Socio-Economic Status of Dalits Community in Sindhuli District

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Abstract

This study is based on Kamalamai Municipality, Sindhuli District. There are 56 households of Dalit (Damai 29 and Kami 27) in this area. The census method was used in the study where, total population is 365 from 56 households. Among them, 172 were male and 193 were female. The general objectives of this study are to identify demographic and socio-economic status of Dalits and to find out causes of deprivation of Dalits people in the community. They worked as agricultural labour and service work. Their income is less than their expenditure. Most of them are uneducated but nowadays, the level of education has increased so that their children go to school and college. Only 39 percent were literate and only 7 percentDalits have passed SLC and +2. They give priority on arrange marriage. Youth generation doesn't like the traditional occupation and skills. They use a lot of alcohol (Jaad and Raski) in the festivals and rituals ceremony howeverthe economic condition of Dalit is poor so many children of them are forced to dropout from schools because their parents cannot afford their education fees. The social status of the females in the Dalit community is very low than the males in the society. After the father's death all the properties is transferred to the son. The main causes for degrading status of Dalits are due to poverty, lack of education and lack of social awareness. So far, there have not been any kinds of policies and plans to uplift the Dalit community in this area.

Keywords: Dalit, socio- economic, discrimination, income and rituals ceremony

1. Introduction

The Nepalese people are socially segmented in different caste, sub caste, ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. According to 2011 census, there are 56 dalit groups and their 20 major languages (CBS, 2011).The structure of Nepalese society and culture does not develop in the short period of time rather it is a long historical result. Nepal is multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and republic democratic country where 61 ethnic groups and other caste exist.

Nepal is a very complex and diversified country due to socio-economic and cultural aspect of the society. Nepal is well recognized that caste is the main foundation in the development of the society where each caste hasspecific traditional skill and occupation.

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Their skills have played the vital role for understanding their socio economic status. Rural people are living more difficult life than people in urban areas. Rural people are living in traditional way and deprived from different kinds of facilities such as communication, health, drinking water, education, transportation etc. where dalits have very miserable condition and they are living below the poverty line.

Bhattachan (2001) has categorized Dalits in three groups which are as flows.
1. Pahadi Dalit (Damai, Kami, Sarki, Gaine etc.)
2. Madhesi Dalit (Dusahat, Musar, Chamar, Dome, Halkhor, Badhi etc.)
3. Janajati Dalit (Newari Dalit-Kasai, Pode, Chyame.)

The mother tongue of pahadi Dalits is Nepali, whereas that of Terai Dalit is Maithili, Bhojpuri and Abhadi. Newar Dalits use Nepal Bhasa. The majority of Dalits are Hindu. The number of caste- existing in Nepal are 125 (CBS 2011). In the Malla period, Sarki is mainly living in the hilly area but nowadays itcan be seen in all districts and urban areas in least numbers. According to census 2011, the total population of Damai is 4,72,862and Kami is 12,58,554. Altogether, the number of both castes Damai and Kami is 17,31,416 which has occupied 6.85 percent in total population (CBS 2011).

In the Terai, the Dalits are called Gandhi, due to their dirty occupational works. They are renamed as Sudra, who are untouchable and impure. In Nepali society, Brahmins are supposed to pure and dalits are called impure. Most of the hilly dalits have been residing mostly in the hilly areas and scattered all over Nepal.

2. Objectives

The main objectives of this paperare as following:

- To identify demographic status of Dalits.
- To find out socio-economic condition of Dalit people.

3. Methodology

The paper is mainly based on the Dalits (Damai and Kami) caste. The research is for the descriptive and analytical purpose.This research was formulated through the analysis of primary data collected in the field. There were 29 households of Damai and 27 households of Kami. Altogether there are 56 household of Dalits. For the depth study of Demographic and Socio-Economic status of Dalitsin periphery of Kamala Mai Municipality is selected as the main area of this study. This study is mainly focused on the Dalits inhabitants of the Bhotechaurand the total households of Dalits community in those wards are 56. Research area is small in size so this study has been taken under census method.Observationand Interviewing through the prepared questionnaire are widely applied in this research.

Collection of the data has no meaning until it was processed and analysed in proper way. Therefore, in this study various aspects of the socio-economic status of Dalits was identified and collected data is analysed according to its nature.

4. Limitations

This study is concentrated only above 56 households of Kamala Mai Municipality, Sindhuli District. The research is very specific for the case study. This study wouldn't cover the whole condition of Dalits because of the limited time frame. This study mainly focuses on demographic, social, educational, and economic condition of Damai and Kami people, who are called Dalit of this area.

5. Households Information

There are two different castes of Dalit people who live in this village development committee. They are Damai and Kami. The table below shows the number and percentage of Dalit households.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Households

Caste	Households	Percentage
Damai	29	52
Kami	27	48
Total	56	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

According to table 2, there are 29 houses of Damai and 27 houses of Kami that occupies 52 percent and 48 percentrespectively.

5.1 Population by Age, Group and Sex

Age and sex is one of the most important factors to be considered while analysing the situation of Dalit of research area. The total population is divided into 3 age groups. They are 0-15, 16-59 and 60 above.

Table 3: Distribution of Dalit Population by Age, Group and Sex

Age Group	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
0-15	47	27.33	58	30	105	28.8
16-59	111	64.53	121	62.7	232	63.5
60+	14	8.14	14	7.3	28	7.7
Total	172	100	193	100	365	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3 shows that the Dalit population of Kamalamai Municipality is demographically and socio economically advanced because the young people who can work and support their family have occupied 63.5percent. There are 28.8percent people below 15 years and only 7.7 percent people above 60 years.

5.2 Educational Status

Most of the people 223 (61.1%) are illiterate. Only 27.4percent people have completed their primary level education. 35(9.5%) people out of 365 have passed their lower secondary and secondary level. Only 7 people (2%) have studied up to SLC and +2 levels. Through this, we can know that they are far backward in education. Because of this, they are not getting respect, job and social status and so on. If we compare male Dalit and female Dallit, illiterate Dalit women's number or percentage is higher than male. The table shows that there are 100(58.1%) male illiterate people but 123(63.7%) female who are illiterate (Table, 4).

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Education Status

Status	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Illiterate	100	58.1	123	63.7	223	61.1
Class 1-5	50	29.1	50	26	100	27.4
Class 6-10	18	10.5	17	8.8	35	9.5
Sic and +2	4	2.3	3	1.5	7	2
Bachelor	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	172	100	193	100	365	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

5.3 Social Discrimination

Discrimination denies providing opportunity and rights to certain groups on the basis of race, sex and castes. Discrimination can be either intentional or conscious or unconscious and it can be practiced by individual, groupand institution. Social discrimination consist social inequalities of various social groups. The caste discrimination is persistance all over the country so that thestudy area is also not free from this problem and convention. Legally, the caste discrimination is abolished by the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal and new civil code has been introduced. As being superior castes, Brahmin, Kshetri, Tamang and Newar, do not accept water and cooked food from Dalits. They are kept near the door and permission is not given to enter into the higher caste peoples' house as well as local tea shop in the village. But upper caste people can enter into the house of Dalits without any objection. In the meeting and discussion forums, educated people say that we must abolish

the caste hierarchy system from our superstition society. Actually, the people involved in this study are socially discriminated.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Social Discrimination

Discrimination by	Households	Percentage
Upper caste house	27	48.2
Tea shops	17	30.4
School	02	3.6
Tap	10	17.8
Total	**56**	**100**

Source: Field survey, 2018.

Table 5 clarifies that 48.2percentDalits are discriminated in the upper caste people's home. Then, 30.4percent are discriminated in tea shops of the village. Upper castes people and Dalits do not use well and tap at the same time. If Dalits touch the water pot, the upper caste people sprinkle water by touching gold. But there is not significant discrimination at school (3.6%) in comparison to other areas.

5.4 Minimizing Discrimination

Table 6: Respondents' view to minimize the discrimination.

Area	no. of respondents	Percentage
Education	30	53.6
Eliminating poverty and providing training and skill	12	21.4
Not stated	14	25
Total	56	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The Dalits are worried about caste based discrimination and they want to reduce it. But they are unable to reduce the problem because they do not have opportunities and power. They believe that education is the main tool through which the discrimination will be reduced. 53.6percent respondents believe that education can control caste based discrimination. 21. 4 percent respondents say that eliminating poverty and providing training and skill can minimize discrimination.

5.5 Age at Marriage

Table No. 7 Distribution of Respondents by Age at Marriage

Age	No. of Respondent	Percentage
10-15	16	28.57
15-25	39	69.64
Above 25+	1	1.79
Total	56	100

Source : Field Survey 2018

69.64 percent people married in age between 15-25 years but 28.57 percent people marry in early age between 10-15 years. Only 1.*79* percent is married in the age of 25. So, we can say that early marriage is also a demerit for the Dalit society.

Table No. 8 Distribution of Respondents by income per year

Income	Respondents	Percentage
Below Rs. 10000	12	21.4
Rs 10000-20000	30	53.6
Rs. 20000-40000	9	16
Rs. 40000 Plus	5	9
Total	56	100

Source : Field Survey 2018

21.4 percent people have below than 10 thousand rupees income per year. 53.6 percent people have income level in between ten to twenty thousands. 16 percent people income level in between twenty to forty thousands and 9 percent respondents have Rs. forty and plus thousands income level in a year. According to the study, the income level is not sufficient in Dalit community in Kamalaimai Municipality. Only 5 respondents haveRs. forty and plus thousands income level in a year.

5.6 Occupational Status

Table No. 9 : Distributions of Respondent by Occupation

Occupation Status	Respondents	Percent
Traditional work	28	50.00
Agriculture Work	21	37.50
Foreign Job	5	8.93
Private Sector Job	2	3.57
Total	56	100

Source : Field Survey 2018

Out of the 56 respondents, 50 percent derives their means of livelihood from the traditional work. 37.5 percent derived their means of livelihood from agricultural work. Which is followed by foreign Job with 8.93 and 3.57percent earns from private sector job. It indicates that majority of Dalit people are very poor. Most of dalits are engaged in traditional job as result it does not provide enough money to survive their life.

5.7 Land Ownership

Table No. 10 : Distribution of Respondents by Land Ownership

Land in Ropani	Respondents	Percent
Landless	2	3.57
Less than 3 Ropanies	19	33.93
3 to 6 Ropanies	20	35.71
6 to 9 Ropanies	12	21.93
9 and plus Ropanies	3	5.35
Total	56	100

Source : Field Survey 2018

Out of the 56 household, two is landless, 19 household (33.93%) have less than 3 ropanis. 20 household (35.71%) have 3 to 6 roapnis and 12 household (21.93%) have the land ownership in between 6-9 ropanis of land and only 3 household(5.35%) respondents have more than 10 ropanis of land.

6. Conclusion

Dalit people are inter-dependent with higher caste people. Their socio-economic condition is poor. They have their own land but their cultivation is traditional which is not sufficient to sustain their families. On the other hand, their traditional occupation (which is the supportive key occupation) is in a decreasing stage because of the high competition in the modern market with highly developed machinery products.The study of Dalit people living in the Kamala Mai Municipality, Sindhuli District has the following conclusions.

Socially, they belong from low caste. They have not prestige in the society. They are deprived from education, health, and other facilities. Economically, they are poor and deprived. As the result, they have not good facilities of drinking water, health facilities, education and prosperity.Politically these people who are from lower caste and lower class have no power, prestige, social status and reputation.The Damai and Kami people come under untouchablecatagory. But they are feeling that untouchability is slowly declining. The

economic condition of Dalit is poor so many children of them are forced to dropout from schools because their parents cannot afford their education fees.The social status of the females in the Dalit community is very low than the males as their society is patriarchal society. After the father's death all the properties is transferred to the son.The main causes for degrading situation of Dalits are due to poverty, lack of education and lack of social awareness. So far, there are not formulated any kinds of policies and plans; and programme to uplift the Dalit community on the behalf of government.

The government does not pay to attention strongly to improve their living standards.Despite the Interim Constitution of 2063 BS has abolished the untouchability but it still prevails in the society. There are no employment opportunities for Dalits in this area.The study shows that the governmental and the non-governmental sectors have not given any emphasis to improve the socio-economic condition of the Dalit people in this area.

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