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### Evolution of Caste System: How are Nepali Dalits Left Behind in Education?

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons behind the historical backwardness of Dalits in education and analyze it on a theoretical basis. Based on theoretical review and personal interactions, this article is qualitative. Due to the strict policy of the caste system, especially Dalits have been deprived of every opportunity of human development for a long time. Manusmriti gave untouchability to the caste system which started from the Varna system in the name of religion. The ruler of the state merged religion with the state. Thus historically Dalits have been deprived of education by both religion and the state. At present, despite the removal of caste restrictions, the participation, sustainability, and achievement of Dalits in education are low. Eventhough the state has provided various facilities by increasing educational opportunities, there has been no meaningful participation of Dalit children in schools. The main reason for this is the continuity of social culture and the ceiling of job. The caste discrimination in the community is reflected in the schools as well. As a result, Dalit children have not been able to take benefit from the current education system in a fair and independent manner.

This article shows that Dalits can be brought into the mainstream of education only through the education system which can create an equitable cultural capital to change the social structure developed on the cultural basis of inequality. Similarly, the education system needs to be restructured, and continuous efforts are needed to transform discriminatory values and attitudes into human values and integrate these values into practice.

**Keywords:** Verna, caste discrimination, religious scriptures, cultural capital, reproduction, restructure

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## **Introduction**

Inequality has been a constant issue in both historically developed and underdeveloped nations. A study of Nepal's social structure as well as caste hierarchy and power structure will make it easier to understand the realities of social oppression and inequality.

Beginning of formal education in Nepal even since 1854, widespread public participation in education has been found only after the political changes of 1951. Before 1951, due to various restrictions, Dalits could not have access to education. After 1951, school opening and school participation began to increase rapidly. There was no formal restriction on Dalits to participate in education. However, due to the stratified caste system and caste-based discrimination and oppression, they participated in education only insignificantly.

Nepal's Dalit community still suffers from various forms of oppression and discrimination (Bhattachan et al 2002; Kisan, 2002). The socio-economic status of Dalits is low. Most Dalits are poor and landless. They are living a culturally untouchable life. The educational status of Dalits is poor. Despite the state's inclusive policy, most children in the Dalit community are still deprived of primary education (Poudel, 2007). Despite the Government of Nepal's commitment to universal primary education for almost four decades and education for all for nearly two decades, the Dalit, minority, and poor communities are still deprived of access to education, success, and fair return. According to various educational statistics and studies, participation, survival rate, and success in the education of Dalit and economically weaker communities is very low. The literacy rate is comparatively low.

Therefore, this article discusses the origin of the caste system, historical development, various theoretical perspectives and the condition of Dalits under it. The state's policy regarding the caste system in Nepal and its current situation have also been briefly discussed. An attempt has been made to understand how Dalits have been lagging behind in education within the social structure and caste system built on different bases through sociological and anthropological understanding. The purpose of this article is to find out the historical evolution of caste discrimination and how Dalits in Nepal have been left behind in education through the practice of this system.

## **Methods and procedures**

This article assumes that reality is relative and dynamic. Hence this article is qualitative in nature. This article is mainly based on literature review and psychologically

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depicts the present educational status of Dalits on the basis of reflection of historical facts and trends. Along with this, an attempt has been made to justify the facts of the review of secondary sources from the experience of educated Dalits. The experiences and responses of three Dalit students and a Dalit youth purposefully selected for the purpose are also included. This article, based on a case study, interprets and analyzes data from literatures and informal or telephone conversations based on preconceived notions.

Based on the pre-established theoretical assumptions of Ogbu and Simon's Job Ceiling and Exclusion and Bourdieu's Cultural Capital as well as Freire's banking education system, attempts to find out the reason why Dalits are lagging behind in education even in the present era has gone. It seeks to explain why Dalits are oppressed or backward and why their access to education is poor and why they are unable to take advantage of it?

### **Historical Background of the Caste System**

The superiority of Nepal and South Asia is the prevailing Varna and caste system. Caste has historically been a major cause of social inequality. Western countries have the base class of social stratification while Nepal has caste and Varna. The caste system is the developed form of the Varna. Nepal's caste system has been a major pillar of the Hindu social structure. The rise of caste culture has promoted social division, and stratification and discrimination in Hindu society. The *Purushasukta* of the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda is considered to be the primary basis for the division of the Hindu Aryan caste (Koirala, 1996; Kisan, 2005; Prashrid, 2006; Daniel, 2010). This has been affecting the social, cultural, economic, political and educational life here. In particular, the caste system has created inequality in Nepali society. According to Max Weber, there has been unequal access to wealth, power and prestige (Sekhon, 2000). Caste is a closed system of social stratification. It limits the interaction and behaviour between people with different social statuses based on birth. The caste system is directly related to Hinduism. Caste analysis remains incomplete without a study of any area of Hindu social life (Gupta & Sharma, 2012). The study of the caste system is necessary to be clear about the social structure, educational access, etc. of the cultural side of Nepal. According to Indian scholar Majumdar, caste is mixed in the air here (South Asia) and those who believe in other religions also have a feeling of caste superiority and inferiority (Gupta & Sharma, 2012).

### **Meaning of Caste and Untouchability**

The literal translation of the word "caste" in Nepali language is Jati. The word caste is derived from the Portuguese word 'casta', which means purity of blood (Koirala, 1996), and is applied to opinion, discrimination and caste. In fact, defining the word caste is harder than one thinks.

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According to Risley, caste is a compilation or common name of a family or a group of families, in which the origin of a mythical ancestor, human, or deity is claimed, the same traditional occupation is emphasized (Hutton,1963). Majumdar(1956) considers the caste as a closed class. According to Cooley (1909), caste is based on heredity. The caste system is a social system in which a person is given a social status for life and it is considered unchangeable (Giddens, 2012).

Thus, caste is a social group, whose membership is based on birth and many restrictions are imposed on its members in food, marriage, occupation and social relations.

From ancient times to the present, caste systems can be found all over the world. But the caste system in South Asia is still a serious challenge (Giddens, 2012). Nepal's caste system has been a reflection of the Hindu faith for the past 2000 years. According to Hindu beliefs, there are four major caste groups based on occupational groups. For example, Brahmins, Chhetris, Vaishya and Sudras (Dalits). Caste divisions have also led to stratification in matters such as wealth, prestige, power, and educational opportunities. In particular, the lower caste Shudra caste is considered untouchable. In ancient times, when people were divided on the basis of occupation, workers and artists or those who worked in technology were called Shudras. But after the Smriti period, they were given the status of untouchables (Chalaune, 1999). Even today, they have been economically exploited, politically neglected, socially oppressed, religiously or culturally excluded, and deprived of educational opportunities. What is clear from this is that Dalits (Shudras) have been left behind for hundreds of years.

### **Origin and Theoretical Basis of the Caste System**

There is a difference of opinion among scholars about when and how the complex and bizarre caste system started. Therefore, various theories have come into existence regarding the origin of the caste system in the Indian subcontinent. Some of these doctrines are religious and other biological. According to the Rig Veda (10.90.12), which is considered as the basis of religious doctrines of Hinduism, the primeval person (Purusha) created human society by destroying themselves and also creating characters from four different parts of his body. Brahman (priest) originated from the head of that great man, Chhetris (noble) from the arm, Vaishya (commoner) from the thigh and Shudra (servant) from the feet (Deshpande, 2010,).

But looking at the infallible laws of nature, this principle can only be taken as a figurative meaning (Shastri, 1981). Because of God, the Creator of the universe, imagines a man with a body, then in order to produce a child, one has to imagine a woman with a body.

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According to scientific laws and the infallible laws of nature, from the beginning of creation till today, the origin of human beings has been and will continue to be dependent on the sexual relations of men and women. Therefore, to assume that the origin of human beings is from the body of God or someone else is only unscientific and the imagination of those who create such literature. Even if God is supposed to be all-powerful, the question arises as to how He can rule the world by disregarding the rules he has made.

According to biological theory, there are three qualities inherent in every object. The caste system is also believed to be based on these three qualities. The three qualities are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva is considered white, Rajas is considered red and Tamas is considered black. Sattva is associated with wisdom, honesty, and other positive qualities. Rajas are believed to have qualities like an impulse, pride and heroism. Tamas is believed to contain ignorance, stupidity and lack of creativity and other negative qualities (Daniel, 2010). Character is defined as the type of work of a person, the quality of ego, the color of knowledge, the organization of a person's understanding, the anger of patience, the genius of a person's happiness (Lahiri, 2010). In this sense, Brahman with Sattva Guna, Chhetri with Rajas Guna, and those with Tamas Guna were placed in Vaishya and Shudra.

Some thinkers believe that the origin of the caste system is due to political convenience and manipulation by those who want to maintain power, not race. According to Abbe Dubois, the caste system is the result of the cunning and political maneuvering of the Brahmins, which was created to maintain their power. In addition, the concept of a king's spiritual merit through a priest was also added, in order to gain the support of the ruler of the country (Gupta & Sharma, 2012). The Verna system, which initially began as a form of the governing system, was later given moral legitimacy in the form of caste and religion (Aahuti, 2010).

Herbert Risley has put forward the theory of the origin of the caste system and has the support of Ghurye, Majumdar, and other scholars. According to him, with the entry of the Aryans into the Indian subcontinent, the white race Aryans conquered the non-Aryans of the black race. Aryans compared to non-Aryans, Aryans considered themselves to be of a higher race than non-Aryans. Thus the Aryans regarded the natives as inferior to themselves and maintained their own views and ceremonial purity (Gupta & Sharma, 2012). The Aryans came to the Indian subcontinent about five thousand years ago and then the white Aryans conquered the black, red and yellow indigenous non-Aryans (Astro-Darvids). The victorious Aryans became rulers and the non-Aryans became slaves. In the course of time, division of labor according to caste, then innate caste system and untouchability has been developing (Aahuti, 2010). According to Ghuriye (1969), Brahmins introduced a caste system to maintain their clan and respect.

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According to Evolutionary views, the rise of the caste system happened slowly and gradually. Factors that contributed to this included the desire for purity of blood, devotion to a particular profession, the principle of karma, the victory of one army over another, geographic location, and isolation.

In fact, the caste system is a complex institution, in the origin and development of which many elements are responsible. The caste system is the result of a long development process. It is influenced by religion, race, geographical and political reasons, cultural affiliation, sense of blood purity and impurity, occupation, rituals, etc.

Historically, the caste system is believed to have started around 1500 BC with the entry of Aryans into the Indus Valley (Daniel, 2010). The Aryans came to the Indian subcontinent from Southern Europe and North Asia. They were lighter-skinned. However, he came in contact with the dark-skinned tribal Dravidians. Skin color and cultural differences caused inequalities between them and gradually created a situation of Verna distinction (Ghuriye 1969).

Ghuriye (1969) divides the history of the origin and development of the caste system into four parts: The Vedic period, post-Vedic period or epic period, religious period and present period. The period from 1500 to 600 BC is considered as Vedic period. Verna was used during this period to refer to a person's skin color. For example, Brahmins were considered white, Chhetris red, Vaishya yellow, and Shudra black. There was no restriction on career choice and marriage during this period.

The post-Vedic period is considered to be from 600 to 200 BC. During this period Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Buddhist literature were developed. The word caste was also used in this era along with Varna. The meaning of caste was taken as a subgroup found in Varna. The right to perform Yajna (sacrifice), to receive education, and to perform rituals was restricted to Brahmins only. During this time, the position of Brahmin became very high and the position of Shudra became critical. The marital relationship was also limited to the same caste. Those with a black complexion were considered Shudras and were deprived of the right to own property, to receive education and to perform sub-duties. But there is also evidence that this rule did not apply to powerful people during this period. For example, one of the wives of King Dasharatha, who was also Lakshmana's mother, was also a Shudra (Gupta & Sharma, 2012).

The period from 200 BC to the 11th century AD is considered to be the period of theology. During this period various codes and memoirs were composed, hence it is also called the Smriti period. The work duties of the castes were determined on the basis

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of different Smriti (memories) scriptures. According to Ghuriye, the caste system had an ideological and practical impact during this period. Emphasis was placed on purity, especially by giving alms to Brahmins. On the other hand, with the rendering of the doctrine of reincarnation and karma, the importance of Brahmins increased and the caste system became stronger. From this age onwards, the caste profession was recognized and the condition of the Shudras became more and more critical. But due to the influence of Buddhism, some liberalism also appeared in the caste system. In the Middle Ages (11th to 17th centuries), the caste system was influenced by Muslims. As a result, the caste system became rigid. The power of the Chhetris was weakening and the Vaishya and Shudras were given equal status. However, some reformist movements in this era have led to some changes in marital relations and an increase in the number of cross-castes (Deshpande, 2010).

In essence, according to the intent of the Rig Veda (9-112-3), in the Vedic period, the Varna system was variable as the determination of one's Varna was based on one's work. As caste was related to the division of labor, members of the same family belonged to different castes, there was no caste or Varna distinction (Shastri, 1981). But as the Aryan population grew, so did the needs and problems of life. As a result, they began to form different groups by selecting individuals according to their ability to carry out social work smoothly. It is natural for them to believe that this will increase their work efficiency and keep things going, and it is also a way to make a person accountable for their work. As one works in the same group, it becomes natural for people to grow friendship with each other. As a result, Arya society was divided into four castes. It is a general rule for children to learn the work of parents and to show more interest in it. From this, Varna's / caste actions became hereditary and later it became the cause of caste discrimination.

On a sociological basis, a caste system is a form of social discrimination, stratification, oppression and inequality. According to Parsons, caste culture is an example of political power. In Marx's words, this is economic exploitation. According to Weber, the caste system is a combination of the distribution and level of power within the community. According to Runciman, caste culture is the overall form of class, level and power (Koirala, 1996). Ambedkar argues that the caste system is not only related to the economic and political aspects, its roots are connected with the social system which has been preserved and nurtured by Hinduism and other ethics throughout its history (Omvedt, 2011). According to Sharma (1980), casteism is a cultural as well as a structural system. Therefore, the caste system is a form governed by social and economic aspects, which is based on traditional rules or practices. It divides a person on the basis of birth and heredity. This creates inequality in society and deprives the lower castes of various rights.



## **Beginning of Caste System in Nepal**

The concept of caste entered Nepal with the beginning of the Lichchhavi era (200-879 CE) and spread widely during the Malla period (Prashrit, 2006). There was no Varna/ caste system in Nepal during the Kirat rule based on Mundhum (Kirat Shastra) beliefs. From the first century AD, after the entry of Shakya, Lichchhavi, etc., from India, the caste system was introduced in Nepal (Bista, 1993, Aahuti, 2010). Caste system already existed in the Eastern Terai of Nepal (Poudel, 2007). The 14th century in the Kathmandu Valley, during the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla, the caste system was found to be legalized. In the name of social reform, Jayasthiti Malla laid a strong foundation for caste discrimination and untouchability. Ram Shah was a 17th century king of Gorkha, followed Jayasthiti Malla and hardened the caste system (Kisan, 2005). In this way, the occupation, culture, boundaries and dynamism of all castes were determined. Strict punishment was also provided for those who went against the caste system. Even after the unification of Nepal, the caste system was strictly continued. The Civil Code brought by Jung Bahadur Rana in 1854 gave legal legitimacy to caste discrimination and untouchability (Prashrita, 2005). After the transformation that took place in 1951, voices began to be raised against caste discrimination. With the development of science and technology, the desire for independence and the expansion of democratic values, the voice for the building of a non-discriminatory human society began to be heard all over the world. As a result, the United Nations has said that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was issued in 1948. Along with the efforts made in the international arena, the new civil code 1963 against caste discrimination and untouchability was issued in Nepal. Currently, Nepal has been declared a secular state. Various legal efforts have been made considering discrimination on the basis of caste and untouchability as anti-democracy and anti-humanitarian. Efforts have been made to end caste discrimination constitutionally. Efforts have been made to provide social, economic, political and educational protection and rights, especially to the Dalits and backward castes. Ethnic organizations are also playing an important role in the upliftment of Dalits by eliminating discrimination on the basis of caste.

## **Why is Caste Discrimination?**

A discussion of the origin of the caste system makes it clear that the basis of the caste system is religion. From a religious point of view, knowledgeable and religious people consider themselves of high rank. Weak and ignorant people are forced to be considered inferior. To make such an unequal relationship natural, social jurists make many rules and practices. Advocates of the Hindu caste system and state officials are the ones who make and



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enforce such rules (Koirala, 2007). Why is there caste discrimination in society? The answer to that question, according to sociologists, is that, according to Marx, there is an unequal distribution of the means of production in society. This creates a class of haves and have nots. The class occupying the means of production is rich while the others are proletarians. The rich belong to the upper caste while the poor belong to the lower caste. According to Max Weber, the person with wealth, power, and prestige belongs to the upper caste while the weaker ones become the lower caste. In the words of Emile Durkheim, social inequality is caused by the nature of a person working together and his moral status. Its embodiment is the caste system (Ritzer, 2011). According to Gramsci, Historically, society has been dominated by one group over another. Politically and culturally powerful groups dominate other weaker groups through state power and ideological means. When the weaker group accepts the hegemony of the other group then a state of inequality prevails (Forgacs, 2000). The Dalits accepted the hegemony of non-Dalits for various structural and ideological reasons, and as a result, caste discrimination continued (Mishra, 2010). According to Giddens (2012), actions, rights and culture create social inequality and caste discrimination. Those who do the work which is considered good by society are given high status and those who do the work which is considered inferior are given low status. The ancient Vedic society considered those who did the work of intellect as the upper caste and those who did the work related to skill as the lower caste. But the pro-caste social groups which through cultural and political hegemony were making the caste system innate. As a result, despite changes in the nature of work and attitudes towards work, the caste structure has not changed.

### **Dalits and Education**

Examining the historical background of education since the beginning of the caste system in Nepali society, it is seen that there was widespread caste discrimination in education before 1951. It is clear that the Dalit community, which is considered untouchable in the caste system, has been deprived of all opportunities for education. At that time, the guiding principles of state and social management were Hindu religious texts.

The Rig Veda (10-90-12) did not teach the subject of untouchability even though it showed Varna distinction. But Manusmriti, which is the basis of Rig Vedic thinking, managed untouchability. Religious leaders followed this line of thinking and divided education into *Para* (knowledge) and *apara* (non-knowledge), interpreting para-knowledge as the path to salvation or divine knowledge and traditional productive knowledge and skills as *apara*-knowledge or inferior knowledge. According to the Varna system, education was arranged according to caste. But the productive knowledge and skills of the Dalits could not get educational recognition within the caste system. Thus, from the Vedic period onwards, structural deprivation was brought.

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In the Puranic period, caste discrimination became severe. Dalits were deprived of water, property and education. The Puranists taught the Dalits to become untouchables and lower castes. During the Smriti period, the so-called lower castes were not allowed to join the upper castes. Manusmriti (4-80-4-81) mentions not giving wisdom to Shudra and not teaching any religion or worship (Shastri, 1981). This completely deprived the Shudras or Dalits of education and forced them to live in inferiority and destiny. Opposing the caste system and discrimination by the Buddhist creed, they got educational opportunities to some extent, however, the environment could not be created with the idea of providing educational opportunities to all Dalits and backward communities and ending the caste structure.

In the religious period, in fact, Dalits were not accepted as human beings. Everyone benefited from their traditional knowledge and skills, but the knowledge, skills, and art of Dalits, which are useful to all, were not given any academic recognition. Rulers like Jayasthiti Malla, Ram shah (Gorkha), Jung Bahadur Rana, in particular, made Manusmriti the main policy of the state, which has taken strict policy towards Shudras or Dalits and argued that they should be kept away from education and property. With the exception of Ran Bahadur Shah, who opposed the caste system, and Raja Jaya Prithvi Bahadur Singh, who considered untouchability as an inhuman culture, the Dalits were deprived of education by both the state and religion from ancient times to the Rana period (Bista, 1991; Koirala, 2007).

### **Dalit in Modern Education**

The first Varna less formal modern education in Nepal was started in 1853 during the autocratic Rana period. But even though the school was Varna less; the teachers, students, and parents were not Varna less. Society was guided entirely by caste thinking. Therefore, this could not be good news for the Dalits. On the other hand, unfortunately, this school was established for the purpose of educating only the children of upper caste Rana families (Bista, 2008). During the 104-year Rana period, Dalits were treated legally as untouchables. The door of schooling remained closed for them. That is why during the rule of Rana, neither education was provided for the common people of other castes nor was Dalits given the opportunity to get an education (Chalaune, in press). This way, the oppressors do not want the educational development of the society as a whole, especially the common people, and they only want to be the ruler of the oppressed people. Any of their activities tend to marginalize and divide people in order to maintain their power, dominance, and supremacy (Freire, 1970).

After the democratic change in 1951, the door of education was opened for the Dalits but they could not get equal treatment. Although the Civil Act of 1963(BS) declared

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the abolition of caste untouchability, it was not implemented as expected in practice. As a result, Dalits could not stay in school in a dignified manner. However, modern education allowed Dalits to enter schools, but justice was not done (Koirala, 2007). The school for Dalit children was given such a culture that upper caste teachers and students were treated with contempt and untouchability, humiliated reading materials, and inferiority complex. At times the reports of various education commissions have expressed sympathy for the Dalits but failed to guarantee their rights. However, the Universal Declaration of Education for All (2000) laid special emphasis on the education of the underprivileged, emphasizing that education should be the right of the downtrodden. Similarly, Nepal's 2015 constitution guarantees that basic education is compulsory and free for all citizens and that secondary education is free. However, there is no emphasis on breaking the cultural hegemony, which is the main obstacle in Dalit education.

The constitution of Nepal (2015) has emphasized the principles of social justice, inclusion, and decentralization. As per the guidelines of the constitution, the educational policy and plan seem to have emphasized the approach of human resources development based on social justice. But the gap between rich and poor in education is widening and many children from marginalized communities, including Dalits, are out of reach of basic education (Chalaune, in press). The situation of reproduction of caste discrimination persists. The situation of widespread untouchability is found more outside the school or in society than in the schools. It is not easy to get a rented room even for Dalit students studying in the city.

According to three Dalit students studying in higher education (within Dhangadhi sub-metropolitan town) – “If we introduce ourselves by surnames belonging to the Dalit community, it is difficult to find a room for rent.” In the experience of another Dalit student – “Once I got a room without giving my last name, but after three days the landlord found out my last name and threw me out of the room.” (Conversation, Dec. 2021)

In the experience of a Dalit student studying in Sub-Engineer (Kathmandu) – “indirect caste discrimination from class to canteen has created a feeling of inferiority in us (Dalits). It also affects our learning achievement”. He further said, “I have recently completed my studies and while working in a municipality, I feel that the feeling of caste discrimination is getting stronger among the non-Dalit staff members.” (Telephone conversation, Jan. 2022)

Although of the 235 Dalit students, 63 percent felt some form of caste discrimination and untouchability in school (7.2%), but the most (97.2%) Dalit students felt caste discrimination by teachers outside the school rather than at school. Similarly, 74%

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of Dalit students respond that their educational success is due to caste rather than economic discrimination and about 57% of students respond that it affects their learning. Moreover, most of the Dalit students feel that they have been discriminated against them directly or indirectly on the basis of caste in various walks of school life by non-Dalit teachers and students (Chalaune, 2021).

Although direct caste discrimination in schools, seems to be declining it still exists in an indirectly ways. This has a psychological effect on them and they do not come to school as expected, but even those who are enrolled in educational institutions drop out without completing the level.

At present, the literacy rate of Dalits is lower than other castes. Along with the level of education, the representation of Dalits in schools is declining. There are 20% Dalit students in the basic level (grades 1-5), but only 7% Dalit students in the higher secondary level (grades 11-12). This shows the historical exclusion of Dalits. As well, it is seen that even their basic level is not met and the dropout rate, Class repeat and failure rates is high (MOEST, 2021). What is clear from this is that there is still social discrimination in society. Such discriminatory practices certainly do not help create a healthy school environment. Why is a caste lagging behind in special education? It is necessary to find the answer.

### **Why Dalits not Coming to School ?**

There has been a general discussion about how the caste system has left the Dalits behind for a long time. Dalits have been victims of inequality since the beginning of the caste system. In the present democratic age where education is considered as a fundamental right of the individual, why is any particular community lagging behind in education? Why don't they come to school? Why is caste discrimination felt in school classrooms? etc. There are various reasons for this. Before 1970, Dalits were considered a culture of poverty because they did not attend school (Koirala, 2007). But even with free education and financial support, it is important to know why they did not attend school as expected and why they did not stay. Currently, there are some theoretical thoughts behind it. In particular, the continuity of social culture may be the main reason. Only those who get the culture of the society or home can go to school. Our school environment, teacher's thinking, classmate's behavior, curriculum, textbooks, and teaching methods are not and will not be Dalit friendly. As a result, Dalits do not come to school and even if they do, they do not stay.

Dalit community has been under the control of the upper caste due to the caste system in the society. Society treats Dalits in a degrading manner. Due to Job Ceiling & Exclusion (Ogbu & Simon, 1998), Dalits are not allowed to choose their profession freely. A Dalit youth from Kailali said that he had a skill and interest in cooking, and wanted to start a

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small hotel business. However, due to caste untouchability, the hotel did not operate and he could not pursue his profession of interest and skill (conversation, Dec. 2021).

The accumulation of cultural capital occurs through access to certain knowledge, attitudes and skills that are highly valued in society. But caste-oppressed Dalit students generally have less exposure to ideas that can gain cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990). In this sense, cultural capital plays an important but subtle role in the development of marginalized communities in society, the more *capital* they acquire, the more *power* they have. Therefore there has a structure in society. The caste structure has its own kind of culture. Culture continues to be reproduced in society. There is superiority and inferiority in the caste structure.

In this way, the reflection of the society also happens in the school. The educational system of the school is determined as a reflection of the culture in the society. Dalits are not allowed to choose their profession freely. Even the chosen ones are not allowed to work with dignity. As a result, they see no difference between getting an education and not getting one. This does not allow Dalits to have a positive attitude towards education. This creates an environment where Dalit children cannot study. According to Basil Bernstein, the curriculum is guided by the kind of knowledge that society gives to the form of knowledge, and technology accumulates that knowledge in the head of the student. The exam tests the same thing and the student is bound by the same knowledge (Koirala, 2007). According to Freire (1996), the banking education system makes the Dalits more oppressed instead of identifying the causes of inequality. Strengthens their destiny knowledge. Instead of changing the selfish thinking of the discriminator, it changes the consciousness of the students towards the status quo. The school rattles whatever the social structure is. There is no attempt to expose the independent conscience of the Dalits. In the teaching process, the learners treated like a thoughtless machine. The learners haven't been able to understand the real problem of their life (Chalaune, 2021). As a result, Dalits do not believe that schools can provide a bright future. According to Vygotsky (1896-1938), one learns from one's environment. The school system has not been able to create a Dalit-friendly educational environment. Therefore, the reflection of the society is in the school. This has been guaranteed by Dalit children. So they don't come to school and even if they do, they leave in the middle.

In this context, to improve the educational condition of Dalits: It is the duty of the concerned parties to remove the gaps in educational policy and curriculum and classroom teaching. Educational opportunities can be ensured by educational institutions that can build cultural capital for students. It helps boost morale and self-esteem of Dalit students. Thus, just as educational facts are needed to participate in academic discussions, students also need

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cultural facts to solve cultural problems. For this, teachers need to change their old thinking towards Dalits.

Hence the findings of this article are that Dalits can be brought into the mainstream of education only through the education system which can create an equitable cultural capital to change the social structure developed on the cultural basis of inequality.

### **Conclusion**

The caste system in Nepal has been going on since ancient times. The caste system, which started with the division of labour, was later limited to a closed system on the basis of birth. Gradually it assumed an inhuman form like untouchability. Due to the bad culture it created, Dalits became the biggest victims. Although the nature of work done on the basis of Varna has been changed, the behaviour on the basis of caste and caste has not changed. People with vested interests and the feudal mindedness of their caste began to harden it. Theologians and state leaders combined religion and the state and legitimized caste practices. As a result, Dalits were exploited both by religion and by the state. The political changes that came with the dynamism of the society made the Dalits feel that they were also human beings like others but did not strengthen the practical side to protect their rights. Educational policies showed sympathy to them but did not guarantee their rights. As a result, Dalits are still victims of inequality and are denied reliable access to education.

Hence, from the classroom to policy making, an equitable perspective should be maintained and it is necessary to respect the individual identity and differences of each student.

Teachers and policy makers should adopt an equitable approach to develop the cultural capital of Dalit and non-Dalit students. One size does not fit all, and students from different backgrounds require different strategies to achieve expected achievement. The focus should be on results, not equality in input. In fact, the search for equality in education is a failed attempt. Whether in teaching strategies or policy making, the focus should be on providing everyone access to the same outcomes. Teachers, students and policymakers all have certain cultural beliefs. He cannot be separated from it, but a just faith must be developed within them.

It is necessary to organize a program to change the mindset of the parents of Dalit students to develop a positive attitude towards education. Apart from the thinking of caste superiority, the policymakers should create an education policy and curriculums as well as the teachers create an educational environment of the school. Educational activities should start from the problem and level of the students and not from the solution.

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Similarly, inclusive thinking based on justice as well as radical transformation in social and cultural structure is required to ensure access to education for Dalits. For this, by modifying the old religious texts and making caste friendly; an environment can be created to discuss inhumane aspects such as superstition, bad culture and untouchability from school to village. The position of Veil of Ignorance (Rawls, 1999) is required in the policy-making and implementation process. Similarly, caste system, its origin and reality as well as the traditional technical skills of Dalits can be modernized and included in the curriculum of formal and non-formal education. Similarly, education should be free and compulsory not only by incorporating it in the policy, but also by having a physical, educational and psychological environment for its practical implementation.

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