

# Shifting Dynamics: Modernization and Its Impact on Dalit Occupations

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## Abstract

*This article explores the modernization of traditional Dalit occupations and their compatibility and competition in the market. It discusses how traditional Dalit occupations, once limited by outdated technologies, were insufficient to sustain their livelihoods. Societal dynamics shift with modernization and urbanization, opportunities for education and diverse occupations emerge (Rostow, 1959, Hochschild, 1989; Ritzer, 2011), influencing traditional occupations. Focusing on Godawari Municipality, Ward No. 5, this study employs random sampling and an explanatory method to analyze data. The findings reveal a noteworthy departure from traditional Dalit occupations such as metalwork, leatherwork, and sewing. Modernization and urbanization have not only provided educational opportunities for Dalits but also influenced their traditional occupations. The study indicates that Dalits, particularly the younger generation, are opting for new occupations aligned with their education. The increased educational levels among Dalits are instrumental in their pursuit of alternative professions, driven by aspirations for higher income and improved living standards. This shift is a strategic response to the desire to educate their children and meet daily needs more easily. Notably, Dalits are modernizing their traditional occupations by incorporating new technologies and establishing shops in market areas. This transformative shift is not limited to traditional sectors; more Dalits are now entering the business and the service industry. The article emphasizes the interaction between modernization, urbanization, and the occupational choices of Dalits, highlighting their active adaptation to evolving socio-economic conditions.*

**Key Words:** Dalits, Discrimination, Occupation, Modernization, Urbanization,

## Introduction

Dalits, historically relegated to the status of an untouchable caste, have traditionally found themselves constrained to specific occupations such as ironwork, leatherwork, and sewing. The pervasive discrimination they face based on their caste identity results in their systematic marginalization from various spheres of social life. The repercussions of this discrimination are multi-faceted, affecting Dalits across social, economic, educational, political, and religious dimensions. The derogatory labels attached to Dalits, such as “Paninachalne” (water-polluting), “Achhoot” (untouchables), “Doom,” “Pari Ganit,” and “Tallojat” (low caste), not only reflect the deep-seated prejudice embedded in societal norms but also contribute to their social exclusion and stigmatization. The term 'Dalit' itself embodies a struggle for fairness and equality, signaling the ongoing battle against entrenched caste-based discrimination.

The legislative framework, exemplified by the Civil Code of 1854 (Muluki Ain 1910 BS), initially sanctioned and institutionalized these inequalities. While the civil code of 1963 ostensibly banned such discriminatory practices, the persistence of the term 'Dalit' underscores the stark reality that caste-based discrimination, including untouchability, continues to persist in Nepal. Historically, Dalits faced the denial of land ownership, compelling them to rely on higher caste for their sustenance. The degrading practice of extracting Bali from their Bistas, a means of collecting offerings to meet their basic needs, exemplifies the systemic economic subjugation that has perpetuated their vulnerability. The occupational shifts among Dalits encompass a broad spectrum of social, economic, and political challenges. The historical injustices and ongoing struggles faced by Dalits drive them toward social reform, seeking to dismantle the deeply entrenched structures of discrimination that continue to persist in Nepalese society.

Modernization and urbanization in Nepal have brought about significant changes across various levels of Nepali society, both over time and across different regions. These processes have notably altered employment dynamics, especially within urban and global contexts (Rostow, 1959; Hochschild, 1989; Inglehart, 1997; Ritzer, 2011). The ripple effects extend beyond economic realms, influencing educational opportunities and subsequently contributing to an observable rise in the country's overall literacy rate. Amidst these overarching developments, a conspicuous dichotomy emerges concerning the Dalit community. While the broader society undergoes shifts, Dalits appear to be grappling with a persistent reliance on traditional occupations. This paradox warrants a meticulous examination of occupational transitions within the Dalit demographic, necessitating an exploration beyond conventional narratives of exclusion and adversity.

Historically, scholarly inquiries into Dalit affairs have predominantly revolved around themes of marginalization, poverty, and deprivation (Bhattachan et. al, 2009; Folmar, 2007; Shahi, 2017; Nepali, 2018). However, there exists a critical void in our understanding if we limit our focus solely to the challenges faced by Dalits. This article contends that a comprehensive exploration of Dalit experiences must encompass an examination of the ongoing transformations in their occupational landscape. By delving into the evolving nature of Dalit occupations, we can uncover nuanced insights into how the processes of modernization and urbanization intersect with the socio-economic fabric of this community. Analyzing the shifts in employment patterns within the Dalit sector is imperative for a holistic comprehension of their contemporary dynamics. Consequently, this article endeavors to unravel the layers of change within the Dalit community's occupational landscape, recognizing the imperative to transcend conventional narratives and engage with the complexities of their evolving socio-economic milieu.

## **Modernization and Occupation Change**

The modernization is the social process, which lead to change social, economic and political structure of the society. Firstly, it was dominant in 1960s. Modernization means moving societies from traditional activities to industrial, manufacturing and related activities for sustenance and jobs are highly specified (Haralambos & Holborn, 2014). Urban areas are expanded as people move to near places of their employment. Talcott Parsons refers modernization to structural differentiation pattern variable, technology or values change. Social institutions are multiplied, simple structure of traditional societies are transformed into complex. Scholars such as Rostow (1959) and Eisenstadt (1964) have laid the groundwork for

understanding modernization theory, emphasizing the progression of societies through distinct stages of development. This perspective suggests a correlation between the advancement of societies and shifts in occupational patterns. They propose a linear progression of societies through stages of traditional, take-off, drive to maturity, and age of high mass consumption.

Blau and Duncan (1967), among others, have explored occupational stratification in the context of modernization. These studies investigate how social and economic changes associated with modernization influence the distribution and hierarchy of occupations within a given society. Globalization-driven modernization connects societies both nationally and internationally, spreading knowledge and economic opportunities and leading to changes in occupations. Scholars such as Castells (1996) and Sassen (2015) have investigated the emergence of new industries and the decline of traditional occupation through the influence of global economic forces and technological advancements. Their research highlights the crucial role of technology, particularly automation, in transforming job roles. Additionally, Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) also discussed how the technological progress that happens in the world reshapes job roles by generating new opportunities while making some occupations obsolete.

The strong link between industrialization and urbanization observed in the Western context has led to a prevalent assumption that a comparable relationship exists between socioeconomic development and urbanization. The growing urbanization was accompanied by a growth of population. Industrial activities brought into being a fluctuating class of artisans, craftsman and workers who were politically and economically unstable. At the same time, an unaccustomed money economy began to take root, and a more rational mentality spread to all strata of society (Gutkind, 1964).

The development of industry leads to the development of society. Partly as a result of the industrial Revolution, a large number of people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were uprooted from their rural homes and moved to urban settings. This massive migration was caused, in large part by the jobs created by the industrial system in urban areas. But it represented many difficulties for those who had to adjust to urban life. In addition, the expansion of the cities produces an seemingly endless list of urban problems like overcrowding, pollution, noise, traffic, and so forth (Ritzer, 2011).

Modernization theory is a theory of a comprehensive process of social change and is a form of societal development. It is the current term for an old process—the process of social and cultural change where less developed societies acquire characteristics common to developed societies (Curry et al., 2008, p. 65). It is generally accepted that the economic development of underdeveloped countries is contingent upon the introduction of industry, industrialization, in turn, is associated with urban growth and the relationship between these two processes is usually assumed to be closed that some writer speaks of industrialization and urbanization as two facets of the same process (Hoselitz, 1957). Due to the concept of modernization, the urban areas are rapidly grown. Three decades ago, when Asian Development Bank started its business, about 18% of the Asian population lived in urban areas. Today 5 million people live in the urban areas. Subsequently, Asian societies have experienced major changes as their population has moved from rural areas to urban areas. Rapid urban growth has created problems, severe infrastructure deficiencies in housing, water supply, sanitation, sewage disposal, drainage, solid waste management, roads and public transport need to be addressed (ADB, 1996).

Modernization often corresponds with changes in educational systems and skill requirements. Studies by Boudon (1974) and Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) delve into how educational reforms influence occupational mobility and the acquisition of skills necessary for the modern job market. Cultural shifts play a pivotal role in occupation change during modernization. Researchers like Inglehart (1997) explore how changing values and attitudes within societies contribute to the transformation of occupational preferences and choices. Modernization is closely linked to gender dynamics in the workforce. For example, Reskin (2000) has explored how gender roles within various occupations and sectors have shifted due to the modernization process. The traditional role of women working within the household has evolved, with more women now participating in occupations outside the home. Rotberg (2000) posits that modernization and urbanization create upward social mobility by providing opportunities for education and employment.

Scholars such as Prebisch (1988) and Frank (1992) have critiqued modernization theory in favor of dependency theory to explain changes in occupation. They argue that underdevelopment and the persistence of traditional occupations in certain regions result from economic dependency rather than a lack of modernization. Wallerstein (1980) discussed profoundly the interconnection of developed and undeveloped nations in the world-systems theory, highlighting the unequal interdependence among nations within the global economic structure. Sociologists like Touraine & Mayhew (1971) and Bell (1973) have examined the shift from industrial to post-industrial societies that led to a rise in service and information-based occupations. Appadurai (1996) discusses how globalization impacts cultural, economic, and social dimensions, emphasizing the global interconnections driven by modernization and occupational changes. Sennett (1998) explores how flexible capitalism and modernization create short-term, project-based employment opportunities by enhancing occupational skills and identity. Hochschild (1989) analyzes the interplay between social and gender roles in occupational change, focusing on the evolving gendered division of labor and its impact on both professional and domestic responsibilities. Castells (1996) examines how information technology reshapes work and communication, altering occupational opportunities. Collectively, this body of literature provides valuable insights for analyzing how modernization and urbanization influence the transformation of traditional occupations among Dalits.

## Dalits in Nepal

Following the unification campaign led by King Prithivi Narayan Shah, Nepalese society is often perceived as a unified entity. The caste system, believed to have been formally established in the 16th century according to Risely, underwent adaptation to the existing categories and types in Nepal. In terms of language and religious practices, Nepalese people can be categorized into dominant and minority groups. The majority of contemporary Nepalese identify as Hindu, with Buddhism constituting the second-largest religious group, followed by Islamic and Christian minorities. Within Hinduism, the caste system has been observed since the modern period (Pandey, 2004). The Muluki Ain of 1854, the legal code, classified Nepalese castes into four categories: *Tagadhari* caste (those wearing the sacred thread), *Matwali* (those consuming liquor), *Pani Nachalne*, *Chhoichhito Halnu Parne* (those deemed water unacceptable, but without the need for purification or sprinkling of holy water). Dalits fall into the fourth category, identified as a caste with water deemed unacceptable, requiring the sprinkling of holy water to be purified (Bhattachan et al., 2009). During the Rana regime, caste

discrimination was accentuated, leading to Dalits being prohibited from entering Hindu temples despite being Hindus themselves. They were considered an "untouchable" caste, with higher castes refraining from drinking water touched by Dalits and preventing them from entering their houses.

In the hierarchical structure of the Hindu caste system, there exist four varnas or categories: *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra* (Sharma, 1994). Among these, Sudras were traditionally assigned the task of serving the other three categories. However, over time, the discourse surrounding the Varna system shifted from being based on human virtues to becoming linked to birth. The major caste groups were then delineated based on their respective occupations, resulting in high castes occupying the apex of the caste hierarchy, while lower castes were situated in the lower stratum. The Sudras, often considered the untouchable caste, are referred to as Dalits.

The concept of untouchability in Nepal is rooted in Hindu religious beliefs, guided by the Vedas and Manu Smriti. According to Hindu ideology, Sudras were purportedly born from the feet of Brahma, the creator of the world (Bishwakarma, 2002). In Nepal, the untouchable caste, as identified by Cox (1994), can be categorized into three groups: those predominantly residing in the Terai, those primarily found in the middle hills, and the Newar untouchable castes. Based on both caste and religion, 22 subgroups can be classified as follows: *Damai, Kami, Sarki, Gaine, Badi* (total 6) in the Hilly region; *Paswan, Lohar, Dom, Chamar, Halkhor, Dushad, Musahar, Santhal, Batar, Khatwe, Tatma* (total 11) in the Terai region; and *Kasai, Pode, Kusale, Chyme, Kuchu*, which are regarded as another group of Dalit castes.

As of the 2021 census, the Dalit population in Nepal constitutes more than 15% of the total population of 2.91 million (NSO, 2023). The precise number of Dalit castes in the country remains undefined. While the Ministry of Local Development officially recognizes 22 castes as Dalits, the Central Bureau of Statistics acknowledges only 11 castes falling under the Dalit category. People from the Dalit community, like *Lohar, Sunar, Kami, Sarki, and Badi*, are commonly referred to as being marginalized by upper castes and experiencing isolation and deprivation from various socio-economic facilities within society. They can be categorized based on their occupations as follows: *Hudake, Pariyar, Dholi, Kusale, Damai*, and Nepali engage in stitching clothes and playing music; *Kandara, Mijar, Tamata, Kami, and Lohar* are involved in metalwork, crafting ornaments, and creating weapons; *Sarki* and *Chamar* specialize in working with skin and shoemaking, including the disposal of dead bodies; *Gaine* is associated with singing; *Badi* is involved in dancing, playing musical instruments, and skinning dead animals; *Pode* and *Chaymeare* engaged in cleaning; *Kasai* is associated with the meat business; *Dusadh, Paswan, and Dom* engage in activities such as making *Dalo, Nanglo*, and cleaning; *Musahar* and *Halhkor* are involved in toilet cleaning and burying dead animals; and *Khatwe, Tatma, and Bhulare* associated with agricultural work and mouse killing (Jha, 1997).

Various initiatives have been devised to eradicate discrimination among castes and groups. In 1947, the first Tailor Union was established to vocally oppose discrimination. With the advent of democracy in 1950, discriminatory practices were recognized as detrimental to society. In 1957, over 750 individuals attempted to enter the revered Hindu temple Pashupatinath, challenging discriminatory norms. The Pari Ganit Nari Sangh (Association for Scheduled Caste Women) was founded in 1955, and 1958, efforts were made in the Upper

House to address and speak out against discrimination. The Muluki Ain of 1963 explicitly prohibited untouchability and discrimination, declaring such practices illegal. The term "Achhut," denoting individuals who are deprived, suppressed, hated, and marginalized, was officially defined in 1967. In 1965, the United States Organization passed a referendum to eliminate racial discrimination, a measure that Nepal accepted in 1970. Despite these endeavors, caste-based discrimination continues to persist in Nepal (Bishwokarma, 2008). The prohibition and punishment for such discriminatory actions have been reinforced by the Kingdom of Nepal in 1990 and incorporated into the constitution of Nepal in 2015.

Since 1990, numerous initiatives have been undertaken, including the formation of a National Commission dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by Dalits. In line with the Uplift and Preservation Bill of 2000, Dalits are identified as individuals who have suffered from untouchability-based discrimination in society, experiencing economic, political, and educational backwardness, and facing domination in religious and cultural practices. In 2002, the government established the National Commission to improve the conditions of the Dalit community. Various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are actively engaged in community welfare efforts. The constitution of Nepal, established in 2015, underscores the commitment to reconstruct the state by ensuring the inclusion of women, ethnic groups, and Dalits while abolishing any form of discrimination, thus striving towards the vision of a democratic and inclusive nation.

## Methodology

The methodological framework employed in this study employs a qualitative research design intricately interwoven with an explanatory data analysis process. The data collection process involves immersive fieldwork, where respondents are carefully selected using a systematic simple random sampling (SRS) method. This method ensures that every individual has an equal chance of being selected. The process begins by creating a comprehensive list of all eligible respondents, categorized by their occupations. By following the principles of simple random sampling, this approach ensures that the sample is representative of the larger population, capturing a wide range of occupational experiences while minimizing selection bias. This study is meticulously centered in the locale of Godawari Municipality, focusing acutely on Ward No. 5, situated in Lele, Lalitpur, within the southern expanse of the Kathmandu Valley. The meticulously chosen sample consists of 30 households, thoughtfully drawn from a total demographic pool of 172 Dalit households within the specified geographic precinct. This approach ensures a representation of all Dalits castes and also the variations in their occupations in the research area, allowing for a nuanced exploration of their experiences and perspectives. Respondents are selected based on their involvement in income-generating activities that contribute to the household's livelihood and the overall richness of the study. One individual from each household is chosen to participate in an in-depth interview. This meticulous selection process not only ensures depth in data collection but also facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the intricacies within the Dalit community's dynamics, as it pertains specifically to the designated region.

## Findings and Results

Situated 14 kilometers away from the Lalitpur district headquarters, Godawari Municipality's Ward No. 5 reflects a notable proximity to urban centers, facilitated by accessible road infrastructure. A pivotal aspect of this locale's evolving landscape is the heightened availability and improvement of educational facilities. The burgeoning trend of residents seeking employment in urban areas indicates a substantial urbanization effect, exemplifying a shift in occupational preferences. The discernible transition in housing structures further underscores the transformative impact of modernization. Approximately half of the residences in Ward No. 5 now boast cemented structures, indicative of a departure from traditional construction methods. This architectural shift aligns with broader socio-economic changes associated with modern living. In essence, the confluence of improved educational opportunities, a growing urban workforce, and the prevalence of modern housing in Ward No. 5 of Godawari Municipality signifies a pronounced influence of modernization and urbanization. This nuanced analysis goes beyond the surface observation, providing insights into the multifaceted changes shaping the socio-economic fabric of the community.

Dalits, traditionally identified by their occupational roles, are experiencing a notable evolution in their traditional vocations. Within the ambit of Godawari Municipality, specifically in Ward Number Five, a focused study involving 30 households out of 172 Dalit households illuminates compelling shifts in occupational patterns. A majority of these respondents have veered away from their conventional pursuits, signaling a dynamic transformation in their professional trajectories. Remarkably, over 25% of the respondents have not only altered their traditional occupations but have also embraced modernization in the process. For instance, artisans specializing in ironwork, like Sunars, have incorporated contemporary technologies to enhance their craft. Likewise, individuals engaged in leatherwork, particularly in the production of shoes, have transitioned from the conventional *Bali* system to operating commercial establishments in market areas, charging monetary fees for their services.

Contrastingly, less than 20% of Dalits persist in adhering to traditional occupations, often involving the ownership of limited *Bistas* and accepting grains as *Bali* for their services. However, the transformative winds of change are palpable, with a substantial majority—more than 50%—expressing a desire to either modernize their traditional occupations in alignment with contemporary market policies or transition entirely to alternative vocations. A discerning trend emerges among the economically active young population (below 40 years), who overwhelmingly opt for occupations divergent from their traditional roots. In contrast, those aged over 60 years predominantly adhere to traditional occupations. The satisfaction levels among these groups vary significantly. Those engaged in non-traditional employment express contentment, perceiving progress akin to other caste groups. Conversely, individuals clinging to traditional occupations often voice dissatisfaction, seemingly tethered to these pursuits merely due to familial legacy. This complex landscape underscores the intricate interplay between generational dynamics, modernization imperatives, and the nuanced satisfaction levels derived from diverse occupational choices within the Dalit community. The study paints a vivid picture of a community in flux, navigating the delicate balance between tradition and adaptation in pursuit of economic progress and personal fulfillment.

**Table 1***Occupational Mobility of Dalit's Households*

S.N.	Types of Occupation	No. of Households	Percentage
1.	Modernizing traditional occupation	8	26.6%
2.	Traditional Occupation	5	16.7%
3.	Other Occupation	17	56.7%
-	-	30	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The discerning observation emerges that educated Dalits are notably diverging from traditional occupations, opting for alternative avenues. Within the study area, the literacy ratio among Dalits stands at an encouraging 70.48%, albeit with a slight gender disparity favoring male literacy. Importantly, among the literate Dalit population, a substantial proportion pursues education up to higher levels, reflecting an upward trajectory in educational attainment. Comparatively, the overall literacy rate of Dalits in the study area, while commendable, falls slightly below the national average of 76.1%. The geographical proximity of Godawari Municipality to the capital city introduces a pivotal dimension to this analysis. This proximity not only facilitates increased access to educational opportunities but also opens up a broader spectrum of employment prospects. The magnetic pull of the capital city, with its confluence of educational and employment options, significantly influences the choices made by the educated Dalit populace.

Crucially, the occupational choices of Dalits reflect a strategic departure from traditional pursuits such as ironwork, leather craftsmanship, and sewing. This departure underscores a dynamic response to the changing socio-economic landscape, with Dalits leveraging their skills and knowledge to explore diverse professional pathways beyond the confines of traditional vocations. In essence, the nexus between geographical proximity to urban centers, and evolving occupational choices among Dalits unravels a narrative of empowerment and adaptability. The Dalit demographic emerges as a vanguard in reshaping not only their individual destinies but also contributing to the broader socio-economic fabric, epitomizing the transformative potential inherent in education and exposure to diverse opportunities.

**Table 2***Factors to change traditional occupation*

S.N.	Types of Occupation	No. of Households	Percentage
1.	To increase income	13	43.3%
2.	For the further security	4	13.3%
3.	To get occupation according to qualification	8	26.7%
4.	Time changed	5	16.7%
-	-	30	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The motivation for occupational change within the Dalit community is multifaceted, with over 40% expressing a desire to transition to new occupations primarily driven by the aspiration to augment their income. This inclination towards change is rooted in the pursuit of financial security for the future, as individuals seek not only to meet their daily needs but also to facilitate

the education of their children. Traditional occupations, it is observed, fall short of providing the necessary resources to fulfill these evolving aspirations. Furthermore, the constraints of inadequate land for agriculture impede the effective pursuit of this traditional avenue. Crucially, this study identifies a discernible trend of vertical social mobility within the Dalit community, correlating positively with the elevation of their economic status. As educational attainment increases within the Dalit populace, a growing inclination is observed towards exploring non-traditional occupations. The changing landscape, characterized by modernization and urbanization, offers an expanded horizon of opportunities for Dalits to diversify their occupational pursuits.

The shift in occupation is not limited to male Dalits; Dalit women are also actively participating in a wide range of professions beyond traditional household roles. They are now employed in government positions as well as in private sectors, such as nursing in hospitals and working as cashiers in banks. This change reflects a broader shift in societal roles and family responsibilities, empowering Dalit women through education and access to diverse job opportunities. The occupational transformation among Dalits is driven by economic aspirations, educational opportunities, and the impacts of modernization and urbanization. These new opportunities and changes in occupation are helping Dalits gain social status and respect, moving away from the discrimination they previously faced.

**Table 3**

*Main Profession of Dalit Households Except Traditional*

S.N.	Main Profession.	No. of Households	Percentage
1.	Agriculture	2	11.8%
2.	Labor	4	23.5%
3.	Business	5	29.4%
4.	Teaching	2	11.8%
5.	Service	4	23.5%
-	-	17	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

This research identifies significant positive changes in vertical social mobility within the Dalit community, marked by an improvement in their economic standing through the modernization of their occupations. Less than 15% of Dalits now work in agriculture, while a notable 20% engage in labor-intensive jobs. There is a significant shift towards business-related activities, with nearly 30% of individuals involved in this sector, and over 20% representation in the service industry. Teaching also remains some attraction as a career choice among Dalits. The diversity of Dalit occupations is detailed in Table 3, highlighting a wide range of fields they are currently pursuing. This occupational diversity reflects the impact of education, modernization, and growing political awareness within the community. Political involvement, in particular, appears to be a potential catalyst for the evolution and modernization of traditional Dalit occupations. When I interviewed with respondents, it is also found that the intersection of political engagement and occupational diversity is helping transform social relationships within the Dalit community, broadening their socio-economic opportunities.

A burgeoning phenomenon among Dalits is the establishment of independent businesses marked by the integration of modern machinery for heightened efficiency and a keen adaptation to produce goods aligned with contemporary trends. This transformative shift is not merely confined to local markets; some Dalit entrepreneurs have strategically expanded their market presence into urban areas, effectively capturing the attention of new clientele and achieving notable financial success. Intriguingly, the younger Dalit generation emerges as trailblazers, surpassing their predecessors in the embrace of modern occupations. Evident in this paradigm shift is the proactive approach adopted by the younger generation, prominently showcased through the direct demonstration of their products in self-owned shops and a simultaneous embrace of contemporary production methodologies. This proactive stance has facilitated some individuals within the Dalit community to attain a lifestyle comparable to, or even surpassing, their counterparts from higher castes. The engagement of Dalit women in this transformative landscape is particularly noteworthy. Far from lagging behind, they actively contribute to and support their male counterparts in their chosen occupations, with some women venturing into independent professional endeavors. Despite these strides, a substantial hurdle remains: the prevalent reliance on mass-produced goods from established, branded factories pose a formidable barrier to the success of small-scale Dalit enterprises.

## Conclusion

The traditional occupations of Dalits have experienced significant transformation. Over half of the Dalit population has moved away from their traditional occupations, taking up new types of work available in urban areas. Additionally, many Dalits are now using their traditional skills to meet market demands, incorporating new technologies, and shifting towards establishing independent businesses. Moving away from the traditional *Bali* system of grain collection, they are adapting to contemporary market preferences by producing goods that meet current consumer needs. This shift is driven by their exposure to market dynamics and a continuous search for new approaches within their traditional crafts. Notably, the Dalit community is increasingly moving away from their traditional roles, embracing more modern and diverse professional opportunities. This shift is particularly evident among the younger generation, who, with greater access to education, have achieved higher literacy rates. The younger generation is increasingly drawn to occupations in both government and private sectors. Their exposure to education and interactions with other communities have broadened their horizons, opening doors to new opportunities. This economic advancement is playing a crucial role in facilitating vertical social mobility, contributing to the rising economic status within the Dalit community.

The landscape of Nepal is undergoing a profound transformation characterized by the forces of modernization and urbanization, ushering in a wave of new opportunities for the Dalit community. In the study area, traditional occupations have undergone a significant shift, heavily influenced by modernization and rapid urbanization. This transformation occurs due to their education and expansion of knowledge about modern tools and methods. This reflects their growing awareness and efforts to adapt to the market to generate more income for their daily needs, including subsistence and their children's education. The diffusional process of urbanization has become a catalyst for a noteworthy trend among certain Dalits who are actively modernizing their traditional occupations. This reflects the interconnectedness of urbanization,

economic transformation, and shifting educational dynamics within the Dalit community. They are not only adapting to these changes but also strategically positioning themselves to secure a place in Nepal's evolving socio-economic landscape.

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