

SUSTAINING LIFE AS A DALIT: AN EPIC JOURNEY

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A Dissertation

Submitted to

School of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Environment Education and Sustainable Development (EESD)

Kathmandu University

Dhulikhel, Nepal

January, 2013

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for any candidature for any other degree.

.....

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January 30, 2013

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DEDICATION

To the departed soul of my father (who expired on 13/07/2010)

To my mother who loves me much for better life!

Master of Education in Environment Education and Sustainable Development

dissertation of *Lila Bahadur Bishwakarma* presented on January 30, 2013.

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ABSTRACT

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There is a caste-based social hierarchy in Nepal where the Dalits are regarded as the lower-most people in the hierarchy. Practice of caste-based hierarchy is often intended to control the Dalits in favour of the non-Dalits; as a result, the Dalits have been bound to live their life in the margin of the Nepalese social sphere. For this, the non-Dalits have often used socio-cultural structure as a tool to exploit the Dalits.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the existing socio-cultural practice of the society in which I am a part, particularly to examine the ways in which the Dalits are sustaining their life.

Since I believe in the existence of multiple realities which can be uncovered through the subjective standpoints of the people in question, I adopted auto/ethnographic qualitative research design as a methodology of this research. I elicited data from the socio-cultural circumstances of my life, which I have narrated in the form of monologues, poems and stories. I have supported the discussion and interpretation of the data with relevant literature and have drawn meanings in the form of learning from the context.

Dalit discrimination and untouchability were found to have taken place mostly in relation to food and drink, direct physical contact like shaking hands. The social interaction between the Dalits and the non-Dalits were mostly found to be limited to wage and works. The Dalits were strictly prohibited from participating in rituals and cultural ceremonies performed by the non-Dalits in the community. Similarly, the

Dalits were found to bear ample social stigmas. The non-Dalits took the Dalits as merely the service providers, particularly at the cost of tolerating humiliation, injustice and suppression. The non-Dalits also perceived the Dalits as the ones who do not know anything. For the non-Dalits, the Dalits are the subjects to be controlled, subjugated and exploited. Such understandings among the Dalits were found to be the products of our socio-cultural tradition and religion.

The study also explored some key learning in relation to coping with the above discussed sufferings of the Dalits. One way to overcome such discriminations is to confront the anti-Dalits practices in the society. The Dalits were also found to use 'silence' as a tool to cope with the humiliating situation. Escaping from the social event (i.e. not attending the social ceremony) in which there is possibility of being discriminated was also found to be practiced by the Dalits. The study came up with an important learning to cope with these discriminations; that is to be critical towards the anti-Dalits practices in schools and public places at the local level. The non-Dalits are to be called for holding a table-talk with the Dalits so that the non-Dalits would understand that their suppression and control over the Dalits is inhuman. In this regard, the non-Dalits can be asked for negotiation and revise their ill-practices over the Dalits to improve the overall social relationships.

Regarding the prestigious socio-cultural life among the Dalits, the study has provided us with some key learning. First, the Dalits need to be encouraged to seek their prestigious identity within their socio-cultural situatedness. Second, the practice of education at schools and also in the community needs to be made Dalit friendly so that the Dalit children can participate in learning both at school and in community with due respect and self-esteem. Third, the non-Dalits are to be provided with Dalit friendly inputs through social conferences, meetings, and social gathering to bring

improvement in their age long anti-Dalit attitudes among them. Fourth, the social sayings developed age long before to dehumanize the Dalits are to be banned. Fifth, the Dalits are to be encouraged to contribute to the social development activities to bring changes in the old age practices. This will be an opportunity for them to create a prestigious space in the society.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am indebted to Kathmandu University with its all honorable professors and faculty members, and NOMA as well, because of all these I am here.

Most respectfully, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to both of my dissertation supervisors, Assoc. Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD (MEd Program Coordinator), and Radheshyam Thakur. Both of them inspired me to take this textual journey over the chronic painful social issue ‘untouchability’ of the Hindu society since a long history. Frankly speaking, he (Luitel) is the only genius expert out of whose ideas this dissertation took its birth. Perhaps, I wouldn’t have such an idea of writing on my own if he did not supervise me. His continuous guidance, despite his busy schedule, to explore my lived experiences led me to generate such an organized text. I feel that the perfect guidance of both of my supervisors really smoothed my journey over.

Similarly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Prof. Dr. Tanka Nath Sharma, Dean of School of Education, for his insightful remarks.

Many thanks go to my parents, wife and children, siblings, relatives, and all my well-wishers who always supported me in tangible or intangible ways to further my education in general and to complete this dissertation in particular. Sincere thanks go to my friends who were much interested in my research agenda and paradigm. Similarly, I would like to thank Rebat Kumar Dhakal for his expert help in language editing and formatting this dissertation according to the APA style.

Finally, I would like to spread countless thanks to my university people who provided me a greater opportunity through NOMA scholarship program to have this degree in my educational journey.

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January 30, 2013

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ACRONYMOUS

BS- Bikram Sambat

CFL- Child Friendly Learning

CFUC- Community Forest User Group

CRA- Civil Rights Acts

DEO/RC- District Education Officer/Resource Center

DJP- Dalit Janajati Party

DNF- Dalit NGOs Federation

DWO- Dalit Welfare Organization

HDR- Human Development Report

ICERD- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial
Discrimination and Untouchability

JVCSA- Jatiya Vedvab tatha Chhuwachhut (Aparadha ra Sajaya) Sambandhi Ain

KCN- Potassium Cyanide

MW/FWDR- Mid Western/Far Western Development Region

NCC- New Civil Code

NDC- National Dalit Commission

NMA- New Muluki Ain

PM- Prime Minister

RCS- Resource Center School

S.L.C. - School Leaving Certificate

VDC-Village Development Committee

PRELUDE

Who really knows?

Who will here proclaim it?

Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation?

If the God came afterwards, with the creation of this universe,

Who then knows whence it has arisen?

(Nasadiya Sukta: Creation Hymn, Rig Veda-10:129)

Who am I? What am I here for? These are some prominent questions that motivated me to enquire about the world around me. An enquiry to self or the other is itself an effort to approach knowledge aiming to beautify life. But it became very much essential for me to think of which knowledge I should approach and to what extent. My thirst for knowledge in terms of its degree and kind motivated me to approach the Vedic philosophy which the Brahmins in my village used to chant (the mantras) during religious and cultural ceremonies. During one Ekadasi Mahayagnya held in my village, a priest chanted the above mentioned Vedic Sukta to which I was listening very intently to meet my purpose of quenching my thirst for knowledge. The priest explained the above mentioned Vedic verse in which he meant Knowledge is unlimited. For him, there was no one who could claim, "I REALLY KNOW". This means that there can be hardly anyone who can claim the total knowledge existing in this universe. This made me enquire myself how much I should know. This enquiry ended when I came to know the following verse of the Durga Saptasati:

ज्ञानमस्ति समस्तस्य जन्तोर्विषय गोचरे ।

विषयश्च माहाभाग जाति चैव पृथक् पृथक् ॥

The above Sanskrit verse maintains that knowledge exists in every creature in this world but the knowledge of one creature differs from the other depending upon the subjects for their survival. I often linked myself with the body of knowledge around me that helped me to exist and develop as a human being. The above explanation of knowledge induced me to seek the knowledge practices in my socio-cultural situatedness that influenced my prestigious social life immensely.

During my childhood, I found myself to have been termed as a Dalit- the lower most caste in the social hierarchy. I was brought up and educated as a Dalit having to bear a lot of social suppressions, to which a Dalit is subjected in the society in which I was (am) a part. This has influenced my entire life so far. Therefore, I wanted to examine the socio-cultural knowledge that made me a Dalit- a subject to bear suppression, exploitation and exclusion in the society. I carried out this study to explore the knowledge that a Dalit in my society approaches to sustain his or her life.

For me, what a human being does is the result of what he did in the past. Since my childhood, I, as a Dalit, have been facing numerous social exclusions in my immediate world particularly in the village site. In this study, I have scrutinized my socio-cultural experiences which I accumulated right from my childhood, schooling and community environment. I have attempted for it through this study to explore the socio-cultural norms, values and knowledge practices particularly in relation to sustaining a Dalit's life.

Stepping towards Schooling

Most un/fortunately, I was born in a poor Dalit family and lived a socially restricted rural life. Due to that, neither I had been nurtured well nor was I educated justifiably. The situation was extremely unfavorable for the schooling of the Dalits like me. However, my educational journey started in 1980 from a rural elementary

school in my native village. I used to love my school more than my home, but I was not treated fairly in my school. Usually, I was discriminated by my teachers and friends during school time. While I used to go outside or around the village, I was often ill-treated by villagers. I would see this unkind discrimination rampant everywhere in the society in the name of untouchability. I was alone amid all the teachers and the students who belonged to the so called upper caste of the society.

Though there was beautiful panorama (village was in the lap of a hill, school at the centre point of the village and near the tiny stream even under the big banyan tree), the school building was not beautiful. It had stone-mud wall and wooden roof covered by slate-stone. The furniture in the classes was old and insufficient. A big banyan tree was near the school building and a mango tree opposite it, one of which (banyan) is still there where I spent almost five academic sessions. All the teachers, except one, left their jobs there. A voice from my mother “Maila¹, wake up.....wake up” used to wake me up every morning. With new hope, I used to wake up and do homework. More often, I used to pass the time by reading books with the reluctant desire to come in the first position in my class. Due to the weakest financial condition of my family, I lacked required learning materials for my study. The discriminating behavior of my teachers would make me feel down but I had no way to comfort myself besides being silent and disciplined. However, I hardly spent a long time at the elementary school level. Thereafter, I had to change the school for further study. I shifted to another school though I was repeatedly haunted by the ghost of discrimination that surrounds the taboo of untouchability.

Of course, a child learns many things in course of his/her nurturing and is trained in his/her birth place. There were no any extra-curricular activities for us at the

¹ Second son among at least three sons from the same mother

school. We used to play in the ground. I didn't see any topics in the textbooks which would help to remove untouchability and discrimination then. Many constraints disturbed my educational journey; particularly after completing S.L.C. exam, I was forced to be a job holder. However, I was creeping for this much academic degree. Luckily, I became a teacher in an elementary school, whereby, I saw fairly institutionalized untouchable discrimination at the very beginning. The school children didn't respect me as other school teachers. I found a few Dalit children in discrimination by their friends and teachers. I taught the students time and again about untouchability in the favorable situation without any imposition on them. I rather accused the cultural and religious values of the society which was hardly debated among the teachers and the intellectuals in formal training and discussion session. Once, an event of untouchable discrimination occurred in school, I raised voice against it. But I failed to have justice. Thereafter, I started to reflect on my perceptions over such discrimination to other openly. I learned many lessons on how to debate on this challenging issue and understood others' perception of it. I think that this was my greater prosperity from the teaching profession which I practically gained over the long period of time. At present, I have many examples and experiences.

Journey to My Dissertation

With some dilemmas

How to write at the beginning,

What to write

Where to go as a journey

Either Japan or America

Neither Europe nor Africa

Though, around the world

A textual journey

With juvenile perception

How to entwine with idea

It's almost midnight (11:59)

Let me have this journey alone

Till the final dissertation

During the third semester in my Master's course, I was taught 'Social Research Methods', a book written by Alan Bryman through which I basically learned how to conduct a social research. However, I learned imperfectly how to research on a challenging social phenomenon. Lately, I have decided a research topic 'Dalits, Reservation Policy and Bureaucracy of Nepal' and began to write a dissertation proposal under the guidance of my course facilitator. As per the rule, I defended my proposal at 1:00 PM in my university hall on 3 August, 2011. I was suggested for improving drawbacks of the proposal. Later, a research supervisor was confirmed to facilitate me for the successful accomplishment of my study. At the very beginning of guidance for this study, he (one of my supervisors, Luitel) encouraged me to write about my personal experiences and socio-cultural and socio-economic positions. The job was tough for me though I wrote around twenty pages and submitted to him. I got a worthy suggestion by my supervisor "Lila, change the paradigm and carry on your writing as autoethnographer that could be very empowering according to your cultural positioning as a Dalit" I nodded my head and said "yes, sir!"

I completely changed my dissertation journey with the genre of autoethnography where I poured my lived experiences of untouchable discrimination into the intellectual readers' domain. This is one of the greatest opportunities to

idealize my lived experiences in a renowned university. If I had not got him as my supervisor, I would certainly have missed this opening.

Ethical consideration always pinched me once at a time from different corners, however, I dared and connected my untrained fingers with mental command and played on the laptop keyboard. My laptop didn't know any philosophy nor did it give any idea to my fingers because this was not a human. So, many dilemmas came around— how to write, whom to contact, what to write, why and where to go alone as critical destination of my textual journey. I felt much worried to decide on this domain for my academic course. But, on the other hand, an inquiry into my lived experience as a Dalit person inspired me to question against the ill-treatment that I received from the society. Hereafter, I continuously roamed around the world through different genre of research. I read a number of theses, even dozens of articles available on the Internet and also visited libraries.

As an autoethnographer, some serious confusion was felt at the very beginning. Did I do anything bad by exploring something upon my own society?

Overview of My Entire Textual Journey

Figurative issues are entwined while reading my textual arts. It may vary depending upon the perceptions of the readers. I would like to promise that these texts are not only mine but ours. You are free to make senses wherever gap exists between you and me. I was hardly successful to evoke my experiences into academic thoughtfulness though I am not much satisfied myself because it could itself have been full of curiosity to readers. I embraced the notion of multiple genres as a textual journey of dissertation. As an artistic landscape, I have used multiple ways of expression, namely autobiographic, poetic, dialogic, monologue, letter, and story. These all represent my experiences as worthy 'data' which are seen in '*Italic*' face

‘Times New Roman’ font in the entire report. The non-bold face of writing can be regarded as my ‘interpretations’, just as clue to know the style of coherence representation of the data and interpretation. However, I can’t claim such a distinction to have taken place consistently in all chapters although I have tried to make interconnections between themes, cases and stories as per my lived experiences. Moreover, a brief overview of the entire chapters is given in the shortest and sweetest pin-touch mode.

Chapter I: Setting My Research Agenda

In this chapter, I have tried to organize a multidimensional point of view as historical background of untouchability and legalized initiation against it. With a poem 'black sun', a story 'untouchable punishment at school', a monologue 'exclusion of the Dalit from religious places' all these contents present the data somehow as agenda. Similarly, 'an overview of untouchability and constitutional practice in Nepal', 'cultural norms and values', 'national and international conventions, treaties and acts', 'human rights', perspectives from brotherhood, citizenship, ownership and co-seeker, 'eastern philosophy and untouchability' are the scope of some discussion and all these have been organized as research agenda. Through all these contents it has tried to depict how the untouchability is being taken as the tool of exploiting Dalit life in the Hindu social world.

Chapter II: My Positioning and Methodology

This chapter has been divided into several sectors with a title introducing myself, a poem 'a literal understanding of the Dalit', 'a letter to Manu', and my stand point (My identity as a researcher and a member of the Dalit community) have been entitled as data sources. I have opened my lived experiences of untouchable

discrimination as representative exploration what I faced from many places over the period of time and some reflection through literature review.

Chapter III: Life of a Dalit: Experiences from My Socio-cultural Context

This chapter depicts my everlasting experiences of discrimination. I have tried to explore my lived experiences through multiple ways of representation, for instance as content, a monologue 'stepping towards schooling: a Dalit context', a poem 'seeing of an untouchable life', and some stories 'untouchable in the Hindu ritual: a lesson from Satyanarayan Puja', 'humiliation as a tool to social exclusion: anecdotes from my school life', 'education: inherent rights or a dream among the Dalits?', and 'questioning against anti-Dalit socio-cultural norms: a coping strategy' all these have been taken as the sources of data. In this way, interpretation of the data has been organized in this chapter.

Chapter IV: Life as an Untouchable Change Agent: Critiquing Nepalese Socio-cultural Context

As representative exploration of my lived experiences from many places over a long period of time, some stories and poems with representational figures depicting my experiences of untouchable discrimination are presented in this chapter. Almost all the stories and poems revealed the experiences from the professional (as being a teacher of government school) field, being a social worker in the public sector and a person of untouchable caste in the private sector. Recalling the discriminative moment of my schooling from the untouchable community captures the main theme of this exploration. In this chapter, some poems 'perceiving a school beyond discrimination', 'unshackling of social suppression: an emotional perspective', 'till when waiting?', 'moment of disgrace', and 'power and sustainable future', and some stories like, 'untouchable as social slow poison', and a discussion of 'reflection through within

school' give the overall data to analyze the untouchable discrimination in a particular perspective.

Chapter V: Speaking as a Dalit Researcher: Perspectives from Within and Without

Here, in this chapter, I have tried to synthesize all those data in a figurative frame with multidimensional perspectives. Whatever has been represented in each and every chapter as with poems, stories, letter, monologue and a heartbreaking series of episodic creation are the main compositions of this paper. Various ways of generating and interpreting data through poems, stories, dialogues and some episodic discussions depict somehow an interdisciplinary approach that portrays my lived experiences.

Chapter VI: Overall Learning

As the finale of this textual creation, I have tried to recapitulate some viewpoints from the whole chapter as overall learning. As the masterpiece of this text, some facts and reality have been pinpointed in this chapter which were somehow scattered along the pages of every chapter of this text. Similarly, I have concluded with an account of possible continuation by means of a poem into an epilogue page.

The attribution of creating this autoethnography gracefully goes to my respected supervisors. They inspired me to embrace this research paradigm availing me of the choices of methodology in the research domain.

CHAPTER I

SETTING MY RESEARCH AGENDA

ब्रह्मणोस्यमुखमासीद् बाहूराजन्यः कृतः।

उरुतदस्ययद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यांशूद्रोअजायतः॥ १०।९०।१२.....ऋग्वेद²

The above stated verse of the Rig Veda quenched my thirst for knowing the foundation of caste-based hierarchical society in Nepal. Since I am a part of this society which is essentially erected upon the basic premise of the Hindu Vedic philosophy, I purposely reviewed the cultural and religious stances of the Hindus to identify who I am and why I am so. The Vedic verse mentioned above induced me to learn about the origin of the four different castes (Brahmin, Kshatri, Vaisya and Shudra) into which the Hindu society is divided.

I also learned from the Vedic stance that the group of people who were so called Brahmins was generated from the mouth of the Birat Purush (God). Similarly, the Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras were produced from His arm, abdomen and feet respectively (Sinmayanandan, 2012, p. 9). Since the feet are regarded as the most impure part of the body in the Hindu culture, the humans produced from it were also regarded as impure and the subject to be dominated. Domination of the so called high castes (Brahmins and Kshatris), thus, is not the newly developed phenomenon; but is the consequence of the Vedic stances which has been in practice since the time immemorial. Later, in ancient time, Manu strictly followed this Vedic principle to rule over his people. Since then the reproduction of dominating the Shudras, Dalits in

² Bramanosya mukhamasida bahu rajanya kritah urutadasya yadbasyah padbhyamshudroajayatah

these days, continued for ever. Since my birth I have always been noticing and experiencing the social domination upon me (as society named me Dalit) in various forms which induced me question to my own identity in my socio-cultural situatedness. I, therefore, attempted to explore my own experiences of social domination, sufferings that I bore in the society due to my positioning as a Dalit. For this, I have created a study question as: How did?

Although I acknowledged meaning as juvenile perception, still a little curiosity remained the same and thus I tried to go through some literature in this regard. Then, I knew that the history of Varna preceded the idea of Jaties (living with one's own language and same tradition and customs), so it can be placed hundreds of jaties within a Varna (Zelliot, n.d.). Furthermore, the two terms *Varna* and *Jati* are significantly related to the nature of human beings. Varna is based on *gunas*. There are three *gunas* according to the Hindu philosophy: *Satva*- seeking of knowledge or calmness; *Raja*- referring to the desire of action and *Tama*- denoting darkness, inertia or ignorance. The Universe is considered to be composed of a mixture of these three qualities of human beings. According to *gunas*, there could be more than one *Varna* in a family. My question is why Brahman always remains Brahman and Shudra remains the same forever. Where is the contribution of education to change the society? Sankhya³ philosophy is the school of Bhaktiyoga as a way of salvation, the most important doctrine of Sankhya is that the true is self (Atmah or Purusha), even it asserts that 'the man is lost in selfish delusion thinking that he himself is the actor'. As a result, s/he does not cause anything to happen in the world. The *gunas* are the causes of all events. Salvation, therefore, is to overcome the 'delusion' that we have any effect on events, or that they can really affect us. Life is just like watching a movie,

³ According to Eastern Philosophy, soul (human life) is combination of 24 elements

we can get caught up in it emotionally, but it really can't materially affect us (Gita chapter –III, Verse 27).

Jaties are based on birth and it denotes the same origin and the Varna are based on the theory of gunas (Calikoglu, 2005, p. 37). As per this view, no one is different in relation to their origin. For example, human being is a Jati. In the same way, elephant, snake, birds, all are Jaties. These names have been created by us according to their physical features and other indications. By greater scholars (Rishi) all living things were classified in four clusters like *Udbhija* (coming out of ground like plants), *Andaja* (coming out of eggs like birds and reptiles), *Pindaja* (mammals) and *Ushmaj* (reproducing due to temperature and ambient conditions like virus, bacteria and so on (Sanjeev, 2010). Then a question is why do ill-practices and discrimination in the name of untouchability persist in the society? The Varna is something in which a person belongs to and also it is something which is not the product of sex, birth and breeding. It is rather color and aptitude of an individual and mental attitude of human beings.

The Hindu scholars advocate that 'Manusmriti' as much important as Vedas, has repeated itself over it, where the differences in between Shudra and upper caste was advocated in such a way "But he who does not (worship) standing in the morning, nor sitting in the evening, shall be excluded, just like a Shudra, from all the duties and rights of an Aryan" (Calikoglu, 2005, pp. 30-31). Thus, the most prominent boss of the caste system is the Sage, Manu. Then, it hit on my mind inducing me to compose a poem as follows:

Black Sun

I saw a black sun in my own sky

Gives lights from a tinny hole

Into the cruel society

Where I was born and ill-treated

Read Manusmriti, no lights for us

As black fire, unfairness epic

Terrible crime over us, giving dead lives

Forbidden life, no charm in faces

Cloudy sky hides the sun

Though itself does it run

Never set down

Rather eternities black lights

Being human - no equal rights, no identity

Unsustainable and warranty-less dignity

Thus, I saw a black sun in my own sky



The poem 'black sun' tries to depict many painful matters. Many days came and went but those days didn't come on which could ensure our dignity and identity. We are waiting for long with high tolerance. Still, we have not come up with some ways out. However, I tried to create this poem as a metaphysical verse though I am not a metaphysical poet. It is the result of extreme inhumane over me along millions of untouchable lives around the world. Merciless and unfair idea of Sage Manu made us to be dehumanized in the Hindu society. That's why I appointed entitling of 'Manusmriti' as 'black sun' because I felt that it is the major idea of humiliation

among human beings. The idea existed itself into society and has been transferring generation to generation in an orthodox manner.

Many texts were scripted; speeches were delivered but in practice untouchable remained as usual. In the name of untouchable, the state or society made us right-less, motionless and speechless humans. People particularly the Dalits are living as dead in the cruel society with charmless faces. How pitiful the situation is where the Dalits have to bear inhuman practices imposed by the non-Dalits. I often, as a Dalit, find myself in a state of bewilderment, uncertainty, unidentified in the society in which I am a part. How can I ensure my future in this world as human beings? This question often entangles me. I therefore attempted to seek whether there is any remedial measure of my socially produced anxieties.

I felt that the Manusmriti as 'black sun', is seen in my own sky causing social suffering, humiliation for centuries. It spreads black light constantly and makes our daily life the darkest one. It creates pain and allows us to cry loudly. Due to social, religious and cultural obstacles, our voice is not heard. It always demoralizes us from the centric view point of Hinduism or cultural norms and values which makes us downtrodden into the societal swamp. Many times, we cry in this discriminating world, as a result, textual scripts are made but removal of untouchable discrimination is hard due to birth-based Jati system.

Albeit the untouchability has legally been removed, ill-practice remains the same as it was. It is thought that the rights over natural resources are being practiced with discrimination. Dalit can't use the same spring/well or water tap in their community, hence a question on social justice is that- does this sort of atrocity foster social justice? I have presented the following as an example.

A heartbreaking news text on the cover page of Kantipur Daily on topic 'Tin Jatika Tin Kuwa' by Prakash Adhikari,.....Rakam Karnali, Serabada, Dailekh, there is a community with three different caste ethnicities Majhi, Damai and Kami (65 houses of Majhi, 2 houses of Damai and 22 houses of Kami). They are using the water resources from a common place separately according to their size of population. There have been three wells for three different castes. According to Amar Majhi (a teacher of Janajyoti Secondary school), smallest one was for Damai, biggest one was for Majhi and the other was for Kami. Namely these were well known as 'Simenaulo' which belongs to Majhi and 'Dumenualo' which belongs to lower caste. A woman, Dhanasara Kami (54 years age) says while she came there after her marriage no memory of using water from 'Simenaulo'. There was even restriction to stand near it. It obviously seems as the result of untouchability in Nepalese society (Adhikari, 2011, p. 1).

In the Ramayana, the great religious book of the Hindus, Lord Rama visited Sabari. He called her a mother (mata). He ate food from her hands and washed feet of Nisadraj. He lived for years among vanvasi (tribal). So, the second lesson of the Ramayana is that a true Rambhakta should never discriminate against Dalit. They should never hesitate to visit and dine with them (Acharya, 2006). But in our society, this sort of discrimination is being practiced against social justice. Does it help to uplift the lower class people like Dalits into national mainstreaming? I never feel so. It is being a greater challenge in the society where I was born, brought up and educated.

Such discrimination mostly occurs in rural life. However, I experienced the discriminatory practices in urban life as well while I had to stay for this academic

degree in Kathmandu. I looked for a room on rent for two years. While I was looking for a room, a house owner asked about my caste identity when agreement was done for living in his house. When I told him that I am a Dalit, he denied giving me a room of the house. Similarly, once I went to get the house for a rent where a house owner asked me to rent the ground floor and he also warned me not to come up the first and second floor of the house. During my internship course at Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO), I got an opportunity to take part in a discussion session in Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), while the tenth National Population Census (2011) was conducting. At that time, it was reported that many of the Dalits respondents registered their names in the census as non-Dalits. They did this because they have fear of being humiliated if they tell the fact. They said that if they revealed their identity, they will be forced by the house owners to leave the house or they would bear the insult imposed by the renters living in the adjacent rooms. In this regard, I couldn't talk more because the house belonged to them and their cultural and religious embedded mind rather than my identity was the barrier. This sort of fearful situation has been found in the urban life, too. The policy of the government has determined the reserved opportunities according to the size of population. If they couldn't provide the real data, then the size of population will be automatically small. I found many Dalit friends in Kathmandu valley hiding their caste identity to the people immediate to them. Untouchable discrimination is forcefully making them to do so.

Untouchable Punishment at School

Once in class four I was severely beaten up by a teacher with a stick on my back and got contusion with a short moment of unconsciousness. Luckily, I revived and started to cry after receiving the First Aid. Then, I was sent home before the school was over. I went home sobbing bitterly. My parents asked me why I was

weeping. I couldn't tell them the event of the punishment at school due to the fear of teachers. My father wanted to go to school to beat the teacher but on the way there was a house of the chairperson of the School Management Committee (SMC). They talked about the case and he persuaded my father to dismiss the case. My father then did not go to school. He calmed down after getting persuasion from the chairperson. On the other hand, I got fever due to contusion on my back and I thus couldn't sleep comfortably for a few days. When the weak dead skin of bruise got removed in a few days, I continued the school. Later, I thought I could not have been so serious (unhealthy) if I had been punished with hands.

People often hide reality to calm down the hot cases like the punishment I bore. The same was done by the chairperson in the above mentioned event. The above mentioned story of my punishment is not the product of my ill-intention to highlight someone's fault. I, however, attempted to uncover the anti-Dalit attitudes among the non-Dalits which I have further discussed in the later part of this research. My fingers were tirelessly dancing on the key of my laptop even sometimes till midnight. I however was determined to uncover the micro discriminations and exploitation of the Dalits through my personal experiences, sufferings, anxieties which I obtained from my socio-cultural situatedness in life. I saw around me thousands of underprivileged people like me were oppressed in the name of Dalits in the society. As an autoethnographer, it could be an incomplete study if I wouldn't explore my entire experiences by narrating painful stories and events in my life. An autoethnographer may write his or her narrative analysis as personal 'truth', but within this process and outcome there would be an attendant awareness and expression of the discursive milieu of oppressive or liberating influences (McIlveen, 2008, p. 3).

An autoethnographer is both a researcher and a practitioner. Since s/he is a practitioner- bears subtle experiences about the issue in the research context. S/he is a researcher. S/he, therefore, needs to uncover his/her life experiences in the form of data for the study. I, as a Dalit, a primary recipient of the discrimination made by the non-Dalits in the community where I was born, was brought up and got schooling in difficult circumstances. I possess the lived experience of the Dalit discrimination imposed by the non-Dalits in the community. Here, in this research context, I have unfolded my experiences- the product of socio-cultural discrimination- in the form of data for this study. I would like to connect the narration of my experiences in relation to the Dalit discrimination in my community with the view of Bruner, a psychological theorist. Narrative may be wholly constitutive of personhood: “In the end, it becomes the autobiographical narratives by which we tell about our lives” (as cited in McIlveen, 2008, p. 2). However, the diversity in the definition of narratives is acknowledged differently. The author can assume personal reality even externalized and internalized form which may have ontological perspective.

The word ‘Dalit’ has been derived from the Sanskrit language which means crushed, downtrodden, depressed and so forth. All they are known as the lower social status people in the society. In the South Asian countries, mostly in India and Nepal, there still exists race and caste-based discrimination. Only India has 180 million Dalit population and altogether 300 million people are being treated as untouchable discrimination in this contemporary world (Dalit Solidarity Network UK Report, 2005, p. 6). The Hindu societies are the prominent practitioner of caste-based discrimination and the Dalits are severely treated by privileged people as untouchable. In the name of Dharma of customary practice, people don’t have any sympathy over untouchable people. Moreover, due to religious and cultural power privileged people

do as Lord Krishna (main character of Gita) without any hesitation “Krishna has no sympathy with Arjuna’s difficulty. Be a man, is essentially what he says” (Gita, Chapter II, 1-3).

Autoethnography entails writing about oneself as a researcher-practitioner. But, it is not the same as autobiography in the literary sense. It is a specific form of critical enquiry that is embedded in theory and practice (i.e., practice as a researcher and/or career development practitioner). As an untouchable activist, I should know the discrimination in our society. There are many forms of discrimination. It might be different in situation and places across Nepal. I have found that some cases are related to witch due to ‘*Balighare Pratha*’ (a system in which a few portion of crop is given to Kami and Damai and so on). Mostly the female should go house to house for collecting harvest and to eat feast when they are invited on some occasion. If something goes wrong in a house, it is accused as witch to that Damini and Kamini (female of Damai and Kami caste) who often goes to their house. Many times, I heard none was accused of becoming a witch from the upper caste female as much as the lower caste female.

I have another piercing event to share about punishment to the Dalits in public. It was the year of first democratic election (2048 BS/1991 AD). I was a teenager. Due to the restoration of democracy, all the Nepalese were glad and were taking part in election across the country. Meanwhile, I was caught by a police, since local leaders of my village were against me. They called the police to falsify my social initiatives. The police came to know that I was needlessly accused by the villagers. They then freed me. It does mean that an untouchable person is compelled to bear many obstacles on the way of initiating social and cultural reformation.

Exclusion of the Dalit from the Religious Places

Hum.....! There could be anything. Since long back it has not been seen by us. Most of the people go there and they come from different parts of the country (Terai⁴, hill and mountain). Some of them are from India. They believe there is a God in the temple. I, however, don't think so since I have never been allowed to visit and observe the temple inside. I have always been excluded from the temple. I am therefore prevented from possessing the purity and holiness of the temples. Should I obey the thing which I don't believe? It might be wherever, as an example be Pashupatinath (Kathmandu) Saileshwari (Doti), Dholamandali (Dhading), Manakaman and Gorakhnath (Gorkah), Dholakhabhimsen (Dolakha), Tripurasundari (Dolpa) and other many places and temples. These places I wouldn't say temple because the term temple denotes the habitat of the Gods and goddesses so far as I know. If these places were temples, the people should not be restricted to enter. If the God is for all, the Dalits must not be excluded from the temple. Somehow, I murmured who banned me. Some of our activists would have tried to know the mystery of those bounded places like Saharshanath Kapali at Pashupatinath (2011 BS) and Durga Shob at Saileshwari in 2057 BS (Bishwakarma, 2003), and other more initiations around the country by the Dalit activists as the movements. However, they failed but no one knows about the mystery of the temple. What is inside over there, either devil or angel? As a legend, I have heard that there is something inside the temple but I have no idea what there is exactly. Why should we people have this discrimination under the one umbrella of Hinduism? Sometimes I think, perhaps, the Vedas might not have said about the sacrifice of untouchable. But some other times I am bound to respect the Vedas because it asserts the peace, prosperity and happiness of all which I learned from the

⁴ Plain land of southern Nepal

following Sanskrit verse: “sarve vavantu sukhinah sarve santu niramayah, sarve bhadrani pashyantu ma kashchid dukha bhagwet”⁵ (Gautam, 2066, p. 41).

I asked a question to some of my friends whether God can only be for any typical caste. They answered, "No". For them, only the name and its function can be different. With the passion I asked myself, why temples are kept far away from the untouchable people. The untouchables are supposed to be greater artisans around the world. They can make and see/enter other more places like that banned places but it is not the way of equality, the struggle not with the interest of competition rather voiced for construction of justifiable religious society by deconstructing existing some bad religious norms and values. Until and unless untouchables remain suppressed in society their struggle against suppression will continue hoping to get the doors of temples opened for them.

As a genre of my writing, it could be as the effect of Hinduism, its caste system. I live in the society in which social values are strictly guided by the Hinduism. I don't know when my ancestors started to follow it. I think; they would have suffered much more than me.

While I was young kid my father and other elders used to say that they couldn't wear bright clothes or *Dhoti*⁶, *Paints*, *Daura-Suruwal*⁷ due to untouchability. Once one of my distant grandfathers have been caught by upper caste people in my village because he wore Dhoti and walked towards neighboring house. Similarly, they needed to get permission to move (while they meet upper caste on the way) and for this they used to say "*Jauoon*⁸ *Maliksab*⁹", this means shall I go now, my lord? And some flocks of people don't have access to some holy places of Nepal even in India.

⁵ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयः सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखं वागभवेत्।

⁶ A type of cotton clothes is worn by specially Brahman male more often bright white colour

⁷ Nepali national dress for male

⁸ Is used to beg permission to cross path while upper caste is met on the path

⁹ Respected word as like as God to the upper caste people by Dalit people specially in spoken verse

If there are only two truths, that is birth and death; we can see and sensibly feel without any doubt. I meant death and birth are truer than even light and darkness or day and night.

Those religious and cultural norms and values have been constructed through the notion of metaphorical view and have been in practice till now in the name of purity and impurity (untouchability). For me, it is not true. It is rather just an illusion though it is believed as truth. If an untouchable touches the body of an upper caste, becomes impure. Is it really a reality? Similarly, if they would give access to the water sources, temples and so on to the Dalits, some bad incidents would be caused as the revenge by the almighty. This sort of folklore strongly existed in our society for centuries.

According to the Hindu theology, there is a life cycle because only physical body disappeared as death but eternal power (soul) changes its forms one after another. It is believed that there are 8.4 million life cycles. The human being is a last stage to complete the cycle of that much lives, the salvation or *Moksha* (liberation from the cycle of rebirth, final union with God) never would come for untouchable because as they serve of twice born (*Dwijia*) always the same because without completing the four school of the Hindu philosophy no one gets salvation. Traditionally, those Shudras who have typically not been given the same rights as higher castes are forced to be not having access to temples and public facilities and so forth for many centuries in the name of caste system. This is a major cause of disharmony (an unsustainability of human lives) among the Shudras. If temples are kept for anybody to enter on the basis of his/her birth, the temple loses its sanctity. A mysterious thing is that the Dalits from different parts of the country can easily enter those places hiding their real identity. But the Dalits around the temples can't do the

same. As a result, they are forbidden to enter the temples and the other religious places.

An Overview of Untouchability and Constitutional Practices in Nepal

Untouchability is an orthodox rule of Hinduism. Though the secularism has recently been introduced, the things (socio-religious norms and values) which have been practiced for last many centuries are still remaining the same. A huge portion of the Dalit population falls into the Hindu religion. A political movement in 1950 replaced the prevailing system of oligarchic rule by a multi-party system of government though it took a long time to be sovereign in a constitutional way. Many constitutions have been promulgated and amended but they could not clearly sweep out the untouchable discrimination from the Nepalese society. These constitutions, including the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1992 ensured the right to equality. It stated that the state shall not discriminate the citizens based on religion, caste, ethnicity, sex, color, and belief. To abide by these provisions, the New Civil Code 1963, erased privileges based on caste. Despite its declaration, the practice of untouchability strongly remained mostly in rural life.

Similarly, the Civil Rights Act-1955 and the Defamation Act -1963 also supported the principle of non-discrimination and elimination of untouchability. In 1971, Nepal ratified the provision in Article 6 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and Untouchability (ICERD). The article reads, "State parties shall assure to everyone within their jurisdiction, effective protection and remedies through the competent national tribunals and other state institutions against any acts of racial discrimination, which violate his human rights and fundamental freedoms." Albeit these constitutional, legal and international commitments made by the state to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including

those based on caste, some provisions of law still provide support for these types of practices. The New Civil Code -1963 as amended in 1992 states that the traditional practices at religious places shall not be considered as discriminatory, even in interim constitution article no. 23 (2) every religious denomination shall have the rights to maintain its independent existence, for this purpose to manage and protect its religious places and religious trust in accordance with law, it also implies that untouchability might be punishable in some contexts, not in others. The government recently introduced and approved an act called ‘Jatiya Vedvab tatha Chhuwachhut (Aparadh ra Sajaya) Sambandhi Ain-2068’ (JVCSA)¹⁰ in terms of untouchability. There has been written in many places the word 'public place' which means that there is no removal of untouchable discrimination from every aspect of the society. Moreover, it is so vague to define public places legally. Regarding this, legal scenario can be blamed that it is just the flexibility of untouchability not eliminated so far. So, my curiosity is that why and how the nasty practice of untouchable are still existent and couldn't be other way to be eliminated better than legal practice.

In the past, the Dalits were addressed with various names which created confusion in defining the Dalits in a single term. Some popular words which were used to address the Dalits in the society were as ‘*Pariganit*’ *Achhut/Aprisya* (Pani nachalne or untouchables)’, ‘*Harijan* (people of God)’, Shudra, ‘*Utpidit Jat* (depressed caste)’ and so on. There are suggestions that the Dalit term should not be used because it breeds inferior compel and insulting among the Dalits. Some people argue that due to the use of the term Dalit, we never ever help to abolish caste-based untouchability but others argue that as long as the victims of caste-based untouchability are not identified as the Dalits, they would never ever have a chance

¹⁰Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchable (crime and punishment) Act, 2068 which was introduced in 2011

for their upliftment (Bishwakarma, 2001). However, the Dalit intellectual and leaders have now accepted that there is nothing wrong in referring them as the Dalit and they should be proud of being referred to as the Dalit in their campaign against caste-based untouchability and discrimination. Based on some given practices some Dalit castes are untouchable in some places; but the same become touchable in some other places. I have also found some Dalits for whom the degree of untouchability is lessened in the society along with their economic upliftment. The bottom line of the definition is that those castes or communities which have been treated as untouchables by the upper caste are the Dalits. In other words, caste-based untouchability embedded with the notion of pollution of water, food and body which is the hallmark of the Dalit. Indeed, the term 'Dalit' is connected with history, religion, politics, economics and social practices and exploitation.

Cultural Norms and Values

A long time ago, when people came as nomadic to visit India, they had to cross a large river called *Sindhu*¹¹. These people couldn't say the word '*Sindhu*' properly and pronounced Hindu instead of *Sindhu*, and then it started calling them with the term '*Hindu*'. They got their name and whatever as beliefs and practice they had in their daily life as the customary practices even introduced as rituals or religious trend. Eventually, it became a way to ritual norms and values for wellbeing of the human beings and the entire society. What has been taught for generation to generation as part of life took place as religion in their mindset and experience. Those people are Hindu and their religious belief has been called Hinduism in the philosophical terminology. It has been developed through long past by several founders of the Hindu religions.

¹¹A River lies in India

It is believed that the founders of religions are the first people who started teaching that religion. Every religion has either one or more founders, like Islam religion has a single founder, i.e. Paigamber Muhammad but Hinduism does not have a single one. Hinduism came to exist through hundreds of founders who have taught Hinduism in different times. The special name given to these founders is *Rishi* (comes from Sanskrit root word '*Drish*' means to see) those who can actually experience or see the God, the ultimate truth. *Rishis* can be young or old, male or female such as Gargri, Maitreya and Patanjali.

According to the Varna system, there are some hierarchies among the human beings and these led to classify the human beings as lower and upper caste. As a result, the caste-based hierarchy created touchable and untouchable despite nothing being mentioned in the Vedas about untouchability. So, it is a by-product of the Varna system. The Varna system and caste hierarchy is a kind of tightly-knotted web; hence, none could break down easily. In a Varna (or caste group), there are layers of hierarchy known as clan-based hierarchy. For example, in Brahman there are various categories and even offspring based hierarchy. In this way, in each and every Varna, there are many clan-based and offspring-based hierarchies which are a way of recognizing individuals either as upper or as lower class. In the case of untouchability, even humiliated forms are there within the same Varna or out of any typical Varna. As a result, there is a big gap between the Brahman and the Dalit in terms of social hierarchy. These all are the result of cultural practices on the basis of the Varna system. However, it was also fostered by constitutional practice until 1960s.

Constitutional practices hold two types of views: legally fostered untouchable and legally abolished untouchable. According to the Civil Code 1854, Nepali societies

(castes) were broadly categorized into four categories: (i) *Tagadhari*¹² (ii) *Matwali*¹³ (iii) *Pani nachalne chhoi chhito halnu napaparne*,¹⁴ and (iv) *Paninachalne chhoi chhito halnu parne*¹⁵. This last one is considered as the real Dalits or untouchables in Nepal (Bishwakarma, 2009). If we see this division of the Nepali society, it is strongly and obviously religion-based rather than occupation-based because *Tagadhari* does mean those having full of rights to wear Janai (sacred thread) and are prohibited against liquor but in case of the Dalit (*pani nachalne, chhoi chitto halnu parne*) nothing has forbidden to eat and no rights to wear holy thread and do *Yajna*¹⁶, is based on purity and impurity. Shudras don't have any rights to education (Veda) and earn money which is vividly exposed through this verse in Sanskrit “*shakthanopi hishudrana na karyo dhan sanjaya*” (Manusmrithi, 10:129).

National and International Convention Treaties and Acts

Nepal endorsed and ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on 1st March, 1971. According to Article 1(4) of the Convention, special measures were taken for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination, provided, however, that such measures do not as a consequence lead to the maintenance of separate rights of different racial groups, and that they

¹²The group of people especially who wear Janai (holy thread), religiously not allow to have alcohol and some sort of food varieties.

¹³ The group (caste) of people, religiously not forbidden to drink alcohol but they have typical food culture

¹⁴ The group (caste) of people, who may socially interact and physically touch to the Takadhari and Matawali, not require to sprinkling water if touched happen

¹⁵ The group (caste) of people who are totally untouchable whose touched requires sprinkling water by others three categories people, recently known as Dalit

¹⁶ Way of worshipping Hindu God through Vedic manner by reciting Mantras (hymns)

shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved.

Human Rights

I respect those many of the international and national initiatives against the caste-based discrimination because of which several policies were made to liberate marginalized people; however, some policies might be in favor of privileged people to save their power and status. The Dalits want to claim equal rights and status as the non-Dalits which is a way to ensure social harmony and tranquility. The movement of the Dalits in this 21st century is not only for empowerment and access to various opportunities rather for identity and dignity.

It would be a big question whether untouchability falls against human rights or not. Most of the constitutional practices indicated that as the human rights the upper caste people may not allow untouchable people enter their house. They used to claim that permission for entry is only the rights of house owner. The New Civil Code as amended in 1992 stated that the traditional practices at religious places shall not be considered as discriminatory. A big question here is that in the name of religious practice legal discrimination is being practiced against the untouchables. It is why because the upper caste Hindus wouldn't like to change their religious norms and values.

During the course of these developments, Nepal also expressed its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations and ratified the provisions, protocols and declarations endorsed in favour of human rights by various types of international laws and conventions. While, New Muluki Ain (NMA) has been formed in 1963, it clearly endorsed rights to equality, no discrimination of untouchability but it is still in practice against aspiration of the

Human Rights. Due to various causes, Dalit communities are under more violence. They don't have access to justice. In the civil war led by the Maoist, most of the recruitment was from the Dalit and indigenous community. In 2011 BS (1954 AD), a leading effort was made by Saharsha Nath Kapali to enter Pashupatinath temple with a huge gathering of untouchable people but failed and more than 700 hundred activists had been caught by the state force. Similarly, the Dalits also failed to enter a temple 'Saileshwori' of Doti district in 2057 BS, and others more holy places and temple are being forbidden for entering the Dalit (Bishwakarma, 2003).

This is the 21st century where societies are developing with the conscience and viewpoint of global citizen. Through the developmental point of view, the world has subjected in terms of developed and developing countries. Mainly, a huge chunk of people of the developing countries (south-eastern Asian countries) are believers of Hinduism. Social inclusion is a political process through which marginalized minorities are included into every walk of the national life. But, in Nepal, it is complex due to richness of ethnicity along the untouchable community. Dalits were made to do various inhuman tasks through lots of intolerable activities.

It is why every society regards a theology among many like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and so forth. Many vivid philosophies have been developed including western philosophy and eastern to see the universe. Here, the subject is that, Hinduism has been constructed in the ground of eastern philosophy. According to original Veda, all human being is a *Jati*¹⁷. They, however, differ as per the deeds of them. A particular *Jati* has to have similar physical characteristics and can't change from one *Jati* to another. Later on, it was started to classify with similar characters as community. In terms of human being as the community with different behaviors and

¹⁷ group of people with a particular custom/culture according to Varna System

deeds, human beings are categorized in four “Varnas” (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra). They were not different *Jaties* because the source of origination is the same but are different by the job or duties, which is also mentioned in the Bhagwat Gita as “*chathur varnyam maya srishtom guna karma vibagasha*”¹⁸ (Bagvath Gita, 4:13). This means that I have created four Varnas for different quality and duty.

The God in the Gita also mentioned the duties as “*Krishigaurakshamvanijyam vaishyakarma svaaojamh parichartmakam karma shudrashyapi svaaojamh*”¹⁹ (Bhagwat Gita, 18: 44). By this, the God says that agriculture, rearing cows and honest exchange of merchandise constitute the natural duty of a Vaisya, and service of the other classes is the natural duty of a Shudra (member of the labouring class). *Jati* is by virtue but Varna is upon our choice with deed, one can change his/her Varna. For example, Shaunak became Brahmin though born in Kshatriya family (Vishnu Puran, 4.8.1), sons of Vishwamitra became Shudra. Vishwamitra himself was a Kshatriya who later became a Brahmin. So, Vedic dharma is called ‘*Varnashram Dharma*’²⁰ with complete freedom of choice. However, discrimination was there because women were subjected to be weaker as they are taken as fickle minded. For the Vedas, one should never believe them. Friendship with a woman is just like friendship with a wolf (Rig Veda, 8.33.7). The Veda also says that sacrifices performed by women are inauspicious and not acceptable to God. They should, therefore, be avoided (Manusmriti, 4: 206) (Causality, 2010). It is said that “The Vedas and Upanishads never give permission to Shudra, women and other low caste Hindu to pray in temple and study the Vedas and science.” It means there were strictly unwelcoming norms and values in the door of education for them. Such groups of people, thus, were excluded and depressed even today. In this regard, an assumption

¹⁸ चतुर्वर्ण्यमया सृष्टा गुण कर्म विभागसः (भागवत गीता, ४॥ १३)

¹⁹ कृषिवाणिज्य गौरक्षं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम् । परिचर्याकर्म कर्म शूद्रश्योपी स्वभावजम् (भागवत गीता, १८॥४४)

²⁰ Religious belief according to Eastern Philosophy and Varna System

is that whether the brotherhood, realizing self and co-seeker could be into the single umbrella (Hinduism) or it is just dimmed rather to be seen as the justifiable dignity of an untouchable.

Brotherhood

It is said that there is no element of birth-based discrimination of any manner in the Vedas. However, the word 'Shudra' has been written in the Vedas around 20 times. Discriminations as deeds of human being were there. For example, there was a cold war between Vashishtha and Vishwamitra because Vashishtha himself didn't intend to accept Vishwamitra as Brahmarshi (Rishi from Brahmin) rather as Rajarshi (Rishis from Kshetriya or Rajanya), (Agniveer, 2010). As a critic, a lot of questions raised that does it mean respect the Shudra or disparity because of the repetition for twenty times? Was there any change of caste? We could see only changing of Varna, isn't it? However birth-based and gender-based discrimination began later in the Varna system in contrast to the Vedic aspiration. Can we say that there was fair brotherhood rather than competitive recognition among particular Varnas? Does it give any justification that there was no any discrimination?

There is a statement in Sanskrit '*Bashudhaiva Kutumvakam*'²¹; it does mean the feeling of brotherhood for social harmony from a global perspective. But in contrast, there may not be social harmony as much as the expectation of the society. It is why the excluded section of communities is living without social harmony due to hegemony of upper-class people. The nature of domination varies according to social and caste-based situation. What I have experienced is that due respect does not consider age-seniority nor does it do so with caste. Nonetheless, a junior of upper caste expects respect from a senior untouchable one. Mostly, in rural areas,

²¹ वशुधैवकुटुम्बकम् (महाभारत) ।

'*tapain/jiuoo/hajoor*'²² is rarely used during conversations. Majority of the people use nasty words to the Dalit while simply talking and feel proud of that. In relation to speaking to them if untouchable use kinship word (Mama, Vinaju, Buba, Hajurba, Aama, Kaka, Kaki etc.)²³, they feel shame. Though the untouchables are senior, they should respect the junior of upper-class people, which is still in practice across Nepal. The upper class people feel proud of the social prosperity but do not do the same to the lower class people. In this regard, a case study by Pandey et al. (2006, p. 23) states:

Prasadi Pariyar, a Dalit member of Panchnagar Community Forest User-Group (CFUG) in Dang district, is aware that non-Dalits use a different type of language to address the Dalit and non-Dalit members of the group. The Dalits have to address the non-Dalits by addressing them as "sir", Baraju (great-grandfather), Malik (lord), Hajoor (your obediently) etc. However, the non-Dalits address them as Dom, Dholi, Dumetro, Dholetro, and other derogatory terms whenever they interact with each other.

In this situation, how the sense of brotherhood could be sound. Really, it is thought and happened, thus, I want to raise that why such moral obligations have to be on the part of only the Dalits; and not on the non-Dalits. Should it not be equitable? May we all unite together as one integrated family, reject the last element (surname) of birth-based discrimination of any manner and embrace each other as brothers and sisters. Couldn't it be?

Due to untouchability and lack of rights they couldn't invite priest for their ritual works like birth and marriage ceremony, death incident and ancestors

²² Word is used while talking in respective manner

²³ Kinship word (maternal uncle, sister in law, father, grandfather, mother, uncle and aunty and so forth)

worshipping, *Satyanaraya Puja*²⁴, *Rudri*²⁵, *Garud Puran*²⁶, *Shreemad Bhagawat Saptaha*²⁷ etc. The Hindus celebrate various festivals over a year by worshipping in temple but the Dalits can't participate with them. Similarly, except priest, no one enters the Pashupatinath temple, Ramjanaki temple and some temples in Dadeldhura and Baitadi districts, and so many other temples across Nepal are restricted for the Dalits. For the purpose of entertainment, the Dalits are called to play the musical instruments and to do other jobs but they have to stay away (separately) from upper-class people during feasts. In the Terai, *Holi*²⁸ is a great festival and people play color with much pleasure but people don't like to play with the untouchables. The casteism is a socially created system which serves people and society definitely and deeply rooted in religious norms and values rather than socio-cultural ones. It was started as a classification on the basis of one's occupation. As an example, in this system, there could be more than one caste in a family on the basis of one's occupation. Brahmins were regarded as higher order since the Vedic period, as evidence there are some hymns from different texts as follows:

- a. "*Avidhom shvchiva vidoscha brahmano divatham*" (Narada smriti, 9:317), which means a Brahmin, whether scholar or madman, is believed to be the God.
- b. "*Dushelo api dhijo pujanitho shudro jidendriya*" (Parashra Smriti 8:33), which means a Brahmin butcher is better than scholar Shudra, "a Brahmin equal to God, they must forcefully suppress the lower caste people, make them their slaves" (Manusmriti, 9:317).

²⁴ Worshipping to the God Vishnu (immortal)

²⁵ Worshipping to the Rudra, as fire God with reciting the Mantras

²⁶ A way of praying God Vishnu, there is an imagine of Eden, Hell and Rebirth, especially during funeral ceremony in Hindu religion

²⁷ Seven days celebration ceremony of God Shiva in Hindu society

²⁸ A Hindu festival is played with various colour among people

Even there is a provision, “If Shudra talks against the Brahmin, suddenly cut his tongue. If he tries to beat (action is enough) the Brahmin by his hand or leg, Brahmin suddenly should cut that (hand or leg) body part as soon as possible” (Manusmriti, 8:279-283) (Shabeer, 2011). Since these barbarous practices have been practicing, *Shudras* are suppressed as part of tradition and culture in the society.

Citizenship

Introduction of Democracy in 2007 after 104 years of autocratic ruling of Rana regime, the Citizenship Act-2009, was formed and enabled. After more than two decades, an authorized mobile group was deployed for distributing citizenship card in the Terai region in 2032/033 BS. As obligation, they used a criterion to provide it. The criterion asserted that the people to have *Lalpurja* (land-ownership card) need citizenship card. However, a huge number of slave people (*Haruwa/Charuwa*)²⁹ those mostly from the Dalit community didn't have it (land-ownership card) because they had been made landless by the landlord system. Unfortunately, they lost their identity, even dignity as well. In contrast, there is still dual provision in relation to citizenship as before. Yet, some Dalits of Terai (Mushar, Chamar, Dom and Bantar)³⁰ don't have any of those sorts of certificate given by the state (Gurung, 2064). In this situation, how the state relieves the pain of those communities being deprived since long with chronic hurt.

Similarly, a few cases like Terai exist across the country. A case of inter-caste marriage of a non-Dalit girl with a Dalit boy is a big problem. If her maternal home rejects her marriage, she would lose her identity. Similarly, some of *Badi* children still have citizenship problem due to unknown fathers despite the state policy that recognizes children may get citizenship in the name of mother. In order to settle these

²⁹ Particular words is used to denote people who works free of cost in others' house

³⁰ Particular Dalit caste, live in Terai

kinds of obligations, the existing society should be reconstructed. There is no way of freedom from untouchable discrimination if norms and values remain the same.

Ownership

In terms of using resources, there is discrimination between upper and lower caste people. For example, many of Dalits don't have land ownership certificate due to the provision of citizenship card, mostly in the Terai region. In the history of land ownership, the state gave land to those people in the name of '*Birta*' or conquest land (those whose son or husband died during battle of conquering many kingdoms of Nepal and even higher post officials). This process created landlord and landless problem. On the other hand, non-Dalits don't allow their Dalit neighbours to collect water from sources that are used by them for their domestic use (Bhattachan et al., 2001). There is a Mantra "*visrabdham brahmana srudad dravyo padanama charathe nahi thasyakthi kinjith swom barthey harodhanohisa*" (Manusmriti, 8:417), it means that, if they (Shudra) have any asset, Brahmin must forcefully recapture the entire asset from Shudra (Shabeer, 2011).

According to Dr. Shiva Shharma (labor expert), in Nepal, 85-90% Madeshi Dalits are landless. Similarly, Tek Tamrakar (Dalit activist) says landless Dalit in Nepal are Gaine, Dushad, Dhobi, Kami, and Sarki. In figure, like this 42.2%, 41.2%, 33.3%, 11.2% and 7.6% respectively. In this situation how the Dalit communities feel pride of ownership. About 35% Dalits don't have citizenship in the Terai (Battachan et al., 2008, p. 81), which has prevented them from the ownership of land in their name. There is a verse, "*Tapase Shudram*"³¹ (Yajur Veda: 30.5), which means Shudra is a hardworking Varna (Sanjeev, 2010). So, According to this literature, it can be said that the foundation of the entire human society and owner of land would be Shudra in

³¹ तपश्यै शूद्रम् । (यजुर्वेद, ३० ॥ ५)

the ancient time but as contemporary recognition, the Dalits are becoming landless in Nepal.

Co-seeker

In terms of religion, Nepal was a spiritual Hindu state in the world. However, it has turned into a secular since the parliamentary proclamation in 2063. Here, in the Interim Constitution, it has been written in part-3, article No. 23 (right to religion) clause (1) that every person shall have the rights to profess, practice and preserve his/her own religion as handed down to him/her from ancient time playing due regards to social and cultural traditions but no person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another, and no person shall act or behave in a manner which may infringe upon the religion of others and clause (2) every religious denomination shall have the rights to maintain its independent existence, for this purpose to manage and protect its religious places and religious trust in accordance with law. Besides this, there is no any reform of law in relation to religion. Whatever has been written in the holy text about the reincarnation and *Moksha* (freedom of the soul to attain peace), so far untouchables are oblivious of the world because they were not given and still don't have rights to read and follow the rituals as per the Vedas. Culturally, they can't perform *Satyanarayan Puja*, *Rudri*, *Garud Puran*, and so forth for *Moksha*. If they do these, they are severely insulted. Here, Padam Singh Bishwakarma, the chairperson of National Dalit Commission claims that religion is the most responsible factor for classifying people into touchable and untouchable in Nepali society (National Dalit Strategy Report, 2002).

If they are not given ritual rights through the Vedas and access to enter holy temple and religious places they may not be able to pray to God for religious satisfaction, then how they mean them as the co-seeker of other higher class Hindus

and what the meaning of secular and republic state is. If not so, are there any new things in order to address the one-fourth untouchable people of the nation?

Eastern Philosophy and Untouchability

Untouchable is a term which is used to denote the people who were excluded on the basis of various social norms and values or religious code of conduct. It is why because every society (band of human being) regards a theology among many like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islamism, Jainism and so forth. There are vivid philosophies to see the universe like the western and eastern philosophies. The eastern philosophy has been constructed on the ground of Hinduism. There are some important rules in the Hindu society which has been formed and reformed over the centuries. As the culture and religious practices those would be practiced in the name of ritual. The untouchable discrimination would occur in every Hindu society which can be acknowledged from different Hindu legend and theological textbooks like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagwat Gita, and so forth.

According to the Uttarkanda of Ramayana, lord Rama gave a terrible punishment (head was cut off) to the Sambhuka while he knew that a boy from Shudra (Sambhuka) was practicing tapas (asceticism) in the forest. It was thought that such practice (tapas) would be against the law. Thus, if people don't do what they are supposed to do according to their caste, then other bad things will happen in the society.

Similarly, a famous character of the Mahabharata, Ekalavya wanted to get some training from Pandava's Master Dorna but while Eklavya had been rejected then he trained himself and became better than Arjuna (a disciple of Dorna). When Dorna came to know his performance then Ekalava was asked to cut his thumb (Vasudevan,

2010). In this way, he was made cripple to be a greater archer, a way of discrimination at the time of Mahabharata.

There is a contradictory idea in the 'Manusmriti'. In the name of law, some verses appear to be overtly positive towards Brahmin (priest) caste in terms of concessions made in fines and punishments but according to Friedrich Nietzsche (German philosopher) it seems too much poor because of its abusive treatment to the Chandala (offspring of Shudra father and Brahman mother, sacrificing Shudra and Brahman killer). Similarly, even some verses are against women, which thus seem anti-view of an egalitarian society and even against feminism. That's the reason Manusmriti articulates just moral, ethical values and societal norms rather than religious and ritual performances. Therefore, Manusmriti is being criticized by Dalit activists, feminist, egalitarian advocates.

Problem Statement

The issue of untouchability is being a greater challenge in the Hindu society; it can be neither eliminated nor excused. Practice of caste in Nepalese society has been common for years. The caste-based relationship among people in the society has exerted its influence on the various dimensions of individuals, social and national life. Particularly, control of non-Dalits over Dalits has impeded the life of the later. The non-Dalits in the country often use socio-cultural structure as a tool to exploit the Dalits. As a result, the Dalits have been bound to live their life in the margin of the Nepalese social sphere. How has the socio-cultural structure been the tool to exploit the Dalits? What is the nature and design of such tool and how does it function to subjugate the poor, marginalized, disadvantaged and Dalits? These questions eventually encouraged me to develop an overarching question," How does the existing socio-cultural practice in the caste-based society in Nepal control, limit,

subjugate the life of the Dalits and how the Dalits sustain and promote their life in such a pressing social condition?

Purpose of the study

This research aims to explore the existing socio-cultural and religious practice of the society through my lived experiences as an important message to the human world where millions of untouchable people are being ill-treated due to untouchability, and tries to explore the hidden realities and various traditional schools of thoughts too.

Research Questions

1. How did I, as a Dalit, experience my socio-cultural life among the non-Dalits?
 - a) How was my childhood experiences in common social sphere?
 - b) How did my school treat me as a student from the Dalit community?
 - c) What experiences do I have about the social suppression upon the Dalits in the domain of my teaching profession?
2. In what ways, can I cope-with different forms of discrimination?
 - a. How can I behave myself among Dalits as lesson for others?
 - b. How long does it remain and what could be a way of liberation?
 - c. What could be the role as a teacher to abolish discrimination through school learning?
3. How can the anti-Dalit norms and values in society be addressed for mainstreaming the Dalits in honourable and progressive social and national life?

Significance of the Study

This research has focused on a daunting challenge of the Hindu society. The issue is primarily untouchable discrimination. Ethically and more soundly, the issue

has been raised on the basis of its historical, religious and socio-cultural aspect to legalize perspectives which is the core area and has been covered in this study.

The changing dimension of the society depends on the demand and interest of the people, it goes generation to generation. However, some of the matters are being critically challenging, for example, untouchability and its impact on the society. Some of the inhuman behaviors occur in the name of traditional practices and belief. The socio-cultural and religious norms and values are not stable things despite the religious belief of each and every individual in this world. Thus, here I have presented the information regarding what I myself experienced throughout the social interaction for around three and half decade which I have explored with multi-perspective interpretation. What I experienced, analyzed and came up with certain exploration can be regarded as result of this study on which multiple realities are. This multidimensional reality obviously shows the factual impact of the untouchability, and eventually could be an impressive factor in the course of social change through socio-cultural norms and values. It may give a crucial hint to raise awareness both of them Dalit and non-Dalit people in the days to come, which can be taken as the significance of this study.

Chapter Summary

As the chapter summary, a poetic creation 'black Sun' talks about painful life of the Dalits. Similarly, a story 'untouchable punishment at school' gives a sort of discriminative situation and the school environment, how the people treated me in the school or society and how the by-birth and earth rights are not ensured justifiably. A monologue 'exclusion of the Dalits from religious places' talks about social injustice in a school life and so on, then we as Dalit should know and do something to get rid of the cultural imposition and hegemony from others in the society. And even more

issues which have been raised with various titles are also equally important; all these depict and represent the Dalit issues and their impact into the society. They can do everything for their freedom from suppression if they make sacrificing attempt.

Hence, all these are a stand point for myself as a researcher how I was interested to have this issues for my research, as a clue notion of caste system and impact upon human world in a sense of inequalities and injustices.

CHAPTER II

MY POSITIONING AND METHODOLOGY

Tiny landscaping of this chapter through a paragraph is a difficult task. As an overview of the entire chapter, I would like to form a short description of the chapter. Introducing me myself reveals the beginning of my schooling. A poem 'a literal understanding of Dalit' depicts the pain of Dalits and being untouchable from generation to generation. Similarly, an ironic creation 'a letter to Manu' has tried to explore some evidence and my experiences throughout the real world. At the end of the chapter, I have discussed my opinion about myself in relation to other Dalits of Nepal. It also consists of the discussion on why I carried out this study.

Introducing Myself

"If you had to give me this birth, why give me at all?

You cast me away to be born; you are cruel, where you at the time of my birth?

Who did you help then? Chokh says: O' Lord, O' Keshava, don't let me go."

(Chokhllmela, as cited in Gurung, 2005).

I was introduced on this earth with a tag of a nasty stigma of untouchability because I was born from the womb of a socially/religiously constructed untouchable mother; I was compelled to behave with others (so called non-Dalit) as an untouchable. While I was taking shape into mother's womb I was labeled as an untouchable. I was born in such a socio-cultural context where hatred and discrimination for the low caste people like me was structurally webbed. I was not able to change my caste, nor could the state do anything for me then. Once I was scolded by a mother of my classmate while I was in grade three because I had called

her daughter by her name. The event compelled me to internalize the meaning of untouchable.

A Literal Understanding of Dalit

D' for differently miserable,

Either rich or poor, neither intellectual nor ignorance

Being alive as Dalit, could be hard

A' for ability-less to voice,

Slightly, voice goes down,

No alter to head down,

Then, what to do rather voice shut-down,

Being activist as Dalit.....

L' for living with limited rights to resource,

No right to talk for more and more,

Let us our rights,

Then, no more fights,

Being alive as Dalit.....

I' for imposition of untouchable

Being pessimist, tag with under-privileged,

No one could move ahead,

Being alive as Dalit....

T' for tyranny of privileged,

I see in text, then enough... no need to more cry

While in practice, untouchable remained as is it, why?

The two terms 'Dalit' and 'Untouchable' signify intersection over something literally. If a person belongs to untouchable, s/he is undoubtedly a Dalit but someone

belongs to Dalit caste may not be untouchable like some sub-castes of Newar community. The term Dalit is derived from Sanskrit word '*Daldal*', etymologically it does mean that swamp to be disappeared something, and then literally it deals with the vast meaning with multidimensional perspectives, for instance, near about to extinction of dignity, identity and being swept from every aspect of society.

According to National Dalit Commission, the term Dalit is "those communities who by virtue of atrocities of caste discrimination and untouchability are most backward in social, economic, educational, political and religious fields, even have been deprived of human dignity and social justice" (NDC Draft Bill, 2002). Moreover, it is used to for designate communities to be continued the untouchable practice as *Paninachalne chhoichhito halnuparne Jat* (groups of caste from whom water is not accepted and whose touch requires sprinkling of water by the so-called higher caste communities (Old National Code-1854).

The Dalit community falls into Shudra Varna and known as *Paninachalne tatha Chhunanhune Jat* (Koiral, 1996). The New Muluki Ain³² (NMA-1963) abolished caste-based untouchability, but due to lack of bylaws and strong implementation mechanism, practices continue unabatedly. A recent study conducted by Bhattachan et al. (2007) revealed at least 205 different forms of caste-based untouchability are practiced in different parts of Nepal. Another study conducted by Dahal et al. (2002) revealed that Dalits are marginalized in every field due to caste-based discrimination, evenmore he argued that the state would have to pay high attention since very beginning to address the untouchable discrimination and find real solution promptly. Untouchability refers to the idea that a non-Dalit should not be in physical contact with Dalits individuals because this will pollute the purity or

³² Constitution of Nepal, was introduced in 2020 BS (Nepali calendar)

sacredness of the non-Dalits. The concept of untouchability is also applied in the pattern of social interaction; they are not only ritually but also socially untouchable. It is one of the most important expressions of the pure/impure dichotomy inherent in the Hindu ideological system. We people are being severely suffered from misconception within us as Shudra Varna with a tag of untouchable for the past many centuries.

While Manu scripted Manusmriti with ideas of four folded Varna system, as a result, people began to practice impurity among the people. If there has not been written on the forehead to identify the Dalit then why people suppress in the name of Dalit. Of course, it was shameful act in the past and present too, and, thus, it could be in future if it remains as it is. Once in a speech the former Prime Minister (PM) Prachanda spoke that he will "remove untouchability from country yard within seven days". For me, he timed to remove untouchability only for a cheap popularity.

I am myself an informant for this study. I, therefore, should not forget narrating my lived experiences. My personal view or past knowledge may foster the movement in favor of the marginalized people in every society in this contemporary world. A researcher who wants to carry out a critical ethnography needs to have a burning passion to help the marginalized people in the society to reclaim their rights. This is the noblest feature of a critical researcher as the researcher fosters democracy and ensures equity through his/her study (Madison, 2005). I think an ethnography research could play an important role to inspire as researcher's value such arrogant thoughts for long. This critical inquiry gives the excitement to reveal the researcher's craze towards any subjected social phenomena. Emotional control and craze comes under maturity/expertise of the researcher, so I strongly agree with this point, qualitative inquiry requires a unique maturity in the researcher (McMullen, 2002). I

would say maturity helps to bound what and how s/he should explore on the way of a narrative journey of writing.

I have confidently chosen the issue and research paradigm to carry out this study which has not been merely out of my academic goals but out of strong obsession to ensure the welfare of those depressed community by ensuring equity in every walk of socio-cultural life. I strongly believe in the critical research paradigm because of some significant feature of autoethnography. Equity in the society is the main focus of this paradigm to cultivate meaningful democracy irrespective of caste, race, religion, color, clans and so forth. Here, a researcher takes the readers beneath the surface to make the unheard voices to be heard in an optimistic way. Here, I will be trying to link this research paradigm frequently. My belongingness to the Dalit community is a precise cause to commit that much.

I came to know about critical ethnography through which I can help my own community and other marginalized groups who are living in my lovely country without much harmony due to hegemony of the privileged people. Each and every sharp experience that comes from my childhood as memorandum, I felt would be better to share around the world. The readers of my research must know about my identity, about my community and about the political, religious and cultural disturbances that prevailed in our society for centuries. This will help them to have a better understanding of my research. Breuer (2005) says that talking about others implies talking about oneself and then conversely talking about oneself also implies something about others (Breuer, 2005). Therefore, I will try to give some descriptions about my own people (community) and societal norms, values and system but not against the people of my country in particular. Specially, I have focused on my community (Dalit), and untouchable discrimination and I have tried to employ my

research methodology which ultimately seeks to get bounded answer to a set of research queries.

A Letter to Manu

Dear Manu,

Hmmm....., How are you? Though I am irritably well, I wish you to be spiritually well. Fortunately, I was born on this earth where you had been once upon a time. How was the beauty of nature and nature of philosophy then? I have no idea at all. How was the nature of human being and society in your time? I would undoubtedly guess it to be much different from this contemporary world. I believe that everything moves along the pace of time. This is what the characteristic of the nature is. I couldn't imagine the demand of the society was in your time. Please! Sage, I am fairly unknown.

However, I would like to extend my warm greetings from my lovely land of Nepal with beautiful Himalayan range endowed with Mount Kailash (habitat of Lord Shiva and Parvati). Perhaps, it was an unknown place in your lifetime. I hope that you are fine and incorrectly busy with some writing like 'Manusmriti' whereas as topic could be the hierarchy of the God or people those who are around you through salvation from hell as heavenly dwellers. You have been successful to introduce 'Manusmriti' with a great idea as eastern philosophy although not in an empirical mode. While you were exploring your idea my ancestors would be crying into anxiety of social extinction. Eventually, we are also being suffered by your great idea rather than Japanese life (during late moment of the World War-II) from the idea of Albert Einstein. Those lives were damaged, damaged forever but nuisance from your idea never gives rights to be touchable to an untouchable individual from womb of a

untouchable mother, father doesn't matter could be anyone male. What a mysterious idea, Sage!

Dear Manu! There are two purposes of this letter. One is sharing of series of endless experiences of untouchable discrimination and other is an attempt to know the mysterious web of the Varna System. Why and how has the Varna system been developed against the equitable social harmony? By reading this letter, perhaps, you can know about the result of Manusmriti within the Hindu society and you may not remain in the same flaws in your second version with which you are being incorrectly busy. I wouldn't say you are criminal but I perceive that your codes of conducts in 'Manusmriti' contributed to breed criminals in the contemporary society. Are you engaged in developing some other literature like 'Manusmriti' over there to defend your post and position?

It would remain incomplete or untrustworthy if my identity became unclear to you. Let me introduce myself from the contemporary world. I'm LILA BISHWAKARMA (belonging to the Shudra Varna). No doubt, I came onto this beautiful world and in this cruel society much later than you. While in the infancy stage, I had no sense of untouchability. It is because, most of the time, I used to be in the lap of my mum and other family members. They easily touched and held me. I had no idea about caste. Perhaps, you don't know that there are more than 3000 castes in the Indian society and untouchable are getting ill-treated by upper castes in more violating ways.

Dear Sage, how mysterious web of caste system you created! There is also hierarchy within a typical caste group, for example, 64 sub-castes in a Newar caste which were categorized by the King Jayasthiti Malla. Thereafter, the upper and lower

smear has started within that community. One could hate the other in the same community since even within the Brahmin community they have hierarchy.

On the stage of late childhood, my journey of schooling started with children and teacher of diverse ethnic families. I was treated differently by school family. Later on, I was looking for the caste history and, as a result, I came to know that you are the pioneer who created caste and hierarchy in the society. You were a marvelous human, intelligent and great scholar. Why did you develop these social norms as mentioned in 'Manusmriti'? Do you know the pain of more than 300 million untouchable people of the current world? Where are you? You might have been busy in writing like 'Munusmriti', or an essay about regret of the Varna System (casteism) on the earth, for the other world. If any, don't focus hierarchism of God in the heaven, please. I hope you won't do the same in this time. You might be the forefather of mine and could be grandson due to rule of carbon cycle. Why is there untouchable within the same origin of the human being then? What did you think? The hero of Ramayana (Rama), Mahabharata (Krishna) and Buddhism (Buddha) are honored in this world just like God, but you are only sage for upper caste; but not for all the human beings in this world. Who are you for untouchable (Shudra) people? You are neither a devil nor an angel. This is the time of experiential world. There is no difference in the blood cell between untouchable and touchable. I would say that the flaw of Hinduism is your Varna system which is the cause of our social suffering under the shade of a single umbrella of Hinduism. We couldn't follow the rituals performance as per the Holy Text (Vedas), then how it is possible for salvation and to go to heaven, for us. For me, it will become just like a dream to see heaven where you are. Without salvation, none could reach there and without the help of Holy Text salvation is limited only among the upper castes.

Some people from the primitive society became sage like you; yah...all right, but people from western philosophy are being greater scholar continuously, which is a mystery. They invented many things and contributed to advancement of current world (as an example, suppose this letter is sent to you by e-mail service within a moment, do you believe?). Our most of the practices of Hinduism are the waste of time in the name of reincarnation. Salvation of upper caste people could hardly contribute to new innovation rather than corruption in the name of Dan (Donation to the priest through several ritual/religious works). You might have known the upper caste people who didn't give us rights to read the Holy Text (Vedas) to make an attempt to salvation for ourselves. What's the mystery of purity and impurity? Could you answer, please?

I would let you know about the Hindu people who are habitually enjoying in restaurant and bar or Bhatti (where alcohol is sold) with branded liquor. Some of them might be from Brahmin community though having entertainment by religiously banned meal and liquor. Many of the Brahmins today do not wear holy thread and they have forgotten to recite Gayatri mantra³³. They still enjoy their recognition and pride as Brahmin as their ancestors did. There couldn't have been any fault as per Vedas explanation or other Hindu ritual texts. Didn't they make any mistake? This is the time of science and technology and human beings have invented airplane and other faster aircrafts. They can change their place hour by hour. The people from the upper caste must be having meal cooked and served by lower caste people in the hotel. In this case, what about their purity outside their home and what will be their rebirth? Your intelligence in designing hierarchical society has been more harmful than Potassium Cyanide for us. You would develop any other text. The web of

³³A typical singing mantra among various hymns, very important mantra according to Eastern Philosophy

casteism is being an unsolvable barrier of emancipation of huge chunk of untouchable Hindu people in this current world. If you have still that intelligence, is there any better solution in your mind? If you can, please rethink just once again for emancipating the untouchable people from hatred, oppression, and subjugation in the society.

I would let you know the case of Maharashtra (Bombay, India) at Nagpur, on 14th October, 1956 on the 2500th anniversary of Buddha led by a Dalit leader Dr. Bhimrawa Ambedkar proclaimed against Hinduism with more than a half million people and entered Buddhism formally. Thereafter, he continued Dalit Buddhist movement all over India (Calikoglu, 2005, p.71). It's the cause of undoubtedly untouchable pain. More than twenty countries' people are strictly following the untouchable discrimination. There have been held many conferences on the untouchable discrimination (later, 1956) in the world. For an example, International Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1965), in the case of Nepal, New Muluki Ain-1963 officially abolished the untouchable, though the practices are still prevalent across Nepal and currently enacted an Act namely Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchable (crime and punishment) Act, 2068 but I am sure that wouldn't be fruitful unless and until the mindset of the Hindu people over untouchable doesn't change. If any more Acts I find here, I will let you know.

Best wishes

Your known/Unknown

Bishwakarma Lila

Being addicted to the methodology of autoethnography, I couldn't stop my changeability after reading more and more autoethnography research products. In the very beginning, I was humbling for the right mode of writing my research text. Later,

I came to know the magical way of the genre of writing- autoethnography. As an autoethnographer, nobody could settle the varieties of variable (data or experiences) in a single mode of writing.

After completing the first draft of the 'a letter to Manu', I felt some disordering to concluding the final draft. The expectation from the text was to reflect my experiences to the readers in a critical way. I wouldn't claim that you will have the same meaning from the letter. Of course, you could have different meanings though that couldn't be mine. The thing could be true for me which may not be true for other because realities of social context are dependent on socio-cultural variability. I bitterly experienced the practice of untouchability from the discriminatory society which may not have been experienced by other untouchables in the world. I mean the degree of feeling by the untouchable may vary but I would undoubtedly claim that no experiences of untouchable discrimination or hurt/pain may be with the touchable whoever falls into the upper caste.

My intention to write this letter is to portray the societal context of Hindu society in this world which witnesses sorrows of billions of untouchable people. It couldn't be of an individual rather all of us (poorest, richest, ignorance or intellectual, whoever). It is the voice of the entire untouchable people from the contemporary world against the caste-based discrimination. I hope from this letter, you may guess the critical reflection upon the pitiless traditional cultural practices of untouchability in our society. Impressing from the idea of Dethloff (2005, p.166) as a quotation, 'walk the walk, talk the talk'. I thought that I should talk about our culture in which I grew up. If I don't talk focusing on exploring my lived experiences in this study, who will talk and walk as the activist? The problematic issues of the Hindu society may not be solved until and unless reconstructing of the cultural norms and values of

Hinduism is done. You will find what I have already mentioned in the body text of the letter as the information which addresses my lived experience. I strongly believe in the viewpoint of Van Mennen (1995) who argues that the autoethnographer is a part of observed or studied sub-culture. It does mean the autoethnographer could have detailed information over the particular problematic social phenomena. According to Dethloff (2005), an autoethnography is a highly personalized genre of writing and research where the author uses his or her own experiences to extend understanding of a particular culture or sub-culture in a critical manner (Dethloff, 2005, p. 9).

The challenges I faced and experienced, even I have been acquiring could be a greater challenging part of democracy in the world. Van Mennen (1990) suggests in regard to lived experience and research, “The fundamental model of this approach is textual reflection on the lived experiences and practical actions of everyday life with the intention to increase one’s thoughtfulness, and practical resourcefulness or tact” (as cited in Dethloff, 2005, p. 60). The idea of such genre of writing is thoughtfulness and tactfulness.

I didn’t mention this letter in my proposal and even some other subject matter like poem, dialogues, monologue, story etc. After defending my proposal, it was given a task to write my positionality as the researcher then I wrote about my bringing up with lots of experiences of untouchable discrimination. Thereafter, with the help of Assoc. Prof. Luitel (my supervisor) I proceeded for this research which provided me a greater chance to explore my experiences. My lived experiences which I have acquired throughout my life have been my standpoint. My research has been changed from the earlier proposal since because in regard to my positionality I have written about an untouchable incident of my school which touched the heart of my supervisor. From this autoethnographic writing I transformed my experiences into a ‘knowledge

container' from where everyone can know the context of the Hindu society regarding caste-based hierarchy and untouchable discrimination. However, you don't need to consider differently on the 'letter section', it is just a representation of my experiences as the product of multiple genre of writing, not a developed discipline of letter writing. The difference between autoethnography and other frames of representation is likely to depend on the writing style.

You can have questions besides knowing the reality about this matter. But I have also been confined with many issues of problematic societal phenomenon though this is my first endeavor on cruel social issues. You can 'agree' or 'disagree' with the issues that I have raised throughout the letter. The intelligence of sage Manu is the root cause of casteism and cruel discrimination. The hierarchical structure of the society and untouchable discrimination doesn't foster the justifiable democracy rather it produces unsolvable challenges. You might/not know that the untouchable issue of the Hindu society is much cruel or shameful. A reader of autoethnographic texts must be moved emotionally and critically because of the literary vehicle, believable logic, and deeply personal/cultural description. I strongly agree with the view of Nicholas L. Holt (2003), an autoethnographic manuscript might include dramatic recall, unusual phrasing, and strong metaphors to invite the reader to 'relive' events with the author.

Autoethnography is compiling of three different terms 'auto' (self), 'ethno' (culture) and 'graphic' (research process). Richardson (1995) argues how researchers are expected to write influences what they can write about. Thus, I agree with this view being an autoethnographic researcher because my exploration has naturally come from my lived experiences. Though I wouldn't say better but it is a realistic one on the ground of untouchable discrimination. The matter is to relate with the chronic pains of untouchable people. Suppose there are four children in an upper caste family,

if they are named and tagged like as Varna hierarchy and those who fall into Shudra and is treated like real Shudra, then, think how much s/he would be irritated and what terrible situation would be there for the family. The autoethnography is such a genre of writing of research project where reviewers may lose their way of reviewing mode because of the style of representation. There is no any precise recipe to write autoethnography rather it could have 'mosaic' way of writing like colorful tessellation with varieties of textual colors. On the way of writing, a Japanese word came into mind that is '*ikebana*' (etymological meaning is arrangement of flowers) the word itself does mean so nicely rather than having metaphorical meaning. The means of 'flower garden' could be varieties of flower but if we have a rose plant with various colour of flower then it gives a scene of garden but really it doesn't mean a garden by single rose plant having same color flowers. Out of imagination nothing can be done but as so, reality can't be explained beyond the fact. Here, as the roadmap of my journey to the master's dissertation embracing interpretive research paradigm, as the narrative creation I created monologue, poem, dialogue, story etc. It is why I thought that if writing is a 'mode of thought' (Richardson, 1997), then I should search for the most suitable mode of thought for my work which could influence the readers.

My Identity as a Researcher and a Member of a Dalit Community

Dalit is a socially constructed phenomenon. It differs from individual to individual. I have tried to pour my in-heart bitter experiences to the readers in this study which contribute to raise their sensitivity, particularly in relation to the Dalit suppression. I know that critical ethnography allows the researcher to express his/her opinions and to look at society as both researcher and participant (Luitel & Taylor, 2005). Therefore, my role as an actor will not be the sole character rather it will be dual somehow as a researcher and as a participant. This aim of the research is not

simply to explain surfacely regarding research issues on the Dalit and untouchability in Nepalese context rather to explore the hidden realities, barriers and facilities. These are all the causes and symbols of the causes for the Dalit community to be underprivileged leading to inequality and hegemony of the elite people. Hence, I would like to promise that the readers would be happy and feel proud of the exploration of reality in this research. So, my deep intention is to enable them to know the state of Dalit, experiences of untouchable from different contexts and situations; notion of caste system and impact and scenarios of Nepalese society in a sense of inequities and injustice.

The purpose of this journey is to wake up those people who are being mistreated by the shameless behavior of discrimination in the name of untouchables. But in a sense, it is solely not their fault rather the fault goes to the established culture of the eastern society.

The caste of an individual is known on the basis of his/her surname. As an example, if I tell 'Lila' (my name) to someone somewhere else at first meeting, they need to ask my surname to know the community background. As a culture while a new baby is born, the priest gives the name which is browsed by birth star or Nakshatra/Rashi³⁴.

According to different Hindu literatures, the name 'Lila' is Sanskrit origin and meaning is 'night', however literally it means 'pastime', 'sport' or 'play' as a concept within Hinduism. Even it is known as connotative form of Ramalila (Ramayana), Krishnalila (Bhagwata Gita), Iihalila/Dehalila (all the deeds throughout the lifetime) etc. which mean the activities in a disordered manner with hidden power. Thus, 'Lila' represents the unbelievable deed which occurred through hidden power, for example,

³⁴ There are 27 Nakshatra and 12 Rashi according to astrology which is countable as birth star in order to signify something.

the stories like Ramayana, Mahabharata. My surname 'Bishwakarma'³⁵ denotes untouchable caste but is known as artisan power/knowledge which made the horse-cart for God Krishna and Rama, goddess Durgadevi and so on. Having the vehicles by Brahman or other upper-caste they used to worship 'Bishwakarma' (the 1st day of Ashwin, sixth month of Nepali calendar, is celebrated as Bishwakarma Puja/day) as power. Then, how could an artisan community (Bishwakarma) be the matter of humiliation? Why did the other people demoralize us (Dalit) as the untouchable?

A nature of the autoethnography inquiry helped me to explore self-experiences within self and the others, and even helped me to understand the nature of untouchable discrimination and its impact on the human world. To some extent, myself keeping me as a part of untouchable discrimination and seeing others throughout world view that allowed me to critique such challenging social phenomenon in such a way with the ideas emerge within the autoethnography research method. I agree with the view of Denzin (2006) who clarifies that the ways of expressing analytical auto/ethnography with the multiple logics of narratives and poetics (Denzin, 2006). My world view and perception of the untouchability and its practices in the society questioned me in such a way that there was not a chance of skepticism from the discriminative social context. Regarding the view of Spray (2001), autoethnography is as self narrative that critiques situatedness of self with other in the social context. On the other hand, as a set of my research questions and its nature I used autoethnography method of inquiry which is a form of qualitative research where researcher explores his/her lived experiences as data to focus on the studied phenomena.

³⁵ Common surname of a caste group (Kami) falls in Dalit

Quality Standards

As the quality standards of the qualitative research, I would say that there was a kind of positivistic hegemony to establish/evaluate quality standards. In the positivistic approach, there is a criterion of evaluating the research such as validity and reliability. The autoethnography research method advocates that researchers explore experiences through multidimensional ways of expression, thus, such research is partly interdisciplinary. So, in the view point of Greckhemer, Ljungberg, Cilesiz, and Hayes (2008), the nature of interdisciplinary research even in the post modern phase is trying to claim the truth as credible and trustworthy as positivistic nature, the nature of the interdisciplinary research seeks the legitimating knowledge. So, here my argument is that all the data have emerged through my lived experiences and I have tried to interpret them with the support of various literatures. Thus, it claims itself as knowledge.

Critical Reflexivity

I created stories and monologues to criticize myself what I had to do and why I didn't do and even what I was trying to do to emancipate myself and other Dalit people. I, as a teacher having teaching profession from the Dalit community, always looked forward the way of emancipation. Being myself a participant of this research often allows me to critique myself from the various perspectives which are a way of critical reflexivity upon the research itself. Self reflexivity is a strong tool of critical research. I believe that it is the way of legitimating the knowledge which is created through critical research. Critical reflexivity maintains quality standard. In this regard, I agreed with the view of Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) who argued that "The notion of self reflection is central to the understanding of the nature of critically grounded qualitative research (as cited in Gautam, 2011).

To see the social injustice, inequality, humiliation, diversity, complexity and even the critical aspect of the social world as researcher needs such a tool 'self reflexivity' in critical qualitative research. It helps the researcher to conceptualize issue and research project and to analyze the data. Here, I strongly agreed with the statement of Burdick and Sandlin (2010) that "Reflexivity often in the form of divulging or examining one's own 'positionality' or 'subjectivity' and reflecting on how this has shaped or affected research design, data collection and analysis" (Burdick & Sandlin, as cited in Gautam, 2011, p. 28). I reflected my positionality and subjectivity as a teacher from the Dalit community and I have also mentioned the ways out to be considered for the emancipation of the Dalits from social suppression.

Praxis

I would say this is a praxis-oriented research because through it I have tried to inform to the readers that what is untouchability and in what form it exists in the society. Praxis helps to question to the traditional practice of untouchable discrimination through cultural norms and values. I as a researcher tried to advocate bringing the social change by eliminating untouchable discrimination from the society. Those who are underprivileged can't speak for ensuring their rights themselves and living with surrounding of untouchable social taboos. Thus, I envisioned that praxis itself somehow brought change in the society in line of class, caste, gender, races, religion and various layers of social hierarchies. I have tried to spread the message to the entire society where untouchable discrimination exists.

Pedagogical Thoughtfulness

Pedagogical thoughtfulness is a tool to evaluate quality standards of an autoethnography. It talks about what theoretical assumption it can give to the readers and how the readers get knowledge while reading this paper. Van Manan (1991) states

that pedagogical thoughtfulness "arises from phenomenological hermeneutical traditions and address the extent to which present and future readers of my text are evoked to question, reflect and examine their own pedagogical practice" (as cited in Gautam, 2011, p. 29). So, the readers would internalize the issues of untouchable discrimination and its impact on the human world, of course, questioning, reflecting, examining and evoking themselves through their own pedagogical thoughtfulness.

Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude signifies something that has the appearance of being true or real. A study equipped with verisimilitude is often seemed to be genuine and trustworthy. To maintain the quality of genuineness in this study, I have generated the data out of my lived experiences that I obtained in the socio-cultural, socio-economic and pedagogical situatedness. These data were discussed, analyzed and interpreted linking with the relevant theory and previous research findings. Every datum was presented with due background and field context depicting the real context of the Dalit community. The study can convince and induce the readers to believe the learning elicited out of the analysis and interpretation of the Data.

Chapter Summary

As chapter summary, all these above mentioned matters are around the discriminative world where untouchable discrimination is fairly seen. Representative interpretation of lived experiences through various subtitle of this chapter gives meaning to the discrimination and its effect into human world. The ironic subtitle 'a letter to Manu' attempts to talk about the history of untouchability and its impact. Due to Manusmriti, Hindu society has been divided into four different chunks where the Shudra is subjected as lowest and excluded from many aspect of the society. It portrays the chronic hurt/pain of the untouchable life and/even failure of politicized

attempt by Bhimrao Ambedkar in his time. Similarly, a poem 'literal understanding of the Dalit' talks about extremely excluded situation of Dalit life and other contents give a clear advocacy why I needed to talk on untouchable issue as well.

CHAPTER III

LIFE OF A DALIT: EXPERIENCES FROM MY SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

As an overview of this chapter, I have tried to conclude with the research queries. Specially, focusing on the first research question: How did I, as a person from the Dalit community, experience discrimination in different contexts and situations? With this core perception, I have broken it into three sub-questions; (a) how was my childhood experiences in common social sphere? (b) How did my school treat me as a student from the Dalit community? (c) What experiences do I have about the social suppression upon the Dalits in the domain of my teaching profession?

I have attempted to make a clear answer from the themes of various contents like: 'stepping towards schooling: a Dalit context', 'seeing of an untouchable life', 'untouchable in the Hindu ritual: a lesson from Satyanarayan Puja', 'humiliation as a tool to social exclusion: anecdotes from my school life', 'education: an inherent rights or a dream among the Dalits?', 'questioning against anti-Dalits' socio-cultural norms: a coping strategy'. All these contents have been taken as data and its interpretation seeks the answer around the set of research questions.

Overall Understanding

Untouchable discrimination somehow makes me to feel sad about life since there is no way to live, survive and enjoy without privilege or under the pressure of untouchable burden. Sometimes, I feel that to what extent does untouchable discrimination suffer others or what would be the moment if I freed from the discrimination. The cases or evidence, whatever I am going to explore through this

chapter is not the collection of a single day or place rather from a long period of time and of different places.

Stepping Towards Schooling: A Dalit Context

I got enrolled in school with the help of one of my upper-caste friends. The trend for enrolment in the school was that the existing students used to be sent to community during Tiffin-break to collect more children. The time was December third week. One of my friends with his classmates came and proposed me to attend school while I was in my farm as cowhand. They said to me, “We are coming here to take you to school. We have been sent by the head teacher of our school for this. Let’s go.” I got surprised but became happier. I went with them and I was introduced with the head teacher. I was given a set of books. I felt proud and roamed here and there with a set of books. On the second day, I went to school early with high degree of pleasure. It was early afternoon, I was being taught Ka-Kha-Ga....³⁶ by my friends in the class room. Many times I repeated the same Kabut I couldn’t remember it then. I suddenly went in front of the teacher and threw books murmuring as “Mastsab!³⁷ I couldn’t read so I will go home.” Then, I immediately heard the teacher saying “Oeeee...³⁸ catch him”, and, thus, some children followed me to catch but they couldn’t meet me as I ran away faster. This means I saved myself from the teacher that day. Thereafter, I stopped going to school for one month.

Maghesakranti³⁹ festival was approaching soon. One of my uncles came from Kolkata (a place of west Bengal, India) who knew the importance of education more than my parents. After a few days of his arrival, he took me to school. I was admitted in the school once again. In this way my journey to schooling continued. I clearly

³⁶ First three initial alphabet of Nepali language (Devanagari script)

³⁷ The word was used in Nepalese society to respect teacher, especially in rural area

³⁸ Initial voice to say something humbly

³⁹ First day of 10th month of Nepalese calendar as is celebrated a special day in Hindu culture

recalled the discrimination in which most of the classmates used to bring pop-corn, beans and sometimes homemade breads which they did not eat near me for the matter of untouchability. While I got thirsty in the school, I would have to turn mouth upwards and then anyone of the schoolmates would kindly pour water into my mouth.

My father used to say, “Why did I struggle to send you school, babu⁴⁰?” He used to share his experience stating that a long time ago, letters of his brother came from Kolkata. According to him, he went to his neighbors’ house of a retired public service worker (kharidar⁴¹) and said by greeting, “Khadsab!⁴² What is in this letter, please read it for me.” Sometimes he had to wait for a long time to get the letter read. And sometimes he was given work of chopping firewood or making Damlo (a handmade rope used for tying animals) instead. My father said, “Then I decided to send you to school, so far I succeeded.”

The irritable thought comes through a depressed mind. If Shudra weren't being Shudra there would not be more Shudra, as a result, there would be restructured society. It does mean that being a Shudra hereby I have evoked almost sad experiences of my earlier schooling. It's not over any particular community and culture rather just on my own religious and cultural value and social behavior over me which I experienced from since beginning of my school life and some feelings came into my mind from the experiences of my father as well. According to Taylor and Wallace (2006, p. 171), autobiographical research allows us to explore aspects of our interpretative horizons and thus of our backgrounds. Why did these sorts of discriminations exist in our society? Hopefully, I believe that all readers will know the environment, cultural practices within school, how I have been treated as the leaner

⁴⁰ The word is used by senior to junior man to say something in lovely/respective manner

⁴¹ An employee who works in a government post in public service system in Nepal

⁴² The word is used in spoken verse to address an employee who works in a post of public service in Nepal

from the untouchable community, and how the discriminative culture of my childhood period was. As an autoethnographer or as a researcher, I am supposed to be successful to explore memories in a realistic nature though it was collective through the isolated course of time. It was not the experiences just for a while or a few moments; it was rather shaped in my mind from the primary school.

My exploration is not after some degree of indulgence rather some extent of hope that it may help to awaken those people who are being the follower of Hinduism rigidly. Even in a sense, religiously excluded people may have conscienceness over Hinduism. I would like to connect with the view of Reed Danahay (1997), one emergent ethnographic writing practice involves highly personalized accounts where authors draw on their own experiences to extend understanding of a particular discipline or culture; such evocative writing practices have been labeled 'autoethnography'. However, it might be a cause of frustration, ill-treatment and misbehavior towards me from school or misperception, misunderstanding and product of bicultural practices. There were two types of cultural figures which can be seen from my explicated experiences either familiarization of teacher and student or culture of community and school premises.

While I was grown up within the untouchable discrimination, I got shocked many times in my life. I had not much idea before pre-childhood but since childhood I have been continuously experiencing the discrimination in different forms and contexts. To know the web of caste system and hierarchy is hard but being untouchable everyone should try to know the root of untouchable discrimination. For centuries, it has been continuing as the social abuse/stigma against the social harmony. According to a research done by Thapa (2009), "A cycle of discrimination, thus, begins with cultural and religious taboos and culminates in their reinforcement,

perpetuating and deepening both Dalit's poverty and inherited stigma of inferiority.”

So, here a serious matter of lagging behind in every walk of national life might be the cause of untouchable discrimination.

In most cases of the world, people were made powerless through power vested in others. Spiritually imbedded eastern lives structures are needed to be restructured to liberate people from their conditioned lives. If not liberated, then how will democracy, social justice, and so on be ensured? Due to the power, many of minority people were not considered as citizens on the basis of their jobs and social duties for centuries. Regarding human rights, they used to be treated as animals by the nation. It seems that people lost their by-birth and by-earth rights. Here, these rights mean rights of using any kind of resources without any constraints or discriminatory approach. Dalit would have to work in the filthy field as servant of the communities. They would not have rights to interfere any rules of the nation or community. Certainly, they have been treated in such a way that they were confined to the zero social status people at first and gradually relegated to the untouchable by the society where they lived.

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country with 103 ethnicities and diverse cultures. At the first time, the term ‘Dalit’ (as an umbrella term) was pronounced by Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar (sociologist/Dalit activist and constitutionalist) during revolution period in India in 1927 AD. The literal meaning is those who are excluded from the benefits of entire aspects of the society are the Dalits. If we see any of the several philosophies of the existing universe, there is no more God, however, it is believed differently with the various names of the God in this mysterious world. According to Hinduism, historically some flocks of people don't have rights to read the Holy Texts (Vedas) and to enter the temple and holy

places as well, thus, a question, had they lost their rights before they were born? And even who knew about it at first and, also, who narrowed their rights. They were not given equal rights to admire or pray to the God as the way high class people, why? These are only the gambling of power for the past many centuries. It doesn't have any praiseworthy sense itself. For me, to be a 'Dalit', there are some causes which are determined by the rule of the game created by those who had power. Casteism (caste based system of the society) is the pedestal cause of being a 'Dalit' among human beings. Phenomenological inquiry seeks diverse genre of writing in order for data gathering and explicating. Among them, autoethnography is one of the best ways to articulate the personal feelings or perceptions. So, it can be defined as a self-narrative that critiques the situations of self with others in the social contexts. Autoethnography is both a method and a text of diverse interdisciplinary praxes (Spray, 2001). The autoethnography encouraged me dialogically to look back upon myself as other and generating critical point of view not to overlook rather intensify the perception to build up stories, poems, monologues and so forth for this research. I often experienced untouchable discrimination for past many decades while my detective point of view was not built up then. But now by this research I swamped on the bottom of self reflective mode. Hereafter, my affiliation to phenomenological thought will be stiffened as the threshold of my life to explore the unforgiveable experiences. As the different ways of exploring perception, it could be a poem; this poem has undoubtedly created as a little step to move ahead on the way to my research journey.

Seeing of an Untouchable Life

While I cried against untouched

Me requested to be don't touch

Then, more cried.....

Where 're my rights?

Let me light,

To search the lost rights

Being sleepless for all nights

Let me light for rights

It might not be on the globe or the sky

Could have been in-heart thy,

O' God! Not let us to be re-born

Being untouchable with chronic pinch

No one having dignity as untouchable guy

Let us die or commit suicide, then...forever bye!

I absolutely (strongly) agreed with the view of Luitel (2003), that is poetic representation could be a means of exploring the lived experiences of an individual in a blissful mode, however, the complexity of the experiences doesn't matter. Even rather metaphors, analogies, images and rhythms could be used (Luitel, 2003, p. 65). In my opinion, I expressed myself these feelings through a poem, if I had tried to explore the same thing through other genre of writing, I couldn't be as much delightful as from the poem. While I read again and again his Master's thesis, I really felt a greater need of this than other mode of writing. I also read more than two dozens of thesis and varieties of articles and I have found that the notion of autoethnographic mode of narration would be best for this study. In fact, if something makes someone imitate something that might be the cause of praise for anything. That's why, after reading his product of greater job of Master's degree, I couldn't leave and as a result I embraced this writing spontaneously.

For me, untouchables are being compelled to stay alive in this world just like fish without water. Who knows our pains and sorrows around us? These sorrows push us to die out because of losing the dignity. Where are our lost rights? If we could have rights then there would no more be pain, we could sustain ourselves in common home or the universe. I would not like to be senseless, powerless and right-less for any long. So, my intention is to make equal status as the co-seeker and social beings on this earth where I was born. I should gain my lost rights. To do so; whatever we need to do we should be ready at any time and cost. There should be tireless efforts through different corners of life to gain our rights in our hands, and then there would be our identity and dignity, of course.

People believe that their suffering is the result of their own deeds in their previous birth; however, I don't believe that. Who knows about what everyone did in their past life? Let's imagine about Barrack Obama and Osama Bin Laden, George Bush and Saddam Hussein, Janga Bahadur Rana and Prithivi Narayan Shah as well. Of course, they have religious belief, why not? They competed for their achievement. How a philosophy can explain their deed? We all are knowers much than knowing of philosophy, aren't we? Our history could speak about Prithvi Narayan Shah and Junga Bahadur Rana. They knowingly/unknowingly did many events to lead the nation. We all know that whatever they did was just for gaining power. After gaining power simply as an example Shah did something well by giving land and Rana did something bad by making legal code 1954 by which untouchable people were legally marked as untouchable. Why did they do it even they didn't know about the Hindu religion (rebirth)? It is hard to see the pain of untouchables through the eyes of the upper caste people as like as twinkle in the sunny sky instead of dark night but could be easily felt by untouchable people in every moment of their life. There is a proverb

in Nepali '*Khukuriko chot achanolaimatra thah hunchha*' which means that no one knows the pain of others as much as the knower/veteran (victimized) of the pain or hurt of something. In a sense, as an example, it can be explored that the truth can be seen differently in this world. It means that almighty (God) is the same. Only the name and the process of devotion occurs differently which has been prescribed by all theology.

Religion is a must and it is followed by an individual as duty of their life. According to Bhagwat Gita, Arjun battled finally and won. While he got confusion to kill relatives or/even destroy clans, Krishna convinced him presenting some fact of salvation. He got salvation not because of religion but because of duty. One must do one's dharma, whether it means killing relatives as Arjuna did in Mahabharata, or merely having sexual relations with one's spouse to have children and fulfilling the duty to one's ancestors (Gita, Chapter IV, verse, 20-22). The entire Gita is then explanation of why Arjuna must fight and how he can fight and achieve salvation at the same time. This is why; indulgence towards something through the Karmayoga⁴³, means to participate in life by doing one's dharma and getting salvation at the same time. However, question is that, whoever doesn't have rights of Karmayoga as a result always falls on Bhaktiyoga⁴⁴ then how is it possible to get salvation? I mean, according to yoga philosophy, Shudra falls on Bhaktiyoga, it means all human beings should be devotee to Krishna, why not a Shudra may get salvation by following Bhaktiyoga? If a Shudra does, is it a crime or a sin?

As facts of the cause of existing untouchable discrimination, the Hindu philosophy, religion and its culture are regarded against the social harmony. The school of Hindu philosophy was developed with the concept of Varna and even *guna*

⁴³ Love to the God without any indulgence as dedicating self to the God

⁴⁴ Performing good works as devoting of the God

of human being, as a result the idea of superiority and inferiority emerged within the Hindu society. But according to Manuism, Varna regards on the fruit of past life's deed or Karma (means whatever has been written in fate would be upon previous life). Here, I agree with the result of the study by Bhattachan (2002) those people who fall into Dalit due to old school of traditional practicing of blind faith or orthodoxy rule they had gone to be backward in every walk of national life. Though a question emerges what value does it have in reality? If milk and varieties of food made out of milk have been given to untouchable then, as a result, the animal dies; if water sources (well, spring) are given to be touched as a result snake (as Naga) comes out or source goes dry; if untouchables are given to enter the temple and then the person dies; if tea has been had with a Dalit, then devastating flood comes and natural disaster hits the area. In this way, the untouchables are cruelly punished or bitterly criticized. If someone touches any untouchable, s/he needs *Chhoichhito* (way to be holy). Here, my curiosity is towards the research issue- I mean, once I was gossiping with a friend (from far-western development region), meanwhile he told me that the children from upper caste are allowed to enter their own house with sprinkling *Sunpani* (water touched with gold) after coming from school. It might result that illiteracy, unemployed, landless, poverty, differently exploited and emotional frustration are subjected to untouchable as symbol. Besides it, *Baligharepratha*⁴⁵, *Haliyapratha*⁴⁶, *Sinophalne*⁴⁷ (The Chamar incidents of 2000 and 2003 in Siraha and Saptari district of Nepal), and so forth are the products of casteism.

These trends are not only between untouchable and touchable but also among untouchable sub-castes. According to Koirala (1996), Damai is untouchable for Kami

⁴⁵ A typical system in rural area on Nepal, a tiny portion of harvest is given to Dalit (especially for Kami and Damai) in each harvesting

⁴⁶ A system to serve as cultivating land in landlord's house, basically in Terai by landless people

⁴⁷ Dumping (burying) the domesticated dead animals

and Sarki, similarly, between Kami and Sarki also there is denying something as untouchable. To some extent, inter caste or intra-untouchable marriage can't be accepted among them. As an example, as written in the magazine, namely Kantipur Daily on 22nd July, 2011, Biswendra Paswan (member of Constitutional Assembly of Nepal) showed his intra-Dalit discrimination by rejecting his daughter's (Vidya) marriage with Rajlal Mandal (Khanga) (Khanga means so-called lower than Paswan). He is not only the person of untouchable rather the centre of hope of all untouchables of Nepal because he is a politician and Dalit activist and subjected as the president of Dalit Janajati Party (DJP). Earlier, he opted to create obstacles and threw chairs and did so forth activities in the constituent assembly hall. So far as I know, the web of casteism can be assumed that the notion of Brahmin to bottom most caste Poda to social hierarchy regardless with equal bliss or harmony. Then, it is thought that the bottommost lower rungs of untouchable caste is Poda/Chyame is denied by all other untouchable sub-caste. A study by Khagendra Sharma (1994) noted that Damais don't accept cooked rice and water from Hudke (a subgroup within the Damai). So, it can be imagined that untouchable is a sea of sorrow which may not dry up by taking out millions vessels of water but banishment of old school of religious thought. Most of the untouchables serve as street sweeper, cleaning the houses and surroundings and cleaning sewages (bodily excretion) in urban areas. Still the habitat of Poda and Chamkhala are nearby cremation area because they were subjected to bury and cremate the dead body for the past many centuries. The greatest irony is that they are considered untouchables even by other untouchable sub-castes which must be a shame for them.

The youthfulness and beauty of the untouchable are taken as purity, however, while an upper class male falls in love with an untouchable girl, if the girl gets

pregnancy, then conflict occurs whether they should get married. Here, according to the Hindu's belief, virginity is one of the greatest symbols of any girl's purity, thus, losing virginity, results losing purity. But in case of an untouchable girl she already lost her virginity/purity due to being untouchable because she couldn't get married with non-Dalit youths then. See the situation, despite falling into affection she couldn't be accepted as in conjugal life openly. What's wrong with her, the only cause is untouchability, isn't it?

Dalit women from Dom, Badi, Damai, Gaine, Hudke (sub-caste groups are supposed to entertain the high caste people with various folk songs and dances) help their menfolk in doing several works in the name of religion and tradition. In return, they get nominal tips as the mercy from the high caste people. The women from, basically, Dom, Chamar, Mehtar, Pode/Chyame perform the humiliated job of clearing the houses, surroundings of the public places even to the extent of carrying the night soil, as a result, they are being subjected as untouchable.

The next tragedy lies in the area of women trafficking in which the high percentage of Dalit women fall. As a result, they have to suffer a lot from dangerous diseases like HIV AIDs. Similarly, a great number of Dalit women are being victimized in the accusation of *Boxi* (witchcraft). A study done by Bishwakarma (2004) reveals that a greater number of the untouchable women are subjected of accusation of *Boxi* (witchcraft), mostly in Terai and rural habitations (Bishwakarma, 2004). Recently, there occurred a lot of such *Boxi* (witchcraft) incidents in the Terai. Similarly, Dalit women have been the victims of dowry and bride price systems which are still continuing in our country. Mostly, Dalit women are victimized due to intra-caste and inter-caste marriage as well. Inter-caste marriage in between Dalit and non-Dalit is a greater social problem; such case may not be apologized. If someone

physically touched the higher class people, s/he would have to be imprisoned and would be severely punished for inter-caste marriages (Bishwakarma, 2003). Hence, a great number of Dalit girls have been facing hardships. Any violence on the Dalit community is ultimately borne by Dalit women. Specifically, during the eight-years of Maoist war, many of Dalit youths have lost their lives by being the victim from both Maoists and the state. Lots of unbearable sufferings in the ground of social, economic, cultural and political standing are borne by the women from the Dalit community.

Untouchable in the Hindu Ritual: A Lesson from Satyanarayan Puja

We were four families out of other Damai and Sarki within two hundred houses in the village. The non-Dalits used to celebrate several festivals round the year. Dominance of Brahmans and Kshatries was high. I have a much worried memory of my childhood. I used to simply play Lok Dohori⁴⁸ and even used to dance in several ceremonies (wedding, bratbandha⁴⁹). Being childish, I couldn't remain detached from these sorts of activities myself. We used to play Madal⁵⁰, folk music and clap being seated together on the yard of the houses or temples.



A scenario of 'Satyanarayan Puja', a young girl is sharing Panchamrit to devotees.

⁴⁸ A process of singing Nepali folk song between two individual or groups turn by turn

⁴⁹ A religious ceremony of boys is done by saving head, specially is given Holy thread in Brahman and kshetrya kids

⁵⁰ A typical music instrument is made out of wood and leather

After the Puja, the Panchamrit (which is made by mixing of five things: milk, ghee, honey, curd and sugar-candy) would be given to devotees but not to me. They used to believe that milk wouldn't be given to a Dalit in my village. I would have to have patience with a watery mouth. It would become a moment of humiliation.

It is not simple to acknowledge the religious reality in spite of the fact that massive population is being devoted differently towards the mysterious creation of this universe. But some of them are being humiliated in the name of religious trust. I would believe the social world as the composition of religious and social norms and values. The ritual is performed in the society that bounds itself in some ways with religious and cultural norms and values which results merely in humiliation. It is not wise to humiliate and discriminate the others in the name of performing holy ritual, however, it occurs. Then, does it favor human rights?

The above mentioned information is a lesson from my late childhood which fostered me to be more sensitive over untouchable discrimination in my native village. The moment of discrimination is not limited to any boundary because I have experienced the same at several places and in course of time. It may happen in any time and places knowingly or unknowingly. If I approached to hear about worshipping ceremony, the Pandit (priest) used to say, “You go, do not hear us” and I would have to go hastily. Many times, I tried to celebrate ‘*Sosthani BartaKatha*⁵¹’ in my childhood but I was severely insulted by my neighbors and compelled to deny though I had a great desire to do it. Many times my neighbors used to say (suppose someone going to somewhere outside), “Don’t be here, someone is going....” Reluctantly, I had to change the place. What’s wrong with me? Did I do any crime in my previous life? Who knows this? If they gave something to eat, then I had to wash the utensils. After

⁵¹ A15 days reading and listening ceremony is celebrated in 10th month of Nepali calendar, it talks about self, self-place and soul

washing the utensils, it is purified by sprinkling ‘*Sunpani*’ (water touched by gold) or putting fire and water into the pots.

Whatever has been written in the holy text for the reincarnation/salvation is out of access to the Dalit because they were not given an opportunity to perform rituals as per the Vedas (Sama, Yajur, Rig and Atharva Veda). Even for the purpose of admiring God and Goddess like ‘Satyanarayan Puja’ (dedicated to god Vishnu), *Rudri* (a religious ceremony dedicated to God Shiva), ‘*Garud Puran*’ and so forth for ‘Moksha’ (freedom of the soul to attain peace), they can’t do. If they do, they will be severely insulted. Here, Padam Singh Bishwakarma, the chairperson of National Dalit Commission claims that religion is the most responsible factor for classifying people touchable and untouchable in Nepali society (National Dalit Strategy Report, 2002). If they would not be given ritual rights through Vedas and access to enter holy temples and religious places they may not be able to pray to God for religious gratification.

Humiliation as a Tool to Social Exclusion: Anecdotes from My School Life

December, 1981

It is an anecdote depicting the factual and lived experiences of my life. I would call it an unseasonal ‘Holi’ ceremony in my school life. It was December 2nd week with extreme chilly weather. My first result (class-1) was going to be published. Once I saw a dream of climbing up a banana tree. I was roaming around a beautiful farm and it was near about twilight. I saw a bunch of banana ripen with some yellowish tinge. I got lip-spanking and started to climb up but I couldn’t make it easily. I tirelessly continued and eventually I got success. I felt dripping wet of sweat and just felt uneasy, as if I just woke up with cock-rooster, then..., a bit hallucination. I had never seen such a dream. I had even no fruitful experiences. I asked my mum about the dream and she replied, “Hum..., then if a delivering woman sees a banana during

her dream it would be the massege of something good. So, perhaps, you might have something good.”

Every morning (before going to school) I would have to go to Aran (a kind of workshop where my father used to make iron tools) to help my father as Damkal/khanati (a machine with air fan particularly used in Aran to burn fire) driver. One day, I went to Aran as usual. One of my teachers was already there. I greeted her saying ‘Namaskar’⁵² bowing my head. Then, she informed me about the publishing of my result. She said, “Lile... today result...” I then got a nightmare again. I humbled on thinking about my exam result. I was wondering whether I got through the exam or failed. I breathed and recalled my writing during exam and I comforted thinking that I had performed well in the exam. It means the result would be positive.

I went to school. Many of the schoolmates were already there. I saw some parcels of prizes. The result ceremony began along with the welcome speech of the head teacher. Beside the head teacher, an old man (nearly 55 years of age, Kshatriya caste) was sitting. I had no idea about him. The result was from class 5, the third positioned student was called in-front of them and the head teacher handed over prizes to him with Abir (red powder). Audiences clapped loudly. I was seeing that the old man, the invited guest in the school result program, rubbed his hand on chick, head, and shoulder. It would seem like Abire Jatra (Holi ceremony). In this way, the event continued for some time. On the turn of class-one, Binda has been pronounced as 3rd positioned, and Gokarna as 2nd. Lastly, Lila (my name) was announced as first positioner and was called to receive the prizes. I stepped towards them with red-blue face, my heart was beating rapidly. I realized that my body was shaking with joy. But I was given prize with discrimination. I was not offered Abir as previous students. I

⁵²A word which is pronounced to greeting others

mean, that old man didn't rub Abir on my face and shoulder. He rather reluctantly said, "Though you are a son of Kami, you became first. Keep it up." Despite being top in the class I was shocked with these remarks. Many questions came into my mind (one of them: why did he not rub red powder on my face?). I couldn't sit down smugly myself. Just after a while, I had been summoned again as the board first (top scorer among all students of the school) and whoever were there, they all gazed at me. I got double prizes in the beginning step of my academic journey though I couldn't be delighted as much as others.

I returned home brightly with colored body. At first, I went to Aran (situated beside home) to meet my father. By chance mum was also there. I showed them the prizes, too. Suddenly, the faces of my parents brightened up. One would see tremendous pleasure on their faces. My mum pleasantly tapped on my back.

December, 1982

At the time of final examination of grade two I had always been haunted by the idea of my rank. The performance in the examination would determine my position in the classroom. It was not easy for me to come in the first position this time again. I had been class topper in the previous year and I wanted to be the same in the following year as well. I performed well in my exam. After completion of the exam, I remembered last year's dream and suffered throughout the night. Whether seen or not any fruitful dream, I used to suffer by monologue. For a few nights, I couldn't sleep well.

It could be the day of the second last week of December. Most of the parents gathered around. The result was going to be published. It was almost late morning. I was also there as the first boy of class two and school topper of last year. I was not much confused about pass or fail but I had a fear whether I would come in the second

position. While I looked around the mass, I saw that the old guy (Chairperson of the School Management Committee) who gave me the prizes with a discriminating behavior last year. I thought the same thing would happen in this year again. Similarly, I continuously held the same position up to class five. At this grown up stage of my life, I could feel and analyze detectably over such discrimination. I felt zealous but I was bound to accept it blindly. Later, what I thought and did was that I quit attending the prize distribution on the result day (i.e. I left to go to school on the result day). I did not want to be discriminated in the mass. I became first in class five, six and seven too but I did not participate in the prize distribution ceremony thinking to prevent myself from possible humiliation which I had once faced at the time of receiving prize some years before. For class eight, I needed to go to next school since that was only lower Secondary school. Later, I got admitted in a new (Bhairavee Secondary) school where 66 students were studying in grade eight and my roll number was 57. The new school was at the walking distance of two and half hour. I spent three academic years over there but never got even top third position. It means, only five times in my academic life that my body was colored with red powder and was awarded with untouchable discrimination too. I can never forget that my five times moment as Holi (a spring festival, is celebrated by sprinkling color powders and water which is related to the pauranic story of Prhalad) ceremony in my school life.

Something should be reflected in such a way where trust/fact shouldn't be lost. I have respectively tried to recall those days of incidents, around discrimination taboos. By above storytelling, I am engaged in a way of investigation through which many issues are being uncovered in a pattern towards the research inquiries. It had arisen mainly three issues which were ultimately grounded as metaphorical point of

view ‘*culture and cultural environment*’, ‘*equity and social injustices*’ and ‘*cultural dishonesty*’.

I would say these terms because all those crossing periods of time were my childhood and adolescence periods when my personality was being shaped. To be a well civilized individual in the society, socio-cultural environment should be appropriate. I, however, had to grow up in a terrorized environment. According to Human Rights Charter 217 (III), UN General Assembly ensures the right to freedom from torture and degrading treatment and even equal right to education. I, however, was treated against that provision. The cultural practices which had been followed by my teachers were a burden of my school life because I faced and felt many cases of humiliation and matter of hesitation. I didn’t feel any moment of justifiable exercise, so it was seen perfectly as social injustice and even existence of dead equity. In the background of these social injustices, cultural power and practices were as the backforce. If I were against the school treatment upon me- as an untouchable, they would be answerless and could force me to remain silent. By this, I did not focus on the fault of the school family rather on the flaw of the socio-cultural practices. So, the term ‘cultural dishonesty’ is itself a cause of untouchable discrimination in the Hindu society. My socio-cultural freedom and personal development seemed to be lost. I couldn’t take part in school activities with my classmates while celebrating ‘*Shreepanchami*’ (celebrating the day of goddess ‘*Saraswati*’) ceremony; I would have to wait for a long time. What was the situation of social equity and justice? Would you like to grow up in such a Hindu society? What wrong did I do by enrolling myself to the school, why should I bear those sorts of discrimination in common social sphere? Why the school teachers didn’t voice against that sorts of social injustice which caused me severe humiliation, while I was awarded with prizes

discriminatively. It is said that the education is the reliable means for social reform but you see that the way I was treated by an educational institution.

The school environment where I had been taught for a long time was full of discrimination against Dalits of which I had been a victim. It was not the output of a single moment rather it would seem as the cultural power of the society. If they (school family) didn't treat me in that way, they would be insulted differently by the community. Lisa Delpit holds the view that "we live in a society that nurtures and maintains stereotypes." Similarly, according to O'Reilly et al. (2001), schools are the one universal experience provided for children, they are "a powerful force in the socialization of children" (as cited in Autrey, 2003, p. 7). But from the perspective of human rights, I was totally compelled to lose my rights through the school treatment, and somehow impacted on every moment of daily life. In such a way, I had been treated at that time then how a classmate can justifiably behave me till the time of last moment of his/her life. That's the reason for which I took myself and my lived experience as a data source for this autobiography as a constructive autoethnography. Here, the nature of social justice is extremely dim. I was completely unable to have a justifiable environment for my academic growth.

On the way of generating data from my experience as an autoethnographer, I found some cultural interventions because our culture neither fosters untouchable lifestyle nor initiates for cultural changes itself for liberation of untouchable lives. To be enrolled in school was not my fault rather it was my educational rights to be well socialized in my society. However, I was treated incorrectly in the yard and force of socio-cultural background. Richardson (2000) stated autoethnographies are highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating the personal to the cultural. The power of these narratives

depends upon their rhetorical staging as “true stories”, stories about events that really happened to the writer. In telling the story, the writer calls upon fiction-writing techniques as dramatic recall, strong imagery, fleshed-out characters, unusual phrasings, puns, subtexts, allusions, the flashback, the flash-forward, tone shifts, synecdoche, dialogue, and interior monologue (as cited in Hillier, 2010, p. 17). I absolutely agree with this point of view because of my art-based autoethnographic writing in regards to my life experiences where such expressions happen.

Education: An Inherent Right or a Dream among the Dalits?

While I was in class five, two of my classmates (Brahman) left school for Banaras and then I unknowingly became interested to go to Banaras because I heard that education in Banaras would be free of cost. I asked my parents and they almost agreed. Other schoolmates were also interested in the same who made me too much keen on studying in Banaras. On the other hand, it would teach Sanskrit subject from class four in school education in my time. Being the first boy, I was talented among classmates and even in Sanskrit subject. That matter also pushed me to be excited.

It was holiday in school on the very day of Maghesakranti in the month of January. Generally, Maghesakranti is celebrated by seeing bull fighting (a game between two oxen) and Gir playing (a kind of game between two groups with wooden ball by kicking with a stick towards inverse direction for goal). I thought to go to Banaras. I met my friend's father (nearly 60 years old) while I was watching the bull fight and Gir playing. He had come from Banaras before two weeks. I was supposed to go to his home to meet him. Fortunately, I met him there. Very much excitedly, I went in front of him and I asked “hum..., Hajurba...” then he loudly voiced me “to

whom you said Hajurba (grandfather), you should say Lahure⁵³ Baraju” (because he used to go to Kolkata and Banaras frequently).

Then, I became a bit humble because I had no idea about what he told.

People around us mostly looked at me. Anyway, I hopefully informed him about my desire to go to Banaras (where his two sons had already gone) but he couldn't take intuitively then “you naughty.....that Sanskrit (Vedas) education, Brahman only read that, thou son of Kami, how can you do with it? It could be sin for thou and seems unreligious thought. We are Brahman, they were sent but thou.....” I thought if I were not Dalit I would have got Sanskrit Education.

The sequence of my autobiography as a tale, however, represents such a cruel behavior to me which I faced frequently in my school life within a decade (basically, primary to secondary level). Above mentioned issues reveal the social injustice because the educational opportunities were not given to the untouchable for long. Even Sanskrit education was controlled by the elite, the higher caste (Brahmin) people. Universally, education is known as the fundamental right of the people and it enhances the quality of humanity and dignity. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) laid down (Article 26) that:

Everyone has right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

But, I totally lost the right of Sanskrit education from Banaras where some of my classmates had gone to study free of cost which is an evidence of injustice. A

⁵³ a person who often used to go to a place Lahor which lies in India, who often go to India are recognized as Lahure

character (Brahmin) of this story forcefully harassed me needlessly, why? I thought that my harassment as such is due to the cultural discrimination on the basis of caste in the society where I lived. I couldn't blame him alone rather I would better claim the Hindu cultural practices which were contributing to denying equal rights to education. By recalling those days I feel sad. Time comes and passes, but discrimination remains as usual, why? While I read the e-book on my net-blog I was compelled to recall those days of this story. A case of discrimination by a university is that the Vice-Chancellor of Mahendra Sanskrit University has presented a projected university budget of Rs. 68 million (from the Nepali taxpayers' pocket) to finance the studies of a merely 1200 students at university but it was denied to admit Dalit students (Bishwakarma, 1997). Does it mean social justice, how? What sort of democracy are we practicing? Please, let's think on this at least just for a moment.

The schooling access to the Dalit community is very weak. With various constraints, they didn't have good access for a long time. They were made right-less citizens. Educational history of Nepal is not so long and educational opportunities for the Dalit are even shorter. The major cause of exclusion is the so-called untouchability- while something that belongs to the non-Dalit is touched, it requires sprinkles (many tiny drops of water) to make it holy. Sanskrit nomenclature and manuscript is a root cause of the caste system which resulted in the caste-based hierarchical society (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra). Later on, it was made as strict provision of caste based approach to determine the profession/work in Malla regime, formally by Jayasthiti Malla. While schooling was banned for the Dalit- it resulted in the literacy rate of Dalit community to be quite lower than national average.

After the restoration of democracy in Nepal (1990), many I/NGOs emerged in the field of development. Among the minorities, Dalits were considered as severely excluded group of people (community) in the national life due to various constraints, especially untouchability is major cause. In spite of the affirmation of New Muluki Ain in 1963 instead of Civil Code-1854, untouchability was abolished absolutely though it is still being practiced in different modes. So, it was absolutely true without their own initiation, liberation can't take place among the Dalits.

Questioning against anti-Dalits' Socio-cultural Norms: A Coping Strategy

Being a social activist and teacher, I have some experiences of caste-based discrimination in public sphere and school environment of Nepal, basically, where I live and teach. The state has proclaimed the removal of untouchability through several constitutional provisions; however, it still exists in various forms. Many times I faced such discriminations in school hour. Once upon a time, Dalit children couldn't use water from the same pot (which is used by non-Dalit) because the pot was made out of clay mud. I evoked on this issue and school administration, as a result, brought an aluminum pot instead of claypot. I was alone from the Dalit community in the entire school staff. None of the parents (from upper caste) used to respect me as a teacher as much as other staff.

Once I got hurt by an accident within school premises. A young Dalit kid (about eight years old) of class two had poured water from claypot to water vessel. Later, a woman staff raised an issue of denying that pot due to this incident. Even intentionally she got angry and argued with the head teacher. He could not settle the issue easily and he was compelled to pour remaining water on the yard/ground and kept the pot on the ground in inverse position to be dried by the sunlight. I argued against the case of denying the water claypot but I couldn't settle this within school. I

took the issue to the resource centre (RC) of the school to be discussed. Later on, the female teacher accused me of complaining against her in the RC. She delegated with her husband (a teacher of another school), who urged to my respected head-teacher to dismiss the issue. The female teacher, on the other hand, claimed to make me a subject of punishment. Here, my intention is not to humiliate any people of my society where I was born and nurtured but to condemn the by-product of untouchability. However, I was compelled to share my bitter experience to my readers that was out of tolerance for me. It is just over the orthodoxy of Hinduism and existing religious and cultural norms and values which are fostering untouchable discrimination against the social harmony of millions of Dalits.

Story telling can be a means of expressing complex issues in an easy manner. My first blow of judging is how and to whom the issues of discrimination can be explored throughout the world. It is just a way of mapping the critical, risky and bitterest experiences. Confidently, I gave priority to story-writing. The story entitled ‘questioning against anti-Dalits’ social norms: a coping strategy’ portrays the social injustice in common social sphere on the background of cultural power where the equity and justice were supposed to be dead once at a time. The school environment was not fully supportive to me. No one can feel that the environment was justifiable, isn’t it? In spite of that I spent almost twelve years with excitement for changing the situation. Gradually, more or less I changed myself through the pace of time and efforts. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development with the slogan ‘our common future’ (1987, p. xiv) states that ‘the world’s teachers have a crucial role to play in helping to bring about ‘extensive social changes’ needed for sustainable future (as cited in Abe Osamu et al., 2000, p.13). Despite the fact, from this story neither I felt any affirmative efforts by teachers and

staff towards social change nor am I able to do alone myself for sustainable cultural changes. It is said that Nepal is culturally rich but within socio-religious culture of Hinduism, an untouchable has a worried life.

The natural environment is tremendously beautiful. Most of the poets and literature follow the natural beauty of Nepal. For an example, Laxmi Prasad Devkota wrote in his famous epic 'Sakuntala' "*Gyana chhan prakriti hariya kunama*" which means real knowledge lies on greenery earth, instead of that the cultural environment does not justify the equity and justice. Similarly, one of the greatest poets Lekhnath Poudel writes "*mai khaoon, mai laoon, sukha sayal moj mai garoon*" which means "let me alone eat and well dress up, let me alone enjoy all the pleasures of this world" (Rasaily & Lama, n.d.). One can create and destroy but the motive doesn't depict towards the cultural discrimination and reconstruction of an equitable world.

The selfish nature of human being doesn't give any value to others. The culturally biased school environment was against the Dalit children. The school staff (non-Dalits) behaved in an unjustifiable way against our rights to education, equal participation and right to school resources. When a child poured water himself, it couldn't be a hot/debatable issue. When the headteacher poured remaining water on the ground, a female staff stopped talking to me for long stoning our friendship. They didn't realize their fault. Instead, they claimed me to be a guilty and demanded to punish me. There was nothing wrong with me but they used cultural power as a tool to dominate me and even depicted their barbarian behavior in the name of cultural practice. Thus, a question, how can we accept such unjustifiable behavior of the school teachers or social leaders? On the way of this interpretation, I remember the poetic idea and the poem 'self and others' which belongs to my supervisor. As an example of some verses:

He does not understand me

This means:

He does not know who I am

He does not identify what my values are

He is rather interested in him

Only in him

.....

Selfish he

He does not care about me

Does not want to flourish my way of being

Does not intend to recognize me..... (Luitel, 2003, p. 58)

From this piece of poem, it can be said that self always motivates herself/himself. Selfish motive fosters an individual for his/her superiority and intends to command and control others even all over the society. Their intention always goes to grasp everything whatever available around them. Why and how do the selfish motives grow up in human mental schema? They didn't know an untouchable's rights are equal to human rights. They always think about themselves in line of cultural practices and power which seemed against the human rights and democratic society.

As the resilience from this sort of sorrow, I have found some happier moments. Let's see what and how will be the future generation? The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007), article 33 (d) states that for the inclusion of excluded groups to carry out an inclusive, democratic and progressive restructuring of the state by eliminating its existing form of centralized and unitary structure in order to address the problems related to women, Dalits, Indigenous Nationalities, Madhesis, oppressed and minority communities and other disadvantaged groups, by eliminating class,

caste, language, gender, cultural, religious and regional discrimination. Nevertheless, the situation of untouchable discrimination is knowingly/unknowingly or directly/indirectly being practiced in country yard, mostly in the rural area which causes the Dalits to be backward in national life. According to Hira Bishwakarma (2003), Dalits are considered to be the least educated and lagging behind in terms of access to productive resources and far more behind in representing planning and decision-making at all level of state body and social organization (Bishwakarma, 2003).

Chapter Summary

All these above mentioned contents and their representative interpretations give meaning to the discrimination and its effect into human world. 'Stepping towards schooling: a Dalit context' tries to give a situation that discusses how I got educated through unjustifiable school environment and teachers' behavior, a poem 'seeing of untouchable life' gives a kind of sorrow which tends to make Dalit life as sad life in a sense of rights and justice. Similarly, some stories like 'untouchable in Hindu ritual: a lesson from Satyanarayan Puja', 'humiliation as a tool to social exclusion: anecdotes from my school life', 'education: an inherent right or a dream among Dalits?', and 'questioning against anti-Dalits' socio-cultural norms: a coping strategy' strongly talk about the situations and injustices which made me feel as and be an ethnographer because all these are surrounding the cultural practices of the Hindu society.

Humiliation takes almost everywhere and often times while untouchability occurs knowingly/unknowingly in the society. It could be in an individual level or a massive level during the social interaction like working, getting together, celebrating the local ceremonies and festivals. Even, furthermore, such discrimination was there if we go through various scriptures- Ramayan, Mahabharata, for example event of

Sambhuka and Ekalavya justify a terrible discrimination. The data attempts to justify that inequitable and injustice in the human world. There are huge chunks of people who were excluded around the world and globally twenty countries are still known as untouchability practitioners (Baniya, 2007).

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AS AN UNTOUCHABLE CHANGE AGENT: CRITIQUING NEPALESE
SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

As an overview of this chapter, I have presented a sequence of different topics which are regarded as the core data and their interpretation to the sorrow of being untouchable. A poem 'perceiving a school beyond discrimination' depicts institutionalized discrimination which is often seen in the school/college periphery. A monologue, 'unshackling of social suppression: an emotional perspective' portrays something about my responsibility. It also made me more inquisitive about my own role to cope-with untouchable discrimination. The poem 'till when...Waiting?' itself questions whether there is liberation or not. The poem 'power and sustainable future' and 'moment of disgrace' talk about cultural values and norms as power which is used as a tool to exploit the Dalit lives. The story 'untouchable as a social slow poison', depicts a critical situation of the Dalits lives and 'reflection through within school' also somehow discusses the humiliated situations.

All these contents try to address my second research question: In what ways, can I cope-with different forms of discrimination? And its specified questions are: (a) how can I behave myself among the Dalits as a lesson for other? (b) How long does it remain and what could be a way of liberation? (c) What could be the role as a teacher to abolish discrimination through school learning? Basically, all the data and their interpretations seek the fact as the answer to these research questions.

Overall Understanding

Since birth to death or from womb to tomb the untouchable must be untouchable, it means there is no way for them to get relief. What will be after death nobody knows. Everyone either rich or intellectual it doesn't matter, untouchable is untouchable who is born to untouchable parents. Despite having an academic degree or being a highly positioned person, a Dalit individual couldn't enter the forbidden places or houses of the upper caste, basically in the rural areas. I as a teacher don't have much respectful life in my village due to untouchability. For example, once I was severely oppressed by neighbors in their house while I was gossiping with them sitting on the same mat at the time of great festival. There were many around us as the listeners, the matter of the talking was the deteriorating political scenario of Nepal. Meanwhile, one of us got thirsty. I was requested to be isolated instead of being isolated himself to pay due attention upon my value as a teacher. But I re-requested him and discussed for a time. The current scenarios of rural life is such that I still have to wash utensils after eating if I have eaten in their house, I could not offer anything (cooked, even a cup of tea) to my friends if someone comes to my house.

I know well some youths try to wipe out these bad cultures but when they see their old generation then forcefully or reluctantly they leave the initiation. That's the reason which can be claimed that there is a web of barriers to remove the untouchability from the Hindu society. I have many teacher friends of upper caste in my village but none has frankly made any effort against untouchability in the face of my own effort.

Perceiving a School beyond Discrimination

See a school as universe

Child as clay-mud

Don't know religion and culture

Should be taught

Child friendly approach with no torture

See a child as universe

Don't teach them to weep rather laugh

See the ocean, earth and sky

No one could peep neither full nor half

Come and learn having much shy

See school for child even vice versa

Oh! Teacher read them rather book

Don't see them from distinguish sight

Let them be friendly, freeing shock

Let them to be educated by-birth rights

Exploring experiences through such a poetic creation is not a newly born idea rather it has been practiced as a part of literature for long. On the way to sharing my experiences, many ambiguities came up once at a time from the different set of life experiences. How to write and sequence the ideas as data? However, for optimal use of data and sequencing the writing up, I preferred poetic idea along others. The poem 'perceiving a school beyond discrimination' is based on my school life feelings. Due to ethnic diversity, cultural variation takes place in a school environment. While learning process occurs for a child, cultural effect comes up as an obstacle. The child whoever comes into the classroom at the beginning they might not have religious and cultural knowledge, however, it does take place unknowingly. Mostly, the cultural power and practices impact the children from the Dalit community with bias. This is all about a part of what I have experienced through my school life. For me, the term

Dalit does not mean any caste rather an umbrella term which indicates some existing caste groups which are socially excluded, politically neglected, educationally deprived, economically exploited and religiously oppressed. They are vulnerable and poor group of people who are discriminated on the basis of their caste. Some schools are still practicing discriminating behavior among students, and even among staffs. This discriminative approach can not cultivate the right environment for social sustainability. As a result, proper learning may not take place if they are not given equal rights and opportunities.

Due to various causes Dalit communities are under more violence, even in school environment they were pushed back in terms of educational opportunities. As a result, low rate of school enrollment and high rate of drop out from the early school and/even large number of unschooled children from the Dalit community are resulted. A research revealed that due to various causes the educational flow rate of Dalit is excessively low (Bhattachan et al., 2007, p. 8).

Every school should apply non-discriminative approach for better learning and to ensure the educational rights of children. They should be taught in such a way where no one may feel discriminated in any way during learning. They should be taught to be exciting than demoralized. Each and every child should be taken into consideration as a book to read their religion and socio-cultural background. Thereafter, any matter of distinguishable treatment on learning and socialization process should be avoided. All institutions should think school for children and vice versa. That's the reason that they should be made away from any torture of depression while learning goes on within social interaction in the classroom and school environment. School is a mechanism where children learn to be more socialized through which sustainability of the world/society will be assured and egalitarian

society may be established. For this, religious and cultural discrimination should be strictly removed from the school environment. As a result, it may produce the social harmony which causes equal identity and dignity. We are not half-blooded human or don't have different blood color. What is the meaning of impurity? It is needed to be proved scientifically rather than with socio-religious background.

Unshackling of Social Suppression: An Emotional Perspective

Today, I am supposed to change my way of life for freedom from untouchable discrimination. My feeling is beyond childish. I can have some knowledge through which I can change my cruel society. Once at a glimpse on my physical structure, I see nothing left to be perfect human being as other people, and then think what can't I do?, I must do.

I would be proud of success to cope with some disgraceful imposition of the society where I live. Then after my family will have a beautiful and peaceful life in the days to come, even not limiting only that, it might be for entire community.....then I will be familiar as the avant-garde person. My mum and soul of my dad will love me much. My siblings may give respect more than what I am getting. All my relatives may give me sharp clapping to vow again and again for encouragement. My grandpa and grandma could feel more proud if their spirits come to know my endeavor against existing untouchability (by which they might be suffered more than me) in our society.

If I do it, Damai Hajurba⁵⁴ (Ram Bahadur), Damini Hajuraama⁵⁵ (Sita), Sarki Thulba⁵⁶ (Jhilke) and his wife (Juneli) of my village, may admire my attempts. Gaine Dai⁵⁷ (Birkha Bahadur Gandharwa who frequently used to roam around our village) can make a familiar song for salvation of untouchable. I believe there is nothing

⁵⁴ A respected person as like as grandfather of a Damai (falls in Dalit) caste

⁵⁵ A respected person as like as grandmother of a Damai (falls in Dalit) caste

⁵⁶ A respected elder than some one's father, from Sarki (falls in Dalit) caste

⁵⁷ A elder person from a Gaine (falls in Dalit) caste

which we can't do; Gaine Dai may roam around at least our country. He would sing to regard the courageous battle initiated by me against untouchability. It could be a good message for the Dalit people of mountains, hills and the plains. This attempt will not be only for my own community but also for other underprivileged people in Nepal. Thereafter, I will be a leader of Dalits; they would follow me, which would ensure victory of the untouchable. Of course, we will get emancipation from imposition of untouchable discrimination.

I will open an organization against untouchable discrimination, all Dalit people will be my potential energy. I promise to do so, but.... It might be indigestible to my society. I get frightened too much, too often and sweat drips down my body shaking itself. I should have a warm vow to go ahead, and then I will cut my thumb and drop a drop of blood to irrigate my lovely soil where I stepped at first from my untouchable mother's womb. Then I hold my thumb upright and look around for a while. It is bleeding though it doesn't matter. I would rather go continuously through brainstorming on why I should be untouchable. What does untouchable mean for non-Dalits? I condemn it tirelessly and promise to lead the struggle even if the state would send me to prison, I don't care. If I lost the battle against untouchability, I would get to death but if we win, we will have golden world with dignity and equity. Most of the world famous social/political leaders were grown up through Jail. I remember and feel the way of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. If we sacrifice everything to get freedom from untouchable discrimination, we can enjoy equity and equality in our society.

If I did not belong to the so-called Dalit, I may not come up with such feeling against untouchable discrimination. There is a proverb in Nepali 'Achanoko chot

*khukurile jandaina*⁵⁸. It does mean that none can know the pain if s/he never gets hurt by anything else. What does untouchable mean in this 21st century? Isn't it a shame? Why is it needed to behave with neighbors defectively in the name of Dalit? For me, caste system is itself barbaric. According to Valmiki (2008), "Untouchability was so rampant that while it was considered quite all right to touch dogs and cats, or cows and buffaloes if one from a higher-caste person happened to touch a Chuhra⁵⁹, it gets contaminated or polluted)." The Chuhras were not seen as human (Valmiki, 2008, p. 2). So far as I know, there is no laboratory to examine untouchability like a touchstone. Whoever tries to examine touchable or untouchable by touching objects of surroundings like stones, ices, soils, water, plants and animals, nothing will be there as a result of the examination, if someone does. Thus I questioned myself, why/what is untouchable? It's just a product of game of power for centuries. The world is divided into two isolated chunks where the people are living happily and sadly. Those people who exercise power are happier than those upon whom the power is exercised. As with the point of this version I agree to the view of Arundhati Roy (2008) who argues that "The world is divided into those who have a comfortable relationship with power and those who have a naturally adversarial relationship with power" (Roy, 2008, as cited in Valmiki, 2008).

Writing is a genre through-which a person can vomit his/her experiences over the research matter. The world is itself strange because some reverse matter of egalitarian society is developing simultaneously: equality vs. inequality, empower vs. disempowerment. Autoethnographic writing has life stories, poetry, photography, and other creative forms usually associated with the arts in the form of data. In this journey of writing, the researcher as the participant should have an active role into the

⁵⁸ The wearer better knows where the shoes pinch.

⁵⁹A Dalit caste, mostly live in India

natural setting of the research. How s/he was ill-treated by the society where they grew up thoroughly interacted with existed social norms and values. Why I should be compelled to be serious on what I am going to detect.

Tierney (1998) says, “Autoethnography confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders” (p. 66). So, I suppose I can conquer over some cruel norms and values to some extent. I, hopefully, have poured all my experiences or feelings to the readers about being marginalized which noted me to be at the outskirts of my own society.

So, it could be wiser to isolate those distorted communicative impact of the existing society which fosters the untouchable discrimination. The purpose of the autoethnography research is not to limit in a single specific one rather could vary as per issues and experiences of the narrator. For instance, different points of view are existing in regard (a) to confront my previously held stereotypes and reveal my personal transformation, (b) to provide a counter narrative that “extends sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2002), (c) to demonstrate the use of sport in fostering cross-cultural respect, appreciation, and dialogue, and (d) to offer new ways of knowing and telling (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, Richardson, 2000). According to Sray (2001), autoethnographers’ argument that self-reflexive critique upon one’s positionality as researcher inspires readers to reflect critically upon their own life experience, their constructions of self, and their interactions with others within socio-historical contexts (Sray, 2001). Similarly, it is a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). That’s the reason the purpose of autoethnography is not of a single mode rather fosters multidimensional mode of reflection.

So, autoethnography is being a perfect method to explore complex social issues in this complex world. It often uses the genre of writing as stand point of the self and the others in terms of experience and culture. It promotes the process of self-reflection, understanding of multicultural dimension of others, qualitative inquiry and narrative construction. Readers may understand diverse experiences of the researcher over the particular social issue. It is not limited only explicating researcher's own culture or experiences rather respects/appreciates the others in the context. It always seeks a way to transform own experience as information into study and connecting with others current diverse/complex world.

Till When... Waiting?

Being inane with dilemmas

Neither hopeful nor hopeless

Either waiting or passing

Hard to just waiting for golden morning

Days gone to death with dark evening

Just time coming and passing

Weekend to Era and epic gone

Peace and release never come even red morning



Neither I lost God nor did God lose me

Either I nil for him or somewhat would be

Oh! God being powerless untouchable human

Would be better to be demon

Waiting and tirelessly fighting but....

When comes or never comes that

On eastern horizon with red-yellowish that morning

I became so sad because of not being able to bring any change in my daily life; let alone in my own society. I felt that poetic interpretation is harder than other literal interpretation. For a moment, I felt that everything was coming and passing against me otherwise I would lead tension-free lifestyle in comparison with my ancestors. Billions of untouchables came and passed their life as suffered life, however, they were unable to eradicate untouchability. Dalit are not fighting only for the rights of survival rather struggling tirelessly for rights of equity.

There is a rule of nature, days come and go in a cyclic order, every deep-dark (night) is a symbol of every dawn. Every morning starts after a night, and a night begins with a sun set. There had been many street revolution or paper negotiations for the liberation of the Dalits, but the day of liberation from untouchable discrimination has not come yet. The South African leader Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years for the liberation of his own people or community. Thereby, they got freedom from discrimination. It will not be very easy to transform the flaws prevalent in Hinduism (Parsai, 2011). However, such evidence, slightly makes us hopeful. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, Tamils were ruined forever though they were struggling for their rights. I have much hopes and dilemmas at every moment in my life. I think not only me rather we all underprivileged are lagging behind in every walk of national life in the name of untouchable. It requires strong unification to liberate ourselves from this social evil or caste-related violence. Moreover, we are often denied the basic rights of education, housing, property rights, freedom of religion, choice of employment, and equal treatment before the law though law doesn't discriminate among the citizens. This shows that the Dalits are the most degraded, downtrodden, exploited and the least educated in our society.

Power and Sustainable Future

Being voiceless cause powerless

Beauty of nature could be worthless

Peace and charm always goes to hell

Kiss and love to God even always fail

Why, I don't have tower of power

Power of power constructs the social world

Purity and impurity upon phony bold

Vedas are nothing rather than a tale

If anywhere God, then on, yourself being fail

How I lost myself even power of an hour

If somewhere Gods, see the injustice themselves

Then on, feel the shame and roam around yourself

See the silence death of equity and feel the pain

Being God, why "I" and "we" have credible rein

Ever or never, will I have the power of liberated hour?

Read the Kuran, Tripitak, Vedas and Bible

See the Ocean, mountain, Sky and twinkle

Plan the sustainable, justifiable and shining future

Change the discriminated world, culture and nature

If not, Oh! God, let's weep we accompany with power

The bitter experiences are coming out through the journey of such writing, thus, it leads to be somehow joyful and releases myself from the pain. There are several ways to explore the lived experiences of the autoethnographer, among them poetic expression is quite shortest than others which can be a beautiful creation in the

form of data for such study. I wrote many poems on the way of this autoethnographic journey. One of them is a poem 'power and sustainable future' that portrays the nature of culture in the name of cultural hegemony. Hinduism and cultural heritage itself are vague. Moreover, the Dalit are regarded as not to have ritual rights according to the Vedas and other scriptures.

In the name of holy performance, an untouchable is denied each and every realm of local and national life. The artisan knowledge of untouchable produces idol of God, which is kept inside the temple, but their entrance in the temple is denied. How can an untouchable in such condition kiss and love the God? Please! Let's think for a moment, how the humiliation occurs. Moreover, the way of restriction differs from place to place and culture to culture/subculture, as a result, such restriction pushes an untouchable to be pessimist and even beauty of nature, trust to God, belief to societal harmony, and imagination of justifiable life could be meaningless. Such matter somehow creates a psyche and unhealthy mentality which may naturally result in offensive-mind over them due to their own's cultural practices.

For me, all religious scriptures are a series of fairy tale until they don't foster the social harmony. While I am interpreting this poem my fingers stopped to play on the key board of laptop time to time because of the '*mental crisis*' to search appropriate word for transcribing my feelings through poem to interpretation. More than thousand words I might have deleted and retyped and corrected for seeking appropriate words. Constructed plan would be failed and would be re-planned with question "what I was going to explain?" Mostly, I faced the difficulties of remembering the past experiences: the experience of writing and the experience of reading in a prescribed paradigm of research. I would say that I am not writing completely for you and nor for me rather I am collecting and arranging the

experiences in such a way which could be a lesson for those people who exercise power, cultural power and are gambling with power over millions of excluded people in the name of untouchable in this contemporary world. Some verses of the poem are the satire to the God, “If you are....You’re being failed yourself. Oh! God, if we human beings were created by you and none other almighty, then an untouchable, of course, is the generation of your power. My simple query to you is that why you created restriction for us. While I started to recall my memory, unknowingly my eyes began to shed tear and the palpitation of the heart increased.”

My intention of hot debating could be towards the God rather than the privileged people. If the God is in the world, where s/he is? To what extent and till when should we tolerate injustice? We need a sustainable and justifiable world for shining future for all human beings rather than discriminated world. Let’s start to plan for changing our cruel culture.

Untouchable as a Social 'Slow' Poison

The taste of untouchable is millions times acerbic than Potassium Cyanide (KCN) because whoever once tastes KCN s/he dies without knowing the flavor. Spiritually, it is believed that death is a way of attaining peace. But whoever once gets hurt of untouchability, it fosters to be chronic disregarding the castes or kind of the people in question. Hurt of untouchable compels any individual to be more or less detractor over socio-cultural and religious norms and values but there was no way of life to pass without being fan of the societal system. Since human beings are social animal, they are bound to follow the social norms.

There are only a few cases in the world as inverse movement against spiritualism. As an example, a renowned sociologist and legalist of India Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar struggled for long against untouchability, but eventually he was compelled

to change his spiritual mode or mindset towards Buddhism along with more than half million Hindu Dalit (on 1956) after three times (twice in Myanmar and once in Sri Lanka) participation in world conference of Buddhism. That's why; he couldn't have patience for this sort of poison of untouchable despite being a highly educated philosopher of his time. In my opinion, of course, it was the result of brutal caste system of Hinduism and an untouchable discrimination.

The above mentioned matter is just to compare the harms of untouchability as societal contamination. It is on the ground of bitter experience which I perceived at the different corners of life. Perhaps, you may not easily agree or disagree to the texts but if you belong to Hinduism, please once look back to the society. Please! Search and talk more about Hindu culture and society which will help you to get to the cruel reality. Those who have been depressed about the Hindu religion and cultural practices, of course, might have experiences of discrimination. I am not insulting anyone rather looking and reviewing my own culture to pour my feelings, which I had experienced over the period of time in my area/countrywide, into a 'knowledge container'.

There was (and even still undoubtedly there is) a strict trend of punishment like rejecting the inter-caste (between Dalit and non-Dalit) marriage as a result social punishment is given such as boycotting the couple from the village. This kind of state-led practice against Dalits continued for centuries. While historical society marginalized them socio-economically and culturally, as a result, they were compelled to be isolated from the mainstream of the country. Such matter is not only the untouchable issue rather of the entire social system in a broad sense. As an autoethnographer, I attempted to explore somewhat lived experiences I underwent for years. I, thus, believed the view of Glesne and Peshkin (1992) who argued that, in

ethnography, the subjectivity of the researcher is seen as a resource for understanding the problematic world they are investigating, as something to capitalize on rather than exorcise (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Until the discrimination exists the so called Hinduism (presently is called 'Hindutva') is nothing for me but 'Sanahtan Dharma' or the ancient path of Orthodox Brahmins, like a bundle of rituals and ceremonies from the cradle to the grave, enriches Brahmins and impoverishes and enslaves the Shudras. This was a matter of my inquiry.

The societies in the 21st century are developing with the conscience viewpoint of global citizen/globalization. The developmental of the world has been subjected differently. Social inclusion is a political process (approach) through-which marginalized minorities are included into every walks of national life. But, in terms of Nepal, it is complex due to richness of ethnicity along with the untouchable Dalit community.

Moment of Disgrace

Diverse ethnicity as miniature

Me and some guy of teen ager

We been for long comrade as mere

Used to play either group or pair

Then, I felt lovely.....

Once, gathered in jungle-feast

Day was Saturday with full of mist

Some of guys behave me miss-way

For a few moments I lost all joy

Then I felt guilty.....

I questioned me, why?

Fault, neither me nor thy

Heart shivers itself oddly

Some guy squint me badly

Then, I felt silly.....

I corrected me myself

Fault, nature and culture itself

Neither mine nor them

Initially, we equal human

Thus, I never felt enmity.....

Nepalese society and its social structure is shaped on the basis of the caste system, thus, it is itself rich in terms of ethnic diversity. To be more or less different from one caste to another, they are practicing different cultural norms and values. For example, there are lots of differences among Newars and Brahmins in terms of their food, dressing and language. Similarly, Dalit and Brahmin communities deal with their daily life differently based on their culture though both are Hindus. These are their cultural identity which dignify their caste.

The poem ‘moment of disgrace’ portrays the scenario of untouchability among friendship. An untouchable can accompany to play with others. I enjoyed playing games with my friends in my time, I didn't feel any denial, however, while cooking food, eating cooked meal together such matter would be sphere of denying automatically, even, and in common places. So far, I experienced that I was enforced to be isolated in some activities like in a picnic in common places. Some some of my friends strongly denied such a situation I learnt and felt sometime ‘lovely’ and ‘guilty’, sometime ‘silly’ and hostility during my school life, however, there was no

way to be accompanied with my classmates and other school friends. These all scenarios are the byproduct of cultural and religious practices. So, I wouldn't accuse my dear friends especially those whom I spent my school life, rather I strongly blame the cultural practices. You see, how much tolerating have I been across the situation. I am still facing a number of discriminations differently in the community where I live.

I was compelled to bear that much disgrace from my friends because such cultural practices are the same since childhood. Such a culture for a child, in non-Dalits community, begins from their family. They practically learnt from the family and followed, as a result, I got that sort of discrimination from friends. The cultural and traditional practices couldn't be changed overnight; however, can be taken away from the society if any discriminatory approaches have been removed from the context. To establish a sustainable society in the 21st century is a must but it can be possible only by removing anti-Dalit practices.

My friends used to be close with me but while their parents would come to know it, then, they would get scolded. For example, one day an intimate friend (Brahmin) told *Gayatri Mantra* (it is given to recite on Bratabandha ceremony) which is not supposed to be for an untouchable. Then, another friend conveyed that thing to his parents and he was beaten up severely. Later, I came to know that punishment. I felt sorry, such accident happens time to time all over the country. In this regard, I have presented an article written by Dirgharaj Parsai in Gorkhpatra:

In 1999, villagers in Putali Bazaar of Syangja district, near Pokhara, socially boycotted Ram Chandra Koirala, a priest, for reciting the *Gayatri Mantra* to 27 Dalit youths during a week-long religious ceremony. Since that time, the village has witnessed many a festival and religious ceremony, from Dashain and Tihar to Bratabandhas and weddings- but no one has invited Ram

Chandra. And no one has attended any ceremony conducted by him. His mother and father say that they do not like to eat anything touched by him. But neither the state nor any Dalit organization has conferred an award on this great social reformer who challenged the prevailing practices in society.

Such endeavor by a non-Dalit is very much commendable, however, neither the state admired the priest or did the Dalit organization rather he got punishment by the villagers for long. Such initiatives should be really admired and supported to carry on in the day to come which will be a means to reconstruct the discriminating society.

The cause of discrimination and hospitality comes up among human beings as a result of being a greater challenging issue to cope with. Whenever the social injustice takes place, the social integration doesn't occur in the world. The school is a society where children from diverse ethnicity come and learn new pattern of socialization. Each school needs to play model role with non-discriminative approach for good social integration thus needs to create an appropriate environment. But in contrast, factually I didn't have much conducive learning environment for socially justifiable manner almost since my school days. The educational history of Dalit is very gloomy because they were not given any chance to be educated although they used to learn skills through themselves in the place of outer parts of house like Baranda and Pindhi (Koirala, 1996). Later on, educational opportunity was given to the Dalit by King Jaya Prithvi Bahadur Shingh at first for eight students (from Kami, Damai and Sarki family) into his palace (Satyabadi Pathshala) in Naxal, Kathmandu.

Reflection Through within School

I have tried to reduce the discrimination through school learning but I failed many times because some students from the non-Dalit family reluctantly used to be grouped for having snacks in school. We used to eat together whatever student

brought as snacks. To do so, many times I bought snacks from the shop though they would feel uneasy at the very beginning. Many times, I got difficulties while small children quarreled in the name of touching something (touchable) by their Dalit friends. Still, some teacher friends don't dare for having meal together, even in public feasts. Once, a Dalit student denied for receiving Dalit scholarship from school where I used to teach. Even he used to write his surname 'Sharma' instead of his socio-culturally practiced surname. When he needed to change school, the school then was requested to give him transfer certificate with 'Sharma' surname. The school denied doing so. I argued with staff for it. But, no one considered it positively.

Similarly, before four years, fortunately I reached a school which was located in my neighboring VDC, where I was familiar with teachers. The school had Diba Khaja (mid-day meal) program, supported as a special program by the government. The number of students from Dalit community was about fifty percent and a villager was assigned with the responsibility of managing the program. I saw discriminatory practices in the school that the Dalit children had to clean utensils themselves after having snacks. I debated with the school teachers on the spot and then they promised to correct such behavior. Some of the ex-students from the Dalit community used to come in my school and we talked about untouchability. They shared their experiences with me while schooling. They were treated by school discriminatively. Even their head teacher and others used to scold them badly pronouncing their surname as result some Dalit students were compelled to drop school. If such discrimination takes place for long, it wouldn't be helpful for sustainable society and future.

Chapter Summary

As the summary of this chapter, all the above given contents are around the untouchable discrimination which portray my lived experiences which were gained

through social interaction on which I am a part. Whatever I have explored through various ways of writing like poem, story and so on, with various title like 'perceiving a school beyond discrimination', 'unshackling of social suppression: an emotional perspective' try to talk fairly in an emotional way on the issue of untouchability and its impact onto the society as well. Similarly, a poem 'till when..... Waiting?', and even a story 'untouchable as a social slow poison' give a reflection of the various situations and is about full of doubt whether the liberation takes place or not because untouchable discrimination is persisting for centuries. It makes an untouchable life hopeless rather than hopeful because it is not an easy task to eradicate from the society; it proves the endeavor of Nelson Mandela, his leading revolution for liberating ones' and his community. Similarly, as a story 'untouchables as a slow social poison' gives a hint about brutality impact of untouchability as a terminal social cancer (may not treat within life time of human beings even goes on generation to generation as a hereditary diseases) rather than accident (through terror campaign) death as given the example of damaging millions of Japanese lives in the World War-II.

The poem 'power and sustainable future' also gives a concept. If there is no justice in the society, it may not be able to sustain their lives themselves who fall into the excluded group of the society. A poem 'moment of disgrace' depicts my experiences of humiliation due to untouchability. It is a series of feelings of my high school life. It tries to portray some heartbreaking situation which I experienced in my community and schools. Similarly, 'reflection through within school' talks about what and how was my role as a person from the Dalit community for the society and what I have been attempting in the course of getting relief from the cruel discrimination.

CHAPTER V

SPEAKING AS A DALIT RESEARCHER: PERSPECTIVES FROM WITHIN AND
WITHOUGHT

As an overview of this chapter, concluding two poems and one monologue and some stories and some episodic discussion depict my experiences from untouchable discrimination. The entire situation may not be favorable to understand these verses. I, however, have created these verses based on my real life situation. Thus, through various contents like poem, story and monologue, I have tried to depict the experiences which I gained from various situations and times of social interaction. A poem 'seeking self identity: a Dalit perspective tries to explore the experiences which reveal the universality of God and devaluing of some caste/descent of people in the Hindu society in the name of untouchables. A monologue 'legendary practices of Dalit discrimination' tries to portray the real pitiful situation of the Nepalese society, where privileged non-Dalits humiliate the Dalits. The way of humiliation and demoralization of the people by several legends proves the existence of a challenging attitude in our society. Similarly, a discussion 'revisiting cultural norms and values from the perspective of Dalit discrimination' gives a real situation where cultural norms and values are used as exploiting tools. Similarly, 'untouchability caused the Dalit to be Dalit' and 'equity and justice: a hallmark of a sustainable society' has enriched the data.

The poem 'injustice through the culture persisting in our land' is itself a representation of cultural discrimination which tries to represent a pitiful situation of the Nepalese society. With all these ideas and perspectives, I have attempted to

address the research question: How can, the anti-Dalit norms and values in society, be addressed for mainstreaming the Dalits in honorable and progressive social and national life?

Overall Understanding

At the moment what I experienced and came through is a great sorrow for me. The sympathy which may or may not come in the readers after reading these texts is still out of my guess. Here, my intention is not to seek any sympathy for myself rather I would like to appeal the readers to think about obstructive norms and values of Hinduism which cause a greater challenge to dignify some descents of human beings. Identity and dignity are being lost for long. Oh! God if we all are the generation of the same creator, then humiliating, kicking out, oppressing, making weaker, why? My experiences are my valuable property. However, I shared in the market of knower and knowledge builder from where more often different philosophies and theories are emerged to see over even a single world through various corners.

I raised many cases which caused severe humiliation and injustice in my personal life just in the name of untouchable. Dear my all known and unknown ancestors, I would like to let you know that, I am getting a bit relief by exploring this much bitter experiences to the un-knower/ knower. Ethically it would or wouldn't be sound; however, I explored the realities. As a researcher I developed my research queries, thereafter, I got confusion about whom and how I should consult about my research issue or statement. As the journey of writing under the banner of autoethnography, principally concentration goes to the researcher her/himself, and then I automatically got a permit to run an imaginative vehicle for my journey. I wrote a poem as the first information of this chapter to reveal my lived experiences which tries to portray the situational feeling over untouchable discrimination.

Seeking Self Identity: A Dalit Perspective

I am nothing than a micro dot

But I need my identity

You're the universal

Oh! God how I lost my dignity

I am nothing of seven hundred billion people

But being a part of three hundred million people

I need my identity

He does not intend to valid me

But I need my value

Impurity causes me devalue

Though Hindu, I lost way of devoting you

How are you universal?

For you nothing I, it's okay

I can be confined,

I can be captured and lost anytime

But how can I be dismissed by them

I lost brotherhood and co-seeker in this world

The genre of writing which I followed as an inventive way is my pleasure by which I have created many poems to explore my feelings for massive mass of readers. The cultural practices and the environment where I grew up through several social training that made me to experience many bitter situations which caused this academic writing for my master's level study. I think, then, for me, it is not beyond the societal world rather a representation of the realistic condition of discrimination. As part of religious and cultural practice, it is done in our society and is helping to

create social injustice by the cause that Dalits are being far from resources and opportunities.

The poem entitled 'seeking self identity: a Dalit perspective' could be slightly humorous because most of the time, during three and a half decade, I felt social injustice from the public to the private sector. This opinion might be somehow critical for those who perceive the world through old view lens. According to Maynard, ethnographers have increasingly 'shied away from coherent cultural 'world views' (as cited in Autrey, 2003, p.4). Cultural dominance, religious superiority and humiliation may not be a part of human rationality. Human are by birth equal because science proves that nothing is different to be lower or higher caste or race in order to make a hierarchy. It's only the game of power. One of my teacher friends (Dalit) is getting ill-treated by his headteacher (Brahmin). He said "My head teacher never calls me respectfully." In this situation, how a teacher might have valued himself or herself (students or staff), furthermore he told that "in front of the students he said to me 'tan' (disrespectful way of calling a person)", and even, one day his father and brother also told me that the head teacher doesn't respect the Dalit teacher. I strongly agree with the article by Anita Shrestha (2002) who wrote in her paper that Dalits are abused by addressing them with disrespectful words, such as using the word 'tan' instead of 'Hajoor/Tapain' (Shrestha, 2002). Could it be justice? Does it indicate the social justice? For me, it is a shameful behavior and the product of *ill-cultured mind*. Why I connected this matter here is that because in this way an untouchable individual is devalued in our society. Furthermore, women from the Dalits are the subject to bear multiple dominations. What sorts of tagging are to be held within human beings beyond human rationality? I experienced devalued situation for an untouchable

everywhere. There is no value of untouchable and even more so with an untouchable woman. Once tagged with untouchable, the person becomes untouchable forever.

Religious and cultural restrictions are the backforce to this social injustice or misbehavior towards the Dalits. Some of the intellectuals or politicians from the Dalits have reluctantly broken up their friendship due to untouchability. Even some employees resigned from their job while they were ill-treated. According to Zelliott (2001) there is, in the word itself, an inherent denial of pollution, karma, and justified caste hierarchy (as cited in Bharati, 2002).

In the name of untouchability, a number of atrocities exist in the Nepalese society. For example, mental torture, rape, break-up of inter-caste marriage, battering, brutal punishment, false allegation, etc. Furthermore, they don't feel hesitattion to dominate openly by scolding the Dalits badly. It is, somewhere, also found that the untouchable people, including women, are easily beaten up by the upper caste male. Sometimes such beating punishment causes death. To bring this point into light, let me present an an example:

Jubida-6, Maidhara, Kalikot... A death incident of Manbir Sunar age of 31 by encounter attacked of upper caste Youths (Dip Bahadur Shahi and Mim Bahadur Shahi) in the name of oven touched at a teashop of Jas Bahadur Shahi. He bought cigarette and fired himself from oven, then Bala kumari Shahi (shop owner) scolded him badly "Doom (lower caste) started to enter houses now a days", thereafter debating for a while then suddenly he was beaten up severely and his neighbor bought him to his house and immediately sent to hospital but on the way he breathed his last. After postmortem, Dr. Ravin Khadka said "intestine injury due to severe beating up". Bala kumar Shahi accepted that the case happened after scolding on the issue of touching

the oven. The accused have been caught by the police. Birvade Sunar (Manbir's father) is still on half-crazy mode. A Dalit leader claimed that, event was totally related to the untouchable discrimination. (Pande, 2011, Dec. 14)

How does this sort of misbehavior help for sustainable society/social harmony? Most of the cases of violence against human rights occur in the Dalit community. Without ensuring social justice, resources and opportunities may not be equalized for them those who are marginalized since ancient time. The state should play the risky game to uplift the oppressed community for mainstreaming into the national development. Moreover, all the educational institutions should play the pivotal role with strong commitment to empower marginalized community to bring them into the national mainstream.

Education and Discrimination: An Experience from My Headteacher

I continuously worked in a school for eight years. During my duty at that school I had to go to my head teachers' house and others as well. I was offered tea several times, but I was offered meal only for three times which I still remember. After giving tea I was also given an Amkhora (water vessel). I was asked to clean the tea cup and the head teacher and others used to see the shameful discrimination. Once, in the month of Ashadh (13th, July) at first I was offered meal. I couldn't deny because of hunger. Anyway, I was ready to have meal sitting in the Pindhi (outer part of house).



An untouchable old man is having meal in the outer-part (Pindhi) of the house of a Brahman. It just can be assumed through this how untouchables are being humiliated in rural life in the Hindu society. Just as an instant of social crime.

I was given a water pot full of water (amkhora/lohota) and my head teacher also took a water pot to wash hand. The Head teacher entered his home being merely bent and gently I was requested by him to sit beside the door. An old (nearly 60 years) woman (head teachers' mother) came out with a dish of rice and curry-bowl. I was encouraged by the head teacher from inside "Lilaji! Don't hesitate, eat enough." I humbly said, "Yes, sir..." After a while his mum offered me more food but I rejected because I needed to be faster than the head-teacher. If I were late, I would have to clean the dishes in front of him. But by chance what happened is that while I was cleaning the dishes he asked me "Sir! Do you need more water?", then I said yes, he poured water very carefully into the pot which was already given to me. Just a minute after, his mother threw cow-dung where I was seated for meal then unwillingly I rubbed the place with cow-dung. Thereafter, though more offering I did not accept any more meal in his house because of such behavior; as a result they left to offer the meal. Thus, rubbing cow-dung on that place where I sat and ate rice, washing dishes and not letting to enter the house, all these are the matters of humiliation. It's due to cultural practices for long in the society than the personal interest of the family.

The implicit discrimination upon Dalits is most difficult to uncover, however, I have tried to explore through this storytelling where, to some extent, I would like to connect the matter of attitudes of people towards an untouchable individual. People in many parts of the world are still suffering the discriminatory practices on the grounds of their race, color, creed, caste, gender, and ethnicity. Undoubtedly, it is against the human rights and International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) treaties. Among those, the caste-based approach along untouchable discrimination is one of the cruelest ways of discrimination. Mostly, in the Hindu society, it is still existing and practiced strongly in rural areas

comparatively more than in urban areas. Through the formulation of New Civil Code (NCC) in 1963, the government of Nepal also declared the caste-based practice of 'untouchability' as an illegal act. It, however, still exists in the society where I live. A study by Bhattachan et al. (2003) investigated the existing practice of caste-based untouchability and revealed that 205 areas were identified as the places where the Dalits are discriminated. Furthermore, such discrimination is inherent in the denial of entry to house/temple, denial of services, denial of access to common resources, dissent of kinship and/or social relationships, forced labor, denial of participation, dominance, atrocities, social boycott, attitudinal untouchability, and discrimination in naming as an example differently naming than a Brahmin individual.

The untouchable phenomenon is vast and it is essential to think how an untouchable individual should be active and sensitive to liberate oneself from that problem. Perhaps, the queries could be on intra-untouchability as communal dishonesty because 'I' (self) and 'we' (along others) have a contrast in between untouchable community. It is difficult for the Dalits to get liberation from the tag of 'untouchable'. It needs a rigorous attempt to do so. First, the Dalits need to be aware of the hierarchy which is practiced within their own community. Why do we need a hierarchy within the untouchable community? Let's think for a moment. I realize that it has caused the Dalits to be weaker in the society. As a result, they have not been able to make a unified voice against suppression over them. It is said that "*bhai phute gawanr lute*" which means breaking the unity of brotherhood causes benefit to others. Within untouchable community there are disparities mostly in the rural areas. Koirala (1996) revealed that Damais are untouchables for Sarkis and Sarkis are having a lower rank compared to that of the Kamis.

Moreover, the discrimination within untouchable community/sub communities occurs significantly all over the country. They don't know why there is discriminated behavior within us. Such intra-caste untouchability is a greater issue. Hence, many times and places I heard from the intellectuals like college professors (during my bachelor degree), "Let it to be so, because untouchable discrimination takes place even within the Dalit community". In this situation, how can our initiatives for removing discrimination be successful? The Dalits should once analyze themselves than better claim and blame others, shouldn't they?

The story 'education and discrimination: an experience from my headteacher' is a symbolic representation of the untouchable discrimination of the countryside. It has only three main characters, I (myself), headteacher and his mother but it represents the problematic social issue on untouchable discrimination vividly. I found that the behavior of my headteacher was the product of his cultural attitudes and the behavior of his mother was the product of the cultural practice. I was unable to deny their cultural practice and attitude, neither could I debate. Culturally, they had full power to do so. Here, I would connect with the view of Ishii and Karan (1996) that the religiously and culturally based discrimination is strengthening to verify the Nepalese people in several categories and social hierarchy in order to make ethnic and caste-based segregation. The house was not mine and exactly belonged to him. But, a disparity is that if someone (upper caste) comes in the untouchable's house s/he has to provide mat and talk more respectfully in an ethical manner. If an untouchable goes to the house of the upper caste people, s/he is compelled to sit at the corner of the house-yard without mat and they talk with him/her without respect.

In this situation, how the Hindu society can be the democratic and who is responsible for it? The untouchable community or the state-led provision and acts are

accused of such discrimination; eventhough cultural and religious attitude of the people is also more responsible factor. Whatever has been depicted through this story, the fault is neither mine nor theirs. But to remove the untouchability, the existing cultural and religious practices should be restructured to make it Dalit friendly. It is needed to bring about changes in the attitudinal behavior (not only the written code of conduct) which may foster democracy. As result, egalitarian society may be established. Eventually, it may sustain the social world into justifiable one without any untouchable discrimination where millions of Dalit people may have dignity as equal to the others.

Social Exclusion of the Dalits: An Experience from a Host Family

It was the 16th Mangshir, 2052 BS. The location was Hupra Cahur in Hetauda (an industrial area of Nepal). I was there to engage in in-service teacher training. I had never been to Hetauda. It was the first opportunity for me to participate in such a program, too. We were from six districts with more than 180 participants.

In Hupra Chaur, there was a one storied-house with three rooms. The house was of a sister in my neighborhood. Her maternal house was much close with my home in the village. Her mum sent a message to me and suggested to me to go there at first. I reached there around dark evening and I was requested by her to stay there that night. I happily decided to be there just for one night. At 9 o'clock, I was supposed to have dinner. The sister told her ten years old daughter "Nani"⁶⁰, give him water". At the time when her daughter gave me water, she came out with utensil of meal to provide me food outside the room. Then, her daughter asked her "Why outside, mum?" She humbled and didn't say anything but while they entered inside together, then she told, "You don't know, he is Kami. Culturally, we do not allow him to enter

⁶⁰ A word is used to call young female kids in kindly manner

in our home". Her daughter did not have much idea about untouchable. So, she was surprised. However, I tolerated the thing that just happened to me. I was shocked because I had already introduced myself as a teacher. But more interestingly what happened was that they made a bed for me in the room facing outside though the TV room was empty. Then, she said to me, "Don't be afraid, nothing will happen. You are safe here". I nodded my head accepting her remarks. It was almost 10 o'clock. There was a path besides the house. Though the place was unknown to me, I didn't deny. I thought I would have to go to guest house and I should plan to come tomorrow morning. I realized my fault in bearing the humiliation. I got a deep sleep. When I woke up in the morning, I looked for my shoes which I had kept under the bed before I slept at night. In fact, my pair of shoes was not there. Then, I asked the sister about the shoes. She showed a surprise look and said "Oh ea....might be stolen by street-traveler but such incident had never happened before here". I told her not to worry for it. Thereafter, I went to a shop and bought a pair of shoes. I then came back and took my bag. I stepped towards the training centre (Makawanpur Multiple Campus). If I were allowed to sleep in the TV room, I would not lose my pair of shoes.

During two and a half month, I was familiarized with two teachers of my own district. One of them had matric degree from Banaras (India). We three had hired one room and used to eat in a hotel. After some days, what I had experienced with that friend was that he was very much critical regarding untouchability. I tried to be isolated with them but another teacher advised me not to go far from there because we had a very short time. What he used to do was that he didn't wear Janai (holy thread) almost all the time while we met each other and started sitting together. One day he whispered to another friend and said, "It is not better to wear holy thread before completing this training. I will use it after getting home back." Reluctantly, I

came to know and politely asked him curiously about the thing he was talking about. He irritably enforced me to stop. We used to keep water vessel for room purpose. If I drank the water at first, then he would frown and tactfully throw the water out.

If a stick that you have is bent, then, you can't see the shadow straight. Astrologically, every dream could have meaning. I have seen many dreams but I did not find any connection of these dreams with the liberation from social suppression. Currently, training institutions and school or colleges may have such discriminated behavior towards untouchable learners. It means that they don't know each other and they don't intend to accept others' values. They only impose colonial knowledge. None is superior and inferior by birth (Rig Veda, 10:125). So, it is needed to unify among untouchable for strong debating which could be a reliable way of understanding between privileged and underprivileged. I believed the idea of Ann Ownby Hicks (2004) who wrote "The last theme that I identified, for lack of better terminology, I call 'resiliency with integrity.'" I suggest that this term indicates a stance which does not accept oppression, discrimination, over-power or adversity. It also does not aggressively or radically defend when it is faced with such behaviors. These events gave me a lot of insights to perceive how an untouchable is being treated in his life by the non-Dalits. A child doesn't know about untouchable discrimination as much as her mother. The discrimination upon me sequelled to lose my shoes however it doesn't matter but the reality is cultural practice humiliated me. I still remember that it was very hard time for me to bear. I accepted the situation as a *cultural violation*, such violations I am still facing differently.

Some Collective Experiences of Denial

While I started teaching in a school, I felt much difficult to keep patience bearing untouchable discrimination. Before my engagement as a staff, the teachers

used to have interlude snacks in a local shop. It was the last week of March, 1997. At the first day of my teaching profession, four teachers including me went to have Tiffin. On the way to the snacks shop, I was thinking that whether I have to clean utensils myself over there in the shop or not. All the teachers entered the shop except me. I was requested to sit outside the shop alone. I was given snacks to eat. In the end, the shopkeeper gave me a vessel of water and told me to clean the teacup, plate and spoon. I failed to deny doing that. Then, I got flummoxed by his version. My friends looked at me for a while. Finally, the headteacher just cajoled me “Don’t worry, Lilaji! I will cope with this problem.” The shopkeeper irritably told me, “Being a villager I can’t accept your version. If I accept your voice, all other people of your community try to do the same. I will be insulted by other villagers.”

The situation was just like a drama. The event is imprinted in my mind. By the next day, headteacher reluctantly ordered to some children to bring dry-food (Chiura, Dalmoth and noodles) but we didn’t have plates. He tore a page from students’ attendance register of last year and divided those dry-foods into four equal parts. He then gave me discriminatively. Again, the event shocked me. I frowned myself for a while. Similar had happened a day ago. Thereafter, many times I proposed to make snacks in school. I even said, “As kitchenware whatever is needed, I buy myself alone.” But nobody heard rather I suffered more by various events.

However, I was compelled to tolerate for a long. Then I was transferred to another school where I got much friendly behavior than in the previous school. Even though, I was still suffering from other discriminatory behaviors from my colleagues. Sometimes, we used to go to village. The teachers used to offer some snacks but I couldn’t accept it easily and tactfully I would deny because I had experienced of cleaning utensils. I cleaned utensils in front of my students whose parents talked with

me disrespectfully. This astonished me a lot. Teachers were called by villagers in several parties or feasts (Wedding ceremony, Bratabandha, Puja etc.) but I attained a very few of them. Whenever I attended any feast or festival as a teacher, I was not allowed to share the teachers' groups that I belonged to. I wanted to sit and enjoy the feasts in the group but some of them used to say, "Mastsab! Don't be in the same row, be seated being isolated." I knew the culture of excluding Dalits in our society which made me feel humiliated. Then, I frequently denied those sorts of parties. Still I don't have strong desire to take part in such public feasts.

On the way to exploring my experience I thought that it could be incomplete if I don't share a surprising action, a breakthrough of traditional restriction. One day, I took out water from the reserve tank which was located in the middle of the village. None of the Dalits were allowed to do that since long back. As a teacher, I broke that rule. Thereafter, a message extended all over the village. Next day a meeting was held by the villagers. The teachers were also called but they weren't interested in taking part except the headteacher. He failed to debate with villagers in my favor. He told, "Lila did the thing that the other Dalits do not. It does not need any meeting." They asked me unnecessary questions aggressively. I debated more than two hours for defending me. Eventually, I got a serious threaten of getting transferred to a remote area. One of the debaters told me, "If you do such again, we all villagers will collect signature to propose District Office for your transfer in Jharlang (a remote place at the distance of least 3 days on foot from my village). Then, I irritably replied, "I don't know, you do whatever you like but I am not weak as whatever you guys are guessing. I will also decide to defend me in the pace of time." You see, just I took out a pot of water within a few minutes but we (almost 20 people) spent about two hours.

Eventually, they realized their fuss. They said to me, "You did because you are teacher but the other Dalits are not allowed to do the same."

I was neither hopeless nor excited by having such experiences which I explored through the pages of this chapter. Undoubtedly, I experienced the difference between a story writer and a commentator. While I have been commenting to the other's cultural behavior with reference to discriminatory actions that were serially performed by others influencing my life. Really, we untouchable people are not weaker to behave others discriminatively. The above discussion revealed the overall image of how an untouchable is treated in common places and how many hardships the Dalits have to face in their individual and professional life. On the other hand, how I failed to settle those discriminative behaviors while I was compelled to debate in the shop and school, how an untouchable is humiliated in the feast in common places in the society- are the main themes of the essay. If an untouchable opposes to such discrimination, they usually used to make the arguments on the basis of culture and tradition. Dalits have low capacity to take advantage of the opportunities and existing local resources due to social restriction. Such structural discrimination has severely impacted the overall existence of the Dalits who have been undoubtedly denied their rights to citizenship, land, education, health care, livelihood, security and bodily integrity. On the top of all, manifestation of such discrimination is the practice of 'untouchability' which has absolutely segregated the Dalits from members of the other castes. An exemple with an article from Gorkpatra written by Dirgaraj Parsai stated:

In the villages of Doti, there is a belief that if Dalits are given to drink milk, the cattle will stop giving milk and blood will ooze out instead. This is why the people of Doti don't sell milk. The villagers use powder milk when making

tea, and milk is not sold in the teashops. In Bajhang and Bajura, a Dalit is obliged to wash the teacup after drinking tea from it. The political leaders are well aware of the situation, but they do not speak out.

From the above piece of writing, we can view the untouchable life into Hindu society. A question to the practitioner of Hinduism is: does it foster democracy in helping a justifiable society and sustainable future in the 21st century?

An untouchable individual should bear various discriminations in the course of life. Since early childhood, from playgroup to school and college education they are somehow ostracized in a particular situation. Even the teachers, from the Dalit community, are discriminated. Similarly, they are not allowed to practice Hindu rituals, norms and values in the same manner as upper castes. Thus, there is discrimination in religious and cultural spheres as well.

For me, such discriminatory approaches couldn't support the modern democracy. Only the constitutional revision is not enough to relieve from the suppression rather socio-cultural environment needs to be made Dalit friendly. Social injustice should be removed as soon as possible so that their lost rights will be ensured with especial rights and opportunities. It should be considered that those who are lagging behind (socially, economically, religiously, politically, culturally and educationally) are being failed to contribute to helping national development.

Legendary Practices of the Dalit Discrimination

Tomorrow, I should go to school early. The Headteacher is going to be late. Today I have seen him in merely a humbled mood. It could be due to unnecessary debate on untouchable matter. He compelled to pour remaining water after a long debate and he might be thinking as a loser. I am also confused about the case. It is typically my schools' case. Sometimes, it happens, leave it.

Meanwhile, I recall an event. Once I got hurt by a case was happening in a temple where the people of my village had sacrificed animal and were sharing meat among the villagers. Traditionally, the task of sacrificing animals in temples is not given to the Dalit, not only in my village but all over the country. As a result, they couldn't take those sharing meat on time. One day a young boy tried to take those shared meat himself. All the meat was denied by the others and a villager said, "you naughty.....do you have rights to do so? He further said, "Daminiko kokhama bas linu hunnathyo." This means that 'you were not to be born of an untouchable mother's (Damini) womb.' Some of them even intentionally tried to beat him. I debated much and I hardly reconciled it. While I was recalling and converting memories into text I felt much hurt. To minimize the pain intentionally, then immediately, I changed my mood ,as a result, some typical several proverbs I remembered which more often I used to hear during gossiping in the Aran(a place where iron tools are made by blacksmith), among the people from Dalit and non-Dalit. A conversation between an old Brahman and a blacksmith which I heard years before:

An old Brahman: Jetha! (First son of any couple) Did you repair my tools?

Blacksmith: No, Baraju! (Forefather/grandfather)

An old Brahman: Why....., it seemed as "Kamiko palo Pushama" means (turn of Kami comes on the month of Pusha (9th month of BS).

Blacksmith: Being flummoxed....., No, immediately I repair, without a word towards that nasty proven.

An old Brahman: (Irritably) why not, you must do, we are giving you Bali (a tiny portion of harvest is given to server especially to Kami and Damai in rural life of Nepal)

Blacksmith: (Politely) No. Hajur! ..., don't say like that, you're not giving that without cost, I am serving rigorously being blacksmith as my duty, you see, how much hard? ..., (to produce/repair tools of iron...) so, please! Don't be angry.

An old Brahman: Jetha!⁶¹ Needless to say, if you talk more with me this and that, you would be a sinner in your rebirth.

Blacksmith: (irritably), leave it, "Marepachhi Dumai Raja" means (whoever be king after death, doesn't need to worry), naturally, the situation cooled down for a while.

There are many proverbs in Nepalese society; however, most of them are used in order to satire the lower caste people. Of course, such a conversation humiliates the people of the typical caste. Here, I raised mainly two major proverbs regarding lower castes.

Kamiko Palo Pushama, it might be the result of either giving less priority as a sign of exclusion of Dalit in any sphere or humiliating/dominating them and not accepting their identity. In this situation, as above conversation, Kami (blacksmith) should tell nothing though being humiliated severely by the proverb. The Brahmin is presenting irritably and other character is politely (like Baraju, Hajur, please etc.) requesting. It is sure that this is the sign of underprivileged caste.

Marepachhi Dumai Raja, this proverb regards Dalit (Dumai means 'Dum'; it is used mostly in the Western part of Nepal to address the people from all the untouchable caste). Such a words, phrases and proverbs are openly used while gossiping with each other, as result, it somehow demoralizes the Dalit people though no one gives any attention to stop it. There is a saying in English, "one who lacks patience become psyche patient." Dalit is always humiliated as Dalit by the nasty proverbs, as social taboo even same caste community too. It would be the matter of

⁶¹ a Nepali word used to call first born son to any couples

shame. It is believed that those who are mentally frustrated, then, think badly, behave others badly. What they eat and do beyond the cultural norms, as seems impure and forgives the Vedas, and follower of bad indeed is Shudra although falling in any Varna” (Santi Parva, Mahabharata). If so, then most of the Hindu people fall on Shudra because only a few could follow in the Vedic manner. That’s why, how and who are Shudra, Vaishya, Kshatriya and Brahman? All the human beings could have a new recognition as Shudra because as per the Vedas' theme to be Brahman forgiveness is a must. One shouldn't have any indulgence over something except on endowment. In contrast, most of the intellectuals have professionalized their life to have more properties which comes with serving others like doctors, engineers and professors. Does it give the sense that serving to other is Shudra's job? If so, then all of us are becoming Shudra, aren't we? I would say that, it is, therefore, needed to have a new identity for all of us rather than Manuism. The Verna is a rhetorical literature rather than a metaphoric one.

As the recognition of color, black people are called Shudra. If so, then what we can call Lord Krishna because he was also a black. It is said that the caste can be changed as per one's deed. If mental detachment can avoid karma, then there is no good reason to be same Varna is the main theme of Gita, (Chapter II, Verse, 59). Similarly, there were some written texts and legendary talks, Vishwamitra's son became Shudra, and Vishwamitra himself was a Kshatriya who later became a Brahmin. Shaunaka became Brahmin though born in Kshatriya family (Vishnu Puran, 4.8.1). But there is no any symbol of caste of these greater characters, no surname, only Varna, in which castes they fall upon. If they fall in any caste group, of course, there would be surname but they did not possess any surname. The surname is an identical way of introducing caste of an individual. Some scholars state that caste is

not based on birth. But I have not found those scriptural statements in the Vedas. I have also not seen any kind of ritual to transform a Shudra to a Brahmin even in any Hindu scriptures. Born as Shudra, die as Shudra, thus, that is the name of the game.

Injustice through Culture Persisting in our Land

This land is of all of us,

From Sagarmatha to the hot Terai

Neither only mine nor alone yours

Neither of the rich nor poor

Only you impudent me impotent

But same religion even culture

From Mechi river to the Mahakali,

Northern beauty nature of snowcap,

Beautiful fountain and mountain

Southern plain feature of forest-cap

Joyful land though me impotent

Eastern red-yellowish morning

Ocean has silence waving

Cloudy eternity on sky

Western sun setting

Breaking down to have shiny sky

See the twilight, hope the golden morning



The poetic representation is a shortest artistic way to explore feelings subjectively. It is said that ‘where Ravi (sun) doesn’t reach, Kavi (poet) reaches’. The poem ‘injustice through culture persisting in our land’ tries to depict some version of cultural discrimination according to which Hindu society has been classified into

several cultural segments. Social injustice (due to untouchable discrimination) is greater challenge in current contemporary world.

Nepalese society has been living for long as a religiously and culturally integrated society as a result it has become rich in cultural diversity. The entire natural amenity introduces Nepal as rich in terms of beauty of the nature. We have beautiful snow covered mountain range from the East to the West. The northern part which is the source of glacier and river is known as water top. Northern Himalayan range, world's highest peak Mt. Everest, Mechi⁶² and Mahakali⁶³ River, Mahabharat Hill⁶⁴ range etc. are our natural heritages. The eastern beauty with yellowish red morning gives exciting view to every Nepalese each day. In the southern part, most of the land with deep forest is known as forestland '*Charkose Jhadi*' (deep forest in Terai) and crops' reservoir. One hundred three ethnicities with diverse cultural richness originated from several religions and with linguistic prosperity are our identities. Varieties in food and dress up are another aspect of cultural opulence. Out of many world cultural heritages, Nepal occupies tenth places which is a matter of pride. My patriotic love is always with my country and its beautiful nature. However, my mind always roams around discriminative torture- socio-cultural and religious taboos.

The Dalit people are wandering here and there to be released from untouchable discrimination. Many of them are changing their religious belief into Christianity. In my area also, some Dalits turned into Christianity. Here, a question is that whether changing religion is a scientific solution to untouchability or any expression. It can't be so. It could be a threatening step over Hinduism and its discriminative culture. Deconstruction of cultural practices is a challenging task in

⁶² A river lies eastern border of Nepal

⁶³ A river lies western border of Nepal

⁶⁴ A famous hill range in the world and separates hill region and south plain of Nepal

this world. Constructive and deconstructive view has come up into existence though existing cultures are being practiced badly in some cases.

It is believed that, if any milk variety is given to an untouchable individual, those animals are to be climbed up a tree or let it fall down from the cliff within a few days. Even entering into cowsheds is also restricted for Dalits mostly in Mid Western and Far Western Development Region. All such restrictions symbolize the severe domination over the Dalit. Dalits are compelled to bear atrocities wherever they live. That's why they are known as an impotent in national life. They have to pay attention to respectful behavior to the upper caste people. Does it mean justice or social harmony? As a literal example, it can be taken as the effect of hierarchical society on the untouchable community which is traditionally like the natural honesty of the *Buhari Jhaar* (Minosa Pudica), a bushy plant mostly found in the hillside. When the leaf is touched, as a response, it itself closes leaves and bows down as like in veneration to the God by a devotee. Here, if untouchable tries to evoke on getting the lost rights, of course, s/he will get trouble. Mostly, rural lives of untouchable are like '*Buhari jhaar*' because Dalit should respect the upper caste people though they are junior in age, education, skills and so forth.

Here, I would like to connect with some moments of my schooling. The school was two hours far from home, therefore I needed to have a rented room for attending extra class (tuition/coaching) beyond the school hours. I looked for a rented room for long though failed to get due to untouchability but all of my non-Dalit friends got easily. I talked with two more friends they tactfully denied my purpose to accompany me rather politely they told me "let us ask our parents first, and then we will decide," whether they asked or not rather they also left their room. Similarly, for S.L.C. (School Leaving Certificate) exam, I had to go to my district head-quarter

which was 5 hours far on foot. I couldn't get room. Hardly had I spent 15 days in an outer-part of a house (Pindhi) that was also managed by one of my classmate's father though I paid money as much as for other room of the house.

Revisiting Cultural Norms and Values from the Perspective of Dalit

Discrimination

The discrimination which I faced may not be limited in certain pages of writing. As an episodic creation with recalling memories and exploration, I humbled what to write because so many numbers of events come serially from the different corners of life experiences, and eventually I vowed for opening some incidents from which I was humiliated severely in various places and times.

Episode 1

It could be any week of December 1991. I went to a senior friend's father in-law's house, which was six hours far on foot. That was the first time for me to visit the house of a friend's relative. We reached in the mid evening. Being untouchable, I have given the bedding to sleep at the upper part of a cowshade. It's almost intolerable though I spent a night. Being at a new place, I got up early in the morning and left the bed to peek around. A sister-in-law of that house went up, where I was slept, and sprinkled 'Sunpani' (water with touching gold) even on bedding goods. It was my first experience to see sprinkling of water in the place where I had slept. I couldn't say anything over that. I saw it and was quite silent.

Episode 2

15 years ago, although I was well known about the culture and discrimination, I dared to enter a teashop in the local market of my area. There was a set of bench outside for the Dalits. It is still practiced in some teashops. I asked for snacks. Immediately a woman (shop owner) aggressively told "be seated outside, over there

on the bench.” She also knew me. By profession, I was a teacher then. I denied to be seated outside with some argument but she left to serve other customers who were already there. She was uneducated, with full of fear she told me straight “if I let you to have snacks inside, my regular non-Dalits customers may deny to come in my shop.” She also said, "I know you are good but I can't serve you until and unless you do not sit outside." Then, I accused of the culture rather than her squinted eyes over me.

Episode 3

10 years ago, a teacher friend (from the upper caste) and me entered a teashop of my local area and sat on the bench. We ordered two cups of tea. A woman (shop owner) treated us very much politely and tactfully, “There is no milk to serve you tea.” We asked for black tea then she told with some dilemmas, “Oh! There is no sugar as well. Wait for a while I need to go to buy sugar then I will serve you”. There was a utensil washer girl too, we waited about five minutes with gossiping ourselves but intentionally she didn't come. We then left the shop without having tea. Later on, we came to know nothing was lacking there for making tea. The shopkeeper did not want to serve the Dalits in her shop.

Episode 4

It was mid February, 2003. We were around 50 teachers in a school which was known as Resource Centre School (RCS) of our area. At that time, I was an assistant of Resource Person (RP). There was the head teachers' training from two resource centers for three days on Child Friendly Learning (CFL) issue. The training was handled by RP. During discussion session/hour and on the topic of debating to maintain ‘non-discriminative classroom environment’ many points of head teachers have been brought out into the discussion floor. I also explored my perception over

there. For a while, a heartbreaking issue arose about untouchability. Some teachers told no student from the Dalit community to be in the classroom. Some told that there is no problem having Dalit student and some told untouchability as serious problem in school. We shared our experiences over the phenomenon. The trainer was imposing optimally to the participants. We should do like this and that way. Meanwhile, a teacher threw a question on the floor, "Lila is here, and who can dare to take him into one's own house? And later indicates to the trainer, could you sir? Please take Lila (Dalit teacher) to your house. For a while it was silence over there. Thereafter, they dropped the issue by accusing our cultural practices as the major obstacle.

Episode 5

Once, it could be the last week of January 1997. We four teachers were on the yard of school. One of the parents and some ex-students came in front of us. They invited to all teachers except me to go to a temple namely 'Dholamandali Mai', located in my district which is about five hours walking distance. Many people go there for sacrificing female kids of goat on Tuesday of every weekend and Dalits were forbidden for such sacrificing. They were even not allowed to go near the temple. Eventually, the people informed me "Sir! We couldn't take you over there as per our cultural beliefs." It is believed that if Dalits are present and pray/sacrifice, a terrible sinister occurs somewhere else. I felt 'cultural shame' and 'embarrassment'.

Episode 6

It was the last week of February 1995. The event took place in a primary school where I started my teaching profession. We decided to go on a picnic with young kids of class three, four and five on Saturday. We got together on the spot. Four teachers along with forty students joined the picnic. I got humiliated during the picnic because I was not offered to cook and share the cooked meal. My friends told

me that for them there was no problem in mixing me in the picnic to serving of food. But, according to them, if the students told their parents about the mixing of Dalit teachers in the serving of food, they would be furious. Thereafter, school never arranged such program until I was there though I proposed many times.

Episode 7

It could be the last week of March 2003. A Japanese guy (Agro-expert) came to my house to meet us for farming of sweet-potato. I brought him at dead evening. By morning, he told me to gather ten-fifteen farmers. Early morning I went to my neighbors and informed them to come for meeting with the Japanese expert. At 7:00 am, some farmers gathered in my house yard. I didn't know early about the topic of discussion. He intended to discuss about Japanese green tea (produced by him). Discussion was around one and half hours. Meanwhile he opened his bag and took out pack of green tea and some pack of biscuits. He showed us and told "This tea is from my field, let's taste." He asked to boil water for tea but we couldn't do that because some of them were from the upper caste. Then, he failed for giving his tea taste. On the other hand, he also failed to serve biscuits because nobody dared to have biscuits without tea or water. Then, he got surprised and told me that you teachers are even restricted into society this much. Such restriction, in fact, might be obstacle for social development and your social status as well. How could you lead your society?

All these heartbreaking episodes portray my experiences from different places and times. As to my belief, all these happened on the cultural background. All the episodes are all about how strong and orthodox our Hindu culture and society is, and let one have the experience of restriction, humiliation and exclusion. They do as their forefathers did in the name of culture.

Are Dalits not the subjects to enjoy equality, equity, social prestige? Are Dalits really born with the destiny full of hate, subjugation, humiliation and suppression in the society? So, I thought that as my duty I should raise voice over such humiliation. What caused me to bear humiliation by non-Dalits in my community? I think, in all the episodes mentioned above I had to bear humiliation, suppression and social exclusion only because I was missing 'power': the power to convince non-Dalits for my honor and self-esteem, the power to secure my existence as human in the society, the power to create and occupy social space where both Dalits and non-Dalits live together in peace and harmony. I was being powerless in all the episodes. Although I am a teacher from a community devoid of respectful life, as a result, I could not offer the non-Dalits to have green tea and biscuits (as mentioned in the data above) at my house yard. For them, it was a Dalit house yard which has been neglected, hated and ignored for centuries.

Episode six gives a clear landscape of untouchable discrimination in the public feast arranged by school, a public institution. Episode five shows a restriction in a religious place and shameful behavior to others in the name of cultural belief. Episode four portrays discriminative school environment, such discrimination is found more or less in the entire countryside. Episode three and two depict the cultural power against untouchables in the public sphere. Due to the horror of public criticism the shopkeepers ignored me serving tea in their shops. What I learned from these episodes was that I am not the part of community where I live. I have not been able to make the non-Dalits realize my significant presence (as Dalit) contributing to their existence in the society. I felt myself that my life is, in some ways, unwanted, disregarded and without pride and identity. This also caused me feel this life as a sad life.

Untouchability Caused the Dalit to be Dalit

Untouchability is a key obstacle; makes to be an individual powerless, as a result, often remains voiceless. Thus, liberation from social suppression is too far from them. Due to the socio-religious power, non-Dalits don't consider the Dalit as the members of the society in which they have been living for centuries. The Dalits have been serving the non-Dalits for centuries in almost all the spheres of their life. Kitchenwares, garments, building houses, cultivating their fields and producing crops, taking care of their cattle, children etc. are the scopes of non-Dalits in which the Dalits essentially have been contributing to their services for years. Besides these, the Dalits have often taken the non-Dalits in their community with the high sense of honor and followed them accordingly. In return, the Dalits were treated inhumanly. They were never ever regarded as colleague, co-partners and brothers by the non-Dalits. Dalits are born in the society, live in the society and contribute in the socio-economic spheres of life of the individuals in the society but they hardly enjoy the rights to use social resources and participate in the social functions as equally as the non-Dalits in any sphere of social life. What an injustice! High social responsibility and very little rights for survival in the part of Dalits induced me to explore why Dalits are bound to live in such a limited social life for centuries. I was often stunned by the idea why they remained Dalits- the subject for discrimination, social suppression, humiliation and exclusion- from one generation to another.

It is estimated that more than 260 million people around the world suffer from caste-based discrimination which is still practiced in 20 countries (Algeria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea Conakry, India, Japan, Kenya, Libiya, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ruwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Yeman) all over the world (Baniya, 2007). So far as I experienced, the

discrimination, mostly in rural areas caused the Dalits to be deprived of living the life as honorable as the non-Dalits. They can't eat together with the non-Dalits and they are also not given to use water from the same sources. They are not allowed to enter the house of the non-Dalits and some temples. They aren't allowed to touch corpse. They may not talk during holy rituals, specially, 13th day of the death cultural ritual. Even within the Dalit community, there are some barriers too. It's just like breaking the unity of the people and ruling the state for the extreme benefit of the ones in power. What's wrong behind it? Is there any scientific reason between touchable and untouchable among human beings? Does it do any good for the entire communities of federal republic? Why has the primitive society made such obligation against the human rights? To meet the goals of republic Nepal and to have equity based rights for individual and welfare of the society, these sorts of disparities may get interrupted.

Equity and Justice: A Hallmark of the Sustainable Society

The term equity is defined as creating equal opportunity to each and every individual. Some of the resources are far away from the access to Dalits. For instance, using forest resources where most of the forests are being handled by the non-Dalits, most of the forest user group is, basically, formed without presence of Dalits, as a result, when the forest products are needed by the Dalits, they have to wait for the decision of the forest consumer committee. Those people who are known as landless almost fall into Dalits. The huge portion of the dropping out of school is occupied by the Dalit children.

Who is the key player of the power game? Those people of backward community who don't have rights to education are still lagging behind the higher class people. In terms of land ownership, according to NDC Survey (2004), 74.14% Dalit people are still landless (highly in Shiraha District) among the sampled districts

(National Dalit Commission, 2005, p. 1). Dalit communities are suffering from various problems and living under the pressure of various burning issues. So, they could not be mainstreamed into national development themselves spontaneously. It is needed to uplift them in a scientific manner. To some extent, it is a fact that the policy should be made under the consideration of several burning issues of Dalits. National census report (2058) shows the literacy rate of Dalit is 33.8%, S.L.C. graduates (3.8%), and only 0.4% higher education degree (Bhattachan, et al., 2008, p. 144). A study done by Save the Children shows that literacy rate of Madeshi Dalit is only 18.9% (Save the Children, 2007). This status quo also might be a result of discrimination.

These scenarios show that the unjustifiable status of people in our society. How can the equal rights, opportunities over productive resources be ensured and who will be the responsible agency for this? Those who didn't have equal rights are compelled to lag behind those who have. Does it seem equity or justice? Why untouchable may not take water from the same source (See: Dailekh Incident, p. 5)? Why they are not allowed to enter the temple and houses of the upper caste? Why didn't they have the rights to perform Vedas and wear holy threads? Why couldn't they interact with the upper-caste people? Are they born differently with different gene or have different blood color? These are the questions to be discussed.

The term 'social justice' has different perspectives though it seeks to address diverse emerging issues in a single multimodal approach. From the various corners of the society (human world), it tries to incorporate all the essential aspects of the human world by which they can assure themselves their basic rights, socio-economic benefit, and natural resources. Moreover, utilization of human potentiality with equal opportunity needs to be legal and systematic. Dignity, identity, security and freedom

are essential components for liberation from discrimination. Fair economic justice helps to realize a part of social justice through which deprived people could have life as they want. As a result, it saturates a feeling of equalization. Social justice means equal rights for all, regardless of race, clan, class, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age, gender or sexual orientation. It seeks the equitable distribution of world's natural and intellectual property so that everyone is able to gain a fair share. In such a way social sustainability could be maintained (Justice and Equity, n.d., para. 2).

There should be a larger scale of freedom to those people who were made deprived by the state for many centuries; however, it is not an easy task to uplift them. Moreover, only making voices against it may not be enough to uplift them from the ground of exclusion. I agree with the vision of MDGs (2000) that advocates and promises that global integration is required in this 21st century. Thus, as an approach of building a foundation of greater equity, social justice and respect for human rights (Human Development Report, 2005), should be ensured.

Theories say that equity and justice should be maintained which are the strong pillars for sustainable development of the human world. In contrast, neither is there equal access to the economic resources nor the constitutional provisions implemented accurately. Instead of that, the attitude of the powerful people tends to remain traditional as it was. For example, a discussion on classroom equity and justice holds that there should be child-friendly learning environment, and mutual respect for each other. There shouldn't be any sense of discrimination. Students need to have a strong feeling of rights to learn regardless of caste, clan, gender, religion, custom and culture, socio-economic background and individual differences. If injustices are not addressed through school learning, justifiable, accessible and equitable social life can only be a dream for the Dalits. How are

Dalits approaching for equity and justice? How often do injustices take place in the school environment? The term 'equity and justice' is broadly defined by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in the 2nd inaugural address in 1937 as "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

Chapter Summary

As the chapter summary, despite human beings being born the same creator some of the groups of people are outcast, thus, remaining away from the access of many opportunities and resources. I have depicted the heartbreaking message through all the poems, various episodes and so on. The universality of the God and devaluing of some descents of human beings is a key matter which has risen over here. Similarly, all the poems and episodes give an injustice scenario of the social lives. Some of the issues which I experienced through school life, societal interaction and teaching profession forced me to explore in such a way as the bitter experiences of my life, really I was getting harassed. It happens because of unjustified culture, humiliated behaviors of the society, and dominating attitude of the privileged people. Some of the events enforce the Dalit individuals to feel as in impasse of their life.

Most of the discriminations around the untouchable issue happen on the socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. I have noted these behaviors as cultural shame and embarrassment. There are lots of cultural differences according to the caste hierarchy, such differences show and identify their caste. The social transformation is slowly taking place; however, untouchable discrimination can't be removed overnight despite the vital efforts of various educational institutions. However, school environment and learning activities should be created in such a way where none feels discriminated. As a result, untouchability will be eradicated in days to come.

CHAPTER VI

OVERALL LEARNING

Along with the heart palpitation, legs are shaking. Even bitter experiences embedded in mind are confusing whether I succeeded or failed and also whether my piece of writing would satisfy the queries of my readers. However, I felt proud on my job at the time of logging onto my laptop for this final chapter. Very much interestingly, I opened my note book sized laptop's monitor and pressed on the switching point. Thereafter, my personal setting loads itself and signals to me for playing with it as per my needs click-click and click-click. Monitor opens and shows 'icons' with beautiful scenery. Albeit I was not expert in computer, my untrained fingers started dancing in every point of the keyboard. Almost all the time, I worked with listing to following song:

Gauon-gauonbata utha,

Basti-bastibata utha

Yo desko muhar phernalai utha

Hatma kalam huneharu kalam liyera utha

Baja bajauna janneharu baja liyera utha

Gauon Basti.....

Yo desko.....

Hatma aujar huneharu aujar liyera utha

Sathma kehi nahuneharu aawaj liyera utha

GauonBasti.....

Yo desko.....

Rise up from your village; rise up from your shelters

To refigure the face of this nation

Those with the pen in their hand struggle against the oppression with writing.

Rise up.....

Those who know how to play the musical instruments struggle with the music

Rise up.....

Those with the equipments in their hands struggle against oppression with their equipments

Those with nothing rise up with their voice against the oppression

I felt time and again, as a beginner, my initiation could fail in an evaluation frame but I did not feel so because I could have learnt many ideas and skills through this journey of creation. Every creation may earn power to produce more creations. The beauty of the nature may not easily be denied by a far-sightseer. Moonlight, of course, is heatless and fountain could not be motionless. Similarly, creative knowledge may not be artless. Idea of pouring something from a small pot to a big pot is easy but from a big pot to a small pot could be hard. Due to the connection of electric power hundreds of bulb can be lit in a single click within a second.

Crisis of crisis questions itself what does crisis mean? Similarly, given the crisis as research question to know the reality and how much I got the answer is another crisis. It does mean that a remained portion of crisis is rather a challenge that the past crisis is a fact. Given these crises and questions, choosing out the appropriate paradigm and subject is a tough job. Even, the first layout of any paragraph depends on the thinking and processing of ideas in the mental box. My thinking always inspired me myself to be an autoethnographer as a subject with 'me' rather than others. However, I kept others in the core of exploring. Ethical consideration comes into mind and/although my perception overlaps towards cultural and religious norms and values. What came into my mind and what would you think about yourself? These could virtually be different things due to individual difference and the way of perceiving the world. Building up a researcher career and thinking for future is a risky stage of writing though I tried the processing of knowing, reflecting something upon my research queries and stepping a corridor with the hope of future.

My Standpoint and Background as a Researcher

My own research career was not built up so expertly in the previous days because I just did for only academic purpose rather than aiming at being a researcher.

However, I have conducted several researches to gain scores rather than knowledge in the past academic courses. I was grown up in and around the challenging social and educational phenomena but I habitually did not try to search the realities of those issues. I had had much desire of making conducive environment in carrying out such issues in the research. I conducted several mini researches during educational training, from such initiatives I just gained ideas rather than realities from those researches and/even felt reality is out of there. It does mean that research is simply a course for bringing any issues into public realm. This is why the task of information collection and analysis was really challenging. On the other hand, I was adding my academic degree in the education stream.

I hardly conducted any research with lots of confusions of research paradigm and process while graduating and post-graduating from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. I confined by old paradigm; thus, the emerging nature of research paradigm would be unbelievable due to some drawbacks of my intellectuality, however, such newly developed research paradigm enlightened my ideas to be more confident for this journey. It speaks that everything is changeable in this world, nothing is permanent even shape of the earth is being changed with the pace of time. I strongly agreed with the view of Luitel (2003) that 'Pangea' which was broken into different blocks: our Himalaya is not stable! (Luitel, 2003, p. 115) Hence, nothing is stable in this world rather changeable throughout time pace and innovative perception of people those who tend to advocating a contemporary society.

Sustainable World and Future

I was not thinking of my belongingness, neither of my people (who fall into the same caste as mine) just before a moment. On the journey of my research, I have expressed my bitter and sharp experiences to the open floors where billions of people

are entertaining on the ground of their own culture all over the world. Among them, I am nothing. It doesn't mean that I am living without existence but if someone comes to me, s/he can see my physical shape which does not help one to reach the socially ignored identity and dignity that I have been living with for years. However, I thought that I have to reveal something about my belongingness. Thus, I embraced autoethnography modal as the journey of writing otherwise I wouldn't have a tiny chance to reveal my three and a half decade long experiences of untouchable discrimination to my readers who could be sensitively waiting.

There might be thousands of cultures around the world. Among them, Hindu religion and its' culture is one of them on which I am webbing like a motionless creature. I couldn't release myself easily from this web. I could have tightened barriers to move around being free from the tag of untouchable. In the beginning, I would face some confusion of the notion of writing. Someone can have habitually fictional writing rather than factual one. To some extent, I could be as abstract as like but I don't need to be. My strong hold of autoethnography is for factual writing by which facts of something can be revealed in a natural setting. Autoethnography is like homogenous to anthropology which comes from the field of anthropology and talks about people or allows a writer to examine what it means to be a human; it even works like a bridge between culture and society or feelings of an individual over the cultural practices or traditions. Having own feelings explored in a natural settings is an essential character of autoethnographic inquiry where the writer writes about 'self' more naturally than writing in the abstract sense over something (studied phenomenon). The self point of view of the autoethnographer can be an important data to others to acknowledge or understand the fact of something. I felt arrogance

because the cloudy blocks of the societal sky are being broken by this writing to open the eternity of the real sky of the cultural universe.

The change doesn't occur itself rather it should have strong changeability in a combined approach. Cultural change may not take place without material and spiritual change. On the other side, religious and cultural change should be simultaneous in terms of social change. The context of discriminative society is hard to understand but it must be understood in a critical manner. It depends on the line of thinking and acknowledging the social world and understanding the beginning of the untouchability.

However, the experiences from the different arena might be an important learning in helping to change the society. Whatever is experienced on the way of crossing through religion embedded world could be crucial data in mapping of the contemporary world. All the atrocities against Dalits which caused them to be the weakest and lowest ranking in the world should understand at first. Thereafter, a combined initiation will be fruitful in order to change the society. I think, out of many facts, there are only three facts as follow:

- a) The practice of inhumanity in the society to the untouchable is a fact which can be seen in the world.
- b) It may not change overnight but it should be eliminated in any cost for democratization of the society.
- c) It may not change through sweet and greater speech or any text rather we must change an old perception of individual over the religious nature and spiritual thought to bring about change in it in the long run.

These could be the ways of changing the discriminative world into unrestricted world where caste (Jaties) and Varna may not be taken to classify human

beings. Dalits should be taken as human beings- one supreme creation of this Universe. They must not be taken as lower and upper in terms of birth. They are to be provided with several opportunities like training, gaining and building knowledge from the family to the global range. It could be better to share equal rights over the resources and opportunities instead of ranking the human beings.

Let's see the Varna system and Jati system as resulting into countless layers within a typical caste. It is such a risky notion that none could dismiss the identified caste and hierarchy; however, everyone agrees that untouchability should be removed. If we people from our community may not unite who will do for us? To make disunity or breaking unity among untouchable there are also hierarchies within the Dalit community which lead to the loss of our rights to raise voices against the existing norms and values. As an example:

Dalit castes are also ranked in a hierarchical order and those in the upper rank do not allow their lower-ranked neighbours to share their kitchen. The Doms are treated by all the Dalit castes of the Terai village in the same way as they all are treated by the non-Dalits. These are only illustrative examples. (Pandey et al., 2006, p. 33)

How mysterious ideas? This is our drawback to break untouchability. The people from the world altogether should be unified to sweep out the untouchable discrimination. Through this journey, whatever I explored, my intention is to recall you all about discriminative scenario of the Hindu society. It is needed to understand the history and nature of untouchability. The changes are needed at the way of practicing culture particularly in relation to the social life of the Dalits. For instance, if a child gets admitted to a school, s/he is treated discriminatively, Dalit can't take out

water from the same well/spring (see: Dailekh incident, p. 6), such things are happening in front of us.

A Dalit should ask to walk on the path if s/he met some upper caste people. Similarly, the untouchable are beaten up (actually my maternal grandfather in his time) for well dressing up. They are forbidden to ride a horse. They would be beaten up if they try to wear holy thread. It is a social boycott and they are beaten if they deny burying the dead animals (event of Shirah and Saptari districts in 2000 and 2003), they will be severely insulted if they break the cultural norms and values. Mostly, in Far Western and Mid Western Development Region (FW/MWDR), separate water tap is built for untouchable community; if they try from the same tap, they are punished. Sometime the social punishment causes death of untouchable life (Kalikot incident, Dec. 14, 2011, see: p.106). Most of you must have heard and some of you must have experienced such atrocities, am I right? Such atrocities differ according to the situation and places. Social boycott is used whenever and wherever beating is not possible.

I realized it and perhaps you too. But a question is that: is it a struggle between castes or between classes? If it is a struggle between castes, why it is on the basis of the same religion and why it is not on the basis of economical production? It is much needed to understand the root causes of its' tyranny. The lower caste people always fall into the lower class and they try to be uplifted through highly economical status. They, however, have one cruel barrier, i.e. untouchability which does not favor them in possessing good social opportunities in their life. Without giving reasonable rights over resources, economical development is impossible. Such struggle is related to the social status. These practices have been continuing from generation to generation

since long back and existing in the Hindu society as the matter of pride to high class people to keep the Dalits in lowest rungs.

Fa Hein, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who recorded his visit to India in the early 4th century, noted that Chandalas were segregated from the mainstream of society as untouchable. They were not allowed to let their shadows fall upon a non-Dalit caste member and they were required to sweep the ground where they walked to remove the 'contamination' of their footfalls. Dalits were forbidden to worship in temples or draw water from the same wells as caste Hindus, and they usually lived in segregated neighborhoods outside the main village. In the Indian countryside, the Dalit villages are usually a separate enclave a kilometer or so outside the main village where the other Hindu castes reside. (Keay, 2000, p. 189)

The Dalit people are ill-treated and not given equal rights. Social boycott for inter-caste marriage is a social crime. It is refused in the social sphere in the name of inter-caste marriage and/even their children are also victimized with several burden. Some of the children may not have birth registration card because to have this certificate marriage registration should be presented first. For marriage registration, woman should submit the maternal house evidence like copy of/original citizenship card, thereafter, they can legalize their children. Some children don't have birth registration card due to this provision. They need it at the time of getting admission in a school. In this case, they may not have access to school which is another problem to Dalits. If a man (non-Dalit) marries an untouchable girl or vice versa, as a result, their children will belong to the untouchable caste. It is not justice for the children, nor is it their fault rather, obviously, fault of their parents who do so. Why they should be fallen into untouchable? This provision is a greater social crime.

My Research Questions

With the multiple layers of thinking, the notion of spider web is a metaphor (e.g. continuously, through surrounding). The pivotal role of research queries is facilitating the narrative exploration which is entitled from the bounded research paradigm. I conceptualized and re-conceptualized my mental perception to develop the research questions and continuously changed my questions, even by the time of preparing the final draft. Many times, I got confused whether my research questions are getting answer or mismatching between my lived experiences and queries. In my opinion, critical research in qualitative paradigm is a kind of exploration to meet the aim of research or researcher himself. Standing on the theoretical standpoint, continuous explanation of something is sequencing of recalling memories.

I developed the research questions with many dilemmas of hopeful and hopeless perspectives in order to make them more rational. At the beginning step, neither I was clear about my research paradigm nor about the phenomena. However, I embraced the critical inquiry paradigm as an autoethnography creation. Neither I hate nor do I admire rather I enforced a promise of choosing autoethnography construction to respect and uncover my life experiences. If I couldn't embrace this paradigm, I wouldn't have this greater chance to explore my lived experiences of the untouchable discrimination. The cultural and religious contextualization of norms and values is the greatest burden of Hinduism to maintain a justifiable society. I thought that narrative research questions should be encapsulating in multiple dimensions. Multiple perspectives do not come in a single paradigm incorporating the questions in the forms of why, how and what.

The research questions are taken as the guidance of any research. It does mean that if there is no question there is no problem. This also means that there is no need

of doing the research. The more I felt easier, the more I got difficulty to develop questions because I as a researcher needed to be more considerate of my research throughout the entire course of reporting. I might be totally failed for testing answer to the question on the way to expressing my lived experiences as data and interpreting them. I raised many questions in order to construct clear answers. However, I have tried too much for depicting my experiences through multiple genres of this creation. Now I beg for your permission to throw this piece of writing among readers.

Research question 1: How did I, as a person from the Dalit community, experience discrimination in different contexts and situations?

Theoretically, an established trend gives us command to come up with some conclusions at last. I can't beg pardon if I leave this ritual of my research creation. How much I answered to the questions is still in the hands of the readers but I have undoubtedly interpreted data as much fairly as possible on the basis of the research questions. My first question allowed me to revisit all the representational multilateral genres of writing. As of making more specified one, I have splitted the research question one in three different pieces (a) How was my childhood experiences in common social sphere? (b) How did my school treat me as a student from the Dalit community? , and (c) What experiences do I have about the social suppression upon the Dalits in the domain of my teaching profession? I have addressed these questions specifically in chapter three in which I have focused on exploring my lived experiences through stepping towards schooling: a Dalit context, seeing of untouchable life, untouchable in the Hindu ritual: a lesson from Satyanarayan Puja, humiliation as a tool to social exclusion: anecdotes from my school life, education: an inherent right or a dream among Dalits?, questioning against the anti-Dalit socio-cultural norms: a coping strategy and more or less from representative interpretation

of data from other chapters as well. It is because all the data surround towards untouchable discrimination taboos.

Research question 2: In what ways, can I cope with different forms of discrimination?

The second research question with three tail-questions as (a) How can I behave myself among Dalits as a lesson for other? (b) How long does it remain and what could be a way of liberation? (c) What could be the role as a teacher to abolish discrimination through school learning?

As the clear landscape of answering the second question I have explored my lived experiences and the interpretations are represented in different modes and genres of writing. In chapter four, perceiving a school beyond discrimination, unshackling of social suppression: an emotional perspective, till when... waiting? Power and sustainable future, untouchable as a social slow poison, moment of disgrace, reflection through within school, and all these contents depict crucial experiences as data form. All these stories, poems, and monologue are as the core sources of answer. A monologue ‘unshackling of social suppression: an emotional perspective’ represents my role as a social leader to handle activities against the Dalit discrimination.

The social hierarchy caused me to create the poem ‘a literal understanding of Dalit’, and a monologue ‘unshackling of social suppression: an emotional perspective’ which give clear landscapes of untouchable discrimination. In chapter two, my experiences have been explored through letter writing entitled ‘a letter to Manu’ which portrays a clear perception of pain of untouchable discrimination as well. And there are other several contents especially in chapter five. I have raised many discussions through chapter to chapter which also advocate some points as

answer. As an autoethnographer, I have presented my lived experiences as data through which answers to all the research questions were sought. Perhaps, you may not know directly as an obvious answer to any typical research question.

Research question 3: How can the anti-Dalit norms and values in the society be addressed for mainstreaming the Dalits in honourable and progressive social and national life?

Fictional writing may be extending through many pages. However, the fact is that it should be removed from the world, should not cause delay for better outcomes of removing untouchability. I have explored many bitter experiences through many genres of writing. I think, all the informative exploration and its' representative interpretation is more or less interlinked with the scenario of the discriminatory world. Specifically, chapter five addresses the research question three where I explored my views under the themes such as seeking self identity: a Dalit perspective, education and discrimination: an experience from my headteacher; social exclusion of the Dalits: an experience from a host family; some collective experiences of denial; legendary practices of the Dalit discrimination; injustice through culture persisting in our land; revisiting cultural norms and values from the perspective of Dalit discrimination; untouchability caused the Dalit to be Dalit; equity and justice: a hallmark of sustainable society. These entire contents portray the cultural hegemony over the untouchable life although they have natural rights to have dignity in this world. They were made powerless for long as the server of the society. They, thus, need to get support from the state in a progressive way to bring them into the mainstream.

Until and unless the religiously and culturally embedded perception is not changed, it is hard to remove untouchability. The philosophy of social sciences and

the socio-political ideology is also responsible for changing the world. It is, hence, socio-political initiations and the cultural and religious norms and values that should be removed or reconstructed into a new form of philosophical perspective. For changing the old perception of an individual, it is necessary to challenge the conscious views over the societal issues which may be achieved through education. Education is one of the strongest means to build up the perception/knowledge which may cause change in the society. Educational development is, therefore, the most important aspect of the national development and societal change as well. So, through the educational development, we may reform/reconstruct the society. Some of the vital initiations should be taken by the state (upper class/caste people) and some of the initiations from the untouchable community through the process of social interaction which may lead them towards changing the world.

Legally binding and educationally enriched initiations should be taken in a combined approach which may uplift the Dalit community with the opportunities of economical empowerment. They will have different social status and feelings of happiness and liberation from untouchability. Each and every sort of restriction should be removed whereby they may have dignity and identity. The more we battle for removing untouchability, the sooner and easier we get over the challenging phenomenon. Philosophers should play a vital role to change the religious and cultural embedded mind of Hindu society at first. Thereafter, each and every effort of the state may work for immediate better achievement. Whatever I have tried to explore here, my lived experiences more or less interlink with question number three. Having horror, none can sacrifice the life for liberation. There are several ways of sacrificing and contributing to changing the society. So, we should do for ourselves and state should do its duty towards maintaining a justice society. In this way, we can change

the society without blood-bath. We should not fear and shouldn't be lazy to raise the voices for golden morning in the eastern horizon of Dalit liberation where identified and dignified life is. Hence, let's voice!

It's time to speak

Let me speak

Along you too,

If we don't speak

Who will speak?

Dare to speak

Once comes in a Era

Moment for speaking

Whereby comes a new morning

Don't miss it

Be ready to speak

If not now,

When to speak?

To whom speak?

How to speak?

For what to speak, be clear

Let's dare to speak

Fortify the voice to the world

Speak, be spoken, and let's speak!!!

The term 'Dalit' is, perhaps, one of the most ancient terms, which has not only survived till date, rather it is also a largely shared term, particularly, among the people influenced by Hebrew and Sanskrit literature. The inner core of poverty by birth is

ascribed as Dalit. In fact, they have been the most degraded, downtrodden, exploited and the least educated in our society. They have been socially and culturally, economically and politically subjugated and marginalized through around three thousand years of our history. They have been severely cheated by the state and have been excluded from the Varna system at first then caste system (social hierarchy). They have also been declared as ritually unclean/impure. They are, hence, called untouchable and pushed out, for fear of pollution, to live on the outskirts of villages. In this way, they are segregated from the society.

We are not on the stage of tolerance. We have to demand with the state at least to fulfill our needs with correcting religious and cultural norms and values- ensuring rights of self-determination as the compensation which may be a means of happiness. Following are the learning essences of this research:

Dalit discrimination and untouchables were found to have taken place mostly in relation to food and drink, to direct physical contact like shaking hands. The social interaction between the Dalits and the non-Dalits was mostly found to be limited to wage and works. The Dalits were strictly prohibited from participating in rituals and cultural ceremonies performed by the non-Dalits in the community. Similarly, the Dalits were found to bear ample social stigmas. The non-Dalits took the Dalits as the service providers, particularly at the cost of tolerating humiliation, injustice and suppression. The non-Dalits also perceived the Dalits as the ones who do not know anything. For the non-Dalits, the Dalits are the subjects to be controlled, subjugated and exploited. Such understandings among the Dalits were found to be the products of socio-cultural tradition and religion.

The study also explored some key learning in relation to coping with the above discussed sufferings of the Dalits. One way to overcome such discriminations

is to confront the anti-Dalits practices in the society. The Dalits were also found to use 'silence' as a tool to cope with the humiliating situation. Escaping of (i.e. not attending the social ceremony) the social event in which there is possibility of being discriminated was also found to be practiced by the Dalits. The study came up with an important learning to cope with these discriminations; that is to be critical towards the anti-Dalits practices in schools and public places at the local level. The non-Dalits are to be called for holding a table-talk with the Dalits so that the non-Dalits would understand that their suppression and control over the Dalits is inhuman. In this regard, the role of the Dalit teachers is to create an environment in the society in which the non-Dalits can be asked for negotiation and revise their ill-practices over the Dalits to improve the social relationship.

Regarding the prestigious socio-cultural life among the Dalits, the study has provided us with some key learning. First, the Dalits need to be encouraged to seek their prestigious identity within their socio-cultural situatedness. Second, practice of education at schools and also in the community needs to be made Dalit friendly so that the Dalit children can participate in learning both at school and in community with respects and due self-esteem. Third, the non-Dalits are to be provided with Dalit friendly inputs through social conferences, meetings, and social gathering to bring improvement in their age long anti-Dalit attitudes among them. Fourth, the social sayings developed age long before to dehumanize Dalits are to be banned. Fifth, Dalits are to be encouraged to contribute to the social development activities to bring about changes in the old age practices. This will be an opportunity for them to create a prestigious space in the society.

Recalling the Past and Then.....

As I uncovered the experiences throughout the pages of this study, the untouchable discrimination compelled me to oversee the issue. It is my duty too because of my belongingness to the untouchable community. I have tried to uncover the experiences from the recalling memories of my mental box about situatedness, humiliation and so on which I faced, perceived, learnt. Moreover, I was compelled to live with lots of atrocities. I was openly and severely treated in the name of untouchable. I have brought forth such experiences in this epic journey.

On the other hand, while I through rigorous academic journey got some changes in my life. As a result, I have somehow been getting social respect, identity as a social change agent or a Dalit activist in my area. From the different corner of my social and professional life, I felt some behavioural change in me; it might be as result of my contribution to the society from my educational background and presently achieved academic degree. I mean, so far as I know, I am only one from the Dalit community in the district with double master's degree. Hence, I maynot be silent without expressing my indebtedness to those teachers, schools, professors and whoever provided me many opportunities to be me as a student of univeristy now, so far.

I have perceived that in such a way the more I have been educating, the more I have been getting social respect rather discrimination like other uneducated Dalit individuals. However, I don't claim that it is enough to be free from discrimination. I have been changing from the various aspects through educational struggles; hence, I would like to request all the Dalit people to send their children to school, to make them educated through different modes of learning. Education is the only best gateway to get relief from any sort of discrimination from where any Dalit can stand

out in the society where they live. In my opinion, for educated people, in which Varna they fall doesn't matter since they are highly honored and accepted. I may not remain silent without remembering great poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota, who, in his epic Muna Madan, has mentioned that *manisa thulo dilale hunchha jatale hudaina* (an individual can be great by his/her deeds but not by caste). Thus, those who are highly educated can gain not only assets rather higher social status too. Be educated and get relief from the social discrimination.

For me, education is the best means to perceive the world justifiably, to reconstruct the world from injustice to justifiable one. It is as also one of the perfect ways to be ahead for changing the world.

Future Possibilities...

As an autoethnographer researcher, I came up with a conscience view of the autoethnographic writing and research. I believe that I could't/won't escape from searching and researching the phenomena which surrounds the taboos of social discrimination. I will try to go through if I get a chance, thus, probability and possibility will be extending such research in detail in future. This is my promise which somehow can be perceived form the epilogue page.

EPILOGUE

By now I have created a trustworthy image of myself as a Dalit activist unpacking my experiences throughout this dissertation. Here, I have offered a gist of my writing. I hope it will help my readers to make a conscience understanding of the Dalits. However, with juvenile perceptions/skills, I felt that it's so funny and risky to be an autoethnographer. I won't be as namely the author/researcher rather I am inspiring you forever to build up a new set of your own meaning from my text. Moreover, I cannot say that authorship of any writing is not better.

On the other hand, it could be better to have authorship through an inclusive model. As seeming limited space for extending my writing, I would like to thank you for eyeing the words with deep understanding from the prelude to the epilogue pages. Thanks again and again! And I would like to conclude my research with some pieces of poetic cantos.

Before departing soul
 Or cruise towards somewhere else
 Neither heaven nor hell
 Nobody does know yet, a greatest mystery
 Will have to complete something else

With gazing on mirror
 I unearth dilemmas and horror
 Seems wrinkles on charmless face
 With newly growing curly grey hair
 Down falling of memory power

Though lately, with multi-notion
 Move my fingers on blank white paper/keyboard
 With conscience artful biro or Ms-word
 Without destroying old one
 Will have to create a world new one
 As a greatest duty, over left by ancestor
 Will have to complete prior to soul departure
 (Holy Diary Lila:, February, 2012)

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