaking Wallonia appear close to irrevocable breakdown and an overhaul of the constitution which would give more power to the regions - in what is already the most federal nation in the European Union - has exacerbated those tensions.

The country's embattled prime minister, Yves Leterme, a Flemish Christian Democrat who struggled for more than 200 days to come up with his contorted five-party coalition government, believes more devolution is crucial if Belgium is to remain a unified country. But the Francophone community, which has fallen behind economically in recent years and receives generous subsidies from the state, believes the federation is already too loose.

Leterme offered his resignation last week for the third time since he was elected last year, but was asked to stay on by the king. A team of advisers, appointed by King Albert II, are now working round the clock to try to resolve the constitutional stalemate between the two communities within the next fortnight. (Davies 2008)

Till today (2008) children in Belgium went to “separate French and Dutch schools” and the “major political parties have split into separate French- and Dutch-speaking versions”. Ethnic identity based “Flemish political parties also want each language-based region to run its own health care, unemployment insurance and even “courts and other functions” (Miller 2008).

3.3.2 Spain

Another European nation that is still facing identity/ethnic-based problems is Spain. The Basque people in the northern central Spain and Southern Western France have different history, culture and language from the majority of Spanish and French people. For more than three decades Basque separatist group known as the ETA (Euskadi Ta Azkatasuna) has waged a violent campaign for

independence for the seven regions in northern Spain and south-west France that Basque separatists claim as their own. Spain has done as much as possible not to alienate Basque minority by giving them rights like “it has its own parliament, police force, controls education and collects its own taxes” (BBC 2007) but “Eta and its hard-line supporters have remained determined to push for full independence” and their violent separatist campaign has led to more “than 800 deaths over the last 30 years” (BBC 2007).

3.3.3 United Kingdom (Irish nationalist movement)

Like Spain Great Britain also faces ethnic/identity based political problems. One of the identity-based problems in UK is the separatist demand made by Roman Catholic Irish people in Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein is a political party in Ireland that was founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905. Sinn Féin in 2008 was the second-largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly, with four ministerial posts (including Deputy First Minister) in the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive, and the fifth-largest party in Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Oireachtas, the parliament of the Republic of Ireland. Its current leader is Gerry Adams. Their core demands were total independence from Britain and unification of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Since mid 1990s however Sinn Fein and their armed wing IRA has changed their stance on total independence:

Gerry Adams, the political leader of the Irish Republican Army, said today that he could agree to a compromise solution of the conflict in Northern Ireland that falls short of the I.R.A.'s ultimate goal of a united Ireland. In perhaps the most conciliatory statement he has made since the I.R.A. began a cease-fire two months ago, Mr. Adams said that as president of Sinn Fein, the I.R.A.'s political wing, he still wanted a "unitary state," combining the North, a Protestant-dominated British province, with the Irish Republic, which is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic.

Asked in an Ulster Television interview if he was "prepared to accept a settlement that is something other than a united Ireland," however, he said: "Yes. I'm prepared to compromise. I'd like to see a united Ireland. I am an Irish Republican and make no apologies for that." (Clarity 1994)

Sinn Fein's armed wing Irish Republican Army (IRA) or The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) is a separatist Irish republican paramilitary organisation that, sought to separate Northern Ireland from United Kingdom and unify Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. Since its emergence in 1972 the organisation has launched a violent campaign against Great Britain. On July 28, 2005 however the IRA Army Council announced an end to its armed campaign, stating that it would work to achieve its aims using purely political and democratic programs through exclusively peaceful means:

On 28 July 2005, the IRA said it had formally ordered an end to the armed campaign from 4pm that day.

Significantly, it was the first time in decades that a republican, former IRA prisoner Seanna Walsh, had been put before a camera to read a statement. His choice was no mistake: he had been the cellmate of Bobby Sands, the first of the IRA hunger strikers to die.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said it was a "step of unparalleled magnitude". The view of unionists was muted. Many said it would take time to be convinced. (BBC 2005)

The end of violent campaign by IRA caused a split in it and the splinter group called Real IRA emerged. According to BBC (2001) the group called Real IRA "was born out of a split in the mainstream Provisional IRA in October 1997, when the IRA's so-called quartermaster-general resigned over Sinn Fein's direction in the peace process" (BBC 2001). BBC (2001) further reported the following:

The Real IRA carried out the worst single atrocity of over 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland when it bombed the County Tyrone town of Omagh, killing 29 people, in August 1998.

Over the past 16 months, more than 27 explosions, booby traps, shootings and arms finds in Northern Ireland and six attacks in London have been attributed to the Real IRA. (BBC 2001)

The identity based conflict between Irish and English is not yet over in UK. According to BBC “The Ealing car bomb blast was the most recent attack blamed on this group, and the explosion in Birmingham will again raise fears that the Real IRA is starting a new phase in its campaign of violence” (BBC 2001).

3.3.4 United Kingdom (Scottish nationalism)

Another identity-based movement that is taking place in United Kingdom is that of Scottish nationalists who want Scotland to be an independent nation. Some groups advocating for the independence of Scotland from Britain have dedicated themselves to violence. According to The New York Times (1983) a letter bomb addressed to Employment Secretary Thomas King at the House of Commons in London was diffused by the police and “The Scottish National Liberation Army, in a letter to a news outlet, took responsibility”(The New York Times 1983) for sending the letter bomb. Majority of Scottish nationalists are however against violence. Many want independence from UK in a peaceful and constitutional manner and “proposed referendum on Scottish independence has been scheduled for 2010 on St Andrew’s Day, one of the most symbolic dates in the nationalist calendar” (Gordon 2008). Majority of Scottish unlike Irish are not Catholic but Protestants just like majority of English people however their separate sense of ethnic identity has pushed them for independence from UK. Darnton (1995) further wrote about this issue in The New York Times:

Michael Payne, a guide who knows just where to sink the hook to land a trout in a lake in the Highlands, peered off into the early morning Scottish mist while he pondered the question of independence from England. Then he made

his pronouncement: "We've got all the resources up here, oil, gas, salmon, whisky. England takes from us and doesn't give us anything back. We'd be better off without them."

Mr. Payne is not alone. In the last few years sentiment for independence for Scotland has grown by leaps and bounds, after rising in the mid-1970's and then tapering off in the 1980's.

It can be seen in public opinion polls, which show nearly one-third of Scotland's 5.1 million people backing independence and two-thirds saying they regard themselves as Scottish rather than British. Both figures are up from a decade ago. (Darnton 1995)

The Scottish nationalism is a unique case in which despite sharing similar Protestants religious beliefs with English Protestants still the Scottish nationalists want independence from England because of ethnic nationalism. Scottish nationalism shows how ethnic nationalism cannot be weakened even by common religious beliefs.

3.3.5 Canada

Québec province is the largest province of Canada. Québec is located in the eastern part of Canada and extends north from the United States border to Hudson Strait and east from the shores of Hudson Bay to the region of Labrador. Québec is unique among the Canadian provinces as the vast majority of its population is of French descent and speaks French as a first language. The population with French descent and who speak French language have demanded greater autonomy in the past and their demands have been fulfilled but some group have openly advocated for independence. There have been both non-violent political organizations as well as armed separatist movements in Quebec. FLQ or Front de Liberation du Quebec is one of the armed group fighting for the independence of Quebec from Canada. According to BBC (1970) "Quebec's Labour and Immigration Minister, Pierre Laporte" was "kidnapped" by "Front de

Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), whose goal” was “independence for French Quebec from Canada”(BBC 1970). The identity-based violence in Canada shocked the world when Minister “Laporte was murdered by the Chénier cell of the FLQ during the October crisis”(Belanger 2000).

3.3.6 Rwanda

The ethnic animosity between Hutu majority and Tutsi minority led to “...the worst genocide since the Nazis killed 6 million Jews in World War II” (CNN 1998). Genocide in Rwanda was sparked by the death of Juvenal Habyarimana the Rwandan president on 6 April 1994 when his plane was shot down. Juvenal Habyarimana was a from Hutu ethnic community. The news of his death triggered a campaign of ethnic/communal violence that spread throughout the country.

Between April and June 1994, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed in the space of 100 days. Most of the dead were Tutsis - and most of those who perpetrated the violence were Hutus. (BBC 2004)

The Hutus “killed at least 800,000 in 100 days, aided by ordinary men and women who were somehow convinced this was their "umuganda", their work and civic duty” (Bradshaw 2004).

Majority Hutus and minority Tutsis have a very little difference “they speak the same language, inhabit the same areas and follow the same traditions” (BBC 2004). The arrival of Belgians sowed the seed of division because the “Belgians considered the Tutsis as superior to the Hutus” (BBC 2004). When Rwanda gained independence in 1962 and after that the Hutus came to power and soon “the Tutsis were portrayed as the scapegoats for every crisis” (BBC 2004).

3.3.7 Middle East (Kurdish ethnic nationalism)

There are roughly “the 20 million or so Kurds in the various countries” (Washington Post 1999) that Kurds call Kurdistan, a region covering eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, western Iran, and parts of Syria and Armenia. Ethnic Kurds formed The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the late 1970s and launched an armed struggle against the Turkish state in 1984. PKK demand was an independent Kurdish state within Turkey for ethnic Kurds. “Since then, more than 37,000 people have died”(Toole 2007). Middle Eastern countries with Kurdish minorities, sees Kurdish nationalism as a threat to its national integrity. This fear is particularly acute in Turkey because "Kurds are the largest ethnic group (10-12 million) in Turkey's population of 63 million"(Ergil 1999).

PKK's prime targets were Turkish regime's security forces, local Turkish bureaucrats, and villagers who oppose the organization in Turkey. The group conducted attacks on Turkish diplomatic and commercial facilities in dozens of Western European cities in 1993 and 1995. In an attempt to hurt Turkey's thriving tourist industry, PKK bombed tourist sites and hotels and kidnapped foreign tourists in the early 1990s. Turkish authorities have confirmed or suspect that the group is responsible for dozens of bombings that occurred throughout 2005 in western Turkey, predominantly in Istanbul and resort areas on the western coast where foreign tourists, among others, were killed.

In the “1990s, the organisation rolled back on its demands for an independent Kurdish state, calling instead for more autonomy for the Kurds” (Toole 2007). Kurdish ethnic insurgents in Turkey are also believed to be helping Kurdish insurgency in northern Iraq and Western Iran:

And the last few years have also seen the rise of a sister organisation - Pejak - which has carried out attacks against Iran. Turkey believes that the PKK currently has several thousand fighters based in the Candil mountains of northern Iraq; an area which is also said to be a base for Pejak. (Toole 2007)

3.3.8 Pakistan (Balochistan secessionist movement)

“Balochistan is the largest of Pakistan’s four provinces. Some 347,190 square kilometres in size, it covers 43 per cent of its land area but has only around 6 per cent of its population”(International Crisis Group 2006).The ethnic make-up of Baluchistan “according to last official estimates, is 54.7 per cent Baloch, 29.0 per cent Pashtun” (International Crisis Group 2006:2). Baluchistan borders Afghanistan and Iran making it a region that is of strategic importance.

The ethnicity based Baluch insurrections are reported from many parts of Pakistan. According to Reuters (2008) “Forty-three people were killed in clashes between security forces and militants in a part of Pakistan's southwestern province of Baluchistan where nationalist insurgents have been active”(Reuters 2008). The migrants from Baluchistan have voiced their separatist views even in non-Baluchi areas:

KARACHI: Graffiti signed off as BLA has surfaced on the walls of the city. The Balochistan Liberation Army is an entity that goes by BLA. In some Baloch-dominated areas, the spray-painted message had an oddly poetic separatist agenda: ‘Islam hamara mazhab, Baloch hamari qaum, Balochistan hamara watan, azadi hamari manzil’ [Islam is our religion, Baloch is our nationality, Balochistan is our nation and freedom is our destiny]. Another one said: ‘Hamain Pakistan nahi, azad Balochistan chahiyea. Yahudi jamoria Pakistan namanzoor’ [We want an independent Balochistan, not Pakistan. A democratic Jewish Pakistan is unacceptable]. (Khan 2008)

Intense struggle for self-determination and even independence have been fuelling this region. Despite being rich in natural resources this region remains economically marginalized. According to Fulcher (2006) “It is the poorest province in Pakistan”. The Baluch have a long history of struggle against impositions by the Pakistani state. Their history predates the formation of

Pakistan. The “Baluch lay claim to a history reaching back 2,000 years” (Fulcher 2006).

The groupings that make up the current Baluch national movement emerged gradually after the 1973-77 conflict there between Pakistan's security forces and Baluch ethnic insurgents. The Baluchistan Liberation Army is an insurgent group that was formed in the early 1980's. Khair Bux Marri of the Marri tribe heads it. It has taken responsibility for most of the attacks against the Pakistan military. The Baluchistan Liberation Army wants the creation of a Greater Baluchistan, including the Baluch territories in Iran and Afghanistan. The Baluch National Party is an amalgam of intellectuals that focus on winning political support for Baluch cause. It calls for extensive provincial autonomy, restraining the central government to defense, foreign affairs, currency and communications.

3.3.9 Sri Lanka (Ethnicity based civil war)

The ethnic difference between Sinhalese majority and minority Tamils in Sri Lanka have often in the past led to communal riots. The relationship between these two communities aggravated after Sri Lanka gained independence. Sinhalese nationalist Solomon Bandaranaike was elected in 1956. The same year Sinhala the language of Sinhalese majority was made sole official language. Tamil parliamentarians protested against these new laws but Sinhalese retaliated in which “More than 100 Tamils” according to BBC (2008) were “killed in widespread violence”. Another “Anti Tamil riots” took place in 1958 in which “more than 200 people” died and “thousands of Tamils” were “displaced” (BBC 2008). In 1972 Ceylon was renamed as Sri Lanka and Buddhism was declared as

the official/state religion and this further alienated Tamil minority because most of them were Hindus, Christians and Muslims.

In 1976 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was formed. The conflict between Sinhalese majority and minority Tamils reached a new height when 13 soldiers were killed in LTTE ambush in 1983. This sparked “anti-Tamil riots leading to the deaths of an estimated several hundred Tamils” (BBC 2008). The armed conflict between Sri Lankan military and Tamil separatist-LTTE have “killed more than 60,000 people, damaged the economy and harmed tourism in one of South Asia's potentially prosperous societies”(BBC 2008).

3.3.10 India (Maharashtra nationalism)

The *Maharashtra Navnirman Sena* (henceforth MNS) the English translation of which is *Maharashtra Reconstruction Army* is a regional political party operating in Maharashtra, India. It was founded on March 9, 2006 in Mumbai. Its president and founder is Raj Thackeray. This party in 2008 launched campaign against North Indians in general, and those from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in particular. MNS is a breakaway party of the Shiv Sena, which in 1966 launched similar regional chauvinist campaign against South Indians, and in early to mid 1990s they were against Muslims.

The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena leader accused migrants of swamping Maharashtra, India's most industrialised state, in search of jobs. Following Raj Thackeray's statement, “his supporters attacked north Indian migrants in Mumbai and damaged property associated with them” (BBC 2008). MNS cadres went on a rampage in which “Taxi drivers from north India were pulled from their cabs and beaten” (Blakely, 2008) and “forced many migrants to leave their

neighbourhoods” (BBC 2008). Raj Thackeray however defended his stance by saying that the “violence . . . was a spontaneous reaction of local Maharashtrians who, for a long time, have been sick and tired of these migrants who come here and ruin the local culture” (Blakely 2008)

3.3.11 India (North East’s ethnicity based insurgencies)

North East India consists of seven Indian states that are famously called “Seven Sisters”. Seven Sisters' states are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. The North East has more than 2000 km of international border with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and is linked to the rest of India only by a narrow 20 km wide corridor of land. This region is rich in ethnic and linguistic diversity with each state having its own distinct cultures and traditions.

North East India is the home for over 166 separate tribes speaking a wide range of languages. Separatists in Assam, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland not only fought against Indian security forces but the growth of conflicting demands for independent homelands between various ethnic groups in the region have also resulted in much violence between themselves as well. Hazarika (1995) wrote in The New York Times 1995 that “As reason for their struggles, many insurgents cite their Christian heritage and separate ethnic identities, which make them closer to Southeast Asia than the Hindus and Muslims of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh”(Hazarika 1995). The violence between the various ethnic armed outfits of the region has often affected life of ordinary non-combatant citizens. There have also in the past been attacks by armed ethnic rebels against the settlers from outside the region. Ethnic insurgent group in this region has

multiplied in last two decades. According to some news report there “are around 30 separatist groups fighting for the causes of various ethnic groups in north-east India” (BBC 2004).

Indian North-East region is not very far from Nepal. West Bengal state of India is the only state that separates Nepal from the rest of North-East India. In West Bengal the movement for separate Gorkhaland state within India has been going on which could also be an influence of the ethnic identity based politics and even insurrection in Indian North-East. Many West Bengalis have written in blogs like *madhesi.wordpress.com* and *NuisanceofGorkhaland.com* that the West Bengal should support *Madheshis* in areas of Tarai adjoining West Bengal so as to counter the agitation launched by Nepali speaking Gorkhaland protesters in northern West Bengal which the bloggers believe are supported by the government of Nepal. The Gorkhaland supporters however claimed that their demands are not secession from India but to have a new state within federal structure of India. West Bengali bloggers often reiterate in their writings that “Madheshis want a state within federal Nepal and so do Gorkhaland protesters...Bengalis should support Madesis just to make Nepalese feel how it feels to watch a home land being divided even if it is not secession” (Babu 2008). Mr Ram Sahaya Yadhav, General Secretary of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal told the researcher in an interview that *Madheshis* are a large community in Nepal whose protest are huge and needs no support from any foreign elements. He further added that Forum (MJF) was fighting for an inclusive Nepal that would make Nepal strong from within.

3.3.12 India (Caste conflict in Bihar state)

Caste based violence between so-called high caste and so-called low caste have caused many deaths in north Indian state of Bihar. The ultra left armed groups have a strong presence in this state and have often targeted people of high caste and have recruits who are from low caste. High caste groups formed many vigilante groups to counter the armed leftist groups. In 1994 the caste war took a momentum when high caste private armies like Savarna Liberation Army, Brahmashri Sena, Kuer Sena, Kisan Morcha and Ganga Sena merged and formed Ranvir Sena in Bhojpur district. Since then ultra leftwing groups and high caste vigilante groups or private armies as they are called in Indian press have committed dozens of caste related violence including massacres. Devraj (2000) wrote in Asia Times that the “Ranvir Sena has massacred over 500 lower caste peasants”. Ranvir Sena chief Brahmeshwar Singh has master minded “36 massacres that left at least 400 persons dead over the past six years, including 63 Dalits in a single strike at Lakshmanpur-Bathe in 1997” (Chaudhuri 2002) as according to Frontline magazine. Ranvir Sena chief Brahmeshwar Singh after his arrest said “I don’t have any remorse over the massacres carried out by the Ranvir Sena in its fight against naxalite groups such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, or the CPI (ML) Liberation, the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and the People's War (P.W.) and their supporters, particularly among the landless poor and the backward Dalit community” (Chaudhuri 2002). “Pregnant women and children appear to be the Ranvir Sena's special targets, for it apparently views attacks on them as an easy means to check the increase in the Dalit population”(Chaudhuri 2002)

which clearly indicates that this group is dedicated to commit genocide of Dalits (so called low caste).

Just like Ranvir Sena the ultra leftist armed groups in Bihar state had also carried out several massacres of the high caste people. In 12 February 1992 according to Asian Centre for Human Rights “36 people of the upper-castes were killed by the Maoists Communist Centre”(ACHR 2006).The revenge killing (including massacre) between these two armed caste groups have been going on because of which many civilians have fallen prey to them. Besides these two groups there are many other private armies of different ethnic groups in Bihar:

Bhumihars formed the Brahmishi Sena. By the mid-1980s, the Brahmishi Sena became a formidable force with over 700 members. It became inactive after the Ranvir Sena was formed in 1994. In 1984, the Yadavs organised their own caste army, the Lorik Sena, to fight both the leftist groups and the upper caste Senas. The Lorik Sena was active in Nalanda, Vaishali, Patna and Jehanabad districts of Bihar. It allegedly committed the ghastly carnage in Hilasha village of Nalanda district on November 14, 1995. Fifteen Dalits, who were said to be supporters of the CPI (M-L) Liberation, were killed in the incident.

Members of the Kurmi caste formed the Bhoomi Sena. It was also active in Patna, Nalanda and Jehanabad districts as well as in the Nawada and Barh areas. The gruesome incident at Pipra in February 1980 and the massacre at Lahsuna in Aurangabad district in 1982 were committed by the Bhoomi Sena. The Sunlight Sena was raised by Rajput landowners in Aurangabad and Palamau districts. Along with the Kisan Security Force of the Yadavs and the Kurmis, the Sunlight Sena was responsible for the 1992 carnage at Tishora. The victims of the Tishora massacre were naxalite supporters. The Savarna Liberation Force, led by Ramadhar Singh Diamond, is another army formed by landlords to take on the leftist groups in central Bihar.

The Azad Sena was formed by Brahmins, mostly from the Rohtas and Bhojpur areas. The Shrikrishna Sena is also a Yadav organisation. Anand Mohan Singh organised the Samajwadi Krantikari Sena to fight against those who supported reservation for the backward castes. His rival Pappu Yadav formed the Mandal Sena. The Kuer Sena, formed by the Rajputs, is active in Bhojpur and Rohtas districts. The Ganga Sena, another Rajput organisation, was founded in 1990 to fight the naxalite groups in the northern region of Bhojpur, particularly in the area around the Ganga ghats. (Chaudhuri 2002)

Mushrooming of caste basted private armies and weak state machinery makes a Bihar a perfect ground for ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing and even

genocide. Districts of central eastern Tarai which faced deepest brunt of *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008 are the districts that border Bihar. Keshab Mainali the chair person of Chure Bhawar Rastriya Ekta Party (Chure Bhawar National Unity Party) told the researcher in interview "the uprisings in Tarai were huge because Biharis (people from Bihar) participated in it". Dr Laxmi Chaudhary advisor of Nepal Democratic Socialist Party told the researcher that "most the protesters in *Madheshi* uprising were from Bihar". Mr Ram Sahaya Yadhav, General Secretary of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal however rubbishes such claims. He told researcher the following:

The revolt in *Madhesh* was a historic moment. People from villages across Tarai came to main cities like Birgunj to participate in this movement. In Birgunj there were about two hundred thousand protesters in the streets despite the curfew. Police were baton charging, throwing tear gas and shooting protesters with rubber and live bullets. Many people were killed and injured. Tarai-Madhes at that time looked like a warzone and in such a time why should people from Bihar come to Tarai. It was nether a festival not a wedding party, people were killed and in such a situation why should Bihar's people come to Tarai-Madesh and participate in protest that was the target of police.

Similarly Mr Ramchandra Pokharel, Chief Secretary of Nepali Congress Party told the researcher in an interview that "people of Tarai revolted during *Madheshi* People's Movement and it would be an extremely insensitive to call it as a handiwork of foreign countries".

3.4 Chapter conclusion

Scholarly literatures on ethnic identity politics written by social scientists, new report on ethnicity based politics and ethnic conflict have all shown that ethnicity is a very sensitive issue which if not addressed properly could lead to unprecedented scale of violence like that in Rwanda and Sri Lanaka or could even lead to the very disintegration of a nation like the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. Scholarly books, reports and journals on the rise of Scottish

nationalism and social mistrust between French speaking and Flemish or Dutch speaking communities in Belgium have on the hand shown that the ethnic antagonism can lead to the demand for the secession of a region from a nation without the use of violence. Various literatures on the ethnic nationalism in Nepal and *Madheshi* conflict had predicted much before *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 that the cocktail for ethnic conflict in Nepal especially in Tarai region was being prepared due to the rise of ethnic armed groups there and also due to the indifference shown by the government of Nepal towards the grievances of *Madheshis*.

Chapter IV

Research Methods

Following the study of various literature covering the most influential and recent research in the field of identity politics in society and the evolution process of *Madheshi* identity politics, the main research question was divided into sub-question, which directed the research process towards what Cohen (2003) described as 'operationalisation'. The refinement of the general research aim to more answerable question allowed researcher in determining the process and tools that was to be used to continue further in the research process. This section will present the methods used for data collection and analysis, assessment of trustworthiness of the methods and ethical considerations in this study.

4.1 Research design

The researcher used explanatory, descriptive and exploratory design for this research. Studying the causes of *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008 required researcher to explain and describe the causes that led to it but the researcher was also required to make further investigation and explore if other potential factors/causes also existed or not. While studying the impact of *Madheshi* People's Movement it required the researcher to describe and explain the impact this movement caused but further investigation to explore other hidden impacts were not missed and for this purpose exploratory design was chosen.

In order to determine the methodology to be used, one might consider the kind of data required to answer the research questions (Crotty 1998). This study being exploratory in essence and explanatory and descriptive to some extent, hence most of the questions dealt with 'how' and occasionally 'what'. This pattern indicated the need for an understanding beyond what was apparent and definitive, hence called for a qualitative research design. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that research which required an examination of real-life situations by capturing perception of the participants to gain a holistic view of the context calls for a qualitative design. They also argued that the researcher becomes the main instrument of measurement interpreting reality and carrying out analysis, which is mostly in words. This, of course, does not exclude the use of quantitative data. Punch (1998) suggested that increasing interest in combined use of both quantitative approaches has been expressed by Bryman (2001) and Hammersley (1992). The emphasis on qualitative design is made due to its flexible nature, which as Rossman and Rallis (1998) argue, is the hallmark of this approach. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) supported this claim by characterizing the approach as a naturalistic study of social phenomena that builds on multiple methods of investigation. Therefore, the nature and context of this inquiry required a qualitative process or might be obtained deliberately through the use of mixed methods.

4.2 Informant selection criteria

Miles and Huberman (1984) view sampling as the process by which data collection is bound. They argue that samples in qualitative research can change, are more often purposive than random, and are fewer compared to quantitative

research. They also describe it as an investigative process of iterations in comparing, replicating and classifying objects of the research, reflecting the flexible nature of qualitative methods.

The sampling strategy used in this study began with what Laws (2003) called 'judgement' or purposive sampling followed by 'snowball' sampling. A few respondents were chosen, taking in account the differences between them to achieve a wide representation. These respondents then referred the researcher to other respondents who shared similar characteristics with them. Various parts of Tarai where majority of the *Madheshi* community lived and hilly areas where majority of the *Non-Madheshis* lived were chosen for questionnaire survey, FGD (Focus Group Discussion) and interview in this study.

4.3 Nature and sources of data

This study required both qualitative and quantitative data. These data were further classified into primary and secondary data.

According to Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, a qualitative data are "generally associated with interpretive epistemology, trends to be used to refer to forms of data data collection and analysis which rely on understanding , with emphasis on meaning" (Marshall 1998:543). Qualitative data includes almost any information that can be captured and that are not numerical in nature. A study based upon a qualitative process of inquiry has the goal of understanding a social or human problem from multiple perspectives. Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting and involves a process of building a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon of interest. Focus Group Discussions, semi-

structured interview and observations were the methods used for the collection of qualitative data.

According to Oxford Dictionary of Sociology a quantitative data “generally associated with positivist epistemology, is usually referring to collection and analysis of numerical data” (Marshall 1998:543). Quantitative data contains information that can be counted / measured and expressed numerically. Quantitative data in this research were used to support the qualitative data. Questionnaire survey and study of secondary data were used for the collection quantitative data in this research.

The information that is collected first hand by researcher is called primary data. They are collected and used by the researcher for the first time. It is not a published data, it is problem specific data collected by the researcher, first time. When primary data is published by researcher, it becomes the secondary data for everybody, other than the researcher.

The data that is not collected first hand by the researcher but by some other researcher is called secondary data. Secondary data are those data, which are already published. It may be useful for many other people than the researcher who has published it. There are various sources of secondary data collection.

In this research primary data were collected by the researcher himself and with the help of other assistant researcher while the secondary data were collected by studying various available literatures that dealt with identity based politics, *Madheshi* issues or research methodology techniques.

4.4 Data collection techniques

Following the decision of methodology and participants in the study, the methods to collect the data required to answer the questions were considered. Punch (1998) suggested that methods applied in data collection should follow from the research questions and Rossman and Rallis (1998) proposed that the stage that followed required decisions to be made regarding: a) depth and breadth of data, b) prefigured or open-ended, and c) mix of methods. Hence, while considering some degree of representativeness, the research questions required a deeper exploration into the worlds of participants, which could be afforded by using an open-ended structure for qualitative data and using closed-ended for quantitative data, while relying on more than one method. This section presents the methods of data collection used in this study and the process of data gathering that followed.

Among the array of methods available for research (e.g. Punch 1998, Robson 1993, Cohen et al. 2003), the ones selected for this particular study were Focus Group Discussion, key informant semi structured interview ,study of secondary data and observation.

4.4.1 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (henceforth FGD) are group discussions in which people are gathered together to discuss a topic of interest. The discussion is guided by a group leader (called a moderator) who asks questions and tries to help the group have a natural and free conversation with each other.

Focus groups are aimed at encouraging participants to talk with each other, rather than answer questions directly to the moderator. The group

interaction of focus groups is important because it gives researchers some understanding of how the people/respondents are thinking about the topic.

The questions asked of the group are usually focused on one or two main topics, to get a really detailed idea about how the people think about the area of interest. They are also focused because participants of any focus group usually share common characteristics, such as age, sex, educational background, religion, or something directly related to the topic being studied. This encourages the group to speak freely (Dawson and Manderson 1993). Focus groups can find out about people's feelings, attitudes and opinions about a topic of interest. They examine only one or two topics in great detail, in an effort to really understand what people think about a topic of researcher's interest. For this research FGD was a "fairly inexpensive but effective way to get reactions of a small group of people to a focused issue" (Baker 1999:224).

Six FGDs were conducted for this research. Three of the FGDs were conducted in Tarai region and other three were conducted in non-Tarai regions of Nepal.

In Tarai region Banke, Kanchanpur and Morang districts were chosen for FGD. In Banke district 13 respondents from *Madheshi* community took part in FGD. In Morang district 18 respondents who were all hill migrants participated in the FGD. In Kanchanpur district 7 respondents from Tharu community participated in the FGD.

Madheshi respondents who participated in the FGD at Banke district were mostly the ones who had participated in *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2008. Some of them were members of MJF and Nepal Sadbhavana Party. Non

Madheshi respondents who participated in the FGD at Morang district were mostly migrants from the hills but one participant was an internally displaced person who left his property in Saptari district after receiving threat from a *Madheshi* insurgent group called Madheshi Tigers. Tharus respondents who participated in the FGD at Kanchanpur district were youths and had participated in various Tharu agitations that were organized as a reaction against being defined as *Madheshis* by *Madheshi* political parties.

In non-Tarai region of Nepal, Lalitpur and Kathmandu districts were chosen for FGD. In Kathmandu district 13 respondents from Madheshi community took part in FGD. In Lalitpur district 11 *Madheshi* respondents and 20 non- *Madheshi* respondents participated in the FGD.

The researcher first requested community and club leaders for the permission to conduct FGDs in their areas. The researcher suggested that if FGDs were conducted immediately after community meetings or club meetings then it would save researcher's and respondent's time. Most of the FGDs were conducted immediately after community meetings or club meetings hence the researcher did not have to spend his energy and time in gathering people.

4.4.2 Key informant semi-structured interview

An interview is a conversation between two or more people. The questioner is the interviewer and the answerer/respondent is the interviewee. The questions are asked by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee.

Key informant interview has very definite purpose and it involves identifying different members of a community who are especially knowledgeable

about the topic on which the research is being conducted. These special respondents are called "key informants". These key informants are asked question and their answers will be used as data.

The semi structured interview is the type of interview in which the focus of the interview is decided by the researcher .The objective is to understand/identify the respondent's point of view on the decided subject. The interviewer used open-ended questions, among which some recommended by the researcher and some that arose spontaneously during the interview. The researcher tried to build a rapport with the respondent and the interview was like a conversation. Questions were asked when the interviewer felt it was appropriate to ask them. Some were prepared questions while others were questions that occurred to the researcher during the interview. The wordings of questions used in the interviews were not necessarily the same for all respondents.

Semi-structured interview involve the preparation of an interview guide that lists a pre-determined set of questions or issues that are to be explored during an interview. This guide serves as a checklist during the interview and ensures that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people. Yet, there is a great deal of flexibility. The order and the actual working of the questions is not determined in advance. Moreover, within the list of topic or subject areas, the interviewer is free to pursue certain questions in greater depth. The advantage of the interview guide approach is that it makes interviewing of a number of different persons more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting the issues to be taken up in the interview (The World Bank 2009). Logical gaps

in the data collected can be anticipated and closed, while the interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.

Usually the researcher's role was engaged and encouraging but not personally involved. The researcher facilitated the interviewees to talk about their views and experiences in depth but with limited reciprocal engagement or disclosure. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information.

Unlike the questionnaire framework, where detailed questions are formulated ahead of time, semi structured interviewing starts with more general questions or topics. Relevant topics are initially identified and the possible relationship between these topics and the issues such as availability, expense, and effectiveness become the basis for more specific questions which do not need to be prepared in advance.

During the semi-structured interview the researcher worked out a set of questions beforehand. Researcher intended the interview to be conversational. To do so, the researcher changed the order of the questions or the way they were worded and even leave out some questions that appeared to be redundant. The researchers did the best to get the interviewee talk freely and openly while making sure at getting the in-depth information on what researcher was researching on.

During the interview researcher followed the following rules:

The researcher listened, but talked as less as possible so as not to influence interviewee to change what they were going to say as they may use

what researchers say to guess what researchers would like to hear, rather than what researchers needed to hear.

The researcher did the best to make questions short, straightforward and clear, so as to avoid that the interviewee may only remember some part of the question.

The researcher remained neutral during the research and did not use the word such as 'good' or 'oh dear' or 'excellent' depending on whether the researcher liked the response or not. Instead researcher moved head showing he understood the answer but not showing any emotions about it.

The researcher enjoyed the interview. Sometimes when interview became monotonous due to repetition of the answer the researcher did the best to look as if he was enjoying the interview. The researchers smiled and kept a good eye contact so as to appear interested.

The researcher became silent and nodded encouragingly to the answer of the respondents to motivate respondents to answer whole heartedly.

The researcher took a full record of the interview through the medium of note taking, audio recording and video recording. Note taking allowed the interviewee to (re)consider what had been said while the researcher was writing which in many instances expanded the answer. The researchers also checked up after answers were noted down by re-asking the questions such as: 'What I have written down is... Have I noted that down OK, or do you want to change something?' and these questions reconfirmed the answers of the respondents.

During the period of interview few months were spent in the field and in most cases the interviewees delayed the agreed appointment for at least three

times. In the period spent in Tarai three working days were declared as strikes, which paralyzed transportation as well as other basic facilities. Also, due to political campaign all the political party leaders and cadres whom the researcher interviewed were extremely busy. This resulted in constant rescheduling of meetings due to unprecedented events, which the researcher had no control over. All the interviews were held in a location chosen by the participants. Most of the politicians were interviewed in the party office or parliamentary party office premises during their free periods on weekdays and some respondents were very kind to accommodate the interview during weekends.

The interviews began by introducing myself and the research study to the participants, followed by assuring anonymity to the participants and explaining that they could interrupt me anytime for clarification and finally, requesting permission to record the interview. This was in keeping with what is suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1995). The two pilot interviews, conducted with two *Madheshi construction* contractors working in Kathmandu, helped to improve and rephrase interview questions using the valuable feedback from the participants.

Out of the 19 interviews, 17 were recorded and eight were transcribed. The interviews were not recorded in situations where the interviewee did not permit to do so or when they appeared to become over conscious of the recorder. The transcribed interviews were conducted in English and rests of the interviews were conducted mostly in Nepali, the language of choice for participants. However, during all the interviews notes and quotations were taken during the interview in order to ensure against technical problems or loss of the recorder.

The recordings were listened to several times during the data analysis period, which helped in verifying the notes made during the interviews, making additional notes about the interview and identifying quotable sentences to be used in the findings section.

4.4.3 Non-participant observation

The third method employed in data gathering, was observation of participants, sites and practices. Non-participant observation is a research technique whereby the researcher watches the subjects of his or her study, with their knowledge, but without taking an active part in the situation under scrutiny. This approach is sometimes “criticized on the grounds that the very fact of their being observed may lead people to behave differently, thus invalidating the data obtained” (Gordon 1998).

The kind of technique used was ‘naturalistic’ (Punch 1998), which implies that observations are made as events unfold naturally and the situations are not engineered for the research. He had also argued that the logic behind this is that the concepts and categories emerge later and are not imposed on the data.

Most of the visits made for interviewing respondents from political field, led to opportunities for brief observation of party offices and mood of other cadres of the party especially the *Madheshi* parties. Researcher also visited Banke, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Bardiya, Morang and Jhapa district of Tarai and observed the political environment generated there by two *Madheshi* People’s Movement.

Technology for instance, videotape, taking photographs and audio recording were used to observe events and people. The researcher observed

Madheshis and non- *Madheshis* in different events and constructed conclusions and hypothesis according to it.

4.4.4 Study of secondary data

The researcher studied different secondary data / literatures on Tarai, *Madheshi* movement, identity based political movements, and politicization of identity/ethnicity as required to realize the objective of the research. The secondary data for this research included scholarly books, research reports, articles, newspapers, news of printed and visual media and data (news, article, and reports) obtained through the Internet.

Documentary sources Rossman and Rallis (1998) argued are about unobtrusive way of gathering data and has a chance of portraying the values and beliefs of participants, which are not revealed by other means. Rossman and Rallis (1998) also suggest that these sources may offer data that contradict the data produced by other methods. The assortment of documents (Rossman and Rallis 1998), and can be categorized in numerous categories based on authorship, ownership, access etc (Punch 1998).

Scholarly books, journals, newspaper reports, newspaper articles, research reports and article from reliable websites that dealt with identity based politics, ethnic conflict, *Madheshi* issues, sociological theories and research methodology were studied for this research. Sophie Laws (2003) advocated that documents have to be considered carefully as they reflect views of those who create them. However, the use of documentary sources along with interviews and observation methods also enables triangulation of methods and data as suggested by Denzin (1989), thereby strengthening the validity of research.

4.5 Operational definitions of key concepts

For the purpose of this study a few operational definitions were formulated for conceptual clarity. These are:

An ethnic group: An ethnic group is defined as group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and the others as a distinct group, with such recognition based on social / cultural, linguistic, racial or even regional characteristics.

Communal conflict: Conflict between two or more communities based on their different Identity. The term ethnic conflict is the result of 'cultural incompatibility' of groups, coupled with a sudden rise in awareness of one's identity. In such a conflict, at least one of the groups will define its goals in ethnic terms, i.e. it will claim that its distinct ethnic identity and the lack of the opportunity to preserve, express and develop it, is the reason that its members do not have the same rights, and cannot realize their interests. It is thus made clear that ethnicity and ethnic identity play an important role in conflicts of that kind, as they can provide a power that is capable of arising passion and nationalistic feelings that thereof are used by elites for pursuing territorial and political power.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity is the state of being ethnic or belonging to a certain ethnic group. When a subpopulation of individuals reveals, or is perceived to reveal, shared historical experiences as well as unique organizational, behavioral and cultural characteristics, it exhibits ethnicity.

Identity: Since attributes of ethnicity give the group its individual characteristics and distinguish it from the others, ethnicity could be considered synonymous to the notion of "identity".

Madheshis: *Madheshis* claim that they are the indigenous people of Tarai region of Nepal and not migrants from India. They claim that there were many kingdoms in the region of Tarai in the past some of which are now part of Nepal while others are part of India. Every indigenous community in Tarai are *Madheshis* according to them. They further claim that those people who are the citizens of Nepal and whose mother tongues are Awadhi, Tharu, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Bengali, Rajbansi, Urdu and Hindi are *Madheshis*. Urdu speaking Muslim community of Tarai and Tharus whose mother tongues are Tharu language strongly disagree with this definition and refuse to call themselves as *Madheshis*. *Madheshi* activists claim that they make up around 32 percent of Nepal's population, most of them living in the Nepal's region called Tarai which makes up around 23.1 percent of Nepal's land (Shah 2006:1-2). Some 48.51 percent of country's population live in Tarai (Rimal 2007) where 60 percent of Nepal's agricultural land is located. Tarai contributes two third of Nepal's GDP (International Crisis Group 2007:4) and provides the most important transit areas for import dependent Nepal. Any instability in this region could seriously affect most parts of Nepal.

Regionalism: Regionalism is a political ideology that focuses on the interests of a particular region or group of regions, whether traditional or formal (administrative divisions, country subdivisions, political divisions). Regionalism centers on increasing the region's influence and political power, either through movements for limited form of autonomy (devolution, states' rights, decentralization) or through stronger measures for a greater degree of autonomy (sovereignty, separatism, independence). Regionalists often favor loose

federations or confederations over a unitary state with a strong central government. Proponents of regionalism say that strengthening a region's governing bodies and political powers within a larger country would create efficiencies of scale to the region, promote decentralization, develop a more rational allocation of the region's resources for benefit of the local populations, increase the efficient implementation of local plans, raise competitiveness levels among the regions and ultimately the whole country, and save taxpayers money. In some countries, the development of regionalist politics may be a prelude to further demands for greater autonomy or even full separation, especially when ethnic and cultural disparities are present. This was demonstrated in Basque region of Spain and Scotland region of United Kingdom.

4.6 Data analysis

The data gathered for this study was analyzed following the suggestion of Miles and Huberman (1984). The process began with data reduction, which involves editing, segmenting and summarising the data. In this stage, data was reduced by the process of 'meaning condensation' (Kvale 1996), which entails compressing long statements into shorter ones that represented the main gist of what was said. What followed was the process of coding, which required categorisation of data on the basis of emergent concepts and themes. Punch (1998) suggested that coding is tagging or labelling of chunks of data, which begins by descriptive and low-inference types to higher-inference ones. Simultaneous to coding, the process of memoing was also undertaken, which required identifying relationships and patterns from the data (Punch 1998). These processes required constant interpretation of the verbatim, which meant going

beyond what has been said (Kvale 1996), for which notes taken during the interview were useful. The process of coding, memoing and interpreting took place simultaneously, and as Punch (1998) suggested, iterations were helpful in refining the analysis. This stage was followed by display of data, which helped to draw conclusions by assembling information in an organized manner (Miles and Huberman 1984). The third stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions, which was a complex process of organising and integrating piles of memos into coherent and meaningful presentation of data (Punch 1998). Memos from data collected from all the methods were brought together at this stage and compared with each other for consistencies. Rossman and Rallis (1996) advocated that the process of analysis begins at the same time as the study. Reflection after every two or three interviews led to changes and improvement in how interviews were conducted and the questions that were asked, was a continuous process of preliminary analysis that shaped the study.

4.7 Trustworthiness: truth values and ethics

According to Rossman and Rallis (1996), two interrelated criteria are evaluated to determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research, namely: a) standards of practice. And b) ethics.

This section discussed the standards of practice, which considers the issues of truth value, rigour of the study and applicability in other situations. According to Rossman and Rallis (1996), truth value of research depends on presentation of valid and adequate multiple understanding of reality. They suggested triangulation, which is attempted in this research by employing

multiple methods of data collection and data sources. This is similar internal validity, which determines if the research has studied what it is supposed to.

From an objectivist stance, the results of the study should be replicable if the study is repeated, which Rossman and Rallis (1996) argued is impossible in qualitative research. Instead, they proposed that researchers should assess the point to which an outsider agrees with their suggestions, this study made clear its research aims, used multiple data gathering methods and documented carefully the process of research referred by Erickson (1986) as a natural history of the inquiry.

Rossman and Rallis (1986) contested that the objectivist view of generalisability does not apply to qualitative research. However, agreed that the usefulness of a study across other settings is an important standard. They suggested providing rich descriptions of the research process, which has also been attempted by describing methodological and theoretical orientation of this research. They also urged detailed contextual descriptions, which are presented to some degree in the findings chapter. The richness of contextual descriptions is, however, limited by ethical constraints in order to ensure confidentiality of the sites and participants.

While Busher and Clarke (1990) contended that totally ethical research is impossible to achieve, there is a strong consensus in the research community for ethical considerations in the research process.

This research was carried out under the guidance of Padam Lal Devkota who is the Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University. This research was also carried out under the guidance of the late Dr

Saubhahya Shah who was also Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University.

Approval for this research was obtained from the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Tribhuvan University. Regarding the purpose of the research, it not only arose from personal interest, but also from the aspiration to contribute something meaningful to the ethnic identity based social science theories and ethnic conflict prevention initiatives. On contacting several politicians and academics during the research, it was discovered that there was a serious concern regarding the situation created by politics based on ethnic identity and all sides wanted to assure that they supported inclusion of marginalized communities but not communalization of Nepal. The researcher was encouraged by most interviewees for trying to understand a serious situation and the researcher wished to contribute in whatever way possible in his limited capacity to understand the complexity of the situation and also to reduce the tension between various ethnic communities (especially between *Madheshis* and *Pahadhis*) in Nepal through scientific approach. Kvale (1996) asserted that research should go beyond the value of knowledge sought after and consider improvement of the human situation that is investigated.

Process of data collection: prior to the interviews and observations, informed consent was obtained from all participants explaining the purpose of the study, their right to anonymity and withdrawal from the study at anytime. Although most of the participants did not have a problem with disclosing their identities, some of their responses have been anonymised as per their request for

any unprecedented harm. The data collected is safely stored and cannot be accessed by any other person.

4.8 Distribution of published report

The time constraints of the current research did not allow for member checking of the data collected, which was made more difficult by the fact that most participants did not use e-mails. However, it is researcher's responsibility to represent their responses in ways that does not undermine their status, even though some of them have been made anonymous. Furthermore, after writing all chapters the responses of the participants were checked along with interview and FGD recordings to ensure accurate interpretations and quotations. Also, the final written report will be available to all the interviewees, which ensures that any unintentional biased opinions and impressions will be checked for rigorously.

4.9 Time taken for the research

Study of various literatures on Tarai politics, ethnicity based conflicts and theories on ethnicity for this research was started on September 20, 2007. After months of consultations and advice from thesis supervisor the final research proposal was submitted to the Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology of Tribhuvan University on December 23, 2008. Field work for this research was carried out from December 25, 2008 to July 28 2009. Data analysis was carried out from August 1, 2009 to August 18, 2009. The draft report was submitted to thesis supervisor on September 10, 2009 for his review and comment. The final draft of this research was completed on November 25, 2009.

4.10 Limitation of the study

There are two factors due to which the research is constrained by limitation. First is the lack of intensive field study and second is the small size of the sample population chosen for this research. The researcher did field study in six districts (Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke, Bardiya, Morang and Jhapa district) among the twenty districts of Tarai during the research. The researcher however feels that the field visit to all twenty districts of Tarai would have been much more helpful for this research.

The sample size chosen for field study, FGD and the number of respondents interviewed for this research is small. Two hundred questionnaire survey respondents, maximum twenty people in each of the six FGD and 19 interview respondents is small and the findings of the research would have enhanced had the size of respondents in questionnaire survey, FGD and interview would have been larger in number. The researcher however is confident that the use of available scholarly literatures and the interviews with intellectual and political elites of the country makes this research a valuable sociological research report on *Madheshi* ethnic identity issue and ethnic identity based politics in general.

Chapter V

Chronology of events and movements

The uprising of ethnic *Madheshis* in 2007 was of such a magnitude that it forced the seven major political parties of Nepal and former rebel Maoist to amend the interim constitution they themselves had made. These uprisings also showed that ethnic identity based issues were now at the centre of Nepalese politics.

5.1 *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007

Angry that the leaders of *Madheshi* Janadhikar Forum (hence forth MJF) or Forum for *Madheshi* People's Rights were arrested the cadres of MJF had declared *Madhesh Bandh* (Tarai general strike) in Tarai. MJF leaders were arrested in Kathmandu on January 16, 2007 while burning the copies of the interim constitution of Nepal. The strike was not treated as an important event by the media because it was not called by major national or regional parties. It was a protest called by an organization whose name was not much heard before.

During the protest launched by MJF in 2007 the MJF cadres in Lahan town of Siraha District had patrolled the highway to prevent any vehicles from passing through the town. Mahendra highway Nepal's longest highway running from east to west passes through many towns including Lahan hence preventing vehicle movement there could cause huge disturbance in the entire eastern part of the country. MJF cadres of Lahan made two groups one was to patrol the highway at night and the second one to patrol it during the day. On January 19, 2007 the deserted highway of this town saw a convoy of vehicles moving

towards the town. The convoy was escorted by the police of Nepal. Some MJF cadres recognizing the vehicle decided to let it pass through the town but others took a risky decision to prevent the convoy from passing. It was a bold and risky decision not because the vehicles were being escorted by the police but because the vehicles were carrying the much dreaded cadres of CPN (Maoist) who “were virtually in control of most of rural Nepal” (BBC 2009) during their insurgency. Only about three months ago on November 21, 2006 had Maoist formally came into the peace process by signing Comprehensive Peace Agreement yet the fear of Maoist were not yet over in Nepal. After all “the decade-long insurgency had left more than 13,000 dead, uprooted nearly half a million people from their homes, displaced the government from most of the rural countryside, left the economy in shambles, and seriously undermined the integrity of the Nepali nation-state”(Shah 2008:481).

The convey was carrying Maoist cadres of Mechi and Koshi zone to the Maoist training centre in Chitawan district. Their vehicles were decorated with Maoist flags (red coloured flag with white hammer and sickle) which was not very different from the flag of other small Communist parties. At the beginning the Maoist cadres miscalculated the mood of the protesters and thought that the protesters mistook their flag for the flag of other communist parties and that they let them pass once recognized that the vehicles were carrying Maoist. Dialogue between the two sides came up with no compromise and the Maoists understood that they were being undermined. Using the wartime experience the Maoist tried to intimidate the protesters but this strategy backfired. Offensive words were exchanged the Maoists and about 80 MJF cadres. During the argument Siyaram

Thakur a Maoist cadre shot dead “a 16-year-old student Ramesh Kumar Mahato of Majhaura, Siraha”. After Mahato’s death a riot broke out in Lahan. Police fired blanks rounds to control the situation but riots continued unabated. People demanded the punishment to the guilty. In order to quell the crowd police arrested two Maoist cadres. Locals however continued to protest in the street during which seventeen vehicles were torched (Pathak and Niraula 2007). When the situation looked uncontrollable then the authorities immediately clamped ten hour curfew in Lahan. Irked locals kept on staging demonstration in several areas of the town.

Demanding justice from the government several MJF members and locals had cordoned the dead body of Ramesh Kumar Mahato. The next day in the evening of January 20 “all of a sudden Maoist cadres arrived there in two trucks, one jeep and two dozen bikes and seized the body” (Pathak and Niraula 2007). They brought his family members and cremated his body” (Pathak and Niraula 2007). This enraged the locals.

5.1.1 Anti-Maoist protest

People were shocked with this incident. The CPN (Maoist) had already come into the peace process after signing Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the government of Nepal on November 21, 2006. After the agreement they were not to carry arms outside their United Nation monitored cantonment. Death of a non-combatant civilian due to former insurgents who were supposed to have joined the peace process enraged many.

In Lahan where the incident took place people from Tharu community, Madheshi community and even Pahadhi community came out in streets to protest.

People felt that Maoist were bullying them and stood up against this atrocity. Sympathy for the victim's family brought ordinary people together. A mass movement was building up in Lahan. Other parts of central eastern Tarai also saw similar demonstrations against the killing.

MJF which had already called strike on January 16, 2007 intensified the protest program after the killing of Mahato. In many places the CPN (Maoist) cadres threatened people not to participate in the protest which was aimed against them but the huge number of the people across eastern Tarai proved that people were not going to listen to the Maoist anymore. Maoist symbols and offices became the target across Tarai. In many places across Tarai Maoist made several check points that systematically threatened people not to participate in the protest but as the number of people swelled the Maoist themselves became the target. The Maoists claimed that it was not the people of Tarai but rather their rival armed group JTMM that were targeting the Maoists.

5.1.2 Participation from different ethnic communities

During the early days of the protest people from different backgrounds joined the protests. Tharus and even Pahadhis claimed that they participated in the protests. Mainali of CBES in an interview with the researcher claimed that "Madheshis and Pahadhis both were out in the streets to protest against the killing of an innocent boy". He further added that "I was a Nepali Congress cadre and I saw many Madheshi Congress cadres in the street and they all told me that the protest would benefit all people of Tarai". Laxmi Chaudhary also in an interview with the researcher claimed that "Tharus participated in the protest thinking this would benefit all the people of Tarai". Bishwendra Paswan the

leader of *Dalit Janajati Party* said in the interview with the researcher that “ We had planned with MJF to launch a mass movement but when suddenly this incident happened in Lahan I without delay declared that Dalits would also participate in this movement “.Mr Msruddin Ansari the leader of of *Nepal Muslim Nagarik Samaj*(Nepal Muslim Civil Society) said in an interview with the researcher that “ Muslims participated in the Madheshi movement by becoming martyrs” and further added that “ we are an organized community and when one Muslim supports an issue the whole community would be behind him hence Muslims took the Madheshi movement to a new height”.

5.1.3 Uprising of *Madheshis* only

On January 22, the protesters vandalized a police post in Lahan during which two policemen were wounded by bullets fired from the restive crowd. The police force responded by opening fire on the crowd that instantly killed two bystanders and wounded 12 others. All the 12 wounded protesters were airlifted to Kathmandu for medical treatment but three among them died. The news of their deaths ignited huge protests (Pathak and Niraula 2007) throughout Tarai where *Madheshis* were in majority. What started as a small protest of few hundred people in January 19 around Lahan had transformed within five days into huge mass movement filling many cities of eastern and central Tarai with sea of people. Sensing the mood on the street, the MJF on January 25 it would prolong the protests indefinitely until the interim constitution was amended.

The slogan of protesters became bolder and as participants swelled. The anti Maoist slogan soon changed into anti state and finally anti *Pahadhi* slogans. The *Pahadhi* became the target in some places (Haviland 2007). *Pahadhi*

participation in the movement stopped and it became a purely *Madheshi* movement but Tharus, Muslims and Tarai Dalits continued their protest in huge numbers.

Statues of prominent national figures like that of Bharat Bahadur Shrestha, Laxmi Prasad Devkota, BP Koirala, Man Mohan Adhikari, Ganesh Man Singh, and various Shah kings of Nepal which were considered as the symbols of Pahadhi cultural domination were smashed across Tarai by protesters. Effigies of Prime Minister, Home Minister, Maoist Chief, UML General Secretary and even that of Mr Matrika Yadav, a CPN-Maoist *Madheshi* leader were burnt in different parts of Tarai. In course of the movement the protestors also vandalized the Birgunj FM station and the Federation of Nepalese Journalists' office. Reporters covering demonstrations in Biratnagar, Birgunj, Inaruwa, Lahan, Bara and Saptari were threatened. Journalists say they covered the movement consistently but sometimes missed information about activities in villages where there were no reporters" (International Crisis Group 2007:12).

Government offices like District Administration Offices, District Development Offices, District Courts, District Election Commissions, District Forest Offices, District Agriculture Offices, District Irrigation Offices and Police Posts were torched or vandalized during the movement (Pathak and Niraula 2007). In Rautahat District Administration Office was vandalized while the house of Madhav Kumar Nepal the General Secretary of CPN-UML was torched down. In Janakpur city of Dhanusha District large number of protesters chased the police and vandalized several police posts across the city. In Biratnagar angry

protesters overpowered hundreds of transport workers and guards and vandalized large number of vehicles parked in the city bus park.

Pathak and Niraula (2007) reported that during the protest non-*Madheshi* government employees in Tarai were attacked and many went underground due to insecurity. There were sporadic attacks on Tarai-based non-*Madheshi* community but “communalism was not a defining feature of the unrest” (International Crisis Group 2007:12).

5.1.4 Blockade

Strike in Tarai caused shortages of basic commodities like food, cooking fuel, cooking gas and fuel for vehicles throughout Nepal. The blocking of Kathmandu’s key supply routes during the protest “had a more direct impact, leading to travel disruption, price rises and a petrol shortage”(International Crisis Group 2007:12). Major highways passing through districts where *Madheshis* were in majority were blocked by demonstrators and in some places the trees were chopped down to block the highways (Haviland 2007). According to Pathak and Niraula (2007) in some places even the ambulances and vehicles of UN OHCHR and National Human Rights Commission were attacked by protesters. It was reported in BBC website that “Nothing is moving on the highway, and there are not even vehicles parked by its sides” (Haviland 2007).

5.1.5 Demonstrators

Some demonstrations were organized by MJF while others were spontaneous. Many organizations were formed during the course of the movement that helped to keep the momentum of the protest alive. These groups including the

renowned TSS⁹ “kept in touch with all protesting groups, provided some logistical support, took injured to the hospital and collected donations for medical care” (International Crisis Group 2007:12). The MJF emerged as the movement’s leading group but many participants and observers like Anil Jha (2008) complained that the movement/protest lacked clear planning¹⁰. Jha further added that since there were no leaders to lead the people properly on the streets it caused some regrettable incidents. A district level leader of MJF admitted that they “ didn’t know how to handle the movement” and confessed that MJF had “four to six leaders and about 20 to 30 activists in each district, who had to suddenly deal with thousands of protestors”(International Crisis Group 2007:13). The protest attracted huge number of *Madheshis* from various caste, class and political background. *Madheshis* from Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, NSP-A, Hindu militants, royalists, extreme secularist, extreme republican, insurgent *Madheshi* groups like JTMM and even *Madheshi* Maoist cadres despite the “anti Maoist theme” of the protest joined the protest(International Crisis Group 2007:13).

5.1.6 Accusations

The scale of the protest in Tarai took many by surprise. Many political scientists, leaders of civil societies, political parties and even the Maoist leaders expressed that regressive, royalist and Hindu extremist elements were leading the protest in Tarai. Prominent journalist Kunda Dixit (2007) cautiously wrote about mayhem in Tarai warning that “exploiting this could be religious

⁹ Tarai Samrakshan Samiti (Save Tarai Committee)

¹⁰ Anil Jha CA a member and the General Secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party(Rajendra Mahato fraction) in an interview conducted by the researcher.

and royalist groups with powerful allies in a rabidly anti-Maoist Bihar government across the border” (Dixit 2007). On January 25 when asked about the importance of holding dialogue with the forces leading the protest in Tarai the Maoist leader Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai said in *Kantipur TV* that there was no need to talk with MJF and JTMM. Similarly the Maoist chief Prachanda when talking about MJF said that he would “not negotiate with criminals and gangsters” (Lakshman 2007).

5.1.7 Government response

The state response to the *Madheshi* protest was harsh. *Madheshi* leaders like Sarita Giri and Mahanta Thakur told the researcher in interview that state mistook the popular movement for anarchy and tried to suppress it by using force but it only intensified people’s anger. To quell the protest police shot dead more than 30 people and wounded over 800 (International Crisis Group 2007:12). Mr Ram Sahaya Yadhav, General Secretary of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal told the following to the researcher during an interview:

During the revolt I was in Bara organizing street protests when police suddenly started to fire bullets. There was a stampede and I fell down. When I stood up I saw blood spilled over different parts of the streets. I saw one man who was hit on his leg by the bullet and he was in such a condition that his leg was separated from his body but only a few inches of skin were holding it together. One was hit on the front part of his head with bullet and parts of his brain had fallen from the back part of his head. Another was hit with the bullet on his chest while there was a hole on his back. In this chaos people were taking the injured to hospital in rickshaw while others were carrying them on their backs and shoulders. Injured protesters were helped by other protesters.

Many *Madheshis* and non-*Madheshis* expressed their outrage over the use of excessive force by the security forces. Similarly Govinda Neupane (2007) in an article criticized civil society of Nepal, blaming them of having no sympathy towards the bleeding *Madhesis* (Neupane 2007). Curfew and gunning

down of protesters became an ineffective tool to control the situation hence on January 31, Prime Minister Koirala, in televised address, invited protesting groups to negotiations and promised to increase electoral seats in the Tarai region and announced a commitment to federalism. On February 2, the government even set up a ministerial-level talks team headed by Mahanta Thakur of Nepali Congress Party, Gyanendra Bahadur Karki of Nepali Congress Democratic Party and Rajendra Pande of UML. However, MJF rejected the offer. MJF complained that Prime Minister's address "was high-handed and unilateral and did not recognise Madhesi demands as rights that were due to them"(International Crisis Group 2007:13). A journalist and an intellectual from *Madhesi* background CK Lal (2007) also complained:

Loss of life during any agitation becomes the rallying cry of the masses, and political honchos use innocent deaths to inflame passions. But a head of government is expected to condemn violence, offer his condolences, and promise an investigation to bring the guilty to book. This is what a government routinely does in a functioning democracy. Koirala did no such thing in his Wednesday address. Maybe it was an oversight, but it gave madhesis an unambiguous message that their own prime minister showed a callous disregard for their feelings. (Lal 2007)

When the movement intensified then the Maoist leaders and other intellectuals grudgingly and belatedly apologized calling the movement in Tarai as "legitimate". Saubhagya Shah (2007) wrote in the book *The Inclusive State* about the reaction shown to the *Madhesi* uprising in Tarai:

The sudden passion, mayhem and violence that engulfed the eastern Tarai not only drove away the January *sheet lahar* but also left April's triumphant paradigm in tatters. There was a pitiful sight of mighty leaders and auxiliary intelligentsia first dismissing the *Madhesi* uprising as handiwork of a handful of miscreants and the conspiracy of reactionaries and religious fundamentalists; then threatening to use the force of arms to suppress the raging inferno; and, then finally making 180-degree turn to embrace the same revolt as their own, all within the span of a week! (Shah 2007:230)

Situation in Tarai aggravated further after the address of the Prime Minister. A week after the first address, the Prime Minister, flanked by Madhab Nepal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal made a second address in which he talked about the contribution of Madhesi community in strengthening democracy in Nepal. He also expressed his regret over loss of life during the protest and promised electoral representation and inclusion of marginalized communities and groups in the state bodies on a proportional basis (International Crisis Group 2007:13). MJF welcomed the announcement by suspending all agitation programs for ten days to allow the government to implement the promises. However it set preconditions for talks and they were the resignation of home minister, action against those responsible for the killings and a judicial commission to examine the government's conduct. On August 30, 2007 the government signed a 22-point agreement with the MJF. Mr Upendra Yadav Convener of MJF and Mr Ram Chandra Paudel from Government Talks team signed the agreement.

5.2 *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2008

Madheshi political parties had complained that the government of Nepal did not implemented the 22-point agreement it signed with MJF on August 30, 2007. To force the government to implement the agreement and to secure more rights for *Madheshis* the three *Madheshi* political parties ;*Madheshi* Janadhikar Forum ,Tarai-Madhesh Loktantik Party and Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato faction); formed an alliance called "United Democratic *Madheshi* Front"(hence forth UDMF).

5.2.1 UDMF call for Tarai/ *Madhesh bandh*

On 8 February 2008, UDMF announced that it would call a Terai-wide *bandh*¹¹ from 13 February to pressurize the Government to fulfill their demands. The demands included a constitutional amendment to establish an autonomous *Madheshi* state within a federal democratic republic and fair representation of *Madheshis* in all organs of the state, including the army. *Bandhs* were also called at the same time by the Federal Democratic National Forum (FDNF)¹², a coalition of indigenous groups and the Federal Republican National Front (FRNF)¹³. The imposition of the *bandhs* called by UDMF was the most effective one and paralyzed daily life in most of the Terai and led to violent clashes between *bandh* supporters and both the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force (APF).

According to the findings of OHCHR (2008), six civilians died during the protests as a result of confrontations between UDMF supporters and police, five as a result of bullet wounds, and hundreds were injured. An APF officer was also killed and numerous other police officers were injured in connection with demonstrations, mostly by stones and rocks thrown by protestors.

During the course of the protest demonstrators threw stones and Molotov cocktails at police and, in some places, carried out sustained attacks against police posts. Demonstrators also attacked local government offices and private

¹¹A general strike in which all businesses, shops, schools, etc are closed and public transport halted.

¹² The FDNF includes the Federal Limbuwan State Council (Lingden) and the Tamangsaling Autonomous State Council.

¹³ The FRNF includes the FDNF, the United Tharu National Front and a broad *Madheshi* Front comprising the *Madheshi* People's Rights Forum (Biswas/Gupta), Dalit Janajati Party, Loktantrik *Madheshi* Morcha and *Madheshi* Loktantrik Morcha.

businesses that defied the *bandh* and vandalized or burned vehicles. Despite public announcements that ambulances would be allowed to move freely, they were often prevented from doing so and several were vandalized (OHCHR 2008).

On several occasions various organizations reported that they witnessed the participation of children, sometimes in the front lines and armed with sticks, during confrontations between *bandh* supporters and the police (OHCHR 2008). OHCHR and UNICEF issued a joint press statement on 22 February expressing concern at the participation of children in violent protests and *bandhs*.

5.2.2 Government's response

A curfew order issued by the CDO of Banke district on February 17 stated that "...the security forces deployed for security reason may even open fire if anyone is found moving..." (OHCHR 2008). Similarly, the CDO of Morang issued a curfew order on 19 February, which mentioned that, "...security personnel may open fire if this order is violated". In Parsa district, the CDO issued a curfew order on 26 February, which mentioned that, "...if anyone moves about, assembles, or does any other act which is not allowed in that area, and if anyone violates the curfew order the security personnel who have been deployed for security may, as necessary, take [someone] under control or shoot". These curfew orders failed to cite the provisions of the Local Administration Act that require that police may use firearms to enforce curfew, on the orders of the CDO, but only if they judge it necessary after using all other non-lethal means of force.

On 20 February, OHCHR (2008) found that the District Administration Office (DAO) had failed to inform Birgunj radio stations, usually used to relay

curfew times to residents, of the curfew times that day. At least three people were beaten by police that morning for inadvertently violating the curfew, including a man going for a morning walk whose foot was broken by an APF officer.

5.2.3 Different treatment by the police towards *Madheshi* and *Pahadhi* protestors

On 19 February several non-*Madheshi* youths according to OHCHR (2008) in Sarauchiya area of Biratnagar were seen throwing rocks and vandalized properties in the mostly *Madheshi* neighbourhood. The police watched but did not intervene; some even participated in rock throwing (OHCHR 2008). Similarly on 21 February confrontations between *Madheshi* demonstrators and APF personnel, OHCHR (2008) reported that some non-*Madheshi* youths helped APF and Nepal Police by throwing rocks at the *Madheshi* protesters even after the imposition of curfew in the area(OHCHR 2008).

In Kapilvastu and Rupandehi districts the CDOs had issued prohibitory orders banning meetings of more than five people but OHCHR(2008) observed that the orders were enforced against UDMF supporters but the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) were permitted to carry out a 'harmony rally'.

5.2.4 The movement covered by the media

Protests in Tarai were covered by many news agencies. Nepalnews.com (2008) under the heading *Terai sees some respite on 10th day of general strike* wrote that "The agitators burnt down three fuel tankers in Bara and vandablised another in Parsa". Similarly Nepalitimes (2008) under the heading *Trouble*

across the Tarai reported that “Unrest along highway lifelines has triggered crippling shortages of fuel all over the country” and further added:

There used to be 1,700 buses plying the eastern section of the Mahendra Highway every day, but this has slowed down to a trickle with Rs 50 million daily losses to transporters. Even air links were hit, with Janakpur suspending flights after threats.

Some 100 factories have closed down in the Birganj-Simara industrial corridor, throwing thousands out of work. Hundreds of thousands of school students across the Tarai haven't been able to attend schools, and many have moved to India or to the hill towns. (Nepalitimes 2008)

Humanitarian agencies expressed concern about the protests in Tarai region. Some agencies expressed their worries about the access of food supplies, health and other humanitarian services have been limited due to UDMF strike. UNHCR (2008) further expressed their concern:

“If the crisis in the Terai goes on for another week, we will see a considerable impact on humanitarian programmes in terms of food security, the livelihoods of vulnerable communities and daily wage earners,” Wendy Cue, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Nepal, told IRIN in Kathmandu. Most markets have been closed in cities and towns across the Terai, Nepal's lowland industrial and agricultural heartland. (UNHCR 2008)

They further warned that “Aid workers said the situation for them was becoming more challenging than during the decade-long armed conflict (1996-2006) (UNHCR). On 18 February 2008 Ian Martin, Special Representative of the Secretary General of United Nation in Nepal released the following statement to the press about the protests in Tarai:

I am deeply concerned at incidents in several towns and other locations in the Tarai which have resulted in one death and many serious injuries. In a number of places across the eastern, central and mid-western Tarai, OHCHR and UNMIN teams were present to seek to contribute to the avoidance of violence, and witnessed excessive use of force by personnel of the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force, including beating of protesters after they had been brought under control. Police used tear gas, rubber bullets and, in several cases, live ammunition; the actions of the police are being investigated by OHCHR. UN teams also witnessed heavy stone-throwing at police, causing injuries, as well as attempts to close government offices, vandalize property and coerce others into observing the *bandh*, and saw among protesters a few persons carrying firearms or petrol bombs. Many

children were in the crowd and engaged in stone-throwing or were otherwise caught up in the violence.

I have appealed to the Home Minister to take all possible measures to avoid excessive use of force, and to leaders of the United Democratic Madhesi Front to call on protesters to remain peaceful and to avoid the involvement of children in demonstrations.

UNMIN has consistently urged that the grievances of Madhesi and other marginalized groups should be addressed by the Government and the Seven-Party Alliance through dialogue, and should be pursued by peaceful means. I hope that all concerned will draw back from the brink of escalating violence and pursue the common interest of an inclusive Constituent Assembly election in a conducive climate. (UNMIN 2008)

On 20 February 2008 the Amnesty International wrote about the protests in Tarai under the heading *Nepal police target protesters* in which it said “Amnesty International has called on the organizers of the protests, including the United Democratic Madhesi Front, to ensure their members and supporters show due restraint and responsibly exercise their right to peaceful protest” and further reported :

“We recognize that the Nepali police are trying to contain what in some cases have been violent protests. However, by firing live ammunition into crowds and beating demonstrators after their arrest, the police have gone beyond what is acceptable use of force in situation such as this,” said Tim Parritt, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Asia Pacific programme.

“At times the police showed restraint when faced with crowds throwing stones, but in other cases the police appear to have used disproportionate and excessive force despite assurances from Home Ministry that security forces had been instructed to show maximum restraint.”

Under international standards, law enforcement officials are required as far as possible to apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms.

If the use of force and firearms is unavoidable, Principle 5 of the UN Basic Principles states that officers must exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved. (Amnesty International 2008)

Laxmi Chaudhari a Tharu activist and Constituent Assembly member told the researcher during interview that there were small scale clashes between Tharu and *Madheshis* communities in different parts of eastern Tarai during the

protest. Keshab Mainali told the researcher in interview that Madheshi activists had warned Pahadhis to leave Tarai or face physical punishment during this protest. He added that some UDMF activists had even phoned and sent letters to private domestic airlines companies not to fly from Tarai to any other parts of Nepal. He even complained that human rights groups and media ignored the threats issued by *Madheshis* during the protests.

5.2.5 Major incidents during the movement

During the protest several districts of Tarai saw unprecedented violence due to clashes between UDMF supporters and security forces. In some districts people died during the clashes.

5.2.5.1 Banke district

The agitating UDMF supporters called for the closure of all Government offices in Nepalgunj. They approached the District Administration Office (DAO) where they clashed with police deployed there. The police responded with baton charging; tear gas and firing of rubber bullets. The police managed to chase the demonstrators but demonstrators managed to attack police by throwing stones. Suddenly after one o'clock a Government office near the DAO was attacked, looted and the equipments of the office were burned. DAO reacted by imposing curfew at 2 o'clock.

At around three thirty police officers trying to implement curfew shot dead Guljar Khan approximately 100 metres east of the main bazaar road when it penetrated his forehead (OHCHR 2008). Information gathered by OHCHR (2008) from several sources indicates that he was not taking part in the protests and was in fact on his way home for lunch. In addition to the fatal shooting of

Guljar Khan, eleven men sustained bullet injuries on 17 February in Nepalgunj, among whom seven had injuries above the knee (OHCHR 2008).

5.2.5.2 Bishnupur, Siraha district

On 19 February in Bishnupur town police clashed with about 30 UDMF protesters (OHCHR 2008). As clashes continued the crowd of protester started to swell. After few hours there were hundred of protesters clashing with police force. The police fired on the crowd of protesters in which Rajesh Thakur was shot from a distance of 100 metres, while picking up a stone to throw at the police. Rajesh Thakur died in an ambulance on the road to the hospital in Dharan (OHCHR 2008). OHCHR (2008) believed that the multiple road blockades set up by demonstrators may have contributed to his death.

5.2.5.3 Saptari district

On 25 February there were confrontation between Armed Police Force (APF) and approximately 800 UDMF supporters in Rajbiraj of Saptari District after police arrested UDMF cadres who attempted to stage a sit-in protest in front of the electoral office in Rajbiraj (OHCHR 2008). Throughout the day, UDMF demonstrators had confronted both Nepal Police and Armed Police Force, throwing stones, rocks, bricks, and bottles and using sling shots. Police responded with multiple lathi charges, firing of tear gas shells and firing of live ammunition into the air. At least ten other civilians were injured during these clashes, as were at least three Nepal Police and, according to the Armed Police Force, at least seven APF personnel. Several sources, including the Nepal Police, APF officers opened fired shots on the crowd after the crowd threatened to vandalize an APF vehicle that was carrying an injured APF officer. APF officer

shot and killed 30 year-old shop owner Gultan Das after a bullet reportedly pierced the hood of the rickshaw and hit him in the chest (OHCHR 2008).

According to OHCHR (2008) on the same day a joint team of Nepal Police and APF were deployed at Hatiya in Rajbiraj to enforce a prohibitory order restricting demonstrators from entering the area surrounding the District Electoral Office to obstruct the registration of candidates. During several hours of confrontations, demonstrators threw bricks, stones, glass bottles and used sling shots against the police as they attempted to enter the prohibited area (OHCHR 2008). Police responded with multiple lathi charges, firing of tear gas shells and firing into the air. A 57-year-old man named Lakhan Safi was injured during a lathi charge and died three days later in Dharan Hospital (OHCHR 2008).

5.2.5.4 Maheshpur, Nawalparasi district (February 26)

A crowd of several hundred UDMF supporters approached the police post and some UDMF leaders requested that the Nepal Police leave the police post. The Nepal Police claim to have heard shots fired from the direction of the crowd that was moving towards the police post and saw a group of people heading towards the nearby house of a former minister and NC Nepali Congress candidate in the Constituent Assembly elections, which was subsequently looted and burnt (OHCHR 2008). A few minutes after receiving the request, the Nepal Police fired five or six rounds of ammunition into the air. Some shots were then allegedly fired into the crowd, which had already started dispersing after the initial shots were fired. Jagadish Pasi was shot in the chest and died (OHCHR 2008).

5.2.5.5 Duhabi, Sunsari district (February 27)

Defying curfew more than hundred UDMF supporters took out a protest rally in Duhabi of Sunsari (OHCHR 2008). Six police officers who were deployed according to OHCHR (2008) clashed with protesters as they began to pelt the police with rocks. From a distance of 20 to 30 metres, the police fired approximately four rounds of live ammunition into the air from .303 rifles to disperse the crowd (OHCHR 2008). A man named Mohammad Biskud Miya, was standing in front of a tea shop on the side of the road when he was hit by police bullet (OHCHR 2008). The victim ran from the shop and collapsed approximately 100 metres from the tea shop, where he died from blood loss according to OHCHR (2008).

5.3 The agreement between the government of Nepal and UDMF

Some news agencies reported that Indian Embassy in Nepal was involved in negotiations between protesters and ruling party's leaders. Under the heading *Indian embassy 'mediates' talks between NC leaders and UDMF* it was reported that UDMF and Nepali Congress leaders held talks inside Indian embassy premises in February 20, 2008 to end the agitation in Tarai but Indian Embassy denied about such meeting taking place within its premises (Nepalnews 2008). It was later reported that the meeting inside embassy did took place but UDMF and Nepali Congress leaders could not reach an agreement there.

On February 28, 2008 UDMF withdrew all the agitation programmes and signed an 8 point agreement with the Government of Nepal. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on behalf of the Government of Nepal signed the agreement (UNMIN 2008). Mr Mr Rajendra Mahato the National Chairman of

Sadbhavana Party, Mr Upendra Yadav Central Coordinator of MJF (*Madheshi* Janadhikar Forum) and Mr Mahantha Thakur the Chairman of TMLP (Terai-Madhes Loktantrik Party) signed the agreement on behalf of UDMF.

Chapter VI

Factors that led to *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008

Madheshis felt they were being discriminated by Nepalese state and by other Nepalese communities and felt culturally dominated by cultures of hill people. They joined various political movements to establish democracy in Nepal but their grievances were not addressed. They continued to be marginalized the state continued to be indifferent towards their grievances until *Madheshi* People's Movement occurred which was able to stir the very foundation on which Nepali nationalism was built and how Nepalese state operated. This chapter would describe some of the grievances of *Madheshis* which the researcher has identified as important factors that may have led to *Madheshi* People's Movement.

6.1 Discrimination

During an interview the researcher asked Mr Arun Kumar Prasad a Maoist cadre and science lecturer from Dipahi VDC of Rautahat district about the causes of *Madheshi* People's Movement. Mr Prasad gave the following answer :

Madheshis and *Pahadhis* are two brothers. The *Madheshis* had to take care of the front portion of the cow and *Pahadhi* had to take care of the back half portion of the cow. *Madheshis* because their responsibility was to take care of the front portion of the cow hence had to feed it and clean it. The *Pahadhi* brothers since they had to take care of the back portion of the cow got cow milk, cow's offspring and even cow dung. The *Pahadhi* brother never shared what he got from that cow and *Madheshi* brothers were so docile that they never dared to question this situation thinking it was their fate. However due to Maoist political campaign now *Madheshis* want to turn the cow around and get hold of its backside while the *Pahadhi* brother tries to prevent this. This is the situation in Tarai. Madhesh is a place where most of the tax revenues are collected from where food are produced and supplied to the rest of the country. Again let us not forget that the most important transit areas for import depended Nepal in Tarai.

But what do *Madheshis* the indigenous population of Tarai get in return ? They are not given citizenship certificate, they are excluded from the civil service and worse they are treated as foreign nationals¹⁴.

The above view of Mr Arun Kumar Prasad is similar to the views of other *Madheshi* activists. They agree that *Madheshis* were discriminated in an intesed manner that forced them to revolt. *Madheshis* say that they were always treated by other Nepalese as foreigners. Some of the leading *Madheshi* politicians and activists say that many other take them as Indian migrants. Although some Nepalese politicians believe that ancestors of *Madheshis* were Indian migrants but *Madheshis* refuses to accept this. They believe that long before the existence of present Nepal or India there were people living in the region of Tarai under different kingdoms. These kingdoms of Tarai sometimes expanded while at other times they were conquered by other kingdoms. Some part of former kingdoms of Tarai region are now under Nepal while others fell under India's territory and from this point of view *Madheshis* argue that they are not descendents of Indian migrants but descendents of indigenous people of Tarai.

Majority of *Madheshis* live in Tarai region of Nepal that borders India hence shares a common language, culture and racial features with people living in the Indian side of the border. The government and bureaucrats of Nepal were mostly *Pahadhi* or from hill region and viewed *Madheshis* with suspicion. Laws were passed in 1964 and 1990 that made it difficult for *Madheshis* to obtain citizenship certificate. An "official report in 1995 found more than three million

¹⁴ Mr Arun Kumar Prasad (Dipahi VDC, Rautahat district) a UCPN(Maoist) cadre and a science professor in an interview conducted by the researcher.

Madhesis lacked citizenship certificates”(Sinha 2008).To get citizenship certificate the appliers had to know Nepali language which many *Madhesis* failed to be as they had other mother tongues. Among many formalities *Madhesis* need to fulfill to obtain citizenship one which was particularly difficult was that the applier had to show the official papers of property they own in Nepal. This created a vicious circle because without citizenship certificate one cannot get the property ownership papers. Many Madhesis said that the government officers decided in an ad-hoc manner whether they were Nepali or not and many *Madhesi* had to go through humiliating question answer process while applying for citizenship. *Madhesis* without citizenship had to face many problems. Without citizenship they could not prove that they were the owners of their land and due to this many *Madhesis* claimed that they lost their land to migrants from the hills who had good relationship with *Pahadhi* government officers. The citizenship law was amended in 2006 but the humiliation and the hardship Madhesis faced due to citizenship law in the past made it a strong factor for Madhesis to rise in revolt.

6.1.1 Discrimination and apathy

Anil Jha an influential *Madhesi* leader of Nepal Sadvawana Party told the researcher in an interview that not only the state but even major political parties that used *Madhesi* cadres during the insurgency and agitations launched by them but forgot them once these parties came to power. He further added that contribution made by *Madhesis* for Nepal and for democracy are minimized but the contributions of *Pahadhis* on the same issues are highlighted and even exaggerated:

B.P Koirala and Girija Prasad Koirala the two well known national leaders of Nepal were son of rich merchant named Krishna Prasad Koirala. Krishna Prasad Koirala is still respected in *Madhesh* and other parts of Nepal because he dared to stand against Rana regime and in the process sacrificed all his wealth for that cause. Many people in *Madhesh* are also familiar with the name Narayandata Jha but many in other parts of Nepal are not. He was the father of Vedanada and Kulananda Jha. He was a very wealthy landlord and sacrificed all his wealth against Rana regime. The Ranas killed him and did not even give his body to his sons for the last rites. All his property was confiscated. His sons Vedananda Jha and Kulananda Jha joined hands with B.P Koirala and fought against Ranas. After the success of democratic movement they formed a political party called Tarai Congress. They wanted Madhesh or Tarai to have a priority in the policy of the government and so on but in the election of 2015 B.S they could not win much vote. The Jha brothers were in a poor economic condition and perhaps that is one of the reason they could not disseminate their message much. Chair person of Tarai Congress Mr Vedananda Jha surrendered to the King and General Secretary of the party Mr Ramcharan Tiwari later joined Nepali Congress Party. But my point is even *Madheshi* martyrs were ignored in Nepal. This is the level of discrimination we all are facing¹⁵.

Major political parties and erstwhile rebel CPN Maoist failed to diagnose the storm of *Madheshi* anger that was slowly building up across Tarai which showed how disconnected these parties were from the aspirations and grievances of ordinary *Madheshis*. Hridayesh Tripathi a leading figure in *Madheshi* politics said that the “three major parties—the Nepali Congress, the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist— not only failed to address the problems of Madhesh, but also completely failed to comprehend them” (Tripathi and Ghimire 2007). Nepalnews.com a news website reported under the heading *NC remained indifferent to Madhesis* quoted senior Madheshi leader Mahantha Thakur who said that “the uprising in Terai was the result of centuries of indifferences to the grievances of the Madhesi people and suppression by the centralised government” and he further added that “had some demands of the Terai been fulfilled by the state earlier, it would not have faced the Terai uprising last year”

¹⁵ Anil Jha CA a member and the General Secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party(Rajendra Mahato fraction) in an interview conducted by the researcher.

(Nepalnews 2008). The same news had also reported year ago under the heading *JP Gupta quits parliament* that Mahantha Thakur of Nepali Congress, Hridayesh Tripathi of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandi Devi), Mehendra Yadav of CPN (UML) and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) lawmaker Ram Chandra Raya had resigned from the parliament as well as their party positions “citing the ‘indifference’ shown by the state towards the problems facing the Terai people”(Nepalnews 2007). This level of discrimination is also one of the many factors that contributed in making this huge movement ; *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008; in Tarai possible. Hridayesh Tripathi leader of TMLP also talked about the discrimination faced by *Madheshis* :

Of the 42 people who died during the Madhesh revolt, only one had succumbed to bullets fired by the Maoists. All others were killed in police firing. But the state has not even bothered to declare any one of them a martyr while all 22 people killed during the April uprising were declared martyrs. This shows the state practices discrimination not only against the living Madhesi people but also the dead. (Tripathi and Ghimire 2007)

In 2008 all the agitators who were killed during *Madheshi* People’s Moment of 2007 and 2008 were declared as martyrs by UCPN Maoist led government.

Indifference shown towards the grievances of *Madheshis* is not only practiced by the state political parties and civil servants but also by civil society , media and donar organizations according to *Madheshi* activists. *Madheshi* journalist Prasant Jha under the heading *Missing the story* wrote in Nepalitimes newspaper about apathy shown towards *Madheshis* :

Kathmandu’s self-righteous civil society and media have done the impossible. They have matched the insensitivity, insularity, inertia and ignorance of the central state.

The Madhes has been in crisis for a year. People are scared. There are ‘political’ killings every day, though most stem from personal rivalries, caste and property feuds, and revenge. The increasing number of rapes go mostly unreported. The legal system is a sham and justice elusive.

Nepal's activists were at the forefront of raising human rights issues during the Maoist insurgency. Yet on the Madhes, how do Kathmandu's human rights organisations react? Silence. Propped by donors, they spout buzzwords like "inclusion" but forget the exclusion within their own organisations. The district heads of Insec in the Madhes, for example, are Pahadis.

How else does one account for the absence of any fact-finding reports or investigations into the various forms of atrocities in the Tarai? It was only after the Gaur incident that Kathmandu's human rights wallahs got agitated enough to go down and produce what later proved to be inaccurate reports. For them no other incident, or the pattern of killings was worth a response. There is no report on the violations, if any, by the STF. Is the life of a Madhesi worth less than a Pahadi? (Jha 2008)

Madheshi politicians like Anil Jha , Mohanta Thakur and Sarita Giri all told the researcher in an interview that they all felt that the government of Nepal, *Pahadhi* dominated media and *Pahadhi* dominated civil society were indifferent to the grievances of *Madheshis*. They all said that had the government of Nepal been sensitive enough about the grievances of *Madheshis* in the past then *Madheshi* People's Movement would not have occurred.

6.1.2 Discrimination in employment

Madheshi activists Shree Govind Shah told the researcher in an interview that the employment opportunities for *Madheshis* are low not only in government jobs but also in other sectors. According to Shree Govind Shah's research findings "81% of the total manpower involved in the 30 multilateral agencies working in Nepal and 61 projects funded by these agencies are from Pahadi community, 14.1% are foreigners and the rest 5.2% are *Madheshi* people" (Shah 2006,11). Citing his own report *Social Inclusion of Madheshi Community in Nation Building* Mr Shah told the researcher that manpower companies of Nepal and multinational agencies hire more foreigners than *Madheshis* of Nepal. He further argued that due to the absence of economic opportunities most *Madheshis* are "under employed facing under-employment". Available data indicates that

Madheshis especially “uneducated teenagers and the young people have temporarily migrated to India for economic opportunity – this has unbalanced labour supply to farming in many parts of Madhesh region” (Shah 2006:16). Even among the educated *Madheshis* employment is a problem because “there is unemployment for the educated *Madheshi* people in government or non-government organizations or in INGOs or international organizations working in Nepal primarily due to the exclusion behaviour of these institutions towards *Madheshi*” (Shah 2006:16). *Madheshi* youths who could not see employment opportunity in neither the government nor private sector and the frustrations due to it could have been one of the driving factors of *Madheshi* People's Movement. The high unemployment rate among young *Madheshi* youths could also be one of the major driving factors that attracted them to join armed groups in Terai which gave them opportunity to earn money as well as to express their frustrations.

6.1.3 Economic discrimination

“The Terai is the backbone of the national economy, containing more than 60 per cent of the agricultural land and contributing over two thirds of the GDP”(International Crisis Group 2007: 5). The investment of Nepalese state in Terai however looks discriminatory and unplanned according to *Madheshi* leaders like Mohanta Thakur. Investment in Terai “has been significant but the focus has been on developing national communications rather than serving local populations” (International Crisis Group 2007, 5) the example of which is “the east-west highway, a vital transport artery, does not link even one Terai district headquarter directly – all are on poor feeder roads” (International Crisis Group 2007, 5).

Many *Madheshi* intellectuals had complained for a long time about the low level of investment in Tarai. One of such complain was in a report *Social Inclusion of Madheshi Community in Nation Building* written by Shree Govind Shah which stated the following:

Investment both from the government and the donor community in rural Madhesh appears to be very low. Most of the industries are located in urban centres and they could not much help the local rural people. Again, the agro-based industries established in the Madhesh region are not tied up with agriculture farming; they import raw materials from other countries which could be technically produced in Madhesh. The issue of renovation and reconstruction of the Hulaki Road has been raised on many occasions. This road was constructed in early 20th century and connects the inner part of Madhesh region from Jhapa in the east to Kanchanpur in the west.(Shah 2006:16)

“Current estimates suggest that as much as 33 percent of Nepalis are of Madhesi origin” (Sinha 2008);but literacy among *Madhesis* is “41 percent but 68 per cent among Bahuns and Chhetris (the hill high castes) and Newars” (International Crisis Group 2007:5). What looked like a sheer indifference of the government to the huge illiteracy rate among *Madheshi* could also be one of the many factors that caused the uprising or *Madheshi* People’s Movement. About “Fifty percent of the Tarai districts have ‘worst ranking’ for child literacy rates compared to 29% in hills and mountain districts” (Shah 2006:9). Even according to Nepalese standard "Rauthat, Sarlahi and Mahotari are the worst in child literacy index values (Shah 2006:9). Literacy rate in Tarai where majority of *Madheshis* live is so low that "40% of Tarai districts have lower overall literacy rates compared to 31% in hill districts "(Shah 2006:9). Terai has a large number of people who are deprived from education. About “ 90% of the Tarai districts have a large number of educationally deprived populations compared to only about 13% in hills and mountain districts"(Shah 2006,9) where districts like “Siraha, Bardia,Dhanusha, Mahotari, rauthat and Sarlahi have the largest number

of educationally deprived people” (Shah 2006:9). The Terai districts unlike the ones in hill regions have plain lands hence have good transportation facilities. The large number and density of population as well as closer proximity with vibrant Indian markets in bordering areas makes Terai one of the most economically potential areas of Nepal. Terai is also rich in forests and agricultural land. Despite having all these advantages yet about “ 45% of the 20 Terai districts have worst poverty rankings and only 25% are ranked as ‘best’ compared to 35% districts in hills and mountains are ranked as ‘best’ and 29% are ranked as ‘worst’”(Shah 2006:7-8). Many leading intellectuals including Shree Govind Shah gives hypothesis that the low level of investment in Terai particularly in *Madhesi* majority areas could be due to discrimination of the Nepalese state towards them:

There appears to have ethnicity and poverty interaction. Rautahat, Siraha, Mahotari, Dhanusha and Sarlahi districts, where about 78-94 % of the total population is Madhesi people, reranked as having worst poverty cases; the poverty-ranking index ranges from the lowest 4 in Rautahat to 13 in Sarlahi district. The poverty level is reported to be very low in Jhapa, Chitwan and Morang districts where majority of the people are of hill origin. (Shah 2006:7-8)

The report of International Crisis Group (2007) on Terai also reports the following :

A 2002 study found half of Terai districts but only 29 per cent of hill districts “worst affected” by poverty. Within the Terai, there is higher poverty in Madhesi-majority districts, less in districts with more *pahadi* population. (International Crisis Group 2007:6)

Tarai districts that has high *Madhesi* population has high rate of poverty while the Terai districts with high hill origin population has low rate of poverty. There could be many factors that could have caused this disparity but this is a gruesome fact which cannot be ignored because it somehow constructs a hypothesis that development projects in Terai were focused on areas where the

majority of the people were of hill origins. Shree Govind Shah further reported that:

There is disparity in per capita budget allocation between Tarai and hill districts; 10 out of the 20 Tarai districts have 'worst' index values compared to about 17% of the hill districts. Similarly, more number of Tarai districts has lower primary sector development compared to hill districts .(Shah 2006,8)

Data shows that the “Madhesis are poorer and have lower education and health indicators than hill communities” (International Crisis Group 2007, 5-6). This could be due to their lack of influence on politics and government and at the same time perhaps because they are discriminated by the state itself. If this is true then the *Madheshi* People’s movement of 2007 was a logical action that any *Madheshi* could take to strengthen their interest. The victory of MJF, which asserts itself as the party of *Madheshis*, in Constituent Assembly election indicates that *Madheshis* are ready to change the system that is not beneficial to them, their community or their region. However according to UNICEF website “Mugu is the poorest region” (Taylor and Crowe 2009) of Nepal and this region is a mountainous region and not in Tarai or plain region. Hari Prasad Shrestha who worked for UNDP wrote in California Chronicles that “Karnali Zone of mid-western region of Nepal, poorest and miserable part of Nepal, is no better place than far away region of Sub-Sahara of Africa”(Shrestha 2009). Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) a humanitarian news and analysis project of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated in 2006 that “Nepal’s worst food deficit districts: Mugu, Humla, Kalikot, Jumla and Dolpa - all in Karnali, where most Nepalese live on less than US \$1 day - have had a history of food shortages for many decades”(IRIN 2006). In 2008 Ramewhor Bhomara reported in Nepali Times in which he wrote “Jajarkot and

neighbouring Achham and Dailekh are the districts worst affected by Nepal's nationwide food crisis" (Bohora 2008). The districts mentioned by IRIN (2006), Shrestha (2009) and Mr Bohora (2008) which were considered as worst affected by food crisis in Nepal were in mountainous regions of Nepal and not in Tarai region. Mr Shree Govind Shah and International Crisis Group's statement that said *Madheshis* are poorer than hill communities may be true but poorer than *Madheshis* are people living in mountainous regions of Nepal. The investment and development projects in mountainous regions of Nepal are much lower than that in the Tarai regardless of ethnic demography of any Tarai districts. Even *Madheshis* leaders such as Mahanta Thakur and Anil Jha told the researcher in an interview that people living in Himalyan regions or mountainous regions are the most deprived people in Nepal however both of them asserted that government of Nepal launched more development projects in Tarai area where majority of the Pahadhis lived than in areas where the majority were *Madheshis*.

6.2 Cultural domination

In 1957 Nepali language was declared as the sole language to be used as a medium of instruction in education throughout Nepal. The *Panchayat* government made Nepali language the state language of Nepal. When democratic government was formed after People's Movement of 1990 Nepali continued to be the official language of Nepal. Having Nepali language as an official language had multifarious impacts on the Nepalese society. Due to this policy passing Nepali became compulsory in School Leaving Certificate Examination. Those who failed in Nepali failed in the exam. This promoted unfair completion between students who spoke Nepali as the first language and

those for whom it is a second or third language. Like many other ethnic groups the *Madheshi* also were victims of this language policy. This prevented many *Madheshis* as well as other ethnic communities from continuing their studies in a system which taught in a language that they did not fully understand. As the result of this state monolingualism Pahadhis who spoke Nepali as the first language had advantages over *Madheshis* and other ethnic communities in Nepal.

International Crisis Group (2007) further reported on this issue:

State monolingualism has contributed to Madhesi marginalisation, be it from not benefiting from Nepali-language education, facing disadvantages in entrance exams and job applications or being unable to join in national debates. (International Crisis Group 2007:5)

Not being able to use their own language in official places forced many *Madheshis* to trap their potentials and talents within themselves. Unjust system that ensnared the self as well as the community growth of *Madheshis* must have infuriated them. Hindi was not permitted to be spoken on the floor of the national legislature until the People's Movement of 1990. Though the language is today taught at some universities, its continued non-recognition by the government discourages its study. Amongst other things, "this has caused many Hindi periodicals to die a premature death" (Sinha 2008). Moreover, in spite of the overwhelming demand of *Madheshis* to include Hindi in national examinations, Nepali remains the only medium of entrance exams for government jobs. Similarly the dhoti-kurta, the traditional attire of *Madheshis* has never been recognized as proper 'formal' dress for a Nepali even by the post 1990 democratic government. It can be therefore said that the 2007 *Madheshi* uprising was launched also for the dignity and identity of the *Madheshis* and not only for their legal rights.

6.3 Marginalization

Madheshis make up around 32 percent of the population (Shah 2006: 11) but they “occupy less than 12 per cent of the posts in influential areas, including the judiciary, executive, legislature, political parties, industry and civil society, and less than five per cent in international organisations and multilateral donor projects”(International Crisis Group 2007:5). In 1991 people from Pahadhi community which made up of 36% of total population in Nepal occupied 89.2 percent of position in civil service, while *Madheshi* community which has about 32% of the population occupied only 8.4% of position in civil service(Shah 2006:11).The number of *Madheshis* in judiciary system also shows the level of exclusion they are facing. *Madheshis* making almost one third of the population makes just “over 8% of the total judges in the country” while the rest “92% are from Pahadi community" (Shah 2006:12).Participation of judges from *Madheshi* community at the Appeal Court is about 13.0%, and 6.1% at the District Courts (Shah 2006: 12). They are “very few in the army”(Haviland 2007) and the Nepalese army “ has no senior Madhesi officers” (International Crisis Group 2007 :5).

Madheshis were under represented in parliament from 1990 to 2006. MJF leader Upendra Yadav in an interview said:

There are 10,000 people in one constituency in the hills and upper reaches and 100,000 in the Tarai. This goes against the principle of one person, one vote”(International Crisis Group 2007:6)

The number of parliamentary seats in the Tarai does not reflect its population because the “average population per constituency is considerably higher in Tarai districts (127,414) than in the mountain (73,026) and 109,081 in

the hill districts”(Shah 2006:9). This reduces the number of parliamentarians representing Tarai region where majority of the *Madheshis* live and increases the number of parliamentarians representing people from hills and mountains.

The demarcation of constituencies has been from north to south and not east to west. This method of dividing constituencies is seen by *Madheshi* activists as a way to dilute the Madhesi vote because north-south strip pattern introduces a sizeable hill electorate. According to A.C Sinha “the division of constituencies has always been carried out from north to south (rather than east to west), with a view to including hill people and thereby working against the possible dominance of Tarai peoples in any given constituency”(Sinha 2008).

This system angered many *Madheshis* because thanks to this system, “in the 1999 elections, *pahadi* candidates won a majority of Tarai seats” (International Crisis Group 2007,6) and “ Irrespective of party affiliation, during the last parliamentary election, in 1999, only 40 *Madhesis* were elected throughout Nepal in a house of 205”(Sinha 2008).

6.4 Events that contributed in building up the *Madheshi* People’s Movement of 2007 and 2008

The government of Nepal not addressing the grievances of *Madheshi* community made *Madheshis* revolt against the state but there were also many events which were slowly radicalizing the *Madheshis*. Some of the events which contributed in building up this movement are given below.

6.4.1 History of rebellion

Madheshi activists that during Rana regime the Ranas confiscated lands of the locals and distributed it to their loyalists. The regime supported the local feudal lords who committed atrocities against peasants and other locals. Some

Madheshi leaders like Anil Jha told in the interview with the researcher that during winter the Ranas came to Tarai for vacations and abducted women of the locals. For these various reasons people in Tarai were against Ranas. The Indian freedom fighters who often came to Tarai part of Nepal to hide from the security forces of British India also influenced many *Madheshis* in Tarai to join anti Rana underground political parties of Nepal like Nepali Congress. *Madheshis* joined in the fight against Ranas and later in the fight against autocratic Panchayat regime but they said their contributions were overlooked. *Madheshis* also complained that the statues of *Madheshi* martyrs were not found in Pahadhi areas whereas the statues of Pahadhi martyrs were found in Tarai region.

The democratic movement of 1990 could not address the real grievances of *Madheshis*. The anti- Indian riots in Kathmandu in December 2000 in which *Madheshis* became the main target (Poudel 2001) was a major event to alienate and radicalize *Madheshis*(Jha 2007). The forceful seizure of the dead body of Ramesh Kumar Mahato on 20 January infuriated many *Madheshis* also on religious ground. According to Goldman (2003), Melwani (2003) and BBC World Service (2000) it is a common Hindu belief that if we tamper with the dead body too much then the soul will not be able to be separated from the body and carry on to the astral realm. Most *Madheshis* are Hindus and seizing of the corpse of Ramesh Kumar Mahato was viewed by many as a direct attack on their Hindu religious belief itself. In 2008 anthropologist Dr Saubhagya Shah wrote about the 2004 anti-Maoist uprising in Dullu VDC of Dailekh district. This movement according to him was flared after the Maoist insurgent abandoned and disregarded the body of one of their cadre. In the same research report he further

wrote that even “in more modern and urban contexts, such as Palestine, Iraq, and apartheid-era South Africa, funeral processions have been highly charged sites for political expression”(Shah 2008: 483). Shah’s argument that dead body and funerals are powerful symbols to mobilize people can also be applied in understanding how the death of Ramesh Kumar Mahato ignited riots in that town. On January 22 when five people died due to police firing in Lahan it finally led to the explosion of *Madheshi*’s rage against the state.

Maoist insurgency or what Maoist called ‘People’s War’ which began in 1996 had strong presence in rural areas of Nepal. During ‘People’s War’ members of the political parties were targeted by the Maoists which strongly weakened the presence of these parties in rural areas. Leaders and activists of political parties could not enter rural Nepal for the fear of Maoists. On November 2005 the SPA(Seven Party Alliance) the coalition of major political parties of Nepal and CPN-Maoist signed a twelve-point agreement in which Maoist agreed to accept the multiparty democracy ,to lay down their arms and to launch protest programs to overthrow the regime of the King Gyanendra. Following this agreement the CPN-Maoist allowed the leaders and cadres of SPA to organize political programs in rural areas so as to organize people for the uprising against the king Gyanendra. The leaders and cadres of political parties penetrated deep into rural areas including in Tarai and worked to educate people about their rights and a need for democracy. During this period many Nepalese including the *Madheshis* learned about their rights, importance of fighting for their rights and the values of democracy. *Madheshi* leaders like Anil Jha,Mohanta Thakur ,Ram Sahaya Yadhav and Sarita Giri told the researcher in

the interview that it was this political campaign that raised the consciousness of *Madheshi* people. MJF along with other political parties actively participated in rural Tarai during this period to raise the consciousness of the people. People's Movement of 2006 also taught Nepalese people including *Madheshis* that no matter how powerful a person or institution might be the power of people can defeat them as they defeated King Gyanendra. The *Madheshi* uprising in February 2007 against the Maoist could also have been due to the inspiration of People's Movement of 2006. According to Sociologist Dr Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan:

Monarchy was the most powerful hindrance for the evolution of a new inclusive society in Nepal. It was the very symbol of status quo maintenance. The 1990 uprising could not remove it but the 2006 movement disarmed it and made it prone for removal. Eliminating royal references from army and government titles was a victory for Indigenous and Ethnic nationalities of Nepal whose culture, language and identity were oppressed by Hindu monarchy. The achievement of 2006 inspired many suppressed nationalities including *Madheshis* to rise up for a federal Nepal.

According to Anil Jha although *Madheshis* also played an important role in People's movement of 2006, the interim government after the fall of King Gyanendra's regime, failed to be sensitive to *Madheshi* issues¹⁶. Mahanta Thakur and Professor Jha believed that People's Movement of 2006 raised the consciousness of *Madheshis* but most importantly it taught them that the method to secure one's right was not through violence but through peaceful means.

6.4.2 Reaction against secularism

A *Madheshi* politician who requested anonymity told the researcher in an informal conversation that he believed that *Madheshis* revolted in 2007 because majority of them did not like the Hindu state of Nepal being converted into a

¹⁶ Anil Jha CA a member and the General Secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato fraction) in an interview conducted by the researcher.

secular one in 2006 by *Pahadhi* dominated parliamentarians. During the course of the interview he said the following:

People converting to Christianity is higher in hill areas of Nepal than in Tarai because most Madheshis are orthodox Hindus. Madheshis were respected and admired across the national border by their Bengali, Bihari and Awadhi cousins because they were from a Hindu country which had a Hindu king. When in 2006 the Hindu state of Nepal was converted into a secular one in an ad hoc manner then Madheshis lost their identity. They felt that their very religious beliefs were under attack. Besides Hindu religion the Pahadhis and Madheshis have nothing in common as both communities are from different geographical regions, eat different types of food, speak different languages and practice different types of cultures.

International Crisis Group's report on *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 also identified Hindu religious element as one of the forces but not the only force in driving this movement. The report further stated the following:

The Madhesi movement did have some Hindu strands: resentment against the government's May 2007 secularism declaration was used as a rallying call; some MJF central committee members have past associations with Hindutva groups; the MJF has also used inflammatory Hindu imagery in publicity. Smaller sects and popular gurus may also have helped rally anti-secular opinion. Although religious sentiment does not necessarily translate into Hindu nationalism or monarchism, there may be more sympathy for Hindu politics than Madhesi leaders and secular-oriented commentators would like to admit. (International Crisis Group 2007:11)

Although most *Madheshi* and non-*Madheshi* politicians refused to accept the logic that the conversion of Hindu state into a secular one after People's Movement of 2006 triggered *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 yet this could also be one of the hidden factors that contributed in making this movement possible. A *Pahadhi* from Spatari district of Tarai who have not been able to go to his village since *Madheshi* People's Movement told the researcher in an informal conversation that *Madheshis* and Pahadhi Hindus worship same Hindu deities and had rather a normal relations in the past but after converting Nepal into a secular state many *Madheshis* felt that *Pahadhis* atheists and Hindus only in name. He argued that many Madheshis told him that *Pahadhis* were all

Maoists hence atheists and that was the reason why they made Nepal a secular state.

6.4.3 Radicalization of *Madheshis* by ‘People’s War’

Madheshis had many reasons to be angry with Nepalese state but Maoist movement gave them a political platform to express their anger. The organized campaign of CPN (Maoist) in forming different ethnic fronts is one of the most important factors that led to self-consciousness as well as radicalization of many ethnic communities and identity based organizations in Nepal including the *Madheshi* community.

The grievances of ethnic communities according Harka Bahadur Gurung were raised by CPN Unity Center which later became CPN Maoist and “began mobilizing oppressed ethnic communities in their struggle in 1991 when they adopted the twin agenda of secular state and linguistic /ethnic equality” (Gurung 2007:81). According to Deepak Thapa the post 1990 democratic Nepalese State remained insensitive to ethnic issues and it’s reaction to the demands of ethnic communities was "uninspiring" and the state "did little to recognise concerns" relating to "language rights, under-representation in administration” (Thapa 2003:86-87). The CPN(Maoists) "were quick to identify this ethnic discontent and tried to ride it to their purposes" and even " added ethnic demands as flavour to their ideological programme of class struggle " (Thapa 2002:86-87). D.B Gurung stated that the Maoist insurgency or what they called ‘People’s War’ was committed to “addressing the ethnic, regional, and linguistic inequity" (Gurung 2007:170) and therefore the CPN (Maoist) therefore established various ethnic fronts during their People's War (insurgency period

from 1996 to 2006) which attracted many ethnic groups and discontent communities including the *Madheshi* community. Maoists advocated for the elimination of discrimination among caste groups “apparently minimizing only its effects, i.e. exploitation and prejudice” but to ethnic groups on the other hand the Maoist gave a “promise of territorial autonomy” (Tilouine 2004:115) which attracted ethnic communities of Nepal towards Maoist agenda. During the peak of Maoist insurgency scholar Harka Gurung argued that “the radical struggle of the Maoists” was “being reinforced by ethnic liberation fronts consolidating the process of identity formation further” (Gurung 2007: 90). *Madheshi* Rashtriya Mukti Morcha or ‘*Madheshi* National Liberation Front’ the *Madheshi* ethnic front of Maoist party that acted as a strong recruiting organ for the party Maoist insurgency and was a major factor in radicalizing Madhesh politics. The “CPN (Maoist)’s position on nationalities was severely criticized by its Indian counterparts” because Nepal’s Maoist “rejects the right of secession of the oppressed nationalities of Nepal and substitutes in its place demand for autonomy” (Tilouine 2004:116-17). Saubhagya Shah (2004) warned that “After the Maoists attain their political goals and seek to demobilise, the ethnic genie, raised on ambitions of secession and separate statehood, may not wish to go back into the bottle so quietly: ethnic chauvinism has a tendency to take on life of its own” (Shah 2004:220). He further warned that unlike "Mao and Stalin, the Nepali Maoists would not have the wherewithal to contain the ethnic firestorm they had ignited" (Shah 2004:220).

Sociologist Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan in an interview with the researcher gave credit to CPN Maoist for raising the consciousness of the

suppressed ethnic communities of Nepal including the *Madheshis* but he further argued that the Maoist movement was one of the factors among many other factors that raised the issue of these communities. Maoist leader Prabhu Sah Teri however disagrees with the view of Dr Bhattachan. Prabhu Sah, a Maoist lawmaker told the researcher in the interview that “it was People’s War that raised the issue of federalism, inclusive state, citizenship and dignity when other political parties and *Madheshi* organizations were not concerned about the issues of *Madheshis*”. He further added that “during the People’s War Maoist formed parallel government with ethnic federalism that gave *Madheshis* idea on how to form a federal state that does not discriminate hence Maoist movement is the most imperative factor that triggered different ethnic uprising in Nepal including the Madheshi uprising”. Mr Teri further reinforced his argument by saying the following:

Mahan Jana Yudha (Great People’s War) helped Madheshi people to raise their consciousness about how they were oppressed and exploited. Many Madheshis knew that they were oppressed but they did not dare to speak against the ruling regime because police, army and the armed goons of the ruling elites were everywhere. When People’s War began, the People’s Army (armed Maoists) and People’s Militia easily defeated the vigilante goons, police, armed-police and military throughout Nepal. The defeat of well trained and well armed military forces by the Maoists inspired oppressed Madheshis as they were the victims of these military forces. They came to realize that the stories created about bravery of the Nepalese soldiers were indeed a myth. They learned that they were oppressed by the state with the support of paper tiger military force and hence they gained courage to stand up against the establishment. People’s War gave Madheshis consciousness and created fearlessness among them to fight for their rights¹⁷.

Leaders of Madheshi political parties believe that it was not the Maoist movement but rather the various movement launched by various Madheshi political parties and organizations since 1950s that was responsible for

¹⁷ Prabhu Sah Teri a CA member and UCPN (Maoist) leader in an interview conducted by the researcher.

Madheshi People's Movement. They further argued that since most of the *Madheshis* voted for Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum, Tarai Madhesh Loktantrik Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party hence these three parties are the true representative of Madheshi people. When *Madheshi* Maoist leader Mr Prabhu Sah Teri was asked by the researcher if what the leaders of MJF, TMLP and NSP were true Mr Teri responded and said the following:

The parties which you just mentioned are lead by the feudal elites of Tarai. These elites were always present in Nepalese politics. They held powerful positions before the Madheshi People's Movement. However after Madheshi People's Movement these elites suddenly became revolutionary. But they are revolutionary only in theory. It was People's War that raised the issue of federalism, inclusive state, citizenship and dignity. The political parties you mentioned were not concerned about these issues of Madheshis. However people are slowly understanding that it was the Maoist party that raised the issues to liberate *Madheshis*. The new parties like MJF are trying to take credit for what Maoist sowed but people are not fools. It often happens that a farmer does all the work but land lords come and take away the harvest. However people are now realizing that Maoist is the only real party that raised the issue of Madhesh in the past and that has a true non-sectarian solution to the problem of Madhesh.

Madheshi leaders of MJF, TMLP and NSP told the researcher in the interview that the role of Maoist led insurgency had very little to do with raising the issue of *Madheshis*. Maoist movement however did played an imperative role in not only raising the *Madheshi* issue but politicizing it and radicalizing it by promising ethnic regional autonomy to *Madheshi* in Tarai. The Maoist radicalized the *Madheshis* in such an extreme manner that the ethnic issues of *Madheshis* eclipsed the communist doctrine of the Maoist resulting in the formation of The Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) a secessionist *Madheshi* armed group in July 2004 after Jaya Krishna Goit split away from the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist).

6.5 Chapter conclusion

Madheshi communities like other ethnic communities of Nepal felt discriminated by *Pahadhi* dominated state. However unlike other discriminated ethnic communities of Nepal the very nationality of *Madheshis* were questioned in Nepal. Over 3 million *Madheshis* could not get citizenship in Nepal prior to 2006 because government officers decided in an ad hoc manner that they were not citizens of Nepal. *Madheshi* language, dress and culture were also viewed by other Nepalese with suspicion taking it to be the language, dress and culture of Indians. Even to study in their own mother tongue became difficult for *Madheshis* in Nepal because Nepali was the only language of instruction to be used in education in Nepal hence the *Madheshis* considered themselves as internally colonized community by hill rulers. *Madheshi* fought for democracy but the democracy of 1990 did very little to address their grievances. Despite making almost one third of Nepal's population their presence in civil services, judiciary, military and even in parliament were low. On the other hand Maoist insurgency propagated relentlessly about how *Madheshis* were being mistreated and promised them ethnic autonomy if Maoist came into power. On the other hand the anti -Indian riots in Kathmandu in December 2000 in which *Madheshis* became the main target of attacks further made *Madheshis* insecure in their own country and contributed in ethnically radicalizing them. The People's Movement of 2006 which reestablished democracy in Nepal brought jubilation to *Madheshis* as discriminatory citizenship laws were amended but this jubilation was short lived because Nepal was declared as a secular state and interim constitution ignored the issues of federalism which *Madheshis* had demanded.

The killing of a young *Madheshi* by Maoist cadre in Lahan angered people in that town alone. But the killing of *Madheshi* protesters by the police of a democratic state that was being led by Nepali Congress Party which had strong support base among *Madheshis* shocked and infuriated them. The issues of *Madheshis* which had so long been suppressed and ignored suddenly reached the boiling point during the protest of 2007 and mass movement of *Madheshis* erupted in Tarai and *Madheshi* People's Movement occurred.

Chapter VII

Impact of *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008: an analysis

7.1 Federalism

The greatest achievement of Madheshi People's Movement was that it forced Nepal to be a federal state. The fifth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 is about the reconstruction of the Nepalese state while the sixth point is about the making Nepal a federal state. Leading *Madheshi* parties accused the government of Nepal for failing to implement the 22-point agreement it signed with MJF on August 30, 2007. To force the government to implement the agreement and to secure more rights for *Madheshis* the three *Madheshi* political parties ;*Madheshi* Janadhikar Forum ,Tarai-Madhesh Loktantrik Party and Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato faction); formed an alliance called United Democratic *Madheshi* Front” On February 8, 2008, (UDMF) announced that it would call a Terai-wide protest from February 13 to pressurize the Government to fulfill their demands. After two weeks of mass protest the government of Nepal and UDMF signed eight point agreement on February 28, 2008. The second point of the eight-point agreement was related to reconstructing the state of Nepal into a federal structure.

7.2 Victory of *Madheshi* parties in CA election

MJF and TMLP (Tarai-Madhesh Loktantrik Party) both political parties formed for the cause of *Madheshi* issues became the fourth and fifth largest party in the Constituent Assembly Election of 2008. In FPTP(First Pass The Post) MJF and TMLP won 29 and 9 seats. Fifty four political parties participated for the

Proportionate Representation of Constituent Assembly Election of 2008 and out of them MJF became the fourth largest party with 678327 votes and TMLP became the fifth largest political party with 338930 votes (Election Commission 2008).

7.3 First President of Nepal

Dr Ram Baran Yadav from Nepali Congress was elected by the elected members of Constituent Assembly members and he “became the first President of Republic of Nepal in July 2008, nearly two months after the country's new constituent assembly had voted to abolish the 239-year-old monarchy”(BBC 2009). In almost two and half century this was the first time that a *Madheshi* became the head of the state of Nepal. Similarly Parmananda Jha from *Madheshi* Jana Adhikar Forum, Nepal was elected as the first Vice-President of Nepal

7.4 Madeshi ministers in important ministries

CPN-Maoist became the largest party in Nepal in 2008 Constituent Assembly Election. They formed a coalition government with the third largest UML and the fourth largest MJF party. *Madheshi* occupied important ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Education and Sports, Physical Planning and works, local Development and Commerce and Supply after the *Madheshi* uprising united *Madheshis*(Central Intelligence Agency 2008).

7.5 Inclusion of Madheshis (special reservation/quota for Madheshi)

One of the major demands of MJF during *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 was to end exclusion of marginalized community. The forth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on

2007 was about the proportionate representation of excluded communities in all organs and levels of all structures of the state; and also in powers, machinery and resources(UNDP 2008)The eighth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 was about the inclusion of excluded communities in political appointment in sectors like foreign services and education.The eighteenth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 was about the inclusion of *Madheshi* community in media and mass communication sector. The twentieth point among the 22 point agreement was about the formation of high level task force to make policies and laws for the inclusion of marginalized communities in all organs of the state (UNDP 2008).

The third of the eight-point agreement signed between the government of Nepal and UDMF on 2008 was to further galvanize the inclusion of marginalized communities by increasing 20 percent legal provisions of Article 7, sub-article 14 of the Constituent Assembly Member Election Act-2054 to 30 percent. The fourth of the eight-point agreement signed between the government of Nepal and UDMF on 2008 was also about inclusion of marginalized communities by the government by compulsorily appointing, promoting and nominating marginalized communities in all organs of the state including the security bodies. The fifth of the eight-point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and UDMF on 2008 was about the government ensuring entry of Madhesi and other marginalized communities into the Nepal Army and giving Nepal Army an inclusive structure (Kantipuronline 2008).

7.6 Defection of Madheshi leaders from major political parties

Madheshi cadres and *Madheshi* leaders from various major national political parties left the party they were in and joined *Madheshi* parties like MJF or TMLP after *Madheshi* People's Movement. Professor Amar Kanta Jha told the researcher during the interview that when Mohanta Thakur who was in Nepal Congress Party for last 37 years defected from it citing indifference shown to *Madheshis* by the party it shocked *Madheshis* and made *Madheshis* realize how serious he was about *Madheshi* issues. After Mohanta Thakur many *Madheshi* leaders of other different political parties like Jaya Prasad Gupta of Nepali Congress Party, Hirdesh Tripathi of Nepal Sadbhavana Party and Sarvendra Nath Sukla of The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (National Democratic Party) left the party they were affiliated with and joined either MJF or TMLP. Scores of cadres of different national political parties defected the party they were affiliated with and joined these two *Madheshi* parties after the movement. The sheer magnitude of *Madheshi* People's Movement made *Madheshi* leaders and cadres realized that *Madheshi* issues was core issue for *Madheshis* in Tarai hence many of them thought that defecting national party they were affiliated with and joining *Madheshi* political parties became a rational move for them. One of the impacts of *Madheshi* People's Movement was that it made *Madheshis* from various national political parties to leave it and join *Madheshi* political parties that were focused on pure *Madheshi* issues.

7.7 Dignity

Modern Nepali nationalism “has always excluded Madhesis, whose distinct cultures and cross-border links have led hill Nepalis to view them with suspicion

and derision” (International Crisis Group 2007:3). International Crisis Group (2007)

further wrote the following:

The psychological distance between Madhesis and the Nepali state, as well as other citizens, was aggravated by discriminatory policies. Some of this distance is centuries old but much reflects the more deliberate constructs of Rana and Panchayat policies. Few older Madhesis will forget the harsh insistence on conforming to pahadi cultural norms embodied in the Panchayat slogan “ek desh, ek bhash, ek bhasa” (“one country, one dress, one language”). Even moderate Madhesi intellectuals describe the cumulative effect as a form of “internal colonisation” and say that the overall goal of their movement is to achieve “emancipation from slavery”. (International Crisis Group 2007:3)

However after *Madheshi* People’s Movement of 2007 this feeling of being a victim of “internal colonization” (International Crisis Group 2007, 3) has changed. Rather than feeling humiliated the *Madheshis* after the Madheshi People’s Movement feel dignified. The *Madheshi* People’s Movement has strengthened democracy and integrity of Nepal by making Nepal more inclusive and sensitive towards the sentiments of marginalized community¹⁸. Prasant Jha (2007) under the heading *The year of the madhes* wrote in *Nepalitimes* that after *Madheshi* People’s Movement “Nepal is not the same country anymore. Nepal can never be described anymore as just a country of mountains, even in a tourist brochure”(Jha 2007). Mahanta Thakur told the researcher in the interview that *Madheshis* feel more dignified in New Democratic Nepal which was made from the sweat blood and sacrifices of Madheshis and other marginalized communities. CK Lal (2007) an influential *Madheshi* intellectual under the title *The revolt of the aristocrats* wrote in *Nepalitimes* how issues of Madheshis which were ignored in the past are now being heard after *Madheshi* People’s Movement:

Influential donors and lenders have long been involved in manufacturing knowledge in Nepal. Since 1996, sponsored scholarships have sought to identify

¹⁸ Sarita Giri a CA member and the party president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandidevi) in an interview conducted by the researcher.

the causes behind the insurgency. Later came possible remedies to counter leftwing radicalism.

Latent tensions between Bahun-Chhetri-Newar (BCN) elite and janajati aspirants has been minutely mapped. Donor support has been channelled for dalit consciousness, gender rights activism, identity politics, social inclusion, and the kamaiya struggle.

Yet, the Madhes Uprising last winter took everyone by surprise. The international community was asking who these madhesis were and why they were so angry. Magnus Hatlebakk of CMI, Norway, was one of the 'experts' asked to find an answer.

Hatlebakk has been studying the economics of the eastern tarai for nearly a decade. In the past, when he approached donor agencies for research funds, all he'd get was a polite hearing. Now he was asked to do something double-quick. (Lal 2007)

Language and dresses of all ethnic communities of Nepal including that of *Madheshi* ethnic community was declared as national language and national attire by the interim constitution of Nepal. This ended the cultural domination that *Madheshis* and other ethnic communities of Nepal felt. Although Madheshi People's Movement alone did not force this change in the interim constitution but the movement did played an imperative role in asserting issues of *Madheshis* as well as that of other ethnic communities and pressurizing the constitution makers to make it more inclusive. Madheshi journalist Prasant Jha (2007) under the heading *The year of the madhes* wrote the change he felt brought by *Madheshi* People's Movement:

Any party that ignores madhesi sentiments cannot remain a national entity for long. Any politician, who thinks he can take the madhesi vote for granted, commits political suicide. Never again will Kathmandu be able to tell a madhesi politician not to wear a dhoti to parliament or speak in his own language.

All government departments have been forced to at least appear sensitive about the need to include madhesis. Even the insular mafia of international organisations in the capital has had to wake up. The World Bank is adding a chapter to a major study on exclusion in which they had originally forgotten all about madhesis.

But any Nepali who derisively dismisses a madhesi as "dhoti" can't get away with it anymore. A madhesi friend who lives in Kuponhole reports that he used to look down and walk away when abused. Today, there are no more insults.

If this is happening in the capital, where madhesis are relatively insecure, think about their level of confidence in the tarai. (Jha 2007)

Madheshis were looked down upon but *Madheshi* People's Movement changed all this. International Crisis Group (2007) writes "The Tarai, a long-neglected borderland, now occupies the centre of Nepal's political stage" (International Crisis Group 2007,2) because of *Madheshi* People's Movement.

7.8 Rise of ethnic antagonism in Tarai

Madheshi People's Movement has secured many rights for *Madheshis* but some politicians claimed that the movement brought ethnic conflict between *Madheshis* and non-*Madheshis* or *Pahadhis* (hill community). Keshab Mainali the chair person of Chure Bhawar Rastriya Ekta Party (Chure Bhawar National Unity Party) which is the 23rd largest party in Proporzate Representation in 2008 Constituent Assembly Election and 53rd largest in First Past the Post of the 2008 Constituent Assembly Election told the following to researcher in an interview:

The uprising in Tarai occurred following the killing of a young boy by a Maoist cadre. I supported the uprising because the agitation launched to secure more right for the people of Tarai. However the uprising became increasingly communal intensified as it. The slogans became anti pahadhi instead of anti Maoist or anti government slogans. Slogans like "Pahadhi kuta maro juta" (Beat Pahadhi dog with your shoes) slowly emerged. When anti-Pahadhi slogans were shouted I thought it was work of some infiltrators. During the peak of the movement I got information that in some places of Tarai pahadhis were tied to heavy stones and thrown in lakes and rivers by the agitating Madheshi mobs. I also met pahadhis whose family members were burnt alive by Madheshi mobs during this Madheshi uprising. After that we opened our organization to protest against this communal force and to protect pahadhi community in Tarai.

Madheshis and Pahadhis have been living together for so many years but India backed political parties like Madheshi Janadhikar Forum has played communal games that divides Pahadhis and Madheshis. After Madheshi 's uprising the communal harmony between Pahadhis and Madheshis ended. Going to district headquarter of Tarai was not that difficult but now after the Madheshi uprising it is like going to a warzone. Madheshis when they meet us in Tarai's district headquarters they use such obscene words against us that our women are afraid to go there. They humiliate us ,kick us and worst whenever they see us wearing Nepali topi(Nepali cap) they take it out spit in it and tell us to wear it. Before this uprising there were only three separatist armed Madheshi groups in Tarai like Goit, Jwala and Madheshi Tigers but after it Madheshi uprising the number of separatist group increased to 21. After the second uprising

of United Democratic Madheshi Front the number of armed separatist Madheshi groups in Tarai reached forty two. They are killing *Pahadhis*, capturing their land, misbehaving with their women and doing everything they can to displace us from *Madheshi* majority areas. *Madheshi* atrocity against *Pahadhi* community is opening a flood of displaced *Pahadhi* migrants in Chure Bhawar region of Tarai where *Pahadhis* are in majority. My party is doing all it can to prevent *Pahadhi* youths from attacking *Madheshis* in our area. Just because Jwala Singh or *Madheshi* Tigers kill an innocent *Pahadhi* in Tarai that does not mean we should go and kill our *Madheshis* neighbor who have been living with us for many decades. However I can not control everyone. If my party wants then we can launch an ethnic war between *Pahadhis* and *Madheshis* but this will lead to a violent civil war that will destroy this country. We are doing our best to prevent *Pahadhi* youths from attacking *Madheshis* in Chure Bhawar region but if government can not protect *Pahadhis* then we can not let *Madheshis* do whatever they like with us. We hope we don't have to carry guns but if we do then yes there will be a civil war¹⁹.

Constituent Assembly member Dr Laxmi Chaudhari told the researcher that Tharus want Tharuhat province / state in Tarai region in a federal democratic Nepal. He warned that if Tharu's demands are not fulfilled by the state then ethnic war between Madheshis and Tharus may erupt as Tharus would launch uprising to fulfill their demand. He is worried that if government fulfills the demand of the Tharus for Tharuhat province then still ethnic war between *Madheshis* and Tharus could erupt as Madheshis would start attacking Tharus for spoiling their core demand of "*Ek Madhesh Ek Pradesh*" (One *Madhesh* One Province/state). *Madheshi* Maoist leader Prabhu Sah Teri is however optimist that ethnic violence would not break out in Tarai between different ethnic communities there. In an interview with the researcher Mr Teri said the following:

Madheshis and other indigenous as well as ethnic communities of Nepal were deprived from enjoying basic fundamental human rights as a citizen of a country. People's War helped these marginalized communities to fight for their rights. However some reactionary, revisionist, feudal and religious rightwing organizations with strategic and financial help from anti revolutionary global powers are doing their best to create communal tension so as to lead this country into chaos. These communal groups dedicated in launching ethnic violence in

¹⁹ Keshab Prasad Mainali a CA member and Chairman of Chure Bhawar National Unity Party in an interview conducted by the researcher.

Nepal are however are few in number and their supporters are not the masses but criminal gangs. These groups enjoy no mass support and when time comes the Maoist party which is the party of ordinary people would crush these communal elements. Many people know that these communal groups are not good for the country nor for the community which they claim to represent. These communal reactionaries are the last fighters of feudal and religious mindset. These groups are in the verge of collapse and have already lost the first battle which is to win the support of the people. Soon they will lose in all fronts and then they will perish²⁰.

The targeted killings and displacements of *Pahadhi* settlers in Tarai by *Madheshi* armed groups has polarized *Pahadhi* and *Madheshi* community in Tarai along ethnic lines. The continuation of such ethnically motivated attack could ignite anti *Madheshi* attacks by Pahashis in Tarai and hilly regions as a reaction which could then push Nepal further into the quagmire of ethnic conflict. After *Madheshi* People's Movement the relationship between Tharu community of Tarai and *Madheshis* have worsened because Tharus do not wish themselves to be put under *Madheshi* definition and are oppose to the *Ek Madhesh Ek Pradesh* or to make the entire Tarai into one single *Madheshi* province or state in federal Nepal which is the core demand of *Madheshi* parties and some *Madheshi* insurgent groups. Tharus want Tharuhat province /state in western and Midwestern Tarai for Tharu community. For Tharuhat provice some Tharu groups have even formed their own militias. Some of the radical Tharu organizations are even opening ethnic Tharu militia fronts in central and eastern Tarai where *Madheshis* are in majority. There is a possibility that ethnic violence between *Madheshis* and Tharus may occur if either of the demand of the two communities are met because their demands are vertically contradictory to each other . *Madheshi* People's Movement radicalized different ethnic communities in

²⁰ Prabhu Sah Teri a CA member and UCPN (Maoist) leader in an interview conducted by the researcher.

Tarai including *Pahadhis* and Tharus hence Tarai has become a fertile ground for ethnic violence to erupt.

7.9 Chapter conclusion

Madheshi People's Movement brought sea of changes in Nepali society. The interim constitution of Nepal declared Nepal as a federal state after signing the agreement with MJF in 2007 and UDMF in 2008 who led the *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008. Due to the *Madheshi* People's Movement the voting pattern of *Madheshis* in Tarai changed. *Madheshis* had in the past had voted for national parties like Nepali Congress Party, UML and RPP whose commitment on *Madheshi* issues were ambiguous. In Constituent Assembly Election of 2008 however the *Madheshis* voted for regional *Madheshi* parties like MJF who had led *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and for TMLP which played important role in *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2008 and due to it MJF and TMLP became the fourth and fifth largest elected political party of Nepal. Another major impact the movement made was that the very first President and Vice President of Nepal were chosen from *Madheshi* community because there were large number of *Madheshi* Constituent Assembly members whose votes were crucial in electing the President and Vice President of Nepal. Despite being able to achieving so much by the *Madheshi* People's Movement this movement has however also brought polarization between different ethnic communities in Tarai making it a region prone for ethnic violence. After this movement ethnic antagonism between *Pahadhis* and *Madheshis* and between Tharus and *Madheshis* started because their ethnic interest and demands are in conflict with each other.

Chapter VIII

Research summary, Main research findings and Research conclusion

8.1 Research summary

This dissertation was a study of two ethnic uprisings that swept through the Tarai region of Nepal in 2007 and 2008. It aimed to understand what caused these two uprisings, what impacts they had on Nepalese politics and what could happen to the achievements made by these two powerful movements in the future.

Ethnic uprisings are the symptoms of how angry a community of people is against a particular government or a state. If ethnic uprisings are not understood and taken seriously, it can lead to violent ethnic conflicts like the ones in Sri Lanka, Rwanda or even Yugoslavia. Following the *Madhesi* People's Movements the ethnic violence in the Tarai escalated and the number of ethnic armed groups and ethnic militias swelled. In this context, the research attempts to study the scale of these two movements, diagnose the causes that led to them and the impact they were able to make in different sectors of Nepalese society.

Research methodologies used for this research were semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), questionnaire survey and study of secondary data. Nineteen respondents were interviewed for this research among whom most were either politicians, ethnic activists or intellectuals. Six FGDs were conducted for this research among which three were conducted in the Tarai region and the other three in the hilly regions of Nepal. Two hundred

respondents participated in questionnaires survey. Among the two hundred questionnaire survey respondents, one hundred of them were from *Madheshi* community and another one hundred from *Pahadhi* community. Books, reports, journals and newspaper reports on ethnic politics or *Madheshi* uprising related topics were also studied for this research.

The *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 started in January 16 when cadres of MJF declared a general strike in the Tarai after MJF leaders were arrested on the same day in Kathmandu for burning the interim constitution of Nepal. The killing of a MJF activist by Maoists in January 19 and killing of five *Madheshi* protesters by the police in January 22 sparked the movement and took it to a new height. Within three weeks, from January 16 to February 7, the movement was able to force the Government of Nepal to change the interim constitution and declare Nepal as a federal state. Within these three weeks about, 40 protesters died due to police actions.

Following this uprising the number of *Madheshi* armed groups increased and so did their activities. These armed groups were involved in various crimes such as extortion, abductions and assassinations. Some even synchronized serial bomb blasts in Kathmandu with intentions to ignite communal riots between *Madheshis* and *Pahadhis*. After the uprising the cases of communal riots in the Tarai also increased. The violent political but also caste related clashes in Rautahat district in March 21 and ethnic violence in Kapilbastu in September 16 that claimed many lives, occurred after the first *Madheshi* People's Movement.

In February 13, 2008 United Democratic *Madheshi* Front (UDMF) the alliance of three *Madheshi* political parties, *Madheshi* Jana Adhikar Forum,

Tarai Madhesh Loktantrik Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party launched the second *Madheshi* People's Movement to pressurize the Government of Nepal to implement the 22-point-agreement the government had signed with MJF in August 30, 2007. The movement lasted for two weeks and during this period six protesters and one police officer died during the clashes between agitators and security forces. The agitation was called off by the UDMF in February 28 after the Government signed the eight-point-agreement with them. The main points in the eight-point-agreement were to make Nepal a federal state, to declare those who died in 2007 and 2008 uprisings as martyrs and to make Nepal more inclusive by making more reservations for *Madheshis* and other marginalized communities of Nepal.

8.2 Summary of main research findings on the causes of *Madheshi* People's Movement

The research findings on the causes of *Madheshi* People's Movement are as follows:

Discrimination and complication for *Madheshis* in acquiring Nepali citizenship:

-) *Madheshi* respondents complained that they are treated by Nepalese state as foreignn nationals.
-) *Madheshi* respondents complained that Laws were passed in 1964 and 1990 that made it difficult for *Madheshis* to obtain citizenship certificate in Nepal.
-) To get citizenship certificate the appliers had to know Nepali language which many *Madheshis* failed to be as they had other mother tongues.

-) Many Madheshis said that the government officers decided in an ad-hoc manner whether they were Nepali or not while applying for citizenship.
-) An “official report in 1995 found more than three million Madhesis lacked citizenship certificates” (Sinha 2008).
-) *Madheshis* without citizenship had to face many problems. Without citizenship they could not prove that they were the owners of their land and due to this many *Madheshis* claimed that they lost their land to migrants from the hills who had good relationship with *Pahadhi* government officers.
-) The citizenship law was amended in 2006 but the humiliation and the hardship *Madheshis* faced due to citizenship law in the past made it a strong factor for *Madheshis* to rise in revolt.

***Madheshis* felt misused by major political parties**

-) *Madheshi* activists complained that major political parties used *Madheshis* for agitation but forgot about them once these political parties formed the government in Kathmandu.
-) *Madheshis* further complained that statues of *Pahadhi* martyrs were built across Tarai but statue of *Madheshi* martyrs were not found in hilly and mountainous regions of Nepal.

Indifference shown towards the grievances of *Madheshis*

-) *Madheshi* respondents complained that the armed conflict between CPN Maoist and the security forces of Nepal were addressed through Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006 because the hilly regions faced their direct impact.

-) The insurgent groups in Tarai like “JTMM” and “Madheshi Tigers” were not invited for peace process or even the dialogue by the government during 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord because *Madheshis* felt that *Pahadhi* dominated government officers and leaders of political parties only cared about peace to come in hill areas of Nepal and did not care about terrors face by *Madheshis* of Tarai region.

***Madheshis* facing employment problem in Nepal**

-) *Madheshi* activists Shree Govind Shah told the researcher in an interview that the employment opportunities for *Madheshis* are low in government jobs and also in other sectors.
-) About “81% of the total manpower involved in the 30 multilateral agencies working in Nepal and 61 projects funded by these agencies are from Pahadi community, 14.1% are foreigners and the rest 5.2% are *Madheshi* people”(Shah 2006:11).
-) Available data indicates that *Madheshis* especially “uneducated teenagers and the young people have temporarily migrated to India for economic opportunity – this has unbalanced labour supply to farming in many parts of Madhesh region” (Shah 2006:16).
-) Even among the educated *Madheshis* employment is a problem because “there is unemployment for the educated *Madheshi* people in government or non-government organizations or in INGOs or international organizations working in Nepal primarily due to the exclusion behaviour of these institutions towards *Madheshi*” (Shah 2006:16).

-) *Madhesi* youths who could not see employment opportunity in neither the government nor private sector and the frustrations due to it could have been one of the driving factors of *Madhesi* People's Movement.

***Madhesis* felt that revenue collected from Tarai were not invested in Tarai**

-) “The Tarai is the backbone of the national economy, containing more than 60 percent of the agricultural land and contributing over two thirds of the GDP”(International Crisis Group 2007: 5) but *Madhesi* leaders like Mohanta Thakur told the researcher that investment in Tarai were low compared to the revenue collected from the region.
-) *Madhesi* activists and datas on Tarai indicated that the investment in Terai “has been significant but the focus has been on developing national communications rather than serving local populations” the example of which is “the east-west highway, a vital transport artery, does not link even one Tarai district headquarter directly – all are on poor feeder roads” (International Crisis Group 2007:5).
-) Secondary data on Tarai indicated that “Investment both from the government and the donor community in rural Madhesh appears to be very low. Most of the industries are located in urban centres and they could not much help the local rural people” (Shah 2006:16).
-) Reports on Tarai indicated that “Fifty percent of the Tarai districts have ‘worst ranking’ for child literacy rates compared to 29% in hills and mountain districts” (Shah 2006:9).
-) Secondary data published by international research organization indicated that “Within the Tarai, there is higher poverty in Madhesi-majority districts,

less in districts with more *pahadi* population” (International Crisis Group 2007 : 5)

-) Secondary research report further highlighted that “There is disparity in per capita budget allocation between Tarai and hill districts; 10 out of the 20 Tarai districts have ‘worst’ index values compared to about 17% of the hill districts. Similarly, more number of Tarai districts has lower primary sector development compared to hill districts” (Shah 2006:8).
-) Majority of the revenue collected from Tarai regions should be invested in Tarai region and for this to happen federalism was the only way according to *Madheshi* respondents.

***Madheshis* felt culturally dominated in Nepal**

-) *Madheshis* complained that the law passed in 1957 made Nepali as a sole national language but various mother tongues spoken by *Madheshi* community were not considered as national language.
-) *Madheshi* activists told the researcher that *Madheshi* attires were not considered as national dress of Nepal.
-) *Madheshis* wanted their cultural dresses and the language they spoke to be considered as national attire and national language.
-) The 2007 *Madheshi* uprising was launched also for the dignity and identity of the *Madheshis* and not only for their legal rights.

***Madheshis* felt that they were marginalized**

-) *Madheshis* make up around 32 percent of the population (Shah 2006: 11) but they “occupy less than 12 per cent of the posts in influential areas, including the judiciary, executive, legislature, political parties, industry

and civil society, and less than five per cent in international organisations and multilateral donor projects”(International Crisis Group 2007:5).

-) Secondary data on Tarai showed that “In 1991 people from Pahadhi community which made up of 36% of total population in Nepal occupied 89.2 percent of position in civil service, while *Madheshi* community which has about 32% of the population occupied only 8.4% of position in civil service”(Shah 2006:11).
-) *Madheshis* making almost one third of the population makes just “over 8% of the total judges in the country” while the rest “92% are from Pahadi community” (Shah 2006:12).
-) Participation of judges from *Madheshi* community at the Appeal Court is about 13.0%, and 6.1% at the District Courts (Shah 2006: 12). They are “very few in the army”(Haviland 2007) and the Nepalese army “ has no senior Madhesi officers” (International Crisis Group 2007 :5).

***Madheshis* were dissatisfied with electoral constituency system in Nepal**

-) The number of parliamentary seats in the Tarai according to *Madheshi* activists does not reflect its population because the “average population per constituency is considerably higher in Tarai districts (127,414) than in the mountain (73,026) and 109,081 in the hill districts”(Shah 2006:9). This reduces the number of parliamentarians representing Tarai region where majority of the *Madheshis* live and increases the number of parliamentarians representing people from hills and mountains.
-) The demarcation of constituencies has been from north to south and not east to west. This method of dividing constituencies is seen by *Madheshi*

activists as a way to dilute the Madhesi vote because north-south strip pattern introduces a sizeable hill electorate. “The division of constituencies has always been carried out from north to south (rather than east to west), with a view to including hill people and thereby working against the possible dominance of Tarai peoples in any given constituency”(Sinha 2008).

-) Electoral constituency system angered many *Madheshis* because due to this system, “in the 1999 elections, *pahadi* candidates won a majority of Tarai seats” (International Crisis Group 2007:6) and “ Irrespective of party affiliation, during the last parliamentary election, in 1999, only 40 *Madheshis* were elected throughout Nepal in a house of 205”(Sinha 2008).

***Madheshis* were angry that they were attacked in Kathmandu riots**

-) The anti- Indian riots in Kathmandu in December 2000 in which *Madheshis* became the main target (Poudel 2001) was a major event to alienate and radicalize *Madheshis* (Jha 2007).
-) After this riot *Madheshis* felt insecure to live in hilly regions of Nepal.

Radicalization of *Madheshis* by ‘People’s War’

-) *Madheshis* had many reasons to be angry with Nepalese state but Maoist movement gave them a political platform to express their anger.
-) The organized campaign of CPN (Maoist) in forming different ethnic fronts is one of the most important factors that led to self-consciousness as well as radicalization of many ethnic communities in Nepal including the *Madhesi* community.

-) Maoists advocated for the elimination of discrimination among caste groups “apparently minimizing only its effects, i.e. exploitation and prejudice” but to ethnic groups on the other hand the Maoist gave a “promise of territorial autonomy” (Tilouine 2004:115) which attracted ethnic communities of Nepal towards Maoist agenda.
-) During the peak of Maoist insurgency scholar Harka Gurung argued that “the radical struggle of the Maoists” was “being reinforced by ethnic liberation fronts consolidating the process of identity formation further” (Gurung 2007: 90).
-) *Madheshi* Rashtriya Mukti Morcha or ‘*Madheshi* National Liberation Front’ the *Madheshi* ethnic front of Maoist party acted as a strong recruiting organ for the party Maoist insurgency and was a major factor in radicalizing *Madhesh* politics.
-) Prabhu Sah, a Maoist lawmaker told the researcher in the interview that “it was People’s War that raised the issue of federalism, inclusive state, citizenship and dignity when other political parties and *Madheshi* organizations were not concerned about the issues of *Madheshis*”.

***Madheshis* encouraged by People’s Movement of 2006**

-) Leaders of *Madheshi* political parties believe that it was not the Maoist movement but rather the various movement launched by various *Madheshi* political parties and organizations since 1950s that was responsible for *Madheshi* People’s Movement.
-) On November 2005 the SPA (Seven Party Alliance) the coalition of major political parties of Nepal and CPN-Maoist signed a twelve-point

agreement in which Maoist agreed to accept the multiparty democracy, to lay down their arms and to launch protest programs to overthrow the regime of the King Gyanendra.

-) Following this twelve-point-agreement the CPN-Maoist allowed the leaders and cadres of SPA to organize political programs in rural areas so as to organize people for the uprising against the king Gyanendra.
-) The leaders and cadres of political parties penetrated deep into rural areas including in Tarai and worked to educate people about their rights and a need for democracy. *Madheshi* activists explained to the researcher that it was during this period many Nepalese including the *Madheshis* learned about their rights, importance of fighting for their rights and the values of democracy.
-) *Madheshi* leaders like Anil Jha, Mohanta Thakur, Ram Sahaya Yadhav and Sarita Giri told the researcher in the interview that it was this political campaign that raised the consciousness of *Madheshi* people.
-) MJF along with other political parties actively participated in rural Tarai during this period to raise the consciousness of the people.
-) People's Movement of 2006 also taught Nepalese people including *Madheshis* that no matter how powerful a person or institution might be the power of people can defeat them as they defeated King Gyanendra.
-) The *Madheshi* uprising in February 2007 against the Maoist could also have been due to the inspiration of People's Movement of 2006.

8.3 Summary of main research findings on the impacts of *Madheshi* People's Movement

The following were the main research findings on the impacts made by *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008:

Federalism

-) The greatest achievement of *Madheshi* People's Movement was that it forced Nepal to be a federal state.
-) The fifth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 is about the reconstruction of the Nepalese state while the sixth point is about the making Nepal a federal state.
-) After two weeks of mass protest (*Madheshi* People's Movement 2008) the government of Nepal and UDMF signed eight point agreement on February 28, 2008. The second point of the eight-point agreement was related to reconstructing the state of Nepal into a federal structure.

Victory of *Madheshi* parties in CA election

-) MJF and TMLP (Tarai-Madhesh Loktantrik Party) both political parties formed for the cause of *Madheshi* issues became the fourth and fifth largest party in the Constituent Assembly Election of 2008.
-) In FPTP (First Pass The Post) MJF and TMLP won 29 and 9 seats.
-) Proportionate Representation of Constituent Assembly Election of 2008 and out of them MJF became the fourth largest party with 678327 votes and TMLP became the fifth largest political party with 338930 votes.

First President of Nepal

-) Dr Ram Baran Yadav from Nepali Congress was elected by the elected members of Constituent Assembly members and he became the first President of Republic of Nepal in July 2008.
-) In almost two and half century this was the first time that a *Madheshi* became the head of the state of Nepal.
-) Similarly, Parmananda Jha from *Madheshi* Jana Adhikar Forum, Nepal was elected as the first Vice-President of Nepal

Inclusion of *Madheshis* (special reservation/quota for *Madheshi* People)

-) One of the major demands of MJF during *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 was to end exclusion of marginalized community.
-) The forth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 was about the proportionate representation of excluded communities in all organs and levels of all structures of the state; and also in powers, machinery and resources.
-) The eighth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 was about the inclusion of excluded communities in political appointment in sectors like foreign services and education.
-) The eighteenth point among the 22 point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and MJF on 2007 was about the inclusion of *Madheshi* community in media and mass communication sector.

-) The twentieth point among the 22 point agreement was about the formation of high level task force to make policies and laws for the inclusion of marginalized communities in all organs of the state.
-) The third of the eight-point agreement signed between the government of Nepal and UDMF on 2008 was to further galvanize the inclusion of marginalized communities by increasing 20 percent legal provisions of Article 7, sub-article 14 of the Constituent Assembly Member Election Act-2054 to 30 percent.
-) The fourth of the eight-point agreement signed between the government of Nepal and UDMF on 2008 was also about inclusion of marginalized communities by the government by compulsorily appointing, promoting and nominating marginalized communities in all organs of the state including the security bodies.
-) The fifth of the eight-point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and UDMF on 2008 was about the government ensuring entry of Madhesi and other marginalized communities into the Nepal Army and giving Nepal Army an inclusive structure.

Defection of *Madheshi* leaders from major political parties

-) *Madheshi* cadres and *Madheshi* leaders from various major national political parties left the party they were in and joined *Madheshi* parties like MJF or TMLP after *Madheshi* People's Movement.
-) Mohanta Thakur who was in Nepal Congress Party for last 37 years defected from it citing indifference shown to *Madheshis* by the party.

-) Many *Madheshi* leaders of different political parties like Jaya Prasad Gupta of Nepali Congress Party, Hirdesh Tripathi of Nepal Sadbhavana Party and Sarvendra Nath Sukla of The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (National Democratic Party) left the party they were affiliated with and joined either MJF or TMLP.
-) Scores of *Madheshi* cadres of different national political parties defected from the party they were affiliated with and joined either MJF or TMLP after the movement.

Recognition of *Madheshi* People's Dignity

-) Mahanta Thakur told the researcher in the interview that *Madheshis* feel more dignified in New Democratic Nepal which was made from the sweat blood and sacrifices of *Madheshis* and other marginalized communities.
-) Language and dresses of all ethnic communities of Nepal including that of *Madheshi* ethnic community was declared as national language and national attire by the interim constitution of Nepal.

Rise of ethnic antagonism in Tarai

-) *Madheshi* People's Movement has secured many rights for *Madheshis* but some politicians claimed that the movement brought ethnic conflict between *Madheshis* and non-*Madheshis* or *Pahadhis* (hill community).
-) The targeted killings and displacements of *Pahadhi* settlers in Tarai by *Madheshi* armed groups has polarized *Pahadhi* and *Madheshi* community in Tarai along ethnic lines.

-) The continuation of ethnically motivated attacks launched by various *Madheshi* armed groups against *Pahadi* settlers could ignite anti *Madheshi* attacks by *Pahadis* in Tarai and hilly regions as a reaction of which could then push Nepal further into the quagmire of ethnic conflict.
-) After *Madheshi* People's Movement the relationship between Tharu community of Tarai and *Madheshis* have worsened because Tharus do not wish themselves to be put under *Madheshi* definition and are oppose to the *Ek Madhesh Ek Pradesh* or to make the entire Tarai into one single *Madheshi* province or state in federal Nepal which is the core demand of *Madheshi* parties and some *Madheshi* insurgent groups.
-) Tharus want Tharuhat province /state in western and Midwestern Tarai for Tharu community. This demand for Tharuhat province directly contradicts twith he demands of major *Madheshi* political parties who want one single province comprising of all the Tarai districts.
-) For Tharuhat provicve some some of the radical Tharu organizations are even opening ethnic Tharu militia fronts in central and eastern Tarai where *Madheshis* are in majority.
-) Constituent Assembly member Dr Laxmi Chaudhari told the researcher that if government fulfills the demand of the Tharus for Tharuhat province then ethnic war between *Madheshis* and Tharus could erupt as *Madheshis* would start attacking Tharus for spoiling their core demand of "*Ek Madhesh Ek Pradesh*" (One *Madhesh* One Province/state).

-) There is a possibility that ethnic violence between *Madheshis* and Tharus may occur if either of the demand of the two communities are met because their demands are vertically contradictory to each other.
-) *Madheshi* People's Movement radicalized different ethnic communities in Tarai including *Pahadhis* and Tharus hence Tarai has become a fertile ground for ethnic violence to erupt.

8.4 Research conclusion

The *Madheshi* People's Movements of 2007 and 2008 was a historic event which ended a system of state-led discrimination and contributed to the enhancement of democracy of Nepal. Notwithstanding the uprising, the discrimination against the *Madheshis* and the ethnic antagonism brought by the uprising have not yet been seriously debated, let alone properly addressed. Although the *Madheshi* political parties like MJF, TMLP and NSP have become a national political power, thanks to the *Madheshi* People's Movement, the movement and the *Madheshi* parties that led it are now in danger of losing this power due to fragmentation as “identity politics often falls into its own trap” and “fragments itself, and, therefore, becomes self-defeating”(Pathak 2006: 143-144). Like other identity based politics around the world the *Madheshi* politics is also facing new revolt from different identities within the *Madheshi* identity. In 2008 the Tharus, the Tarai Muslims and *Madheshi* Dalits launched their own movements asserting their own unique identities, thus presenting an example of the revolt of identity within an identity.

Gopal Dahit, the leader of Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee in an interview with the researcher said that “*Madheshis* and Tharus are different” and

warned that “If the government puts Tharus within *Madheshi* quota then Tharus will revolt”. The Chairperson of *Nepal Muslim Nagarik Samaj* (Nepal Muslim Civil Society) Mr Msruddin Ansari accused *Madheshi* leaders of trying to divide Muslims by putting them into different regional categories.

Bishwendra Paswan, the leader of *Dalit Janajati Party* during the interview with the researcher also stated that Dalits of Tarai should not be put into *Madheshi* category. He argued that Dalits of Tarai played an important role during the *Madheshi* uprising but the *Madheshi* parties ignored their grievances

The Tharu community makes about 6.75 percent (Rimal 2007:10), Muslim community makes around 4.20 percent (Rimal 2007:62) and Dalit makes around 4.72 percent (Rimal 2007:63) of Nepal’s population. Majority of Tharus, Muslims of Nepal and Tarai Dalit resides in Tarai region and are considered as *Madheshis* by *Madheshi* politicians but the above views of Tharu, Muslim and Dalit leaders indicates that the *Madheshi* movement is facing what every identity based movement cannot avoid – revolt of different identities within it.

The *Madheshi* political parties that led the *Madheshi* People’s Movement of 2007 and 2008 secured rights for *Madheshis* and brought many positive changes in Nepal but they cannot afford to be a political movement of *Madheshi* community only. They must grow from being a party of only one ethnic community to the political party of every marginalized Nepali. Rather than being an ethnic party the *Madheshi* parties if they can grow into a party for the emancipation of all marginalized, poor, weak and helpless people of Nepal then they can become a powerful national political force. Otherwise they can lose the

power they now have because identity based politics always splits due to the revolt of various identities within the identity.

Since the *Madheshi* People's Movements, which was uprisings of ethnic *Madheshis*, was able to radicalize *Madheshis*, this radicalization also led to the fracture of *Madheshi* identity. Many marginalized communities within *Madheshi* community were so radicalized that they now wanted their own independent identity. Tharus, the Tarai Muslims and the Tarai Dalits who once had participated in the *Madheshi* People's movements were now claiming that they were not *Madheshis*. Such revolt of different communities has weakened the drivers of these two uprisings. If such ethnic identity based divisions continue within *Madheshi* organizations, *Madheshi* forces will be weakened and the achievements made by two *Madheshi* People's Movements will be challenged and endangered. The *Madheshi* parties must not become the party of only *Madheshis* but rather become the party of all marginalized communities of Nepal if they want to retain the positive change they have already brought about. If this does not happen, the identity politics which they had started will leave them in tatters as other identities within the *Madheshi* identity, which were radicalized by the movements, will revolt for their individual identity against the *Madheshi* identity.

The impact made by *Madheshi* uprisings on other ethnic communities of Nepal especially the ones living in the Tarai regions like the Tharus, Tarai Muslims, Tarai Dalits and hill migrants in Tarai was beyond the scope of this research. This however is an important subject for further study in order to understand how these different groups would learn lessons from *Madheshi's*

uprisings to further and promote their own cause. As in the case of *Madheshi*, it is also important to understand the various factors operating to alienate different ethnic communities from the state and thereby making them rebellious against the state and mainstream society. Such study will help us to devise ways to address the various problems that antagonize these different communities before they become too radicalized and rebellious.

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Appendix 1

22-point-agreement signed between MJF and the Government of Nepal

On 30th August 2007 the government signed a 22-point agreement with the MJF. Convener from MJF during the signing of this agreement was Mr Upendra Yadav and from Government Talks team it was Mr Ram Chandra Paudel. The agreements were as follows:

In order to eliminate all forms of discriminations made by the centralized and unitary state against, inter alia, the Madhesis, indigenous people/nationalities, Dalits, women, other backward classes, minorities, Muslim communities and also to create an environment to move forward all Nepali people including the Madhesis, into a single national mainstream by restructuring the state into an inclusive democratic and federal structure; an agreement as follows has now been concluded between the Government of Nepal and Madhesi People's Rights Forum, Nepal by taking into consideration the spirit of the movement of the Madhesi people as a continuation of the historic popular movement of 2006.

1. To implement forthwith the government decision to provide compensation to the families of those persons who got martyrdom during the course of Madhesh movement, by honoring them.
2. To provide relief to the persons injured, blinded or disabled during the course of Madhesh movement and also to make immediate arrangements for medical treatment of those injured persons who are still deprived of treatment.
3. To withdraw the cases filed against the leaders and cadres of the Forum in course of Madhesh movement
4. To make a balanced, proportionate representation and collaboration of the communities in the country, which were excluded since a long time such as the Madhesis, indigenous people/ nationalities, Dalits, women, other backward classes, disabled, minorities, Muslims, etc. in all organs and levels of all structures of the state; and also in powers, machinery and resources.
5. To immediately constitute a commission relating to restructuring of the state and to make such an arrangement that such commission is represented by experts in an inclusive manner.
6. While restructuring the state, an arrangement of a federal governance system comprised of states with autonomy shall be made; keeping sovereignty, national unity and indivisibility of Nepal intact. The rights, nature and limitation of such autonomy shall be as decided by the Constituent Assembly.
7. To give national recognition to the customs, languages and cultures adhered to by the Madhesi people.
8. To make an appropriate proportional representation in all political appointment to be made by the Government of Nepal as well as in services including foreign services and education sector and in the commissions.
9. To declare public holidays on major festivals of the Muslims; and to frame laws in order to protect their ethnicity, language, sex, religion, cultural and traditional customs including the Madrasa boards.

10. To make full guarantee of human rights by eliminating all kinds of discriminations based on race, language, gender, religion, culture, national and social origin, political and other ideology, etc.
11. To adopt a three-language policy comprising of (a) native language, (b) Nepali language, and (c) English language in government business, education and international correspondence.
12. In order to solve problems relating to Dalits:
 - a. To make provisions for severe legal punishment against racial discrimination and untouchability;
 - b. To effectively implement the provision related to free and compulsory education at least at the primary level to Dalits;
 - c. To make arrangements for special opportunities and reservations in education and employment;
 - d. To make arrangements for alternative livelihood, by making arrangement of land for settlement to landless Dalits.
13. To solve the citizenship problem by sending again the citizenship squads to the villages in order to distribute citizenship certificates to the citizens, who are still deprived of citizen, in a simple and easy manner.
14. To adopt a balanced and justiciable distribution policy while making distribution of revenue and income obtained from the state to Madhesh and remote areas.
15. Whereas the process of returning or cause to be returning back the houses, lands and properties occupied by the CPN (Maoists) is going on, to carry out the task of returning back the weapons also occupied by them to the right holders in an expeditious manner.
16. To constitute an industrial security force so as to industrialize the nation and to guarantee industrial security along with the enhancement of industrial production.
17. To remain both parties committed to hold election of the Constituent Assembly in an impartial, peaceful and fearless environment. To make necessary arrangements for preventing misuse of state resources, machinery and powers of the state by, inter alia, the existing Legislature-Parliament, so as to ensure impartiality of the election to the Constituent Assembly.
18. To gradually make proportionate and inclusive representation of Madhesis in appointments of communication experts and journalists in all organs and levels of the government communication media, including radio, television and print media, to be made by the Ministry of Communications and also in government media commissions, entities and representative teams.
19. To immediately make public the situation of the Valley Chairperson of the Madhesi Youth Forum Jeetendra Sah, who was disappeared after being kidnapped by the kidnapers, by forming a search squad in order to carry out his search and special investigation.
20. To immediately constitute a high level task force on inclusion so as to formulate necessary policies and frame laws for the inclusion of Madhesis, indigenous people/ nationalities, Dalits, women, etc. in each organ and level of the state.
21. To make constitutional guarantee of the rights of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in accordance with the principles of the United Nations and international human rights for the rights of minorities.
22. To withdraw various movements launched by the Madhesi People's Rights Forum. The Government of Nepal shall immediately

implement the understandings which can be implemented immediately and other understandings, which cannot be implemented immediately, shall be implemented within an appropriate time-frame. A joint monitoring mechanism shall be in place for overseeing necessary tasks carried out for the implementation as well as to review the implementation status. (UNDP 2008)

Appendix 2

Eight-point-agreement signed between UDMF and the Government of Nepal

On February 28, 2008 UDMF withdrew all the agitation programmes and signed an 8 point agreement with the Government of Nepal. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on behalf of the Government of Nepal signed the agreement (UNMIN 2008). Mr Mr Rajendra Mahato the National Chairman of Sadbhavana Party, Mr Upendra Yadav Central Coordinator of MJF (*Madhesi* Janadhikar Forum) and Mr Mahantha Thakur the Chairman of TMLP (Terai-Madhes Loktantrik Party) signed the agreement on behalf of UDMF. Kantipuronline (2008) under the heading *Agreement between the Nepal Government and United Democratic Madhesi Front* wrote about the agreement. According to it (Kantipuronline 2008) following were the unofficial translation of the agreement:

The following agreement has been reached between the Nepal government and the United Democratic Madhesi Front honouring the people's aspirations and wishes put forward by the Madhesi people of Nepal during the regular protests and agitation to ensure equality, freedom and justice to every citizen across the country and to ensure Nepal as a federal republican democratic state with multi-party democracy system for government by ending all forms of discrimination effective immediately.

1. The government will declare martyrdom for those killed during the Madhes agitation and provide proper compensation for the injured who haven't been compensated yet. Similarly, expenses will be provided for treatment for those injured during the agitation, one million rupees will be provided as compensation to the family of those killed during the agitation and those arrested will be released immediately.

2. Nepal will be a federal republican democratic state by accepting the wish of the Madhesi people for an autonomous Madhes state and wish of people of other regions for a autonomous state with federal structure. There will be distinct power sharing between the centre and the region in the federal structure on the basis of list. The regions will have complete autonomy and authority. The elected Constituent Assembly will devise a way to apply the formation of such states and the rights attributed to the region and the centre while keeping national sovereignty, unity and integrity intact.

3. The current 20 percent legal provision mentioned in Article 7, sub-article 14 of the Constituent Assembly Member Election Act-2054 will be increased to 30 percent.

4. The government will compulsory appoint, promote and nominate Madhesi, indigenous communities, women, Dalits, backward areas and minority communities to ensure proportional participation in security bodies and all organs of the state.

5. The entry of Madhesi and other groups into the Nepal Army will be ensured to give the army a national and inclusive structure.

6. The government along with the UDMF urged all armed agitating groups in the Terai to join the peaceful political process and come to talks to resolve all problems. The Nepal government will take immediate steps to create a favourable environment for the same. We appeal everyone to conduct the April 10 elections in a peaceful, fair, non-violent and terror-free manner.

7. The Nepal government will immediately implement the agreement reached with the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) on August 30 last year including releasing those under police detention, dismissing cases against MPRF leaders and activists.

8. All the agitation programmes called by the UDMF will be immediately withdrawn.

The Nepal Government will be responsible for the constitutional, legal, political and administrative (aspects) of the above mentioned subjects. The government will form a high-level monitoring committee comprising government and UDMF representatives to implement the agreement.(Kantipuronline 2008)

Appendix 3

Photographs of interviewees

All photographs were taken with the permission from the interviewees. All photographs were taken by the researcher except the photograph of Mr Msruddin Ansari. Mr Msruddin Ansari gave his photograph to the researcher.



PHOTOGRAPH 1: Dr Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, Sociology professor at Tribhuvan University. He is also an activist for the rights of *Adhivasi* (indigenous) and *Janajati* (ethnic people) of Nepal



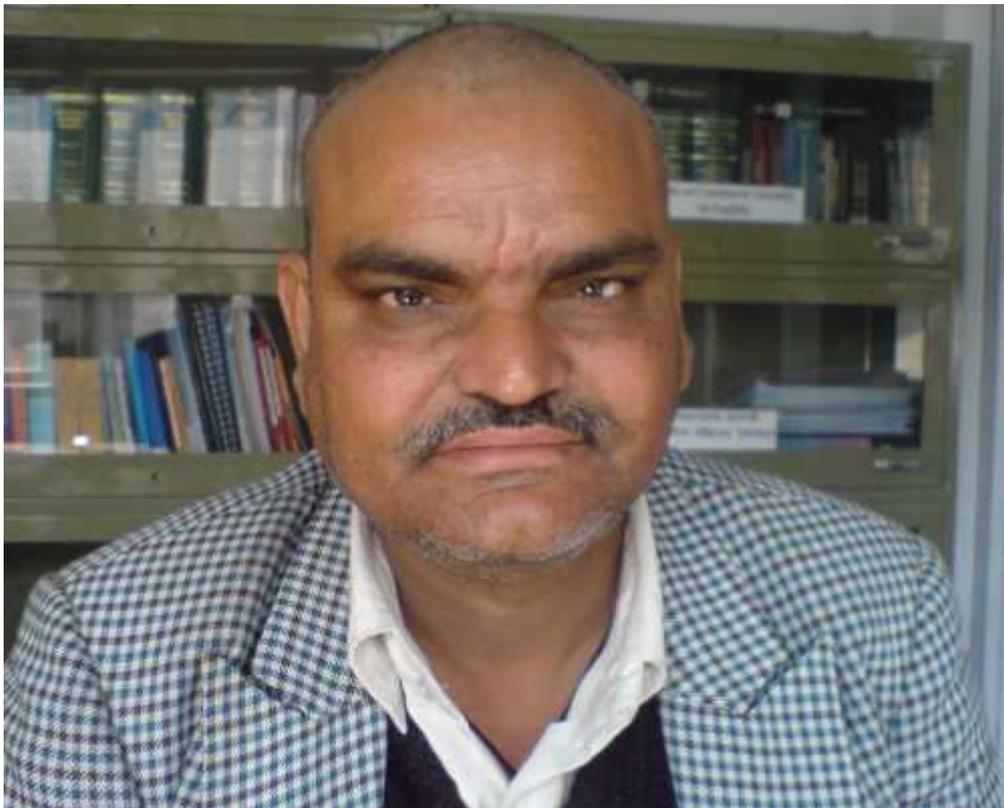
PHOTOGRAPH 2: Dr Laxmi Chaudhary, Constituent Assembly member and advisor of Nepal Democratic Socialist Party



PHOTOGRAPH 3: Dr Shree Govind Shah, Environmentalist, Policy Analyst and Resource Management Specialist. He is also a *Madheshi* activist .



PHOTOGRAPH 4: Mr Anil Jha, Constituent Assembly member and the General Secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato fraction)



PHOTOGRAPH 5: Mr Arun Kumar Prasad is *Madhesi* cadre of UCPN- Maoist party from Dipahi VDC of Rautahat district in Tarai.



PHOTOGRAPH 6: Mr Bishwendra Paswan a Constituent Assembly member and leader of *Dalit Janajati Party*



PHOTOGRAPH 7: Mr Gopal Dahit, former Assistant Minister of Population and Environment. He is also an influential leader of *Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee (TJSC)*.



PHOTOGRAPH 8: Mr Kashinath Adhikari, Central Committee Member of CPN – UML the third largest political party of Nepal.



PHOTOGRAPH 9 : Mr Keshab Prasad Mainali, Constituent Assembly member and Chairman of Chure Bhawar National Unity Party



PHOTOGRAPH 10: Mr Mahanta Thakur, Constituent Assembly member and the chairman of Tarai *Madhesh* Loktantirk Party the fifth largest political party of Nepal



PHOTOGRAPH 11: Mr Mruddin Ansari the leader of *Nepal Muslim Nagarik Samaj*(Nepal Muslim Civil Society).



PHOTOGRAPH 12: Mr Naim Ansari, President of Student wing of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato fraction), Sunsari district



PHOTOGRAPH 13: Mr Prabhu Sah Teri is an elected member of Constituent Assembly and *Madheshi* leader of UCPN-Maoist the largest political party Nepal.



PHOTOGRAPH 14 : Mr Rambilash Meheta, District chairperson of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato fraction) ,Sunsari district



PHOTOGRAPH 15: Mr Ramchandra Pokharel, Chief Secretary of Nepali Congress Party the second largest political party of Nepal.



PHOTOGRAPH 16: Mr Ram Sahaya Yadhav, General Secretary of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal the fourth largest political party of Nepal



PHOTOGRAPH 17: Mrs Sarita Giri, a Constituent Assembly member and the party president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anadadevi fraction)



PHOTOGRAPH 18: Party Secretary of Nepal Democratic Socialist Party

Appendix 4

Table 5: Population of twenty Tarai districts

District	Total Population	Population percentage							Tarai total	Other unidentified	Total
		Hill mountain ethnic	Hill mountain caste	Hill mountain total	Tarai ethnic	Tarai caste	Tarai other (inculding Muslims)				
Banke	385,840	8.8	26.1	34.9	16.5	25.3	21.3	63.1	2.0	100	
Bara	559,135	8.2	9.9	18.0	11.4	56.1	13.4	81.0	1.0	100	
Bardiya	382,649	5.0	29.3	34.3	52.7	8.8	3.0	64.6	1.2	100	
Chitwan	472,048	34.1	49.6	83.7	12.8	2.0	0.8	15.6	0.8	100	
Dang	462,032	15.1	46.9	62.0	31.9	3.6	1.0	36.5	1.5	100	
Dhanusha	671,363	8.5	6.8	15.2	0.9	74.3	8.5	83.7	1.1	100	
Jhapa	632,995	22.5	46.6	69.0	18.8	6.1	3.5	28.4	2.6	100	
Kailali	616,697	5.3	41.2	46.5	43.7	3.5	0.6	47.8	5.7	100	
Kanchanpur	377,899	5.1	56.4	61.5	23.4	6.3	0.1	29.8	8.7	100	
Kapilbastu	481,976	4.4	15.6	19.9	12.6	46.9	19.4	79.0	1.0	100	
Mahottari	553,481	7.6	5.0	12.6	1.7	71.0	13.6	86.3	1.1	100	
Morang	843,220	22.3	28.7	51.0	19.8	22.2	4.8	46.7	2.3	100	
Nawalparasi	562,870	26.4	30.8	57.2	16.5	21.6	3.9	42.0	0.8	100	
Parsa	497,219	6.3	8.0	14.3	8.5	59.6	15.5	83.6	2.0	100	
Rautahat	545,132	5.1	7.0	12.1	5.1	61.9	19.5	86.4	1.5	100	
Rupandehi	708,419	16.0	26.1	42.1	10.6	36.9	8.9	56.4	1.5	100	
Saptari	570,282	4.3	5.4	9.7	13.0	66.5	8.6	88.1	2.2	100	
Sarlahi	635,701	12.1	11.5	23.6	3.2	64.2	7.7	75.1	1.3	100	
Siraha	569,880	6.3	4.1	10.4	5.0	74.2	7.4	86.6	2.9	100	
Sunsari	625,633	21.1	20.4	41.5	18.0	26.9	11.4	56.2	2.3	100	
Tarai Total	11,154,471	12.7	23.0	35.7	15.5	38.1	8.5	62.2	2.1	100	
TOTAL	22,736,370	28.5	38.0	66.5	7.9	19.5	4.3	31.7	1.9	100	

Source: Sharma (2008)

Appendix 5

Important *Madhesi* events

- 1951: Nepal Tarai Congress formed under Vedanand Jha.
- 1952: First Citizenship Act introduced.
- 1957: Imposition of Nepali as sole language for education sparks protests in Tarai.
- 1959: NC sweeps first democratic elections; Nepal Tarai Congress wins no seats.
- 1964: New Citizenship Act based on 1962 Panchayat constitution makes it harder for Madhesis to acquire citizenship.
- 1979: King Birendra holds referendum on Panchayat system; higher support for multi-party democracy in Tarai districts.
- 1983: Nepal Sadbhavana Parishad formed under Gajendra Narayan Singh to raise Madhesi issues.
- 1990: People's movement brings Panchayat system to an end. New constitution promulgated. Nepal Sadbhavana Parishad registers as party to contest elections but demands constituent assembly.
- 1994: Government sets up Dhanapati Commission on citizenship issue.
- 1996: Maoists launch insurgency.
- 1997: Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) established in Biratnagar as cross-party intellectual platform.
- 2000: Maoists set up Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha (MRMM) under Jai Krishna Goit in Siliguri.
- 2004: Matrika Yadav appointed as head of MRMM; Goit splits and forms the Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha (JTMM).
- 2006**
- 24 April: Following nineteen-day mass movement, king announces reinstatement of parliament.
- 18 May: Parliamentary proclamation curtails royal powers and declares Nepal a secular state; Hindu organisations, especially in the Tarai, protest.
- 17 July: Matrika Yadav announces war against JTMM.
- August-October: Jwala Singh expelled from JTMM and forms his own faction. Frequent JTMM strikes (both factions) affect normal life in Tarai. Increasing Maoist-JTMM and JTMM factional clashes.

- 23 September: JTMM(G) activists shoot dead RPP MP Krishna Charan Shrestha in Siraha.
- 22 October: JTMM(G) expresses willingness to talk; government agrees in principle (26 October) but makes no move for negotiations.
- 26 November: Citizenship law amended enabling Madhesi to get citizenship certificates and associated rights.
- 16 December: NSP(A) protests interim constitution provisions on electoral system and its silence on federalism. JTMM(JS) imposes prohibition on non-Madhesi driving on Tarai roads for a fortnight.
- 26 December: NSP(A) protest turns violent in Nepalgunj; communal aspects with *pahadi*-Madhesi clashes, while police accused of anti-Madhesi bias. Government forms commission to investigate (27 December).
- 30 December: Prime Minister Koirala expresses his willingness to solve Tarai problem through talks. Ian Martin, special representative of the UN Secretary-General, voices concern about violent activities in eastern Tarai.

2007

- 6 January: JTMM(JS) expresses willingness to talk to government under UN auspices.
- 12 January: Three-day Tarai strike called by JTMM(G).
- 16 January: MJF announces strike in Tarai to protest interim constitution's promulgation. Its leaders are arrested while burning copies of the statute in Kathmandu.
- 19 January: Maoists clash with MJF activists in Lahan, killing student Ramesh Kumar Mahato.
- 20 January: Maoist cadres seize and cremate Mahato's body; Lahan put under curfew.
- 21 January-7 February: Movement picks up across eastern Tarai against the government and Maoists, with growing public support, mass defiance of curfews, clashes between police and protestors, attacks on government offices and almost 40 people killed. Maoists accuse feudal elements, Hindu rightwing and royalists of inciting unrest and reject talks.
- 29 January: NSP(A) minister Hridayesh Tripathi resigns from government. Government arrests former royal ministers on charges of instigating violence.
- 31 January: Prime Minister Koirala makes national television address appealing for dialogue; protestors reject the offer.

- 2 February: Government forms committee led by Mahant Thakur to talk to all agitating groups.
- 7 February: Koirala makes second address; government agrees to introduce federalism and allot half the seats in the constituent assembly to Tarai.
- 8 February: MJF cautiously welcomes Koirala's address, suspends agitation for ten days and sets preconditions for talks: home minister's resignation, declaration of all those killed as martyrs and a Madhesi-led, independent panel to investigate atrocities.
- 11 February: Madhesi MPs demand immediate amendment of interim constitution.
- 13 February: JTMM(JS) agrees to talk and halt violence. JTMM(G) rejects talks offer (14 February).
- 15 February: Home Minister Sitaula apologises for mistakes during Tarai unrest but refuses to quit.
- 19 February: MFJ renews its agitation, saying government failed to create environment for talks. JTMM(G) calls three-day Tarai shutdown (21 February).
- 22 February: Thakur committee asks government to withdraw all charges against JTMM factions to create environment for talks.
- 1 March: Madhesi Tigers abduct eleven people from Saptari.
- 4 March: JTMM(JS) resumes armed revolt, accusing government of not wanting negotiations.
- 6 March: NSP(A) threatens to leave SPA if interim constitution is not amended.
- 9 March: Legislature amends interim constitution creating Electoral Constituency Delimitation Commission (ECDC) to revise constituencies and guaranteeing federalism.
- 21 March: MJF-Maoist clash in Gaur, killing 27 Maoists and leaving dozens injured. Curfew imposed. Government forms panel to investigate and submit report in fifteen days (23 March). MJF protests banned in Rautahat, Siraha, Jhapa and Morang (24 March).
- 11 April: Peace and Reconstruction Minister Ram Chandra Poudel calls MJF and JTMM for talks.
- 18 April: Madhesi MPs reject ECDC recommendations, demand fresh census and block functioning of interim legislature for over a month.
- 20 April: OHCHR investigation holds law enforcement agencies, MJF and Maoists jointly responsible for Gaur massacre.
- 26 April: MJF applies to the Election Commission to register as a political party.

- 10 May: Ram Chandra Poudel meets MJF president Upendra Yadav in Birgunj.
- 13 May: JTMM(G) kills JTMM(JS) district chairman of Rautahat. JTMM(JS) retaliates by killing two JTMM(G) activists.
- 25 May: Cabinet forms commission to investigate killings during the Tarai unrest.
- 1 June: Government-MJF talks in Janakpur; MJF presents 26 demands.
- 8 June: NSP factions merge under banner of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandidevi).
- 13 June: Two Maoists killed in clash with MJF in Rupandehi.
- 22 June: MRMM central committee dissolved after differences between Matrika Yadav and Prabhu Sah. Ram Kumari Yadav appointed co-ordinator of new ad-hoc committee; Prachanda takes charge of the party's eastern Tarai region.
- 24 June: Government announces 22 November date for constituent assembly elections; extends ECDC term by 21 days so it can review its earlier report.

2008

- 8 February Alliance of three *Madheshi* political parties, the “United Democratic *Madheshi* Front” (UDMF) announced that it would call a Terai-wide agitation.
- 28 February UDMF withdrew all the agitation programmes and signed an 8 point agreement with the Government of Nepal.
- April MJF becomes the fourth largest political party in Nepal after Constituent Assembly Election
- July Ram Baran Yadhav elected as the first President of Nepal
- 22 August Upendra Yadhav chairman of MJF sworn in as Minister of Foreign Affairs

2009

- 12 February Matrika Yadhav leaves United CPN (Maoist) and forms his own CPN (Maoist)

Scan of a letter written by Sadvavana Party's Sunsari district chairperson



श्रीमान् _____

विषय :- विभिन्न विषयमा सर्वेक्षण गर्ने महिलाका लागि
निवार प्रस्ताव।

उपरोक्त सम्बन्धमा हाम्रो पार्टीको आन्दोलन तथा भागि आन्दोलनको कार्यक्रमको उद्वेग कारणमा मधेशी, आदिवासी, जनजाति, दलित, पिडीत उत्पीडित आदि सबैको पुन शोषण र उत्पीडना भएको हो त्यसको विरुद्ध र स्वस वाहुनवाह, र सम्राज्यवाद शोषक, विरुद्ध शान्तिपूर्ण आन्दोलन गर्दा। अहिले समय आन्दोलन भएको हुनाको कुनै पनि मांग पुरा नभएकोले पनि पुनः आन्दोलनको सम्भावना छ। जवसम्म देशमा सुर्णरूपले भेदभाव जस्तै हुँदैन तबसम्म आन्दोलन जारी रहनेछ र हाम्रो पार्टीको अन्तिम धारणा हो।

अवधीप
 दिनांक २०५४/१०/१९
 रामीबलाम मेना
 जिल्ला अध्यक्ष
 सद्भावना पार्टी
 जिल्ला कार्य समिति
 सुनसरी
 मोबा ९८५००५२९३६

Appendix 7

Names of armed groups active in Tarai region of Nepal

ATMM	Akhil Tarai Mukti Morch (All Tarai Liberation Front)
BHB	Bishan Hilmali Bagh (Ferocious Himalayan Tiger)
CD	Caribbean Dog
GMM	Gorkha Mukti Morcha (Gorkha Liberation Front)
IM	Independent Madhesh
JGTMM	Janabadhi Ganatantik Tarai Mukti Morcha (People's Republican Tarai Liberation Front)
JTMM(BS)	Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morch (Bisput Singh) or (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front-Bisput Singh led fraction)
JTMM (G)	Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morch (Goit) or (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front-Goit led fraction)
JTMM (HS)	Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morch (Himat Singh) or (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front –Himat Singh led fraction)
JTMM (JS)	Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morch (Jwala Singh) or (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front –Jwala Singh led fraction)
JTMM (PS)	Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morch (Pirthivi Singh) or (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front-Pirthivi Singh led fraction)
JTMM (RM)	Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morch (Rajan Mukti) or (Democratic Tarai Liberation Front –Rajan Mukti led fraction)
KJP	Kirat Janabadhi Party (Kirat People's Party)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tarai Elam (not to be confused with LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam)of Sri Lanka)
MADA	Madhesh Army
MDT	Madhesh Defence Tigers
MM	Mahan Madhesh (Great Madhesh)
MMT	Madheshi Mukti Tigers (Madheshi Liberation Tigers)
MNS	Madhesh Navnirman Sena
MRJ (R)	Madhesh Rastra Janatantrik (Revolutionary) or Madhesh National Democratic (Revolutionary)
MRMM	Madhesi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha (Madhesi National Liberation Front), Maoist front
MS	Madhesh Sena (Madhesh Army)
MSF	Madheshi Special Force
MSK	Madheshi Silent Killers
MSTF	Madheshi Student Force
MT	Madheshi Tigers
MVKP	Madheshi Virus Killers Party

NDA	Nepal Defense Army
NJP	Nepal Janatanrik Party (Nepal Democratic Party)
NRA	National Republican Army
PX	Python X
RNA	Rasitya Nepali Army (not to be confused with erstwhile Royal Nepalese Army)
SJTMM	Samyukta Janatantik Tarai Mukti Morcha (United Democratic Tarai Liberation Front)
SKLTK	Santi ka Langai Tarai Kranti (Tarai Revolution for Peace)
SMM	Sahi Mukti Morcha (Royal Liberation Front)
TA	Tarai Army
TB	Tarai Baghi
TC	Tarai Cobra
TC	Tarai Commando
TCL	Tarai Commando League
TDA	Tarai Defence Army
TDT	Tarai Defence Tigers
TGMM	Tarai Ganatantrik Mukti Marcha
TKKS	Tarai Kalyan Kari Sangh
TT	Tarai Tigers
TUS	Tarai Uthan Sangathan
UD	Udayapur Dinosaurs
UDTLF	United Democratic Tarai Liberation Front

Appendix 8

Respondents who participated in interview conducted by the researcher

Nineteen respondents were interviewed for this research. Politicians, activists and academicians whose views were imperative for this research were interviewed. Interviewees from major political parties who were interviewed in this research are as follows:

United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

Mr Prabhu Sah Teri who is an elected member of Constituent Assembly and influential *Madheshi* leader of UCPN-Maoist the largest political party Nepal was interviewed for this research. Mr Teri is also an important leader of Madheshi National Liberation Front a sister organization of UCPN-Maoist which in the past had played an important role in raising and disseminating the issues of *Madheshis* like the issue of federalism.

Mr Arun Kumar Prasad a *Madheshi* cadre of UCPN- Maoist party was also interviewed during the course of this research. Mr Prasad is from Dipahi VDC of Rautahat district which is one of the most *Madheshi* ethnic insurgency affected district in Tarai. It was in Gaur town in this district that in March 21, 2007 that clash between MJF and Maoist activists erupted in which 27 Maoist cadres were killed. Understanding the *Madheshi* People's Movement from the perspective of a Maoist cadre from this district was important for this research. Mr Prasad was an eye witness of *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008.

Nepali Congress Party

Mr Ramchandra Pokharel, Chief Secretary of Nepali Congress Party the second largest political party of Nepal was interviewed for this research. Prior to 2008 Constituent Assembly Election the largest number of people in Tarai used to vote for Nepali Congress Party. After *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008 MJF took over most of vote bank of Nepali Congress Party in Tarai. Understanding this movement from the view of the party that most bore the brunt of this movement was helpful in this research.

United Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist)

Mr Kashinath Adhikari, Central Committee Member of CPN –UML the third largest political party of Nepal was interviewed for this research. CPN-UML has been opposing the demands of *Madheshi* parties for making the entire Tarai into one single province or state of federal Nepal. Views on *Madheshi* People's Movement from the point of view of third most powerful political party of Nepal was important for this research.

Madheshi Jana Adhikar Forum, Nepal

Mr Ram Sahaya Yadhav, General Secretary of Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Nepal the fourth largest political party of Nepal was also interviewed by the researcher. MJF led *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and was the most important force in *Madheshi*

People's Movement of 2008. Understanding the Madheshi People's Movement from the view of the party which led it was vital for the research. Mr Ram Sahaya Yadhav led the movement of 2007 in Bara district.

Tarai Madheshi Loktantrik Party

Mr Mahanta Thakur a Constituent Assembly member and the chairman of Tarai *Madheshi* Loktantrik Party the fifth largest political party of Nepal was interviewed for this research. TMLP was one of the three political parties that led Madheshi People's Movement of 2008. Understanding *Madheshi* People's Movement from the perspective of Mr Thakur was important for this research. Mr Thakur was in Nepali Congress Party for 37 years but after *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 he and other defectors from other major national political parties formed TMLP for *Madheshi* cause.

Nepal Sadbhavana Party(Rajendra Mahato faction)

Mr Anil Jha, Constituent Assembly member and the General Secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato faction) was interviewed for this research. Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato faction) was one of the three *Madheshi* parties that formed United Democratic *Madheshi* Front (UDMF) which led *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2008.

Mr Rambilash Meheta, District chairperson of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato faction) Sunsari district and Mr Naim Ansari, President of Student wing of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Rajendra Mahato faction), Sunsari district were interviewed for this research. Their views were helpful for this research because they had actively participated in *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008.

Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anadadevi fraction)

Mrs Sarita Giri, a *Madheshi* Constituent Assembly member and the party president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anadadevi fraction) was interviewed for this research. Although the party Mrs Giri belonged to did not participated in Madheshi People's Movement of 2007 and 2008 still her views and the views of her party are similar to the views of MJF, TMLP and Nepal Sadbhavana Party(Rajendra Mahato fraction). Her views about Madheshi People's Movement were valuable for this research.

Dalit Janajati Party

Mr Bishwendra Paswan a Constituent Assembly member and leader of *Dalit Janajati Party* was interviewed for this research. Mr Paswan's party participated in Madheshi People's Movement of 2007 but after the success of the movement he claimed that the movement only benefited so called high caste *Madheshis*. His party did not joined nor supported the UDMF which led the *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2008. His views were highly critical of the *Madheshi* People's Movement.

Nepal Democratic Socialist Party

Dr Laxmi Chaudhary, Constituent Assembly member and advisor of Nepal Democratic Socialist Party was interviewed for this research. Nepal Democratic Socialist Party played an important role in opposing the government decision to put Tharus under *Madheshi* category and organized various protest programs in Tharu uprising that started after government showed indifference to Tharu protests. Party Secretary of Nepal Democratic Socialist Party was also interviewed. Both respondents were from eastern Tarai (Saptarai and Siraha district) and had witnessed Madheshi People's Movement of 2007 and 2008. Their views regarding the movement were important for this research.

Chure Bhawar National Unity Party

Mr Keshab Prasad Mainali, Constituent Assembly member and Chairman of Chure Bhawar National Unity Party was interviewed for this research. Chure Bhawar National Unity Party is considered as Tarai based hill migrant dominated anti *Madheshi* party by many Madheshi politicians and activists. The party was created after Madheshi People's Movement of 2007, citing that the movement was an attempt ethnic cleansing of hill migrants in Tarai. Mr Mainali's perspective about *Madheshi* People's Movement was imperative for this research because his views reflect the impact of the movement on hill migrants living in Tarai.

Intellectuals and activists interviewees

Mr Amar Kanta Jha, professor of Linguistics at Rajbiraj Multiple Campus of Tribhuvan University was interviewed for this research. He was witness to both *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008 in Rajbiraj city of Saptari district which was one of the most affected district of Tarai during the movement. Mr Jha's views on the movement and his views on the linguistic differences between *Madheshis* and *Pahadhis* and linguistic difference between *Madheshis* themselves helped this research to see the movement as a heterogenic uprising of different people within *Madheshi* community.

Dr Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan, Sociology professor at Tribhuvan University was also interviewed for this research. Mr Bhattachan is also an activist for the rights of *Adhivasi* (indigenous) and *Janajati* (ethnic people) of Nepal. His perception of *Madheshi* People's Movement was helpful for this research because he saw the movement from the perspective of a sociologist and from the perspective of an activist.

Dr Shree Govind Shah, Environmentalist, Policy Analyst and Resource Management Specialist was interviewed for this research. Mr Shah is also a *Madheshi* activist who has conducted several researches on the exclusion of *Madheshi* community in Nepal. His experience as a *Madheshi* activist helped the researcher to understand the grievances of *Madheshis* even deeper.

Mr Gopal Dahit, former Assistant Minister of Population and Environment was interviewed by the researcher. Mr Dahit is also a leader of *Tharuhat* Joint Struggle Committee (TJSC). TJSC is one among several *Tharu* organizations that launched agitations simultaneously against the government after the government of Nepal put *Tharus* under *Madheshi* category. His view about the definition of *Madheshis* and about *Madheshi* People's Movement of 2007 and 2008 helped the researcher to understand the ethnic diversity of Tarai region and how ethnicity was radicalized by the Madheshi People's Movement.

Mr Msruddin Ansari the leader of *Nepal Muslim Nagarik Samaj* (Nepal Muslim Civil Society) was interviewed. Mr Ansari is from Jhapa district in Tarai. He claimed that Muslims of Tarai participated in Madheshi People's Movement of 2007 but the movement brought split within Nepali Muslim community because it divided them into *Madheshi* and *Pahadhi* Muslims. He claimed that Muslims of Tarai should not be put under *Madheshi* category and wanted Muslims to stop participating in *Madheshi* issue related politics. Views of Mr Ansari helped the research by revealing the impact made by the Madheshi People's Movement on different communities within Tarai.

Punch (1998) suggests that interviews lend access to perception, definitions and meanings of situations and how participants construct reality, which is a powerful way to understand them. Rubin and Rubin (1995) point out that qualitative interviewing allows understanding and reconstruction of events in which the researcher did not participated in. This research is precisely the study of perception of realities, of past and the present of the people who experienced the environment generated by *Madheshi* identity issues which the researcher intended to find out. Therefore, interviews were selected as the primary method of gathering data.

The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for openness and flexibility within the conversation directed by pre-determined guiding questions, and could be modified or omitted during the interview on the researcher's discretion (Robson 1993). All the politicians and academics were interviewed individually by the researcher himself with the help of research assistant Mr Dilip Rana who video recorded and audio recorded the interviews.