

GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION AMONG HILL DALIT OF KASKI*

✍ Biswo Kallyan PARAJULI

ABSTRACT

Gender perspective in traditional occupation among hill Dalit of Kaski is a study based upon a survey to explore the status of men and women and their perspectives in relation to the traditional occupation among Dalit of Kaski district. This study tries to analyse the changes observed in traditional skills of hill Dalits. Traditionally hill Dalit works as artisan, mason, carpenter, painter, builder, labour, tailor, tiller, musicians, ironworkers and shoe makers. The study describes the gender perspective in traditional occupation among hill Dalit of Kaski and presents some of the empirical evidences. The field research has been conducted among 570 male and female respondents. Attempts are made to discuss on educational, occupational and economic status of men and women, occupational knowledge on traditional skill technology (TST), caste specific occupation, TST and perception towards work of men and women, gender based difference on wage, necessity and type of training and education to the Dalit women. The finding of the study reveals that Nepali Dalit women are in dual oppression in terms of caste and in terms of gender. The study identifies that the hill Dalits are gradually shifting from their traditional occupations.

KEY WORDS: *Gender, Hill Dalit, Traditional Occupation, Traditional Skill Technology*

INTRODUCTION

According to the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) every citizen of Nepal deserves equal right in Nepalese society. However in practice, owing to the deep-rooted traditions and customs, there exists discrimination and inequality among and between the various strata of people. Some of the strata are known as so called 'mainstream strata' and some of the strata are oppressed, suppressed and exploited by their

** I would like to express my gratitude to the Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) and SNV/ Nepal for the research funding on 'Continuity and Changes in Traditional Skills and Technologies among Hill Dalits of Nepal' as a principal researcher.*

own countrymen and 'mainstream strata'. These oppressed strata of people are marginalized and excluded in the development process of Nepalese society. Out of such exploited, excluded and oppressed strata, Hill *Dalit* of Nepal is a major marginalized group of Nepalese society. In terms of gender, women in this group are in more disadvantaged situation who are affected by both the caste based disparity and patriarchal oppression. Unless and until the inclusion of these marginalized and excluded strata especially the severely marginalized women in development and decision making process is not insured, the goal of national integration will remain unattainable.

It is widely recognized fact that economic change can play a decisive role to change the structure of a society. *Dalit* is no exception in this regards. Market economy has penetrated each and every corner of our society which has brought up different level of social and economic changes. In this process, traditional occupations and social relationships including gender relationship are changing rapidly. Some empirical evidences approve this fact (Parajuli 1999 and 2005) vividly. In this connection, it is very enviable to investigate the nature and pattern of such overwhelming change especially from gender perspective. Without understanding these changes, it is not viable to develop realistic framework that aims at mainstreaming and uplifting the *Dalit* population in Nepal. This study tries to include the agenda of excluded and disadvantaged group through relevant research initiative. It is expected that the research on gender perspective in traditional occupation among hill *Dalit* of Kaski District will effectively contribute to further policy debate on national integration and social harmony of Nepalese society.

An activity of expenditure of energy that produces service and product of value to other people is an occupation or work, (Fox and Harse, 1940). The idea of occupation also implies a set of social relationship, (Hall, 1975). Change in occupational structure and occupational mobility has been analyzed as a significant element in the process of social and economic change. These changes have greater implications in interventions regarding mainstreaming of a marginalized group of a society. The rational of this study relies on this fact through the study on 'gender perspective on traditional occupation among hill *dalit* of Nepal'.

THE PROBLEM AND GOAL

Various studies show that Hill *Dalits* of Nepal have the smallest or marginal landholding. They are economically deprived, socially oppressed and politically excluded in the development process (Parajuli, 2005). Traditionally Hill *Dalit* worked as artisan, mason, carpenter, painter, builder, labor, tailor, tiller, musician, iron-worker, shoe maker and mender, producing and manufacturing different types of goods from metal, wood, lather and forth. Dalit women and girls experience gender discrimination from their men and boys counterparts. Dalit women have either limited or no access to and control over resources such as land, house, jewelry, and cash. Unfortunately, Dalit women and girls experience violence against women, including physical and psychological such as battering, rape and verbal abuse. Illiteracy is rampant and very few have received higher education. Socio-economic condition of women and girls is worse than that of men and boys (Bhattachan, 2003). But now-a-day's owing to the growth of economic-commercial-industrial activities, development intervention and urbanization, a sizable number of Hill *Dalit* are shifting their primary source of livelihood into service, business, sales, skilled and non-skilled labor (domestic and foreign) as well. With respect to the *Dalit* of Nepal, various authors, researchers and social reformers have expressed their concern through their writings. But the empirical studies on occupational mobility, preference, satisfaction, and *Dalit* perceptions towards their own skill and technologies in relation to gender are still inadequate.

This paper is a part of research on 'Continuity and Changes in Traditional Skills and Technologies among Hill Dalit of Nepal'. Hence the overall goal of the study was to explore the effective measure (s) for the inclusion of *Dalit* in society and to analyze the nature and pattern of occupational change among Hill *Dalit* of Kaski with reference to social inclusion – exclusion discourse. But the current article intends to analyze the traditional occupation among Dalit of Kaski district in term of gender.

CONCEPTUAL SKELETON

Number of books, text, reports, dissertations and journals were reviewed to develop a conceptual frame. On the basis of reviewed literature and observation of study site following conceptual skeleton has been developed to the interpretation of study result.

CONCEPTUAL SKELETON OF THE RESEARCH

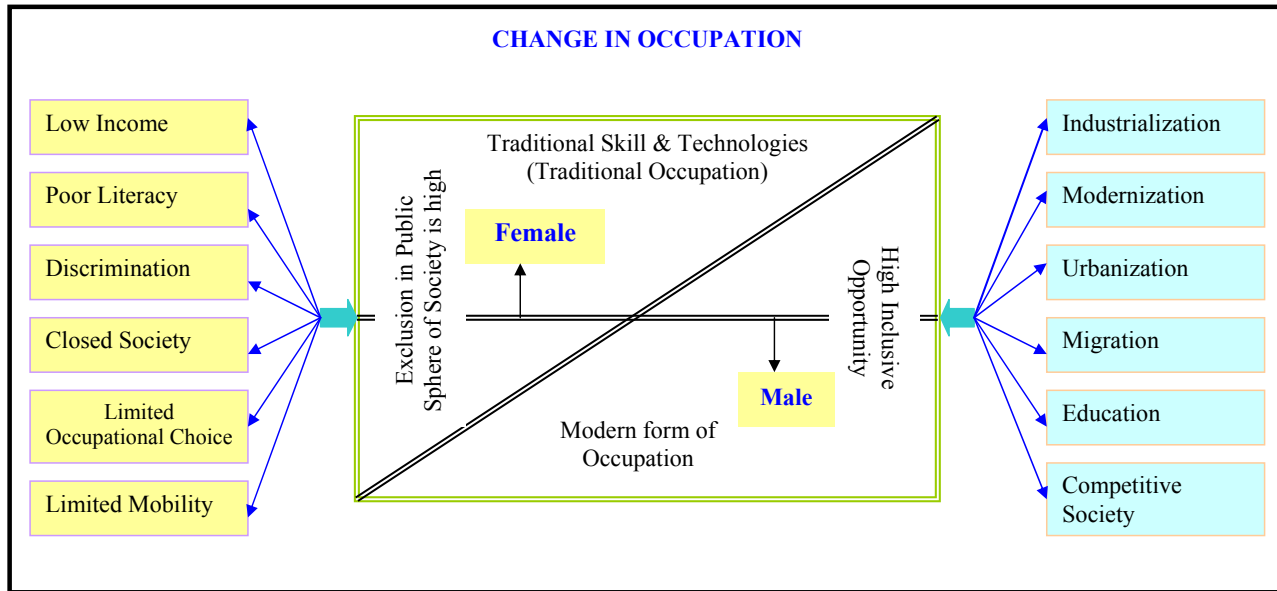
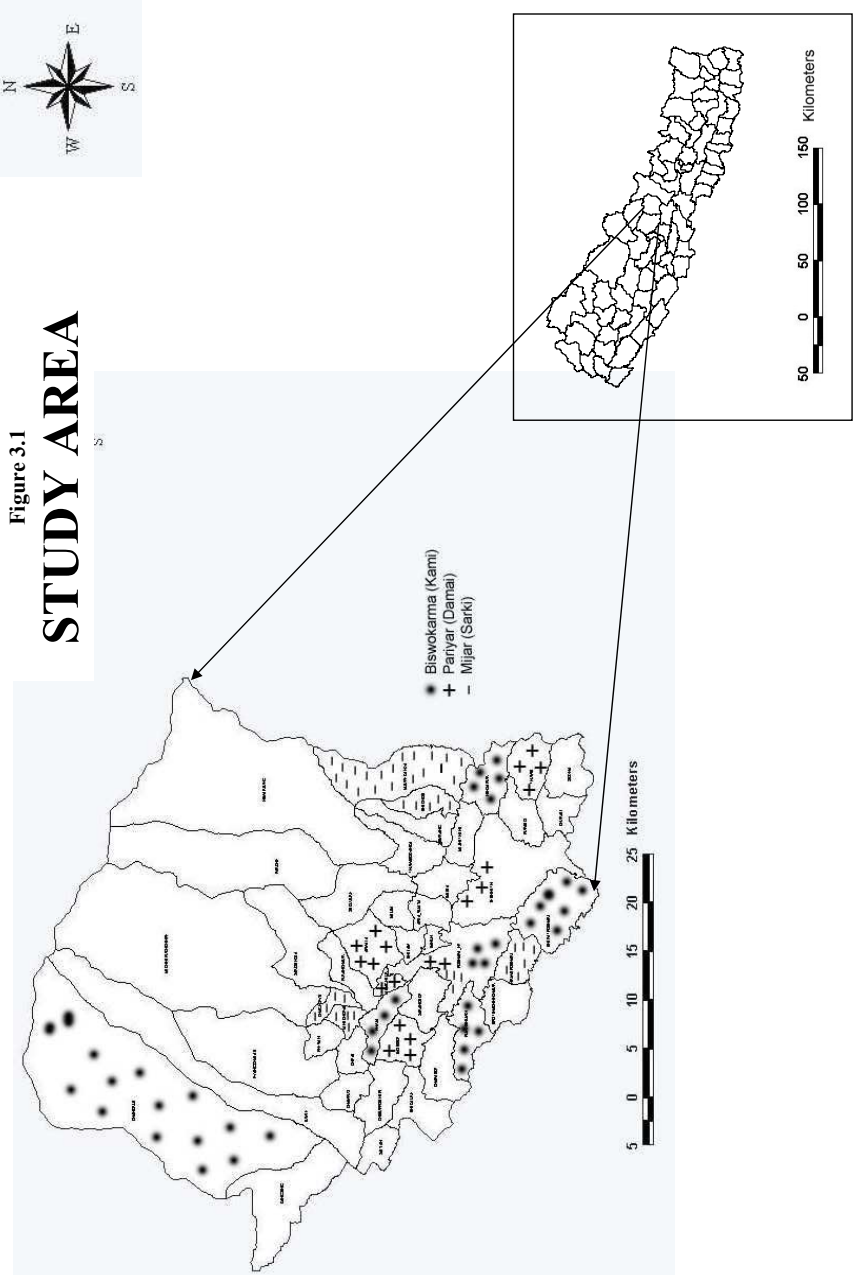


Figure 1: Conceptual Frame illustrates that the timeline of occupational change above indicates the decreasing trend of traditional skill and technologies, and increasing trend of adoption of modern forms of occupation. The cause of decreasing trend of traditional occupation is because of high exclusion in public sphere of society whereas the increasing trend of modern form of occupation is because of high inclusive opportunity. The major factors affecting the traditional occupation are low income, poor literacy, caste-based discrimination, closed society, limited occupational choice, and limited mobility in society. Similarly, other factors affecting such change are industrialization, modernization, urbanization, migration and increasing effects of education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The study was carried out in Kaski district, which lies in the western hill of Nepal. The district covers an area of 2017 sq. km. Politically, the district is divided into 43 Village Development Committees (VDCs) and two municipalities. It is one of the most identical districts inhabited by major occupational group of *Dalit* populations (i.e. *Kami*, *Damai* and *Sarki*) in Nepal. The total population of Hill *Dalit* in Kaski is 50,518 (CBS 2001) out of which *Kami*, *Damai* and *Sarki* constitute 26278, 15116 and 9124 respectively. Evidences show that *Kami* is the 4th largest group in terms of population density of Kaski District where as the largest cluster of *Damai* population was also recorded in Kaski during the census of 2001.

The study was carried out on the *Dalit* population mainly *Kami*, *Damai* and *Sarki* (herein after Biswokarma, *Pariyar* and Nepali) of the 30 sampled households from each settlement. The study design is descriptive in the form of social survey. The universe of the study were the all Hill *Dalits* (only Biswokarma, *Pariyar* and Nepali) households of Kaski district. Multistage cluster sampling was used to select the elements of the sample. Following Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size was determined at 5% confidence interval from total households of Hill *Dalits*. Thus out of 1583 *Dalit* households from selected clusters, 540 households were chosen. *Kami* respondents were selected from 5 VDCs (Ghandruk, Hemja, Pumdi Bhumdi, Hamsapur and Bharatpokhari) and 1 cluster of Pokhara City. *Damai* respondents were selected from 4 VDCs (Kaskikot, Armala, Lamachour and Thumki) and 2 urban clusters (Pokhara Ward No. 3 & 4 and Lekhnath Ward No. 6 & 7). Similarly, *Sarki* respondents were selected from 5 VDCs (Dhital, Lahachowk, Nirmalpokhari, Bhachowk and Mijuredanda) and 1 cluster of Pokhara (Ward No 14 & 15). Out of the total, sampled population covered 1583 individuals from 540 stratified households which included 180 *Kamis*, 180 *Damais* and 180 *Sarkis* households respectively. Out of the 540 households men were heading 470 (87%) households whereas women were heading 70 (13%) households. Overall 540 respondents were interviewed according to the sampling frame. There were 270 male and 270 female respondents respectively.



The study is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. It relies heavily on primary sources and supplementary information was collected from secondary sources. Interview was the main technique used for data collection. For triangulation of the data key-informant interview, focus group discussion and consultation meetings were also used as supplementary techniques. All the quantitative and quantifiable data obtained from interview schedule were processed and analyzed using computer program SPSS 11.5. The qualitative data were classified and analyzed descriptively.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In any society women's status is one of the basic indicators of social and economic development. Any change in the role of women reflects changes in social, economic, and demographic structure of the society. As the Nepali society is organized in the patriarchal model, the status of the women is lower to that of men in all realms of life namely social, economic and political. The position/status of the *Dalit* women in Nepali society is not very different to that of Nepali women in general. But the position of *Dalit* has to be assessed in the overall framework of *Dalit* social structure. As the *Dalit* group as a whole has the lower status in caste hierarchy, the position/ status of *Dalit* women is much lower than *Dalits* men in general. In this article, gender relations in the *Dalit* society has been analyzed particularly focusing on caste-specific occupations.

1. EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

It is widely recognized fact that education is one of the main agents of transformation of traditional societies into modern one. On the other hand, it also indicates the status and position of women in the society. In this connection, the table below explains the educational status of the respondents in terms of gender..

Table 1: Educational Status of the Respondents

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Illiterate	101	37.4	119	44.1	220	40.7
Just Literate	50	18.5	75	27.8	125	23.1
Under Primary Level	29	10.7	19	7	48	8.9
Primary Level Passed	37	13.7	31	11.5	68	12.6
Lower Secondary Level Passed	33	12.2	22	8.1	55	10.2
S. L. C. Passed	6	2.2	3	1.1	9	1.7
Intermediate Passed and Above	14	5.1	1	0.4	15	2.8
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

The table shows that there is significant percentage of illiterate people in the sample. Of the total, 40.7 percent are illiterate. Of them, the percentage of women (44.1%) is slightly higher than that of the men (37.4%). Interestingly the percentage of women who are just literate is much greater than the percentage of men. It might be due to adult literacy programme for women. There are virtually no women (0.4%) who have completed Intermediate and bachelor level. In general, the educational status of the Dalits is poor and it is poorer in the case of women.

2. LAND OWNERSHIP

In an agrarian society, land ownership is one of the key indicators of socio-economic status of an individual. In a patriarchal society, women's ownership to property, especially, land is very limited. Women are the dispossessed group. This applies to *Dalit* groups, too. As a matter of fact, few Dalits have ownership over land. Even those who have some land, most of them are men who possess the land. The following table explains it further.

Table 2: Land Ownership among the Respondents

Category	Bishwakarma		Pariyar		Nepali		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Women	7	7.4	9	14.3	9	7.9	25	9.2
Men	85	90.4	53	84.1	105	92.1	243	89.7
Both	2	2.1	1	1.6	0	.0	3	1.1
Total	94	100.0	63	100.0	114	100.0	271	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Of the total respondents who reported their households own land, only few (9.2%) reported that women owned land in their households. There is some level of variations between the groups. Compared to Bish-owkarma and Nepali groups, the percentage of women having land ownership is slightly larger than among the *Pariyars*. Regardless of this variation, it is quite clear that women are largely dispossessed group among the *Dalit* groups. It also indicates their low social status in the household/family.

3. KNOWLEDGE ON TRADITIONAL SKILL TECHNOLOGY

Due to differential in gendered role, one can presume that there is variation between men and women in terms of acquisition of Traditional Skill Technology (TST). Following table explains it vividly.

Table 3: Knowledge on Traditional Skill Technology (TST)

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Knowledge on TST	123	45.6	60	22.2	183	33.9
No Knowledge on TST	147	54.4	210	77.8	357	66.1
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

The table clearly depicts that there is significant variation between men and women in terms of acquisition of TST. Compared to 45.6 percent male, only few (22.2%) women have possessed TSTs. It means almost half of them know TSTs while less than one fourth of women know it. In fact, most of the TSTs are highly gendered that it is largely associated with men. Like in other groups, women are kept inside home and confined to household chores. But they also work as helpers of men in the application of these skills. It can be said that *Dalit* TSTs are largely masculine.

4. CASTE-SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONS

Out of 540 respondents, only 183 reported that they were engaged in caste based traditional occupations. The previous table has already showed that larger percentage of women is involved in agriculture than that of men. This indicates there will be fewer women who are in-

involved in caste specific occupational works. This type of gender difference in occupation has been further illustrated by the following table.

Table 4: Caste Specific Occupations

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sewing	31	23.3	50	100.0	81	44.3
Playing Musical Instruments and Sewing	22	16.5			22	12.0
Ironsmith	20	15.0			20	10.9
Bamboo Work	16	12.0			16	8.7
Sikarmi and Dakarmi	16	12.0			16	8.7
Karmi	12	9.0			12	6.6
Playing Musical Instruments	6	4.5			6	3.3
Theki (wooden utensil) Making	6	4.5			6	3.3
Goldsmith	3	2.3			3	1.6
Madal (Tom Tom) Making	1	0.8			1	0.5
Total	133	100.0	50	100.0	183	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Consistent to the findings analyzed in the previous tables, larger number (133) of men are involved in caste-specific occupations but fewer women have been involved in these traditional occupations and all of these women have been involved in sewing. This also indicates that except from **Pariyar** group, other groups of women are not involved in such caste specific occupations. Even in the case of men, many of them have been involved in sewing. There are 15.1 percent men who work as ironsmith. There are also a remarkable number (16) of men who are bamboo workers but most of them do wage labour together. It is worth to note here that traditional occupations related to Nepali group are less prevalent. Only one male respondent reported leather works as his occupation.

5. NON-CASTE AND NON-AGRICULTURAL WORKS

Besides traditional agriculture and caste specific occupations, *Dalits* have been increasingly shifting to non-traditional works such as wage

labour and foreign employment. To adapt to new situations, both women and men are increasingly being involved in such economic activities especially wage labour. Of the total 540 informants, almost one third of them fall in non-caste and non-agricultural occupation.

Table 5: Non-caste and Non-agricultural Occupations

Occupations	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Wage Labour	40	45.5	39	43.3	79	44.4
Housewife / Housemaid	-	-	46	51.1	46	25.8
Foreign Employment	21	23.9	-	-	21	11.8
Pensioner	9	10.2	-	-	9	5.0
Service (Government+ Private)	6	6.8	2	2.2	8	4.5
Trade and Business	4	4.5	2	2.2	6	3.4
Students	6	6.8	1	1.1	7	3.9
Industry	2	2.3	-	0.0	2	1.1
Total	88	100.0	90	100.0	178	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Of the total 178 in this category, almost half (44.4%) reported wage labour as their occupation. It is remarkable that proportion of both men and women is almost equal in this category. Identical to other groups of rural women, the largest proportion of *Dalit* women (51.1%) reported that they were housewives. After wage labour, there are remarkable number of men who have been involved in foreign employments. There are small proportions (4.5%) of the respondents who have been working in organized sectors such as government and private organizations. A few have been involved in trade-business. It is worth to note that there is high chance of social mobility in these areas. But most of the *Dalits* are in the occupations from which they can hardly make their living.

6. DURATION OF INVOLVEMENT IN CASTE SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONS IN A YEAR

As explained previously, slightly less than one third of the respond-

ents were involved in caste specific occupations. It cannot be said for sure that the people involved in caste specific occupations have been employing it always for their subsistence. In this context following table depicts duration of their involvement in traditional occupation in a year.

Table 6: Duration of Involvement in Caste Specific Occupations in a Year

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Whole year	49	41.5	50	83.3	99	55.6
Six months	20	16.9	1	1.7	21	11.8
Three months	4	3.4	1	1.7	5	2.8
Occasionally	45	38.1	8	13.3	53	29.8
Total	118	100.0	60	100.0	178	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

The table shows that slightly more than half (55.6%) of the respondents have been employing TSTs for the whole year for their subsistence. Compared to 41.5 percent men, the percentage of the women (83.3%) is much larger. In fact, they are the people who have been continuing TSTs for their survival. There are remarkable proportions (29%) of men who employ TSTs at least occasionally.

7. PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS EASINESS OF WORKS/OCCUPATION

To an extent, the difficulty level of the skills or occupations also affects the adoption and continuity of the skills and occupations. In this connection, the following table analyses the opinions of the respondents towards the easiness of the caste specific occupations of men and women.

Table 7: Perceptions towards Easiness of Works/occupation

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Women's skills are easier	145	53.7	148	54.8	293	54.3
Men's skills are easier	50	18.5	40	14.8	90	16.7
Don't know	71	26.3	75	27.8	146	27.0
Similar	4	1.5	7	2.6	11	2.0
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

The table above depicts majority of the respondents reported that the caste specific works of women are easier than that of the male. Of the total respondents, 54.3 percent respondents had such a view. Only few (16.7%) of them reported that the works of the men are easier than that of the women. There is no remarkable variation in opinions in terms of gender of the respondents. In general, women's traditional occupations are considered easier than that of the women.

8. PERCEPTION TOWARDS IMPORTANCE OF WORKS OF MEN AND WOMEN

Generally, works of men are considered superior to the works of the women in a patriarchal society. Women's works are not considered productive and given lower importance. The following table shows similar attitude.

Table 8: Perception towards Importance of Works of Men and Women

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Women's works are important	18	6.7	9	3.3	27	5.0
Men's work are important	196	72.6	226	83.7	422	78.1
Don't know	56	20.7	35	13.0	91	16.9
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Most (78.1%) of the respondents opined that the works/occupations of the are more important while only a few (5%) told that that the occupations of the women are more important than that of men in terms of subsistence of the family. It is interesting to note that more women than men reported men's works as more important. It shows how strongly patriarchal values shape the beliefs and understandings of people regardless of their gender identity. Men's occupations are considered important also because these are paid or financially rewarding.

9. SUITABILITY OF TRADITIONAL SKILLS/TECHNOLOGIES

In the given social structure, suitability of TST may vary in terms of gender. In this connection, the respondents were asked about the suitability of the TST for men and women.

Table 9: Suitability of Traditional TST

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Suitable to men	114	42.2	113	41.9	227	42.0
Suitable to women	19	7.0	23	8.5	42	7.8
Suitable to both	93	34.4	117	43.3	210	38.9
Don't know	44	16.3	17	6.3	61	11.3
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Larger percentage of the respondents (42%) reported that TSTs are more suitable to men than to women. There is no variation in opinion between men and women in that the percentages of the men and the women who have this opinion are virtually equal. There are very few who reported TSTs are suitable to women. But other remarkable percentage, slightly above one third of the respondents reported that TSTs are suitable for both men and women. The data suggests that Dalits believe that TSTs are largely suitable more for men than the women. This is also linked with the fact that very few women are found to be involved in TSTs in the study area.

10. EASY AVAILABILITY OF WORK BASED ON THE TST

In traditional caste society, women are kept inside house and men enjoy more exposure to the outside world. So, women's works are mostly confined to the household chores. In this context, it was investigated who, men or women get works based on TST more easily.

Table 10: Easy Availability of Work Based on the TST

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Men	137	50.7	131	48.5	268	49.6
Women	7	2.6	6	2.2	13	2.4
Both	70	25.9	79	29.3	149	27.6
Don't know	56	20.7	54	20.0	110	20.4
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

The table depicts that half of the respondents have had the view that men easily get the caste based jobs in comparison of women. Slightly more than one-fourth of the respondents believed that caste specific works are available for both men and women. Only few (2.4 %) others thought that women get these jobs easily. There is no significant variation in opinions with regard to gender of the respondents.

11. DIFFERENCES IN WAGES

Like other spheres of lives, women are generally discriminated in working area. It is quite common in agrarian society that women are paid less for their agricultural labour even if she performs same work as efficiently as their men counterparts. In this context, the following table explains whether there is difference in the wages for works done by women and men. This is important to know also because many women are found to be involved in wage labour.

Table 11: Differences in Wages

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	20	7.4	10	3.7	30	5.6
No	210	77.8	201	74.4	411	76.1
Don't know	40	14.8	59	21.9	99	18.3
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

An overwhelming majority (76.1%) of the respondents reported that there is no difference in the wages paid for the same works done by men and women. Only a few (5.6%) of the respondents stated that they had experienced the wage differences. Rest of others had no idea about this. In fact, it is quite remarkable that respondents have not felt that there is gender discrimination in wages of the work and both men and women had the same opinion on this. The data indicates that the discriminations regarding wages have been significantly reduced in recent times.

12. NECESSITY OF TRAININGS AND EDUCATION

Traditionally, men rather than women are considered deserving for education, training and outside exposures. Women are thought to work

inside houses. Therefore, there is no need felt for their education and training. But this fallacy has been changing gradually. In this connection, the following table explains *Dalit* people's attitude toward the need of education and training for women and men.

Table 12: Necessity of Training and Education

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
For Women	23	8.5	16	5.9	39	7.2
For Men	72	26.7	87	32.2	159	29.4
For Both	160	59.3	146	54.1	306	56.7
Don't know	15	5.6	21	7.8	36	6.7
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Majority (56.7%) of the respondents opined that there is a need of providing education and training for both men and women equally and both men and women thought similarly on this issue. However, there is a remarkable proportion (more than one fourth) of the respondents who reported training and education should be provided to men while only a few (7.2%) told that it should be specifically for women. It shows the perception towards women's education has been changing but the traditional concepts have not been eliminated yet as there are still some people who think that only men are suitable candidates for education and training.

13. OPINION TOWARD THE STATUS/CONDITION OF DALIT WOMEN

It is important to know how Dalit men and women perceive the status of Dalit women in the study area. Following table describes the respondents' attitude regarding this.

Table 13: Opinion toward the Status/Condition of Dalit Women

Category	Men		Women		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good	194	71.9	181	67.0	375	69.4
Sympathetic	76	28.1	88	32.6	164	30.4
Don't know	0	.0	1	.4	1	.2
Total	270	100.0	270	100.0	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

More than two-third of the respondents had reported that the condition of the Dalit women is good in the study area. But almost one third of others believed that it is pathetic or sympathetic in comparison of men. It is interesting that there is no significant variation in opinions in terms of gender of the respondents. However slightly more women reported that the condition of women is pathetic. Despite the fact that Dalit women are stuck between caste and gender discrimination, many of the Dalits had opinion that condition of women is good in Dalit Society. It is also because there are some improvements in their condition in the recent time. In others cases, it is simply a positive attitude toward the situation.

14. RECOMMENDED MEASURES FOR UPLIFTMENT OF DALIT WOMEN

As mentioned in the preceding table, some respondents had told that condition of Dalit women is sympathetic. They have also recommended the ways to improve the condition of the women as follow.

Table 14: Recommended Measures for Upliftment of Dalit Women

Category	N	%
Provide employment opportunity	54	32.9
Provide educational opportunity	38	23.2
Both education and employment opportunity	46	28.0
Reservations quotas	18	11.0
All of the above	7	4.3
Other	1	0.6
Total	164	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

One third of the respondent told that employment opportunities should be provided to women for the improvement of their condition. Almost similar percentage of others reported both education and employment opportunities should be available to Dalit women. And 23.2 percent of the respondents recommended providing educational opportunity. In the same way the respondents had marked that reservation in different sphere of living chances must be provided and is reported by 11 percent of them. Surprisingly, fewer reported that reservation should be one of the measures for the improvement of *Dalit* women. This might

be due to the fact that they are less aware about the reservation. But the reservation issue is indirectly associated with their opinion about the job opportunity. In general, education and job opportunities are emphasized for the upliftment of the *Dalit* women.

15. TYPES OF TRAINING REQUIRED FOR DALITS WOMEN

The respondents had identified different trainings related to different issues of the. This question was asked to all 540 respondents. The need felt by them has been summarised into four different categories to show the specific trainings needed for the women in *Dalit society*.

Table 15: Types of Training Required for Women

Category	N	%
Income generation	281	52.1
Education (adult education)	154	28.5
Awareness raising/ empowerment	66	12.2
Health awareness/education	39	7.2
Total	540	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Majority (52%) of the respondents reported that women must be given the income generating training. It shows that there is focus on the trainings that create income for the women. For the income generation even the training on sewing (one of the TST of *Dalit*) has been prescribed. Other 28.5 percent of them told that education such as adult literacy should be given to women. Rest of others felt the need of raising general and health awareness among the *Dalit* women.

16. POSITIVE CHANGES AFFECTING THE STATUS OF DALIT WOMEN

Though pace and pattern can be different, societies are always under the sway of change. The *Dalit* society is no exception. Despite the deprived condition of the *Dalit* women, there are some positive changes occurring, which may have effects on the overall status of the *Dalit* women in long run. The status of the *Dalit* women has neither changed overnight nor will be changing in that way in future. But there are certainly some positive indicators. The following table illustrates the

changes pertinent to improvement in the status of *Dalit* women as perceived by both *Dalit* women and men.

Table 16: Positive Changes Affecting the Status of Dalit Women

Category	N	%
Awareness about health and sanitation	331	61.3
Awareness about education	268	49.6
Increased organizational capacity	183	33.9
Income/saving awareness	171	31.7
Awareness on women/girls education	157	29.1
General awareness	68	12.6
Mutual cooperation	67	12.4
Environmental awareness	53	9.8
Self-reliance	15	2.8
Improvement in interpersonal skills	13	2.4
No change at all	12	2.2
More job opportunities	11	2.0

Source: Field Survey (2007)

Percentages are based on multiple responses

The changes reported are mainly in the realm of education and awareness. Of the total, 61 percent respondents reported that there is increased health and sanitation awareness among the *Dalit* women. Similarly awareness about the importance of education was also reported by many. Of the total, almost half of the respondents reported that there is awareness in terms of importance of education in general. Other 29 percent also reported awareness towards education for the girls/women. Other remarkable change in the scenario is organizational capacity of the *Dalit* women. Women are being involved in different community based organizations and groups. They have formed and are organized in mothers groups, credit and saving groups etc. In the economic realm, awareness and practice regarding income saving is also an important indicator of change. As mentioned, saving and credit groups are helping them to organize as well as improve their livelihood. Better cooperation among the women, environmental awareness, self-reliance, job opportunities were also reported by some of the informants.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Traditional Skill Technologies (TSTs) of the Dalits are largely masculinized in that most of the TSTs belong to the Dalit men. For example, playing music is male centered or considered to be the knowledge and skills of Men. The skills or works of men are also considered more important than of the skills and works of the men. The work hierarchy is also seen in the perception towards the difficulty level of the skills in which men's skills and works are considered harder than that of the women. Caste specific works are easily available for men than for the women. Therefore, fewer women are involved in caste specific works. Regardless of gender, Dalits are increasingly switching to non-caste and non-traditional occupations. But this mobility has brought limited benefits to the *Dalits* because they have shifted to unorganized and low mobility sectors such as wage labour. Caste specific occupations and non-caste/non-agricultural occupations are prevalent parallel to each other. It also indicates to a transitional situation in which neither all Dalits have left their caste specific occupations nor all of them have adopted non-caste occupations.

The finding of the study also indicates that *Dalit* women are in dual oppression, grinded between caste and gender based oppressions. Illiteracy is still rampant among the Dalit women. Access to resources and control of property is still limited which is indicated by the fact that very few women possess land among the families who have some land. But there are some positive indicators too. Many Dalit men and women see the status of *Dalit* women positively. This is partly because of the recent improvements in some indicators. The study shows that discriminations regarding wages have not ended but remarkably decreased in the recent time. Women have become more aware about the importance of education and their political awareness has increased because of their increasing involvement in groups such as mother groups, saving/credit, etc.

Since traditional skill technologies of the *Dalits* are disappearing rapidly, it is very important to take essential steps for its preservation. Participation of both men and women is essential for the preservation of such traditional skills. To emancipate the *Dalit* women from the com-

pounding effects of the caste and gender inequalities and oppressions, state and civil society should work together to empower them through education and training. Intervention should also focus on increasing their access to resources and participation in decision makings both at local and national level.

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