

**Socio-Economic Condition of Chamar Community: A Case
Study of Kurtha VDC, Dhanusha District**

A Thesis

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CHAPTER – ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Geometrically, Nepal is divided into three regions; Mountain, Hill and Terai. These three regions are different in their climate, due to the climate variation. People are different in their culture, languages, dresses behavior economic status, social, caste and ethnic.

Nepal is a multicultural, multilingual, multi – ethnic and multi –religious country covering the area of 1,47,181sq.km located at 26⁰ 22 ' to 30⁰ 27 north latitude and 80⁰ 4' to 88⁰ 12' east longitude which is 0.03% of the total world and 0.3% of Asia lying between two giant countries China and India. So it is called the "Yam between two huge stones" by the late king Prithvi Narayan Shah who unified our country Nepal (Nepal in figures –2002,HPC). Though it is small in size but it is considered as mini word due to its different climatic condition and diverse ethnic cultures. It is the homeland of four varna groups and 60 ethnic groups having their own types of religions, beliefs, faiths, rites and rituals, language and life styles. Since the basic elements of social composition includes rear as ethnicity / caste, language as mother tongue and religions or beliefs (Gurung –1996). Ecological differentiation, cultural heterogeneity, ethnic and linguistic diversity, hierarchy and uneven power distribution and economic inequality followed by rate of illiteracy are striking attributes of this nation –state, Nepal (Gurung –1994). But there is never seen any dispute preferring on one's own religions and cultures. Thus, it is said that Nepal the unity in cultural diversity. (Nationalities of Nepal-2000, NCDN)

The Terai is divided into two regions i.e. Outer Terai and Inner Terai where Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumiars, Hajams, Tharus, Haluwai, Sudi, Teli, Muslims, Dom, Khatbe, Mushar, Chamars dwell.

Nepal has provided shelter and security for large numbers migrants from different places comprising different races and represent different ethnic cultural and linguistic background. According to racial origin Tebeto-Burban, Indo-Aryan and Astro-Asiatic (KC1995)

Chamars are Indo-Aryan and they are migrated from India. About the Chamars, Ghurye(1969)writes " Chamars or Chambhar the name of leather working caste is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning worker of leather. We can say that the word "Charmaker" "Charma" means leather and "Kar" means worker.

Indo Aryan people inhabit in the Terai of Nepal that is popularly known as Madhesi. It is homeland of number of caste groups among them Chamar is one of the least developed dalit groups who is socially and economically weak and backwarded since generation. Chamar is an indigenous caste group of Terai whose way of life, dress, culture, region and socio- economic status is different to the other caste groups. Chamar is the less educated community in Terai. Due to the least education they are living in vulnerable condition and their Socio- economic conditions are very weak. They are considered as untouchable and socio not convergent to Vedic culture whose social, religion culture are not quite compatible with accepted higher class modes of Avarna (non- caste) implying culturally descendent and untouchable. They belong to the fourth category of the varna system. They are soodra who serve owner.

Chamar is the caste or Harijan .So, they might have different demographic pattern than other castes of Nepal. Thus, this study tries to present Socio- economic conditions of chamar of Kurtha V.D.C in Dhanusha district. It also tries to represent social, cultural and economic changes that have occurred in chamars of that area.

1.2 Statement of Problems

Nepal is one of the poorest countries of the world. According to the life expectancy survey (2060 – 61), 30.8 percent people are below absolute poverty line (CBS, 2062 B.S.). In this condition, there are such castes, tribes and ethnic groups, who bounded to their traditional occupation because they could not meet their basic needs (food, clothing, shelter etc.) by doing their traditional occupation in the changing condition.

Their social life and socio-economic status is still under the smoke of cloud. So, the question is how deeply these social trends affected their daily livelihood and what change it has brought to their socio-economic status. This research attempts to focus on the various aspects of their socio-economic life of the Chamar community of Kurtha VDC in Dhanusha district. So, it has its own importance.

Among the various caste/ethnic groups, Chamar is one of the indigenous groups of Nepal. They are found mainly in Terai region. Chamars are poorest and backwarded

caste people in Nepal. They are born in poverty, live in poverty and die in poverty. Although their traditional work is leatherwork, they are giving up their traditional occupation because they cannot fulfill their basic needs by their traditional occupation. Very few and only seldom, they take part in leatherwork. They are engaged in waged labour, some of them are engaged in agricultural sector also. But they have not sufficient income to fulfill the needs to survival. To get food, they work very hard. They have weak economy. They are facing with illiteracy, malnutrition, high infant mortality, maternal mortality and poor health.

Various ethnographic studies have been undertaken in Nepal. Some studies have focused on demographic socio-economic and cultural change in Nepalese people (Bista, 1967). However, studies about Chamar at Kurtha VDC of Dhanusha district have not yet undertaken.

Due to continuous interaction with other groups, they have been losing their own social and cultural identity. The economic, social and cultural condition of Chamars in Nepal is seriously thinkable. Likewise, the Chamars at Kurtha VDC of Dhanusha district are also suffering the same problem.

Therefore, a study of ethnographic of Chamar is very essential as it may throw light on socio-economic backwardness of these ethnic groups.

The important question is in spite of the government efforts to uplift the living condition of rural people especially minority group like Chamar, they are not joined the main stream of national development.

Due to modernization and urbanization, Chamars have changed their traditional pattern of life. By considering this fact, this study focuses the following research problems.

1. Present living condition of Chamar.
2. Economic condition of Chamar.
3. Social condition of Chamar.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to identify the socio-economic condition of Chamar people at Kurtha VDC of Dhanusha district in the context of changing Nepalese society. The specific objectives are: -

- a) To provide an ethnographic study of Chamars.
- b) To explore the cultural pattern of Chamars.
- c) To provide relevant recommendations to policy makers.

1.4 Importance of the Study

All the Nepalese villages are affected by numerous problems including racial discrimination, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, lack of food, clothing and high magnitude of poverty of rural households poses serious problem both for the planners and the poor villagers.

Nepal is still facing the problem of narrowing the gap between haves and have-nots. Despite the efforts of the government to provide an equal share of benefits of its development activities to deprived sectors of the society, the primary needs that lies ahead is to help these communities by broadening their perception, raising their economic level and education level, to take part in the mainstream of national life with dignity and with a sense of belonging.

Thus, this study aims to present information about the socio-economic condition among Chamar community. The results of the study may also be useful for policy makers in relation to upliftment of socio-economic as well as other development programs in the region.

1.5 Scopes and Limitation of the Study

Everything has its own limitation. This study also has research demarked with in a specific area is supposed to be scientific and systematical. Taking this fact into consideration the purpose of this undertaking is to study how the social change has affected the socio-economic status of Chamars. Chamar tribe is confined with in the limitation of this study area. Chamars, here, are the main actors.

The main aim of this study is to find out the socio-economic condition of Chamars in Kurtha VDC. However, it is supposed that this study would be representation of the study relative to this area. It is also micro level study, which attempt to explore the socio-economic condition of Chamars.

- a. This study is limited in the Kurtha VDC of Dhanusha district. Therefore, the study could not be generalized Chamar community throughout the country.
- b. This study is academic case study. Therefore, large area could not be incorporated in the study.
- c. Simple statistical tools will be used to analyze the data obtained.
- d. Findings of this study may or may not be applicable at the national level but relevant in some of micro perspective.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into three chapters. The first chapter discusses the General background of the study, Statement of the problem, Objectives of the study, Importance of the study, Scope and Organization of the Study Limitation of the study. The second chapter presents the Review of literature. The third chapter contains the Methodology adopted for the study in which various methods of data collection and analysis are described.

CHAPTER – TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 General Overview

Nepal is inhabited by diverse ethnic groups. It is a mosaic society and it is rich in its ethnic and cultural diversity. But many communities and sections of society are still weak and lagging behind in different aspects.

On the basis of Hinduism, Nepali caste system is divided into four varnas: Brahmin, Chhetri, Vaishya and Shudra. In this system, high castes are placed at the apex of the caste hierarchy and low castes on the lower stratum. Similarly, various prejudices and discriminations had started as; there were the introduction of four varnas and eighteen castes in the regime of Lichhavi in Kathmandu and Shakya regime in Kapilbastu (NDC, 2060). Later on, King Jaystithi Malla divided Nepali caste system into four varna and thirty six castes on the basis of occupation. Ram Shah also started such social system in the Gorkha state.

The Mulikin Ain-1854 was a written version of social codes that had been in practice for several centuries in Nepal. Its caste categories diverged from the four varnas of the classical vedic model and instead had three categories to accommodate the tribal peoples between the pure and impure castes. These were further classified into five hierarchies with the following order of precedence.

- A- Wearers of holy cord (caste).
- B- Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers (ethnic).
- C- Enslavable Alcohol Drinkers (ethnic).
- D- Impure but touchable caste (ethnic, other caste & outsiders).
- E- Impure and untouchable castes (caste).

Soruca: (Gurung, 2005).

Similarly, the Muliki Ain published by the king Surendra Bir Vikram Shah Dev in 1910 B.S. classified the castes into four main categories. These main categories of the recognized castes are presented in the following table.

Table No. 2.1
Hindu Caste System

| | |
|--|--|
| Dagadhari | Dwice born caste (literally thread wearing caste) |
| Matawali | Alcohol drinking caste (not wearing sacred thread) |
| Pani Nachalne (chhoi, chhita halnu napanne) | Castes from whom water cannot be accepted, but whose touch does not require aspiration of water. |
| Pani nachalne (chhoi, chhita halnuparne) | Untouchable castes |

Source: Muliki Ain 1910 B.S.

But, the Muliki Ain published by the King Mahendra Bir Vikram Shah Dev in 2020 B.S. eliminated all discriminations on the basis of castes (Muliki Ain, 2022).

Right to equality is guaranteed in a modern democratic state to check any form of discrimination among its citizens. In Nepalese constitution (1990), which is the main body of legality, it has been stated in its prologue that the main objective of the constitution is to provide everlasting social, political and economic justice to all the citizens. Besides this, the following provision in favour of Dalit and oppressed people is made.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1991 (2047)

Part – 3 Fundamental Rights

Article 11: Right to equality.

Article 11 (1): All citizens shall be equal before the law: no person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws.

Article 11 (2): No discrimination shall be made against any citizen in the application of general laws on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction or any of these.

Article 11 (3): The state shall not discriminate among citizens on the grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction or any of these provided that special provision may be made by law for the protection and advancement of the interest of women, children, the aged or those

who belong to a class which is economically, socially or educationally backward.

Part – 4 : Directive Principles and Policies of the State

Article 25 (3): The social objective of the state shall be to establish and develop, on the foundation of justice and morality, a healthy social life, by eliminating all types of economic and social inequalities and by establishing harmony amongst the various castes, tribes, religions, languages, races and communities.

Article 26 (2): The state shall, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various religions, castes, tribes, communities and linguistic groups, and by helping in the promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures.

Article 26(10): The state shall pursue a policy which will help promote the interest of the economically and socially backward groups and communities by making special provisions with regard to their education, health and employment.

Article 26(14): The state shall, in order to secure justice for all, pursue a policy of providing free legal aid to indigent persons for their legal representation in keeping with the principle of the Rule of law.

The Local Self Government Act 2055 (LSGA) has been set the provision for Dalit and neglected communities for formulation of village council, municipality council and district council, and plan formulation as well. Similarly, the prologue of same act has also been stated in the favour of Dalit.

Nepal has ratified 16 different international treaties and conventions such as- The universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), international Convention on Discrimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), Covenant on Civil and political Rights (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), etc. (INSEC, 2003). It has shown positive commitment internationally for implementing these instruments. The international laws to which Nepal is a state party and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 have specified the

following obligations for the state for uplifting the status of deprived and weak section of the population.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Article (1): Right to equality:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article (2): Freedom from discrimination:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent trust, non-self governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article (7): Right to equality before law:

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Similarly, another treaty is International Convention on Discrimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965 that is crucial for improving the condition of Dalits and to eliminate the discriminations against them. The Article (1) has clearly defined racial discrimination and the Article (2) has stated the various responsibilities of the state to improve and uplift the conditions of the backward communities. Articles 3,4,5,6 and 7 have stated the responsibility of the state to enact immediate, necessary and effective actions to the same end.

Likewise, in current tenth five years plan (2002-2007), the following provisions for Dalits and neglected communities have been set.

Tenth Five Years Plan (2002-2007)

Chapter – 28

28.3. Long Term Vision

The long-term vision is to raise the living standard of Dalits and neglected communities by empowering them on the basis of equality, and bringing them into the mainstream development efforts while enhancing their self-respect.

28.4. Objectives of the Tenth Plan

Dalits, who have been lagged behind in the society due to the old social systems and beliefs, will be empowered on the basis of equality, and their access to the development efforts will be enhanced.

Strategy

Traditional social systems and belief have made some sections of the society socially and economically backward. It is necessary to undertake programs of correcting various human development indices related to this section of the population through targeted programs. Since they are generally isolated from the mainstream of development, the implementation of programs, such as making these people capable, for greater representation in the political process, providing access to various income generating activities will not only promote social justice but also contribute to social development. In this context, the strategies of the plan are mentioned below.

- 1) By identifying oppressed, downtrodden, neglected communities, the social oppression and discrimination against them will be abolished through the economic and social development of this class.
- 2) Through social and economic empowerment, their knowledge, skill and intelligence will be brought into the mainstream development process, and their possible contribution in the national level will be identified and encouraged in its implementation.
- 3) The traditional occupations of the downtrodden and oppressed community will be modernized and the goods produced by them will be made competitive. The institution arrangement for marketing of such products will be undertaken.

- 4) The dalits and oppressed social dignity promoting programs will be emphasized, while appropriating national productive resources and opportunities.

2.2 Related Literature Review

Different scholars both national and foreign have carried out various ethnographic studies in Nepal. Among them Bista is that indigenous pioneer, scholar who has given a lot of contribution to the field of ethnographic study. His book “People of Nepal” is one of the masterpieces of literature on ethnography. He has discussed about lots of ethnic groups in his book.

Similarly, “Sabai Jatko Phulbari” (Bista, 2030) is another book of his, in which he has given the ethnography of different people. Bista has given a short ethnographic study of the people of Chamar in his book, “Mechi Dekhi Mahakali Samma” (2031, vol-I, II, III, IV). However, there is also lack of detailed information about the socio-economic status of Chamars as well as other untouchables.

Macfarlane and Gurung (1990), both have studied on “Gurungs of Nepal”, which is mile stonework in the field of ethnography. In this book different aspects of Gurungs, such as economic organization and socialization, social hierarchy, religion and festivals, village political organization, phase of life etc. are described in detail.

Nepali (1965), in the book “The Newars”, has given as ethnological study of the Newars, a Himalayan community of Nepal. The book has given a good ethnography of Newars in different aspects.

Caplan (1970) has studied village of eastern Nepal, where he studied the changing relation between members of indigenous tribes, the Limbus and the high caste Hindu groups, the Brahmins.

Regmi (1971) has studied on “Dhimal”. His work is also a milestone in the field of ethnography. In this book, different aspects of Dhimals, such as economic organization and socialization, social hierarchy, religion and festivals, village political organization, phase of life etc. are described in detail.

Gurung’s (1989), “The Chepang”, Regmi’s (1990) “The Gurung”, and such other different scholars’ different books have been written as the ethnographic studies. They

all have tried to give ethnographic picture of Nepalese society. But very few works have done on untouchable castes.

Shephord (1982) has written the book “Life among the Magars”, in which, the writer describes the socio-economic as well as cultural/religious factors of magars.

Regmi (1990), in his book “The Gurungs, Thunder of Himal”, has prepared across cultural study of a Nepalese ethnic group, the Gurungs. He has described the bravery and glorious culture of Gurung.

Tamang (2051 B.S.), has published a beautiful book “Tamang Jati” which is an example of ethnographic study in Nepal. In the book Tamang has mentioned about the life activities of Tamangs and their changing process of social life. He has just touched the Chamar in his book.

Subba (1995), in his book “Culture and Religions of Limbu”, has given a detailed account of the Limbu culture and religion.

Halmerg (1996), in the “order in Parabor” has described the mythiritual and exchange among Nepal’s Tamangs very nicely.

Luitel (2055 B.S.), has studied on the nomadic Raute in mid-western and far-western of Nepal. His book is one of the milestone works in the field of ethnographic studies. The social life, their hierarchy, religion and festivals, social change etc. are analyzed in the book. According to Luitel, there is less or more change in their custom and daily life.

Similarly, Gautam and Thapa’s (1974) books such as “Tribal Ethnography” (vol. I & II) etc are also excellent references of ethnography. These books have traced some untouchable castes of Nepal. Badi, Dom, Gaine, Kami, Musahar, Charar (Sarki) etc. – the so-called untouchable castes – are described in those books. Gautam and Thapa have argued on Chamar (Sarki) adding further “the Chamar (Sarki) is an occupational tribe and can be found in most areas of Nepal. Due to their profession, they are as widely spread out as their kinsmen the kami and Damai.”

A research prepared by Sharma, Chhettri, & Rana (1994) entitled “A Modest Study of Current Socio-economic Situation of the Lowest Status Caste and Tribal Communities

in Nepal”, is a book in which all types of problems of untouchables are well presented.

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

“An untouchable teacher in kailali was not sent away from his village school to Dhangadi on deputation because he ordered the students of higher castes and untouchable caste, to sit together in luncheon provided under the nutrition food program. The school inspectors were satisfied with his technique, quality, but the head master, a Brahmin who did not accept this value, influenced the District Education Officer against the teacher later, the luncheon program itself was dropped” (Sharma, Chhetri & Rana, 1994).

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

Although, special books are not available, some students of master degree of T.U. have written some dissertations on the untouchable.

Subedi (1985), Pokharel (2054), and Adhikari (2059) have prepared thesis on “Badi”, an untouchable caste of Dang and Nepalgunj, whose traditional profession is prostitution. In the research work, researchers have given the socio-economic status & the cultural patterns of Badi.

Chhetri (1985) has prepared a thesis on “Gaine”, a singing caste of Nepal and Shrestha (1987) has also written on the same caste group. In these books, the cultural tradition of the “Gaine” is described and these two books are limited in Kaski.

About Sarki, Khanal (2002) and Shah (2001) have written the thesis, in which they have described the socio-economic, cultural as well as demographic aspects of the Sarki ethnic group.

Pokhrel (1997) and Pokhrel (1998) have written the thesis about “Musahar”, who are known as achhut (untouchable) and their social status is very poor in Nepalese

society. The researchers have provided some socio-economic status of Musahar in changing situation.

About livelihood strategies of occupational communities (Damai & Kami), Rai (2004) has prepared a thesis in which he has drawn the picture about the occupation of Damai & Kami. Similarly, K.C. (2001) has drawn a comparative study of achievements in mathematics of primary level students of Chhetri, Tharu and Kami in Surkhet district. But Joshi (1999) has written on “Socio-economic Profile” of the Damai people of the Tanahu district.

Dhaubhadel (2001) has prepared a thesis on “Socio-economic Dimension and Fertility Behaviour of Bather Women”, in which he has concluded that there exists an inverse relationship between socio-economic dimension and fertility behaviour of Bather women.

About Poda, Chapagain (1987) has written a thesis on “An Ethnographic Study of the Poda of Kirtipur” which belongs to Achhut (low caste) in Newar community. They are living in miserable condition in Nepalese society. Similarly, Paudel (2005) has prepared a thesis on “Poda Jatiko Samajik Tatha Arthik Avastha” which is limited in certain notion and area.

Khatri (1999) has prepared a thesis on “An Ethnobiology of the Lohars” in Darchula district in which he has presented some glimpses of the Lohar community.

Aryal (2006) has prepared a thesis on “Teli Jatiko Samajik Tatha Arthik Avastha”, whose traditional profession is coiling. In the research work, he has given the socio-economic status of Teli in the Mahottari district.

About Jhangar, Ghimire (2005) has written a thesis on “Jhangar Jati Ek Adhyan” and Adhikari (1999), has prepared thesis about “Fertility Behaviour of Jhangar”. Similarly, Timalsena (2005) has written about “Gender Discrimination of Jhangar” in the Sunsari district.

Lamichhane (2002), Baral (2003) and Pokheral (2008) have conducted a study about “Danuwar Jatiko Samajik Tatha Samskritik Avastha”. Similarly, Bhattarai (2005) has written on “Ethnography of Danuwar Community” in Nuwakot district.

About Dum, Shrestha (1998) has written on Socio-economic dimension and fertility behaviour of the women in Biratnagar sub-metropolitan city. Similarly, Thakur (2059) has prepared on “Dum Jatiko Samajik, Samskritik Tatha Arthik Avastha Ek Adhyayan” whose social status is very poor in Nepalese communities. Their traditional profession is to clean the dirty places like toilet.

Mandel (1999), has written a thesis on “Sex Preference and Fertility about the Khatway communities”, who are minorities in the Nepalese society. In the research work, Mandel has talked of their sex preference and fertility practices.

Karma (2002) has prepared a thesis on “Age at Marriage and Fertility about Dusadh” which is limited in sarlahi district, in which the researcher has portrayed the marriage and fertility behaviour of the Dusadh people.

Some foreign writers have tried to write about untouchable castes, but they all are not based on ethnographic studies.

Caplan (1972), “Priest and Cobblers” is an example, which is a study about social change in a Hindu village of western Nepal. About the untouchable, Caplan has said, *“Although untouchables consider themselves Hindus, they are not served by Brahmin priests and indeed, are considered as being outside the formal Hindu hierarchy by members of clean castes. Untouchables are, however, necessary to the proper function of the caste system, since they provide service which clean caste persons are precluded from performing.”*

In the same books Caplan describes, *“Untouchables may not use the wells in the village, although they have access to the springs, they may not enter the houses of the high castes; indeed they may not even sit at the doorway.”*

Similarly, Macdonald (1975) has written a book “Essays on the Ethnography of Nepal and South Asia”, in which he has written about some untouchable castes.

2.3 The Chamars

There are very few scholarly studies, which have been made on untouchables in Nepal. But both native and foreign researchers about Chamars have done almost no sociological and anthropological research. Therefore, we have to rely on Indian literature as well as foreign researchers.

Bista (1967), a renowned anthropologist is also silent in his books about the Chamars. In his book, "Peoples of Nepal", he says- "*Chamars have been charged of involving in dirty and musical works in the community and eating any animals' carcasses, except for that of a dog, cat or horse. The Chamars play drums in the wedding band.*"

The four volumes of "Mechi Dekhi Mahakali Samma" (1975) have given brief information about Chamar.

"About Fertility Behaviour of Chamar Caste of Dhanusha" (Mahato, 1993), which is a dissertation of degree has only drawn the fertility behaviour of Chamars but it has not given an ethnographic picture of Chamars.

"Chamar Jatiko Samajik Tatha Arthik Avastha of Saptari" (Koirala, 2003), which is a dissertation of degree has identified the socio-cultural factor of Chamar.

Similarly, "Socio-economic and Demographic Impact on Fertility of Chamar of Dhanusha" (Yadav, 2001), which is another dissertation of degree has correlated the age of women and duration of marriage which are found to be positively associated with fertility, where as age at marriage is found negatively associated with fertility. Similarly, childbirth experience and desired number of children are positively related with fertility but the level of education and level of income are inversely associated with fertility. Occupational status of people has played significant role in lowering fertility.

Adhikari (2002) has written a thesis on "Poverty in the Chamar Community of the Siraha District", which is a dissertation of degree, has portrayed the poverty of Chamar and presented the situation of the Chamars. In the research work, Adhikari has clarified that the Chamars are born in poverty, live in poverty and die in poverty.

Similarly, Subedi (1998), Shah (2005) and Gupta (2005) have prepared the theses about "The Socio-economic Impacts on the Chamars", in which they have drawn the picture of changing condition of socio-economic impact of Chamars. During a long period of time the leather workmen and village watchmen had become scarce and they gradually started to shift away from their traditional occupation. They now are depending mostly on agriculture and labour.

Ghurje (1969) has given some account about Chamar. He says in his book "Caste and Race in India", "The Chamars, leather workers of Maratha country have Ahir as one

of their sub-caste. The Chamars of the central provinces have sub-caste named KorChamar, who are said to be the descendants of alliance between Chamar and Koris or weavers” (Ghurje, 1969).

Similarly, the book has also thrown some light on Chamars of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal (Ghurje, 1969). The book has traced the context of Vedic age, Manusmriti and Rajatarangini about Chamar.

About Chamar, Hutton (1963) says in his book “Caste in India”, “The Chamars of Chattisgarh, though belonging to that exterior caste of leather worker whose touch is polluting the castes of Hindus, are here cultivators tilling the land whose women have a great reputation locally for their handsome features.”

“The Chamars are hereditary leather workers, who cut and dry skins, make shoes, sandals and water bags and also do tanning where a Dhor population is not to be found. They are relatively well off economically and are rated the highest in the ritual hierarchy among the Harijan” (Patwardhan, 1973).

About the settlement of Chamars, Sherring (1974) says in his book “Hindu Tribes and Castes vol. II”, Chamars cover nearly one-fourth of all the inhabitants of Bilaspur, where they have been settled for so many centuries that have no tradition of any other home.”

About their physical features, the same writer says, “they possess active and well set figures marked in features than the easy and higher classes” (Sherring, 1974).

About their marriage ritual, Crooke (1974) says in the book “The Tribes and Castes of the North Western India”, he says- marriage is of two kinds- the Shadi, Charch, or Charhaua, which is the respectable form, and the Dola is used by poor people.

About their tanning system, the same writers say that the system of tanning pursued by the ordinary village Chamar is of the most primitive kind, the skins are placed in pit and covered with water, containing lime (Chuna) and impure carbonate of soda (Sajji); after ten days they are taken out and the hair removed with an iron Scraper (khurpi). They are again removed, sewn up in the form of a bag, which is again filled with the bark solution, and hang on a tree or stand. This process lasts for five days when the tanning is considered complete (Crooke, 1974).

Like this, different scholars have been written different books about Dalit. And the government has been practicing different legal provision and programs for Dalit and oppressed people to uplift the status of them. Not only the government sector but also different NGOs/INGOs, CBOs, NDC have also been doing work in different fields. But the programs and plans did not meet the special Dalit who is living in the grass root level. So, the situation of the Dalit (Chamar) community in Nepal is very pathetic. In the name of Dalit, the higher-level people are getting benefited more and more and getting richer and richer day by day. Till now, in the Nepalese society, the Dalit community has been facing different discriminations. Some of them are as follows:

-) Prohibitions imposed up on them to enter public places.
-) Prohibitions on entering or leaving educational institution.
-) Restrictions on entering religious places and participating in various functions.
-) Denial of health and medical treatment and services.
-) Prohibitions on entering the houses of the higher castes groups.
-) Prevention from the use of public roads.
-) Prevention from the use of public wells.

CHAPTER – THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Rationale of the Selection of the Study Area

The study area is selected at Kurtha VDC of Dhanusha district, which is situated 3 kilometers far in the west of Janakpur Municipality and near to Mahottari district boarder and Kurtha is a single village of this VDC.

Dhanusha district lies in southeastern part of Terai. The study area is located in central part of Dhanusha district. Five VDC (Mahadaiya, Tapanpur, Bispity, Singurjora & Ratanpur) and one municipality (Janakpur) surround the study area. The study area has been selected because of the following reasons;

- a. The socio-economic condition of Chamar of this VDC is measurable in comparison to other castes.
- b. Any researcher and government agencies did not studied about this community.
- c. This study area is easily reachable for the researcher to collect primary data for research.

3.2 Research Design

The study has based on descriptive as well as analytical design. Being a descriptive work, it does not have any formal hypothesis regarding socio-economic status of Chamar in Dhanusha district. The main focus of the study is to find out and analyze the socio-economic status of Chamar of Kurtha VDC through the description of institution, social organization and economic condition of Chamar people.

3.3 Natures and Source of Data

The study has used both the primary data as well as secondary data. Primary data has been collected from the field survey through household survey, key informant interview, observation and focus group discussion.

Secondary data has been collected through Government Report, NGOs/INGOs report, VDC office, and other available sources, books, relevant literature and journals about the Chamars. This secondary information is helpful to check the validity and reliability of empirical data. However, the study has been mostly based on the primary data.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

The total population of Kurtha VDC was 6668 with 1587 household. The total number of male is 3558 and the female is 3110. The average household size is 4.49. The total literacy rate is 82.49 percent and the total male literacy rate is 53.53 percent and female literacy rate is 46.46percent (CBS, 2001).

According to VDC record (2005), there are 115 households in this community. The total population is 878, and male population is 448 and the female is 430. In the total household, 35% household has been selected randomly. Among the selected household, 40 respondents has been interviewed.

3.5 Techniques and Tools of Data Collection

3.5.1 Techniques

3.5.1.1 Household Survey

One of the techniques of primary data collection is the household survey, it is helpful to get reliable data about socio-economic background of Chamar, a household list was prepared and all the households, in which the household head has been acted as the main respondent has been surveyed, and interviewed.

3.5.1.2 Observation

Observation is also a major tool of data collection. The method of non-participant observation has been used in this study. This method has been used to observe their living style, housing style, art and technology, costumes, daily activities and so on.

3.5.1.3 Key Informant Interview

The primary data also has been collected from key informants using the semi or unstructured interview method. The local school teacher, intellectual person of village and senior citizens of the community are selected as key informant in order to collect information through interview about socio-economic condition of Chamar of the study area.

3.5.1.4 Focus Group Discussion

Qualitative information such as expressions capacity, decision-making and implementation practice has been obtained from FGDs. Two FGDs have been made for this study involving approximately a dozen women & men in each group who

involved in various activities of the program.

3.5.2 Tools

3.5.2.1 Questionnaire

Structured questionnaire has been prepared to generate the realistic and accurate data from the Chamar community. The respondents have been requested to fill up the questionnaire. In case of respondents who cannot fill up the questionnaire, the questions are asked to the respondents and researcher himself collect required data has filled up answer.

3.5.2.2 Checklist

The Checklist has been prepared to collect data through focus group discussion and key informant interview.

3.6 Classification & Editing of Data

The collected data by different techniques have been classified according to their nature or characteristics and edited. While editing data the necessary thing has been put accordingly and the unnecessary things are removed or rectified. The data has been classified according to the characters and attributes.

3.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

After the processing and analyzing the data, they have been presented with the help of simple tabular form and simple statistical tools like percentage, ratio, average, table, figure, graphs etc. Family structure, housing pattern, and festival celebration have been descriptively analyzed, information obtained on marriage, education attainment, population composition, economic status, have been simply analyzed. Most of data has been calculated and tabulated with simple percentage.

CHAPTER – FOUR

SETTING OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1 Location of the Dhanusha District

The Dhanusha district is located in the Central Development Region of Nepal. It is one of the six districts of the Janakpur zone. The political boundaries of this district are Sirha district in the east, Mahottari in the west, Sindhuli in north and Bihar one of the Indian states in the south. It is located between 85^o.05" east to 6^o.20" east longitude and 27^o.05" to 25^o.35" north latitude. It is situated at the altitude of 90 m to 786 m above the sea level. The total area of this district is 1180 of sq. km. The total number of households of this district is 117417; and total population of this district is 671364 where male population is 349422 and female population is 321942. The density of population in this district is 5.69 per km and the average household size is 5.20. The average maximum temperature is 30.7^o c and minimum is 10.7^o c, (CBS, 2001).

4.2 The Kurtha Village Development Committee: The Study Area

4.2.1 Physical Setting

The Kurtha VDC is one of the 102 VDCs of the Kurtha district, which is located in the West part of this district and surrounded by Four VDCs and one Nagarpalika namely Janakpurdham in the east, Tapanpur (Mahottari district) in the north, Mahadaiya (Mahottari district) in the west and Ratauli & Bispiti (Mahottari district) in the south. It is connected with both the district head quarters and zonal headquarters about 3 km in the East. It lies on the Janak Highway and its code number is 6032.

It is a less developed village largely populated by poor ethnic caste groups like Brahmin, Sudi, Danuwar, Teli, Dom, Dushad, Khatbe, Kyasth, Banodhiya, Yadav, Haluwai, Nuniya, Chamar etc. But the settlement of Chamar in this VDC is miserable in the comparison to other caste groups. The Kurtha VDC occupies approximately 14 Sq. km. area. There is only one village in this VDC and divided in nine wards.

4.2.2 Climate and Soil

The Kurtha VDC is a beautiful village, which is situated in Terai area. The climate of this VDC is characterized by sub-tropical climate. In this area, different types of soil are found like sandy-loam, silty-loam, clay loam, etc. The rainfall (monsoon) in this

district usually begins from the end of May and lasts for three to four months till August and sometimes till September. The land of this VDC is very much fertile.

4.2.3 Population Distribution

According to the CBS 2001, the total population of the Kurtha VDC is 6668 with 1163 households. Out of the total population male population is 3558(53.35%) and female population is 3110 (46.64%). There is only one village in this VDC and divided in nine wards. Each ward has large population.

The total population of the study area belongs to different age groups, which is shown in the following table.

Table No. 4.1
Distribution of Population by Age groups

| Age | Population | Percent |
|---------------|------------|---------|
| Below-4 years | 940 | 14.09 |
| 5-19 | 2346 | 35.18 |
| 20-59 | 2963 | 44.36 |
| 60 to above | 419 | 6.28 |
| Total | 6668 | 100.00 |

Source: CBS, 2001.

In the above table out of the total population, 14.09 percent population belongs to below 4 years age groups, 35.18 percent population belongs to 5-19 years age group, 44.36 percent population belongs to 20-59 years age group and 6.28 percent population belongs to above 60 years age groups.

4.2.4 Caste and Ethnic Composition

The people of various castes and ethnic groups are living in this VDC, which are as follows;

Table No. 4.2**Caste Wise Distribution of the Population in the Study Area**

| S. N. | Caste | Total Population | Percent |
|-------|----------------|------------------|---------|
| 1 | Newar | 443 | 6.64 |
| 2 | Teli | 308 | 4.61 |
| 3 | Kalwar | 106 | 1.58 |
| 4 | Hajam/Thakur | 48 | 0.719 |
| 5 | Chamar/Harijan | 315 | 4.72 |
| 6 | Sudi | 1444 | 21.65 |
| 7 | Khatbe | 439 | 6.58 |
| 8 | Nuniya | 249 | 3.73 |
| 9 | Yadav | 350 | 5.24 |
| 10 | Haluwai | 83 | 1.24 |
| 11 | Tharu | 20 | 0.29 |
| 12 | Sonar | 624 | 9.35 |
| 13 | Dhanuk | 235 | 3.52 |
| 14 | Brahman-Hill | 76 | 1.14 |
| 15 | Kayastha | 18 | 0.27 |
| 16 | Muslim | 617 | 9.25 |
| 17 | Kumhar | 337 | 5.05 |
| 18 | Tatma | 218 | 3.26 |
| 19 | Sanyasi | 74 | 1.11 |
| 20 | Mali | 12 | 0.18 |
| 21 | Dusadh/Paswan | 444 | 6.65 |
| 22 | Baniya | 148 | 2.22 |
| 23 | Lohar | 54 | 0.81 |
| 24 | Others | 6 | 0.09 |
| 25 | Total | 6668 | 100 |

Source: CBS, 2001

The above table shows that the populations of Sudi and Muslim in percent are 21.65 and 9.25. These two castes are the major castes group in the study area. Similarly, Haluwai, Mali, Lohar, Hajam, Tharu etc are castes in minority in the study area. The

population percentages of Yadav, Khatbe, Dusadh and Chamar are 5.24, 6.58, 6.65 and 4.72 percent respectively.

4.2.5 Occupation

The people of the Kurtha VDC are engaged in various occupations. But, most of the people are engaged in agriculture. So, agriculture has been proved to be a major source of employment and income of the households of this VDC. Besides this agricultural occupation, some people involve in non-agricultural economic activities, which are shown in the following table.

Table No. 4.3
Distribution of Total Household According to Non-agricultural Economic Activities

| No of Households | | | Types of Activity | | | | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|---------|--------|
| Total | Having economic activities | Not having economic activities | Total | Manufacturing | Trade/business | Transport | Service | Others |
| 1147 | 230 | 917 | 230 | 7 | 41 | 21 | 117 | 44 |

Source: CBS, 2001.

According to the above table, 117 households engage in service, 41 households engage in trade/business, 21 households engage in transport, 7 households engage in manufacturing and serving and 44 households engage in other non-agricultural economic activities.

4.2.6 Economy of the Villages

As in other rural parts of the country, the economic activities of the people of the Kurtha VDC are based on agriculture. Almost the whole population is engaged in agricultural activities. The main agricultural products are rice, wheat, maize, potato, oil seeds etc. Besides agriculture animal husbandry is another source of income. The domestic animals such as buffalo, ox, goat, pigs, chicken etc are reared and sold as a means of income that supplements the agricultural profession.

Due to the unequal distribution of land more than half of the population does not produce enough crops to feed them for the whole year. The populations of 10 years of age and over who usually live by economic activity are as follows;

Table No. 4.4
Distribution of Population by Economic Active (Over 10 Years)

| Total | | | Economically Active | | | Economically Inactive | | |
|-------|------|--------|---------------------|------|--------|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 4710 | 2490 | 2219 | 3743 | 2151 | 1592 | 967 | 339 | 627 |

Source: CBS, 2001.

The above table shows that the economically active population is higher than the economically inactive population. The male population is higher than the female population in comparison.

4.2.7 Educational Status

In the Kurtha VDC there are three primary level schools and one secondary level school, which are running in good condition providing education. The literacy rate of this VDC is 63 percent.

The literacy status of six years and above population in the Kurtha VDC is given below.

Table No. 4.5
Literacy Status of the Kurtha VDC (above 6 years)

| Gender | Literate | Percent | Illiterate | Percent | Total population | Total percent |
|--------|----------|---------|------------|---------|------------------|---------------|
| Male | 5290 | 73 | 1952 | 27 | 7242 | 100 |
| Female | 3858 | 54 | 3262 | 46 | 7120 | 100 |

Source: National Labor Academy, 2004.

The table shows that, above 6 years population consist of 73 literacy percent of male and 54 literacy percent of female. Similarly 27 percent of male and 46 percent of female are illiterate in this VDC.

4.2.8 Health Facilities

In the Kurtha VDC, there is one sub-health post. People are getting health facilities from private allopathic medical practitioners, village health workers and traditional healers such as Guruwa, Biadawa, Dhami, Jhankri etc

According to the records of Prathamik Swastya Kendra, Kurtha 's major health problems found in the whole VDC include: Scabies, worms, diarrhea/dysentery, pneumonia, typhoid etc.

4.2.9 Transportation

The Kurtha VDC is located at Janak Highway. So, transportation facility is adequate in this VDC. Inside the VDC area, all major roads are also graveled, but the problem is that there is regular transportation service. In the local area, bus, tempo, rickshaw and bullock carts are important means of transportation sources, which carry people and goods from one place to another.

4.3 The Cultural Pattern of Chamar Community

4.3.1 Origin and Distribution

Scholars have not been able to come to a definite and clear conclusion regarding the origin of Chamar. Most of them believe that they come from India. Chamars are Indio-Aryan and they were migrated from India (Subedi, 1998). The term 'Chamar' or 'Chambhar', the name of the working caste on leather is derived from a Sanskrit word, meaning "working in leather". We can also say that the word "Chamar" has been taken from the word "Charmakar" where 'Charma' means leather and 'Kar' means worker. So, the 'Chamar' is derived from the word "Charmakar". Chamars are also called "Mochis". Nowadays, they are known as "Ram" also. Their mother tongue (Language) is "Maithili".

In Hinduism, Chamars and Sarkis have the same social and occupational status (Mahato, 1993). But Sarkis are hill caste/ethnic group and Chamars are Terai caste/ethnic group or indigenous.

The Dhanusha district is not the place of origin of Chamar rather this group has come from the Siraha, Saptari districts and from India too. This community has come to the Dhanusha district through internal migration due to the hand to mouth problem.

4.3.2 Population

In the study area, there are altogether 96 households of Chamar. The total population of the Chamar is 528 and the male population is 267 and female population is 261, which shows that the number of male is more than the number of female. The household size of the Chamar family is 6.32 percent. (Field Survey, 2006)

4.3.3 Physical Feature

About their physical features, Sheering, (1974) says "They possess active and well set figures are more brown than black in color, and less marked in features than the easy and higher classes".

4.3.4 Occupation

The traditional occupation of Chamar is associated with their leatherwork and the occupation of watchmen is hereditary one. But the situation has changed a lot. Very few of Chamars are involved in their traditional occupation.

Many of the young Chamars hate the leatherwork. Very few of them like to do the work but it is very difficult to get the work. Some Chamars still do the leatherwork but they do not take it as the main occupation. They cannot survive only by this work. Therefore, they are compelled to change their occupation. The next occupation, which is of the watchmen, is also difficult to get. Therefore, Chamars are changing their traditional occupation. Nowadays, they are interested to embrace the agricultural occupation.

But agriculture is the major occupation of Chamars in the study area. A vast majority of the people has to supplement either with case based occupational work or wage labour or both.

4.3.5 Family and Social Organization

Family is a universal institution. It is found in each and every society. It fulfills emotional and physical needs of its members. It is a biological unit composed of groups of persons and kin who are related through blood and marriage. It usually begins when the partners marry because marriage is the basis of family.

The family system is divided into three categories - nuclear, joint and extended. In the society of Chamar, it is found that they are either joint or extended categories of family. But nowadays, some changes are found in it due to change in economic status and diversification of occupation.

Like other patriarchal societies, the father (Chamar) is the functional head of the family and outer activities. After the death of the family head, his eldest son takes his position.

4.3.6 Settlement Pattern and Houses

The settlement pattern of Chamar in the Kurtha VDC is compact in nature and most of the houses are built closely. But the clustering of houses has no particular direction as that of other ethnic groups. Due to population increase in the settlement area, which it presupposes the lack of land it is insufficient for the construction of new houses.

In the study area, there are 3 small clusters of Chamar houses. Most of houses are made up of bamboo walls and thatched roofs slopping towards two sides. Most of the houses are found to be one strayed with small windows. All the members of the family, both married and unmarried sleep in the same rooms.

As the size and shape of the houses are very small and narrow because of the poverty, separated sons are also found to be living together, cooking separately.

4.3.7 Food and Drinks

Most of the Chamars are non-vegetarian and their staple food is rice. They consume more fish, meat and alcohol than vegetable curry and bread. They eat the meat of chicken, pig, rabbit, pigeon, tortoise, buffalo etc. They used to eat even Caracas some 5-7 years ago. But nowadays, they don't eat Caracas because of awareness.

4.3.8 Dress and Ornaments

The Chamars of the study area do not wear traditional type of dresses. Patwardhan (1975) says about the dress and ornaments of Chamars of Rae pore "The dress of man is usually a single cloth, on end of which encircles their loins, and another their head, and the women wear little or no jewellery".

According to the key informants, the traditional types of dresses of male Chamars are Kurta (a type of shirt), Lungi or Dhoti (white cloth for wearing under the waist, but the cloth is not stitched). The Chamar women's traditional dresses are choli and lahnga (a traditional type of long skirt). The women's traditional ornaments are silver or aluminum bangle, earrings, Nathiya (a silver bangle wearing in nose) etc.

Nowadays, we cannot see the traditional types of dresses and ornaments in the study area. Today, shirt, trouser and coat are worn by old male Chamars and pant, shirt, T-shirt; shoes are worn by young male Chamars. Married women wear Blouse/Cholya, Dhoti, maxi, petticoat and mini skirt, T-shirt, maxi, suruwal-kurta are worn by

unmarried girls. They wear earrings, phuli, tilahari etc. Due to the poverty most of the ornaments are made of brass, silver, aluminum and plastics.

4.3.9 Language

The language of Chamar in the study area is Maithali. It is different from the Nepali language. Most of the Chamar of the study area know how to speak their native language but they do not use the Nepali language to interact with other caste groups because most of them do not know to speak Nepali language. The young Chamars like to speak Nepali more than their own language. The Chamars who have done inter-caste marriage, speak Nepali at home, but the Chamars who have not done inter-caste marriage, speak the Chamar language in the house.

4.3.10 Birth and Death Rite

Birth is the universal fact of human life. When a man and a woman get married, they are socially and legally permitted to have sexual reproduction. After the conjugal life begins they give birth to children and their social life starts.

Birth impurity is observed by Chamars as well. During the time of delivery they take help of a woman called sudeni (a local old woman who knows something about delivery, but special health care). The woman who gives birth to a baby is called Sutkeri and her family members observe birth impurity for 13 days. But sometimes, they observe only for 10 to 12 days. In the Chamar society, the birth of a son is often higher than a daughter. In the Chamar community they celebrate other ceremonies like Chhatihar (sixth day ceremony), Nwaran (Name giving ceremony), Bhat Khwai (Food giving ceremony).

When a person die the dead body is cremated in any selected area or generally at the side of the river called Dudhamati by sons and other close relatives. At that time, the dead body is tied with cloth. All the relatives and close neighbors participate the funeral procession. If the dead person is old or adult, he/she is burned but if the dead person is a boy or child he/she is buried. His/her sons and some other relatives initiate the burning process of corpse too. They shave their head and after finishing the burning process, all the participants of the funeral procession take bath in the river.

The family members and clan members associated with deceased are also ritually impure. They are not allowed to take salt and mustard oil for 12 days. At the mother's death, sons do not take milk and at the father's death, sons do not take curd. No pooja (worship) or any religious function can be performed during those days. Death impurity in the Chamar society is performed by son-in-law (Jwain) or nephew (Bhanja).

4.3.11 Marriage

Marriage is a socially recognized institution for having legitimate sexual relationships between men and women for the protection, Upbringing, Maintenance and socialization of the children through establishing a family. It is a strong institution in Hindu society and perhaps in every other society. The marriage system of Chamar is similar to other caste groups like Chhetri or Brahmin. In the Chamar society especially three types of marriage system are in practice.

- (a) Magi Bibaha (Arranging marriage)
- (b) Mankhusi bibaha or bhagi bibaha (love marriage)
- (c) Jari Bibaha (compensation Marriage)

4.3.12 Religion and Festivals

Religion is a part of culture. Each and every society of the world does have its own religious tradition. The religion of every ethnic group is interwoven with their religious processes. Chamars are rigid in their religious belief. Ghurye (1969) says, "The Chamars of Bihar are more orthodox in the matter of religion than their eastern brethren, some of them having advanced so far in the direction as to employ Maithali Brahmins for the worship of the regular Hindu gods."

Although Chamars of the Kurtha VDC are rigid in the matter of religion, they are not as orthodox as Indian Chamars. Chamars of the study area strongly say that they are Hindus. They worship Hindu gods and goddesses like Siva, Krishna, Ram, Vishnu, Durga, Laxmi, and Kali. They also worship their own Kul Dewata (deities). They worship their deities in the night of Nawami, the greatest festival of Hindus Dashain. They put Dhoja (pieces of cloth) on the main pole of the house. It is put in the up stairs. They think that pleasure and misery are directly related with the religion.

The Nepalese people celebrate various festivals according to their culture and tradition. They worship various gods and goddess, and enjoy themselves by eating, drinking and dancing. So, it can be said that the Nepalese people know how to live in pleasure. The festivals, which the Nepalese people celebrate, are associated with one or the other dignities; they are held sacred either in the Hindu or Buddhist theology.

Chamars of the Kurtha VDC celebrate various festivals as other Hindus do. Dashain, Laxmipooja, Holi, Chhat, Chaurchan, Jitiya, Sakranti, Saune Sakranti are the main festivals of Chamars in the study area.

CHAPTER - FIVE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

This chapter Provides socio-economic and demographic information of the Chamar of the Kurtha VDC.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics

5.1.1 Household and Family Size

The demographic features of sampled respondent's households of charmers of the Kurtha VDC are given in the table.

Table No. 5.1

Household and family size

| No. of HHS | Total Population | Total male | Percent | Total female | Percent | Average family size of HHS |
|------------|------------------|------------|---------|--------------|---------|----------------------------|
| 40 | 250 | 132 | 55.00 | 128 | 45.00 | 6.25 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The total population of the Chamars in the sampled households in the Kurtha VDC is 250. Out of it, 132 (55.00%) were males and 128 (45.00%) females, which shows that the number of male is higher than the female. The average family size is 6.2, which is greatening than 5.73, the average family size of the Dhanusha district in 2001. This large family size is due to the large extended family size.

5.1.2 Age and Sex Composition

The population distribution of the Chamar in the Kurtha VDC is given in table 5.2.

Table No. 5.2

The Population Distribution of the Chamars on the Basis of Age and Sex Composition

| Age Group | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|-----------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 0-9 | 37 | 28.03 | 35 | 27.34 | 72 | 27.69 |
| 10-14 | 17 | 12.87 | 18 | 14.06 | 35 | 13.46 |
| 15-59 | 67 | 50.75 | 65 | 50.78 | 132 | 50.76 |
| 60 above | 11 | 8.33 | 10 | 7.81 | 21 | 8.07 |
| Total | 132 | 100.00 | 128 | 100.00 | 260 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The table shows the distribution of population by age and sex groups. The age group (15-59) accounts highest with the proportion 50.76 percent of the total population (50.75% male and 50.78% female). The 60 and above group has the lowest proportion 8.07 percent of the total population (male 8.33% and female 7.81%). Likewise, (0-9) and (10-14) age groups rank second and third having 27.69 percent (28.03% male and 27.34% female) and 13.46 percent (12.87 male and 14.06 female) of total respectively.

5.1.3. Structure of Family

Father is the head of the family and makes household decision. The family fulfills various needs of the members. In addition, it performs several function inducing continuity, integration and change in the society.

It is believed that the majority of family in Nepal is joint. The study shows that the joint and the nuclear families are found in the Chamar's Society. The nuclear family consists of married couple and their unmarried children, and Joint family is a group of brothers' family living together in which there is a joint living space and property.

Table No. 5.3
Respondents by Family Structure

| Family structure | Respondents | |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| | No | Percentage |
| Nuclear | 17 | 42.5 |
| Joint/Extended | 23 | 57.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The above table shows that the family is categorized into two types: nuclear and joint/extended. Out of the total households, 57.5 percent Chamars live in joint/extended family and 42.5percent in nuclear. The joint/extended family is higher than the nuclear family in the Chamar community.

5.2 Social Status

5.2.1 Respondents by the Language Spoken

One of the major characteristics of the Dalit Caste group is their mother tongue. The Chamars also have their own mother tongue. In the study area, most of the Chamars speak their mother language.

Table No. 5.4
Respondents by Their Mother Tongue

| Language | Respondents | |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| | No | Percentage |
| Mother tongue/Maithali | 34 | 85 |
| Nepali | 6 | 15 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The above table shows that most of the Chamars, 34 (85%) speak mother tongue and 6 (15%) of respondents only speaks the Nepali language. Though recently the Chamars feel more comfortable speaking the Nepali language in the process of their communication, the impact of modernization has deeply affected in terms of language. Chamars, who speak mother tongue among themselves also speak other language i.e. Nepali to deal with their owners

5.2.2 Respondents by Their Costumes

Regarding the traditional costumes of the Chamars, the males wear Kurta (a type of shirt, lung or Dhoti (white cloths) for wearing under the waist, but the cloth is not sewed). The Chamar women traditional dresses are choli and lahnga (a traditional type of long scort).

These days male Chamars have begun to wear the modern clothes seen as shirts, plants, waistcoats, and the married Chamar women have begun to wear blouse/chalya maxi, petticoat. Similarly the unmarried Chamar girls wear miniskirts, t-shirt, maxi, suruwal-kurta etc about which the table 5.5 shows.

Table No. 5.5

Respondents by Their Costumes

| Customs | Respondents | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| | No | Percentage |
| Traditional | 27 | 67.5 |
| Modern | 13 | 32.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The above table shows that most of the Chamars, wear traditional costumes. Among the respondents, 27 (67.5%) respondents wear traditional costumes and 13 (32.5%) wear traditional costumes at ones which show that the socioeconomic life style of the Chamars is not changing. But nowadays most of young Chamars are wearing modern dresses.

5.2.3 Respondent by Age at Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important parts of life. So, it is meaningful for the whole life. Marriage is an institution with admits man and woman to lead a family life. In the Hindu culture there are various types of marriage. The CHAMARs are also not far from these marriage variations.

Basically the researcher found the arranged marriage in the Chamar community. Love marriage is found in rare cases. Divorce and widow marriage are not found in the study area. Inter-caste marriage is prohibited. The Chamar community generally follows the customs of the marriage bye agreement. The following table shows the age at marriage of the respondent.

Table No. 5.6

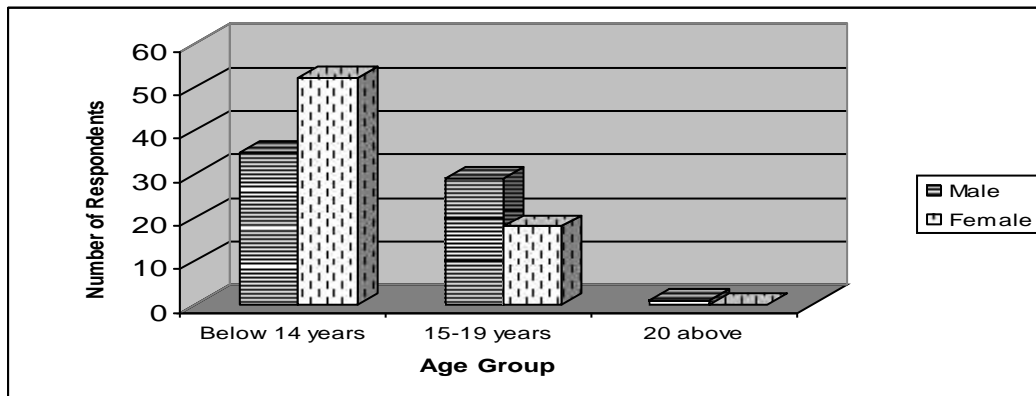
Age at Marriage of the Respondents

| Age at marriage | Family members of respondents | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Male | Percent | Female | Percent |
| Below 14 years | 35 | 53.84 | 52 | 72.28 |
| 15-19 years | 29 | 44.61 | 18 | 25.71 |
| 20 above | 1 | 1.53 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total | 65 | 100.00 | 70 | 100.00 |

Source: field Survey, 2008

Fig No. 5.1

Age at Marriage of the Respondents



The table and figure show that the maximum 52 (72.28%) females get married under 14 years where as 35 (53.84%) males get married under 14 years. Similarly, 18 (25.71%) females get married under 19 years whereas 29 (44.61%) males get married in the same age. Only 0 (0.00%) females and 1 (1.53%) males get married after 20 years.

Thus, marriage system of the female Chamar begins bearing a child before the age of 20 years. Early marriage invites early pregnancy and high fertility.

5.2.4 Respondent's Preference for the Child

In Nepalese context, son plays a vital role in the family. He becomes the owner of the property after his father/mother's death. Due to the lack of awareness and education, Nepalese people have taken the son as the insurance in old age and as a means to continue the generation. The Chamar communities are not free from this type of thinking. Rather, it is found very rigid in the context, which is shown in the table 5.7 below.

Table No. 5.7

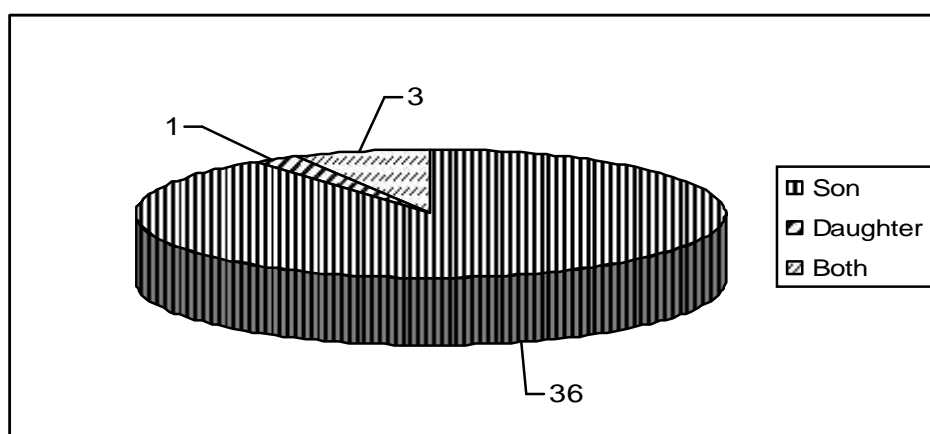
Respondent's Preference for the Child

| Child Preference | Respondents | |
|------------------|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Son | 36 | 90.00 |
| Daughter | 1 | 2.5 |
| Both | 3 | 7.50 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Fig. No. 5.2

Respondent's Preference for the Child



The above table and figure show that out of the total respondents, 36 (90%) prefer son, 3(7.5%) prefer both (son & daughter) and 1(2.5%) prefer daughter. The above condition shows that there exists the domination of female in the Chamar society.

5.2.5 Respondents' Use of Family Planning Method

The Family Planning Program has been launched in this VDC. Most of the Chamars have adopted several family planning measures. But, the knowledge and awareness is not sufficient. The following table shows the types of contraceptives distributed in the study area.

Table No. 5.8

The Contraceptive Preference and Use

| Method | | Respondents | |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| | | No | Percent |
| Pills | | 1 | 2.5 |
| Condom | | 6 | 15.00 |
| Sangani (Dipo) | | 2 | 5.00 |
| Permanent Sterilization | Vasectomy | 0 | 0.00 |
| | Laparoscopy | 15 | 37.50 |
| Not any | | 16 | 40.00 |
| Total | | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The above table shows that out of the respondents, 24(60%) respondents know at least one method of family planning. Among them 1 (2.5%) respondents have used pills, 6(15%) have used condom, 2(5%) have used sangani (Dipo). Similarly, 15(37.5% female Chamars have their laparoscopy done respectively. Likewise, 16(40%) respondents have not used any means of family planning.

5.2.6 Perception of Respondents on Causes of Illness and Preference of Treatment.

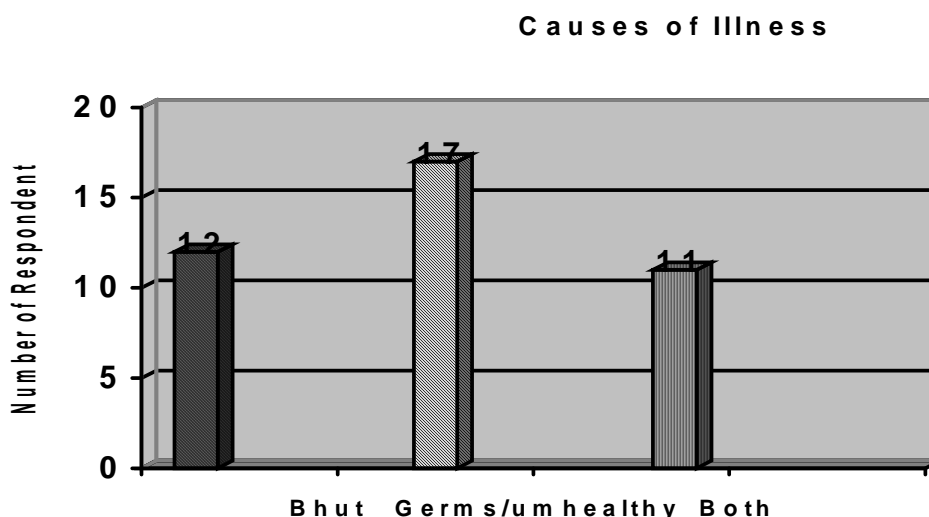
The respondents have indicated the causes of illness differently which are given in the following table.

Table No. 5.9
Cause of Illness as Perceived by Respondents

| Causes | Respondents | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|
| | No | Percentage |
| Bhoot-preta/Boksi | 12 | 30.00 |
| Germs/unhealthy environment | 17 | 42.5 |
| Both | 11 | 27.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figure No. 5.3



All respondents were asked about the causes of illness. Among them, 12(30%) respondents replied Bhoot-preta/Boksi as the main cause of illness. Similarly 17(42.5)

believed germs as the main cause of illness. 11(27.5) respondents showed their belief on both.

The above table and fig. show that the Chamars have strong belief on supernatural power (such as Boot-preta/Boksi) as the cause of illness. But at the same time it is also found that there is a grate change in cognitive pattern of Chamars. Since 23(57.5%)respondents didn't accept the influence of supernatural power regarding the cause of illness, the change in belief system is brought out by interaction with other communities. And the literacy of the respondents seems to play and important role.

The respondents opined differently when asked about the preference of treatment.

Table No. 5.10
Preference of Treatment by Respondents

| Preference | Respondents | |
|--|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Guruwa, Indigenous Medicines Healers | 15 | 37.5 |
| Doctors/Health practitioners | 14 | 35.00 |
| Both (Indigenous Healer & Doctor Healer) | 11 | 27.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

All the respondents were asked where they get their patients treated when they get sick. 15 (37.5%) respondents informed that they consult the Guruwa was and indigenous healers at first And 14 (35%) respondents choose health post, hospital and doctors for their treatment. Only 11(27.5%) the people of Chamar community consulted both indigenous healer and doctor healer.

The table gives clear information that the role of indigenous healers in the Chamar community is still decisive and significant because 37.5 percent respondents showed their first preference to indigenous healers. The attraction towards health post, hospital and doctors is also found but the number is low.

5.2.7 Respondents' at Decision Making

Decision-making is a important matter in every house hold. So, the Chamar household is not an exception. As in most of the Nepali households, the decision is made by the

male head of the family but in the study area the decisions of the family were made by female as well.

Table No. 5.11
Decision Making in the Chamar Community

| Decision Maker | Respondents | |
|----------------|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Male head | 39 | 97.5 |
| Female head | 1 | 2.5 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Though male i.e. 97.5 percent makes most of the decision making in the family in the study area, the female-headed households are also in substantial number, which is 2.5 percent. Thus, we find out that the males in the households of the study area make most of decisions and the females remain very passive.

5.3 Economic Status

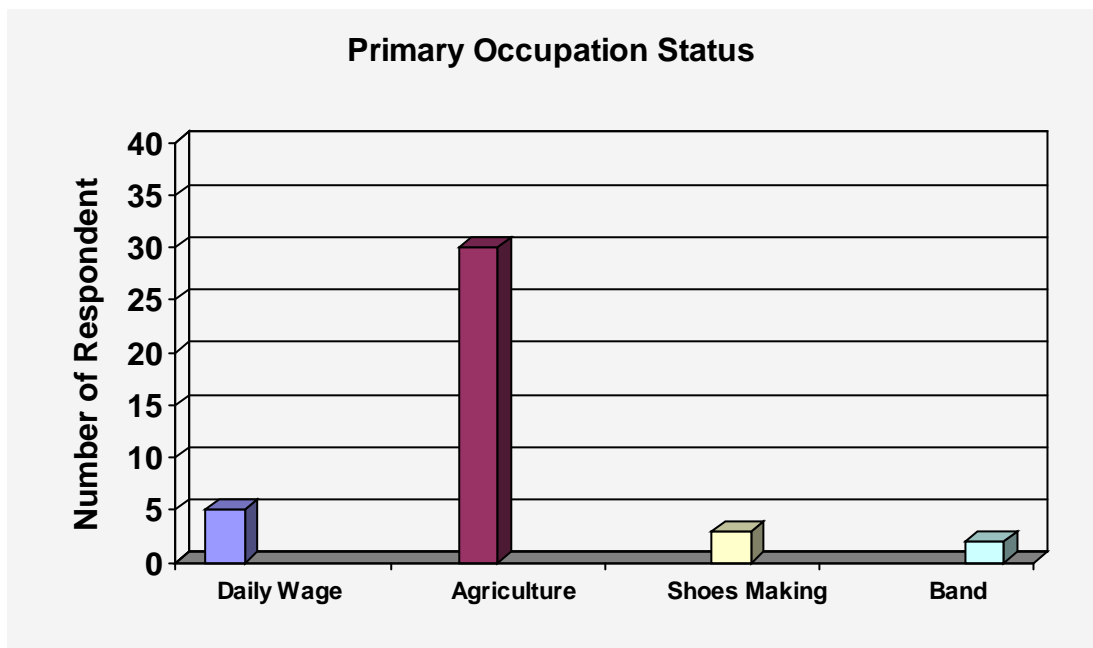
5.3.1 Occupational Status of Respondents

The people of Kurtha VDC are engaged in various occupations. But the Chamars of this VDC are mostly engaged in daily wage labour, agriculture and others. The primary occupational status of respondents in the study area is shown in the following table.

Table No. 5.12
Primary Occupational Status of the Respondents

| Occupation | Respondents | |
|------------------|-------------|------------|
| | No | Percentage |
| Daily wage labor | 5 | 12.5 |
| Agriculture | 30 | 75 |
| Shoes Making | 3 | 7.5 |
| Band | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 50 | 100.00 |

Figure No. 5.4



Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The table and figure present that the 5 (12.5%) Chamars are engaged in daily wage labour. Agriculture is the major occupation “which is 30(75%) respondents’ main source of family income. 3 (7.5%) is engaged in shoes making and 2 (5%) are engaged in band.

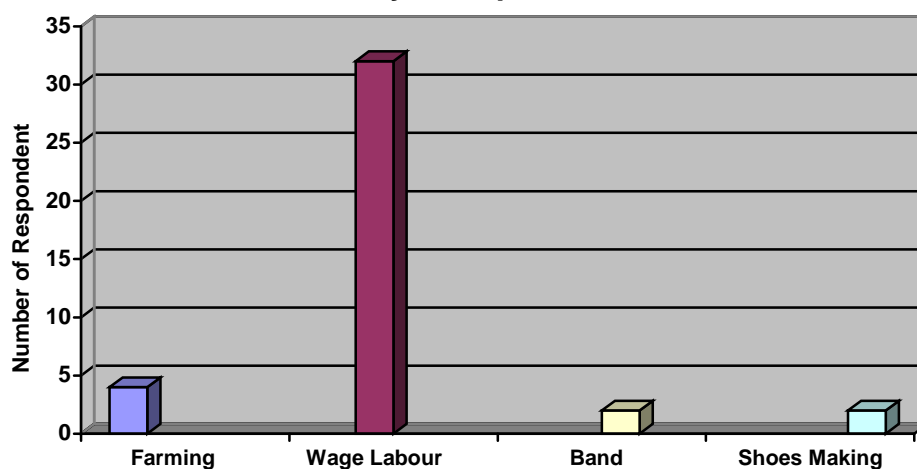
The Chamars lead their livelihood through many secondary activities, which are presented in the following table.

Table No. 5.13
Source of Secondary Occupational Status

| Occupation | Respondents | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| | No | Percentage |
| Farming | 4 | 10.00 |
| Wage labour | 32 | 80.00 |
| Band | 2 | 5.00 |
| Shoes Making | 2 | 5.00 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Sources: Field Survey, 2008

Figure No. 5.5
Secondary Occupation



The table and figure show that out of 40 respondents, 4 (10%) are engaged in farming as the secondary occupational source, 32 (80%) respondents are engaged in Wage labour, 2(5%) adopt banding, 2 (5%) are engaged in shoes making.

5.3.2 Land Ownership

Agriculture is the main source of the Nepalese people for their livelihood. But most of the Chamars are landless. So, the agricultural production is not sufficient for the fulfillment of their needs.

Generally, in the study area, there are three types of cultivators. They are owner, owner- cum tenants and tenants about which the following table shows.

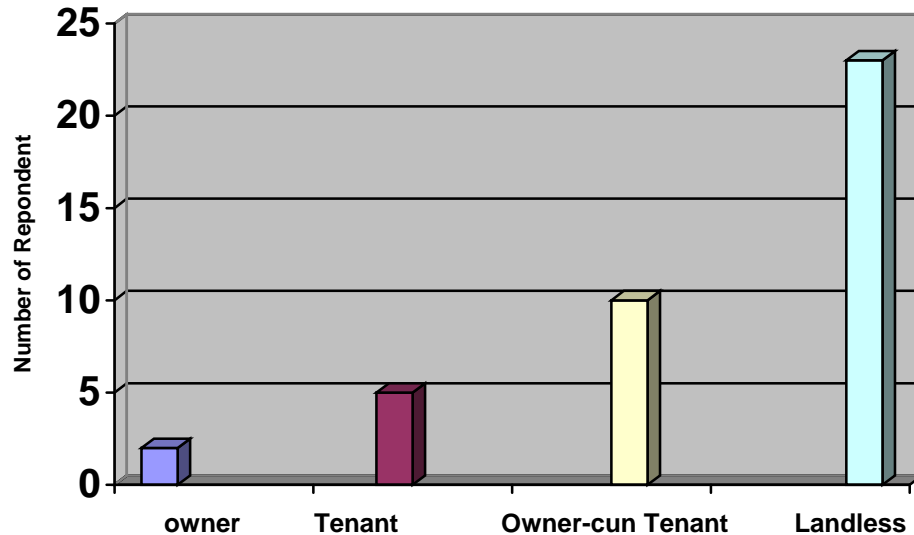
Table No. 5.14
Land Ownership Pattern in the Study Area

| Types of tenure | Respondents | |
|-------------------|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Owner | 2 | 5.00 |
| Tenant | 5 | 12.50 |
| Owner-cum tenants | 10 | 25.00 |
| Landless | 23 | 57.50 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figure No. 5.6

Land Ownership Pattern



The tenants are those who have not their own land but they cultivate the land of others (Adhiya/bataiya). The owner-cum tenants are those who have very small area of their own land and have rented land. The landless are those who have not their own land for cultivation.

The owner operators are recognized as an important class and which has various benefits from economic point of view. In the study area, out of total respondents, 2 (5%) are owners, 5 (12.5%) are tenants, 10(25%) are owner-cum tenants and the remaining 23 (57.5%) are landless.

5.3.3 Respondents by Adequacy of Food Grain

During the study period, it was tried to find out whether the annual production of food grain was sufficient to meet the daily requirement of one year or not. The farming land is being divided into small pieces where as the population is growing rapidly. Most of the Chamars are landless. So, they haven't sufficient food for daily requirement, which the table 5.14 shows.

Table No. 5.15
Adequacy of Food Grain Among the Chamars

| Group | Respondents | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Food sufficiency for all year | 5 | 12.5.00 |
| Food deficient | 35 | 87.50 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The table shows that only 5 (12.5%) households produce enough grain from farming and remaining 35 (87.5%) households have to depend on other sources. This shows that most of the people do not have enough food grain. Thus, people suffer from many kinds of diseases as well as malnutrition. The very poor people are compelled to knock the door of other relatively rich households for their livelihood.

5.3.4 Housing Conditions of the Chamars

The Chamars are seen to have lived in closely packed communities. Their houses are joined to each other. Their social activities like *pujas*, marriage and other functions are indicative of their community and unity. Chamars mostly live in one-story huts with bamboo walls and thatched roofs. Houses are made of both sides with thatched roofs. The following table shows their housing condition.

Table No. 5.16
Housing Condition of the Respondents

| House Types | Respondents | |
|------------------------|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Kachcha (Roof of Tile) | 26 | 65.00 |
| Phush (Thatched roof) | 9 | 22.50 |
| Cemented | 5 | 12.50 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The table shows that most of the respondents have *Kachcha* type and the number of it is house 26 (65%). 9 (22.5%) of the total respondents have *phush* type, and only 5 (12.5%) have cemented type of houses

The settlement pattern of the Chamars is not scattered, instead their houses are clustered in a certain area. They use either a corner of their land or uncultivated land for garbage management

5.3.5 Respondents' Source of Fuel

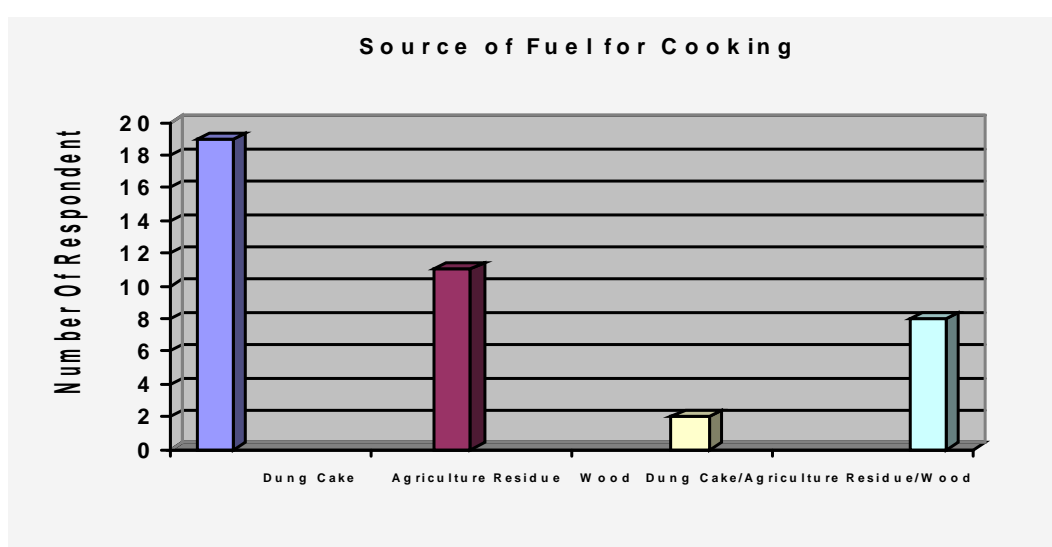
Biomass is a source of energy, which mainly consists of fuel wood, agriculture residues and animal dung. Biomass fuel accounts the highest energy consumption in Nepal. The commercial form the energy such as electricity, fossil fuels etc are not very significant. In the study area, dung cake and agriculture residue area seen as the major sources of cooking and heating.

Table No. 5.17
Sources of Fuel for Cooking

| Source of Fuel | Respondents | |
|--|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Dung cake | 19 | 47.50 |
| Agriculture residue | 11 | 27.50 |
| Dung cake/Agricultural residue/ fuelwood | 8 | 20.00 |
| Fuelwood | 2 | 5.00 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figure No. 5.7



Above table and figure show that the entire households rely on Dung cake, Agriculture residue, and wood as a source of energy. Among the respondents 19

(47.5%) rely on Dung cake, 11 (27.5%) rely on agriculture residue, 8(20%) households rely on Dung Cake/Agriculture residue/wood and 2 (5%) rely on wood for their major source of energy in cooking, heating lighting etc. Due to poverty, they haven't used modern form of energy like kerosene and electricity.

5.3.6 Respondents' Water Sources

Water is essential for humans to survive. Most of the Nepalese people are away from safe drinking water. In the study area, most of the Chamar use tube-well as the main source of drinking water. There is no modern tap.

The Chamars in the study area don't use toilet. They either use open area or bank of river/stream. The main cause of this is that many of them are landless and have poor economic condition.

5.3.7 Literacy Status of the Respondents

For every one primary education is basic human needs education is the basic foundation and a must for development; lack of education may obstruct the development process of the country.

Table No. 5.18
Literacy of the Respondents

| Literacy | Respondents | |
|------------|-------------|---------|
| | No | Percent |
| Literate | 2 | 5.00 |
| Illiterate | 38 | 95.00 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

The table shows that out of 40 respondents 2 (5%) respondents are literate where as the remaining 38 (95%) respondents can neither read nor write.

5.3.8 Educational Status of the Chamars

Education is the measurement of socio-economic development of community and nation. It is the major weapon to uplift the poor condition of the weak people of any society. It not only helps the individual for personal development but also provides the knowledge and the skill that gravitate the community towards participation in

nation building efforts. On the other hand, most of the aged Chamars are uneducated and do not understand the value of education.

Table No. 5.19

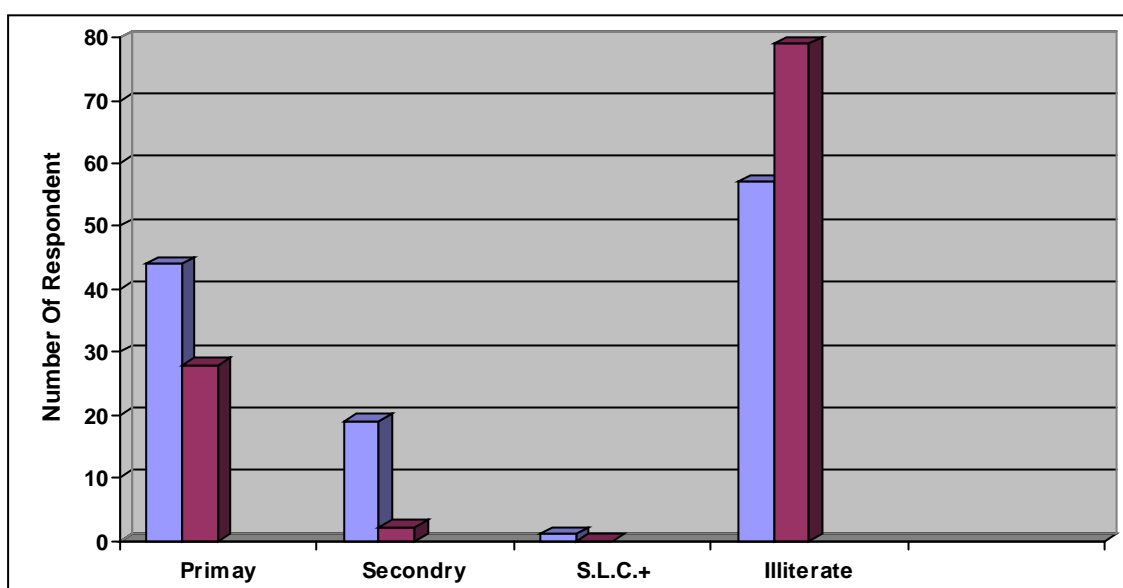
Educational Status of the Household Members of Chamars

| Education | Respondents | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|---------|--------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Male | Percent | Female | Percent | Total | Percent |
| Primary | 44 | 36.36 | 28 | 25.68 | 72 | 31.3 |
| Secondary | 19 | 15.70 | 2 | 1.83 | 21 | 9.13 |
| S.L.C + | 1 | 0.82 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.43 |
| Illiterate | 57 | 47.10 | 79 | 72.47 | 136 | 59.13 |
| Total | 121 | 100.00 | 109 | 100.00 | 230 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Figure No. 5.8

Educational Status



The table and figure show the educational attainment of the Chamar community of study area. Out of the total population 31.3 percent have been attaining primary education (36.36% male and 25.68% female). Similarly, 9.13 percent have been attaining secondary education (15.70% male and 1.83% female). Only 0.43 percent Chamars have passed the S.L.C. (0.82% male and 0% female). No Chamar student has achieved the higher education.

5.3.9 Respondents' by Income Sources

Nepal is predominantly an agricultural country. Most of the people in Nepal are primarily engaged in agriculture. So, the people of Kurtha VDC are not exception. But most of the Chamars of Kurtha VDC are involved in Daily wage labour and their family income sources are daily wage labour.

Table No. 5.20
Income Sources of Respondents

| Income Source | Respondents | |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| | No. | Percentage |
| Daily wage labour | 9 | 22.50 |
| Agricultural | 24 | 60.00 |
| Factories worker | 2 | 5.00 |
| Banding | 2 | 5.00 |
| Shoe- making | 3 | 7.50 |
| Total | 40 | 100.00 |

Source: Field Survey, 2008.

Above table shows that most of the Chamar people are engaged in agriculture to fulfill their family's basic needs. Out of 40 respondents, 24 (60%) respondents' family income sources is agriculture and agriculture itself is taken as the major occupation, 9 (22.5%) respondents' main source of family income is daily wage labour, 2 (5%) respondents' main source of family income is working in factories, 2 (5%) respondents' main source of family income is banding, 2 (5%) respondents main source of family income is making or repairing shoes.

Some years ago, the Chamar parents were not interested to send their children in school. The main reasons behind it are their high illiteracy; lack of knowledge and poor economic condition. But now a days, the Chamars of younger generation know that education can play the vital rote in their over all development. So, there is a considerable increment of interest in education in the Chamar community.

The Chamars practice their own tribal religion, which consists of worshipping a number of spirits and some Hindu Gods such as Shiva, Krishna, Ram, Laxmi, and Kali etc. Similarly, the Chamars have their own Kuldevata, an ancestral deity,

installed in their family house. These are known as Lukeswar, Bamet, Royatmala, Bageswari and Gahil.

The Chamars celebrate many kinds of feast and festivals as the other Nepalese people. Singing dancing, eating, drinking are the main activities in festivals. The main festivals of the Chamar are Dashain, Tihar, Chhatha, Krishna Asthami, Maghe Sangranti, Hori (holi), Ram Nawami, Jitiya etc.

The main problem faced by them is that they are landless. Due to landlessness and poverty, they don't use toilet. They have not received any grants from the government. They want that the government should make toilets and provide them with loan without any interest.

Shoe making (Leather work), the traditional occupation of Chamars, is in extinction of Kurtha VDC. Many years ago majority of Chamars are involved in shoe making (Leather work). But nowadays, they are leaving their tradition profession due to lack of skilled training, rapid rate of industrialization and low availability of raw materials. Those people who have practiced their traditional profession, they haven't sufficient to meet their daily requirement to adopt that profession. So, they are escaping/leaving that job.

In Nepal, the nature of exclusion and discrimination against Dalit (Chamar) differs with the level of awareness in society, and socio-economic and cultural status. It also differs according to the strength of the state legal and regulatory mechanism. The attitude of society towards them is very pathetic in Kurtha VDC. Some of them are as follows:

-) They use to wash dishes for owner or upper classes.
-) Prohibitions imposed up on them to enter public places.
-) Restriction on entering religious places and participating in various functions.
-) Prohibitions on entering the house of the higher caste groups.
-) Prevention from the use of public wells.

CHAPTER – SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Summary

Nepal is ecologically and culturally a heterogeneous country from southern belt of Terai to Northern high range of the Himalayas. People of different regions have different life style and culture. But in spite of it, people have strong feelings of nationality. Though people belong to different races, castes and different customs and traditions, they live under one unity, which comes to be known as Nepali culture.

Nepali society is caste hierarchical. It has been characterized by astrictive hierarchy of pollution and purity. Among all castes of Kurtha VDC, Chamar is an important schedule caste, known as Ram also. They are Indo-Aryan and migrated from India. In India, they are known as Harijan and eat carcasses in Indian society. They have low social status. They have been neglected in all aspects of social life

The purpose of the study was to find out the socio-economic condition of Chamar in the Kurtha VDC of the Dhausha district. The basic objective of the study was to access their living standard, social condition and problems and to analyze the result in a way which can bring a positive change in their life.

To fulfill the objectives, 40 houses were chosen as sample and one senior person from each household was interviewed with an objective of getting key information. The data collected from the study covered various aspects of their life such as household size, educational status, occupation etc. The summary of the data has been presented as given below.

Among the total population of sampled households, the population of male was found to be slightly greater than that of female. The majority of the people belonged to active age group (15 – 59). So, the households depend on their active age group members for livelihood.

The Chamars are backward in educational sector as well. Most of them are illiterate. In the study area there is very low literate in comparison to higher castes. In addition to it, females are too backward in education than the males. Only, 27.53 percent of females are literate of the total Chamar population.

Occupation is a major aspect that determines economic condition of a person. Most of the Chamars in Kurtha VDC are found to be dependent on agriculture and wage labour. They cannot make a good living even through the occupation. So, many others have also adopted other occupations such as shoes making, banding etc.

Extended or joint family had been a tradition in the Nepalese society, but nuclear or small family is getting popular now a day. Same is the condition in the Chamar community. Although, most of the Chamars have joint family, nuclear family is getting popular in the Chamar community these days. Not only family structure but other traditional cultures, rites, customs are also being modified along with the pace of modernization.

Most of the Chamars get married at their early age. Traditional marriage is preferred in their community. However, youngsters prefer to follow modern styles of marriage. Though almost all male and female get married at early age in traditional way. It is because of the lack of knowledge and awareness.

They follow Hinduism and hence they worship Gods and Goddesses. They celebrate the major Hindu festivals like Dashain, Tihar, Chhaith, Jitiya, Hori, Raksha Bandhan etc. All kinds of religious ceremonies including birth and death are observed by the Chamars according to their tradition and customs. They perform birth and death ceremony in their own way. The most of the respondents were found to give more preference to son than daughter.

Regarding the language, they have their own language named Maithali, but new generations want to speak the Nepali language also.

In the case of dress, the old Chamars wear traditional type of dress. Males wear dhoti, kurta, lungi etc. similarly, females wear sari, cholo, pharak, etc. The younger people, however, are partially influenced by modern fashion.

On the whole, although the young generation is leading towards new types of occupation and modernization, old generation still is involved in traditional occupation. Normally, they are not allowed to touch, the so-called upper caste people. We can say that this kind of domination and behaviour by the so-called upper caste people on them is a major cause of their degrading condition in society.

6.2 Conclusion

In general, some of the conclusions are derived from the study findings as follows;

- © The economic condition of the Chamars of Kurtha is very poor. The majority of Chamars in Kurtha VDC consist of the landless, the marginalized or small farmers, who do not have enough land or other means of production for survival. They have to knock the doors of others for their livelihood. Landlessness is the main cause of the poverty.
- © The literacy percent of the Chamars are very low and they hardly complete their schooling. There is only one person who has attained higher education in the study area. Due to inadequacy of higher education, they are innocent and unaware of their right as citizens.
- © They practise diverse cultural activities; they practise their religion, customs, traditions and their social values in a strong and rigid manner. They have strong belief on their tradition. In the present time, due to impact of urbanization and modernization, their cultural practices are being influenced by other cultures.
- © They celebrate different feasts and festivals. In the mean time, the unproductive expenses are done in the name of festivals, religion and social customs. So, such ceremonial customs increase their poverty.
- © The Chamars have been subjected to economic exploitation, oppression and poverty. They are still being exploited by the so-called non-Dalits in many ways opportunity, status, education etc.
- © Early marriage, unplanned family, economic disability, illiteracy, lack of decision making power, simplicity, landlessness, exploitation, conventional approach in agriculture are the main constraints for the socio-economic development of the Chamars of the Kurtha VDC.

6.3 Recommendations

On the basis of findings of this study the following suggestions are recommended for the upliftment of the overall condition of the Chamars of the Kurtha VDC.

➤ Provide Land Ownership

In the study area, most of the Chamars are landless. So, they cultivate land for crop sharing (Adihiya/bataiya) system of landowner. They do not like to do enough manual labour in this land because of the fact of low production. So, it is suggested that the

governmental programmes should be in favour of providing the land to the exact ploughman farmers or to the actual ploughing farmers.

➤ **Raising Educational Status**

Education plays the vital role to change the society on all sides. In the study area, most of the Chamars children do not go to school. Most of them leave their school before the completion of their school education. So, it is necessary to encourage for completing at least school level education.

➤ **Raising Awareness**

There is lack of awareness among the Chamars. Thus, in the Chamar society, it is necessary to make them aware about the bad effects of population growth, large family, early marriage, traditional farming and livestock etc. They are very superstitious and they believe in Ghosts, Witches, Dhami, and Wizards. They have no knowledge about their rights also. So, it is necessary to make them aware about the aforementioned aspects of life.

➤ **Raising Livestock**

All the Chamars rear cattle, but they are unable to make it as their occupation. They do not have good economic situation and sufficient land to rear sufficient number of cattle. Due to the discriminating behaviour, the Chamars do not sell their production like milk, meat, egg etc. in the market. Hence, They should be provided with their rights, loan facility should be provided for animal husbandry.

➤ **Aware for the Usages of Contraceptives**

The Chamars generally do not use contraceptives. They are living in joint/extended families and they give birth to many children for their family support. It makes them indirectly socio-economically backward. So, it is necessary to encourage the usages of contraceptives and to live in nuclear family also.

➤ **Launching Community Based Programs**

To uplift of socio-economic condition of the Chamars, Community Based Programs through community based organizations need to be conducted in their areas and encourage them to participate in those programs actively.

➤ **Launching Skill Development Programs**

The skill development programme is very necessary to assure the rural labour. Construction and maintenance of road, bridges, canals, biogas plants, electric works, building making, carpenters etc are such activities, which need skilled labour. The

Chamars need to assure skill development training like sewing and cutting cloths, sweaters knitting, basket making etc. The young Chamars should be trained to such jobs, which are more remunerative and lucrative than agricultural labor.

➤ **Participating on Government Sector**

None of the Chamars in the Kurtha VDC is in government service. Hence, government should do its best to provide governmental job to the depressed Chamars. They should be given priority in such works. This will be very useful in diminishing social disparity and will help to upgrade their living standard and social status.

➤ **Preserving Traditional Occupation**

Shoe making and banding are the traditional occupation of the Chamars. These traditional occupations are going to be disappeared The Chamars are not involved in it nowadays due to the lack of skilled training, rapid rate of industrialization and low availability of raw materials. They are leaving their traditional occupation. Hence, necessary skills, trainings should be provided to them. So, they can compete with the factory production and make a good income from it.

➤ **Raising Awareness about Health and Sanitation**

Health and Sanitation situation of the Chamars of the Kurtha VDC is very poor. Time and again, different types of diseases and illness attack them. Ultimately, many of them have to lose their life untimely. Hence, it is very necessary that they should be made aware of the cause of different disease and stress should be given to sanitation.

➤ **Counseling them about the Negative Effects of Taking Alcohol & Gambling**

The Chamars of the Kurtha VDC spend most of their income in useless activities like drinking alcohol (Jad and Raksi), playing Cards and gambling. Hence, they should be made aware of harmful effects of such activities, which degrade their health and economic condition.

➤ **Social Inclusion**

There is no doubt that the root cause of all the difficulties and backwardness of the Chamars of the Kurtha VDC is none other than the social exclusion. They cannot do any work jointly with others. As they are so-called Dalit, they cannot choose a good occupation that can uplift their life standard, hence, it is necessary to socially include them and eliminate the caste-based disparity (discrimination) that has given birth to different other problems for the Chamars. Strict law enforcement and public

awareness should be launched to make other people understand that humans have no caste; all are equal. Inter-caste marriage should be encouraged in this regard.

Hence, to bring change in the life of Chamar of Kurtha, first of all the system of social exclusion should be demolished and then different essential programs should be implemented strictly to make them socially and economically active. For this purpose, first of all education should be given to them because education plays the vital role to change the society on all sides.

Also the following recommendations are suggested to reduce their socio economic backwardness.

- VDC must launch various effective programmes for generating income to all the areas simultaneously.
- Various educational programmes, health facilities and other social infrastructures should be taken to the study area for the betterment of socio-economic status of the Chamars.
- Various opportunities for and alternatives should be granted to them to uplift their living standard.
- Financial aid must be granted to them for establishing micro-industries to raise income level.
- Agricultural extension training should be conducted for better production in this area.
- The government should give grants for their productive activities.

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