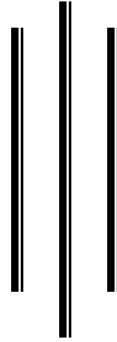


LIFE IN VEIL:

The Position of Maithil Women in Hindu Society



**A Dissertation Submitted to Faculty of Humanities and Social
Sciences for the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Masters Degree in Anthropology**



Rekha Kumari Yadav

Roll No. 280099

Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology

Tribhuvan University

Kathmandu, Nepal

2009

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This is to certify that Ms. Rekha Kumari Yadav has completed this dissertation entitled “**LIFE IN VEIL : The Position of Maithil Women in Hindu Society**” under my supervision and guidance. I therefore, recommend this Dissertation for final approval and acceptance.

Approved By

.....

OM Gurung, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Head

Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Date :.....

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
CENTRAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY / ANTHROPOLOGY KIRTIPUR,
KATHMANDU, NEPAL

LETTER OF APPROVAL

The evaluation committee has approved this dissertation entitled “**LIFE IN VEIL : The Position of Maithil Women in Hindu Society**” submitted by **Rekha Kumari Yadav** for the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of master of Arts in Anthropology.

Evaluation Committee

OM Gurung, Ph.D.

Supervisor

Associate Professor and Head
Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology

Prof. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadav

External Examiner

Head of the Central Department of Linguistic

OM Gurung, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Head
Central Department of Sociology/ Anthropology

Date : 30th January 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to render my whole-hearted gratitude to all of those who have kindly given their valuable time and energy for the study.

I acknowledge my heartfelt thanks to the Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology for providing me an opportunity to carry out this study in this stage.

I am profoundly indebted to my supervisor **Dr. Om Gurung** for his inexhaustible support, valuable suggestions, encouragement and supervision in all stages of the study from the fieldwork to the final compilation of the work. Moreover, I feel deep gratitude to all my respected teachers for their cooperation and inspiration that remained and valuable in the completion of this work.

I am also thankful to the libraries and Librarians at Central Library of TU, USA library and Indian Library where I reviewed the relevant literature in the course of my study.

My few words of appreciation should also go to the people of the study area. Their willingness to share their experiences as well as to provide information required for the study was remarkable.

Likewise, my great gratitude goes to my parents for their kind co-operation, encouragement, financial support and affection. I sincerely wish to express my gratitude to my friend Kashindra Yadav and brother Basudev Rai for their regular help.

Finally, I would like to thank all who have directly and indirectly assisted me to make this endeavor a success.

Rekha Kumari Yadav

January, 2009

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBS	-	Central Bureau of Statistics
GOs	-	Government Organizations
HHs	-	Households
I/NGO	-	International/Non Government Organization
No.	-	Number
Sq.km	-	Square Kilometer
UNDP	-	United Nation Development Programme
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
VDC	-	Village Development Committee

Abstract

This study deals with the position of Maithili women of Khoria village at Chandra Ayodhyapur VDC of Siraha District. Maithili society is an inegalitarian and sexually stratified societies where women in general have lower status than men. Women have no independent existence and women's social position is entirely defined by her father's husband's or son's status. The tendency to patrilineal dominance, through general throughout Nepal is particularly strong in Maithili society.

The general objective of this study is an attempt to depict the Maithili socio-cultural system in its totality and assess the position of women from different angles economic, social, cultural, religious and political by examining women from different economic strata. However the specific objectives of this study are: To examine the socio-cultural position of Maithili women, to examine the economic participation of Maithili Women and to assess the power and authority in terms of ownership, household decision making and involvement in political process.

For the study the extensive field visit has been conducted in the study area. Hence, the findings and recommendations of this study may not be applicable in other places. It is based on primary data along with available pertinent secondary data. Multi-methodological approaches have been applied for data generation. For primary data generation, household's survey, informal interview from key-informant and Focus group discussion method were applied. Besides these, time allocation study technique was used to get the data on economic participation of women. This study was carried out on the basis of exploratory and descriptive research design. The deep rooted cultural practices, custom, social systems in the context of position of women are described in detail with the help of descriptive research design and the economic, political position of Maithili women are explored through exploratory research design.

It is clear that Maithili society is more inegalitarian and sexually stratified society based on Hindu philosophy and strict caste system. On the status scale composed of economic, socio-cultural cum religious and political indicators, Maithili women in general are be far below men. Culturally they are regarded as inferior than male and accorded a lower position in society. They are not allowed to take part in many socio-cultural activities like death ritual of relatives. The educational status of Maithili women are very low compared to male member of this society. Marriage is compulsory for women in Maithili society. For women, besides the social need to produce progeny, marriage is also seen as primary means of livelihood for women. Even these days, dowry system is integral part of Maithili marriage which not only demoralized women socially but brings a lot of physical and mental torture for women. Maithili women have very low scale of freedom. They

have very little freedom in behavior pattern i.e. speech, eating habit, choice of marriage partner, choice of association. The purdah system, the traditional system of preserving purity, has further helped to exploit the women. In Maithili society the inheritance system is patrilineal and males of a patriline inherit all property, both landed and movable. Women's involvement in decision making process is very low. They participate in only minor affairs of household. The major decisions on the family affairs are taken solely by male member of family. The participation of women in political process in Maithili society is very low

There are some recommendations have been made on the basis of problem identified in this study. Several studies have shown that women's increased control over income, and with it increased control over the allocation of household resource, leads to improve health and nutrition of not only for women, but also for their children as well. Increase in agricultural productivity fulfill many basic need of women and improve household condition which directly influence the health and nutrition of women. It is important note that to improve the status of women, women have to be drawn out of the household and into market activity. Social movement should be launched against the many prevalent custom like dowry system, purdah system, domestic violence, witch accusation system, etc. to improve the social status of women.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER	TOPIC	PAGE NO
	Recommendation Letter	I
	Letter of Approval	II
	Acknowledgements	III
	Acronyms and Abbreviations	IV
	Abstract	V
	Content	VII
	List of Tables	VIII
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	1. 1 Background of Study	1
	1.2. Statement	3
	1.3 Objective of Study	6
	1.4 Significance of Study	6
II	LITERATURE REVIEW	7
	2.1 Position of Women in Hindu Scriptures	7
	2.2 Position of Women and Caste system	10
	2.3 The Nepalese's Context	12
	2.4 Mithila and Maithili Women	14
III	METHODOLOGY	16
	3.1 Research Design	16
	3.2 Rationale for the selection of study Area	16
	3.3 Nature and Source of Data	17

3.4	Universe and sampling Procedure	17
3.5	Data Collection Technique and Tools	17
3.5.1	Household Survey	18
3.5.2	The key informant Interview	18
3.5.3	Focus group Discussion	18
3.5.4	Time Allocation Study	19
3.6	Data analysis and Interpretation	19
3.7	Limitation of Study	19
3.8	Organization of Study	20
IV	Social Demography And Economy of Study Area	21
4.1	Age	23
4.2	Economy Status of Household	24
4.3	Size of Agriculture Farm Land	25
4.4	Tenure Status	26
4.5	Number of livestock	27
4.6	Education	28
4.7	Family Structure	29
4.8	Life Style	30
4.9	Food and Clothing	30
4.10	Ideology and Culture	31
4.11	Kanayadan	32
4.12	Women in Mithila painting	33
4.13	Major Festivals	33
4.13.1	Chhath Parba	33

	4.13.2 Deepawali and Lakshmi Puja	35
	4.13.3 Chaurchan	35
	4.13.4 Dasain	35
	4.13.5 Maghe Sankranti or Tila Sankranti	36
	4.13.6 Holi or Faguwa	36
V	SOCIAL LIFE OF WOMEN	37
	5.1 Kanya	37
	5.2 Suhag	38
	5.3 Viduwa	38
	5.4 Opportunities for Literacy and Education	40
	5.5 The Marriage	44
	5.6 Conception, Birth and Fertility	49
VI	WOMEN IN AUTHORITY, POWER AND ECONOMY	51
	6.1 Access to Resource	51
	6.2 Time allocation	52
	6.3 Types of Work Performed by Women	55
	6.3.1 Animal husbandry	56
	6.3.2 Agriculture	57
	6.3.3 Fuel Gathering	58
	6.4 Involvement of Respondents in their Family Decision Making	58
	6.5 Community Affairs and Politics	60
	6.5.1 Party Politics	60

	6.5.1.1 Participation in voting	60
	6.5.2 Caste Politics	62
VI	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	64
	7.1 Summary	64
	7.2 Conclusion	67
	7.3 Recommendations	68

BIBLIOGRAPHY

List of Tables

	Page No
Table 4:1 Caste Distribution of the Households in the Village and the Sample Size.	22
Table 4:2 Age Wise Distributions of Respondents	23
Table 4:3 Household by Economic Strata and Caste	25
Table 4:4 Land Holding Size Per Household	26
Table 4:5 Tenure Status Per Household	26
Table 4:6 Livestock Per Household	27
Table 4:7 Literacy Pattern by Economic Strata and Sex	28
Table 4:8 Family Structures by Economic Strata	29
Table 5:1 Number of Boys/Girls in Government School/Private School	40
Table 5:2 Attitude of respondent towards education	41
Table 5:3 Attitudes towards education by economic strata	42
Table 5:4 Desired Level of Education for Boys and Girls	42
Table 5:5 Mobility Pattern by Age group and Sex	48
Table 6: 1 Land Entitlement by Sex	52
Table 6:2 Working Hour of Respondent	54
Table 6:3 Types of Work Performed by Respondent	56
Table 6:4 Involvements of respondents in their family decision Making	59
Table 6:5 Participation of Women in Casting Vote	61
Table 6:6 Decisions o Voting	61

