

**Paths to Dalit Empowerment:
Comparison of a "Maoist Affected" Village and a
Neighboring Town in Sindhupalchok**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "**Paths to Dalit Empowerment: Comparison of a "Maoist Affected" Village and a Neighboring Town in Sindhupalchok**" which I submitted to the central department of sociology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal is an entirely original work prepared under the guidance of Dr. Youba Raj Luintel. I have due acknowledgments to all ideas and information received from different sources in the course of writing the report. The result presented in this thesis has not ever been presented or submitted published anywhere, in any purpose till present. I am solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This a dissertation entitled "**Paths to Dalit Empowerment: Comparison of a "Maoist Affected" Village and a Neighboring Town in Sindhupalchok**" has been prepared by Mr. Resham Bahadur Bishokarma under my supervision and guidance for fulfillment of the requirement for the **Degree of Master of Philosophy**. He has conducted research from 2017 June to 2020 July.

Therefore, I recommend this dissertation to the Research Committee for its final approval.

.....

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APPROVAL LETTER

The dissertation entitled "**Paths to Dalit Empowerment: Comparison of a "Maoist Affected" Village and a Neighboring Town in Sindhupalchok**" has been submitted by Mr. Resham Bahadur Bishokarma for final examination by the Research Committee of the M.Phil. Programme in Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the **Degree of Master of Philosophy** in Sociology. The Evaluation Committee hereby certifies that this dissertation has found satisfactory and accepted for the degree.

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Resham Bahadur Bishokarma

ABSTRACT

Paths to Dalit Empowerment: Comparison of a "Maoist Affected" Village and a Neighboring Town in Sindhupalchok

Key terms: Multiple paths, social change, caste system, untouchability, Dalit empowerment, Inter caste relationships with focus on Dalits and Non-Dalits, Maoists, People's war

This research focuses the effectiveness of alternate paths to Dalit empowerment within a specific historical, structural and spatial context. The historical and structural context of this research is that of the Maoist "People's War" (1996-2006) and the spatial context is a village where the Maoist had a heavy presence and a town where their presence was less salient even as other potential agents of empowerment were relatively powerful.

This research engages with the question of the relative of effectiveness of the two alternate modes of intervention as far as Dalit empowerment is concerned. Did the Dalits of Kubhinde, the Sindhupalchok village, where the Maoist presence was intense, find themselves more empowered than the Dalit of Chautara, the nearby headquarters of the Sindhupalchok district, where the Maoists were less powerful even as there were many other agents of potential empowerment were in presence there? Did the Maoist class struggle succeed in resolving the contradictions that gave rise to the caste system in general and "untouchability" in particular? Can political parties that seek to resolve Dalit-non-Dalit contradictions resolve caste contradictions immediately after they come to power and exclusively through *political* initiatives? Or is a *longer-term and multi-dimensional* mobilization and state action necessary to resolve such contradictions?

Analysis of observation, in-depth interview and focus group data with a variety of stakeholders show that Dalits have been empowered where ever a political party, regardless of its broader ideology, has been able to shape the nature of awareness among Dalits and has united them together. As an example, the public space in Chautara e.g. teashop, restaurant/bar, temple, school, wedding party, suffers from a lower level of "untouchability" than Kubhinde - even though "untouchability" is in practice in private homes. Second, education, economic opportunities, political

consciousness, urbanization, road facilities, communications, market access, effects of globalization, and access to local services are the key principal factors that have played a key role in Dalit empowerment and social changes in urban areas. Where such facilities are lacking, for example in the rural settings such as Kubhinde, the level of Dalit empowerment and the rate of social change is weaker. Third, "Untouchability" and other discrimination against Dalits remain more severe in the vicinity of Brahmin/Chhetri settlements in both public and private spheres. Patron-client relations such as those between Dalits on the one hand and the Tamang, Ghale, Magar on the other, "Untouchability" and other discriminations are less intense. To conclude, political consciousness led by the Maoists is insufficient to empower Dalits even as the adoption of multiple paths leads to a higher level of empowerment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	I
Letter of Recommendation	II
Approval Letter	III
Acknowledgement	IV
Abstract	V
Table of Content	VII
List of Tables	IX
Acronyms and Abbreviation	X
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1-10
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Self-reflectivity	2
1.3 Conceptual framework of a research	4
1.4 Statement of Research Problem	7
1.5 Research Objectives	9
1.6 Significance of the study	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	11-20
2.1 Defining Caste System	11
2.2 Emergence of Caste system in Nepal	13
2.3 Background on the term Dalit and struggles	15
2.4 Literature on Multi-causal aspects of Dalit exclusion in India and Nepal	16
2.5 Social Theory Related to Study of Caste	17
2.6 Literature on secondary research question: Maoist Movement	18
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	21-25
3.1 Research approach	20
3.2 Selection of Research Sites	21
3.3 Tools of data collection	22
3.3.1 In depth interview	22
3.3.2 Focus group discussion	23
3.4 Case studies	24
3.4 Data Presentation and Analysis	24

3.5	Limitations	24
3.6	Ethical/Safety Issues	25

CHAPTER 4: THE TRAJECTORY OF DALIT EMPOWERMENT IN

CHAUTARA

26-43

4.1	The political history of Chautara and its impact to Dalits, Before 1990 A.D.	26
4.1.1	Anti-untouchability efforts during Panchyat era in Chautara	28
4.1.2	Referendum of 1980 AD and its impact on Chautara	28
4.2	The Prison of Patron-Client Relations: Socio-economic relations in Chautara and Kubinde before 1990 A.D	30
4.3	Economic Modernization in Chautara before 1990: Below the surface of Panchayat History	32
4.4	Kubinde Left Behind by 1990	34
4.5	Post 1990 Chautara : The Rise of Modern Social Movements	35
4.5.1	Well(Kuwa) water touch program of Sipapokhera	37
4.5.2	Public Feast Program-Chautara	38
4.5.3	The Public Tea shop/restaurants Entry program in Chautara	38
4.6	Kubinde in the 1990's and early 2000's : the legacy of Peoples' War	39
4.7	Socio-Economic Comparison of Dalit in Chautara and Kubinde in Contemporary Period	40

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

44-48

5.1	Summarizing the empirical findings	44
5.2	Theoretical Implications	45

Appendices **49-53**

Annexes **54-61**

References **62-64**

LIST TABLES

Table 1:	The socio-economic conditions of Dalits in Chautara and Kubindee before 1990 AD	40
Table 2:	Discrimination according to occupations: Chautara and Kunindee	43

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

A.D.	Anno Domini
B.S.	Bikram Sambat
GO	Government Organization
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PDO	Panchyat Development Officer
PW	People's War
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
UAE	United Arab Emirates
VDC	Village Development Committee