

CHAPTER – I

Introduction

Background of the study

Nepal is a country characterized not only by biodiversity but also by socio-cultural diversity. This socio-cultural diversity is observed especially with Hindu society that divides people into four Varnas, namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Over a period of time, the Varnas turned into Casteism that developed a rigid hierarchical society with the purity and pollution of castes. In this fabricated caste hierarchy, Brahmins lie at the top, and Sudras, or Dalits, lie at the bottom of society.

Nepal's deep-rooted religious and cultural practices give preference to men. Many Hindu rituals institutionalize the criticism of women, and systematically undermine their self-worth. This situation helped people internalize that women are not equal to men under the law, and they are economically and socially dependent on male member. They are unwelcome at birth.

Hinduism which views God and Goddess complementary to each other also suggests the role of women hand in hand with her male counterpart. Fertility is worshipped in the forms of rivers, land, etc. Females have the right to perform worship as their male counterparts. There are many Vedic sages, philosophers of later day, and poets' queens and so on from the womenfolk. If the male has the authority over the operations, the female commands the respect of the family. They do not compete but complement to form a better society. Quite naturally the wife is called *saha dharmini* or the companion in the dharma. But in the course of time there has

been a major deterioration of this status due to different circumstances (<http://www.google.com/>). But it is said that the Manu, the first and principal of the sages or lawgivers who has created or is the author of the Manusmriti, laid down the fundamental and outrageous doctrine of woman's everlasting subjection (Walikhanna,2004:13).

During the Vedic period, women and men were equal as far as education and religion was concerned (http://www.tributetohinduism.com/women_in_Hinduism.htm6/19/2001). It is said that all males' power comes from the feminine. The Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva are all powerless without their female counterparts. Similarly, it is said that Brahma cannot do a worthwhile job as the Creator without the grace of Saraswati. For maintenance activity plenty of resources are required so Laxmi, is an essential companion to Vishnu. Shiva needs plenty of power and energy. That is why Durga is required. Hence in Hinduism all power, *shakti*, is female. So the female represents the totality of power and the male is imaged as the agent of the female (http://www.tributetohinduism.com/women_in_Hinduism.htm6/19/2001).

Women in that period had the right to education and knowledge. Even among the authors of the Vedas, there were said to be twenty-two women. Women like Gargi and Maitreyi were respected as seers (Walikhanna, 2004: 13). In Hindu Dharma, God is often compared to a mother, and is worshipped in the form of the Divine Mother. In social contexts as well, no person is considered as high-ranking and worthy of respect and service as one's mother. In Hindu culture, the mother is the very embodiment of love, of sacrifice, or selfless service to her children and of forbearance. She is considered the first teacher of every child, and is regarded as the highest Guru. Hindu

texts remind us that as long as we live, we must never forget the efforts and sacrifices our mothers make to bring us up in our childhood. According to Manu, “the mother is the most venerable person in this world- even more than the father. More than one Dharma sastra –writers have declared that the mother is a hundred times more venerable than even the father “(cited in Prabhu, 2004:273).

Despite the above sahadharmi position of women Manusmriti prescribed woman's main duties in obeying and serving their fathers, brothers and others male members of the family when they are young. And after they are married off, they should serve their husbands, fathers- in-law, mothers –in –law and others senior male and female members of the family. But when they grow older they should follow the advice of their sons. Thus women are made subservient to male members of the family throughout their life (<http://www.bologi.com/women/index.htm>).

Because of the women's subservient position female group in Nepal is behind compared to their male counterparts. Further, all sorts of household duties and responsibilities are assigned to women neglecting their right to education. Half of their life time is devoted to the household activities only. In this reality, women's participation in national development cannot be expected as equal to the men. Similarly, in the patriarchal system, males rank over females.

In many cases, the girls are also married off in their childhood. Moreover, they are not encouraged to work outside the homes or villages. If they are sent outside, villagers regard it as social stigma. In fact many factors prevent young girls from attending schools. However, the main reason seems to be parent's concept about female education. From the perspectives of many parents, six-year-old girls become physically fit to work in the family after the age of 12 or 13, they will soon be others

wives (Sharma, 2003). So, parents view their role as one of simply acting as guardians of someone's future wives and thus see little practicality in trying to ensure that their daughters receive education (Bhattachan, 2002:28).

Parents only are not responsible for it. As explained earlier, many social, cultural and religious factors compel parents to engage in many activities leading to gender discrimination within their family. The girl who gets a chance to study, is not steadily looked upon favorably by the community. They are subjected to the physical and the mental harassment (<http://www.google.com>). They are considered as "girls unfit for marriage" on the assumption that they have been raised with too much liberty compared to girl students of rural regions of Nepal.

The story of women in Nepal in general depicts a continued way of exploitation and discrimination. The society refuses to recognize their potentialities, hard work and contribution to the welfare of the society. They are considered to be unequal and inferior to men. Women are possessions, subjugation of man, they have no independence. Their life is means for giving pleasure and comfort to their men. They are called the 'fair Sex' and are shown 'unfair treatment' (Bhasin, 2004). Anti-women ideas and acts are glorified (female) child marriage, forced widowhood and compulsorily burning the wife in the funeral pyre of the husband all advocated in Hinduism (Sarkar, 2006:23). However these systems are weakening these days.

Men are considered more "pure" than women. And men are given social authority to maintain control over female behavior and insuring their sexual purity before marriage and their strict monogamy within marriage is critical to the ideological foundations of the entire caste system. This is manifested in rural societies of Nepal, where there is still a wrong concept that educating a girl child is an uncalled

for expense. They take it as an economic burden. They regard their daughter as a burden to the family. Thus these “purity seeking people” preferred education for sons while daughters are kept engaged in household chores like cooking, collecting wood, and cutting.

Quite long ago, the society was divided into four castes depending upon the nature of service they do, the aptitude they hold, and the status they maintain so that they together make sure the smooth running of the social system. It was like the operational divisions of organizations. These four castes were the four functional pillars on which the society was standing. This shows that in the course of time the caste started to get determined by birth and later some of these sections started considering themselves superior to others. This finally led to the cruelty and inhuman behaviors of untouchability.

The discussion above implies that Hindu culture though came from Sanatana Dharma has legitimized division in the society. For example the *Bhagvat Gita* says: the four castes are created by Krishna by the same stuff but they are classified into four castes according to their qualities and actions. But the Rig Veda i.e. Hymn 11 (cited in Nirula, 2005), which is credited for being the genealogical roots of caste system mentioned it differently. It reads “The Brahmin was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made. His thighs became Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced” in the context of describing Birat person (the Brahma).

Dalit is the latest and politically correct, of many terms used for untouchable Shudras. The word ‘dalit(a)’ comes from the Sanskrit - root ‘dal’ that means ‘held under check’, ‘suppressed’, or ‘crushed’, or, in a looser sense, ‘oppressed.’ The term scheduled castes/scheduled tribes is also used in the Indian legal system to refer to

this group along with non-caste tribes (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). In South Asia's caste system, a Dalit; often called an untouchable; is a person of shudra; the lowest of the four castes. Included are leather-workers (called chamar), scavengers (called bhangi or chura), street handicrafters, poor farmers and laborers (<http://www.alrc.net/mainfile.php/60written/>).

According to the research study (cited in Bisowarkarma, 2004) 23% Dalits are landless whereas 48.7% have less than 5 ropanis of land. Furthermore, 15.6% Dalits have 6-10 ropanis of land, 9.6% Dalits have 11-20 ropanis of land and 3.1% have more than 21 ropanis of land. They hardly have 1% of cultivable land. 95% Madhesi Dalits are landless. Their per capita income is US \$39.6, which is almost the lowest in the world (Ibid). Dalits have no easy access to national resources, public services and even development projects. In such a situation, we can imagine the reality of Dalit women. They participate with their male partner's work in the agricultural field of the upper caste people (Ibid).

The word Dalit literally means "a person immersed in a swamp." Traditionally, Dalits have been treated inhumanely as "Untouchables." Although untouchability was abolished by the New National Code of Nepal in 1963, its practice still continues. The women belonging to this community are living in a swamp of illiteracy, exploitation, marginalization, absolute poverty and, above all, caste discrimination. They are, however, triply oppressed: (1) oppressed by the so-called high caste people, which equally affects both male and female Dalits, (2) oppressed by the design of the Hindu patriarchal system and (3) oppressed by Dalit males (Sob, 2005). It is a known fact that 40 percent of country's total population is below the absolute poverty line and out of which 17 percent suffer from ultra poverty. Out of the total number of ultra poor,

80 percent are from Dalits who make approximately 2.5 million of total population of the country and is consisted with 55 percent of female population (Bisowarkarma, 2004). This implies that poverty has been feminized and this is more so with Dalit women.

The fate of Hindu women no matter they are Dalits or non-Dalits resemble in many ways. All kind of *Lakshmanrekas* (boundaries) confine them and good Hindu women inevitably have to be like Sita, performing agniparikshas (tested through fire) every time anyone suspects her of infidelity (Bhasin et al. cited in Sarkar, 2006). This means women and lower castes are conceptually linked in the Hindu law book, Laws of Manu (Dahal, 2003). They are regarded as lifelong slaves until death, and the murder of either carries the same penances and payment of eleven bulls (Liddle and Joshi 1986: 65, cited in Dahal, 2003).

Dalit community in general and women in particular have been treated as sub humans for ages. The women fold, as a whole became the victim of Manu order. *Manubad* is so deeply rooted in our society, no any sort of reference seen to bring change promptly. After the political change in 2007 B.S. the situation of women has certainly changed but not to the extent it should have been. The fact is that Dalit women and the whole women are the victim of gender discrimination in the society.

Caste-based discrimination against Dalit women in Nepal is a matter requiring the introduction and effective implementation of laws that will hold the perpetrators of abuses responsible for their actions, and ensure adequate compensation for the victims (Sarkar, 2006). Nepal's Dalit women are among the most disadvantaged of the world's poor (Ibid.). They suffer both as women and as Dalits in one of the poorest countries on the globe. One of the results is the country's 199th position among 210

national economies. 42% of the general population lives below the nutrition-based poverty line. These women are at the very bottom of the hierarchy of class, caste, and gender ([http:// www.mgep.org.np](http://www.mgep.org.np)).

Dalit women are recognized as victims of not only gender discrimination but also of caste system. These enforce Dalit women to live under the discriminated custom of different spheres of a life. Dalit Women are politically unheard, educationally disadvantaged, socially untouchable, and economically exploited. Everyday Dalit women are facing caste-based discrimination all over the field. Dalit children are also unfairly treated even in the schools (National Dalit Commission, 2060). In the private sphere as well Dalit people are not allowed to enter into the temple and house of upper caste people. The inter caste marriage is socially disproved and Dalit women are mentally and physically abused if they venture to do so (Ibid). This expiation is further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

The problem faced by Dalit women on account of the caste system is unique. Dalit women have been facing a lot of violence from various areas. They have no access to public places including drinking water sources. In some rural areas, Dalit women have to wait long in the water taps and wells until so-called high caste women are ready to serve water for her (www.google.com). If at all they interfere, they become the victim of violence and punishment. Besides, Dalit settlement in general is outside the village of the caste Hindus and mostly in the town areas. They face the difficulty of two basic needs like drinking water and sanitation (Ibid).

Though all Hindu women are also untouchable during their monthly period and they have to suffer but Dalit women are untouchable for whole life. This means the life of Dalit women is miserable compared to the other females of the patriarchal

society. Thus, one of the greatest crimes against humanity is the practice of untouchability. To compare Dalit and non- Dalit women Dalits are treated as untouchables round the year whereas Hindu women of both “high” and “low” castes are treated as untouchables temporarily during menstruation and child delivery. Both Dalit women and men are victims of the practice of untouchability (Bhattachan, 2002:27).

Generally, Dalit women of city centers can be seen sweeping roads early in the morning even by carrying their children in their back. In the village of Terai, Chamar women accomplish maternity job. The irony is that these women are permitted to enter the houses at the time of childbirth but as soon as the job is over they are again reverted back to the untouchable's status (Bisowarkarma, 2004).

In a broad spectrum Dalit women's sufferings are of two folds. She has her own share of universal sufferings as a woman and additionally, she is the victim of a variety of exploitations, social, religious, economic and cultural as a Dalit woman. Her experience of patriarchal domination is qualitative, more severe than that of non-dalit women and opportunities and avenues available to her for voicing her grievances and agonies are very few. Usually, men dominate women in Nepal. Therefore in caste based hierarchical society it is very obvious for a Dalit man to dominate a Dalit woman. Because of weak economy, they cannot progress. They have to make a two-way struggle, in the house and out of the house. Dalit (oppressed) communities in Nepal, particularly women, are situated in the intersection of more than one dimension of social subordination. The male dominated society has always treated them as the second class citizen.

Having guided by Hindu societal norms, Dalit community also differentiate girls to educate as they think them other's property. Different research claims that Dalit women have to face violence in home, in public places and even at work in different occasions. Mostly we can observe in our society that Dalit women have been the victims of intra-caste and inter-caste marriage as well. So-called upper caste people engage in fake love with Dalit girls and then right after pregnancy or marriage they give up them just on the ground of the caste factor (www.google.com). This shows that Dalit women are compelled to bear all forms of unbearable sufferings.

The basic difference between so called high caste women and Dalit women lies on the ground of caste based discrimination and untouchability, which Dalit women have to face. In comparison to other high caste women, the Dalit women have been forced to live in most vulnerable conditions. They constitute the major workforce doing hard manual labour and engage in agricultural operations. This shows that Dalit women are thrice alienated on the basis of class, caste and gender. This was reiterated by Yami, 2052, (cited in Bhattachan, 2002) who said, "Dalit women are suffering from three types of discrimination. On the one hand, they, being women, are exploited by patriarchy and being Dalit, on the other hand, they are exploited by "high castes". Again, within the households, they suffer from their male family members. It means Dalit women are living a life of more Dalit within their own community." Being Dalit women is a reason enough to be ready to face a life full of miseries, suffering degradation and dehumanized way of life. This implies that Dalit women are the poorest of the poor and Dalits of the Dalits. They are at the bottom of the poverty and socio-economic discrimination (Care Nepal 1996:4 cited in Bhattachan, 2002). Clearly they are the double victims of poverty, one as the women and the other as the Dalit.

Dalits regardless of their sex composition suffer gross discrimination in terms of access to education, health care, jobs, housing and credit. Dalit women's quality of life is substandard compared to the national levels. All of the human development indicators show substandard level of Dalit women. Their literacy rate that accounts 9 % against 42% of the national average for women of other caste, the life expectancy of 42 years as against the national average of about 59.8 years (Dahal et al.,2003) are some of the examples.

This means Dalits are at the bottom and at the very bottom are the Dalit women. In fact, all women are oppressed and are not treated as equal with men but the Dalit women are oppressed among oppressed, poorest among poor and slaves among slaves. The discussion above implies that poverty, workload, religious and cultural perceptions are the major factors hindering female education. Moreover, various reports have also shown that there is educational gap between Dalit women and other women or there is a wide gender disparity in education between boys and girls. Therefore, I am interested in how Dalit women have constituted their perception as Dalit, as women, and as Dalit women.

Rationale of the study

In general, the status of women in Nepal is very low, like in other South Asian countries. Among them though, Dalit women face the worst conditions and oppression. They are living a history of pain, torture, sorrow, misbehavior, ill-treatment and suffering. They are not only the victim of gender discrimination but also the victim of casteism. The ancient Hindu society while dividing the population Shudras (Dalits) are placed in the lower caste strata. Because of this, they are suffering from multiple forms of social and economic exclusion in the society.

Therefore, the Dalit women might have constructed perception from the victimizing forces and social oppression. It is where I became curious to know their perceptions about discrimination.

According to UNESCO (2005) the Government of Nepal is committed to achieving Education for All goals by 2015. Most particularly, the Government is committed to achieving Goal 5 of the Education for Dakar Framework of Action and Goal 3 of the Millennium Declaration, both of which are concerned with reducing gender disparity in education. Most recent statistics coming from the National Living Standard Survey suggests that more than 30% of the total primary age girls are still outside the formal schooling system (Ibid). Therefore, the study will be helpful to dig out the cause of Dalit girl's perspectives on exclusion.

According to the CBS, 2001, the literacy rate of Dalit is 23.8, out of 58.4 but the literacy rate of female is only 12% (Census report, 2002:141). Many Dalit women drop out without completing primary education. Even at present out of school going children only 20% of children are admitted in primary school. Similarly, the literacy rate of Dalit above six years is 33.8 whereas the percentage of Brahmins and Chhetri is 67.5, but education above S.L.C. is 3.8 in comparison to 24.7 of Brahmin and chhetri and only 0.4 has completed college level education but it is 5.7 in Brahmin and chhetri (<http://www.google.com>). This data encouraged me to dig out Dalit women's perspective towards discriminatory practice in school. Moreover, this study was helpful for me to understand and seek remedial measures against the discriminatory perspectives.

The above data shows that a vast majority of the Dalit women are still illiterate. Due to the illiteracy they have internalized the discriminatory practices or

patriarchy. Therefore, I want to figure out the perception of Dalit girls about discrimination that inhibits them to get access to education.

Though untouchability is banned since 1963 and made punishable by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal in 1990, untouchability is still practiced. Because of this, Dalit students face discrimination also in school. It means the entire Dalit community is exploited and discriminated on the grounds of caste even in the public arena. So this study will be helpful to dig out the discriminatory practices and forces that are perceived by Dalit girls.

Experiences and literatures show that Dalit women have no economic power in the family; it clearly indicates the economic condition of Dalit women. These women have to work hard as laborers to earn a living, but they receive very little in return. Moreover, payment is mostly in kind, and their pay does not justify the intensity of the work. There is no doubt that Dalit women are economically more exploited than their upper caste women counterparts. This status of Dalit women also encouraged me to find out the perception regarding discrimination of Dalit girls.

Because of "Don't Touchism" (don't touch me), poverty, ignorance and illiteracy, Dalit women are deprived of the opportunity of working in the moneymaking professions, such as opening teashops and restaurants, selling milk (Sob, 2005). This made them unable to uplift their economic status. Consequently, they lacked educational opportunities. At this point they might have different forms of collective subjectivity of the Dalit as well as women. . The media also provide a glimpse of Dalit women's perspective. THE KATHMANDU POST (2005:3:24) in this regard wrote

Article 11(4) of the Constitution clearly states that "No person shall, on the basis of caste, be discriminated against as untouchable. Any contravention of this provision shall be punishable by law." Why is the royal government turning a deaf ear to an incident that grossly violates the Constitution? The government must recognize the fact that the inhuman practice of discriminating the Dalit community still exists. Instead of bringing out measure to uplift the Dalits, the Hindu institutions, headed by high caste royalists, are preaching caste-ism. The government must implement measures to integrate the Dalit community into our society and punish those who practice any form of discrimination based on caste.

The quote above shows that even today Dalit women of our country are subject to hurtful discrimination. To discuss further segregation, exclusion from public institutions such as hostels, restaurants and milk cooperatives, or denied free access to water, schools and temples, on the one hand, and deprived of rights, facilities and opportunities given to others to improve their conditions, on the other are some of the discriminations. Amidst these discriminations, Dalit women's condition remained comparatively substandard amongst other castes of people of Nepal. Out of these discriminatory social practices Dalit women might have constructed a definite perception. This is where I became interested to know them.

In order to address the discriminatory social practices different efforts have been made, the Ministry of Education is one which has taken effective strategies for women's literacy. The strategies of the Government is 'women's participation in

education'. Accordingly, the strategies aim at providing scholarship to girls to encourage their participation in education, reducing their dropouts and repetition rates, continuing the policy of appointing at least one female teacher in each primary school in order to promote female participation in education, and providing scholarship to girl students and students of backward communities. Accordingly, Nepal has made significant reforms in its policies and programs to improve the situation of women in the country. In order to put women in an equal footing with men, several approaches has been devised at the international level. But the country could not make much progress in adopting the policies and programs made towards women with these approaches. The main cause for the failure of these policies and the programs is illiteracy including the lack of awareness and the prevailing conservative attitude of the society (CERID, 2001). In this context the Dalit women might have developed their perception. So I became interested to know perception and understand the reason behind it.

All the MOES data clearly indicate that there is a wider gender disparity between the Dalit and non-dalit men and women. So I felt essential to carry out a research to examine how and why the discriminatory practices are nurturing a definite perception of Dalit girls in education and to derive implications to minimize the effects of socio-cultural taboos against Dalit girls' education.

Caste discrimination is worst in rural areas. Hereditary and occupations both determine caste identity. Dalits look no different from anyone else, but they are recognizable by their last names and a Nepali knows who is who from it. So Dalits do attempt to hide by changing their names, but in rural areas this is impossible. So I also wanted to understand Dalit women's perception regarding caste identity. Besides, the

interesting point is that in spite of various incentive programs Dalit girls are not participating in education or parents are not sending them to school. The reasons need to be dug out and explained. Hence, all the above discriminatory practices have made me to find out Dalit women's perception towards discrimination and help me to understand the reason to reduce the problems of Dalit women to some extent in particular. On this ground I have set the following objectives for this study.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study was to find out the perception of Dalit girls that affect their participation in education. However, the study will be specifically directed towards:

1. Finding out the forces that contributed to make Dalit girls' perception.
2. Identifying the relation of their perception and education.
3. Drawing measures to ensure their desirable inclusion in education.

Research Questions

The above objectives are categorized into research questions. These questions are of two natures. The main question is:

How has discriminatory practices influenced Dalit girls' perception towards education?

Subsidiary question that follow the main question to fulfill the objectives of the study will be as follows:

1. What forces contribute Dalit girls to construct their perception?

2. What are the main discriminatory factors perceived by the Dalit girls against their education?
3. What remedial measures can be drawn to reduce the discriminatory practices that influence Dalit girls' education?

Limitation

The study was conducted in secondary level school of Kathmandu district and school catchments. The main determinants for the construct and reconstruct force that make up Dalit women's perception was understood. Following these field works I had analyzed the cultural and religious values that have hindered Dalit girls' education along with their perspective. Besides, this study was based on secondary level school education and my informants were also the male and female teachers of the respective school, head teacher, non-Dalit women and a parent.

CHAPTER- II

Review of Related Literature

This chapter includes literatures on women under Hinduism, cultural perspectives, discrimination practices, and their influence on girls' education. It also brings literature related to the beliefs, social norms and values influencing discrimination practices to Dalit girls.

Women under Hinduism

The role of women in Hinduism is often disputed, and positions range from quite fair to intolerant. Hinduism is based on numerous texts, some of which date back to 2000 BCE or earlier(<http://www.google.com>). They are varied in authority, authenticity, content and theme, with the most authoritative being the Vedas. The position of women in Hinduism is widely dependent on the specific text and the context. Positive references are made to the ideal woman in texts such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, while some texts such as the Manu Smriti advocate a restriction of women's rights. Some literatures under Hinduism towards and against womankind are described below.

According to Hinduism, a woman is a form of energy (*Shaktiswarupini*) or an aspect of *Shakti* (power). She is *Mata*, the Mother Goddess, the auspicious one. As a young child she is *kanya* (daughter), the goddess *Durga*. As a wife she is *Patni* and *Saha Dharma Charini*, a partner in her husband's religious duties. As a mother she is worthy of worship (*Matrudevobhava*)

(www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

The above statement says that the women are superior and equal to men. In spite of the Hindu society being considered as patriarchal even today women are worshipped during different occasions. We have also *the tradition to worship Goddess in the form of Shakti (strength) Mata (mother), kumarai (living god) etc.* According to Manu, (cited in Prabhu: 2005:269)

Women must always be honored and respected by the fathers, brother, husbands and brothers-in-law who desire their own welfare". And, "where women are honored, there the very Gods are pleased, but where they are not honored, no sacred rite even could yield rewards.

Though Manu has said that women should be honored but I understood that might be from the point of view of necessity in maintaining a pleasant homely environment or for their own happiness and safety. Similarly, according to Swami Ranganathananda

Motherhood is a spiritual transformation of wifedom.

The wife may and does demand and take; but the mother feels it her privilege to give. If woman as wife is socially significant, woman as mother is spiritually glorious. The culture of the Hindu trains him to look upon all women as forms of the one Divine Mother (www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

From the above literature I understood that our scripture has treated the mother more worthy of reverence than father. Similarly, Manu Smriti (ii. 45) says: "From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is ten fold superior to a mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to a teacher and a mother a thousand fold to a father" (<http://www.google.com>). The interesting part I found going through these literatures is mother getting a high social regard than the teacher and even the men. In other words these literatures show that the women were superior to men in the ancient period.

According to Prabhu, (2004:258) in *Rig-Veda*, the husband and wife are described as *dampati*. The Vedic literature also mentions many a women name who attained eminence as philosophers along with men. Thus, during the Vedic period, the position of women was not unequal to that of the men. "*Women had similar education as men; she took part in philosophic debates like man and with men: she practiced penances like man*". (Ibid: 258) This clearly indicates that the men and women at primitive ages were equally educated and women were equally competent to men. Hence they might have equal status in the social life too.

By reviewing the above literature I came to understand that in the primitive age also the women were free to be educated and they were respected too and there was no untouchability. I can claim this by the Hindu theory because according to the Hindu theory, with the permission and consent of the husband, a woman could enter the *Vanaprastha* or the *Samnyasa Asrama* (religious school's hostel) just as a man could enter these with the consent of his wife (Ibid:278). But later on it was denied to women the reason might be apart from the few names of women-teachers almost all

were males and it is also said that the *Asrama* for the woman to learn is the home(Ibid: 279).

On the one hand Hindu literatures proved women to be superior and respected but on the other hand they proved women to be inferior. Now I would like to discuss some literature that shows women as inferior and education as not the matter of concern for them. Yajur Ved says, "Women are without energy. They should not get a share in property" (cited in

www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

It has also expressed women as shudras, dogs and crows together and says falsehood, sin and gloom remain integrated in them

(www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

I also reviewed some literature regarding women as intellectually inferior to men as Lord Indra himself has said that woman has very little intelligence so there cannot be any friendship with a woman.

(www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

Similarly, some literature had also taken shudra and women as equal being. As the literature Mahabharata says that women, Sudras and the inferior members of the twice-borne classes were unfitted for hearing the Veda and desiring the blessings, arising from the ceremonies (Muir III, p.42, cited in www.google.com).

The above argument argue that women and Sudras were declared to be unfit for study of the Veda and even were restricted to get blessings by hearing it. They indicate that girls cannot be taught. Even in Aiterey Puran' Narad says "the daughter causes pain'

(www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

At present also parents take their daughter as burden. Further, the above statements have portrayed women as dull with very little intelligence, due to this, even education was not felt necessary for them and the impact is still seen in the present context too.

From the above argument I understood that the women are also taken as very weak section in the society to show they are inferior to men and to remain under them by realizing that they are not good at any cost. May be physically and mentally and found comparing with dog and crows to dominate them. At that time they used to account physical strength most valuable asset for the success of life. Still the daughter is taken as burden for family as well as for society being weak and useless like the clay pot having hole. By reviewing the different literature I found the Manu, specific in denying education and property to women

(www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/manu

[and_women.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/manu_and_women.html)). Further, Kisan (2005) has also mentioned that “if a Shudra hears the reading of the Vedas by chance, then the king should cut off his tongue and pour molten lead into his ears”. According to Koirala, (2003)

Position of woman under Hinduism seems to be in paradoxical situation. On the one hand Saraswati the idol of learning is female and at times women is elevated at the highest echelon of power in the form of Durga, Kali, Bhagwati etc, on the other hand she is down to earth not being treated as a human being having a soul. It is said that in the early Vedic period her position was high and in the later period it went on deteriorating (p. 31).

While reviewing the above statement I became inconsistent about women status. On one hand I found that women as projected as powerful being. On the other they are portrayed as weaker section of the people. This made me interested to know the religious values that shape Dalit girls' perception. While going through the different literature, mostly I found that the women are weak. But different literature has further explained that woman as a true wife who is skilful in household affairs and borne a son (www.google.com). I think the restriction and distance was imposed on women to maintain hierarchy in two sexes. Though, in the Vedic period I found no discrimination in the matter of education and girls were educated as boys. The lesson taught to them was to sacrifice the maximum and enjoy minimum. In spite of all her rich cultural antiquity, diversity and heritage, Nepal has also been a country that has suppressed her women and mostly the Dalit women. It is ironic to say because Nepal has always worshipped the country as a "*janani*" or mother. On the one hand they worship this mother, and on the other they disregard their sisters, daughters, mothers, and wives (www.hinduwebsite.com).

Though I feel annoyed, and rightly so, going through the contents of the Hindu literature like Mahabharata, where Bhishma has said: "There is no creature more sinful than women. Woman is a blazing fire. She is the illusion. She is the sharp edge of the razor. She is poison. She is a snake. She is fire" (cited in <http://www.boloji.com/women/index.htm>). These things particularly harsh women and treats them with despise and doubt. Probably, I think the Dalit women have been its worst victims and suffered more compared to women of other castes. Though, I can say that the situation is gradually changing. In a changing world, we need to redefine the role of women in the institution of family and society. The critical analysis of the Vedic literature helped me in understanding the perception towards

women and Dalit women that, there is not any specific attitude towards women status in general and their education in particular though the good description of female were deepen and hidden. The effect of all such practices has contributed at present and has hindered girl's education.

The literature that I reviewed gave me the idea that women are described in the dilemmic manner that they themselves feel that they are not equal as men and could never challenge them, their behavior was shaped of feeling humiliation, hesitation and torture as their part of life.

Cultural Perspectives

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted behavior. It includes the ideas, values, and customs of groups of people. A society is the largest form of human group. It consists of people who share a common heritage and culture. Members of society learn this culture and transmit it from one generation to the next (Schaefer, 1999:66/67). Hence I feel important to review the culture of contemporary society. According to Manorama(2006:34)

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

From the above definition I understood culture as a phenomenon that surrounds us all. It is our norms, values, behavior patterns, rituals and traditions that we have adapted for survival. Culture means a way of life, the individual acquires

from his group, a way of thinking, feeling and believing in learned behavior. Boys are generally not expected to contribute to the same extent but girls are expected to perform domestic labour for their brothers (Altekar, 1999). Cultural perspective has helped me to understand how discrimination has been created, embedded, developed, manipulated and changed to some extent by Dalit Women.

According to Koirala, (2003) "Cultural beliefs have segregated women, child marriage is common practice, women get importance as child bearer but culture considers women's body as impure and it reinforces subordination of women". In the context of our country, cultural beliefs have segregated women of all castes. Child marriage is common practice as well. Though the culture considers women's body impure, women get importance as child bearer. Culture has decided boys to take care of the parents at the old age and send the parents to heaven by conducting various rituals after death but girls are taken as only the temporary member, other's property and as helpless people.

From the above perspectives I came to understand that social and cultural values have contributed to the perspective of discrimination. Gender relations are the result of socially constructed unequal power relations and are context-specific. There is nothing in women's reproductive responsibilities that should make them subordinate to men. It is the culture which establishes the ideology of male supremacy and female subordination. Without reproduction the human race cannot survive and the position of motherhood is exalted in all cultures. But female subordination at this stage of human history is universal, although its form and degree vary from society to society and caste to caste.

Relating to the Dalit women from the cultural frame they are the principal victims of the inter-caste marriage system. We can see in our society that, if a girl from a so-called upper caste family marries a lower caste boy, for instance, then she is accepted by the boy's family. However, when a marriage takes place between an upper caste boy and a lower caste girl, problems occur as she is not accepted by her husband's family. Subsequently, she is mentally and physically abused and abandoned in many cases. The impact of this culture has affected the Dalit girl's education.

Functionalists stress that cultural integration reflects agreement among members of a society, conflict theorists counter that the norms and values perpetuated are those favorable to the elites and the powerful (Schaefer, 1999: 86). Moreover, while protecting their own self-interests, powerful groups may keep others in a subservient position. A culture, therefore, may offer "reasons" for unequal social arrangements. Hence untouchability has also been a sort of agreement between Dalit and non-Dalit to protect the interest and power of the so-called upper caste as a result. I presume its role in the school and society too to shape the Dalit women's perception.

Further from the functionalist perspective, the social significance of the dominant ideology is that a society's most powerful groups and institutions not only control wealth and property, even more important, they control the means of producing beliefs about reality through religion, education and the media. For example, if all of a society's most important institutions tell women that they should be subservient to men, this dominant ideology will help to control women and keep them in a subordinate position (Abercrombie et al. 1980, 1990; R. Robertson, 1988 cited in Schaefer and Lamm 1999).

The above literature that I reviewed gave me an idea that the woman and Dalit woman both has internalized discrimination as a fate and also internalized to act accordingly under a cultural frame. The existing cultural belief of inequality and discrimination are a reality rather than an accident for them. They are the part of the deep- rooted socio- cultural norms and practices of a patriarchal society. These factors play vital role on the development of personality and career of the girl child from the very beginning of her life. Such perspective has affected the education of girls negatively.

Educational Perspectives

The Tenth plan of the government has also planned the various welfare programs for Dalits, which focuses on such aspects as: Employment of Dalits; Foreign employment; Sensitization programs against untouchability at the local level; Encouragement to Dalit women for school teachers; Distribution of scholarship programs; Job in governmental as well as non-governmental entities; Other programs visualized by this Plan are: Health awareness at all levels; Food for Work programs. Housing arrangement for homeless Dalits; Income and skill generating training for modernizing their traditional occupations; Arrangement of leasehold forest within community forests for Dalit forest users; Provision of grants to poor Dalits for micro-irrigation; Focal point will establish in levels of the government for Dalits; Discrimination in the entrance into temples will be discouraged; Political parties are mandated to nominate Dalits in every level of parties; Political parties are mandated to punish them who are involved on discriminatory activities; and Abolish all discriminatory provisions and enact new special law to eliminate discrimination (Commission on Human Rights, 2001).

As per these Plans the priorities of the nation are eradication of poverty, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Tenth plan states the importance of the many faces of poverty and focuses on the economic growth distribution of resources, human resources development, social balance, empowerment and social transformation. Tenth plan provides for the compulsory education up to primary level and promises to be taken as national movement and accordingly the institutional, administrative and other necessary improvements will be done (Tenth plan, 2002).

After the restoration of the democracy in Nepal, the government has enacted various laws and provisions addressing Dalit issues. Though, there is not any specific law like in India for the elimination of untouchability and upliftments of Dalit, there are some laws which directly/indirectly address some of these aspects. Basic laws among them are as follows: Legal Aid Act provides legal representation to the marginalized communities; Local Self- government Act has mandated for several welfare policies carried out for the upliftment and promotion of Dalit at the local level; Scholarship Rule provides 10% scholarship as reservation to Dalit student, Education Act provides free education to Dalit students in secondary level; Bonded Labour welfare Act, Children Act, Child Labour Act and Social Welfare Act are other important laws that help to them. Though, the efforts are very little to uplift the overall development of Dalit women (Commission on Human Rights, 2001). And yet Dalit women are left behind in the policy making from the grass root level to the central level. Thus their daily routine steeped in a history of agony, misconduct and ill treatment. The Dalit women are facing threats of social embargo and even of death if they marry men of higher caste. They still face terrible and inhuman violence based on socio-cultural practices even if they touch the water of higher caste (Dahal et al. 2002).

The Three- Year Interim Plan (2007 – 2009) has given high priority to the educationally disadvantaged community like Dalit. It has planned to provide scholarship annually for 7,000,000 Dalit children. It has also mentioned about implementing free education up to secondary level for dalit, women, indigenous people, war victim, and other disadvantaged people. Similarly, it has also made provision of providing five hundred Rupees (\$7) per month per Dalit students for their educational support. Besides this, this plan has made provisions for educational loans to the students of disadvantaged community to their higher education (Educational Pages, 2007, Dec.16-30).

By reviewing the above literature I came to know that the Tenth Plan and Three Year Interim Plan both have given main emphasis to Dalits' issues too. I used this policy to analyze my findings and to formulate some new policy also. Some other literatures bring another perspective. For example Magar (2004) says

The claim to equality is most fundamental rights of human beings as it is the starting point of all other liberties. Art.11 (4) of The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 states that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex etc. No.10 (a) of Chapter on Adal/Miscellaneous, Country Code of Nepal, 1963 made the act of untouchability punishable up to one-year imprisonment or fine up to rupees three thousand or both. However, the practice of untouchability still exists in Nepal and there is no broad definition of discrimination either in the

Constitution or in any other law except prohibition for discrimination on the basis of sex, race or religion (pg.5).

Jha(2001) brought another perspective which reads

The Dalit communities have not only been discriminated in the Hindu caste hierarchy but they have also been suppressed by the State. In the Nepalese history, an account of the exploitation of the Dalit communities by the State dates back to the mediaeval period in the 13th century when King Jayasthiti Malla formalized the caste system. Because of the State support to discriminatory practices, the Dalits forfeited their right to education and they were denied of the right to acquire property. They were discouraged from constructing good house and touch persons of higher castes. So much so that certain sections of the Dalits were almost forced to live either in the outskirts of the villages or in the filthy slums (p.13).

Magar says that the untouchability still exists and it has no clear definition in Nepal. Similarly, Jha (2001) further states that the life of the Dalits in the Terai region of Nepal, including Dom, Dusadh, Musahar, Chamar, Tatma, Khatwe and Dhobi is even more deplorable than the life of the hill Dalits. They are lagging far behind the hill Dalits in education, health and several other sectors. Of the Terai Dalits, the socio-economic conditions of the women are even worse. Virtually, they are Dalits of the Dalits. He also states that the backwardness of the Dalit women is the outcome of

exploitative socio-economic and political structure of the system and, therefore, it is the primary duty of the State to drive adequate resources for the improvement of their education, health, economic and employment opportunities. Nepal cannot make progress until there is an improvement in the status of the weaker sections of the society like that of Dalit women.

Going through the above literature about the status of terai Dalit I knew that their socio-economic condition is worse but there is lack of research regarding Dalit women of our country and hidden factors influencing the status of Dalit women has not been dealt well. Hence this gap also encouraged me to undertake this research. Besides, I saw the role of Patriarchy that has been rooted in religion and culture underpins structural poverty and violence has reproduced gender inequality and discrimination both in the private and the public spheres (<http://www.mgep.org.np>). This literature gave me clue that patriarchy is also another factor for the discrimination of Dalit girls whether they are at school, home or everywhere.

Similarly, I found that The Nepal Human Development Report (2002) reveals that Nepal's female's life expectancy is 59.8 years, adult literacy rate is 42.49 percent and mean years of schooling is 2.25 (Census 2001). Similarly, women's participation in local elections (19.3%), professional jobs (19.5%) and administrative jobs (10.65%) is very low (<http://www.mgep.org.np>). Up to now there are in total 2 Dalit doctors, 15 engineers, a few lawyers and 1 or 2 in high level posts (vasily,2006:197). These indicators are also the inferences that provide low status of Dalit in general and Dalit women in particular and level of education plays role more in them.

Other literatures (<http://www.mgep.org.np>) show that overall women's participation in politics is only one fifth of that of men. The same pattern is also

manifested in professional occupations and even more so in administrative jobs. Their share in earned income is about one third of that of men. And although the Constitution does not allow discrimination based on sex, caste, creed or colour there are more than 150 discriminatory provisions against women in the domestic laws of Nepal. Such inequalities and discriminations against women are manifested in the forms of denial of access to and control over resources, restricted mobility, low representation in decision-making positions in civil services, politics and public sectors, lack of opportunities for advancement and the attendant problems resulting in longer working hours, illiteracy, poor health, high maternal and morbidity rates, increasing number of trafficking of women and girls, violence against women and girls, witch-hunting and so on. (<http://www.mgep.org.np>) Hence in brief, all above indicators show that there are huge gender gaps in Nepal in both educated and non-educated fronts.

Dalits are regularly subject to social exclusion. Dalits have been prohibited from entering upper-caste Hindu temples, and have been penalized for marrying above their caste. Dalits live in segregated neighborhoods, kept separate by both social and economic forces, from members of higher castes. Dalits are often forced to perform menial tasks, such as removing dead animals or cleaning human excreta, and are often punished if they refuse to do so. Even water wells are segregated by caste, and those Dalits who fail to abide by the rules of separation face severe retaliation. Dalits in Nepal face a powerful combination of social discrimination and violence that enforces their second-class status. Government inaction helps preserve this second-class citizenship: the Nepalese government often fails to prosecute those who engage in discrimination against Dalits and has yet to create a comprehensive

plan for ensuring the rights of Dalits (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Experience shows that social exclusion is rampant with the illiterate than the educated Dalits.

According to Vasily(2004)

Within the Hindu caste system that serves as a primary means of social organization in Nepal, *Dalit* communities have historically been oppressed by higher caste others. All contemporary sociological measures of well being continue to reflect lack of access to decision making positions in government and civil service, lack of educational attainment, lack of access to development resources, and higher levels of infant mortality and illiteracy. In addition to the pre-existing conditions of poverty and unstable governments, a seven year old Maoist People's War, waged primarily in impoverished and remote regions of the country, and has taken its toll on Nepali lives, livelihoods, and attitudes (pg.26).

From the above perspectives I hold the knowledge that to bring about positive social change in the lived realities of people within *Dalit* communities; the efforts should be focused on education.

The drawings of the literature showed me:

1. Dalit in general and women in particular face systematic exclusion through the process of untouchability. Out of this exclusionary behavior they might have constructed their perception.

2. Our cultural beliefs have made women subservient to male members of the family throughout their life. Despite the fact that all the women are the victim of gender discrimination by this Dalit woman might have made and trained their perception.
3. Many social, economic, cultural and religious factors compel the parents to view their roles towards their daughter as guardians of someone's wife. Therefore poverty, workload, religious and cultural perception are the major factors hindering Dalit girls' education. Out of these economic hardships Dalit girl might have developed their perspective.
4. In spite of the various incentive programs, the literacy rate of Dalit is very low in comparison to other so-called upper caste. Out of this "illiterate" / non-literate and differently literate status Dalit women might have constructed their perception.
5. Literatures gave me knowledge that Dalit are suppressed on the basis of cultural, education economic and political power they have no economic power and their life span is low. Out of this low esteem they might have constructed their perception.
6. Hindu cast hierarchy, power, history and society has suppressed the Dalit. This historical legacy they might have inculcated a type of perspective towards discrimination.
7. Patriarchy is the root cause of disadvantage of Dalit girl's education. From this patriarchic mindset Dalit girls might have composed their perceptions.

Theoretical Construct

For this study I have used hermeneutics theory to understand and interpret the field information. As literature claims that hermeneutics essentially, involves cultivating the ability to understand things from somebody else's point of view, and to appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced their outlook. Hermeneutics is the process of applying this understanding to interpreting the meaning of written texts and symbolic artifacts, which may be either historic or contemporary(http://en.wikipedia.org/wikipedia:Text_of_the_GNU_Free_Documentation_License).

The word *hermeneutics* is a term derived from the Greek word, *hermeneuein*, means 'to interpret' and from the noun, *hermeneia*, or 'interpretation' (Thompson,1990,p.230). This is related to the name of the Greek god Hermes in his role as the interpreter of the messages of the gods. Hermes was believed to play tricks on those he was supposed to give messages to, often changing the messages and influencing the interpretation thereof. The Greek word thus has the basic meaning of one who makes the meaning clear (http://en.wikipedia.org/wikipedia:Text_of_theGNU_Free_Documentation_License).

According to the different literature I found the term phenomenology and hermeneutics used interchangeably and universally (Kumar,1994:237). Yet, there is a different philosophical beliefs among phenomenologists and hermeneutic philosophers. Phenomologists focus on the lived experience of persons eliciting commonalities and shared meanings, whereas hermeneutics refers to an interpretation of language. However, there is no absolute or universal definition of both. So I wanted to use the understandings of different philosophers to obtain a single phenomenon through hermeneutic interpretation of Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer.

Therefore in this context, I have discussed different interpretations of hermeneutics in the following paragraphs and mentioned how I used their frames for analyzing and interpreting the data.

As I found that Edmund Husserl was an early phenomenologist philosopher, who used the term phenomenology in 1913(Kumar,1994). Husserl's basis of knowledge or epistemology was actualized by reducing, or bracketing as he called it free from all presuppositions(Ibid.), our consciousness to ascertain the essence of the phenomena in question. For example, if I wanted to know about Dalit, I bracketed everything that I already know about Dalit. This bracketing method helped me to identify the essences constituting Dalit that was free of my prior experiences with Dalit. Here, bracketing means to separate my knowledge from their lived experiences. Thus following the Husserlian hermeneutic theory I went to the school without pre-determined expectations from it and whatever I gained from my field experience I generated as first hand data.

As I found that the Husserl's perspectives were reconceived by his junior colleague, Martin Heidegger. He acknowledged our background as "thrownness". Persons are "thrown" or born into a particular gender, culture, and history. While thrownness prohibits an objective viewpoint, it enables persons to have shared practices and common meanings by virtue of the fact that they share a similar kind of *Being*. Heidegger did not believe it was possible to 'bracket' our assumptions of the world. Yet, through authentic reflection we may be able to become aware of many of our assumptions. Heideggerian hermeneutics can be defined as a way to "interpret the shared meanings and practices that we have for our experiences within a context" (Maloney,1993:40). This method assumes meaning making embedded in the process

of dialogue between interpreter and narrator. As language enable people to identify phenomena. On the basis of Husserl's perspective I gathered information from natural setting in the process of dialogue and have interpreted them without manipulating their main structure.

Gadamer's philosophical project, as explained in *Truth and Method*, was to elaborate on the concept of "philosophical hermeneutics", which Heidegger initiated but never dealt with at length. Gadamer's goal was to uncover the nature of human understanding. In the book Gadamer argued that "truth" and "method" were at odds with one another. He was critical of two approaches to the human sciences . On the one hand, he was critical of modern approaches to humanities that modeled themselves on the natural sciences. On the other hand, he took issue with the traditional German approach to the humanities, represented for instance by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, which believed that correctly interpreting a text meant recovering the original intention of the author who wrote it

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_of_the_GNU_Free_Documentation_License).

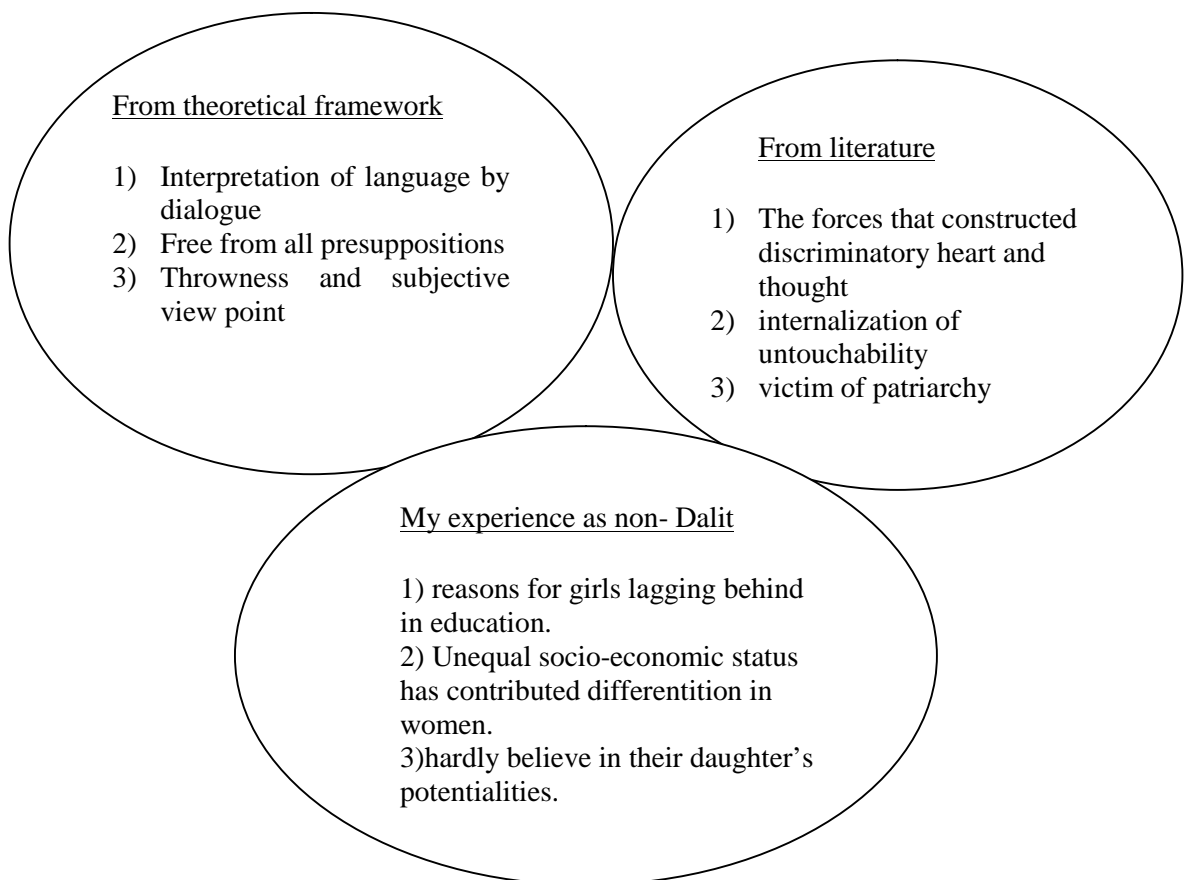
In contrast to both of these positions, Gadamer argued that people have a 'historically effected consciousness' and that they are embedded in the particular history and culture that shaped them. Thus interpreting a text involves a fusion of horizons where the scholar finds the ways that the text's history articulates with their own background

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_of_the_GNU_Free_Documentation_License).

Gadamer (1975,1976) advocated dialogue or conversation as a way of uncovering knowledge and reducing the embedded political power in our discourse. He proposed that through conversation with the text or with one another an event of

understanding will occur that can not be protected nor controlled, He believed that true conversation is when persons are open and equally participative and interested in achieving common understanding. On the basis of this approach I went to the school with out any predetermined concepts and through conversation I captured the information and had also used direct quotations of my informants for interpretation.

Thus by conducting a study by using Gadamerian approach to hermeneutic I could answer my research question and that enabled me to have a deeper understanding of a phenomenon of perception regarding discrimination. The following was the diagrammatic frame of my understanding as a conceptual map of my study.



CHAPTER - III

Methodology

This chapter includes the methodology and procedure of this study i.e. nature of primary and secondary data and information, process of information collection, research design selection for the study, processing and analysis of information and process of report writing by following the qualitative research methodology.

As stated above, I examined interviewers' context and tried to blend the field information to see how the knowledge and information gained from the documents have compliance with the field information. I have also used the methods according to the context. The method to conduct the study is descriptive with field flavor in it and the information based on both primary and secondary sources. I also analyzed the views and opinions of people that are mainly based on the primary sources and for the secondary sources various related literatures, progress reports, national development plans and programs of the government and non-government organizations, and other relevant documents of organizations as well as individual.

In generating information I followed Goodson (1985) who said "Focusing investigation on participants' perception and short span interactive situations is then to 'take the problem as given'; what is needed is data on how circumstances are 'transmitted from the past'" (cited in Gilbert and Low, 1994:3). Following Goodson I tried to identify the individual's life story and the relational level among and between individual and groups within and outside the classroom also. If the situation is so bad for women in general in Nepal, one can only imagine how bad it is to be a Dalit woman although the Dalit men and women are traditional artisans, they are economically exploited, Dalit women's economic condition in particular is very critical, since they are denied in access to the household property.

Data Source

The task of data collection begins after a research problem has been defined and research designed. Accordingly, I generated information through interview information required for this study. The population of the study was Dalit girls, principal, male and female teachers and non-Dalit woman. In doing so I used purposive sampling method which “is a form of stratified sampling in which the researcher chooses purposively some particular units of the population representing the universe distributed over different strata” (Devkota, 1999). Following to this method, I selected five Dalit girls from Ratna Rajya Higher Secondary School and also from the school catchments.

Tools and process of information generation

According to Bhattari and Bhattari (2003) a researcher has failed, unless he/she says goodbye to the natives. There is on both sides the sorrow of parting. In this way rapport creation is an integral part of the field training in qualitative study. By following this concept I tried to build up good relation with the informants by introducing myself and motivating them to help me voluntarily by spending time and by talking very friendly with them.

Case Study

I applied case study as a research strategy for generating information. It is basically the method of exploring and analyzing the life of a social unit. Various aspects of this unit are deeply and thoroughly studied, taking into account its past, present and future (Bhattari and Bhattari, 2003). Charles Horton Cool also said “case study depends on our perception and gives us clear insight into life” (cited in Ibid).

From these thoughts I came to know that case study is a method, which aims at studying deeply and thoroughly different aspects of a social unit. It also helped me to find personal views regarding social reality.

Case study is an approach to research. It is a common way to do qualitative inquiry. This method is very popular form of qualitative analysis and involves a careful and complete observation of a social unit but that unit might be a person or a group (Kothari, 1993). Denzin and Lincoln (2005:443) further said that it is not a methodical choice but a choice of what is to be studied. Case study also enables us to explore, unravel and understand problems, issues and relationship in a particular situation (Joshi, 2001).

Smoeckh and Lewin (2005) also reiterated that the strength of case study is to take an example of an activity 'an instance in action' and use multiple methods and data sources to explore it and interrogate it. They further said in doing so it can achieve a 'rich description' (Geertz, 1973) of a phenomenon in order to represent it from the participants' perspectives (cited in Ibid). Young describes case study as "a comprehensive study of a social unit be that unit a person, a group, a social institution, a district or a community" (cited in Kothari, 1993).

From the above explanations I realized that the case study approach can trace out the relation of social factors that influence the education of girls and the different forces involved in surrounding environment. It also helped me in finding out in- depth information regarding the perception of the Dalit girls. This understanding helped me use different methods under the case study methods such as questionnaires, in-depth open-ended interviews, and direct observations as stated in the Appendix.

In -depth interview

I realized that in-depth interviews involve open-ended questions. So I used a topic guide but didn't rely on a structured question set. I also used probing techniques to encourage my co-researchers to give the fullest answer as far as possible. These co-researchers called respondents in positivist tradition were requested to provide information in the form of facts, attitudes, opinions and intentions about the concerned matter (joshi, 2001). In-depth interviews were used to explore conceptual issues at an early stage in the development of a questionnaire. I looked at how interchangeable co-researchers' answers to the questions relate to their actual experiences. This technique was used to explore topics in their own right, to provide more depth about a subject. Issues are also explored in detail with participants.

By following above approaches to inquiry I viewed and noted the gestures, glances, facial expressions, pauses, modulation of voice, intonation, rate of speech etc. while conducting interview.

Qualitative interviews like indepth interview are a type of field research method that elicits information and data by directly asking questions to members. There are five primary types of qualitative interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005): informal, conversational; semi-structured; standardized, and open-ended. Following this notion I have prepared questions prior to the interview, which serves to minimize variability in question wording and have asked a uniform series of questions in the same order to each interviewee. I began as "breaking the ice" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) with simple question and gradually moving to the specific ones after building the bond.

I got consent to note informant's from the informant's permission prior to starting the interview. Additionally, I had also written a separate field note to describe the member's reactions to the interview, or events that occurred before or after the interview.

In-depth interviews are used to explore abstract issues at an early stage in the development of a questionnaire. It helped me to understand how respondents' answers to the questions relate to their actual experiences. This technique also helped me to provide more depth about a subject or individual cases than a quantitative survey. Thus I was very conscious while gathering my information and I continue my interview until data saturation i.e. unless I could get the theme. Similarly, I used in – depth interview to obtain descriptions of the experience and to develop descriptive narratives. Because in-depth interview helped me to know about the perceptions of Dalit girls, by this I got chance to hear them and know their views. I also used some open-ended questions to Dalit girls to generate information on how cultural practices have hindered their education.

Observation

I gathered data primarily through close visual inspection of a natural setting rather than actively engaging members of a setting in conversations or interviews; the direct observer strives to be unobtrusive and detached from the setting. I have conducted direct observation as an initial approach to understand a setting, a group of individuals, or forms of behavior prior to interacting with members. Forms of data gathered from direct observation were field notes, with detail behaviors, conversations, or setting. Direct observation as a research method is most appropriate to open, public settings where anyone has a right to be or assemble. They can also

stand-alone, to explore topics in their own right in depth, or can complement quantitative enquiry (<http://www.google.com>).

I followed Kothari (1993: 47) who said if a group sees the researcher as an “outsider” and an observer-rather than as a member of the group- its members may feel uneasy and hide many thoughts and emotions. On the other hand, if I as a researcher disguised my identity or purpose, then the groups has added a participant who is being some what dishonest. Following him I was attentive and sensitive during observation. While using the observation method, I kept in mind things like: What should be observed? How the observations should be recorded? etc. When the observation is taken without defining the style of recording the observed information, standardized conditions of observation and the selection of pertinent data of observation is known as unstructured observation (Ibid.: 119). Hence by keeping in mind above questions as stated by Kothari I observed them during their Tiffin time and I also enter in their class and observed their activities to guide my research in a right path.

Finally, for this method to be effective, I have kept detailed records of events and behavior, even when “nothing” seems to be happening” observation may also be used to improve the policies and structures of organizations (Schaefer and Lamm, 1999).

Besides this, I also collected data by reviewing the available literature. The literature were the various books on the related subject, the population census, policy documents, progress report of various NGOs and INGOs including ministries and the-like.

Research Design

I agreed with Kothari (1993) about research design who said “A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure”. As said by different researchers, I needed research design because it facilitated the smooth sailing of the various research operations, thereby making research as efficient as possible yielding maximal information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money. I was aware that a good design is often characterized by adjectives like flexible, appropriate, efficient, and economical and so on so; my research design has also followed this theory. Following him my research design is descriptive and provides description of individual, community and a society. This research design includes qualitative description, case study through the use of questionnaires, in-depth open-ended interviews and direct observations.

Process, analysis and interpretation of Data and Information

The information or data that I generated was to be processed and analyzed in accordance with the outline laid down for the purpose at the time of developing the research plan. In processing I implied editing, coding, classification and tabulation of collected data so that they are amenable to analysis. In this study, I blended the documents review with field information to see how the knowledge and information gained from the documents have compliance with the field information. Likewise, personal experiences, observation during study period, previous study experience, various books, reports and internet information relevant to the study were reviewed, analyzed and used to understand the problem and draw reflection on all the gathered information.

Further more, in this qualitative research I tried to capture other's understanding and interpreting another person's social world through accessing their lived experiences. All the data, information and opinions gathered from the above methods were processed, analyzed and interpreted thematically. In doing so I used different forms of hermeneutics.

Report Writing

The length of the research report varies according to the research problem. I have also taken an attempt to relate the religious and cultural norms and values and other discriminatory practices to girls' opportunities to education. Research report was thus considered a major component of the research study for me otherwise, the research task would remain incomplete till the report has been presented or written. So, I have taken special care to present the study in a systematic way.

The process of reporting qualitative research like this is one of the most challenging stages of the research operation. It is common for researchers to encounter problems as they move from data analysis to presenting findings comprehensively, articulately and with conceptual clarity. Yet, it can also become one of the most rewarding and satisfying tasks for me as I undertook this study ([http://www. Cooper- research.com](http://www.Cooper-research.com)).

I was conscious that report writing was an essential task for me. Its length varies according to the research problem. Knowing this fact I had taken special care to present the study in a systematic way. I was also aware of the fact that the purpose of report was to convey the interested individuals, the empirics or the theoreticians

the result of the study in sufficient details, so that my findings or methods of analysis can be incorporated in to the general store of knowledge available in the area.

While writing my report I focused on the information collected and /or generated from the interview and observation of different people and described it without changing the meaning. I also organized the information by checking and verifying the information obtained from tools. Coding and labeling the information by giving name was also been done to simplify the analysis. Report was produced with the description, analysis and interpretation by including executive summary and research abstract. By following the above approach I also included the cultural and religious framework, social values of the society under them, gender roles, and various ways of inclusive education. Finally, I interpreted the findings from hermeneutics that I have selected as my theoretical closure.

Ethical Issues

A main ethical issue confronting is deciding when and how to inform members that they are part of a research study because they have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved. So, first of all I described the aim of research sufficiently by introducing myself. As relationships with members deepen any notorious aspects of the study regarding Dalit women was discovered.

Conducting direct observation in private or closed settings without the knowledge or consent of members is more likely to raise another sort of ethical concern. Therefore, I took the permission to note their interview and I also replied what I have understood during my study. Similarly, I was careful about dilemmas and

moral issues that might occur. I had also taken extreme care to avoid any harm to them.

I maintained harmony and protected participants from the harm. For this, I replaced their names by pseudo names. I also shared the information that I got from time to time. Besides this, the ethical considerations of research lie not only in the methods used, but in the way that results are interpreted (Schaefer and Lamm, 1999). In live with this, I read my notes in front of them and verified their views that I interpreted.

I did not take their photos. I had not taken any action that would harm them in their study as well as in near future. Moreover, I did not discriminate Dalit girls and had tried to create favorable environment without maintaining any hierarchy with them.

Like Schaefer and Lamm (1999:26) said, "Investigators have an ethical obligation to accept research findings even when the data run counter to their own personal views, to theoretically based explanations, or to widely accepted beliefs" I also accepted the research findings and respected. I was also honest while collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting my findings.

CHAPTER - IV

Forces that make up Dalit Women's Perception

This chapter includes cultural and religious framework, economy, social values and gender roles in society and their influence in Dalit girls' education. In the previous chapter 1 and 2, I have presented the oppressive situation of Dalit and Dalit women of Nepal. Now, I would like to link that with the field information that I found during my study. In this chapter, I have interpreted field findings from the hermeneutics theory and have tried to present the reality as far as possible.

I began my journey of study from the upper crust to reach at the Dalit girls who are considered as lower crust. For this research I went to Ratna Rajya Higher Secondary School situated at ward no.10 kathmandu. I met the principal Gita Kharel, introduced myself and then I explained about my purpose of the visit, even I explained her about the topic. Being a female herself she was curious about my topic and study. Regarding Dalit girls issue she said that the girls hesitate to introduce themselves so you need to be careful about the question that might hurt them. But I convinced the principal and showed my guiding questions that I have prepared for study. Then she gave me permission for study. She took me to the teachers' staff room and then introduced with teachers there and requested them to help me. The important thing that I noticed is there were no Dalit teacher and administrative staff in the school but only a Dalit man (Pode) works to clean toilets in the evening. I fixed the time for second day and returned with out taking any information.

Next day again I went to the school; I met the principal and took in-depth interview with the principal, Gita Kharel, with the help of schematic chart. The extract of our conversation is as follows:

1. Lalita: What perception you have about Dalit girls?

Gita: Though the Dalit and non- Dalit girls both have suffering but Dalit girls have definitely more sufferings due to the social hierarchy. But I have never discriminated my students.

2. Lalita: What do you find the main differences between the (Dalit) girls and (Dalit) boys?

Gita: Mostly Dalit girls hesitate about their caste than the Dalit boys.

3. Lalita: Who are involved in the school activities and programs?

Gita: Mostly boys.

4. Lalita: Who frequently interact with the teachers?

Gita: Both and it is very difficult to distinguish.

5. Lalita: With whom and how they spend most of their leisure time?

Gita: They go outside the class and mainly boys interact with the boys and girls with girls but some of them spend time in classroom and library also.

6. Lalita: Perception towards Dalit girls' education:

Gita: They need education; I know their education situation is not so good I think only the education can change their status.

7. Lalita: Do the teachers give them equal responsibilities as boys?

Gita: Yes, teachers try to bring girls and boys together and being myself a female I have tried to maintain gender balance in all sectors.

8. Lalita: Do the Dalit girls complain with the Head teacher?

Gita: No, very rarely they come to me because their teachers will solve their problem.

9. Lalita: What kind of pressure do the teachers put in encouraging the parents for Dalit girls education?

Gita: They don't give mark sheet to students at the end of the session they ask parents to come and take the result as well as ask parents to admit their child. The principal as well as the other teaching staffs also convince guardians by explaining about the importance of education.

From the above conversation I gathered the information that Dalit girls make up their perception out of the suffering that comes from social hierarchy. For example, I could sense the domination of patriarchy is in the conversation due to which the girls were hesitated more than the boys. Mostly the boys were found involved in the extra-activities conducted by school. By this I understood that because of subordination position the Dalit girls did not want to involve themselves in the activities performed by school. With this subordinated socialization process they just did not want to be exposing themselves. This hesitation was one of the reasons of being discriminated in

educational activities. Though the principal claimed that she has tried to maintain gender balance in her school she was not sensing the “faint voice of the Dalit girls” discriminated by the boys and the girls. This means unequal participation in the schools activities and group segregation of boys and girls indicated gender difference in the school. Dalit girls were the victims of gender and socially stigmatized caste based untouchables.

During conversation I also tried to dig out her previous experiences about the Dalit girl, in response to my question she shared the experiences that before nearly ten years ago she has noticed more discrimination among the Dalit and non-Dalit students but now a days she finds the situation different. According to Principal Gita, Dalit students hide their caste to mix up with the friends. And yet the participation of Dalit girl was found very low.

After taking In-depth interview with the principal I asked the teaching staff of the school to provide me the name list of the students of grade six to ten. Unfortunately, altogether I found only seven Dalit girls in this School. The number of Dalit girl was low in the school in comparison to other castes like Brahmin, Newar, Rai, Limbu and Magar. As the number of Dalit girls from grade one to ten are only 16 as recorded in the school administration. It signifies that the more Dalit girls were excluded from the school participation. Even the teacher told me that they have returned the Scholarship of Dalit girls because the identified Dalit students are very few and though the teaching staffs think that there are some more Dalit girls but they do not want to expose their caste as Dalit and even do not claim for scholarship. So using purposive sampling method I planned to include five Dalit girls in my study. I noted their name and class and then fixed my schedule for the next day.

On the third day of my visit I was familiar and close with the teachers then I asked some questions with them with the help of guiding question of schematic chart as stated above. In response of my question from the male teacher (Navaraj), I noted the following information which is given below in brief.

According to Navaraj though girls and boys are similar and equally capable to study but Dalit girls having the poor economic condition give less time and importance to education and he feels that these girls do not have strong intention to study, they are to some extent dependent and are not confident in their own capability. So he thinks that might be the reason for girl's hindrance in education. Similarly, the female teacher (Narayani) have different view, the reason for girls hindrance, she thinks is the unequal work division at home and these girls have to support family emotionally and economically. The other reason is illiterate mother who unknowingly do not give importance to education so the Dalit girls lack interest and encouragement towards education.

In course of this study I learned the main difference in perception even between male and female teachers towards Dalit girls. The male teachers understanding and female teachers understanding about discrimination were different. Here male teacher argument proved that the girls were with dependent attitude that have contributed to disparity in education where as female teachers argument is different. She thinks the cause as gender role, supportive nature and lack of incentive from education. So I can say that the perception depends on the background too. In this study, I had also tried to understand teacher's academic background, exposure, perception towards students, attitude towards teacher and discrimination.

Following Hermeneutics theory I understood that cultural and social forces have influenced their perception. So segregation of boys and girls was found in the school as the social and cultural phenomenon. As said by Heidegger (<http://www.biblicalhermeneutics.net/philos.html>), I understood that Dalit girls are born and grown up in the particular gender and culture so the differences are seen between boys and girls at the present too. As I understood from Gadamer's view of 'historically effected consciousness' there is differences in the perception due to the embedded history of discrimination and the culture perceived by the principal Gita according to the gender and caste she belongs. Being a so-called upper caste her understanding is different than the Dalit girls. Because she thinks that the Dalit hide their castes to mix-up with the friends but hidden fact or essence as said by Husserl, (<http://www.google.com>) I understood is they hide caste to gain equality in all the aspects of their life. Through reflection and deeper understanding I also noticed that her understanding of Dalit girls issue is relatively large than the male teachers.

To verify the above statement I have presented the lived story of a Dalit girl.

Culture as a force for the construction of Dalit women's perspective on discrimination

Culture consists of "the learned behaviors of a given human society" (www.google.com). It determines the social integration of a person in society and as I know that the cultural belief is the main cause of segregation and adjustment. In the context of the community where I studied women and men or Dalit and non-Dalit are not equal. However, the Hindu cultural model has determined different types of work to women and men like cooking for women and engaging in income generation work for men. "Dalit are the untouchable" this is the cultural belief imposed from

Hindu caste hierarchy system and this belief has been handed over generation to generation whose impact is still observed in the school's phenomenon as below:

Case-1

Cultural belief is the cause of segregation

My first respondent was Radha of class 7 of 13 years old. Her father sells ready made clothes in the morning and evening in footpath of New Baneswor and mother sells vegetables though they are of poudel caste. They have migrated from Makwanpur. She also has younger sister and studies in grade three in private school. Her parents support her and motivate her to study. She does not have more burdens in her house. She spends most of her time in studies. Both sisters help in the house hold work. They have built a temporary house near Shankhamul Bridge and she also has some Dalit neighbors. She knows that the people will discriminate them so she does not go in others house. She said that the discrimination is more in their own village then in Kathmandu. Their friends do not discriminate them so they find the school environment also very favorable. According to her discrimination is a phenomenon that is handed over centuries and they are also the victim of it. She knows that there is no difference in Dalit and non-Dalit but people discriminate us and we are suffering. But one noticeable she said is she is scared in the school when the new teachers come in her class, because they will ask the name and she has to say her surname as well.

From the above case I understood that the Dalits have now changed their traditional occupation which has given them freedom at least during their work but at the same time the argument of Radha shows that they are culturally discriminated because the sentence like *she does not like to go to other's home* indicates that she has accepted the culture of discrimination so the sanskritization is dominated by culture. As a result though her parents are involved in business she has the inner feelings of untouchability which is the obstacle for her carrier. I also understood that migration can change the degree of discrimination in the destination place because of unidentified and even the Dalits can hide their caste but this is not the solution of the

cultural domination. But it is clear that migrating to urban area and changing their traditional occupation can help to uplift their economic status as well. In course of this study I tried to explore different factors that contribute to discrimination. I used the observation method to cross check the above story and I could reiterate the above knowledge through it.

Though, I found the awareness in Dalit girls has been increasing but cultural perspective has been powerful force for domination. The new teacher 's culture of asking the surname before teaching and comparing the student's academic performance with the caste is also our culture of teaching and learning activities and this culture has directly hampered the Dalit girls because they realize that due to their caste they are poor in studies, both their caste and gender exclude them from participation. They do not find any reinforcement from the teachers and school. This perception in long run hampers the academic performance. Hence culture is also one of the forces for Dalit girls to perceive discrimination.

Relating the above arguments with the Hermeneutics theory I found that the Heidegger (cited in Sampaio, 2001) rejecting the traditional description of cultural activity as a search for universally valid knowledge. According to him all meaning is context-dependent and permanently anticipated from a particular horizon, perspective or background of intelligibility (<http://www.google.com>). Following him I learned the culture of discrimination or meaning depends on a particular Dalit girl's context. The learning is that cultural context of segregation is the determining force of Dalit girls' education. Similarly, Gadamer described the cultural activity as an endless process of "fusions of horizons." In fact, through an endless, free and unpredictable process of fusions of horizons, I found the horizon of Dalit girl gradually expanding and

discrimination perceptive changing than their parents. Heidegger's cultural ideal consists basically in an endless process of active and creative interpretations of past productions. From a Heideggerian perspective, I understood the culture as a creative process whereas from Gadamer it is a game that exists only if it is played. From these interpretations I understood that a culture of discrimination exists if it is followed.

Religion as a force for the construction of Dalit women's perspective on discrimination

As some of the *Puranic* texts of Hindu religion regard shudra and women as equal. It also considers the women as weak section in the society and Dalit as polluted caste. It means Dalit women are weak and polluted both for the entire life. So women of all castes are taken as dependent to male members. Different literature (http://www.atributetohinduism.com/women_in_Hinduism.htm6/19/2001) that I reviewed claim that though during Vedic period men and women were equal in education but this equality has changed into inequality for maintaining social hierarchy in the society. Because of such contradictory view Dalit women is behind to other non- Dalit women in education as well. Historically speaking the status of Hindu women was never found good yet because even intelligence is stigmatized with caste association.

Case-2

Caste calculates the intelligence

My second respondent was Srijana B.K. of class 6 of 14 years old. Her story is different from the above two. At the beginning she said that she has not faced any discrimination yet. After convincing her about the real situation like said in research, "breaking the ice" she started to talk about discrimination that she has suffered from and faced on. Her mother has married to another man and now she has a step- mother. Her step mother used to ask her to do all the house hold work and to look after the younger sister. She has realized that she is not good in study and she thinks the reason is lack of favorable environment at the beginning for her. She has repeated the class as well. Since last year she has been living in Thapa Magar's house as helper. They send her school but do not pay her money. There are twelve members in that family and she also does not get time to study there. She wants to study but she thinks that she cannot. There she has to face discrimination especially during religious activities like in Dashain. There are many boundaries for her in that house like in kitchen, in water tank and in some rooms where the religious functions are held. Her main duty there is to clean the house, wash the clothes and had to look after the vegetable garden. She said they scold her often but it hurts her when they say "*kamini*" and "*Kamini Ko buddhi*" (low intelligence caste) to me.

From this case I understood that the Dalit girls try to hide their sorrow because of the feeling of guilt and embarrassment. From the Srijana's life I understood that the girls can tolerate a lot. Dalit Women's day-to-day struggle is one of existence, survival and justice. There is also the domination by women to women in our society. They are also the victim of different boundaries but the so called upper caste provide them job just for their own benefit. Due to the religious belief, externally the principles of 'high and low', 'purity and pollution' has affected the Dalit women's status. The every day's discrimination and boundaries have resulted in mental and physical violence. Srijana's educational performance might be the result of it. This is evident in our festivals as well which ignores Dalit caste and does not involve them in the program because our religion has made us to acknowledge the fact that sin and gloom remain integrated in women.

The above case study also signifies that the power of the so –called upper caste manipulates Dalit for their self interest and necessity and to fulfill their necessity even they cross the boundary of Hindu religion. This indicates that the so – called upper castes made and applied religious belief for their own purpose.

Contrary to the earlier arguments the Rig Veda has stated that the women have little intelligence hence they cannot be taught

(www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html).

This knowledge is deeply rooted in the mind of the people though necessity brings them closer to untouchable but at the same time the religion detached them from each other. However, it is not so only with the Hindus. For example Dhammananda (www.ksri.com) thinks that the discrimination exists against women almost everywhere and the problems faced are also matching. He says, “the peculiar disability attached to women all over the world is based on religious bias”. And yet I argue that the Hindu religion is also responsible for the entire sin imposed upon Dalit women and for their suffering. This religious backup had shaped Dalit girls' perspectives.

According to hermeneutics as a historically evolving set of discourses embodied in the practices and institutions of Hindu societies, religious behavior can only be understood from the viewpoint of Dalit girls' subjective experience (<http://www.google.com>). From this lens Hermeneutics helped me understand the relationship between religion and practice by Dalit girls and the theory says that their wisdom or perception against religion arises from their experience of suffering and discrimination.

Economy as a force for the construction of Dalit women's perspective on discrimination

As the different literature (like Dahal et al. 2003) that I reviewed gave me an idea that the economic status of women is low in comparison to men. Though the women works more hours than male members of the family but the work of women is rarely counted , even the domestics work are taken as lightest work in our society. Mostly the women are not found involving in work outside home and Hindu culture has regarded the work of women as just looking after their children and family members whereas male for income generation i.e. men as breadwinner and women as bread cooker. I found the similar situation in Dalit caste too.

Case-3

Caste as the cause of Humiliation

My third respondent was Asha from class 9. Her father has gone abroad and has good economic status. Lives in rent but house owner do not live there. Mother hesitates to enter in others room and say to her that not to go, they might discriminate you and might feel humiliation. But she tries to convince her mother and goes to their friends' house. She doesn't hesitate to go to the friend's house and does not feel different from other caste. She goes to the temples with friends. Once she has a bitter experience of discrimination by teacher. Two years ago the students were selected to fund raising program. One of the teachers, while writing application said her to include that you are Dalit so they will give you money. She refused and said that I do not like to take money by writing that I am Dalit from that day onwards; she has not taken the scholarship from school. She said that I am not poor than my friends I can pay money I also do not feel difference. She got this feeling from elder sisters. Her sister got married with Shrestha and Gurung. They are Christian and do not discriminate. She thinks that to change the present discriminatory practices she should change herself. If I myself think that I am Dalit then I will never be able to come from and other will also dominate me. Therefore, I should change myself first to change others. She said, this is not my mistake to born in Dalit family and I found that she hasn't internalized the untouchability. She thinks that Dalit are unsuccessful to change them so they are unsuccessful to change others. She is good in study also and has spoken with me very frankly and confidently. She thinks that if people are educated then they can bring change. They need to be aware about their oppression. Women should challenge and should build courage from inside. Awareness is necessary for this; all the people should help each other. They should not accept what the other says to them but should accept the thing like "I am not different from other". So she has the strong vision that she should not be humiliated because of caste. Religion conversion is also the factor for their liberation.

From the above case I found that the good economic condition has created the feeling of superiority in Asha and she feels secure and equal being. Having good economic condition she does not need to compromise with any necessity, it might have resulted in her the feeling of equality. Her good educational performance has contributed to feeling of motivation within her. She has a strong will also. These all are due to the economic status. It indicates that good family background has positive effect in learning. Being the first generation Christian from her family members she

got encouragement and decided to overcome all the obstacles the Dalit women are facing. Asha is indifferentism to Ambedkar(2000:35), “the worst kind of disease that can infect a people” (cited in Fernando, :2000:35) however, I found her free from this disease of “indifferentism”. Poverty has lead to Dalit compromise with people in each and every step. And yet the poor economic condition was one of the determinants of her perspectives on discrimination. Education is another important factor that awakens her. For her if people are educated then the perception of the people can be changed. She further felt that superiority and freedom cannot be achieved only by improving economic condition but in the society Dalit being the slave like people they did not have access to enough food, health care, housing and clothing so to fulfill their basic needs they have to comprise the domination. Asha further said that the reality is that higher class enjoys more social, economic, political and other rights due to its better economic status (Marx, cited in Abraham:2004). This lack of economic status person like Asha were facing multi-facted problems and shapping their perspectives accordingly (CARE- Nepal, 1996).

According to Rothbard (1989), Karl Marx is considered as one of the great hermeneuticians. As hermeneutics interpreted the events of history and structure of society from the poor and outcaste can be linked with the Dalit girl's issue. Here I see Marx, who said that there are two mutually conflicting classes the class of capitalist and the class of the worker or the rich and the poor, and to me it is also the Dalit and non- Dalit. Besides this, in the culture that I live, social status and occupation are not earned, but are inherited as Dalit are found engaging in their own hereditary occupation; hence all these factors have contributed to the low status. In case of education system also I found that low class Dalit girls are deprived of getting education including education.

*Social values as a force for the construction of Dalit women's perspective on**Discrimination*

In our society if parents have to choose education to son or daughter they will certainly choose a son because of more value accorded to him by the society. The society perceives daughter as the property of others. Because under the social value a son carries double value, a breadwinner and caretaker at the old age and a chariot to take the parents to heaven. These values are not given to girls and this has effected Dalit girls' education also.

Case-4

Birth Determines Discrimination

My fourth respondent was Goma of class 7 of 15 years old. Both father and mother are illiterate and father works in Delhi as cobbler. Her father earns nearly 15,000 per month. He sends money in her mother's account. Her mother takes Goma's younger brother to bring that money though both studies in same class. She thinks that her mother tries to humiliate her so she can not do well in the exam. She added that my mother really doesn't understand things. She says "my mother thinks that we cannot learn like so - called upper caste because we are not from the caste of learner". She even feels and has internalized discrimination as her fate. I feel that I can and have started learning better so, now I have improved my study. She feels that her father and mother are different from other because they don't drink alcohol. She started to learn in this school from grade 5. I have changed the previous school because my friends used to hate me due to my caste. So she was alone in class being sarkani. They used to say that we are of bad nature and they accused me. Once, her friend said that she has stolen her friend's Rs. 20, and all friends and even the teacher doubt at her, thinking that being Dalit she must have taken that money. All friends used to complain teachers saying, "sarkani has stolen money". So, my mother changed and brought me in this school. But I have not stolen that money she repeated. In this school, her friends and teachers do not discriminate her.

The above case reminded me woman's work in patriarchal societies like household works including the care of babies, the aged and disabled. The ideological or prestige values of those works are minimal. But the dominant psychology that women are solely responsible for "others not for themselves" exists in our society. I found all the restereotypic roles of girls and the social norms and values within society are responsible to determine the perspectives of Dalit girls and deprive them from of educational opportunities. Besides this, from Goma's argument I understood that the education and generation gap has in some extent contributed to decrease the intensity of discrimination. Along with this discrimination, Dalit and non-Dalit issue as well as the practice can be understood as power over and powerless in the society. Parent's choice for a son and the belief in their son's capacity and perception the parents hold for their son about the role in future has also shaped girls' perception towards discrimination.

The Dalits stigmatized as untouchable are given less value by the so – called higher caste and they have the practice of denial in eating and living together due to the social values of purity and impurity. During my study I found that even in the urban area old generation sprinkle water to purify them and are not allowed to touch their kitchen and share the same glasses and plates with them. But as reported by my respondent there is not any discrimination in the school area. This implies that caste based discrimination is being reduced from public life and approaching the same to the private life.

According to hermeneutics, that oppressed women cultures have their own "ways of knowing," their own truths, even their own mathematics (www.google.com) but the cause of their exclusion from educational periphery is as the result of Dalits

internalization of the social values given to them. As this theory focus on the role and production of meaning that Dalit girls have learned I found is the gender roles. As Heidegger's perspectives of rooted ness and emboidedness, I found the social values embodied in them which have affected their perception. The hermeneuticians tell us that nothing is objectively true and therefore that all views and propositions are subjective, relative to the feelings of each individual (www.google.com). Hence the discriminatory views presented by male and non-Dalit are their own subjective views so it can be changed.

Gender construct as a force for the construction of Dalit women's perspective on discrimination

Going through the literatures and field study I found a wide disparity in all spheres of life between the male and female. As gender is determined through social requirements but do not have biological differences. Though the gender roles are not natural and can be changed but rules and regulations imposed on women are so deeply rooted that it has hindered the education status of Dalit women as well.

Case-5

Internalization of Gender roles

My fifth respondent was Sita Pariyar (False first name) of 15yrs old of class 9. Her father works in bag tailoring and earns nearly three thousand rupees. Her mother is a house wife. She has a younger brother of 13 years old and studies in class 8. They live in the house of Shrestha in the ground floor. Shrestha's family touches them but do not allow them to enter in the kitchen. They came from Chitwan two years ago. In the beginning she said that her mother does not do any work but as I asked about the expenses of rent and cost of their living she replied that her mother goes to wash clothes in neighbor's house during Saturdays to support the families and Sita also goes with her. She doesn't like to eat in the house where they go for working. I asked why? She replied that they give stale and rotten food. The house owner discriminates and feels uneasy to give food in their plates or the glass they use she added. But in her friends house they give food and do not ask to clean plates. While asking about the gender roles she added that her parents don't discriminate her but again stimulating with different questions and examples she added that my brother do not go to work outside the house like me and my mother does not ask brother to do the household work. Still she is scared to touch the kitchen of her close friends also. But she said that her friends do not discriminate her in the home and school too.

The case above shows that in comparison to her village Sita finds Kathmandu the better place because of less discrimination. She does not like the people of her own village who are so-called upper castes because they used to hate and humiliate her. She thinks that the perception of the people living in village is different because of lack of education.

By listening her story of past and present I understood that there is a lack of educational opportunities for girls because they have burden of household work and I found her internalizing the gender roles therefore, she hasn't realize the discrimination in work though she is the victim of it. As far as I understood gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotation (www.google.com). Relating my knowledge about gender with Sita's learning I

found that her mother is equally competent in tailoring but due to the prescribed gender role, she does not go to work with her husband. This remained me

Bhasin(2004) who said patriarchal society does not just say men and women are different, it values them differently, it creates hierarchy and inequalities which not only shaped Dalit women's perceptive towards education but it also marginalized the families and whole societies. I also found that migrating to urban area could help change the status of Dalit and to some extent helped them to gain freedom. Going through the above case I also understood that Culture of women's oppression has developed due to unequal distribution of role in society and women are the sufferer of it.

According to hermeneutics theory I understood that the issues of gender roles are linked in people's minds, and has taken them in some of the more conservative circles which have caused a discrimination against women. The hermeneutical movement at present is found closely related with Jacques Derrida's "deconstructionism" which suggests that it is the changed form of existing situation, where people change their beliefs so roles of Dalit girls also depend on the social structure as Dalit are at the bottom in the structure and the people of the center always dominate the Dalit girls.

CHAPTER - V

Relationship between Perception and Education

Culture, religion, economy, social values and gender construct have propagated many factors which are responsible to bring different perspectives towards education in the lives of Dalit girls. This also shows that a value of education has not been internalized by Dalit women.

The internalized perspective of the Dalit women was seen in some cases as well. For example, I found social stigma, gender roles, economic power, religious belief and cultural forces contributing to shape their perception. To verify this, I went to the school and asked the class teacher for the permission to observe their activities of Dalit girls and teachers' behavior to Dalit girls. I cross checked their interview with classroom observation. I spend ninety minutes in Sita and Asha's class. It was second period and the subject was math. During my study teacher did not ask any question just he solved the problem on the blackboard and the students were copying it. Some boys and few girls asked the question that they have not understood but my participants were quiet. As I noted that the teacher had not created the environment to interact with him. I found the boys showing more activeness and eagerness to learn in the class than the girls. The first reason was there was the presence of male teacher and Dalit girls showed less interest and motivation to talk to the male Brahmin because their perception towards these people was suppressive. Second reason might be the social values accorded to them. Third reason was the Hinduism which says that girls have less intelligence, this mind set of teachers have affected Dalit girls' eagerness of learning. Fourth reason was the patriarchy due to this boy in the classroom were more active than the girls.

Fifth reason was their poor economic status and their mother's economic status or job which has caused the feeling of depression in them. Sixth reason was the culture of giving more importance of education to men and less to girls in education.

The next period was of Nepali, the male teacher taught grammar in class and asked questions. Many respondents and Asha also replied the correct answer. But Sita did not reply. The class was interesting. Both girls and boys equally participated in the activities and the numbers of girl were more in the class than the boys.

I observed and noticed that Sita was more fearful and scared of my presence because of less confidence and not good in study whereas Asha was very active in the class. After noticing this I left the class. I understood that the home environment and economic status also contribute in classroom performance. On the same day during lunch hour I got the chance to talk with my participants. I asked Sita about not answering the question but she said that though she knew the answer she did not reply because of hesitation. I concluded her saying as cultural practices. Though she was equally competent but she herself doesn't believe in her own capacity which directly affects the education.

Next day again I reached the school at second period. I entered in the class of Radha and Goma with the teacher. Because of my presence they were active and were keen to show their performance. I really found the girls very excited. Though they did not ask any question because the period was English and the teacher just wrote the answer of all the questions on the blackboard and asked students to copy and learn at home.

Though there was nothing to observe but I noticed some thing like they are interested in learning. Later on I asked about the performance of my participants and knew that they are average student.

On the next day before lunch I observed Srijana's class. The period was social studies and the teacher was female. She took a class test on that period, so I just stayed in the class watching all the students. And the next period was Nepali, I observed in this period also. The teacher was reciting poem and students were following him. All the students were actively participating in the study and I noticed that they were eager to learn. My participant was also excited and showing her active participation. After the class observation I also talked with the students who replied me that they don't have more interest and do not like to learn the difficult subjects.

Maths and English teacher gave me the clue that mostly girls are weak in maths and English so they are scared of asking question. They do not make noise in the class and show interest to learn but are weak because of poor background. These subjects need more practice and the girls lag behind. The cause of difficulty in education I found as, the gender role and responsibilities of girls as well as the social values given to them. The Dalit girls are scared of asking question because the teacher has not created favorable environment for them so the Dalit girls has realized that the school is not made for them.

After the class observation I also observed their behavior and activities during lunch hour they didn't show any interest in sports and were not playing outside in the ground. But girls were roaming around the ground just catching each other's hand. Some were sitting in group and were talking I don't find these girls

participating in sports and other activities. Boys were playing different game and were roaming here and there. From this situation I noted that in spite of getting equal opportunity the girls and boys activities are different. I went near my participants and asked regarding this question then they replied, "When we were in earlier grades, we used to play but now we don't like, we like to enjoy by talking with friends". But the student of class 6 replied that she wanted to play and even if they join the boys they will say that girls cannot play with them, so Dalit girls don't like to play with them. This means Dalit girls are not getting opportunity for all round development. Here I found the influence of patriarchy in the school as well.

I also understood that girls have interest to play but the patriarchy and superiority feeling has suppressed their interest and slowly the suppression took the form of habit. So, the girls changed their interest and started enjoying differently. During my study I also noted that those who have well economic condition, they were speaking frankly and poor students are timid due to the feeling of inferiority and does not want to show their capabilities also. This could be the reason that lack of economic power and feeling of inferiority has contributed to Dalit women's low performance in education. Besides this, gender segregation was common in classrooms as boys and girls had separate sitting arrangements with separate uniforms like pants for boys and skirt for girls.

Further, I also took interview with a woman named Chandra. I purposively took interview with her as I already knew that she has two daughters and she was married with her class mate. Though, she is a house wife she has passed proficiency certificate level in management stream i.e. she is high school graduate. The main reason she stays at home is to support the family and children. She lives with her

mother-in-law, father-in-law, husband and she has two daughters and a son. Here, I have tried to bring Chandra's thought, perception and opinion and link it with her education. To understand the perception about discrimination I took interview with her.

1) .Lalita : How do they feel if girls are born?

For the first time.....

For the second time.....

Chandra: For the first time all people say that first time its okay, Laxmi came in the house. All the family members also do not discriminate. But for the second time immediately as I gave birth to a daughter I was shocked because of my parents' expectation about male child. But I convince myself thinking that girls and boys are equal. I was hurt when my family members and others said "what an unlucky mother, it would be better and happiest moment if she had a male child". She started thinking that she doesn't have male child in fate. I remember the words that my maternal aunt said to me, "I came to congratulate you but what to do you have a daughter". That sentence still strikes me. Her eyes were full of tears. The family members and other used to take less care to me and my younger child. Even the mother-in-law did not look and took her in lap like first one, just she used to ignore her. Now she has a son and she used to thank god for this gift. She added that, now all my family members are happy with me.

1. Lalita: What do you find the main differences between the boys and girls?

Chandra: Girls are quiet and helpful where as boys aren't so serious in family's matter or problem. Though my son who is younger fights and bits the sister then the daughter only weeps and complains me.

2. Lalita: What do you think about daughters, are they burden to the parents and why?

Chandra: No, I don't think them as burden but it is risky for them to grow up and walk freely.

3. Lalita: Who often go outside home?

Chandra: Son

4. Lalita: Are women needed to confine within household work?

Chandra: No, but they are bound by different problem and they just sacrifice for parents betterment. But she added there is unemployment problem also. Now, all my three children go to school and I want to go outside from home to work but I cannot find any work.

5. Lallita: Your perception towards education:

Chandra: Though some say that education makes women proud and hence they could not adjust in family, I think education can change the women's life. If mother is educated then she can change the family's perception.

6. Lalita: Why do you think that the Dalit girls are not going to school:

Chandra: Lack of money, ignorance, less value of education, unemployment, discriminatory practices in society.

7. Lalita: What cultural practices they find against them?

Chandra: Entering kitchen, temple, using rotten things, drunkards, doing dirty work e.t.c.

8. Lalita: What do you expect from education?

Chandra: Equal share in all aspects as well as equity.

From the above conversation I understood that the men and women though equally capable to do the work outside the home, the men gets priority to go outside the house to work. But position like dependency, family concerns, child care, have traditionally gone to women, social position involving leadership, power, and decision making and interacting with the large world have traditionally gone to men.

Reflecting upon the above conversation, I examined the roles of men and women and found that not only different they are often unequal and I found the inequality as the result of structure (norms and belief). The next thing I noted is though the educated mother realizes the equal importance to daughter and son the family members, society and social values suppress their understanding and the women are also forced in realizing the importance of son for the social values. It is where I see Bhasin (2004:25) aptly fitted who said, "it is much easier to control human beings through religious, cultural, political and economic ideologies".

Relating the field study with Bhasin's ideas I understood that the discriminatory perspective is the product of socially and culturally constructed phenomenon.

The same conversation made me think that the mother has to bear equal pain in giving birth to a son or daughter, and birth of a daughter is not a fault of mother but still the family members consider it as a fate of women and domestic violence occurs in home due to giving birth to a daughter. Similarly, the socialization process of the daughter has definitely contributed to the negative perception that the parents hold regarding daughter and in the long run it hinders the education of a girl. Even, due to the masculinity, when the girls grow -up the home and the street could turn into the area of conflict for them as reported by Chandra, and they have to struggle. I would like to link Chandra's argument with the field experience, as I was talking with the Dalit girls on the school ground the boys listened to our conversation and teased to girls but the girls were ignoring it. Hence this might be one of the causes that parents to feel insecure regarding daughter and they tried to preserve them like other's property. Kalidas's Play (cited in Shrestha, 1994) fits well with this understanding that said "Daughter is a thing to give away, for someone else she is kept. What a relief to send her away today, I' am light as a feather and free from debt". Hence, all these discriminatory perspective has made girls' perceptions towards education and hence they have been found backward.

Finally I tried to link the above discussion with Hermeneutics, which explains about the subjective experience incorporated through history of ones life so I found the history and structure of society is the cause of Dalit girl's hinderance to education. Going through it I am aware of the fact that Hermeneutics does not provide universal standards because it argues that either there is no objective truth or we can never discover it. With each person being bound to his own subjective views, feelings, history, and so on, there is no method of discovering objective truth. For example in literature, what a given author meant to say becomes impossible or

no reader ever can figure out what an author meant to say, even the author does not know what he/she himself meant to say, or driven by each particular individual.

Hence only the subjective view doesn't work in all sectors. As in the case of interpreting Dalit only the subjective description will not be enough. Interpreting the text might not be correct all the times implying that we need to reinterpret the religious texts and also reinterpret the currently marked understanding about Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular.

CHAPTER - VI

Findings and Discussion

This chapter of my research contains the findings generated from the literature and field, my reflection on the study according to the Hermeneutics theory and the conclusion of the study.

Findings generated from the literature

The literature that I came across yielded following findings.

A. Hindu culture is the force that contributed to make Dalit girls' perception.

From the literatures I found that the Dalit girls' perception was constructed due to the Hindu culture as though being discriminated by Hindu Law which they are still practicing and following. Similarly, *Manubad* is so deeply rooted in society and Dalit girls are suffering from it.

B. Dalit women are the most sufferers of both caste and gender. As from the literature I found that the Dalit women are suffering or they are discriminated due to their gender and caste both and found twice the sufferer group than the male and female of other castes and has hindered their education.

C. Culture is established by the so-called high caste men for their own benefit. Consequently it has dominated the so-called Dalits and women. So, all the cultural practices against their welfare need to be reinterpreted.

Findings generated from the field

The field that I came across gave me following findings. They are:

- A. Social exclusion and humiliation faced by poor Dalit girl is the force that contributed to make Dalit girls' perception.
- B. Dalit girls have less participation in education. Due to the norms and values dictated by religion and culture, the Dalit girls I found not participating in extra activities implying that boys could have capitalized this culture but girls failed to do so.
- C. I found that the Dalits are not easily recognized and stigmatized in the urban area meaning that they get more freedom and chance to education than the rural area.

Findings generated from my reflection

My reflection gave me the following findings. They are:

- A. Patriarchy has also shaped Dalit girls' perception. As myself being the female, I could sense that way. Besides this, poverty, workload at home, religious and cultural perception towards them, and the socialization process have shaped Dalit girls' perception towards discrimination.
- B. I did not find the state in favor for girls' equity because even there are still some discriminatory laws such as property law that does not even give women in Nepal equal rights. This law has helped deny the rights of Dalit girls because the country lacks compulsory education system.
- C. Cultural belief has segregated both Dalit and non-Dalit women from educational opportunities. Cultural belief about caste and gender compel parents not to believe in Dalit and non- Dalit girls potentialities.

Findings generated from the literatures on Hermeneutical inquiry

Hermeneutics theory gave me the following findings. They are:

- A. From the concept of the hermeneutic dialogue I knew to bracketing myself as women and the perception I hold about Dalit girl. This helped me to understand the pathetic status and perception of Dalit girl through dialogue.
- B. I interpreted the shared experiences of Dalit girls regarding education by reflecting upon their past and present and also relating their experiences and interpretation of their feeling with my own experiences through hermeneutic interpretation.
- C. Hermeneutics taught me to reinterpret the religious texts. As they believe meaning of any work is not made of objective data, but is performed by and depends on the creativity of an interpreter (www.google.com). Following this hermeneutic concept of the culture I realize that the literature of Dalit and Dalit women's can be reinterpreted to suit with the present context.

Discussion

From different literature and field study I have found that women of high caste have ideologically constructed themselves as superior than the lower caste women. According to Ambedkar, in this regard said, "as soon as a Brahmin woman conceives, she thinks of the High court whether any post of Judge has fallen vacant but when a Dalit woman becomes pregnant she cannot think of any thing better than a sweeper's post under the municipal committee" (cited in Fernando, 2000:64). His socially constructed mindset can be supplemented by other sort of literature that claims mother's impressions strike deep root in the brain of the foetus that dwells in the

womb (www.google.com). Religious text like Rig Veda that says, “a woman should beget sons”. The newly married wife is blessed so that she could have sons (www.geocities.com/Athens/Pantheon/4789/Articles/women/women_in_Vedas.html). Hence, I found that all these factors have composite effects on the construction of Dalit women's perception.

Reflecting upon the findings of this study I understood that the Dalit women and Non-Dalit women have constructed their perception with the culture of faith, practice and fear. The culture of discrimination has been habit and the part of Dalit's life though, habit is not permanent it can be changed but slowly. I have tried to identify local perception of caste and gender discrimination and ways to address them through specific local activities at school and community. In course of this study I tried to explore different factors that contribute to discrimination perspective. The major factor that I found is family related stereotypic factors like stereotypic perception affecting the full involvement of girls in education. Second factor is the work that Dalit girls perform affect the amount of free time that they have. Third factor is behavioral characteristic that Dalit girl has learned like: often engaging in work that benefits the family. Fourth factor that I noticed is girls suppress and repress their natural intellectual skills and abilities.

Going through the above paragraph, I tried to capture some of the commonalities and contradictions during interview and classroom observation. Dalit girls are humiliated and victimized by so – called high caste. The intensity of discriminatory behaviors suffered by Dalits from non- Dalits depends on the economic status, education status and gender. The behavior of discrimination I found among Dalit girls are ignorance of dignity, rejection of personality, and non-

involvement in religious interaction etc. The effect of this discriminatory behavior has negative impacts on the mental development of the Dalit girl including psychological disturbance in the growing up of the children of the lower caste group of the Dalit community (Sharma, 2005:16).

My study helped me know that Dalit women have multi –faceted problem having sociological, ethnic, economic, religious, political, psychological and cultural dimensions and therewith they had developed their perception. They have remained invisible, lacking voices, so that their interests and needs were ignored. If we give voice then it will reveals the problematic and multi-layered nature of women's experience and perception. They need additional voice to fight against gender and religious problems. Apart from it they need “weapon” which help them fight against the perpetuation of the untouchability as it is the denial of access to educational resources by the Hindu religions practices. This states that the Dalit have not been able to avail their basic rights. Next thing is women need to study women (Abbott and Wallace, 1997). For this, they should change their own attitude and perception about their life. Dalit girls have identity crisis. I found the girls with fearful thought i.e. Dalit girls are facing poor, miserable and pathetic situation. The custom like dominating to Dalit women has contributed to push them backward. I also found that those whose economic status is low face much social problems and they have much experience about discrimination. Besides this they are suffering from a lack of self – esteem because non- Dalit women and Dalit men both have dehumanized them.

CHAPTER - VII

Conclusion and Measures to Inclusive Education

Dalit women are suffering from branded untouchability for their no fault. Even the process of sanskritization had not helped Dalits to cross the barriers of untouchability. Discrimination based on caste and gender has imposed social exclusion to Dalit castes women. The shameful social reality is that Dalits are still bearing the historical legacy of so-called “untouchability” or “impurity and inferiority” ascribed to them by the Hindu social stratification system. Our society is not fully aware of gender and social discrimination issues. The adversities in the whole social scenario are reflected in every sector of the society. Nepali cultural norms and values are still not women and Dalit women friendly. The traditional responsibility of women has not changed yet. All these factors have contributed to foster Dalit girls’ perspective towards discrimination and their effective participation in education.

Exploitation and oppression of women on grounds of traditions, superstitions, and conservative beliefs have contributed to unequal treatment to son and daughter. The first priority, by birth claim, goes to the son (Chalise, and Adhikary, 1996). Son born from the same women will be superior and daughter inferior. Dalit girls too have to cope with stress at each and every step and they aren’t able to devote full time to the study at home. Hence automatically girl has remained educationally backward.

Hence, first the fact that woman and man are biologically different but not unequal should be recognized, for this man and woman both should be liberated from the conventional thinking patterns and Dalit women should not underestimate their own ability. Dalit women's comparatively low religious, cultural, economical and societal status has shaped their perspective towards discrimination and that has hindered their education, and in turn, their lack of education has hindered their status within society.

Finally hermeneutics taught me that all meaning is context-dependent and therefore unstable. It also says that culture can be created and recreated implying that the culture which is against Dalit women can also be changed. It also gave me knowledge of women's own subjective views, feelings, history, and so on. Indeed, a religious texts or religious interpretation against Dalit and Dalit women's education can be reinterpreted. If religious text is changed then the social roles will also be changed automatically and Dalit girls can enjoy the social equality in the long run.

Measures to Inclusive Education

In general, being a Brahmin means more privileged, for having a good education and, accordingly, a more powerful position in the society but being born as a Dalit and Dalit women means more disadvantage of education and social status. In daily life it has a lot of consequences of being a Dalit and many more of being Dalit women. Now, I would like to highlight and compare the educational status of women in general and Dalit women in particular. At the same time I brought different ways to make them included in this mainstream society with their identities prior to doing so, I define inclusion education by bringing Armstrong (1999) who says:

The term “inclusive education” refers to a system of education which recognizes the right of all children and young people to share a common educational environment in which all are valued equally, regardless of differences in perceived ability, gender, class, ethnicity or learning styles (p.76).

But my study shows that cultural, religion, socio-economic status and gender role have influenced on girls' perception towards education and has resulted to produce differences in education of male and female and Dalit women and non-Dalit women. This implies that there is a need of inclusive education, because inclusiveness is the only means which promotes the participation and socialization process of women. “Everywhere the starting point is, to empower women and men and to ensure their participation in decision that affect their lives and enable them to build their strengths and assets” (UNDP, 1997:6 cited in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999:4). Following this statement I would like to claim the inclusive education as the starting point to eliminate the discriminatory and discriminated perception of the girls in general and Dalit girls in particular.

The discriminatory and discriminated perception should be addressed by surfacing the contradictory knowledge of the religious texts on girls' education. For example the discriminations are that both Dalit and women were forbidden to listen to Vedas, because the education was thought not necessary for them. On the other hand, the similar forms of literatures claim those daughters are like Laxmi (god of property) and the *Saraswoti* (god of learning). At this point these religious texts

should be re-read and reinterpreted by following hermeneutic inquiry for inclusive education.

Discrimination is in fact more of an illusion than a reality, which is still very dismal and disastrous in the long run. Despite the various programmes launched to promote girls status, the situation has not changed much. The literature that I reviewed showed that the deeply rooted stereotypic perception has been depriving Dalit girl of educational rights. Because of superstitious belief non-Dalit blindly follow the rituals, custom and tradition without any scientific proof and even some unknowingly suppress them in the reason of maintaining traditional practices. Hence there is a need for awaking and educating non -Dalits also to ensure all – inclusive environment for Dalit girls in education. Religious texts should be reread and reinterpreted by following hermeneutic inquiry as the process of hermeneutics begins increasing the enrichment of experience of all, and follows its own direction of the commitment by promoting mutual growth in its interaction with other groups. Following this hermeneutic concept, we can establish harmonious relationship between Dalit and non-Dalit and men and women. For this, I believe that hermeneutics process should be started from realizing the maximum value in all actual being. And these value laden entities should be guided by the subjective aim. The strength of process lies in its openness to truth, and its appreciation for the diversity of various communities. Open to new ideas and willing to change and to grow, this hermeneutics has the virtue of exercising the hermeneutics of feeling on itself. This means Dalit girls need to change themselves to feel as non- Dalit through the change in their identities. Even the non-Dalits should do so.

From this study I also knew that division of sex and caste is equally effective to suppress women and Dalit women. I also found the problem of Dalit women as the problem of women within women. Hence the problem of Dalit women is the problem added by gender and caste discrimination. For this, some of the Remedial measures are given below to reshape Dalit girls' perspective:

Targeted Program for Inclusive Education

- 1) Education is an instrument of socialization and considered as a powerful catalytic agent for social change. Poem and song related to discrimination in the text books can help to aware people. So the textbooks should include anti- discriminatory poem, songs or stories in the school. Biased curriculum should be changed. Local curriculum should be designed according to their need and interest. This is the most effective changing agent for the improvement of the conditions of the Dalit women. Dalit women need special guidance or encouragement to recognize their potential to contribute to their community. Dalit women are culturally and socially suppressed by patriarchy like other women so the concept of segregation, prohibition, exclusion and negation need to be eliminated through education. It is only the equipment that can eradicate the system of prejudice causing hurt, loss of dignity, dispossession, poverty and disempowerment. It can transform the society and their belief in the right path.
- 2) There should be sensitization program even for teachers, because they have equal responsibilities to create opportunities to learn to the best of their ability for boys as well as girls as well as non Dalit girls. School should enroll Dalit women with technical and vocational education and training. School should also change the mentality and the way of thinking and behaving with every human being as equal

ones. Dalit community can also be motivated to value school and send their children through the campaigns. Anti untouchability campaigns in every family, community should be carried out by school. Entire house entry campaign could even be launched. At the same time we need to enhance their self-esteem.

- 3) The government should make the provisions for free and compulsory education for all children up to colleges including technical and professional institutions, establishment of hostels and other incentives like free mid day meals, text books, uniforms e.t.c. In other words special coaching is necessary for them for preparing for competitive examination or for admission into professional courses like medical, engineering e.t.c. Therefore, the government should implement educational empowerment programmes and schemes for Dalit girls through individual schools.

Reorientation of the Culturally Socialized Mindset

1. Dalit girls that I have studied have inner feeling of inferiority; they have realized that they are not the superior since birth. Illiteracy and blind faith and superstitious belief with in Dalit communities should be ended through education. Dalit themselves should respect their caste. They also need to be aware to question the authenticity and utility of inhuman or dehumanizing laws and customs and discard what has become old-fashioned and harmful for the progress of humanity and peace in the world. Local government should shoulder this responsibility.
2. Derogatory terms used in school to hurt these girls should be banned from the school authority. This word hampers the social harmonious relationship of the

school. Justice should be in the feeling and belief of all the non-Dalit and there should be mutual understanding to create favorable study environment.

3. Many Dalit women have low aspiration for their future life. Socially, culturally and religiously women are pressured to take care of the husband and family. There are vast discrimination on rearing and caring of girl child on her beginning of life. The society perceives girl/women are weaker than boy/men thus the socialization process is adversely affected. These factors play vital role on the development of personality and career of the Dalit girl child from the very beginning of her life. Besides this, Dalit girls are not able to devote full time to the study at home. Moreover, girls are considered unimportant and risky to educate. On this ground emphasis should be given on educating the parents about the ability of their daughter that they can do something productive for their lives and their families. For this, parents should inculcate positive attitude towards their daughter's ability. In other words, women should not underestimate their own ability. For these females parents and the male members of the family should be encouraged through mass media. These media could be helpful to change peoples' perspective towards women. At the same time creation of job opportunity is also very necessary because it will stimulate Dalit girl's education.

Change in the Traditional Occupation

- 1) The traditional occupation and occupation of the Dalit need to be modernized and technically backed by the use of science and technology. In the community level school can provide a training to adapt to the modern scientific technique and equipments and after giving them training they should be provided a

prioritized market for their products. Poor Dalit women can be benefited by this procedure.

- 2) Intellectual property and indigenous techniques of the Dalit community should be internationally preserved in the modern era of globalization. Hence we all need to promote, preserve and protect indigenous crafts and skills of the people of the Dalit community. We need to encourage them to food related business as well, because it can boost Dalit girl to inclusive education and thereby reshape their perspective.

Dalits are poor, deprived and socially backward people but not the different human beings. Injustice is being done in the lower cast because they have been kept down by the so-called higher castes not because of any inherent defects god has bestowed on them. Though they have the same talents that we have we deny them the opportunities for using them. They should surely have the same rights and privileges and the same opportunities of growth that the other enjoy. Nepal cannot make progress until there is an improvement in the status of the weaker sections of the society like that of Dalit women. So the so-called upper caste should come forward to reform them by changing their heart and perception of "Don't touch me." Discrimination has started from mind of people and spread to home, school and community so the treatment should be started from the peoples' mind. In other words Dalit should adopt the Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest.

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APPENDIX-I

Schematic Chart

Objective	Research question	Question to be asked with			
		students	Head Teachers/ teachers	women	Remarks
1.	1.	<p>1.Means for Livelihood:</p> <p>2.What time do you get up?</p> <p>3.What work do you do in the morning/ evening?</p> <p>4.What is your perception regarding your birth?</p> <p>5.Were you pleased to have a brother or sister? Why?</p> <p>6.At home who loves you most?</p> <p>7.Who encourage for study and why?</p> <p>8.Who discourage for study?</p> <p>9.Who says girls should study and why?</p> <p>10.At school, where do you go for tiffin, water?</p>	<p>1.General perception towards (Dalit) girls:</p> <p>2.What do you find the main differences between the (Dalit) girls and (Dalit) boys?</p> <p>3.Who involves in the schools activities and programs?</p> <p>4.Who frequently interact with the teachers?</p> <p>5.With whom and how they spend most of their leisure time?</p>	<p>1.How do they feel if girls are born? For the first time..... . For the second time.....</p> <p>2.What do you find the main differences between the boys and girls?</p> <p>3.What do you think about daughters, are they burden to the parents and why?</p> <p>4.Who often go outside home?</p> <p>5.Are women needed to confine within household work?</p>	

2.	2.	<p>11. Do you go to school regularly?</p> <p>12. What is your position in the school?</p> <p>13. Who becomes first and second in your classroom?</p> <p>14. Who the teachers ask question?</p> <p>15. Do you have any Dalit teachers in your school?</p> <p>16. Do the teachers discriminate?</p> <p>17. Among the students who teases who :</p> <p>18. Do your friends want to mix up with you during lunch break?</p> <p>19. Who discriminates you during lunch hour?</p> <p>20. What do they say when discriminating?</p>	<p>6. Perception towards Dalit girls' education:</p> <p>7. Do the teachers give them equal responsibilities as boys?</p> <p>8. Do the Dalit girls complain with the Head teacher?</p>	<p>6. Perception towards education:</p> <p>- Does she/he feel that girls should be educated?</p> <p>- What are the reasons?</p> <p>7. Why do you think that the Dalit girls are not going to school:</p> <p>-</p> <p>8. Perception towards Dalit girls' education:</p> <p>9. What cultural practices they find against them?</p>	

		21.Do you find the text book friendly?			
3.	1.	22. What do you expect from school, teachers, friends, family and community's members?	9.What kind of pressure do the teachers put in encouraging the parents for Dalit girls education?	10.What they expect from education?	

*What was the context? Why they developed the concept that way?