

POVERTY AND GENDER ISSUES IN NEPAL

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

By
SANJEETA THAPA



South Asian Division
Centre for South, Central, South-East^{Asian} and South
West Pacific Studies School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067
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CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTHEAST ASIAN & SOUTH WEST PACIFIC STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067

Phone : 26704350
Fax : 91-11-2616 5886
91-11-2619 8234

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **POVERTY AND GENDER ISSUES IN NEPAL**, submitted by **Ms. Sanjeeta Thapa**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of the University, is to the best of my knowledge an original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Mahendra P. Lama
(Supervisor)

SUPERVISOR
Centre for South, Central South East
Asia and South West Pacific Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Prof. Uma Singh
(Chairperson)

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for South Central South East Asia
South West Pacific Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation entitled **POVERTY AND GENDER ISSUES IN NEPAL**, submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University.


SANJEETA THAPA

South Asian Division ^{Asian}
Centre for South, Central, South-East and South
West Pacific Studies School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110 067

Dedicated to
Baba and Ama

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Abbreviations

HGM/N	His Majesty's Government/Nepal
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GDI	Gender Development Index
WID	Women in Development
GAD	Gender and Development
HPI	Human Poverty Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development for Women
VDCs	Village Development Committees
WHO	World Health Organization
BASE	Backward Society for Education
BCD	Boat for Community Development
CCS	Creation of Creative Society
GRINSO	Group of International Solidarity
RRN	Rural Reconstruction Nepal
STC	Shree Tarun Club
ADB	Asian Development Bank

Preface

Gender is a social institution where everyday activities of social life are produced, negotiated and sustained. Gender analysis in poverty is important to identify the nature and characteristics of poverty that affect and initiate gender gap, disadvantages and discriminations.

It reflects the differences in accessibility, distribution of resources and the power to command resources at the disposal of the poor, be it in a household or in the community level. It analyses the distribution and utilization of scarce resources by poor men and women.

Gender as a subject in poverty assumes that there exists a distinct category of women with limited opportunities. They reflect the institutional, legal and the socio-economic constraints that initiate gender disparities. When we focus on the gender and poverty, the nature of differences within gender is of prime concern.

Assessing in poverty and gender issues brings in the subject of the relative deprivation. It can be successfully used to compare some notion of circumstances prevailing within gender. Generally such comparison can be analysed based on the living standards, provision of basic amenities, education, market accessibility, the economic participation, social etc

Poor women relatively suffer more than men. They are considered to be the weaker section of the society with less education, with less accessibility to resources and with low participation level in economy, which has rendered them to a subordinate status comparatively to their male counterparts.

The system of reciprocity that exists in a household fails to identify the work participation of the women. Many of the economic activities performed by women in a household remain unidentifiable and invincible as women are considered to carry out such works as being women. Their various unpaid work

activities range from looking after children and the other household members, preparing meals, gathering food, fuels and fodder.

Poor women are influenced by many factors ranging from political, environmental and socio-economic, cultural, patriarchy and kinship relation, health, illiteracy, environmental degradation etc. in a developing country. The institution of patriarchy is also a prime factor that determines the status of the women in a developing country.

Patriarchy governs the production and the reproduction processes and the gender identities. It explains the segregated and the divided nature of the work and the work relation in the private and the public spheres. It reflects the hierarchal arrangements in the society in the accessibility, distribution of resources, choices made and selected.

Health is one of the important capabilities for poor women to determine and assess the discrimination, biasness in accessibility of health facilities among the poor women. It also reflects the biasness in terms of nutrients intake, medical structural facilities, availability of medicines, gender biased planning's in health systems etc. Poor women are affected by poor health in their entire life cycle. Hence poor health of poor women results in poor prosperity in them, in the household and as an important contributor in the development of the country.

Education is yet another capability for the poor women to conquer poverty. It empowers women to participate in the economy and decision-makings as an important household member. Investments in education for girls and women carry high social returns. It has proved to be one of the best means to achieve sustainable development. But there arises many questions in educating a girl from a poor household. In a poor family the education of girls ^{are} affected by the costs incurred in education, decisions of parents, burdens of works etc. Other inconveniences for the poor girls that hinder their schooling are non-availability of female teachers, location of schools, lack of gender sensitive curricula, etc.

Nepal has been selected for the purpose of studying the poverty and the gender issues, because poverty in Nepal is rampant. Poverty in Nepal exists in many forms. It is a culmination of host of factors ranging from income poverty, capability poverty, deprivation poverty, geographically isolated poverty etc. Poverty is also seen as a matter of dignity in Nepal. Nepal faces a serious problem of crises in the human development especially among the women. Most of the population of Nepal suffers from one form of poverty or other.

Patriarchal system contributes towards the poverty among the women. Almost majority of the population in Nepal are adherent of the patriarchal system. In such patriarchal society, the status of women in Nepal depends on their preference for male children. Women's access to property and social status is recognized through the male progeny.

Poverty among the women in Nepal has a deep-rooted history. Women in Nepal have been deprived of the necessary laws that could have protected them against discriminations. The low social standings of the poor woman is accentuated by a host of factors like the denial of legal rights, denial of property rights, capacity to bear son, man's domination in terms of their choices, etc. These factors also determine the status of the poor women deprived of the capabilities in health and education.

The dissertation is divided in five chapters, which try to explain poverty and gender issues in Nepal with emphasis on health and education of poor women.

Chapter-I:

The first chapter, **INTRODUCTION** tries to make an exposition of meanings and emergence of gender related poverty discourse. Further it tries to explain the factors responsible for gender discrimination among the poor women based on relative deprivation and relative position as compared to man. The chapter also captures the concept of feminization of poverty and the culture of poverty among the poor women. Lastly it briefly analyses the historical contributions towards gender development.

Chapter II:

The second chapter, **POVERTY AND GENDER ISSUES IN NEPAL** examine the nature and characteristics of poverty in Nepal. It offers a brief description on the status of women and analyses the problems faced by the poor women in various areas as in the patriarchal system and the institution of marriage, deprivation in education, economic participation. Lastly, a short description is made on the roles played by the His Majesty's Government /Nepal and the donor agencies for the upliftment of poor women.

Chapter III

The third chapter, **HEALTH AND POOR WOMEN OF NEPAL**, examines health as a deprivation issue for the poor women in Nepal. The chapter examines the health status of the poor women in Nepal. It explains the various factors that deprive poor women from modern health facilities. The implications of such poor health facilities have also been reflected. Further correlation is generated to prove that education can generate health awareness among the poor Nepalese women.

Chapter IV

The fourth chapter, **EDUCATION AND POOR WOMEN OF NEPAL** also examines education as a deprivation issue among the poor Nepalese women. It analyses the educational status of the poor women and the factors that are responsible to explain the low accessibility of education among the poor women. It further examines the implications of the low education on the poor women. Lastly, the role of the donor agencies is also reflected.

Chapter V

The last chapter, **CONCLUSION** gives an overall assessment of the poverty and gender issues and the future prospects of such issues.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Gender and poverty issue in general seems to be simple. Its study reveal heartening facts that will make every human being to think about its sordid and painful conflicting views. But this conflict can only be resolved if we both men and women try to give ourselves a space of respect and dignity. This chapter makes an attempt to examine the issues that are crucially related to gender and poverty particularly in the context of the developing countries.

Gender: Conceptual Foundations

Gender is an important component of an individual's identity. Gender in simple context refers to the biological identities of an individual in a society. It reflects the dualistic division, where the two categories of male and female are typified as being opposite to each other. "The male side of the equation is generally coded as the positive one, and so becomes the standard by which all others are judged; in effect it becomes the norm".¹ Gender occupies a central place around which the principle of social life revolves through which we understand and experience our identities.

It is not only a system of fundamental classification that sorts out and separates biological identities but is also a socially constructed category. It is an outcome of various societal norms and processes that interplay within a society. "Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive gender as an emergent feature of social situation; both as an outcome of and rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society".² West and Zimmerman perceive gender as a feature of

¹ Anne Cranny- Francis, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulos, Joan Kirby, *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates* (Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2.

² Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender" in Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West (ed.), *Doing Gender, Doing Difference, Inequality, Power and Institutional Change* (New York, Routledge, 2000), P.4.

“social situation that is both an outcome of and a rationale for most fundamental division of society”³ But Micheal Kimmel argues, gender not being a property of individual but is a “‘thing’ one has but a specific set of behavior that are produced in specific social situations. And thus gender changes as the situation change.”⁴

Gender until 1960 was fairly and narrowly understood. It was after the 1960s that gender was widely accepted as a distinct aspect and its definition was based on psychology, culture and the society to which the individual belong, distinct from sex. The physical anatomy of the human being was preferred to define and distinct between sex and gender. “It became widely acceptable to make a distinction between ‘sex’-denoting anatomical or biological ‘maleness’ or ‘femaleness’- and the term ‘gender’- denoting the distinct sets of characteristics culturally ascribed to maleness and femaleness and signified by the adjectives ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’.”⁵

Butler in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversive of Identity* opines, “it would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/ cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as ‘prediscursive’, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts.”⁶

³ Molly Molony and Sarah Fenstermaker, “Performances and Accomplishment: Reconciling Feminist Conceptions of Gender”, in Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West, (ed.), *Doing Gender, Doing Difference, Inequality, Power and Institutional Change* (New York, Routledge, 2000), p.193.

⁴ Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 90.

⁵ Anna Trip, “Introduction”, in Anna Trip, ed., *Gender* (Hampshire, Palgrave, 2000), p. 3.

⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, Routledge, 1999), p. 11.

Gender signifies all the culturally produced behaviors, conceptions and responses to identify the appropriate and normal behavior of being a male and female. Sociologists argue at the inadequacy of the sex role theory to explain the gender. Michael Kimmel in his book *The Gendered Society* identified six significant problems as to why the sex role theory cannot explain the gender. Firstly he brings the idea of the role itself. "Role theory uses drama as metaphor- we learn our roles through socialization and then perform them for others. But to speak of a gender role makes it sound almost too theatrical, and thus too easily changeable"⁷ Further he argues on the uni-dimensional function of sex role theory. "We cannot speak of masculinity or femininity as though each was a constant, singular, universal essence.... To speak of one male or one female sex role is to compress the enormous variety of our culture's ideals into one, and to risk ignoring the other factors that shape our identities."⁸

The shift in the modern meaning of gender as a cultural construct gave a new dimension to understand gender. The meaning of gender seems to be in flux when the performances of cultural attributes change in time and history. Greer's model on gender as 'unstable cultural construct' propounds the flux in gender as human characteristics change with cultural and technological changes. Bock opines gender not as the most important aspect in the society but gender relations could be seen as "equally important as all other human relation"⁹. Hence, Butler does not see gender as an independent subject but gender "proves to be performative"¹⁰ "The effect of the range of gendered performances is to make it appear that there are two distinct, male and female. What we take to be 'nature' is therefore an effect rather than a cause of our gendered acts"¹¹

⁷ M. Kimmel, n. 4, p.89.

⁸ Carol.E. Morgan, *Women Workers and Gender Identities, 1835-1913: The Cotton and Metal Industries in England* (London, Routledge, 2001), p. 7.

⁹ Katrina Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation in England, 1700-1870* (New York, St. Martin Press Inc., 2000), p. 6.

¹⁰ Molly Molony and Sarah Fenstermaker, n. 3,p.193

¹¹ Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimon and Kathleen Lennon, *Theorizing Gender*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002), pp.98-99.

There are also many other hidden attributes that play within gender when transformation of the capabilities takes place in a society. This further increases the complexities in defining gender. To Sen, these other factors are “other spheres of differential benefits, e.g. in division of labor, within the household, in the extent of care or education received in different members are permitted to enjoy”.¹² Hall sees gender as “not only a set of lived relation but is also a symbolic system. Gender operates at every level: the creation and reproduction of gender is a process changing overtime”¹³

Gender Difference

Gender division percolates within the structures and institutions to shape and determine the gender roles in accessibility, allocation, distribution and choice of resources that frame the relation within gender. Gender relates to those norms and regulations existing in a culture that identifies particular sets of behavior and attributes that create differentiation between men and women in a society. “Women differ considerably from one another with respect to the distinctive histories, geographic origins, and cultures they share with men of their same race and class. The problem, however, is that what unites them as women are the ‘clear biological criteria distinguishing females from males’.”¹⁴

Gender constitutes the social division and cultural distinction between women and men as well as characteristics that are largely associated with femininity and masculinity. “Gender refers to the meanings that are attached to those differences within a culture. Sex is male and female; gender is masculinity and femininity - what it means to be a man or a women. While biological sex varies very little, gender varies enormously. What it means to poses the anatomical configuration of male or female means very different things depending on where you are, who you are, and when you are living.”¹⁵

¹² Amartya Sen, *Inequality Re-examined* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992), p.122.

¹³ Katrina Honeyman, n.9, p.6.

¹⁴ Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker, n.4, p. 62

¹⁵ Michael .S. Kimmel, n.4, p.3.

Difference within gender follows two schools of thoughts the biological determinism and differential socialization. According to biological determinism, the loci of arguments lie in human anatomies like physical structure, reproduction capacity, level of hormones etc. that go in the process of making the masculine and feminine behavior in a society. The nature of male superior position explained by this school is due to the strong physique and masculinity. Crownin, a follower of Darwinian concept of evolution, in a program called “In Our Times”, aired in BBC Radio Four in 1999, argues the psychological differences and distinct characters within gender since evolution of species. According to Crownin “men are by nature more competitive, ambitious, status conscious, dedicated, single-minded and preserving”¹⁶

Greer, in the same programme debating against Crownin perceives gender as a variable and culturally unstable. The cultural flux in historical era is given more weightage by her than natural selection, since human being as social creatures are innovative and adapt as time passes by while constructing particular characteristics of gender. “What Greer does here is separate sex –‘biological’ maleness or femaleness-from gender- signified by the nouns ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’. In Greer’s model, gender is understood to be variable and unstable cultural construct. The ways in which women and men think, behave and interact. Greer argues, will often have a great deal more to do with the particular culture in which they live than with nature, and will vary significantly from culture to culture and from one period of history to another.”¹⁷

Differential socialization centers their arguments within social processes involving cultural attributes, behavior and the attitudes in the society. “Gradually, we acquire the traits, behavior and attitudes that our culture defines as masculine or feminine. We are not born different, we become different through a process of socialization.”¹⁸ Gender possesses the “essential nature”¹⁹ to which Goffman sees

¹⁶ Anna Trip, n.5, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁸ Michael .S. Kimmel, n.4, p.3.

¹⁹ Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, n.2, p.6.

a set of social settings for the forces of institutional framework to create differences within gender.

It was the existence of preconceived division and distinction within gender that a gendered social order and the hierarchy were able to take its roots. Joan Scott did not accept the biological differences of the gender but instead reflected gender in terms of social relationship. She sees gender as an element of the social organization from the framework of gender differences. "Although we can readily observe differences between women and men in the rates of aggression, physical strength, math or verbal achievement, caring and nurturing, or emotional experiences, it is not true that all males and no females are aggressive, physically strong, and adept at math and science, or that all females and no males are caring and nurturing, verbally adept, or emotionally expressive. What we speak about gender differences are mean differences in the average scores obtained by women and men"²⁰

Gendering Process: Pre and Post Industrialisation

The transitional phase of the economy during the pre-industrialisation provided a different picture where all family members contributed and participated in the production process to generate income. The women during pre-industrialisation had better opportunity to work comparatively to that in later industrialisation period. The definitions of work were narrow and less demarcated. Gender differentiated identities were not properly established. There was fluidity in gender roles. Women could easily adapt to any nature of works in production process by using their simple skill and mental ability. "Women's identification with any one occupation was typically weak"²¹

Clarke opines that women earned not for themselves but their income was a contribution towards the family's production system. Medick opines that the women co-operated in home based industry for production with minimum gender differences in the work participation. "Maximum of familial co-op characterized

²⁰ Michael S. Kimmel, n.4, p. 14.

²¹ Katrina Honeyman, n.9, p. 18.

by 'minimum gender division'. A flexibility in the role responsibilities of the family members." ²² But Earle argues against the fluidity and flexibility of the women's in work participation and criticizes as "rigid gendering of skill"²³ for, he asserts that the women's works were ill- defined and were of low status and seasonal in character. The work responsibility within gender during the pre-industrial era was less defined and was complimentary in nature as a result of which the gender differences were not based on specified space.

Gender difference in history evolved during the early part of industrialisation when public and private spaces were negotiated and contested within new socio-economic relation based on the nature of economic activities that laid the foundation of the separate institutional cultures for men and women. Gender became central in labor force in the industries. Much of the gender differences in the early part of the industrialization gave greater emphasis on psychological and behavioral attributes of being masculinity and feminine. A system of hierarchy evolved from the contested and negotiated space that intensified women's subordination and oppression. "Women's familial roles were complex and included running the home, caring for her husband, children and possibly other family members and contribution to the family income."²⁴ The advent of industrialization revolutionized and brought reforms both in the inner and the outer activities of a household and specified the roles of women within a household. "Childbirth was a private, domestic event focusing on the mother, the female relatives and the midwife, placing it outside the sphere of the church and its male hierarchy."²⁵

The peripheral position of women brought rigidity in the gendering process on the eve of industrialization. Reforms were introduced by the state defining the private and the public roles for the gender. Karl Marx's capitalist and

²² Katrina Honeyman, n.9, p.22.

²³ Ibid , p. 20.

²⁴ Maria Hayward, " Reflections on Gender and Status Distinctions: An Analysis of the Liturgical Textiles Recorded in Mid- Sixteen – Century London", *Gender and History*, vol. 14, no. 3, November 2002, p.404.

²⁵ Ibid, p.410.

Max Weber's beauracatic concepts specified the nature of gender identities within a fixed conceived notion of being a man and woman. They perceived modern men as being "instrumentally rational, competitive, aggressive, self-controlled, reserved, impressive, oriented towards achievement, success and impersonal rules, protection of individual, rights and freedom."²⁶ While the women were understood to be "emotional, responsive, expressive, co-operative, personality, caring and oriented towards personal well- being, relationships and community"²⁷ The emergence of guilds, scientific knowledge, and technological changes introduced men's monopoly. It further restricted and segregated the choice of the opportunities for women.

Developed and the Developing Countries: The Contents

In the post industrial society, gender, is undergoing new definitions both in public and private sphere. Firstly, it is due to the nature of work and the work intensity carried by women. Household chores may be unrelenting but women in the developed countries have household gadgets to ease out the heavy workloads at ease than the women of the developing countries where they have to perform themselves. "Women in developing countries must carry water from distance, collect firewood and clean and grind food grains. So, it is not only the quantity of time but also the intensity of effort (and its drudgery) that are also important though missing – dimensions."²⁸

In developing countries women have to play multiple roles to perform in their capacity of being a mother, a wife and a daughter. "By roles we refer to the manifold activities carried out by Third World women, such as child- care, housework, subsistence farming, remunerated employment and health care. By

²⁶ Roslyn Wallach Bologh, " Marx- Weber, and Masculine Theorizing, A Feminist Analysis in Norbert Wiley, (ed.), *The Marx-Weber Debate: Key Issue in Sociological Theory, Vol-2*, (Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1987), p.147.

²⁷ Ibid, p.147.

²⁸ *Human Development Report, 1995* (New York, United Nations Development Programme, 1995), p. 90.

status we refer to the value and meaning given to these by wider society, which in turn both reflect and influence the general rubric of gender relations.”²⁹

In the societies of South Asia, women are subordinate to their male counterpart in status, income and mobility though there are cultural diversities in South Asia, women hold a secondary position in the society. “The emphasis is on the duties rather than on rights, sacrificing the individual’s needs for the benefit of the family is considered virtuous and personally gratifying. Excessive concern for the family can lead to undernourishment, ill health and over- work as women often deprive themselves of food, medical attention and leisure to care for their families. The man is head of the household and the main decision- maker. The supremacy of men in the household has become so ingrained in the minds of people that, even if a woman is the chief or even the only income earner, the man continues to occupy a privileged position, exercising the decision –making power in the family.”³⁰

Secondly, it is the popularity of the dual family earning systems and shared household works between men and women. But even in the household where both the male and the female earn. “The combination of work and family obligation is largely considered as a ‘ women’s issue’.”³¹ It has reproduced a new concept in the gender roles, i.e. gender-contract where male members are engaged in the full timed wage and provide security to the family while women in their traditional roles inspite of earning wages. “One explanation of the gender inequities in working hours, payment and career advancement is the often tacit, assumptions of the gender contract and its collorary: unequal division of unpaid family- related work and care work with disadvantage women in the labor

²⁹ Lynne Brydon, Sylvia Chant , *Women in the Third World: Gender Issues in Rural and Urban Area* (Hants, Edward Elgar Publishing , 1989), p. 1.

³⁰ Kumudhini Rosa , *Women of South Asia* (Colombo, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/ Gala Academic Press, 1995), p.3.

³¹ Thomas P. Boje and Arnlang Leira, *Gender, Welfare State and the Market Towards a New Division of Labour* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 7.

market.”³² It is seen that the conventional gender roles and the attitudes still play a prominent roles and has a strong impact in the nature of poverty.

Poverty: Conceptual Foundations

Poverty is a persistent problem that faces moral and global challenges to every society and institution. The word is understandable to everyone in its simplest form as lack of minimum necessities to survive. It refers to the lack of basic needs of survival. To become poor means to be hungry and devoid of food, shelter and clothing. Poverty makes the poor voiceless and vulnerable of the adverse events that are often out of their control. They are excluded from the participation in the institutional power relation. It limits human freedom and deprives a person of dignity. Poverty reflects the inability of the poor people to make choices and decisions on the scarce resources at their disposal. Poverty reflects an order, a hierarchy in a society. It also reflects social exclusion, physical survivability and isolation or estrangement from the eco-system. “Apart from the plurality in areas of life affected, the chronically poor share a history of deprivation. As poverty is associated with social exclusion from mainstream society and, for the poorest, from their community in many cases as well, the chronically poor suffer from a high degree of economic, social, and cultural isolation which may be transmitted from one generation to the next”.³³

Poverty has been defined and understood in various ways as shaped by circumstances. Though the concept of poverty is understood in terms of minimum subsistence level, basic needs, absolute deprivation in term of income, calories intake etc. remain a primary source to identify the poor population, poverty is being increasingly defined in terms of relative deprivation. “Some of the problems disappear when a deliberately relative, rather than an absolute concept of poverty is used. The poor are then explicitly defined as the 20 or 40 per cent of households with the least income, or in terms of the gap between a

³² Thomas P. Boje and Arnlang Leira , n. 31, p. 6.

³³ Quentin Wodon, (ed.), *Attacking Extreme Poverty : Learning from the Experience of the International Movement, ATD Fourth World* (Washington D.C., The World Bank, 2001), p. 17.

household's power over resources and those of the average household in a given society."³⁴

Assessment on poverty has shifted its emphasis from minimum physical standard of survival towards valuation of the quality of life of the poor that can also involve the idea of inclusion, exclusion and social participation of poor. Apart from the income poverty, "it is also important to distinguish extreme poverty from social exclusion. While extreme poverty is a condition, social exclusion is a process which implies a dynamics. One is excluding other, or one is being excluded by other. More precisely, social exclusion includes a double dimension : procedural and moral."³⁵

The following definitions of poverty will reflect the concept in poverty as defined in varied ways:

Absolute Poverty

- (a) "The concept of absolute poverty rests on the idea that it is possible to define a minimum standard for physical survival, and the needs of the poor do not change through time"³⁶
- (b) "The first requirement of the concept of poverty is of a criterion as to who should be the focus of our concern. The specification of certain 'consumption norms' or of a 'poverty line', may do part of a job: ' the poor are those people whose consumption standards fall short of the norms, or whose incomes lie below that line'³⁷

Relative Poverty

Relative poverty is based on comparisons, which is often based on some standards like consumption, expenditure, living standards between groups, class,

³⁴ Wolf Scott, *Concepts and Measurement of Poverty* (Geneva, U.N. Research Institute for Social Development, 1981), p. 25.

³⁵ Quentin Wodon , n.33, p.20.

³⁶ Clara Black Burn, *Poverty and Health: Working with Families* (Miklton Kynes, Open University Press, 1991), p. 9.

³⁷ Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlements and Deprivations* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981), p.9.

nation and international wise etc. Peter Townsend, one of the important pioneers of relative poverty opines that poverty can be defined objectively only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation. He identifies three types of deprivation- objective, acknowledged or normative deprivation and subjective. “The distinction between the second and third is in some ways a matter of degree. The former represents a dominant or majority valuation in society and the latter an individual valuation, but also a valuation of different kinds of minority group- or even a statistical representation of a large number of individual view points.”³⁸

To Sen poverty is an aggregation of relative deprivation. He opines that,

“the question of relative deprivation can be viewed also in the context of a possible transfer of a unit of income from a poor person – call him 1- to another- christened 2- who is richer but still below the poverty line and remains so even after the transfer. Such a transfer will increase the absolute shortfall of the first person by exactly the same amount by which the absolute shortfall of person 2 will be reduced. Can one then argue that the over- all poverty is unaffected by the transfer? One can dispute this, of course, by bringing in some notion of diminishing marginal utility of income, so that the utility loss of the first may be argued to be greater than the utility gain of the second. But such cardinal utility comparisons for different persons involve the use of a rather demanding informational structure with well being difficulties. In the absence of cardinal comparisons of marginal utility gains and losses, is it then impossible to hold that the overall poverty of the community has increased? I would argue that this is not the case.

Person 1 is relatively deprived compared with 2 (and there may be others in between the two who are more deprived than 2 but less so than 1): When a unit of income is transferred from 1 to 2. It increases the absolute shortfall of a more deprived person and reduces that of

³⁸ Peter Townsend, “Poverty as Relative Deprivation: Resources and Style of Living”, in Dorothy Wedderburn (ed.), *Poverty, Inequality and Class Structure* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 26.

someone less deprived, so that in a straightforward sense the over- all relative deprivation is increased.”³⁹

World Bank defines the dimensions of poverty in the following ways.

- “• Many factors converge to make poverty an interlocking multi-dimensional phenomenon.
- Poverty is routinely defined as the lack of what is necessary for material well-being-especially food, but also housing, land, and other assets. In other words, poverty is the lack of multiple resources that leads to hunger and physical deprivations.
- Poor people’s definitions reveal important psychological aspects of poverty. Poor people are actually aware of their lack of voice, power and independence that subjects them to exploitation. Their poverty leaves them vulnerable to rudeness, humiliation, and inhumane treatment by both private and public agents of the state from whom they seek help. Poor people also speak about the pain brought about by their inability to maintain cultural identity through participation in traditions, festivals, and rituals. Their inability to fully participate in community life leads to a breakdown of social relations.
- The absence of basic infrastructure- particularly roads (in rural areas), transport, and water emerges as a critical concern. In the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union lack of affordable electric power is a major concern in the severe winters.
- Illness is often dreaded, because of the experience that it plunges families into destitution, because of the lack of health care, the costs of available health care, and the loss of livelihood due to illness. While literacy is viewed as important, schooling receives mixed reviews, occasionally highly valued, but often notably irrelevant in the lives of the poor.

³⁹ Amartya Sen, n. 37, pp. 31-32.

- Poor people focus on assets rather than income, and link their lack of physical, human, social, and environment assets to their vulnerability and exposure to risk.”⁴⁰

Murphy’s idea on poverty is “people are poor because of the way humankind acts and behaves, that is, how we manage our affairs, and in whose interests the world is organized and managed. Wars do not just happen; they are declared, financed, and waged by human beings. Tyranny does not just emerge; it is the brutal and intolerant exercise of power by a few people over the many. People are not simply poor, they are impoverished”.⁴¹ To him, poverty is a natural phenomenon occurring due to many factors and variables but not by agents. Poverty definitions are not concerned with those sections of the population who are powerful and the rich who survives on the poor. “Instead, poverty is defined within the metaphor of place, a place that people ‘move in and out of’, a place they ‘fall into’, and from where they need to be ‘lifted’. Or of disease or disability or ‘ incapacity’, that can be remedied by education or micro-credit; or other inputs (‘policy instruments’ and ‘levers’ which focus on ‘ the links in the chain of causation’).”⁴²

Poverty has been defined in many ways as per the nature and the characteristics of the poor for searching a proper solution for its eradication. “The multidimensional concept in which the cumulative lack of several basic securities limits the possibility for people to live decently and emerge from their condition of deprivation by themselves does provide a faithful representation of the situation of many very poor individuals and household around the world. If the situation of these individuals and households were one of financial deprivation only, it could be referred to as such, and dealt with through public transfers. But it is not, and the concept of multi-dimensional poverty enables the analyst/policy

⁴⁰ Deepa Narayan, Raj Patel, Kai Shaft, Anna Rademacher, Sarah Koch- Schuta, *Voice of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us* (Washington D.C., Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 31.

⁴¹ Neil Middleton, Phil O’ Keefe and Rob Visser (ed.), *Negotiating Poverty: New Directions, Renewed Debate* (London, Pluto Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 32.

maker to capture what goes on in the life of very poor individuals and households beyond the lack of income.”⁴³

Poverty Debate: Evolution

Poverty under capitalism was considered to be a sin. When the emergence of private property and free competition was at the prime stage, “poverty was attributed to indolence, laziness, unwillingness to work hard, and general lack of personal responsibility towards oneself, one’s family, and society.”⁴⁴ Poverty was not thought to be desirable economically. Classical economist considered poverty to be natural state of humanity. Ricardo and Malthus ideas on poverty reflected the limitations of powers of human production and as such poverty was held as an indispensable phenomenon.

To classical economist like, Thomas Malthus, poverty was an outcome of lack of subsistence. He offered a relatively crude model on poverty based on the population and subsistence. “It is the ‘spirit of indolence’, he argued, that ‘increases the general and consequently the private misery’, and made some nations as a whole poor.”⁴⁵

One of the most important contributions made by the thinkers of the mid sixteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century was the development of the ‘Poor Laws’ in England. Poor Law was “Network of law and practice which in two hundred of years had become entwined in the fabric of society and the economic system... Poor Law became quite suddenly one of the chief public issues of the day, the object of vigorous attack, and the center of a controversy of social challenged.”⁴⁶ While critically assessing the Poor Laws, Jeremy Bentham made a distinction between poverty and indigence. “Poverty is the state of everyone, who in order to obtain subsistence is forced to have recourse to labor.

⁴³ Quentin Wodon, n.33, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Jayantanuja Bandhopadhyaya, *Poverty of Nations: A Global Perspectives of Mass Poverty in Third World* (New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1988), p. 237.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 237.

⁴⁶ R.Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.xi.

Indigence is the state of him who being destitute of property is at the same time, either unable to labor or unable even for labor, to procure the supply of which he happens thus to be in want”.⁴⁷

Jeremy Bentham, in his *Theory of Legislation*, states four areas of civil laws- subsistence, security, abundance and equality with the first two aspects deserving preference above the later two aspects. “He saw, in particular, continual conflict between the aims of security and equality, and his tension was important in his theory of poverty. The closer the distribution of wealth approached, the greater the sum of happiness; a poor man would gain more from the transfer than a rich man would lose. Poverty being a relative term, a grievance existed whenever one man was poorer than another.”⁴⁸

New dimension in the evolution of poverty emerged in 1950’s. It was the global gap between the North and the South i.e. between the rich and the poor that caught the attention of the economists. “The years from 1950 to 1980 saw a second wave of globalisation, one that focused on integration among rich countries, Europe, North America and Japan concentrated on restoring trade relations through a series of multilateral trade liberalizations under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). During this second wave most developing countries remained stuck in primary commodity exporting and were largely isolated from capital flows. Infact this was due to their own inward- oriented policies.... Growth in the developing countries also recovered, but less strongly, so the gap between rich and poor countries widened. The number of poor people continued to increase although there were continued gains in life expectancy. There was little net change in the distribution of income among and within developing countries.”⁴⁹ This trend had an impact on the growth of mass poverty in the developing countries as in Latin America, South Asia and Africa.

⁴⁷ R.Poynter, n.46, p.11.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 117-18.

⁴⁹ *Globalization, Growth and Poverty: Building an Inclusive World Economy* (Washington D.C., The World Bank, 2002), p. 4.

The nature and characteristics of poverty in the developing countries could not be explained within the framework of classical and the neo-classical economic theories. "In the neo-classical economic thought, poverty was not considered as a natural state of humanity, which was the connerstone of classical economic thought. In neoclassical thought it was marginal productivity of a factor of production that determined its value and hence the differences in the income of various factors of production resulted from the marginal return of the factors of production. In neo-classical perception, differences in income-level of factors of production resulted from their marginal productivity. Since low income of a person resulted from relatively lower marginal productivity, poverty did not emerge as an issue for a separate analysis in economic within the theoretical framework of the neo-classical." ⁵⁰

Debates in poverty were based on the inequality of income and economic growth. W.A. Lewis, a pioneer in development economics, who opines that inequality would continue to rise due to the higher profits given the unlimited supply of labor in the developing countries, made an important contribution. "Lewis argued that economy, growth results in higher profits than in higher wages and hence inequality will continue as a trend. At a later stage when surplus labour is exhausted and wages begin to rise, the benefits are widely distributed."⁵¹ Kuznet made another important contribution in development economic. His hypothetical U-shaped curve explained the higher rate of inequality at the preliminary stage followed by decrease at later stage. Kuznet opined "that the expansion increase inequality. By implication poverty at least in relative terms, will also increase. Even an increase in absolute poverty is not unimaginable from this theoretical perspective."⁵²

⁵⁰ G.P. Isser, *Changing Face of Poverty and Globalization* (New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 2002), p. 22.

⁵¹ G.P. Isser, n.50, p.25.

⁵² Rebecca Jean Emigh, Eva Fodor and Ivan Szelenyi, "The Racialisation and Feminisation of Poverty" in Rebecca Jean Emigh and Ivon Szelenyi (ed.), *Poverty, Ethnicity and Gender in Eastern Europe During the Market Transition* (Westport, Praeger Publication, 2001), p.2.

New thoughts emerged pioneered by Gunnar Myrdal where, he emphasized on, the co-relation between equality of income and growth. He argued that inequality of income would not result in the saving in the developing countries as these countries spend most on income towards consumption and investment. He was also the pioneer of the *Theory of Vicious Circle of Poverty* for the developing countries which implies that there will be a circular movement of a inter-related causes, leading to stagnant economic conditions. Hence low saving would bring low investment and low investment would lead to low per capita income and finally stagnation in the economy. Further he stressed on malnutrition, illiteracy and health that can slow down the productivity of the poor. But his greatest contribution was the growth theory based on the transformation of the traditional society to a stage of high mass consumption. But “the stages of the growth theory ignores the massive historical fact which decisively conditioned the poverty and economic stagnation of the South as well as the accelerated economic development of the North.”⁵³

Schultz made human capital the center stage for the economic growth. To him growth suffered due to the exclusion of the poor people from the mainstream of the production processes. “He had also noted that there is no integrated body of economic knowledge and no agenda about poverty. Schultz believed that economist can address the problem of poverty and expressing the optimism he said-‘poor people in low income countries are not prisoners of an iron-clad poverty equilibrium that economy is unable to break.’”⁵⁴

J.K. Galbraith added a new dimension in poverty thinking in his book, *The Nature of Mass Poverty* in 1975. He opines that the mass poverty in low developing countries is predominantly rural phenomenon. “He wrote poverty is man’s most powerful and massive affliction. It is the progenitor of much further pain from hunger and disease or to civil conflict. The first is to combat accommodation. It is by education, literacy and its employment that individual gain access to the world outside the culture of poverty and its controlling

⁵³ Jayantanuja Bandhopadhyaya , n. 44, p. 244 .

⁵⁴ G.P. Isser, n.50 p. 27.

equilibrium. The second is to facilitate that escape. Economic development consists in enlarging the opportunities to escape the equilibrium of poverty and culture.”⁵⁴ He states that if income rises due to any investment it would increase consumption as a consequence of population growth and poverty. He emphasized on the universal education and enlarging opportunities to escape from poverty.

Amartya Sen explains that income is not the only factor for the reduction of poverty but depends on certain minimum capabilities. “Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functioning, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another. Just as the so-called ‘budget set’ in the commodity space represents a person’s freedom to buy commodity bundles, the ‘capability set’ in the functioning space reflects the person’s freedom to choose from possible livings.”⁵⁵

Sometimes, some desires may be affected by the political objectives that may affect the quality of life. Preferences in choice may arise for political reason. Nussbaum insists on the political goal as the capability and not as the actual functionings referred by Sen. The list of central capabilities put forwarded by Nussbaum, “provide the underpinning of basic political principles that can be embodied in constitutional guarantees. For this purpose, it isolates those human capabilities that can be convincingly argued to be of central importance in any human life, whatever else the person pursues or chooses. The central capabilities are not just instrumental to further pursuits: they are held to have value in themselves, in making the life that includes them fully human. But they are held to have a particularly pervasive and central role in everything else people plan and do...they have a special importance in making any choice of a way of life possible and so they have a special claim to be supported for political purposes in a pluralistic society.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ G.P. Isser, n.50,p. 27.

⁵⁵ Amartya Sen , n.12, p. 40.

⁵⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (New Delhi, Kali for Women, 2002), pp.74-75.

Poverty and Gender: Relation and Determinants

Gender occurs in everyday spheres of social life. Gender is a social structural phenomenon, which is produced, negotiated and sustained at every level of interaction. Gender is necessary in order to identify the nature and characteristics of poverty affecting it because it initiates gender gap, disadvantages and inequalities. “Gender analysis of poverty needs to unravel how gender differentiates the social processes leading to poverty”⁵⁷ It reflects the division within gender in the accessibility of resources and ‘the power to command resources’ in a poor household. It analyses the distribution and utilization of scarce resources by poor men and women and how they view at the limited material resources at their disposal. It reflects the performances of gender roles and gender regimes within and outside a poor household.

Gender regimes extensively use patriarchy and the kinship relation in a household in a developing country. By domestic gender regime, Connel relates to the role of women’s responsibility as a producer and nurturer within the households and the market gender regimes as concerned with the low status, wages, nature of flexibility in jobs for women. The domestic work responsibility tends to affect the nature of their labor in the economy. It tends to create a sort of balance between both the earning and caring capability of women. Gender regimes within the households and outside the market “support each other”⁵⁸ It is because of the divided gender regimes that the performances of the women in the market is being associated with “a second wage.”⁵⁹

While dealing in the gender perspective of the poverty it is important to bring out the significance of differences within gender. Because the concept of relative poverty can be fruitfully used as it can often compare based on some

⁵⁷ Shahra Razavi, “ Gendered Poverty and Well – Being : Introduction”, in Shahra Razavi (ed.), *Gendered, Poverty and Well- Being* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2002),p. 3.

⁵⁸ Nador L. Magrayi, Eniko Magyari- Vincze, Livia Popesu, and Troian Rotariu, “The Social Construction of Romanian Poverty: The Impact of Ethnic and Gender Distinction,” in Rebecca Jean Emigh and Ivan Szelenyi, (ed.), *Poverty, Ethnicity and Gender in Eastern Europe During the Market Transition* (Westport, Praeger Publication, 2001), p.143.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.143.

notion of circumstances within gender. Generally such comparison is based on the living standards or basic necessities, amenities provided, the level of education, market accessibility, the economic participation etc. Peter Townsend further argues, "the poverty of individuals and of families is related to form of social stratification within nations."⁶⁰ People do fall in poverty when resources are denied or the accessibility to resources are restricted by customary obligations which tends to initiate differences and stratification in the society. "Such stratification tend to based on the distribution of resources, which is understood in a much broader sense than income, and include 5 categories: cash income, capital assets and their systems of benefits in kind-employment benefits, public social service benefits and private benefits."⁶¹

Women relatively suffer from poverty more than men because women, sharing half of the global population, are considered to be the weaker section of the society. They are less educated, less accessible to resources and has low participation level in economy as a result of which they comparatively have a subordinate status than their male counterparts. "Although women are not a single sociological category, gender remains more than a physiological category, and is an important means of social differentiation everywhere. There is a general identification of women with the sphere of domesticity even though the roles and obligations of women within this sphere and the definition of domesticity itself are culturally and economically specific.... Nevertheless, it is women- rather than men - who are responsible for nurturing the family to provide gender ascribed services, and the extent to which the provision of care, welfare and education are located within the family or kin network, varies between societies and among classes within societies."⁶² These norms has underestimated and failed to identify their unpaid labor of being providers of goods and

⁶⁰ Peter Townsend, *The Concept of Poverty: Working Papers on Methods of Investigations and Lifestyles of the Poor in Different Countries* (London, Heinemann Educational Books Limited, 1970), p. 42.

⁶¹ Peter Townsend, n.60, p. 42.

⁶² Haleh Afshar, *Women, State, and Ideology, Studies from Africa and Asia* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 3.



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services. Yet they form a critical factor in economic development of a country and play a major role in understanding the dynamics of poverty.

Women generally look after children, prepare meals, gather food, fuels and fodder. Many of them perform household activities that fluctuate with time and intensity of varying level. Because “time is certainly the most important resources that are available for poor women. The poorer the country the more hours women work”⁶³ They not only look after household members and provide domestic services but also share the burden of contributing in household income. For the poor women in developing countries “Poverty is very much a women issue at least in the part because of women’s double role.”⁶⁴ Thus prolonging the working hours and narrowing their leisure and even sleep which deprives them the conventional measures of well- being that bring adverse affect tom their health.

Martha C. Nassbaum, while assessing the quality of life of women based on the arguments of culture says “even when women appear to be satisfied with such customs, we should probe more deeply. If someone who has no property rights under the law, who has no formal education, who has no legal right of divorce, who will very likely be beaten if she seeks employment outside the home, says that she endorses tradition of modesty, purity and self- abnegation, it is not clear that we should consider this the last word of matter.”⁶⁵ She further argues that many people since ages have not preferred gender equality and to go against such age old tradition would be going against the traditions of male power. Moreover, some choices and the preferences over the ages were not demanded by women themselves, and some of them are not pursued even today. If we put such preferences and choices within the political principles, “we are

⁶³ Maurya Buvinic Margaret A.Lycette and William Paul Mc.Greevey, *Women and Poverty in Third World*. (Beltimore, 1983), p.5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, n. 47, p.3.

⁶⁵ Martha C. Nassbaum, n. 56, p. 42-43.

going against not just other people's preferences (or so it seems) of women about themselves and their lives."⁶⁶

Poverty and Gender Bias: Factors Responsible and Other Issues

There are many factors that tend to influence the poor women. These factors range from political, environmental, socio-economic and cultural. Patriarchy and kinship relation in a household, health, illiteracy are the socio-cultural main factors. Income and share in the economic activities are the economic factors that reflect the disparities in the employment and the wages of the poor women. Another crucial factors is the environmental degradation that has critical impact on the socio-economic activities of women.

Patriarchy: Historical Basis

The social construction of gender dominated most of the gender debates during the second wave of feminism of 1970- 1980. "During this period the concept was used as an analytical tool which examined the asymmetrical gender relations not only in the present day, in the capitalist mode of production, but also historically, across differing epochs and through various social formations."⁶⁷ The debates on the social construction of gender as propounded by the materialist feminism followed two versions. They were the Marxist structure of social relation and the patriarchy. The Marxist analysis put forward the view of the primacy of the production relation in comparison to all other aspects of the social relation, which is considered to be secondary. It is within this framework that the Marxist feminists opine male's superiority and women's subordination. Feminists of this period hold the view that the subordination and the inferior position of the women in relation to men is the prime cause for the social construction of the gender. To them "gender divisions are exploitative and oppressive".⁶⁸

Patriarchy remains the most accepted way to define the gender division and gender relation. Radical feminists observe patriarchy rather more in a strict

⁶⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, n.56, p.112.

⁶⁷ Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimon and Kathleen Lennon, n.11, p. 69.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.67.

sense, which involves male domination over the reproduction and the physical violence while explaining women's oppression. "It is centrally concern with removing women practically away from violent and controlling men, by setting up women's refuges and establishing women- only space."⁶⁹ Patriarchy and gender division being explained by the Marxist feminist is within the framework of capitalist mode of production. But the socialist feminist supports a dual-system theory of gender division within the framework of capitalist and the patriarchy. Christine Delphy attempts to use these dual systems in a capitalist mode of production. "First, an industrial mode of capitalist exploitation and second domestic mode of production where women provide domestic service and where child bearing occurs. It is the second mode of production which she explores as the site of patriarchal production."⁷⁰

Patriarchy is the system of social relation between men and women that governs the production and the reproduction processes and the gender identities. It explains the segregated and the divided nature of the work and the work relation in the private and the public spheres. Walby opines patriarchy as a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women. "Walby rejects uni-casual models of patriarchy and puts forward a multi-casual analysis, thus divorcing the concept of patriarchy from a fixed, a historic and universalist understanding of 'women's oppression'. Walby identifies six key structures that determine patriarchal relations-paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state. According to her analysis, the different articulation of the six structures produces different forms of patriarchy. She argues that her framework is therefore able to accommodate and explain variations in gender inequalities over time and between different social and cultural contexts."⁷¹

Patriarchy and kinship forms fundamental aspects in the developing countries to assess poverty. Patriarchy and kinship relation reflects wide

⁶⁹ Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimon and Kathleen Lennon, n.11, p. 70

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.71.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 72.

arrangements in the society like the accessibility to resources as land, choice of works and choice of marriage that affects the position of women in the society. Patriarchy in the developing country existed before the advent of the European colonizers. "This was sometimes the result of domination by other patriarchal and highly stratified groups or an existing system of social stratification."⁷² The historians "ignored the traditional egalitarianism of many pre-colonial societies, in which women had greater power and autonomy and life was more in tune with nature and the environment, not based on its destruction."⁷³

But patriarchy system is still strongly rooted today in the developing countries and accounts for the majority of the reasons by which the women are trapped in poverty. Patriarchy is strongly related to the production, reproduction and the nurturing behavior of women in developing countries. "In those developing societies which are rigidly sex stratified and patriarchal and patrilineal, a secure basis for women's power is derived from their ability to have children, especially sons. In fact, reproduction is the only power base that women in all social classes and marital relationships can more or less control. Hence, they have no motivation to limit the number of children they bear until they have at least two or three sons to consolidate their position in the household."⁷⁴

Household

Household is a micro- level unit where everyday interaction takes place. Household reflects the system of reciprocity and distribution and allocation of resources. It is "both the point of origin and destination for the labor and resources of its component members, the household is the point at which reproductive and productive relations meet"⁷⁵ "This is where the gender relations and social stereotypes that influence macro-level events are worked out in

⁷² Jane L. Parpart, M. Patricia Connely and J. Eudine Barribeau (ed.), *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* (Canada, International Development Research Center, 2000), p.42.

⁷³ Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimon and Kathleen Lennon, n.11, p.40.

⁷⁴ Constantina Safilios- Rothchild, "Female Power, Autonomy and Demographic Change in the Third World," in Richard Anker, Marya Buvinic and Nadia H. Youssef, (ed.), *Women's Role and Population Trends in the Third World* (London, Croom Helm, 1982), p. 120.

⁷⁵ Lynne Brydon, Sylvia Chant, n.29, p. 10.

practical terms; where the flow and allocation of resources can determine levels of consumption, saving and investment, and labor- force participation which are crucial to economic growth; where the extent of its dependence on the scarce resources of the state will be based on its capacity to meet its members' needs.”⁷⁶

It was during the 18th century when concept of household as a defined area of women took stronger roots. Straut opines “the legal subordination of women with a marital relationship formed the basis of their subjection in the political and economical sphere”⁷⁷ Even Adam Smith supported the dualistic gender roles of men in public and women in private spheres. “Both spheres and the gendering of the activities within then were necessary to the well-being of the society.”⁷⁸

Households play an important role in determining gender roles. It is the first place where the women are restricted by the institution of marriage and reproduction. It is where the division of the entitlements and the legal rights of the women are decided. Household determines the gender specific work responsibilities. The household responsibilities of women like preparation of meals, looking after the elderly and the children, taking care of the sick, washing clothes and dishes, collecting fuel, fodder and water etc. have always been women specific works. The very nature of the work load have increased the pressure of the work for women in such a way that they tend to carry out simultaneously more than one task at a time like cooking and washing dishes or cooking and looking after the children and the elderly. Sonya Rose opines on women's family- centric role as, “a simple consequences either of being born female or a presumed association with domesticity.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nation Office, “Women and Households in a Changing World,” in Eleonora Masini and Susan Stratigos (ed.), *Women, Households and Change* (Tokyo, The United Nation University, 1991), p. 31.

⁷⁷ Katrina Honeyman, n. 9, p.98.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁹ Carol E. Morgan, *Women Workers and Gender Identities, 1835- 1913: The Cotton and Metal Industries in England* (London, Rotledge, 2001), p. 8.

“Many developing countries, production activities outside the household are difficult to separate from housework, and women’s multiple tasks often combine the two.”⁸⁰ To the poor women time becomes a scarce resource relative to the tremendous loads of tasks that are left undone. This is a particular problem among poor women in developing countries because they very less rely on modern appliances. “As their economic conditions deteriorates, they cope by increasing the output of their one productive resource- their labor.”⁸¹

Women are also very much affected by the changing forms of household in a developing societies. The change can be seen in the fast deteriorating concept of the extended families that comprise of the parents, children and the grandchildren and kin members to a formation of a new type of a nuclear household, shaped by the changing economic and the socio- cultural attitudes. “Though many of the characteristics of a nuclear household are shaped by its economic environment, changing socio-cultural attitudes are also important. A high value on privacy and individual autonomy make the conjugal nuclear household an option increasingly preferred even where extended households are still prevalent.”⁸²

One prime reason for such trend is that the economic viability of a large and the extended household is often eroded due to the less production of resources to feed the increasing dependents in a household. Moreover, the “economic and demographic pressures may be responsible for rising number of nuclear households bound by consensual rather than legal ties, but even the majority which are based on the formal marriage may be formed and dissolved more easily in societies increasingly tolerant of personal choice as a factor in both these events. Emotional or psychological motives may dominate in decisions about marriage and divorce in more culture today.”⁸³ Though this pattern of the changing roles of the household may be seen in a uni-dimensional way from an

⁸⁰ *Human Development Report, 1995*, n. 28, p. 90.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁸² *Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nation Office*, n.76, p. 36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

extended household to a nuclear household, the change is not simple and easy to assess.

Poor women's role may also be affected by other reasons like dissolution and re-formation of families that takes place depending on economic, legal and social constraints. They may belong to different household set up at various stages of their lives. "They may move perhaps from their family of origin to a conjugal household, then back to the first, or into a single- person or sole – parent household until remarriage and a return to a conjugal household, the internal composition of which may be changed by the presence of offspring from previous unions. In other words, household types may be considered and treated in practical terms not so much as discrete forms, but as part of a continuum through the life- course."⁸⁴

Deprivation: Nature and Contents

Needs arise according to the societal and the cultural requirements where the degree of necessities are not uniform for all members. "Needs which are 'basic' are conditioned not only by the physical and climatic environment but also by social structure and culture."⁸⁵ Needs of a poor and deprived woman are different from that of a poor man in both actual and perceived terms. Peter Townsend, a pioneer in the relative deprivation opines that "individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nation Office, n.76, p. 36.

⁸⁵ Peter Townsend, n.60, p.18.

⁸⁶ Peter Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living* (Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1979), p. 32.

Deprivation of needs and requirements is one of the causes to explain the women's poverty. Sen, emphasizing on the feelings and condition of deprivation opines that "the choice of ' conditions of deprivation' cannot be independent of 'feelings of deprivation'. Material objects cannot be evaluated in this context without how people view them, and even if 'feelings' are not brought in explicitly, they must have an implicit role in the selection of ' attribute'." ⁸⁷

Health: As a Determinant of Deprivation

The World Health Organization defines health to mean "a state of complete physical and social well- being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"⁸⁸ "The concomitants of poverty are often poor nutrition, overcrowded, damp, and inadequately heated housing, increased risk of infections and inequality to maintain optimal hygiene practiced". ⁸⁹

Health is one of the important determinants to assess the discrimination, biasness inaccessibility of health facilities in society. Health makes us understand the biased operation in the unequal power relation within the gender in terms of nutrients intake, medical structural facilities, availability of medicine, public policies, allocation of resources and the planning's in health systems etc. "In course of our every day lives, women and men often face similar challenges to their health. However, there are also significant differences between the two groups. The most important starting point for explaining these differences is to be found in the realm of biology. A women's capacity for reproduction makes her vulnerable to a wide range of health problems if she is not able to control her own fertility and to go through pregnancy and child- birth safely, this gives 'special needs' which must be met if they are to realize their potential for health." ⁹⁰ But social differences are also important in shaping male and female patterns of

⁸⁷ Amartya Sen , n. 37, p. 16.

⁸⁸ David Blane, Eric Bruner and Richard Wilkinson, *Health and Social Organization: Towards a Health Policy For 21st Century*, (New York, Routledge, 1996), p.71.

⁸⁹ Michael Marmot and Richard G. Wilkinson (ed.), *Social Determinants of Health* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 216.

⁹⁰ Lesley Doyal " Putting Gender into Health and Globalisation Debates: New Perspectives and Old Challenges" *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 2, p 238.

health and illness because every culture have gender specific activities that include a range of responsibilities and duties.

Gender inequalities in health affects the equal opportunities, wages, access to productive resources, segregation in the nature of the employment, economic decision making etc. These factors negatively affect the social status and the gender relation. “When we assess inequalities across the world in being able to avoid preventable morbidity, or escapable hunger, or premature mortality, we are not merely examining differences in well-being, but also in basic freedoms that we value and cherish. That viewpoint is important. And as it happens, the available data regarding the realization of disease, hunger, and early mortality tell us a great deal about the presence or absence of certain central basic freedoms. Given the motivation underlying the analysis of inequality, it is important not to miss this momentous perspective.”⁹¹

Health is one of the most important issues among the poor women. “It is therefore, important to consider the entire life cycle when examining the causes and consequences of women’s poor health.”⁹² Despite their edge over the life expectancy, women risk a greater part of their life with diseases that affect them through out their life span most women in the developing world are devoid of better health facilities especially in matters of basic maternity care, malnutrition , gender violence etc. “The well- being of a person can be seen in terms of quality (‘well-ness, as it were) of the person’s being”.⁹³ The different types of associated health problems faced by a poor women in their different stages of their life-cycle are as follows:

Childhood :

Discrimination in food allocation: During the childhood stage deficiency of the required nutrient may take their toll in later stages if not properly cared. Discrimination towards the girls are often the reason for such nutritional

⁹¹ Amartya Sen, n. 12, p.69.

⁹² *A New Agenda for Women’s Health and Nutrition* (Washington D.C., A World Bank Publication, 1994), p. 15.

⁹³ Amartya Sen, n.12, p.39.

deprivation. "Customarily a girl is not given milk to drink. This common is a common pattern among Marathas and Brahmins in western Maharashtra, and in fact a general feature of Indian culture except among educated upper- middle-class and well-to-do sections. Milk is a boys' privilege, for they must grow tall and strong. Girls, on the contrary, should not grow much or fast; their growth needs are controlled."⁹⁴

Explanation for such gender biased food habits is that the son are considered to be the productive assets all throughout the life cycle of the parent and girls the low status given to girls. During the acute shortages of food, the more weight of gender bias is towards the girls. "In adverse circumstances of food scarcity, it has always been women who adjust their lives to absorb the burnt of the burden. This usually means that they have to work longer hours just to keep their family afloat."⁹⁵

Nutritional Deficiency: Diets comprise of a combination of proper balance vitamins, proteins and carbohydrates. Nutritional deficiency is one of the major health problems related to poverty. "Malnutrition may be best considered as 'social disease' that can invariably owes its effects, at least in part, to its influences on the nature of social interaction....malnutrition has effects on the behavioral and physical attributes of the child that can influence both the child's response to others and the response to others and the response of others to the child. Such altered social relationships may then have major consequences for the child's subsequent emotional, social, and intellectual growth and development."⁹⁶

One of the main health problems related to the nutritional deprivation and deficiency is the growth retardation, stunting, less weight for age, muscle wastage, impaired brain development, decreases the learning capabilities. "Under nutrition, widely prevalent among socially and economically deprived population

⁹⁴ Leela Dube, *Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South Asia and South East Asia* (Tokyo, The University Press, 1997), p. 137.

⁹⁵ HNB Gopalan and Sumeet Sakar (ed.), *Domestic Environment and Health of Women and Children* (New Delhi, Tata Energy Research Institute, 1999), p. 212.

⁹⁶ Janina R. Galler, *Human Nutrition : A Comprehensive Treatise* (New York, Plenum Press, 1984), p. 38.

groups around the world, is associated with a cluster of related, often coexistent, factors which together constitute what may be termed the 'poverty syndrome', the major attributes which are (1) income level that are inadequate to meet basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter; (2) diets that are quantitatively and often qualitatively deficient; (3) poor environment, poor access to safe water, and poor sanitation; (4) poor access to health care; and (5) large family size and high levels of illiteracy- especially female illiteracy. Among most undernourished population groups, these factors often tend to co-exist, though their relative severity and extent may vary in different locations."⁹⁷

Adulthood and the Reproductive Years (fecundity): The transitional age in women mostly between the age of 10- 19 years or the adult hood and the reproductive years between 24- 49 years are at the greater risk of various diseases. At this age group they are exposed to large number illness related to conception and pregnancies like still birth, premature babies and low weight babies which may be the outcome of early marriage, unplanned pregnancy and the related complications. "Women's special health needs suffer considerable neglect. Many developing countries do not provide qualified birth attendants, good prenatal or postnatal care or emergency care during deliveries. In most poor countries, pregnancy complications are the largest single cause of death among women in their reproductive years. Nearly half a million maternal deaths occur each year in development countries."⁹⁸

Another important illness associated with this age group is malnourishment. Adult poor women suffer from iodine deficiency, anaemia, protein energy malnutrition, etc more severely than the others. "The general effects of the persistent undernourishment and infections vary widely, but they all result in an impaired life."⁹⁹ Malnourishment affects the expected mothers, lactation performances, cause fatigueness, increases the degree of infections and

⁹⁷ C.Gopalan, "Undernutrition: Measurement and Implications," in S.R. Osmani (ed.), *Nutrition and Poverty* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 18.

⁹⁸ *Human Development Report- 1995*, n. 28, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Partha Dasgupta, *An Enquiry into Well- Being and Destitution* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 12.

also impair the brain development in the fetus. “Of adult suffering from iron deficiency anaemia, 458 million are women, 238 million men. Of those stunted by protein- energy malnutrition, 450 million are women, 400 million men.”¹⁰⁰

One of the most serious emerging health issues among the poor women is the unawareness of the wide prevalence of the sexually transmitted diseases that are taking the huge toll of lives in many developing countries. “Gender inequality and discrimination harm girls’ and women’s health directly and indirectly, throughout the life cycle; and neglect of their health needs prevents many women from taking a full part in society. Unequal power relations between men and women often limit women’s control over sexual activity and their ability to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS; adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable.”¹⁰¹

Old Age or Post Reproductive Years: The last stage of the life of a woman is also full of health complications. “The cumulative effects of life time of nutritional deprivation, hazardous and heavy work, continuous childbearing, and low esteem leaves them both physically and mentally frail, while abandonment and widowhood often leaves them destitute.”¹⁰² Most of the problem of illness related to this period is the bone loss, joint diseases, diabetes, heart diseases, cancers especially the cervical cancers etc.

Other Illness: Poor women suffer from other type of illness mostly related to the gender violence. Domestic violence, dowry death, injuries from physical abuses, mental stress are some of the other categories of the diseases which affect the women of all age groups but are more severe among the poor women. They are generally unreported and the actual degree of suffering differs from individual to individuals. Generally illness associated are mental depression and stress. Inge Seiffge-Krenke and Mark Stemmler analysing on the adolescent depression observes that “stress in relationship with the mother presented a risk factor for depressive outcome in adolescent girls at all ages, although gender

¹⁰⁰ *Human Development Report- 1995*, n. 28, p. 35.

¹⁰¹ *State of Worlds Population 2000* (New York, United Nations, Population Fund, 2000), p. 9.

¹⁰² *A New Agenda for Women’s Health and Nutrition*, n.92, p.23.

differences were only significant at the age of 15 years.”¹⁰³ In another model they observed that the risk factors for depression differ according to gender but that such factors for girls being common in early adolescent.

Education: As a Determinant of Deprivation

Education is investment in the development of the human capital. Education is a critical factor for the economic and the social development. It is a crucial factor for the development of capabilities. “Education is essential for improving women’s living standards and enabling women to exercise greater voice in decision- making in the family, the community, the place of paid work and the public arena of politics.”¹⁰⁴

“Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non- discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualification is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Investing in formal and non- formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development an economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.”¹⁰⁵

The Role of Education on Poor Women:

Greater Income Earning Capability: Education brings social benefits to poor women by enhancing the economic and the employment opportunities. The more educated a girl is, the better the scope for her in terms of wages and

¹⁰³ Inge Seiffge – Krenke and Mark Stemmler, “ Factors Contributing to Gender Differences in Depressive Symptoms: A Test of Three Development Models”, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 31, no.6, December 2002, p.414.

¹⁰⁴ *Progress of World’s Women 2000* (New York, United Nations Population Fund for Women, 2000), p.66.

¹⁰⁵ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (New York, United Nations, 1996) p. 26.

bringing equality. "Illiteracy holds people back even in the most basic day-to-day activities. Inadequate schooling prevents them taking advantage of new opportunities, for example, jobs in the emerging knowledge-based industries."¹⁰⁶

Greater Health Awareness: Education improves the ability of poor women to carry out the daily household duties. It enhances their nutritional status and further has a positive impact on the health of the children and the nutritional status among them also. Knowledge will also delay the marriage and early reproduction. "The effect of ill-health on productivity and earnings is likely to be greater on the poor. This is because, among other things, low-paid, less-educated workers are more likely to do physically demanding and often unsafe work in which they can easily be replaced."¹⁰⁷

Greater Social Cohesion: Education brings social cohesion as it will bring democratization among the women, empower the individuals and the communities. It will also contribute towards empowerment of the gender and facilitate in the greater participation and decision making of women. "Less educated people often find it difficult to express themselves outside their own immediate group either in speech or writing, so they are held back from moving into the wider society."¹⁰⁸

Key Issues of Education among poor girls :

Wide gender gaps in literacy and enrollment ratio: Education of poor girls are affected by the cost factor of education. Even though if the schools allow free education for the girls, girls drop out from school because of the inability to pay for the book materials, fees, uniforms etc. "Even when the gender differentials in morbidity and mortality are not so acute, there can be disparities in other important functioning and capabilities yielding substantial inequalities in freedoms. While anti-female bias in nutrition, morbidity, or mortality is much less present in sub-Saharan Africa, there are often big gender differences in

¹⁰⁶ *The State of World Population 2002* (New York, United Nations Population Fund, 2002), p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ *The State of World Population 2002*, n.106, p. 15.

many other capabilities, such as being free to pursue independent careers, or being in positions of leadership.”¹⁰⁹

Poverty and the preference of son for economic dependency : Girls are likely to be treated as second members in the family because of they have to be married and change the place of residence. In such cases decision of parents become vital in investment in girl’s education. "Some parents might conceivably consider choosing between (a) financing all their children upto an identical level of schooling, and (b) financing some of the children further than the others, keeping in view the returns to investment for the family as a whole.”¹¹⁰

Supply side factor: The supply side factors include the accessibility to the schools for the poor girls, non- availability of female teachers lack of gender sensitive curricula, etc. The problem in the institutional facilities and investment in institutional infrastructure for girls arises out of social- choice. The supply side factors for poor girls play an important role in society. “More pertinently it includes in social benefits all the ‘externalities’ generated by an increase in the level of education, such as improved standards of hygiene, lower rates of infant and child mortality, reduced rates of population growth, raised civic consciousness, greater political participation, an improved sense of national unity.”¹¹¹

Environment: Impact on Poor Women

“The asymmetries between the gender assumptions of environmental decision making and the ‘reality’ of environmental degradation are manifested in a gender blindness which disadvantages women even further but which also ensures that unless- and until – this lack of vision is recognized, we cannot adequately address or overcome environmental insecurity. The environment debate as a policy process is gendered in terms of where women are located, and

¹⁰⁹ Amartya Sen, n. 12, p. 124-25.

¹¹⁰ Tapas Majumdar, *Investment in Education and Social Choice*, (Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 1984), p. 21.

¹¹¹ *Human Development in South Asia- 1998* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1998), p.26.

in terms of what are considered appropriate forums for women's action and activity."¹¹²

Women and nature relation is as old as human history. The relationship between them can be explained within the dimension of eco- feminism. Eco – feminism was termed by French women Francoise d' Eubonne in the year 1974 when she called for women for the protection of the earth by ecological revolution. There are two types of eco- feminism, the cultural eco- feminism and the social eco-feminism. The former believes in the biological essence of female. "Through their biological role, and the subsequent caring of children and the household, women develop an ethic of care which is thought to be essential to revaluing the relationship between humanity and nature."¹¹³

On the other hand the social eco- feminism identifies their closeness to the nature based on the women's social role. "Social eco-feminism argue that women , who, because of their social roles are less able to distance them selves from nature and who experience subjugation and discrimination based on their socially ascribed caring role, are able to share with nature a feeling of being dominated." This entitles women to speak up for nature against its domination."¹¹⁴ Women influence in the environment is crucial and significant because women's interaction with environment is more closer then the men. Ruether opines that "eco-feminist analysis argues that in the search for solutions to the environmental crises, the burden of ecological morality is placed upon women within the private domain."¹¹⁵

"Gender specificity of environmental effects mainly arises from the pre-existing inequalities in division of labour; the intra- household distribution of subsistence resources; access to productive resources, other assets, income-

¹¹² Korraine Elliot, " Women, Gender, Feminism, and the Environment," in Jennifer Turpin and Lois Ann Lorentzen (ed.), *The Gender New World Order Militarism, Development, and the Environment* (New York, Routledge, 1996),pp.13-14.

¹¹³ Susan Buckingham- Hatfield, *Gender and Environment* (London, Routledge, 2000), p.37.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.37.

¹¹⁵ Korraine Elliot, "Women, Gender, Feminism, and the Environment," n.112, p. 26.

earning opportunities, and participation in decision- making.”¹¹⁶ In developing countries, apart from the normal duties of washing , cleaning, cooking the tasks of women works are augmented by collection of firewood, fetching water and growing food for the household. “Women’s marginalisation into the private sphere means that they are often more closely connected with day-to-day ecosystem management. They are therefore more likely to be detrimentally affected by the impact of environmental degradation.”¹¹⁷

“Women are affected disproportionately and in different ways, especially in developing countries where the link between poverty, women’s status (or lack thereof), imposed development policies and environmental degradation is a complex but intense one. This disproportionate impact is essentially a form of structural violence against women. Women also, disproportionately represent the world’s poor who are hardest hit by environmental degradation.”¹¹⁸

Feminisation of Poverty

Feminisation of poverty does not mean that poverty is a gendered experience but it means that most women are poor. Feminisation of poverty may not follow a precise way to define because of the multidimensional nature of the poverty among the women. Even the Beijing Platform for Action fails to give an appropriate definition on feminisation of poverty. Nilufer Cagatay has have applied three terms to explain the term feminisation of poverty

- “Women have a higher incidence of income- poverty compared to men;
- Women’s income-poverty is more severe than men’s income-poverty;
- Overtime, the incidence of income poverty among women is increasing compared to that among men.”¹¹⁹

Feminisation of poverty is biologically interpreted in terms of the persistence of life long poverty since her birth, marriage till death. It is believed

¹¹⁶ HNB Gopalan and Sumit Sarkar (ed.), n.95, p.5.

¹¹⁷ Korraine Elliot, n.112, p. 14.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹⁹ *Progress of the World’s Women 2000*, n.104, p.95.

to carry identification of women's poverty engraved since birth of a woman. It is acknowledged that in patriarchal and kinship relation girl child are less cared than other male members, which creates a basis of being marginalized and unequal position of women. Their role of a nurturer and provider has made her less accessible to education and awareness of her own self. It has been associated with high fertility and deprivation of materials, which takes the character of poverty being persistence and tends to be lifelong and transmitted inter-generationally. "Feminization of poverty occurs when women are concentrated in poverty and when biological, not social, causes the feminization of poverty which has explanation of their concentration"¹²⁰

Feminization of poverty has been economically defined by the perceived fact of them being marginalized from market, segregation within gender, since women are the most inappropriately and disadvantageously placed. "Feminisation of poverty is the tragic consequence of women's unequal access to economic opportunities"¹²¹ According to feminisation of poverty, it is assumed that female-headed households face severity in poverty. Many questions have raised on the validity of the extremeness of poverty such households in terms of households headed by single, divorced or separated female member. Feminisation of poverty is also often seen as the shift in burdens from man to women while there are others who supports the women's poverty being visible after a dormant period. Feminisation of poverty has considerably resulted in misunderstanding of the differences between gender disadvantages and poverty.

Culture of Poverty among Poor Women

The culture of poverty in simple term means that the group or the class referred has certain prevalent pattern of norms and behaviour that makes them separate or distinct from the mainstream of the society Edward Banfield in 1970, opines two such groups having distinct culture of poverty. "Those who lacked money but had middle class values and would benefit from government support

¹²⁰ Rebecca Jean Emigh, Eva Fodor and Ivan Szelenyi, n. 52, p.7.

¹²¹ Jane L. Parpart, M. Patricia Connelly and V. Eudine Barriteau (ed.), n. 72, p. 36.

(mainly the disabled and underdevelopment, single mothers who had been widowed or abandoned); and those he called the true lower class, who would live in squalor even if their incomes were doubled.”¹²²

Bradley opines that “poor are impoverished because their culture prevents them taking advantage of opportunities to escape poverty.”¹²³ Much of the hypothesis of the culture of the poverty was conceptualized in the western countries beginning in 1955 when Oscar Lewis coined the term ‘culture of poverty’ based on the research of the Rio family who even after having an opportunity to break from the poverty could not choose to do so. While defining the culture of poverty, “some of the characteristic he identified were long-term unemployment, low life expectancy, a feeling of helplessness or inadequacy, violence in the household, early sexual experiences, little ability to defer gratification poor work habits, short-term horizons rather than long-term goals, substance abuse and deviant family structures. These were self-perpetuating and transmitted from generation to generation.”¹²⁴

Poor women as a homogenous group often suffer from low education attainment, lack of nutrition, dowry death, early marriage and early child reproduction and bearing of children in the hope of producing son. These sets of the cultures are still prevalent among women in many societies of the developing countries. “It is difficult to talk about women as a whole without ignoring the vast economic, cultural and social differences between them.....nevertheless, it is possible to outline the general shape of women’s living conditions in the rural areas of the third world. They share, first of all their poverty....secondly, wherever they live, they are bound together by the common fact of their tremendous work burden.”¹²⁵

¹²² Sharon Kane and Mark Kirby, *Wealth, Poverty and Welfare* (New York, Mac Milan, 2003), p. 99.

¹²³ Bradley K. Schiller, *The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination* (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 86.

¹²⁴ Sharon Kane and Mark Kirby, *Wealth, Poverty and Welfare* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.98.

¹²⁵ Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson, *Women and Environment in the Third World: Alliance for the Future* (London, Earthscan Publication, 1998), p. 3.

Given the opportunities they may come out of the poverty trap, however, sometimes women themselves fail to understand what inflicts them to be discriminated and biased in the society. Giving an example of how a woman named *Vasanti* came out of her husband's abusive conduct, Nussbaum writes, "like many women, she seems to have thought that abuse was painful and bad, but still a part of women's lot in life, just something women have to put up with as part of being women dependent on men, and entailed by having left her own family to move into a husband's home. The idea that it was a violation of rights, of law, of justice, and that *she herself* has rights that are violated by her husband's conduct- these ideas she didn't have at that time, and many many women all over the world don't have them now."¹²⁶

Gender and Development

History on development has isolated women within its main framework. The pre- colonization and the colonization history of development was basically andocentric. Women were little reflected except from the aristocracy class and their highly ostenscious living standard. It was only during the 1960's that the failure of the trickle down theory was able to identify the women as the marginalized groups when Ester Boserup brought to notice that the trickle- down paradigm was "gender neutral"¹²⁷ in her work, *Women's Role in Economic Development*.

A new understanding of development emerged during the 1970's when the modernization theory was criticized which influenced to integrate women in the development efforts. Prior to 1975, women's development planning were focused on the practical needs surrounding their reproductive role. "Practical gender needs are those a woman or a man requires in order to fulfill her/ his socially determined roles. For instances, in order to feed her family. A woman may identify access to food or fuel wood as a practical gender need."¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, n. 56, p. 112-13.

¹²⁷ *Human Development Report, 1995*, n. 28, p. 102.

¹²⁸ *Human Development in South Asia- 2000* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2000), n. 129, p. 27.

The first step towards a new era was taken in the year 1975, when the first World Conference on Women in Mexico City was held which declared the period 1975- 1985 as *The United Nation Decade for the Women*. Thus was born the concept of Women in Development (WID). “The early discussion on WID focused on two different concerns : that women had either been excluded from the benefits of development, or had been included in ways that had marginalized them. The policy orientation of WID was to use development resources for improving women’s conditions and making their contributions visible. While WID programmes did not address the basic structure of inequality in the relationship between men and women.”¹²⁹

The Women in Development (WID) was an outcome of such merging of ideology of the liberal feminism and the modernization.

“The WID perspective has provided a checklist for ensuring women’s status in societies, a checklist that is both helpful and accessible to development technocrats.

However, the WID approach has important limitations that have tended to restrict the transformative capacity on many levels. Because this approach relies heavily on modernization theory, it generally assumes that western institutions hold most of the answers and it often ignores the possible contribution of indigenous knowledge. It also tends to see development as an activity of a government- to-government nature and consequently generally refrains from criticizing Third world governments. It sees the state as a solution, rather than a potential problem for the advancement of women.”¹³⁰

It was under WID that the women’ s active role in the development process was recognized based on the reproductive, productive and emphasized the fulfillment of their strategic needs. “Strategic gender needs, on the other hand, are those which require a confrontation with existing social relationships between women and men. This could include changes in anything from property rights to

¹²⁹ *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development- 1999* (New York, United Nations and Work.), p.viii.

¹³⁰ Jane L. Parpart, M.Patricia Connelly and V. Eudine Barriteau (ed.), n.72, p. 58.

the relative amount of time women and men are expected to spend in child care.”¹³¹ But the policy of strategic needs faced much criticisms from the implementation part of the governments .It overlooked the subordinate position of the women in the society. The growing unpopularity of the strategic needs was replaced by the operational needs of women, by emphasizing on the women accessibility to income in small-scale income generating projects.

During the 1980, due to the growing implication faced by the third world by the global recession, international debts and the oil setbacks, new programmes based on the structural adjustments were implemented. But this policy fails to impress the development thinkers. Some thinkers thought that these programmes fail to develop the women as they were dislocated by the short-term strategies. A new way for the development of the women were sought for which culminated in the introduction of a new approach- Gender and Development (GAD). “The Gender and Development (GAD) perspective calls for a synthesis of the issues of materialist political economy and the radical- feminist perspective issues of patriarchy and ideology (patriarchal ideology). Drawing on the socialist – feminist perspective, the GAD approach argues that women’s status is deeply affected by their material conditions of life and by their position in the national, regional, and global economies.”¹³²

In the GAD strategy the focus was not only on the women’s subordinated position and patriarchy but it laid emphasis on the both men and female as gender was considered to be the outcome of the social construction. “First the focus shifts from women to gender and the unequal power relations between women and men. Second, all social, political and economic structures and development policies are re- examined from the perspective of gender differentials. Third, it is recognized that achieving gender equality requires ‘transformation change’.”¹³³ The ‘transformative change’ could be successful by reorienting and restructuring the gender relation in the gendered society. Hence, mainstreaming of gender is

¹³¹ *Human Development in South Asia, 2000*, n 128, p. 27.

¹³² Jane L. Parpart, M.Patricia Connelly and V. Eudine Barriteau (ed.), n. 72, p. 62.

¹³³ *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development-1999*, n. 129, p.ix.

essential for action behind such initiatives to bring equality between men and women in all spheres of activities be it political, social and economic.

Much of the realization of mainstreaming of gender was ushered when poverty was analyzed as deprivations of basic human needs during the 1990s. The capability approach and the functionality approach ushered a new era that recognised the powerlessness, voicelessness and vulnerability of the women. "Vulnerability can be defined as the risk of being negatively affected by unforeseen events, but some ambiguity is attached to the use of this notion. The Committee for Development Planning at its thirty-second session agreed that a distinction needed to be made between economic vulnerability and ecological vulnerability originated partly from ecological factors (such as hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes and droughts). Thus the construction of an index of economic vulnerability should to some extent take the economic impacts of ecological factors into account, even if ecological fragility as such needs to be considered separately."¹³⁴

A greater stride was taken when gender empowerment measures and gender development index were introduced. The UNDP introduced Gender Development Index(GDI), Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) in year the 1995. The Gender Development Index indicates the inequality between male and female in the spheres of life expectancy and the nature of biological edge of the women, knowledge and standard of living by income constructed on the same principles as that of the human development index. "Unfortunately the measurement of the earned income gap is the most unreliable component of the GDI. It cannot be measured directly, so it is estimated on the basis of data on female non- agricultural wages as a percentage of male non- agricultural wages, and female and male shares of the economically active population."¹³⁵

¹³⁴ *Vulnerability and Poverty in a Global Economy: A Report of the Committee for Development Policy on the First Session (26- 30 April, 1999)*, (New York, United Nations, 1999), p. 29.

¹³⁵ *Progress of the World's Women 2000*, n. 104, p. 104.

The Gender Empowerment Index indicate the level of participation of women in economic, political and professionals by three variables – per capita earned in PPP dollars, share of jobs in professional, technical, administrative and managerial and share of parliamentary seats. The GDI values shows that women are not treated at par with men and income is not the only source to close gender gap. Though GEM is viable measure to acknowledge the women’s participation on the politic and the professional jobs, also mean “that a higher GEM cannot be interpreted in a straight way as an indication of extent to which the country with the higher GEM has policies better able to provide gender equality, because the higher GEM also reflects the fact that the country is itself richer.”¹³⁶

The GDI and GEM [a] reflects on the income which is an “important factor in economic reorganization, independence and reward”¹³⁷ But it fails to give the distribution of income or the pattern of consumption by the earned and the dependent family members. The ratio of the Gender Development Index to Human Development serves the purpose of knowing gender disadvantages.

Another meaningful invention in the assessment in the aspect of poverty and gender issues is the Human Poverty Index (HPI) that measures the deprivation based on longevity, knowledge and living standard. “Based upon the capabilities /entitlements approach which, expanding upon the insights of the income poverty approach, examines people’s ‘capabilities’, such as literacy and levels of health and nutrition, as well as their’ entitlement ‘ to assets and resources. From the perspective of human poverty, the question ‘are women poorer than men?’ gets a more complete answer. Yes, women are indeed poorer when one considers such capabilities as health and education.”¹³⁸

Ponna Wignaraja in his book *Women, Poverty and Resources*, emphasizes that the issue of poverty among the poor women in the developing countries cannot be raised independently of the social fabrics. Wignaraja draws out eleven lessons for evolving a programme concept and approach for the upliftment of the

¹³⁶ *Progress of the World’s Women 2000*, n. 104, p. 4.

¹³⁷ *Human Development Report, 1995*, n. 28, p. 75.

¹³⁸ *Overcoming Human Poverty* (New York, United Nations Development Fund, 1998), p. 72.

poor women. Women's movement, government and the donors, credit are the three factors to start a driving force for a comprehensive programme. "It is the programme perspective that is comprehensive; the specific activities evolve in response to the needs and priorities of poor women and entry point' may be located in a specific sector or activity."¹³⁹ Emphasizing on the identifying the homogenous groups of poor women, basic needs of poor women like environmental sanitation, the role of NGOs, the approach to be "is not a matter of multiplying the process on the basis of experimental learning and a sensitive problem solving participatory approach, rather than a pre-determined, prescriptive and rigid bureaucratic approach to a standard' model'." ¹⁴⁰

Participatory methods were regarded to be the best alternative in assessing the poverty and the gender relation according to the social relationship and the cultural institutions. It could assess the individual rights like entitlements in land and property that are decided by the interplay between the state's rules and social norms. "Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people centered sustainable development."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Ponna Wignaraja, *Women, Poverty and Resources* (1990, Sage Publication, New Delhi), p.103.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 103-4.

¹⁴¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4- 15 September 1995*, n. 105, p. 3.

Chapter II

POVERTY AND GENDER ISSUES IN NEPAL

Introduction

Nepal situated between 26° 22' North –30° 27' North and 80° 4' East-88° 2' East is a land locked country with a total area of 147, 181 sq km, occupying 0.03% of the world area and 0.3% of Asia. The term 'yam caught between two rocks' has been applied for Nepal for its compact location between two Asian giants -China and India. "Its identity is underlined for more than three thousand years, and this is mainly due to the caring capacity of generations who very strongly protested against the external encroachment on its historically, socially, culturally and geographically set fundamentals."¹

"The country bordered by Tibetan China in the north and the vast Gangetic Plain in the south. Sikkim and West Bengal lie in the east and Utter Pradesh in the west. The Himalaya forms the northern boundary but the southern boundary is artificial one. It is locally known as 'Das Gaj Khamba' (Ten Yards Pillar). The country is noted for hilly terrain. Considerable areas are mountains."²

The country consists of five development regions – the Eastern, Central, Western, Mid Western and Far Western. Each of these development regions are subdivided further each into three sub-divisions comprising of mountains, hills and tarai areas for development mapping. "Nepal does not have a well- defined and compact form in geographical terms."³ "These zones of hills and plains districts that lie in the area of the traditional north-south trails connecting the hills areas with the long standing trade marts or import-export center situated along the Nepal- India border in the tarai. It is hoped that the development of roads and

¹ Gunanidhi Sharma, "Infrastructure, Service Delivery and Accessibility in Mountains and Hills of Nepal", *Economic Journal of Development Issues*, vol. 3, no. 1, Jan –Jun 2002, p. 13.

² Bhagawati Upadhaya, *Industrial Geography of Nepal* (Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1994), p. 7.

³ Rishikesh Saha, *A Introduction to Nepal* (Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2001) p. 12.

transport will lead to the opening up of the hinterland in other than the ancient north- south direction, and will assist the growth of market- economy and urban centers.”⁴

Economic Resources of Nepal

Nepal has rich and diversified economic resources. These natural resources however lack optimal utilization in Nepal. According to Krishna B. Thapa, the limited utilization of resources has both positive and the negative impact on the country. On one hand it has deprived the population of well being making poverty a main issue in the country. On the other hand, “the poor economic condition of Nepal was responsible, to a great extent, for the protection of its independency.”⁵ The following is a brief account on the economic resources Nepal.

Agriculture: Agriculture is the mainstay of the 95% of people in Nepal. About 18 % of the total land area of Nepal has agricultural land of which 53 % lies in the tarai areas. The uneven distribution of the fertile lands has greatly hampered the agricultural development in the country. In the tarai areas, the soils of eastern tarai are more fertile than the western tarai areas and receives less rainfall comparatively than the eastern tarai. But to Krishna B. Thapa, the productive capacity of the western tarai was low “because of the necessary population to bring the land under cultivation.”⁶ The important crops grown are rice, maize, wheat, millet, lentils, pulses and others include mustard, potatoes, yam, citrus fruits, jute, sugarcane etc. The mountainous areas make varied agricultural contribution in form of animal husbandry and livestock rearing for both consumption and trade.

“Nepalese agriculture is fundamentally subsistence family type. The so called co-operative and collective type of farming does not exist here. Commercial and mechanized farming too is almost non- existent. Since farming

⁴ Rishikesh Saha, n.3 p. 2

⁵ Krishna B. Thapa, *Main Aspects of Social, Economic and Administrative History of Modern Nepal* (Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1995), p. 97.

⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

is done primarily for sustaining family members, cereals production is dominant in most parts of the country. At the same time, agriculture in most areas is operated with primitive methods and with traditional tools. As such yield per unit of land as well as the rate of increase in agricultural production is very low.”⁷

Forest: “Forest is one of the major source of revenue of the Nepal Government. It supplies fuel, fodder and varieties of timbers needed for various industries like match, paper, furniture, etc. in addition to these tangible products, forests indirectly render various services useful for the country and its people.”⁸ Economic value of forest is high in the region between the tarai and the inner tarai where is known as *charkose jhadi*. These forests provide timbers of high value. Beside the timber the forest provide grazing grounds for the animals, honey, musk, medicinal herbs.

“Owing to the lack of appropriate efforts towards conserving forest resources, forest areas in both hills and tarai are being increasingly encroached and recklessly devastated for agricultural settlement. It is largely due to the rapid growth and migration of population the tarai forest is much more encroached than other forest areas. Deforestation in hills has resulted in several evils like soil erosion, landslides, siltation etc.”⁹

Mineral Resources: “Nepal does not possess spectacular reserves of mineral resources which could lead one to believe the country would enjoy a continued competitive edge in sectors associated with these resources.”¹⁰ The mineral resources though in limited existence make an important contribution towards the industrialisation of Nepal. “The mountains of Nepal with their varied geological structure bear various mineral deposits in diverse parts of the country. The chief minerals found herein include iron ore, magnesite, mica, copper,

⁷ S.H. Shrestha, *Economic Geography of Nepal* (Kathmandu, Educated Enterprise , 1998), p.129.

⁸ Ibid, p. 74.

⁹ Ibid, p.78.

¹⁰ Pradeep Man Vaidya, “South Asia’s Competitive Advantage: A Case Study of Nepal,” *South Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 1, Jan- June 2002, p. 51.

limestone, lead, zinc and so on. Their quality and quantity and workability have yet to be assessed fully.”¹¹

Water Resources: Nepal has a rich network of river systems comprising of rivers and streams that drain into the basins of Koshi, Gandaki and Karnali “Only about 0.5 per cent of the available economic potential has so far been exploited.”¹² Almost maximum of all rivers have high potentiality in power generation. The hydro-electric power generation in Nepal has the capacity of 83,000 mega watt. But very less has been used in the generation of hydro- power. “Being a mountainous country with a snow- capped Himalaya Ranges and with a large number of perennial rivers originating there from, the water resources of Nepal are very intense. If the underground water also is taken in consideration, the actual water resources available in the country renewable and is of substantial significance from the viewpoint of hydro- electricity, land irrigation, drinking water etc. but so far very little use has been made of this valuable assets.”¹³

Large-scale and Small Scale Industries: The large scale industries and the small scales industries in Nepal include cotton textiles, woolen carpets and clothe, paper, metal, wood working grinding and oiling. Other important industries are jute and jute products, sugar, cigarette, match making, leather tanning, soaps etc. “With regard to the impact of employment situation, agro-based and mineral based industries (such as food, beverages, tobacco), and other non- metallic based industries are highly significant in generating manufacturing sector employment). Therefore a set- back to their expansion indicates significant negative impact of globalization on employment in manufacturing. Many of these industrial groups also have backward linkages with the agriculture sector, while some (like cement, bricks and tiles) have forward linkages with the construction

¹¹ S.H. Shrestha, n.7, p. 75.

¹² Pradeep Man Vaidya, n.10, p. 51.

¹³ S.H. Shrestha, n.7, p. 75.

sector. Thus, a set back to such major industrial groups will certainly effect beyond the impact on direct employment.”¹⁴

Tourism: Tourism is the single most important industry in Nepal that has a comparative advantage over other economic resources. It has emerged as the one of the most dynamic sectors where Nepal can have the comparative advantage in terms of the foreign exchange, employment and can generate income directly and indirectly among both small and large entrepreneurs related to tourism. “Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic and promising sectors and is the second or third most important source of foreign exchange earnings for the economy, providing ample employment opportunities, and income generation for small and large enterprises.”¹⁵

“Given that the areas of comparative advantage, geography, culture and tradition generate a special advantage which is independent of economic competition in the world market, it is appropriate to consider tourism, forest, mineral, wild life related activities as the sources of monopoly benefit, although they are indirectly influenced by the growth of other competitive sectors. These historically available sources (climate, landscape or topography, cultural monuments, ethnic groups, wildlife and vegetation) of income or benefits definitely generate their own multiplier effects for the total economy by affecting income, employment, savings, investment, foreign exchange ratios overtime. Nepal need not, to a large extent, be worried about their sustainability. It simply should plan for the adequate preservation of these stocks of wealth which are authentically available in abundance.”¹⁶

Human Resources: Contents

Human resources are the main backbone of the country. Human capability is the necessary pre-requisites for the utilization of the resources of the country.

¹⁴ Kishor-K. Guru- Ghahana, Nav Raj Dahal, *Industrial Relations System in Nepal* (Kathmandu, Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1996), p. 24.

¹⁵ Pradeep Man Vaidya, n. 10, p. 51.

¹⁶ Gunanidhi Sharma, n.1, p.39.

The development of the human resource depends on the policies of the government, the availability of the infrastructures e.g. the facilities for education, trainings for skill manpower and the socio- cultural aspects. “The stretch of land which consists of the low river valleys and unhealthy forest belts is inhabited by various indigenous people whose origins and affinities are quite obscure The fourth and most economically important geographical region is populated by various Indo-Aryan language speaking Mediterranean type and some indigenous people such as the *Tharus, Dhimals, Satar, Koshe, Mushahar, Mache* and *Dhangers*.”¹⁷

“The physical divisions of Nepal correspond roughly to the broad outlines of its well-marked racial and religious zones. The real highlands show the marked influence of *Bon*, a primitive religion of Tibet before the coming of Buddhism, which centers on the worship of spirits, animals and elements of nature. The midlands or the hilly region, consisting of the fertile mountain valleys, show the effect of the steady penetration of Hinduism from the south. But also included among the people in this area, as among the Newars of the Kathmandu valley, are the Buddhist sub-groups who practice Mahayana or Tibetan Buddhism. The lowlands or the tarai area are even more pronouncedly Hindu if we exclude the few aboriginal tribes living there.”¹⁸

Distribution of Population and Gender Composition

Table 2.1, explains that the total population of all ages was 18491097 in the year 1991, out of which male comprised of 49.9 % and female comprised of 50.1 % of the total population. In the gender composition for the group age of 0- 14 years, the percent of girl children to the total population was lower than the male population of the same age group. It indicates that the girl infants and girl children were less. The adolescent girls and the reproductive age group of women were comparatively more than the male out of the total population.

¹⁷ Dor B. Bista, *People of Nepal* (Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak , 2000), p. vii-viii

¹⁸ Rishikesh Saha, , n. 3, p. 13.

TABLE 2.1
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND SEX 1991

Age (in years)	1991		
	Total	Male	Female
All ages	18491097	9220974	9270123
0-4	2707352	1371225	1336127
5-9	2806133	1430265	1375868
10-14	2327286	1209803	1117483
15-19	1792527	878035	944920
20-24	158663	729279	857484
25-29	1374409	648268	726141
30-34	1154301	552339	601962
35-39	1027247	516229	511018
40-44	842719	409992	432727
45-49	734162	374362	359800
50-54	598484	307446	291038
55-59	465957	250040	215917
60-64	431645	215479	216166
65-69	270472	141707	128765
75 and over	185165	91322	93843

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Nepal 200*, (Katmandu, Central Bureau of Statistic, 2000), pp.1-4.

Population distribution in Nepal is said to be uneven due to the terrain character. "The mountainous, although constituting about a quarter of the total land area are sparsely populated (with some twenty- five persons per square kilometers) and contain only about 5-7 per cent of Nepal's population. Even so, since the area actually cultivated in the mountainous regions accounts to probably no more than 3 per cent of all cultivated land in the country, a significant proportion of the population is unable to live from farming alone, but must supplement its income from other sources, including long- distance trade, or else migrate out to the hills and the plains for at least part of the year. The hills contain some 60 per cent of Nepal's population but only about a quarter of the

cultivated lands with the result that overall population density is high, and extremely high per cultivated area.”¹⁹

TABLE 2.2
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION -1991

Regions	Total population 1991	Area in sq. kms.
Eastern Development Region	4446769	28458
Western Development Region	6183955	27410
Central Development Region	3770678	29398
Mid-Western Development Region	2410414	42378
Far-Western Development Region	1679301	19539

Source: *Statistical Year Book of Nepal 2001* (Kathmandu, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001), pp. 5-8.

In reference to the Table 2.2 much of the reason for its uneven distribution is due to the topographic pattern. The far western development region has the least number of population while the Mid Western development region has the highest. The mountains of the north have the sparse and the isolated pattern of population. Population is concentrated more towards the accessible valleys or the east-west corridor towards the south excluding the malaria infested swampy tarai.

“Western Mountain Region with a fifth of total area has only 0.6 per cent of total population. Eastern tarai, on the other hand, has 10 per cent of the total area but 28 per cent of the total population. Kathmandu valley with only 0.6 per cent of total area has 6 per cent of the country’s population. Thus there is skewed pattern when plotting a map of districts relative to their population size. The mountain districts in the north appear as small entities where as the tarai districts constitute large blocks to the south.”²⁰

Racial Composition Nepal is a melting pot of various cultures and religious diversities. The Nepali society is formed of two most important races – Mongoloids and the Aryans. Thapa mentions that, “the migration of those two

¹⁹ P.M. Blaikie, John Cameron, John David Seddon, *Nepal in Crisis : Growth and Stagnation at the Periphery* (New Delhi, Adroit Publishers, 2001), p. 8-9.

²⁰ Harka Gurung , *Nepal : Social Demography and Expressions* (Kathmandu, New Era, 1998), pp.4-5.

stocks of people to Nepal took place in two processes-natural and incidental.”²¹ According to him, the natural migration took place in search of arable lands and pastures and the incidental migration took place due to the political motivation induced under the schemes of rehabilitation, when natural calamities like the floods, earthquake took place or resettlement programmes too develop the swampy inner tarai. Broadly the mongoloid population of northern Nepal comprises of tribes of *Gurung, Magar, Sherpa, and Tamangs, Rai and Limbus*. The Aryan population mostly migrated from northern India. *Bahun*s (Brahmins), *Khas* and the *Chhetris* form the dominant groups of this race.

Caste and Ethnic Composition

Caste in Nepal follows the four varna system – *Brahman, kshtriya, Vaishya and the Shudra*. “Both caste and ethnicity are included in ‘ethnicity’. According to the 1991 census of Nepal, there were 2 major and other castes and ethnic groups in the mountain regions, 29 major and others in hill areas and 29 major and others in tarai region.”²² “Four varna and 36 *jaat* (castes) are the common words used by the common folds. The 61 *janajati* are the recent identifications of the government, which are considered as the suppressed and depressed classes. They are also group- based on language and religion basis. Besides, there are tremendous numbers of level of social status, e.g: The *Newar* community the *Madesia* Community, the regional disparity community so on and so forth. Presently a new caste is emerging known as political caste, caste created due to the caste of votes if so communal even member of the same family do not participate even in the death ceremonies (*malami*) or marriage ceremony.”²³

Upreti states that, “this hereditary transformation of varna (from parents to offspring irrespective of their work especially) distorted into the present

²¹ Krishna B. Thapa ,n. 5, p. 2.

²² Narayan Kumar Basnet, *Nepal at the Dawn of The 21st Century, General, Health and Medical Information* (Tokyo, University of Tokyo, 2001), p. 14.

²³ Shastra Dutta Pant, *Comparative Constitutions of Nepal* (Kathmandu, SIRUD, 1995), p. 197.

complex and rigid caste system in Nepal.”²⁴ The caste system not only differentiates and hierarchizes individuals, households, kinship groups and clans but also horizontally and vertically, “Such segregation, however, does not at all imply an absence of inter-caste and inter-ethnic interaction – only that the domains of such interaction are very specifically and rigidly defined”²⁵

Of the higher caste the *brahmin* and the *chetris* are the dominant group. Half of them occupy the western hills or the mid- montane region of Nepal. “The Brahmins and the Chettris are scattered all along the middle belt of Nepal but rarely settled higher than 6,000 feet above sea level.”²⁶

The Kathmandu valley is the original home of the *newars*, are the rich business class in Nepal and have a “definite cultural entity”.²⁷ They are the most urbanized and skilled trading community. The *Kiratis* comprising of the *Rais* and *Limbus* are best known for their archery, their greater population is concentrated in the eastern Nepal bordering India. The *Gurungs and Magars* are closely associated for their mongoloid features, but “the *Magars* generally prefer lower altitudes unlike their Gurung neighbours who choose to live closer to the Himalayan pastures for grazing their sheep. In the higher regions, close to the Tibetan culture area, the Magars have also adopted local religious and social customs and costumes.”²⁸ They serve a large number of the Gorkha regiments in India. “The ethnic system, on other hand has been rooted mainly in mutually exclusive origin myths, historical mutual seclusion, and the state’s intervention in redefining and recreating individual. Household and more collective ethnic belongingness.”²⁹

²⁴ Bishnu Raj Upreti, *Management of Social and Natural Resources Conflict in Nepal : Realities and Alternatives* (Delhi, Adroit Publishers, 2002), p. 84.

²⁵ *Nepal Human Development Report-1998*, (Kathmandu, Nepal South Asian Center , 1998), p.8.

²⁶ Rishikesh Saha, n.3, p. 13.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 17.

²⁸ Ibid ,, p.21.

²⁹ *Nepal Human Development Report-1998*,n.25, p.8.

The tarai area comprises largely of people from the plains of northern India like the Maithili speaking group, the *Bhojpuri*, *Avadhi*, *Bengali* and the *Urdu* speaking people. The important groups of the tarai are the *Tharus* who are usually the peasant and carry primitive activities as fishing and hunting. Most of the population in the tarai are people of the northern India. "Even after the first quarter of 20th century, it was difficult for the Nepal Government to pursued the hill people to take up landholdings in the hot and malarial tarai. Only landless people were available to brave the risks, and land-hungry Indian peasants from the overpopulated Ganga plain moved north into tarai. In order to increase the revenue of the state and the private income of the Birta holders, the Rana government made it a policy for a long time to employ Indian zamindars (landlords) and tenant cultivators to clear land and settled in this manner between the 1890s and 1930s."³⁰

The cultural divergence between the tarai and the rest of the population of the Nepal has hindered the integrated development in Nepal. "It is not possible for the people of the tarai to develop the same kind of emotional attitude towards the momentous historical events of the past which brought the rest of the Nepali people together and made them pool their efforts and resources to promote territorial expansion as a joint venture of national enterprise."³¹

Poverty In Nepal

In Nepal, income and consumption are less priority factor in the identification of the characteristics and the nature of the poverty. "The basic parameters used to identify poverty is either consumption or income, but poverty transcends both."³² Both these factors cannot capture the nature and the characteristics of poverty because poverty in Nepal is the cumulative effect of multiple factors varying from socio-economic to cultural and political to regional variation.

³⁰ Rishikesh Saha , n.3, p.28.

³¹ Ibid, p.28.

³² Devendra Raj Pandey, *Nepal's Failed Development- Reflections on the Mission and the Maladies* (Kathmandu, Nepal South Asian Center, 1999), p. 74.

Devendra Raj Pandey has put forward three factors that are relevant as far as the incidence of poverty is concerned. "Poverty in Nepal is the product of 3 factors. They are (1) unsatisfactory growth in aggregate output; (2) historical effect of unequal distribution of assets and social and economic status among different groups of citizen including caste-related and gender-related biases; and (3) inequalities born of recent development efforts that have generated further inequitable income and assets distribution."³³

"On another account, poverty is a result of the sustained gap between the income and expenditure in the household account, the latter exceeding the former. The degree of this gap determines the degree of poverty of a household. Two forms of poverty are particularly important. One is called the spatial poverty where in the people residing in a remote and isolated pocket become poor due to high transaction costs involved in the acquisition of inputs or sale of local products. The other is cyclical poverty in which deprivation is caused by several factors. One interesting definition on poverty is based on the proportion of income spent on food. A household spending more than 70 percent of its income on food is also classified as poor."³⁴

Causes and Nature of Poverty

Land Based Poverty

Prosperity in Nepal depends on the landholdings. The structure of the land system and the nature of landholdings are of prime concern to identify the poor. "Land is a prized asset and hence, the ownership of land by a household is generally a proxy for the purpose. It is estimated that a person would need about 0.06 hectare of perennially irrigated land which, if farmed with the best of available technology, would suffice for his/her basic needs."³⁵

Lands in Nepal are inhospitable, harsh, and productivity is limited. The poor derive smaller returns from the land due to their smaller share of holding in

³³ Devendra Raj Pandey, n.32, p. 75.

³⁴ "Poverty and Its Incidence in Nepal", www.panasia.org.sg, p. 1.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 1.

better quality *khet* (cultivable) land. The agricultural economy is subsistent type and it is also the most important sector for generating employment. “86 per cent of the country’s households cultivate some land; 80 percent have some livestock; and 83 per cent of the labour force relies mainly on agriculture for employment.”³⁶

In the context of poverty, the land systems of Nepal have a tremendous impact. They reflect the form of ownership, tenure and the taxation system. The most important land tenure system is the *Raika* system was directly under the control of the government. “In the Raikar, the revenue assessed used to be collected through the Zamindar who got commission at a rate of about 4 per cent of assessment. The Zamindar was an intermediary between the government and the tenant though, in practise, exploitation was quite rampant. Set apart from holding certain plots of land in the tarai region, the Zamindars had bulk of the land (called home- farm land or ‘sir’ land) which he used to sublet in contract either in kind or in cash, and in some cases even cultivated the bulk of land himself.”³⁷

In the *Birta* land system the ownership rights is given to an individual as a reward for his distinct service or due to his privileged position. They differ in the rights and the obligation according to the owner who is the sole authority of collection of tax. “This rent-free lands which were found mostly in the tarai region were almost all held by the Ranas, the hereditary rulers who ruled for more than a century before 1951 and certain people from upper classes to whom these lands has been given away generations as rewards for their loyalty. These lands used to be cultivated not by the owners but by the tenants.”³⁸ *Guthi* land system are those lands that are given for religious purposes to religious individuals and institutions. *Sera* are the lands separated for the royal households and consist of separate rules and regulations.

³⁶ *Nepal Human Development Report 2001*, (Kathmandu, United Nations Development Programme, 2001) , n.11, p.33.

³⁷ Y.P.Pant, Girish P.Pant, *Some Aspects of Economic Planning: A Case Study of Nepal* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1999), p. 257.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

In the *Kipat* land system, lands were allotted to a community or communities. This system prevailed in the easternmost part of the hilly areas. "The state or any organs of the state except the concerning communities. The state or any organs of the state, except the concerning community would not be responsible for the cultivation of those lands. Similarly, the government also would not collect the land revenue directly from the individual cultivators. All works regarding such land tenure as allotting land to an individual for cultivation, replacing and repealing him and collecting taxes from him would be done by the community accredited the *Kipat* land."³⁹

Land taxes were based on the *adhiya* system where half of the produced had to be given as tax. This created difficulties among the peasant specially during the period of natural calamities. Further the fluctuating value under the *adhiya* system gave no incentives to the poor peasant in from of investment to increase production. The *khut* or the system of collecting a fixed portion of the produced replaced the *adhiya* in 1836-37 and it proved convenient both for the peasant and the government. "Beside the right of having a portion of production of the land, they had the right of inheriting and partitioning the land during family separation. But, they had no right of selling or mortgaging lands they cultivated."⁴⁰

The nature of land holding right differed according to the system of land holding. The *Birta* owners fixed taxes for the peasants who worked in their field. The peasant under *Guthi* system bore the burnt of their landowner. Even the *Kipat* authority fixed tax under their control. "The terms and conditions which the government would formulate by laws for the cultivators of *Raika* lands with regard to their tenancy rights affected the tenants of other land systems too."⁴¹ Land holding system was not similar everywhere in Nepal the peasant in the central and the eastern hills were often deprived off the selling and mortgaging of land unlike the *chuni* peasants of the Karnali region. Similarly many of the land

³⁹ Krishna B. Thapa, n.5, p. 123.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 131.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 131.

tenure system like *ukhada*, *mahajaniya*, *jhora*, *rajarajauta* did not improve the condition of the poor peasant.

Land and debt are the two most important social factors that is responsible for the persistent poverty “but not as a consequence but as a cause.”⁴² “The land system in the country, as a matter of history, evolved with one object in view, and that was the maximum collection of land revenue. As a result, the agriculturist class was reduced to abject poverty.”⁴³

Land reform assumed a great importance only a few decades back. The first Land Reform Commission was set up in August 1952 that recommended security of the tenants. The Land act of 1956 fixed the land ceiling upto 50 percent of the produce. In the year 1959, through the Birta Abolition Act, all *Birta* lands were brought under the government.

“In 1956, the Birta Abolition Act banned the direct ownership of land by individuals in Nepal. Since that date, landholding has been almost exclusively under the Raikar and Guthi systems of land tenure. Under the Raikar system, individuals hold land-use rights in perpetuity in exchange for the payment of a fixed annual fee to the government, which without exception owns Raikar land. Such Raikar landholders may pass their holdings down through their family and, under certain restrictions, may sell their holdings. They may also rent out part or all of their land to tenant farmers. Under the Guthi system of land holdings, charitable or religious organizations are granted ownership rights to land, under the condition that income derived from the land is used for charitable or religious purposes. Land under the Guthi system is gradually being transformed into Raikar land. At present the Raikar system is the predominant form of landholding in Nepal.”⁴⁴

It was only in the year a comprehensive land policy was put forwarded under The Land reforms of the 1964. “The land reforms act of 1964 has made

⁴² Devendra Raj Pandey, n. 32, p. 74

⁴³ Y.P.Pant. Girish P.Pant, n.37, p. 258.

⁴⁴ *Nepal- Background Papers, International Monetary Fund Staff country Report*, no. 95/63, July 1995, p. 26.

the ceiling of landownership as follows: 1) Tarai and Inner Tarai- 16.4 ha. 2) Kathmandu Valley-2.7 ha. 3) Hill region other than the Kathmandu Valley – 4.1 ha. for cultivation. Tenants may keep 1) Tarai 2.62 ha. 2) Kathmandu Valley – 0.54 ha. 3) Hill Region other than the Kathmandu Valley – 1.08 ha. as tenants. But, the ceiling of land ownerships are waived to the agricultural industries recognised by His Majesty's government. Obviously, the government permits to possess a large area of land for commercial farming as per the Land Reforms Act 1964.”⁴⁵

“The 1964 Land Act represented the first major attempt at land reform in Nepal. It had two broad purposes: to redistribute surplus land from large landholders to existing tenants and to landless labourers, and to reform the system of tenancy rights. For the first objective, the government established ceilings on landholdings for agricultural use and for homesteads according to geographical regions. The government paid for surplus land it acquired from landholders, but compensation was low. However, in practice such redistribution of land was minimal; in the 30- year period to 1994, just over 1 percent of all cultivated land was acquired by the government and redistributed to tenants and landless persons. The intended redistributive impact of the 1964 land reform was blunted by landholders' reallocation of total holdings among family members to avoid the landholding ceilings. Furthermore, the lack of a centralized database on landholdings across districts allowed individuals to retain cross- regional total holdings far in excess of the ceilings without detection.”⁴⁶

“The Land Reform Act of 1964 has a provision of evicting tenants by landowners by paying one fourth of the total land to tenants at anytime, as such causing uncertainty of having land for the tenants. This act also gives a choice to the landowners for giving tenancy rights to one of the heirs of the deceased tenant, in case of the death of a tenant, but excludes the daughters, despite the

⁴⁵ Siddhi B. Ranjitkar, *Development Efforts in Nepal: A Historical Perspectives* (Kathmandu, Ekta Books, 1996), p. 24.

⁴⁶ *Nepal- Background Papers*, n.44, p.26-27.

fact that Civil Act provides a right of the parental property if a daughter is not married until 35 years of age.”⁴⁷

The high man- land ratio and stagnant production has resulted in extreme poverty, social deprivation, dispersal of family members in search of other source of income and breakdown of households. In the far mountains, land acts as the medium of the barter system and are the least priority even to the poor. Among the *Dolpa Bhote*, “they are even willing to exchange their fields for these creatures (yak).”⁴⁸ The *limbus* of the eastern Nepal evolved the *sohraani* system by which they could give away their cultivable lands to *non- limbus*. Later when the *sohraani* land system was changed into the *raikar* system no one was interested in the up keeping of the land. This decreased the productivity of the agriculture and rendered many poor peasant poor.

Land holdings in Nepal is one of the way to examine the nature and the characteristics of poverty. But to the *byansi* of the Dharchula district in the Far Western Mountain Region, lands are inaccessible and insufficient to maintain the everyday basic needs. Average land asset per *byansi* household is 0.55 hectares. But despite the unproductivity and inaccessibility to the lands, the *byansis* are still one of the prosperous people of the region by becoming successful traders. They have ‘two cycles’ of trades – one performed during the summer and the other during the winter. Their prosperity as according to Dahal is “serious ecological constraint prevent the *byansi* from surviving through agriculture only. Diversification of available resources is the best strategy to adapt in this harsh and fragile mountain zone. Thus, along with raising the best livestock which adapt to the Himalayan ecosystem, the *byansi* started trading activities (both in the north and the south) suitable to their environment and

⁴⁷ Siddhi B. Ranjitkar, n.45, p.25-26.

⁴⁸ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke K. Thapa- Magar, *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal- Vol. --1*, (Delhi, Book Faith India, 1994), p. 182.

culture. Most importantly, animal husbandry supports trading activities heavily.”⁴⁹

Religious Causes for Poverty

Rites and customs become a burden when a household is poor. In Nepal the religious duties that are performed are many and they differ from culture to culture. Most of the communities perform rites generally associated with the birth, death and marriage. In many occasions like naming the new born baby or *navaran*, cutting of hair or *chhaewar*, marriage and death, neighbours, kin acquaintances are invited where a lot of money is spent. This is regardless of the financial capability of the person concerned.

In any religious rites the pundit or the priest has to be given gift ostentatiously and huge expenditures are incurred. The rites are prolonged and generally continue from few days to few weeks. Among the *Bhand* tribe of the Mahakali zone, they earn their livelihood by making clay item like the *hruka* (for smoking tobacco), *chillum* (a pipe for smoking marijuana or tobacco). They have limited and low income. “*Bhand* tribes who are at the bottom of the poverty pit, and their tribal rites and rituals are the main causes for them to increase their spending when it comes to feast, it is seen that they are spending more on these activities today than a decade ago.”⁵⁰

Lack of Infrastructure:

The infrastructure systems in Nepal comprise of transportations in forms of roadways, airways along with few traditional mode transportations by yaks, horses, carts, porters etc. Electricity, postal communication, telephone systems, bankings are also other important forms of transportation that bring development to a nation. On assessment of poverty beside the land holding Dahal opines “other indices are the development of infrastructures such as access to roads,

⁴⁹ Dilli Ram Dahal, “Poverty or Plenty: A Case Study of the Byansi People of Darchula District in Micheal Allen (ed), *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes* (Kathmandu, Mandala Book Point, 1994), p.45.

⁵⁰ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke K. Thapa- Magar, n.48, p.24.

communication and availability of basic social service facilities (like school, post office and health post).”⁵¹

The basic infrastructures in Nepal are lacking in the remote and distant areas primarily due to the topographical hindrances. Beside the geographical inaccessibility the other reason for low infrastructure development is the high cost of production. “Nepal is in a verge of getting further into a deeply rooted economic dualism that is mostly concentrated in hills and mountains.”⁵² The different types of infrastructures in Nepal are as follows:

Transportation: Among all the modes of transportation the road connectivity is the most important given its terrain structure. Airways are next important as it connects the inaccessible areas but its costs are high and mainly out of reach of the poor population. The other modes of transportations like porters, yaks and donkeys are important in flow of goods and services in the remote and inaccessible areas.

TABLE 2.3
THE LENGTH OF ROADS CLASSIFIED BY TYPE OF SURFACE AND DEVELOPMENT REGIONS (IN KILOMETER): 1991

Surface Type Development Region	Black Top	Gravel	Earthen	Total
Eastern	615 (31.5)	604 (31)	732 (37.5)	1951 (100)
Central	3323 (41.6)	844 (26.5)	1014 (31.9)	3181 (100)
Western	754 (48)	249 (15.8)	569 (36.2)	1572 (100)
Mid-western	245 (27.2)	307 (34.1)	349 (38.7)	901 (100)
Far-western	146 (20.2)	177 (24.5)	400 (55.3)	723 (100)
Nepal	3083 (37)	2181 (26.2)	3064 (36.8)	8328 (100)

Source: *Socio-Economic Profiles of SAARC Countries: A Statistical Analysis* (New York, United Nations, 1999) p. 243.

⁵¹ Dilli Ram Dahal, n. 49, p. 36.

⁵² Gunanidhi Sharma, n.1, p.18.

The Table 2.3, indicates that 41% of the total road surface is blacktopped in the central region which has also the highest length of black top road surface among all the development regions. The region also has the highest number of the black top, gravel and earthen roads. In contrast, the far western has the least number of the total roads with 723 kilometers.

“There has been many donor agencies willing to help in creating rural infrastructure but the Government was interested in mobilizing resources for the lengthy highways that connected the nook and corners of the country but without much positive economic impact. Construction of suspension bridges and foot and mule trails will benefit millions of people dwelling in the rural areas. But the construction of big highways will benefit only a few people from their inception to the completion.”⁵³

Banking Institutions: Nepal started its banking era with the establishment of a bank in the year 1937. The Nepal Rastra Bank was established in the year 1956. Banking serves as a great institution for the flow of credit, investment and savings, loan and credit facilities for the development of the financial sector in the country. “Commercial banks in Nepal have been overwhelmingly concentrated in urban and tarai areas. Hills and mountains have small number of branches in view of geographical size and population pressure. Obviously, hill and mountain appear commercially, or economically less transformed than their tarai counterparts.”⁵⁴

Electricity: Electricity shapes the life and the economy of the country. Electricity consumption per capita in Nepal is 56 kilowatt hours in the year 2001. Due to very lack of electricity the conventional type of fuel consumption is high which is was 89.6 % of the total energy use in the year 1997. “Historically, the energy consumption has been continuously dominated by fuelwood in the country. However, the rapid depletion of forest resources in recent years have seriously affected the energy consumption patterns of the economic sectors of the

⁵³ Siddhi B. Ranjithkar, n. 45, p. 44.

⁵⁴ Gunanidhi Sharma, n.1, p.21.

economy of Nepal, particularly, the rural residential sector, where fuel wood is gradually replaced by other traditional and commercial forms of energy.”⁵⁵

Capability Poverty In Nepal

Understanding the dynamics of poverty in Nepal is much beyond the conventional approach of study in poverty in terms of income, consumption, expenditure per household etc. Human Development Report of Nepal, 1998 defines poverty in two-dimensional forms. Firstly, the income poverty to maintain a dignified life and secondly, low level of human capabilities that restricts life to live as aspired by an individual. Under such circumstances, poverty takes a multi-facet shape and changes its nature and character in space and time. “Even in rich country, with no absolute income poverty, relative income poverty may lead to absolute poverty in important dimensions of human development – such as education, self respect on the ability to get descent work.”⁵⁶

The contradictory approach made in the nature and characteristics of poverty of Nepal is that the characteristics of poverty in Nepal have inclination towards human deprivation and capability poverty rather than income poverty. Poverty in Nepal is influenced by the multiple and complex relation of religions, ethnicity, culture, class, caste stratification, history and the politico- economic developments. Devendra Raj Pandey, citing the World Bank’s view on poverty in Nepal says that in Nepal, all are poor with the exception of only few business, prosperous farmers and the professionals. “The overall situation has not changed. Obviously, no matter how and where we draw poverty line, most of the people who may be there placed above the line are also generally poor by a reasonable standard if comfortable and dignified human existence. In parlance of some of the

⁵⁵ Anoop Shrestha Acharya, *Energy Economics in Nepal: Issues and Option* (Kathmandu, Udaya Books, 2002), p. 12.

⁵⁶ *Human Development Report, 2002*, (New York, United Nations Development Programme, 2002), p. 20.

experts in the bank, again, the only difference may be that some are 'hard core poor, some 'ultra poor', and rest merely poor.'" ⁵⁷

"The capability as Nussbaum clarifies, focus(es) on the question, 'what are the people of the country in question actually able to do and to be?'. This focus on capabilities.... The approach asks how all the groups in the population are doing and insists on comparing ... one group ... to another.... Unlike an approach that focuses on equal distribution of resources [emphasis supplied] the capability approach maintains that resources have no value in themselves, apart from their role in promoting human functioning [i.e., what people do and what they are or, in short, "doings and beings"; emphasis supplied]. It therefore directs the planner to enquire into the varying needs individuals (and group) have for resources, if they are to become capable of an equal level of functionings." ⁵⁸

According to the *Human Development Report of Nepal, 1998*, The Capability Poverty Measure value for Nepal stands at 72.3 placing the country above Bangladesh (76.9) among the South Asian countries. Nepal's Capability Poverty Measure value is twice as more than that of Maldives (35.5) which has the least Capability Poverty Measure value in the South Asian region. The rural capability poverty measure value was 74.40 in the year 1996 while the urban capability poverty measure was 46.1 in 1996.

According to the *Human Development Report of Nepal, 2001*, the Human Poverty Index for Nepal indicates the value at 39.2 with rural poverty at 41.4 and urban at 23.9. The Human Poverty Index value is high for the mountain at 46.1 followed by tarai at 40.2 and the hills at 37.2. Among the fifteen development regions in Nepal , the far- western mountain has the highest human poverty index value at 54.1 and the lowest at eastern tarai at 33.8.

Nepal has defined absolute poverty based on the daily average calorie intake of 2550 as per the recommendation of the Central Food Research Laboratory. "This official definition is translated into income terms. However,

⁵⁷ Devendra Raj Pandey, n. 32, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Nepal Human Development Report-1998*, n.25, p.30

when the real identification of the poor has to be done for targeting purposes, the official definition is extremely difficult to be executed because it is neither easy to measure income nor the intake of calorie.”⁵⁹ A household expenditure of more than 70 % of its income on food is also defined as poor in Nepal. Those category of population earning below Nepalese Rs. 4404 per annum are also classified as poor.

TABLE 2.4
DISTRIBUTION OF CAPABILITY POVERTY MEASURE IN THE FIVE ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS

Region	Capability Poverty Measure (CPM)	Female Illiteracy Ratio (%)	CPM/ Income Poverty (Head Count Index)
Eastern	67.00	74.1	1.56
Central	72.53	80.1	2.13
Western	71.10	73.5	1.58
Mid-western	77.27	85.5	1.31
Far western	78.43	87.3	1.21

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report- 1998*, (Kathmandu, Nepal South Asian Center, 1998), p. 273.

With reference to the Table 2.4, among the development regions of Nepal, the Central Mountain, Far Western Mountain and Hills and the Mid Western Mountain and Hills have Capability Poverty value more than 80 with Far Western Mountain Hill having the highest value of 82.03 and Eastern Tarai has the least capability poverty measure value.

However, in the tarai areas many of them are not capable of earning to their sufficiency. Among the *ghums*, distributed mainly in the tarai zones whose primary activities is fishing, hunting, weaving baskets, ropes, eat for the first part of the year and starve for the other half of the year. They are least worried about their unstable future and the other half of the year when they have to starve. Even among the among the *doms*, who are a low caste population occupying the tarai,

⁵⁹ “Poverty and Its Incidence in Nepal”, n.34, p. 1.

are “compelled to abandon their traditional occupations and work as garbage collectors just for the sake of satiating their hunger.”⁶⁰

Despite a high level of illiteracy and poverty among the *badi*, a low caste tribe, scattered in the mid and the western Nepal, illiterate female are held high in their society because of their income earning capability. Illiteracy forbids them to develop skills for which they are extremely dependent on others for their survival and the family. “*Pater* or *paturiya* are names of the *badi* girls who prostitute their bodies, though in their society they are considered virgin, since sexual trafficking is not thought of as an offence and their prostitution is an open matter.”⁶¹

Deprivational Poverty In Nepal

The dynamics of culture and ethnic-religions have influenced the social stratification by developing a hierarchal structure that has left a trail of deprived groups and communities behind. “Deprivation, correspondingly, does not consist primarily in the relative loss of stock of values, welfare and utility but in the relative loss of awareness for using or enhancing capabilities.”⁶² Peter Townsend, a strong adherent to the relative poverty views relative deprivation in terms of social participation also besides the living standards. Sen, quoting on relative deprivation says, “within the uniformity of the term ‘relative deprivation’, there seem to exist some distinct and different notions.... One distinction concerns the contrast between ‘feelings of deprivation’ and ‘conditions of deprivation’.... One must, however, look also at the feelings of deprivation in deciding on the style and level of living the failure to share which is regarded as important. The dissociation of ‘conditions’ from ‘feelings’ is, therefore, not easy, and an objective diagnosis of ‘conditions’ requires an objective understanding of ‘feelings’.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke K.Thapa- Magar, n. 48, p.191.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.37.

⁶² *Nepal Human Development Report, 1998*, n.25, p.30.

⁶³ Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 15-16.

Poverty deprives human freedoms and it deprives a person off his dignity. The Vienna Declaration on World Conference in Human Rights in 1993 declares that extreme poverty and the social seclusion is a violation of human dignity. "Poverty is a form of strong deprivation with strong interactive linkages to other forms such as physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness."⁶⁴

Upreti commenting on the nature of the poverty observes that, "poverty incidence increases with the remoteness of the country. People living in inaccessible areas are more entrenched in poverty and fall into the deprivation trap. Urban poverty is mainly the by- product of increased rural deprivation."⁶⁶ In Nepal, deprivation poverty incidences are higher among the different ethnic and the low caste communities reflecting a severe deprivation of opportunities in all aspects of life. The other hardest-hit groups are the occupational castes of the *dalits*, comprising occupational castes such as *Kami* (blacksmith), *Damai* (tailor), and *Sarki* (shoemaker), etc. who are discriminated and deprived of basic necessities in all sphere of activities.

The untouchables and lower castes population are more deprived than the upper castes. There are reasons to believe that in Nepal the dominant ethnic and caste groups exploitation exist in one form or the other. . "In every group there is a *thulo manche* and a *sano mansche* (the big man – small man dichotomy). The big man is perceived as the centripetal force, which takes care of the community and holds it together in a patron- client framework."⁶⁷ Apart from the deprivation by the upper caste groups to the lower castes there exist another type of discrimination i.e. within the upper and the lower echelon among these caste group. The upper class Brahmin discriminates the lower Brahmins. The *sahu newars* from the rich and the upper class discriminates the lower *newar* class "Any kind of demand for justice by the aggrieved *sano manche* is interpreted as an act of treason in support of the centrifugal forces that may be seen as

⁶⁴ *Nepal Human Development Report-1998*, n. 25, p.10.

⁶⁶ Bishnu Raj Upreti, n.24, p. 87.

⁶⁷ Devendra Raj Pandey, n. 32, p. 86

precipitating the breaking – up of the community.”⁶⁸ It aggravates deprivation among the weak and the poor from obtaining basic amenities in their lives.

Women who form more than 50 % of the total population are also the most deprived group in the Nepalese society. With half of them being illiterate, they are mostly held in low status in the society. They have very little access to the resources at their disposal and limited property rights. “The weight of poverty falls mostly heavily on certain groups. Women in general are disadvantaged. In poor household they often shoulder more of the workload than men, are less educated, and have less access to remuneration activities. Children, too, suffer disproportionately, and the future quality of their lives is compromised by inadequate nutrition, health care, and education.”⁶⁹

Emphasizing on the inclusion of women in the development process the United Nations Development Fund calls for “moving towards gender equality is not a technocrate goal- it is a political process. It requires a new way of thinking – in which the stereotyping of women and men gives way to a new philosophy that regards all people, irrespective of gender, as essential agents of change.”⁷⁰

Poverty and Gender Issues in Nepal

“Poverty is fertile ground for the gender- based domination of women by men.”⁷¹ Poverty is to be understood as a condition experienced and shaped by the gendered action. Gendered actions of being masculinity and femininity are being manifested in many social institutions like the schools, households, working place, markets, entitlements etc. Often such gendered activities place women in a subordinate position than the men. It accepts the existing social and economic relation that implies a sort of dependent relationship based on the system of

⁶⁸ Devendra Raj Pandey, n. 32, p. 89

⁶⁹ *World Development Report, 1990*, (Washington D.C., The World Bank, 1990), p. 2.

⁷⁰ *Human Development Report, 1995* (New York, United Nations Development Programme, 1995), p. 1.

⁷¹ Yubaraj Sangrula and Geeta Pathak, *Gender and Nepalese Perspective* (Kathmandu, Pairavi Prakashan, 2002), p. 3.

reciprocity. "The struggle is a silent one of negotiation and manipulation in which the cards are stacked against the weaker party."⁷²

In Nepal, the pattern of male-female relationship within a household is administered by the community relationship at the local village level. It is important to refer here that the local community relationship in Nepal is based on a single caste or ethnicity where, the gender equality and equity are subjected to a particular setup of their respective group's behavior pattern. The gender relationship among the Tarai areas is basically influenced by the Indo-Aryan culture, while these cultural set-ups differ among the Tibeto-Burman groups. "Just as it was possible to make a crude distinction between the conditions of 'shared poverty' experienced by many hill villages of tribal affiliation and conditions of extreme inequality where the poor live among plenty; so it is possible to distinguish those household where the deprivation of female members is a consequence of the general shared poverty of the household itself and those where the social deprivations of females is a consequence rather-of perhaps also-of sexual inequality and discrimination within the household."⁷³ Therefore before discussing the fundamental poverty issues among the women, we must be aware of the position of the women in Nepalese society.

Status of Women in Nepal

Women in Nepal are among the poorest. They are considered to be subordinate in the households and are dominated by men. They are considered to be second class citizen. In Nepal, where the community is dominantly Hindu, girls born are considered to have a temporary relationship with their natal parents. This is because they are brought up in sense of leaving their parental home after marriage. They are ideally taught to be submissive and to be obedient. "The fact that Nepali society values women less than men, however, seems to hold true for virtually all caste and ethnic groups. From the Himalayas to the tarai, women have lower status and heavier workloads than do men. Many parents treat boys preferentially from birth, and this inequality in treatment continuous through life.

⁷² David Seddon: *Nepal: A State of Poverty* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing, 1987), p.197.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

Girls, particularly in the more orthodox Hindu communities of the tarai, are fed less, educated less, and deprived of opportunities for self- development.”⁷⁴

Citing two examples to support the status of women in Nepal in two different cultural settings, Sattaur observed a *Gurung* woman from Lwang village, situated in hills, north of Pokhara, on the daily works that she performs.

“In the rice- planting season, the day begins a 3.00 a.m. for Damber Kumari. In other season, she rises at 5.00 a.m., she makes the fire, heats the water and makes the buffalo food from the leftovers. The house must be swept and the floors re- covered with a thin paste of red clay.... then fills the brass pots with water, lights the incense, and prays with her husband. They have tea at 7.00 a.m... makes bread and dal- bhat, the staple food of lentil and rice, or dido, a cooked dough of ground millet or corn... She makes enough to eat now, and for a second meal later in the day. By 9.00 a.m. she and her husband will go to the fields. If there is pressing works to do there, she may collect fodder, or weave, or spin wool. At 3.00 p.m. she will eat again. She usually returns home around 7.00 p.m., cooks, eats, and retires to sleep.”⁷⁵

But the men rose up later than the women in the peak agricultural season. The responsibilities of the works are different with the heavier works like ploughing, threshing, making bunds and are free after 10. a.m. rest of the time is spent by gambling, visiting friends, drinking. But such leisure activities are not meant for the Lwang Gurung women and hence they are not aware of their surroundings.

On the other hand, Sattaur further tries to bring out the contrast in the status of women of the tarai from those of the Tibetan of Putak village in lower Mustang. “There are great differences compared to our culture. With us the wife is always viewed as inferior to her husband. She must treat him like a Rajah; we

⁷⁴ Omar Sattaur, *Nepal New Horizons?* (Oxford, Oxfam, 1996), p.26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 28.

have to touch our husbands' feet with our foreheads. But here there is more equality. Without the wife's consent the husband can do nothing."⁷⁶

TABLE 2.5
GENDER DEVELOPMENT INDEX OF NEPAL

Gender Development Index 2000	Region
Below 0.25	Far Western Mountain.
0.25 – 0.30	Mid Western Mountain.
0.30 – 0.35	-
0.35 – 0.40	Eastern Mountain, Far Western Hill
0.40 – 0.45	Central Mountain, Central Tarai, Western Mountain, Western Tarai, Mid Western Hill, Mid Western Tarai
Above 0.45	Eastern Hill, Eastern Tarai, Central Hill, Western Hill.

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nations Development Programme 2001), , p. 132

Table 2.5 explains that the Eastern Hill, Eastern Tarai, Central Hill, Western Hill, have Gender Development Index (GDI) value more than the country's GDI value of 0.452. Far Western Mountain and Mid Western Mountain are the two regions with gender development index value below 0.30, maximum developmental regions of Nepal are concentrated between the Gender Development Index values 0.40 – 0.45. The high rate of the GDI value of the eastern hills, eastern tarai, central hills, western hills can be explained in terms of life expectancy and adult literacy.

Life Expectancy: The females in the regions of eastern hills, eastern tarai, central hills, western hills show high life expectancy at birth to be more than 60 years. The highest life expectancy is found among the women of the eastern region with 66.5 years while in contrast the life expectancy of the far western mountain is least with 42.2 years (refer Table 2.5).

⁷⁶ Omar Sattaur , n.74, p.30.

Life is toughest in the mountains and the women have shorter life expectancy due to inaccessible and untimely health care attention, prolonged labourous work activities etc. "There will always be poor women, and at least for the foreseeable future in Nepal, there will be poor undernourished women engaged in hard labour with scant access to health care, which they cannot at any rate afford in terms of time (traveling, check up, hospital admission) or money."⁷⁷

Adult Literacy: The adult literacy among the women corresponds to the GDI value (refer Table 2.5). The region with the high GDI value i.e. eastern hills, eastern tarai, central hills, western hills also has the highest group of female literates. Central hill has the highest percent of female literates at 44.6% followed by the eastern hills at 43.6%. On the other hand, the far- western mountains have the least female literates with only 14.9% only. The mountainous regions also have the highest poverty. "Parents having no income source prefer to send their children to work rather than to study in schools."⁷⁸

Causes of Poverty among the Nepalese Women

Poverty among women is associated with the differences within the gender in terms of accessibility, mobility, earnings and entitlements of property. In Nepal, women are less involved with the outside activities beyond their domestic subsistence spheres. The main reasons of poverty among the women in Nepal are as follows:

Patriarchal System

In Nepal the patriarchal system predominantly exist and the household system is based on the authoritative power of the head of the household member. Kinship status depends on the lineage of the father. Inherited properties are based on the patriarchal lineage. In patrilineal society the control of resources and the decision making power is in the hands of male members.

⁷⁷ Bijaya Subba, Devendra Adhikari and Teeka Bhattarai, "The Neglected Case of Fallen Womb", *Himal*, vol. 16, no.4, April 2003, p.21.

⁷⁸ "Stress on Joint Efforts to Eliminate Child Labor from Brick Kilns", *Kathmandu Post*, 25.12.2002 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 8, no. 5, December 1 to 31, 2002, p. 44.

Among the *Dimals* of the Jahpa and the Morang districts, the paternal division of the property, can be made in many ways but the share are made only to the sons who have the legal rights. "The first step in the division of property is to make up any inequalities in amount the sons have received from the parents. The next step is to place a part of the property aside for the marriage of unmarried sons and daughters including ' Jiwuni' (some amount of property, land share kept for security for old age) for parents."⁷⁹ Then, finally whatever remains, they divided into equal shares among the sons but the parents may keep the property of the house for themselves and stay with the younger sons. "The parental property can also be divided in another way. In this instance, there are as many shares as there are sons, and parents keep only a few necessities including their clothes and ornaments. The sons divide the ancestral property equally among themselves but the youngest usually gets a bigger share including the house,..."⁸⁰

Another case of parental property share is seen among the Tibetan Sherpa where the family is patrilineal. "The father is the economical head of the family and after death the living youngest son or if not resided, the retained property or land is equally shared among the sons and mother's ornament is generally provided to the daughters."⁸¹ The youngest son plays an important role in the property share and takes g responsibility of the parents because the eldest son generally lives separately after marriage and the second son is sent to the monastery to be a monk.

It is because of the patriarchal system that "the legal system of Nepal is also biased towards the women and the girls. Various laws have been imposed that have only acted to perpetuate men's control over women, rather than to protect the rights and individual identity of women. One example of the legal

⁷⁹ Rishikeshab Raj Regmi, *The Dhimals Miraculous Migrants of Himal: An Anthropological Study of a Nepalese Ethnic Group* (Jaipur, Nirala Publication), pp. 230-31.

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 230-31.

⁸¹ Ramesh Raj Kunwar, *Fire of Himal: An Anthropological Study of the Sherpas of Nepal Himalayan Region* (New Delhi, Nirala Publications, 1989), p. 169.

system is the failure of the state to recognize the citizenship of a child in accordance with their mother's nationality."⁸²

Preference of Son and the Status of Women

In the patriarchal society, the status of women depends on their capability to bear children. Women's preference for son is high as their access to property and social status is through the male progeny. Though in the Hindu tradition, women are worshipped for their fertility, incapability to bear son becomes a cause of curse that they have to bear in their reproduction incapacity. Son preference is not only a status concern but for almost all religious purposes son is the prime necessity. Among the Brahmin in Nepal, son preference is highly preferred because "by having a son he ensures a safe passage over various obstacles which he will have to cross before he reaches *swarga*, 'heaven' or 'the lands of the souls', after death."⁸³ Because a son is necessary for conducting the funeral rites to cross the land of the evil spirit and make him reach the land of the heaven.

On the other hand, the child bearing capability of the women have deprived them off from the active participation in the economy. But inspite of the patriarchal system in some tribes, women are held in high position. Such are the case with *chepangs*, where the position of the women plays an important role in their community. "Though their families seem to be of the patriarchal type in relation to their physical activities, the household's mother has an important social role to play. Even the daughter-in-laws have important roles to play in matters of internal family works. It can also be seen that the women folks are much more skilful and adapt at various practical works."⁸⁴

In Nepal older women, especially those who have sons have a higher status over the others who do not have sons and gain a recognized position in the society in matters whether be of physical accessibility in the public spheres and

⁸² Yubaraj Sangrula and Geeta Pathak, n. 71, p.5.

⁸³ Ibid, p 10.

⁸⁴ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke K.Thapa- Magar, n. 48, p.107.

decision – making authority in the domestic spheres. Recently, in modern times in Nepal, with concern to women’s importance, Article 11(3) of the Fundamental Rights states, “The state shall not discriminate citizens among citizens on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction or any of these. Provided that special provision may be made by law for the protection and advancement of the interests of women, children, the aged or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated those who belong to a class which is economically backward.”⁸⁵

Institution of Marriage and Entitlement to Property

The event of marriage determines almost all the life options and livelihood for women in Nepal. Shyam Thapa, in his work, “*Girl Child Marriage in Nepal: Its Prevalence and Correlates*”, states that ‘ethnic institutions’ and ‘social networks’ are the key determinants in girl child marriages. “Most *brahman* girls are married at the age of ten or eleven, while most *chhetri* girls are married only when they are fully grown. Tradition maintains that the 6th year is the most holy age for a *brahman* girl’s marriage and her parents achieve the greatest amount of *punya*, ‘merit’, if they give her in marriage then”.⁸⁶

Social-economic development has secondary impact on such marriages. It reflects the restricted norms to resources and decision-making among the poor women in the households. It is thought the institution of marriage that the right of succession is determined. “A daughter is prohibited from succeeding her deceased parents, as long as a son or the son’s son of the deceased person survives. If no son or son’s son remains alive, the married daughter receives one share of the property, whereas two shares go to an unmarried daughter. Here again legal capacity is determined by marital status.”⁸⁷ Marriage terminates the right of the women’s claim to property and a subsequent marriage after divorce also ends her claim to the property of their ex-husband.

⁸⁵ Shastra Dutta Pant, n. 23, p. 220.

⁸⁶ Yubaraj Sangrula and Geeta Pathak, n. 71, p. 6

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.39.

The marriage for women in the Nepalese society ends the women's property entitlements. "Both the concepts of access and entitlements help one to examine this complexity."⁸⁸ The *aungsabana* of the Nepalese traditional law or the division in the property rights has many clauses that refer to the property share between the son and daughters and the women's entitlements to the property after marriage. Son born of women from equal caste has the same property rights. Son born of *Brahmin* and *Chhetri* women are entitled to only one fourth part of the property share. "Daughters are excluded from *aungsabanda* (becoming co- parceners of parental property) because they are not considered to be members of the natal family. The son's position is different. He is recognized as having an inherent right of *aungsa* in the parental property by birth. The identity of a woman as a person or member in the natal family is thus denied simply because of her gender."⁸⁹

Women can claim the share from her parent if she remains unmarried for 35 years. Similarly the *Mulukin Ain* or the state's code of laws of 1983, was the first law that codified the provision in the property. The *Mulukin Ain* tries to define the legal relation in relation to kinship, family lineage caste and gender. "In reality, the code was merely as a collection of Hindu dogmas and customs."⁹⁰ It also prohibits an illegitimate child from claiming property. They have equal entitlements to property and have equal share with their brothers under conditions of remaining unmarried for 35 of years (according to the case of Ms Jag at Maya vs Ms Shanu Khadgi).

A woman's claim for their husband's property after his death is restricted. For such entitlements the wife should live together for fifteen years and should have attained thirty years of age. Property claim is limited for Nepalese women even after divorce for five years. Their only opportunity to utilise their own property known as *stridhan* (parental gifts) or *daizo* or *pewa* depends on the permission of their husband or father on being unmarried. Among the *Tamang*

⁸⁸ David Seddon, n.72, p.155.

⁸⁹ Yubaraj Sangrula and Geeta Pathak, n. 71, p. 38.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 36.

community of the central Nepal, who live in relatively poor, unirrigated land, consider livestock to be the most important wealth. Their entitlement to the parental property is essentially *daizo* (deidso in Tamang) the livestock. "Giving away livestock a dowry relieves the pressure of labour intensification on families with successful herds over- burdened with fodder collection."⁹¹ Among this group the women exercise a peculiar way of security when they are distressed or face discrimination from their husbands home, "a women's *phamyung* are the men she can turn to in situations of marital separation or violence, to exert collective moral pressure over her bride service- obligated husband. With reliable, close *phamyung* she can be supported and welcomed in their house as 'her' house."⁹²

Economic Status

The economic activity of women in Nepal comprises of both the domestic chores and the wage- earning activities. Economic activities within a household refer to the daily chores of the family life and the labour intensive farm works like reaping, sowing, milking and cleaning the cowsheds, collecting the fuel, fodder and food, food processing ranging from cooking meals to brewing liquor etc. but such works are not counted as economic activities. As a result of which, "Nepalese economy predominated by households as unit of productions seem to be rapidly replaced by a system which separates households from economic activities limiting them to human reproduction and consumption activities. In this process women may be loosing their economic roles."⁹³

In the field of agriculture, contribution made by poor women are no less important than the men though there are areas of specific division of agricultural works between the men and women. "Women farmers are not recognized as individuals farmers but are referred to as farmers' wives, sisters, daughter etc.

⁹¹ Ben Cambell, "Properties of Identity, Gender, Agency and Livelihood in Central Nepal, in Victoria Ana Goddard, (ed.), *Gender, Agency and Change: Anthropological Perspectives* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 106.

⁹² Ben Cambell, n.91, p. 104.

⁹³ Meena Acharya, "Women and the Economy: The Key Issues" in Laxmi Kesari Manandhar, Krishna B. Bhattachan, (ed.), *Gender and Democracy in Nepal*, (Kathmandu, Central Department Of Home Science- Women's Studies Programme, 2001), p. 24.

cultural traditions also exist which inhibit direct communication with female farmers.”⁹⁴ Most of the delicate works like seedling, sowing, weeding etc are done by women. There are specific work division particularly allotted to one sex which are generally not done by another sex such as ploughing the field is absolutely a man’s work. Violation of such specific work division would not be liked by the society.

Women are reported to be economically inactive even after their large contribution in the agriculture. Krishna B. Bhattachan using a paradigm of Gender and Public/ Private spheres (GAPS) states that “because there is a gap in GAPS, that is, a gap in the redistribution of configuration of division of labor at private and/ or public spheres with the principles of equality and emancipation from all kinds of discrimination, suppression, oppression and exploitation.”⁹⁵

Geographic constraints increase the intensity of the labour. “Refined activity rate in an agrarian society is one way of expressing level of participation in farming activities. Likewise, this activity rate may be an expression of the hardship the farm households have to face in order to earn their livelihood.....refines activity rate increased from plains (tarai) through hills to mountains with a difference of 10.7 percentage points.”⁹⁶ But “the relative intensity of public exclusion of women from the labour force is considerably less in degree and the division of labour by gender somewhat more relaxed than in the other countries of South Asia.”⁹⁸

In the areas of organized manufacturing sectors women are compelled to do low skilled work because of low literacy, lack of training opportunities, etc as a result of which they are mainly concentrated in the areas of low menial and

⁹⁴ *Human Development in South Asia 2002*: (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2003.) p.169.

⁹⁵ Krishna B, Bhattachan, “Sociological Perspectives on Gender Issues in Changing Nepalese Society” in Laxmi Kesari Manandhar, Krishna B. Bhattan, ed., *Gender and Democracy in Nepal*, (Kathmandu, Central Department Of Home Science- Women’s Studies Programme, 2001), p. 24.

⁹⁶ Bhim P. Subedi, Which Inequalities are Greater in Nepal ? Regional or Socio-Economic? : Lessons From National Sample Census of Agriculture 1991/1992, *The Himalayan Review*, Nepal National Geographic Society, vol. 30, 1999, p. 29.

⁹⁸ *Nepal Human Development Report-1998*, n. 25, p.7.

drudgery works. "Women's employment in industries in the organized sector depended less on type of industry than on its location, size of investment and degree of mechanisation. More women workers were employed in manufacturing in the hill region than the tarai."⁹⁹

Low Level of Education

Nepal is characterised by low literacy rates among the women. Total adult literacy for the women was 35.4 % in the year 2000. With one fourth of the adult females as literate, the main reason for the mass illiteracy in Nepal are due to the , lack of resources, "lack of sense of importance since girls will marry; girl's workload at home: high school fees; lack of female teachers or adequate facilities."¹⁰⁰ The same reasons account for the less enrolment for the girls in Nepal. "As long as there is no financial resource constraint for the family, the primary school- age girls may be able to go to school ..., Girls in lower income groups get little opportunity to go to school at all."¹⁰¹ Another problem for the poor girls in matters of education is the dichotomy in the education system in Nepal because there exist both public and the private institution and the later with good infrastructural facilities has high expenditure rates.

Environment

Environmental problems are one of the main concerns for the poor women. They collect food, water and fodder from the nature. "The vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation can be understood from the effects of reduced forest cover not only on soil fertility. It can also be observed on the reduced availability of organic manure, drying up of water sources, and the increased burden of attending to the household chores and tending land under arching technological conditions."¹⁰²

The main reasons for the environmental degradation are heavy pressure of population and the scarcity of land. "Due to the lack of the job opportunities, the

⁹⁹ Meena Acharya, n.93, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Women in Nepal* (Manila, Asian Development Bank Programmes Department West Division I, December 1999), p. 14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 16

¹⁰² Devendra Raj Pandey, n. 32, p. 70.

rapidly increasing population must depend on the subsistent agriculture.”¹⁰³ Moreover the loss of fertile agricultural lands to urbanization processes have resulted in the migration of people to occupy the fragile hill and the mountain ecology which may prove to be hazardous. Population pressure, expansion of tourist industry, over grazing of livestock, expansion of agriculture and deforestation have brought destruction in form of increasing soil erosion, climatic changes, soil depletion etc. “This happens because for poor people in poor countries some environmental resources are often complementary to other goods and services, while other environmental resources supplement income, most especially in times of economic stress.”¹⁰⁴

Poor women are the direct sufferers of the environmental degradation. It prolongs their working hours since the source of their fodder, water and food may recede from their original location. This may have serious implication on the health of the women. They may suffer from the mental and physical stresses, “women’s ability to stretch diminishing resources further is the ultimate safety net for children and men often at sacrifice of women’s own well- being .”¹⁰⁵

Gender Empowerment

One of the most important objectives of the United Nation Development Programme is the empowerment of the poor for reduction of poverty. Empowerment enhances the self capability to examine the process through they can make self decision in a right approach to them selves. Through empowerment women can self assert for their claim in the entitlements, property claims, generate self employment, gain courage, distinguish and separate the evil traditional values in the society and emerge ahead in the path of development. “Women’s empowerment includes :

¹⁰³ Vinod P. Shrestha, “Environmental Problems in the Himalaya, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, July 1994, p.140.

¹⁰⁴ Partha Dasgupta, *As Inquiry into Well- Being and Destitution* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 227.

¹⁰⁵ *Progress of the World’s Women 2000* (New York, United Nation Development Fund for Women, 2000), p. 19.

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and ways in which these relations may be changed;
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life;
- Gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power;
- Developing the ability to organise and influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.”¹⁰⁶

TABLE 2.6
GENDER EMPOWERMENT MEASURE OF NEPAL

Gender Empowerment Measurement	Regions
Below 0.30	Mid Western Mountain, Mid Western Hill.
0.30 – 0.35	Eastern Hill, Mid Western Hill, Far Western Mountain
0.35 – 0.40	Eastern Mountain, Eastern Tarai, Central Mountain, Central Tarai, Western Tarai, Mid Western Tarai.
0.40 – 0.45	Western Mountain, Western Hill
Above 0.45	Central Hill

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nations Development Program, 2001), p. 133.

Table 2.6 shows that the Gender Empowerment Measure value (GEM) shows that it is highest for the central hill which stands at 0.45 and the Gender Empowerment value (GEM) is lowest in the mid western mountains. The high rate of GEM value in the central hill coincides with high level of women's participation in local election, women engaged in the professional and administrative jobs and also income earned in comparison to men for the year 1999. In the central hill 19.6 % of women participated in the local election. This region has the highest percentage of women in the professional jobs and administrative jobs which are 28.38 % and 16.10 % respectively.

The position of women in the central hill based on the socio-cultural patterns of Nepal is “synthesis of two patterns and influences prominent

¹⁰⁶ *Progress of the World's Women 2000*, n. 105, p. 7.

respectively in the north and south.”¹⁰⁷ The northern mountains has a high rate of empowerment among the women because of cultural freedom and the importance of the role played by the women in the communities mostly belonging to the indigenous tribes *Bhotes* and the *Sherpa etc.*

The importance of the women is reflected in the culture where the marriage system is with the consent of the girl. “The *Bhotes*, *Sherpas* and *Tamangs* have no function or festival which is complete or successful without the full participation of their women,”¹⁰⁸ Upreti on the conflict resolution among the women in hill and the mountain regions opines that , “if they are given the chance they effectively utilize all available options to resolve conflict.”¹⁰⁹

Women’s Movement in Gender Empowerment

To generate empowerment among the women, Nepal has introduced the concept of social mobilization in the beginning of the twenty first century which is “seen as a catalyzing process by which people living in a community are observed into groups to share and discuss problems, to seek solutions by mobilizing their own and outside resources, and to become more active participants in the decision- making processes that affect their lives as individuals, households and community. Social mobilization efforts may target one specific aspect of daily life, such as consumption of iodized salt or reduction of child labour, or may constitute a key element of a holistic poverty reduction programme.”¹¹⁰

Mobilization among the Nepali women is not a recent phenomenon. It has a deep historical root since the formation of *Mahila Samiti* by Divya Koirala in 1917. Many such women’s organization were formed since then to mobilize women. Important ones were *Adarsha Mahila Sangh* (Model Women’s

¹⁰⁷ Anuradha and S.D. Muni, “Tradition Vs Modernity- Women in Nepal and Sri Lanka” in Urmilla Phadnis and Indira Malani, ed., *Women of the World, Illusion and Reality* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1978),p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ Anuradha and S.D. Muni, n. 107, p. 33.

¹⁰⁹ Bisnu Raj Upreti, n.24, p. 209.

¹¹⁰ *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001*,n.36, p. 94.

Organization) in 1947 by Revathi Kumari Acharya, *Nepal Mahila Sangh* (Nepal's Women's Organization) in 1948 by Mangala Devi Singh. But the initiation of these women organizations were elistic based and played a great role in the mobilization of women for the struggle against the Rana regime and to fight for a larger political right and democracy. "Over the period form 1917 to 1950 and from 1950 to 1990, therefore, women's mobilization was primarily used as a support to a larger political struggle, that is, the fight for democracy. Women's mobilization in several cities of the country was indeed an important feature of the *Jana Andolan* (people's movement) of the spring of 1990, that put an end to the *Panchayati* system and restored multiparty democracy in Nepal. That women's mobilization is largely associated with causes larger than women's issues – such as democracy or nationalism- does not mean that it is insignificant." ¹¹¹

Though the mobilization of women was confined in the areas of the political changes and demanding political rights, such mobilization has become more frequent after the 1990, multiparty democratic regime. Mobilization of women has started against sexual violence, consumption of liquors, legal rights, property rights etc. women's mobilization also has helped in creation of organized networks like the Women's Security Pressure Group, Gender Watch Professional Interest Group, Democratic Forum for political empowerment of women. These networks have brought the non- governmental organizations together to raise voices from the same platform and played a great role towards political participation of women in the international forums.

To empower the backward community, Nepal established the Backward Society for Education (BASE) in the year 1991 in the Dang districts among the *Tharu* community. "Recognizing lack of education as the main cause of exploitation, this NGO undertook a massive awareness and literacy drive,

¹¹¹ Stephanie Tawa Lama, "Remarks on the Political within the Nepali Women's Movement," *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, vol. 2, no.2, December, 1997, p. 328.

bringing education to more than 55,000 people, most of whom were girls and women between 14-45 years of age.”¹¹²

Similarly there was another successful case of women empowerment in the village of Kurumche of Syangya, when the population of the village was asked to make choices due to the limited resources. The male population voted for an irrigation scheme but the women participants chose for a safe drinking water scheme. Because the choice of the irrigation scheme was “not acceptable for the women.”¹¹³ The opposition continued for many months to witness the favour of the women’s choice.

Gender Development

Plan Periods

During the preceding years of the International Decade for Women 1975-1985, women in Nepal were not an important category of development plans. They were categorized as beneficiaries of the development programmes. These programmes were associated with the traditional roles of women like childcare, family plannings, knitting, sewing, kitchen gardening, etc. “Focus on women was on their reproductive roles as housewives and mothers.”¹¹⁴ But these development programmes for the women entered a new phase when Nepal participated in the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975.

An important change that followed the year 1975 was the reorganization of the inheritance rights of unmarried daughters who have reached the age of 35 years in the *Muluki Ain*, the national code of Nepal. This was followed by setting up of Women Service Coordination Committee in the year 1977 to carry out the welfare activities for the women. In the year 1979, documents on the economic contribution made by the Nepali women were published under a study conducted

¹¹² *Nepal Human Development Report 2001*, n.36 ,p. 99.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.103.

¹¹⁴ Chandra Bhadra, “Gender and Development: Global Debate on Nepal’s Development Agenda”, *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, vol.28, no.1, January 2001, p. 100.

by the Center For Economic Development and Administration at Tribhuvan University for the first time.

Keeping in pace with the global scenario on the WID the Sixth Plan (1980- 85), the efficiency approach was adopted for the development of the women. The government of Nepal have initiated schemes for the upliftment of the poor women with greater emphasis given to the development of women in Nepal in the areas of agriculture, micro- credit, small scale industry, health and education. Such schemes were adopted because of “the agriculture being progressively feminised.”¹¹⁵

The participatory approach was adopted in the Seventh Five Year Plan. The development programmes for the women were expanded to various areas of agriculture, basic health needs, education and also recognized the role of the women in forest protection. Women were given more legal rights. Following Nepal’s participation in The Third World Conference on Women at Nairobi 1985, Women Development Division was established at the Ministry of Labor in the year 1988. The Constitution of Nepal 1991, provided with the right to equality for women. Article 11 (1), (2) and (3) state “all citizens shall be equal before the law. No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws. (2) no discrimination shall be made against any citizen in the application of general laws on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction or any of these.”¹¹⁶

The Eight Five Year Plan (1992-97), emphasizing on mainstreaming of women established women’s development division in the various ministries for their upliftment, like the Women Farmer’s Development Division in 1992, Child and Women Development section in 1993. Women’s Education Unit and the Women in Development Cell at Water and Energy Commission Secretariat and the establishment of the National Council For Women and Child Development at the National Planning Commission in 1995. Nepal also participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in the year 1995. Since 1995, HMG/N

¹¹⁵ *Women in Nepal*, n. 100 , p. 30

¹¹⁶ Shastra Dutta Pant, n.23, p. 220.

has put forwarded a number of policies for the poverty reduction and has elaborated a number of strategies. They include among the important ones “liberalization of economy, input-intensive commercialization, intensification and diversification of agriculture, prioritization of infrastructure (primarily transportation and electrification), expanding the financial and banking sectors, promoting craft and cottage industries, implementing programmes/ projects specifically targeted to the poor, the unemployed and the excluded, devolving and decentralizing political and administrative power, and rendering the administration simple and effective.”¹¹⁷

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997- 2002) made its commitment to women in giving women equal and meaningful participation in socio-economic and political spheres. Further the plan emphasized on co-coordinating and monitoring the activities of women. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2003- 2008) for the development of the society has taken the concern of the indigenous people “the state is committed to the upliftment of the indigenous peoples but one should not use this word for political mission”¹¹⁸

Role of the Funding Agencies

Nepal is mostly depended on the external funding like grants, loans and the financial assistance from the many bilateral and the multilateral agencies for the development of the country. The Net foreign direct investment flows was 0.3% of the total Gross Domestic Product for the year 2001. “Reaching the Goals requires true adherence to the Millennium Development Compact. For the poorest low- income countries a significant proportion of the additional resources needed for social investments will have to come from external sources. For heavily indebted poor countries, from debt cancellation- and much more than so far. And for all low- income countries, from enhanced official development assistance.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Chandra Bhadra, n.114, p. 16.

¹¹⁸ “10th Five Year Plan to Focus on Indigenous People”, Kathmandu Post, 9/8/2002, in *South Asia Green File*, vol.8, no.1, August 1 To 30, 2002, p. 37.

¹¹⁹ *Human Development Report*, 2003, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 108.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank play a prominent role in the overseas funding in Nepal and the other major bilateral agencies are from Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, United States of America, Switzerland etc. The approaches adopted by these multilateral and the bilateral agencies regarding the gender development vary. The World Bank emphasizing on the relation between the poverty and the gender issues intervenes in the areas in women's health, education, land, credit and skill development trainings to increase the earning capacity of the women. "Its gender policy is directed mainly at reducing poverty and particularly, at improving women's earning potential through labor participation."¹²⁰

The Asian Development Bank priority in poverty reduction and human development but it identifies gender and poverty issues as "two cross cutting issues."¹²¹ However the Asian Development Bank considers the role of male and female in the gender analysis, planning, and sensitization and in the role decision making by women. The United Nations Development Programmed also focuses on the poverty reduction by targeting on the status of the women. While the United Nations Children's Fund gives special attention to the education and the health of girl children. It adopts a strategy of decentralization for the functioning of the organization to bring greater participatory approach.

Inspite of the great facilities by the donor agencies, the progress towards the women's development is slow. The gaps in these donor agencies cannot be ruled out. "It would not be an exaggeration to say that European and other donors have been talking about poverty as rhetoric rather than any proper targeting of the problem. Conceptually, they have rightly emphasized poverty reduction, along with gender and environment issues, but the problem lies in translating such programme objectives into a programme package. They have not done enough of it."¹²²

¹²⁰ *Women in Nepal*, n.100, p. 79.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 74.

¹²² Krishna B. Bhattachan, "Nepalese Perceptions of European Donors' Approaches to Poverty Reduction in Nepal", *South Asian Survey*, vol. 5, no.2, July- December 1998, p.209.

Of recent the donor agencies in Nepal have developed political interest along with their commercial interests. They actively participated in the people's movement of 1990 in the restoration of the multi party system in Nepal. "All external agencies involved have linked their financial flows to specific programmes. Indeed, earmarking funds for specific elements of sector wide approaches is widespread, often depending on donor perceptions of local political leadership and commitment in specific areas."¹²³

The donor agencies are becoming more sensitive to the development of the untouchables, ethnic tribes and the low castes and there has been an agreement between the HMG/N and the SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) to support the underprivileged indigenous nationality of *chepangs*. The CARE Nepal, United Mission to Nepal, ACTION AID DANIDA have developed strategies for the upliftment of the poor from the low castes and underprivileged ethnic groups. But Bhattachan opines, "Such tricks are said to be used by some private companies of the donor organizations who would like to stay in Nepal longer."¹²⁴

Though Nepal has taken steps and elaborated on the policies for the development of the women, much of the policies remain desired to be implemented. Such gap between the policy statements and their implementation persist due to the lack of the financial resources, the centralized administration, political and the cultural resources to implement them largely remains unidentified. "The financial and 'development' domains and caters generally perceive the political and cultural domains as not as resources but as problems that hinder the smooth functioning of the 'necessary' development process."¹²⁵ "Though the policies took up radical steps from efficiency approach to equality and empowerment approach, the development actions spiraled deeper down into

¹²³ *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 109.

¹²⁴ Krishna B. Bhattachan, "Nepalese Perceptions of European Donors' Approaches to Poverty Reduction In Nepal", *South Asian Survey* vol. 5, no.2, July- December 1998, p.211.

¹²⁵ Chaitanya Mishra, "Nepal: Five Years Following the Social Summit ", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, January 2000,p.18.

the whirlpool of conservative welfare approach.”¹²⁶ But K. Bhattachan opines. “I am fully aware with the fact that abandoning existing jargonized concepts and creating new ones does not serve our interests but the concepts/ paradigms that we use should reflect the reality of what we want to achieve and why we are doing.”¹²⁷

Despite the repeated focusing on the developing of women, many constraints have hindered the development of the women in Nepal. Apart from the mass illiteracy that hinders the active participation of women, there are confusion in the nature of the activity of the work done by women both in the household and the outside the household which poses as the greater hindrances towards the development of the women. “The actual labor force participation of women remains under- reported as much of the work women do in subsistence farming is not categorized as economically active- this is merely because the produce is absorbed by the households.”¹²⁸ The precise definitions to make women’s work more visible, recognizable with specificity have been questioned of women’s double roles of production and reproductive. There is blurred distinction in specifying the unpaid work relation within and outside households. “Some terms are ambiguous:

“Domestic labor”: Does this refer to the work of family members to maintain the home or to the work of paid domestic help?

“Unpaid labor”: Does this refer to what a woman does in taking care of her husband of the work she does without pay for the family business that he runs?

“Reproductive work”: Does this refer to giving birth and breast- feeding or to maintaining the social fabrics?

¹²⁶ Chandra Bhadra, n.114, p.104.

¹²⁷ Krishna B, Bhattachan, n. 56, p.79.

¹²⁸ Kumudhini Rosa, *Women of South Asia*, (Colombo, Friedrich – Ebert- Stiftung/ Gala Academic Press, 1995), p. 61.

“Home work”: Does this refer to unpaid housework or to paid work done in the home on subcontract from an employer?”¹²⁹

“Noeleen Heyzer, the chief of the United Nations Development for Women (UNIFEM), confirms that the priorities of women in the 21st century are anchored in two key concerns; the economic empowerment of women and the political empowerment of women. It comprises ample food for thoughts to Nepalese women.”¹³⁰ Hence Nepal, it is necessary that the government should make the monitoring processes transparent and invite the people especially the women to participate for inputs and feedbacks as well as in implementation processes for development.

¹²⁹ *Progress of the World's Women 2000*, n.105, p.23.

¹³⁰ Chandra Bhadra, n. 117, p.105.

Chapter III

HEALTH AND POOR WOMEN IN NEPAL

Introduction

The health care system in Nepal comprise of preventive, curative and promotive practices that are carried out from the villages level to the central level. The preventive measures are directed to reduce infant mortality, child health, safe motherhood, immunization, diarrhoea control, acute respiratory infection, tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria and communicable diseases. "Preventive health services are provided with special emphasis on programs that directly reduce the infant and child mortality rates." ¹

While the promotive measures have been undertaken by political workers, health educators, students, Non-governmental organisations through environmental health programmes, awareness in safe drinking water, sanitation etc. "The promotive services include intensive information campaigns on health information and education from the center to village levels involving political workers."² The sub- health posts at the village level and primary health care center facilitates the rural and the urban population with medical care. Each sub health post has the provision of village health workers, mother and child health workers and auxiliary health workers.

With reference to Table 3.1, the brief outline about the health scenario of Nepal still gives a grim picture of the health situation in Nepal. The availability of skilled physicians are very low at 4 for 1 lakh of population. Only 11 % of births attended are by skilled health personals. 1/4th of the total population have excess to improved sanitation and 1/5th of the total population are still deprived of safe drinking water source. The low rate of accessibility to safe drinking water is so intense in some areas that in "the village of a remote part of Makwanpur

¹ *Women in Nepal* (Manila, Asian Development Bank Programmes Department West Division 1, December 1999), p. 55.

² *Ibid*, p. 55.

district swap water with curd or buttermilk happily. This interesting and unbelievable custom is in practice in the village as there is scarcity of drinking water in the village.”³

TABLE 3. 1
HEALTH STATUS OF NEPAL

- Population with access to improved sanitation (2000): 28 %
- Population with sustainable access to an improved water source (2000): 88%
- Population with sustainable access to affordable essential drugs (1999) : 0- 49 %
- One- year- fully immunized against tuberculosis (2001) : 84 %
- One- year- fully immunized against measles (2001) : 71 %
- Oral rehydration therapy use rate (1994- 2000) : 11 %
- Contraceptive prevalence rate (1995- 2001) : 39 %
- Birth attended by skilled health personal (1995- 20001) : 11%
- Physicians (per 100,000 people 1990- 20002) : 4
- Undernourished people (as % of the total population 1998/2000): 19 %
- Children underweight for age (% under age 5, 1995- 2001) 48 %
- Children under height for age (% under age 5, 1995- 2001) : 51 %
- Infants with low birth weight (1995- 2000): 21 %
- Adults with HIV/ AIDS (% age 15-49, 2001): 0.49 %
- Women with HIV/ AIDS (age 15-49, 2001): 14,000

Source: *Human Development Report 2003*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003),p. 256 and p. 260.

The health care system in Nepal reflects regional disparity in terms of its locations and facilities. “In term of facility per population, the tarai has the lowest density. However, the sparse population and difficult mountainous topography requires more facilities per population in the hills and mountains. The tarai population, in spite of the lower density of health facilities, has better access to such facilities because of the availability of transportation, a network of private practitioners, and the closeness of facilities in northern India.”⁴

³ “Village Exchange Milk For Water “, *Kathmandu Post*, 13/ 05/ 2002, in *South Asia Green File*, vol.7, no. 10, May 1 to 31, 2002, p. 44.

⁴ *Women in Nepal*, n. 1, p.55.

Health and Poor Women in Nepal

The Fourth World Conference of Women Held in Beijing in 1995 declared that, “women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity. Women’s health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being and is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives, as well as by biology.”⁵

A definition of well-being has a different meaning to those women who suffer from poverty. For the poor women the interrelationship between their poverty and the health becomes more practical and multi-dimensional. Their well-being can be described as “material well-being, often expressed as having enough; bodily well-being, to be strong, healthy and good looking; and social well-being, which includes having children and caring for them, self respect, security and confidence in future, freedom of choice and action, and being able to help others.”⁶

Poor women are more sick than those who are better placed. With poor health profile they become more vulnerable to hazardous environments where they usually work. “They have less food and less access to clean water. Their housing offers less protection from the weather and is more likely to be overcrowded.”⁷

“From the perspective of human poverty, the question are women poorer than men ? Gets a more complete answer. Yes, women are indeed poorer when one considers such capabilities as health and education.”⁸

⁵ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, 4-15 September, 1995*, (New York, United Nation, 1996.), p. 34.

⁶ *The State of World Population, 2002* (New York, United Nations Population Fund, 2002), p. 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸ *Overcoming Human Poverty*, (New York, United Nations Development Funds, 1998), p. 72.

Access to health care facilities are restricted by the many factors of which the socio-economic are the main reasons. Poor and the deprived women are denied basic health care due to such restrictive social and economic attitudes. "Women are affected by many of the same health conditions as men, but women experience them differently. The prevalence of poverty among women and economic dependence, their experience of violence, negative attitudes towards women and girls, racial and other forms of discrimination, the limited power many women have over their sexual and reproductive lives and lack of influence in decision- making are social realities which have an adverse impact on their health."⁹

Poor women are placed at the receiving end relatively to the men. Since they have a low social status, often they are being deprived from the necessary requirements that often lead to adverse health conditions. "Lack of food and inequitable distribution of food for girls and women in the household, inadequate access to safe water, sanitation facilities and fuel supplies, particularly in rural and poor urban areas, deficient housing conditions, all overburden women and their families and have a negative effect on their health."¹⁰

Due to their inaccessibility to basic amenities, the poor women folk are deprived of simple care and attendance of the health care system that further accentuates their poor health. "They have less access to health care, and the services they do have are low in quality and do not respond to their needs. They get less respect and time from doctors and nurses. They are less likely to recover completely from illness, and die earlier. In addition, they are less likely to fall even deeper into poverty as a result of working time lost to ill health and the cost of healthy care."¹¹

In matters of health access, reproductive health care is important for poor women. It is a poor woman who takes a higher risk of unwanted pregnancies. The

⁹ *Report of The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4- 15 September, 1995*, n.5, p. 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, n. 5, p. 35.

¹¹ *The State of World Population 2002*, n. 6, p. 33.

reproductive health needs of the poor, and poor women in particular, do not command the attention of policy makers, or even of women themselves. The poor give priority to their many immediate and pressing needs. Pregnancy and childbirth are taken for granted-and so are the attendant risks, though they come from easily preventable causes.”¹³

Social constraints affect the women’s reproductive health where poor women are likely to rely on traditional and other alternative and cheaper health services. Women do not get usually support they require in matters of reproduction. Some times women are not allowed to go to health services without the approval of male member in the family. In such cases unwanted pregnancies can be risky and worrisome as a result of which child birth can at times lead to injury or death. “Wanted or not, each additional sibling reduces the chance of a child receiving treatment by 2 to 8 per cent.”¹⁴

Health outcomes are often not the same for the poor women as for the men. The poor health conditions of poor women should be seen from different perspectives. “To reach women effectively, health systems must take into account the biological factors that increase health risks for women and such socio-cultural determinants of health as age at marriage, as well as psychological factors, such as depression arising from gender violence.”¹⁵

The following factors determine the health conditions of the poor women in Nepal-

Poor Health Facilities: Impact on the Poor Women

Poor women in Nepal are more vulnerable to health. The low socio-economic status of women, limited accessibility to the required resources even more aggravates their poor health. “Poor access to material resources for health and greater exposure to health hazards that result from poverty directly harm the body, depriving it of basic necessities for life and reducing its ability to cope with

¹³ *The State of World Population 2002*, n. 6, p.34.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 34.

¹⁵ *A New Agenda on Women’s Health and Nutrition* (Washington D.C., The World Bank, 1994), p. 2.

stresses and infections. This is probably the process that is easiest to understand, as it fits in well with our understanding of a medical model of disease causation.”¹⁶

Poor women denied access to health do not mean that the health institutions and health facilities are not modern or in close proximity. “In fact it is a multidimensional concept dependent on a number of determinants. Broadly speaking, use of services depends on:

- 1) Extent to which women and their families perceive the need for care;
- 2) Knowledge that people have about when and where to seek care;
- 3) Extent to which people are able to overcome the many barriers- physical, economic, social, cultural- that stands between them and the use of services.”¹⁷

Some factors that affect the health of the poor women in Nepal are as follows:

Geographical Constraints: Poor women in Nepal are faced with geographical constraints especially from the hilly areas. The terrain irregularities define the poor distribution of health institutions. Moreover poor women with more work burdens do not feel necessary to attend health centers. They are more reluctant to visit a doctor which may take away their working time. “Adult family members have less time to take care of the sick persons especially in the hills. Most of the family members are busy working at the traditional farming, taking care of the cattle, collecting wood for domestic fuel, collecting fodder for the cattle, walking miles for drinking water, caring for the children at home.”¹⁸

Limited resources and heavy cost affect poor women’s accessibility to health, especially in the remote areas. “In rural settings, where women have little access to resources to pay for the transport and where roads are likely to be poor

¹⁶ Clare Blackburn, *Poverty and Health: Working with Families* (Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1991) p. 39.

¹⁷ *World Population Monitoring 1998* (New York, United Nations, 2000), p. 69

¹⁸ Narayan Bahadur Basnet, *Nepal at the Dawn of the 21st Century: General, Health and Medical Information* (Tokyo, University of Tokyo, 2001), p. 44.

and vehicles rare, such physical barriers render even the use of routine prenatal care services complicated and use of services for complications and emergencies difficult." ¹⁹ In spite of the proliferation of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) to facilitate the women and the children, "there is nothing for the five to 10 per cent who have complicated deliveries. One out of per hundred giving birth in Nepal dies because of complications."²⁰

Further the inaccessibility due to terrain constraints makes health care facilities difficult in the Far and the Mid western regions where poverty rules. "Like all aspects of life in Nepal, the availability of medical care depends on where you live. The comparative wealth of the tarai and the ease of the transport means that people who live there can more easily get to hospitals and receive specialist health care. But in providing even primary health care for the hill population, government health services have yet to prove their worth."²¹ As cited by Mona Bomgars of health department of United Mission in Nepal says, "Geography and ethnicity remain the largest barriers to a really efficient health service."²²

Lack of Quality Service in Modern Health Facilities: Provision of modern health care service remain a main issue in Nepal. Moreover regional disparity exists in the distribution of the health services. The regions with the less health facilities affect the poor women more. The distribution in the health facilities are lacking in the Mid- Western and the Far Western regions indicating a spatial disparity in the health facilities. With reference to Table 3.2 an important feature is the decrease in the health centers in the year 1991/92 from the previous decade of 1980/81.

¹⁹ *World Population Monitoring 1998*, n. 17. p 70.

²⁰ Omar Sattaur, *Nepal New Horizons ?* (Oxford, Oxfam, 1996), p. 34.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 33.

²² *Ibid*, p. 33.

TABLE 3. 2
THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE WESTERN TYPE HEALTH FACILITIES

Development Regions	Hospitals		Health centers		Health posts		All facilities	
	1980/81	1991/92	1980/81	1991/92	1980/81	1991/92	1980/81	1991/92
Eastern	17	23	7	4	135	171	159	198
Central	28	41	6	6	158	216	192	263
Western	15	24	6	2	124	178	145	204
Mid-western	6	13	6	5	103	151	115	169
Far-western	6	13	2	1	63	100	71	114
Nepal	72	114	27	18	583	816	682	948

Source: *Socio-Economic Profiles of SAARC Countries: A Statistical Analysis* (New York, United Nation, 1999), p. 255.

The regional distribution of the health care systems indicates regional biasness which have largely affected the access to the health ^{facilities} for the poor women in the interior and the mountainous regions. "The very high absenteeism among all areas of the country, excepting the Kathmandu valley, has remained a matter of perennial concern for successive governments. Most measures taken to counteract absenteeism have failed, and there is, at present, a continuing impasse as well. Health promotion has become a victim of market and greed."²³

Environmental Degradation: Impact on the Health of Poor Women

Environmental degradation adversely affects women's health in Nepal. Environmental degradation increases the health hazard among the poor women in many ways. For example, as degradation takes place procuring of everyday needs like water, firewoods and food become inaccessible and more difficult for them. Due to the fast receding forests, women take longer time to collect firewood, water, and fodder. The drudgery and the stress and the prolonged working hours affect women's health. "Degraded environments mean that women must spend

²³ *Nepal Human Development Report, 1998* (Kathmandu, South Asian Center, 1998), p. 74.

more time and effort to find fuel or produce food, but their other responsibilities, for meeting household needs and ensuring family health, do not diminish.”²⁴

In Nepal the hills are facing a severe degradation. Landslides and erosion carry away the vast stretches of fertile lands. Not only productive cultivation lands but also the livestock together with the human population have been adversely affected by such natural hazards. “In absence of irrigation when lands are cultivated as *bare* with sloping terraces, surface erosion is the rule and not the exception. Farmers say that about 3 to 4 inches of fertile soil gets washed away during the monsoon when soil is loose from ploughing. It is then the duty of women to replenish the soil by literally refilling with compost or the next crop.... This is always a women’s task, a task which every woman hates to do but finds no alternative.”²⁵ Nothing stops a poor woman to carry out their responsibilities.

The changes that are brought by the environmental degradation in the climate also proliferate diseases among women. “As the global environment continues to change, increases in diarrhoea illness are most likely to occur in communities with insufficient clean water and poor sanitation. Thus, the most impoverished countries are at the greatest risk of environmentally induced rapid increases in the prevalence of such pathogens. Furthermore, climate change may have the unanticipated effect of re-activating residual pockets of the plague bacillus in temperate regions. These micro-organisms include trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), filariasis (also known as elephantiasis), onchocerciasis, leishmaniasis hookworm, guineaworm, and various tapeworms. Furthermore, the prevalence of vector-borne viral infections, such as dengue fever and yellow fever, are also affected by both surface water distribution and temperature.”²⁶

²⁴ *The State of World Population 2001* (New York, United Nations Population Fund, 2001), p.39.

²⁵ Sumitra Manadhar Gurung, “Gender Dimension of Eco- Crisis and Resource in Nepal,” in Michael Allen, ed., *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes* (Kathmandu, Mandala Book Point, 1994), pp. 334-35.

²⁶ Andrew T. Price-Smith, *The Health of Nations: Infectious Diseases Environmental Change and their Effects on National Security and Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), p. 157.

Nepal, faced by large scale of deforestation and the environmental hazards have influenced the climatic conditions of the mountains, hills and the tarai. The hot and humid climate of the tarai areas have proliferated diseases and have affected those who are more vulnerable and poor. "On the outbreak of pneumonia, dysentery caused by hot weather, pollution of the environment and contaminated food and drinks, lack of cleanliness are some of the reasons for the intensity of these maladies."²⁷

Traditional Health Systems

Poor women's health in Nepal is affected by the religious and superstitious beliefs that are more prevalent in areas where health care facilities are less. Moreover such superstitious customs are more widely prevalent in many communities. Such practices risk the life of a poor woman even more and sometimes they are crippled for life. An example of how the women's primary and basic health necessity is being fulfilled is seen among the *dhimals*

"the dhimals have their own conception about pain suffered by a woman at the time of delivery of a child. They say that if a son is born the mother suffers from continuous labor pain. The neighbouring women usually come to help her during delivery. They prevent the women from sleeping. She has to keep awake and sleep after normal delivery. When the pain is intense a dangarani (mid wife) is called to attend on her. There are no mid wives among the dhimals. Sometimes a Tharu midwife is called.... when a tharu women functions as midwife she makes a vow to 'Chapagardini' as a deity of the tharu to offer blood sacrifice for safe delivery. The usual blood sacrifice in such case is that of a pair of a pigeons or a small young goat or a pair of goats. This vow of blood sacrifice is offered on the day of naming ceremony of the child...After birth the mother has to stay in the living-in-room with her baby for about a week. On the day of child birth the mother is fed with fried dal (pulses)

²⁷ Binod Bhandari, "Children in Morang Afflicted by Pneumonia, Dysentery" *Kathmandu Post*, 21/ 05/ 2003 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 8, no. 10, May 1 to 31, 2003, p. 58.

and rice. They say that these two cereals provide the mother necessary nutrition.”²⁸

Similarly such superstitious belief is also followed among the *Sherpas*. Traditional practices are also common among the Sherpas. “Majority of the *Sherpa* pregnant women do not go to the hospital or Health Post for their confinement because of frightening with evil eye sights.”²⁹

The health care practice in Nepal is both traditional and with modern systems. But the poor women are more prone to accept the traditional methods. Limited resources of a poor woman is the prime cause but on the other hand age-old customs and beliefs also play an important role among the illiterate who are less aware of the risk taken by them. In the traditional group are the indigenous healers based on superstitions, myths and magic. It consists of large number of processes as *bhagal* (keeping some sort of vow in the name of god till the individual's fulfillment is achieved), *jaharphuk* (a type of superstitious healing by traditional healers), *deuti bolaune* (belief in the speeches of god in a human form) etc. Healers of such traditional methods are the Brahmin priest, the *dhami* and the *jhankri* (healers who follow superstition processes) and traditional birth attendants, *kaviraj* (ayurvedic doctors).

To define a healer, they are the traditional practitioners who take the place of a modern doctor among the rural and the hilly areas. “Healers are well respected individuals who are recognized as community health leaders. Their methods of treatment are based on a belief that illness arise when gods are displeased or when devils are at work. Much of a healer's work may be to do with driving out evil spirits by incantation, blowing mantras, beating drums, and by appeasing gods by offering sacrifices and prayers. Healers are particularly successful in treating mental conditions but can also hinder a person's chances of cure for a physical ailment by delaying other treatment until traditional methods

²⁸ Rishikesh Raj Regmi, *The Dimals Miraculous Migrants of Himal: An Anthropological Study of a Nepalese Ethnic Group* (Jaipur, Nirala Publications, 191), p. 185.

²⁹ Ramesh Raj Kunwar, *Fire of Himalayas: An Anthropological Study of the Sherpas of Nepal Himalayan Region* (New Delhi, Nirala Publications, 1989) p.190.

have been tried.”³⁰ But traditional healers play an important role in facilitating immediate relief to poor and the deprived groups. “Such healers base their treatment on an intimate knowledge of the sick person and the latter’s physical and social niche assurance, divination/ ancestor invocation and herbal remedies.”³¹

There are innumerable practices associated with various types of traditional methods. There are also many Buddhist healers known by different names like- *shaman* (*lhapa* for male healer and *lhamo* for the female healers), the healing technique followed by *lhapa* and *lhamo* differ in their practices though they are said to be more prominent among the poor. *Lhamo*’s practice to cure a person is by sucking,

“Their main healing technique is sucking, for which reason especially *lhamo* is simply called the sucking by Tibetans. *lhamo*, who is in trance, possessed by goddess Dorje Yudronma when she heals, sucks any afflicted part of the body and has been known to bite savagely, extracting in the process either a dark liquid or a dark, sticky substance. Both are considered physical manifestations of impurity and in the event of a more serious affliction, she may even extract stones, which are either white, brown or black. Particularly in the case of alcohol or drug addicts, she often berates the patient and displays the fierce side of the goddess persona, especially since she must counter an equally socially and personally disruptive force in the form of the addiction. For this reason, her hands or with some implement like *phurba*, though she never actually draws blood in the process. In case the symptoms are caused due to harassment by a spirit or witch, she may prescribe a fire puja performed in her own house once in a week, which, though somewhat costly, is thought to exorcise the afflicting agent... the *lhapas*, on the other hand, do not ordinarily suck the skin directly, but either keep a cloth between their mouths and the patient’s body or employ horns or pips to extract similar substances, though not in the huge quantities that *lhamo* does. Wangchuk, as ostensibly the more empowered of these

³⁰ Omar Sattaur, n. 20, p. 34.

³¹ *Nepal Human Development Report, 1998*, n.23, p. 60.

male shamans, almost always extracts some impure item from the patients bodies and has registered considerable success in the extraction of kidney and gall bladder stones.”³²

Often such traditional practices take huge toll of income and even lives of the poor women. But inspite of the known consequences, poor women prefer to deliver a baby at home. In the *jirel* community, “traditional practices including massaging the laboring women, chanting mantras, performing rituals and giving special food and drinks are common before delivery.”³³

Acharya’ s findings on nature care and the indigenous healing in the village of Danuwar, about twenty kilometers from Katmandu mentions that, “the most common complaints were diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, fever, as well as lesser afflictions, such as colds, sore throats, asthma, bronchitis, constipation, piles, colitis and ulcers. For all of these diseases patients first sought herbal treatment from traditional healers, and would only resort to either the intermediate health workers, locally called ‘ compounders’ or the hospitals when symptoms became worse. They would also go to folk or indigenous healers when suffering from mental disorders attributed to attacks by supernatural beings.”³⁴

Socio- Cultural Factors

The socio- economic and the religious factors affect the health of poor women illness and their vulnerability and exposure to diseases. “Women’s disadvantaged position, which is often related to the economic value placed on familial roles, helps perpetuate poor health, inadequate diet, early and frequent pregnancy, and a continued cycle of poverty. From infancy, females in many parts of the world receive less and lower- quality food and are treated less often when sick, and then only at more advanced stage of disease. In countries where

³² Angela Dietrich, “Buddhist Healers in Nepal Some Observations”, *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 ,

³³ Pashupati Nepal, “Maternal and Child Health Status in Jirel Community”, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, July 1999, p. 286.

³⁴ Bipin Kumar Acharya, “Nature Care and Indigenous Healing Practices in Nepal: A Medical Anthropological Perspectives” In Michael Allen (ed.), *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes* (Kathmandu, Mandala Book Point, 1994), p. 236.

women are less educated, receive less information than men, and have less control over decision making and family resources, they are also less apt to recognize health problems or to seek care.”³⁵

The most important socio- cultural factor is the patriarchal system and its related cultural behavior that largely deprive the female of their basic necessities of life “In areas of food choices and other areas of behavior, poverty also affects health by not only reducing a family’s access to health resources, but by placing them in a situation where they have to make health choices that serve to protect one aspect of health, or the health of another family member, whilst undermining another aspect of health or the health of another person.”³⁶

The allocation and distribution of food in the household is a major cause of illness among the women in Nepal. Traditionally protein and vitamin rich foods are generally offered to male members in large quantities or especially cooked for them as a respect of being a male member. Women also consume food after serving the guests and the elders and the children. Therefore, they are deprived of not only the food in quantity but also in nutrients as a consequence of which large number of them fall prey to protein and vitamin deficiency related diseases. A poor household is restricted in the food choices and quality of the consumed food. Inadequate diet directly affects the growth of the children and the development of foetus. Among the Mushars, “from the day after the birth the mother is given a broth of ginger mixed with a sugar like substances”³⁷ Such food habits affect both the mother and the child and aggravates nutrient deficiency diseases that may make them cripple for life or may even face death.

“Choice may reflect a ranking that systematically favors some members (for example males), and it may discriminate against others (for example higher – birth – order girls and elderly relatives). Household choice assumes strong normative significance only when the underlying ranking of options is based

³⁵ *A New Agenda on Women’s Health and Nutrition*, n. 15, p.4

³⁶ Clara Blackburn, n. 16, p. 46.

³⁷ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke Thapa-Magar, *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal, Vol. II* (Delhi, Book Faith India, 1994), p. 85.

upon a defensible aggregate of each member's well-being. But this may not be common, at least not when the family is impoverished, and the stresses and strains of hunger, illness, and physical weakness make themselves felt."³⁸

Another important feature in a male dominated society is the limited expressibility of women. Women cannot express their problems of health due to the shyness. Sometimes their interaction in the society depends on the male members. This factor is "significant since it is culturally difficult for women to talk to male health workers, particularly about maternal illness and gynecological problems. Thus one of the major functions of the health post in treating maternal and childhood illness is lost."³⁹

Poor Women and Poor Health: Implications

The implication of poor health in Nepal particularly among the poor women is reflected in the fertility, life expectancy, maternal mortality, and morbidity and infant mortality. But the implication of health is much beyond these factors as it is also concerned with the understanding of psychological and behavioral processes caused by poverty.

Fertility

The fertility rate in Nepal are affected by the following factors:

Age at Marriage: The marriageable age is a strong factor to determine the fertility in Nepal since girls are married early in Nepal. Early marriage has the probability of high fertility. Girls in Nepal are generally married at an early age of 14 years. "Age at marriage and use of contraception have strong significant associations with cumulative fertility."⁴⁰ However combining the general belief that early marriage increase the birth rates, "women in some cultures may spend

³⁸ Partha Dasgupta, *An Inquiry into Well-Being and Destitution* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), p.305.

³⁹ Omar Sattaur, n. 20, p. 33.

⁴⁰ Laxmi Bilas Acharya, "Determinants of Fertility in the 1970s and 1990s in Nepal, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol.25, Special Issue, July 1998, p.99.

more time in their natal home than their husband's home before they have their first child.”⁴¹ It may play an important role in the birth spacing for the first time.

Education: Education is another important factor for determination of fertility among the Nepalese girls. “To poor people, whose needs are immediate, high barriers to education may make other choices. It is only when people recognize that they can control the number and spacing of their children that they begin to see larger families as a drain on well-being.”⁴² Education affects the fecundity of women because education provide for better health and nutrition awareness. “Fatal loss are likely to be lower for more educated women.”⁴³

The Socio- Economic Position and Income: In Nepal, the status of the household also plays an important role in fertility determination because poor population may not have any access to the gadgets like radio, television, newspaper or any other form communication which can make them aware of the mass campaign on family planning. “Women from households with better educated household heads may have access to radio and TV. These women are likely to have different fertility behaviors than their counterparts.”⁴⁵ The economic status of the head of the family member also has an impact on the determination of the birth of the children. “Daughters whose father worked as wage laborers are 45 percent more likely than those whose fathers performed other work to have a first birth in any given interval”⁴⁶

Bhim P. Subedi, in his analysis of fertility regimes based on “cluster analysis”⁴⁷ comprising of the fifteen districts and the socio- economic characteristics including literacy, infant mortality, literacy of child bearing

⁴¹ Juhee V. Suwal, Socio- Cultural Dynamics of Birth Intervals in Nepal, *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 28, no.1 , January 2001, p.17.

⁴² *The State of World's Population 2002*, n. 6,p. 34.

⁴³ Devendra P. Shrestha, “Socioeconomic Changes, Women's Autonomy, and Timing of First Birth in a Semi- Urban Community in Nepal, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 25, Special Issue, p.130.

⁴⁵ Laxmi Bilas Acharya, n. 40, p.99.

⁴⁶ Devendra P. Shrestha , n. 43, p.139.

⁴⁷ Bhim P. Subedi, “Regional Pattern of Fertility in Nepal, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* , vol. 25, Special Issue, July, 1998, p152

women and the contraceptive prevalence observes that low fertility in the Eastern Tarai and Central Hill, “are characterized by high levels of the human development index and other socio- economic factors.”⁴⁹ While the same pattern does not coincide for the Far and Mid-West Region where there is low human development.

Total Fertility rate for Nepal was 5.8 per women in the period 1970-75 which came down to 4.8 in the period 1995-2000. “A decrease in fertility rates reduces the time women spend in pregnancy and childbirth, and reduces thus the exposure to risks of maternal deaths. But the later constitute only a small fraction of all deaths among adult women.”⁵⁰

Life Expectancy

“Life expectancy at birth is the number of years a random new born baby can expect to live, on the assumption that current age – specific mortality rate persist.”⁵¹ Health status of a woman affects the survivability and quality of life. It has a direct implication on the production and the reproduction processes in the development of the country. It also affects the rules and the regulation in the society. At the first instance the health status of the women in Nepal is reflected in their life expectancy.

The life expectancy of women at birth was 59.8 years as on 2000 and comparatively male life expectancy was 59.3 years. With reference to Table 3.3, life expectancy at birth is below 45 years for Western Mountains comparatively the life expectancy for women is above 60 years for the Eastern Hills, Eastern Tarai, Central Tarai and Western Hills. The low female life expectancy is related to women’s social and the economic values-the cultural preference of the son, gender discrimination and neglect of the girl child.

⁴⁹ Bhim P. Subedi, n.47, p.154.

⁵⁰ N. Krishnaji, K.S. James, “Gender Differentiates in Adult Mortality With Notes on Rural-Urban Constraints, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 36, no. 47, 16 November, 2002, p. 4636.

⁵¹ Partha Dasgupta, n. 38, p. 81

TABLE 3.3
LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH

Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) for Females	Regions
Below-45	Far Western Mountains,
45-50	Western Tarai, Mid- Western Mountain,
50-55	Eastern Mountains,
55-60	Central Mountain, Central Hills, Western Mountain, Mid Western Hills, Mid Western Tarai, Far Western Hills, Far Western Tarai.
Above 60	Eastern Hills, Eastern Tarai, Central Tarai, Western Hills

Source- *Nepal Human Development Report- 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nation Development Programme, 2001), p.132.

Maternal Mortality Rates

Maternal mortality reflects the reproductive health of the females. “A maternal death is defined by World Health Organisation as ‘the death of a women while pregnant or within 42(6 weeks) of termination of pregnancy’.”⁵² But most of the poor women have limited time available for their own health care which has to be balanced against the time needed for their children, to prepare food, clean, collect water and their engagement in trade. They have less time to attend any pre- natal health centers particularly for those women who view childbirth as a normal event. Hence maternal mortality is not only associated within the time frame of the childbirth but “deaths attributable to pregnancy and child birth also occur outside of this time frame.”⁵³

⁵² Ruth K. Oniang'o, “African Women’s Strategies to Advance Household Food Security”, in Jennifer Turpin and Lois Ann Lorentzen (ed.), *The Gendered New World Order Militarism, Development, and the Environment* (New York, Routledge, 1996), p.179.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 179.

TABLE 3. 4
FEMALE POPULATION BY AGE GROUP- 1995 AND 1998

Region, Area or Age Group Nepal	Country,	Female Population				Total Increase or Decrease in the Female Population (in Thousands)
		1995		1998		
		Number in Thousands	%	Number in thousands	%	
All ages		10520	100	11277	100	757
0-4		1626	15.5	1675	14.9	49
5-14		2736	26	2922	25.9	186
15-24		1978	18.8	2153	19.1	175
25-34		1528	14.5	1630	14.5	102
35-49		1477	14	1614	14.3	137
50-64		795	7.6	876	7.8	81
65+		381	3.6	408	3.6	27

Source: *Statistics on Women in Asia and The Pacific 1999* (New York, United Nations, 1999), P.12.

With reference to Table 3. 4, the decrease of the female population between the prime reproductive period between 15-34 years shows that there is probability of women dying of the reproductive diseases. Such diseases reflect the inadequate health care during the pre-natal and the post-natal period. One important aspect of the maternal mortality is the stress and strain under poverty. Poverty allows little scope to solve the problem of the mental stress faced due to the limited resources and stressful life events “the social position of low income families mean that parents are less likely to have the physical resources, the emotional support from confiding relationships of a level of social support that helps them to cope with the additional pressures that parenting in poverty brings.”⁵⁴

Paltiel opines that “depression is the single most serious mental problem for women in every age group, and it has a significant impact on the women’s well-being and productivity.”⁵⁵ Even the World Bank 1993 has ranked the

⁵⁴ Clare Blackburn, n. 16, p. 45.

⁵⁵ *A New Agenda for Women’s Health and Nutrition*, n. 15, p.26

depressive disorder as fifth among the disease that affect the most women between the age group 15-44 years. “Negative life events and difficulties are positively related to psychosocial risk factors such as poverty.”⁵⁶ Poor women are more vulnerable to the poor living conditions, frequent illness, violence, etc.

Housing patterns: Housing of the poor families are also a prime source of disease proliferation and responsible for maternal mortality death. Because poor women and children are the most vulnerable group as they spend the large amount of time in the households. Damp and mouldy living conditions are directly related to health of the household members. It explains the higher problems in the respiratory infections, tiredness and fevers especially in the case of young children and women who are exposed to such environment for longer hours than the male members. “The household environment carries the biggest risks to health for poor people in the less developed regions, especially women.”⁵⁷

In Nepal the houses in the rural areas are basically build of stones or bricks plastered with mud or cement. Usually the houses have low roofs and have no proper outlet for the smokes. The floors are usually rolled over by mixture made of dung and mud for auspicious reason. Sometimes the livestock are also sheltered under the same roof where the members of the household stay. Among the *Mushars* in eastern Nepal, “The house is comprised of a single large central room. In one corner they keep their livestock, in another they cook their meals and in the third corner they sleep.”⁵⁸ Such poor and congested living conditions have negative impact on the health of a poor woman.

⁵⁶ Jill Astbury, “Mental Health: Gender Bias, Social Position and Depression”, in Gita Sen, Asha George and Pirooska Ostlin (ed.), *Engendering International Health: The Challenge of Equity* (Cambridge, A Bradford Book, 2002), p.157

⁵⁷ HNB Gopalan and Sumeet Saksena (ed.), *Domestic Environment and Health of Women and Children* (New Delhi, Tata Energy Research Institute, 1999), p. 6.

⁵⁸ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke Thapa Magar, n. 37, p. 84.

TABLE 3.5
POPULATION INACCESSIBLE TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

Population Without Access to Safe Water. 2000 (%)	Regions
0 – 10	Eastern Tarai
10 – 20	Eastern Mountain, Central Mountain, Central Tarai, Western Hill, Far Western Tarai.
20 – 30	Eastern Hill, Central Hill, Mid Western Tarai.
30 – 40	Western Tarai, Mid Western Mountain, Mid Western Hill, Far Western Mountain, Mid Western Hill.
40 – 50	-
50 – 60	Western Mountain.

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report- 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nation Development Programme) p.134.

Rainy season worsens the condition of the house more making it more unhygienic to live. “Not only Deuls, there are lot of other sweepers who carry their child on their back while sweeping. They say that they don’t have proper place to keep their baby. Despite the possible health risks, these moms have no alternative but to carry their children while doing their job.”⁵⁹

The Poor Quality of Safe Drinking Water: The untimely supply of water aggravates the health and hygiene problems among the women. Western mountain has the most population inaccessible to safe water (refer Table 3.5) than those of the other regions. “The locals of Mainamaini VDC of Udayapur have been faced by acute drinking water shortage. They are forced to walk a distance of three hours everyday to fetch a bucket of water. So far no drinking water protect has been conducted in this VDC, which lies about 20 miles east from the district headquarters, Gaighat. 865 families living around this region have been deprived from pure and clean water due to lack of proper arrangement of drinking water by the government. On the crack of dawn members of these families are seen hurrying down the road with some vessels in their hands to a spring, the

⁵⁹ Sangeeta Rijal, “Moms Sweep Dust, Leave Behind Sick Babies”, *Kathmandu Post* 21. 03. 2003 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 8, no. 8, March 1 to 31, 2003, p. 50.

only place from where they have been getting a meager amount of water to keep them going through the day.”⁶⁰

Sometimes it may not be viable for a woman to bring sufficient water to home or the source of water may be situated very far. In such cases “it is extremely difficult to maintain a reasonable level of personal, household, and environmental hygiene. Water – washed diseases include most of the faecal-oral transmission diseases, which may be affected by washing.”⁶¹

Most of the poor women suffer from anemia, iodine deficiency, malnutrition, stunting growth and protein deficiency. Only 27 % of Nepal’s population used adequate sanitation facilities in 2000 and 81% of population has an improved water sources in 2000. But “the quality of drinking water supplied is questionable, even in the cities. Very high level of e. coli contamination has been reported in the water supplies of the urban areas of the Kathmandu valley. The poor quality of the drinking water means that the population suffers from very high levels of water- borne diseases, such as diarrhoea”⁶²

In Nepal, since the water supply is infrequent and the quality low, “the poor, who register low on human development indicators, are left to depend on infrequent and contaminated water supply from the public system.”⁶³ Since the safe drinking water awareness is low there appears high level of gender disparity in the safe water drinking programmes. “The gender disparity in participation persists: only 30 per cent of the women participated in some form in the planning of drinking water programmes, compared to 54 % of men- difference of 24 percentage points. In sanitation programmes, it was 39 % for women versus 56 % for men.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Pesat Acharya, “Udaypur Locals Forced to Walk Three Hours for a Bucket of Water”, *Kathmandu Post* 06/03/2003 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 8, no. 8, March 1 to 31, 2003, p. 36.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.140.

⁶² *Nepal Human Development Report- 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nations Development Programme, p. 42.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42.

Labor-intensive works: The increase in the labor-intensive works and the prolonged nature of work in the subsistence economy of Nepal affects health of poor women. “In addition to reproduction, the responsibilities of adult life for women can be very physically demanding. These additional responsibilities generally include household management (cleaning, cooking, child care, family health care, collection of adequate water and fuel), in addition to agricultural food production, processing, and other production activities vital to survival.”⁶⁵

In Nepal, women spend most of their time in the agricultural activities and the food processing. In a subsistence economy they are mostly engaged in the manual laboring in the fields. Threshing, winnowing, weeding, cutting, harvesting, digging water channels, sowing etc are mostly laboriously done physically which deprive them of nutrients and protein more vigorously. It affects the reproductive health of women because maternal mortality during the reproductive years are mostly related to the complication during the childbirth. “In developing countries more than one-fourth of all deaths of women of reproductive age are pregnancy-related, caused mainly by hemorrhage, sepsis, unsafe abortion, hypertension disorders, and obstructed labor.”⁶⁶ The collective impact of lifelong nutritional deprivation, hazardous work, changing family structure and low status, poor women are prone to death at early stage than the men.

Infant Mortality

In Nepal the status of women depends on their capability to bear son. Women’s preference for son is high as their access to property and social status depends on the male progeny. Assessing the degree of the female autonomy and the fertility in the two villages of Benighat (central hills) and Bagahi (tarai), Morgan and Niraula observe that greater gender inequality in Bagahi leads to stronger son preference than is observed in Benighat. “We have demonstrated dramatic differences in women’s autonomy between settings using two sets of measures: one focusing on freedom of movement and the other focusing on the

⁶⁵ Ruth K. Oniang’o, n.52, p. 187.

⁶⁶ *A New Agenda for Women’s Health and Nutrition*, n. 15, p.16.

wife's role in household decisions. The gendered division of labor and the restrictions on women's autonomy together comprise a stratification system- the division of labor provides differential access to resources and limitation on autonomy perpetuates the general division of labour. The more rigid gendered division of labour in the plains settings is consisted with the more rigid constraints on women's movement and decision making."⁶⁷

The loss of infant in Nepal is due to the lack of medical facilities and the lack of immediate care for the children. "The long – term deprivation of women is related to the extremely high infant death rates in developing countries."⁶⁸ The diseases that are widely responsible for infant mortality are the infectitious and parasitic diseases. Respiratory diseases as tuberculosis and pneumonia, and other airborne diseases such as measles are also major causes of mortality among the children. Much of the disease occurring in the poor children are due to the negligence of the poor parents who do not have enough resources to support their sick children. "Such a disease pattern is overwhelmingly the result of poverty. Those aspects of poverty that are particularly important, apart from nutrition, are lack of access to safe water, inadequate sanitation and poor housing and lack of reasonable quality health services. Many diseases spread through the contamination of food, water, or soil with human waste."⁶⁹

Some of the causes for the infant mortality among the poor households in Nepal are as follows.

Discriminatory Childcare: In Nepal since the son preference system is stronger boys receive more preventive care than the girls and timely attention. "Their status within the family and community is at its lowest in most countries during this phase of life cycle."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Bhanu B. Niraula and S.Philip Morgan, "Gender Inequality in Two Nepali Settings," Brigida Garcia (ed.), *Women, Poverty, and Demographic Change*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.), p.67.

⁶⁸ Barbara Rogers, *The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies* (London, Tavistock Publication, 1980,P. 175.

⁶⁹ Barbara Rogers, n.68, p.9.

⁷⁰ *A New Agenda for Women's Health and Nutrition*, n. 15, p.16.

Malnutrition: Malnutrition and nutrient deficiency aggravate the health problem among the adolescence. Due to the requirement of nutrients at this stage lack of which will have a lifelong impact on the girl child. Apart from the iron-deficiency diseases, “skeletal growth is also delayed by malnutrition, and since a smaller pelvis can prolong labor and obstruct delivery, incomplete skeletal growth, or stunting, poses serious risks during childbirth.”⁷¹

**TABLE 3.6
MALNUTRITION AMONG THE CHILDREN**

Chronic Malnourishment Among Children (Under 5 yrs of Age) % 1998	Regions
Below 50	Eastern Tarai, Far Western Tarai
50 – 60	Eastern Hill, Central Hill, Central Tarai, Western Hill, Western Tarai, Mid Western Tarai
60 – 65	Eastern Mountain, Central Mountain, Mid Western Mountain, Mid Western Hill, Far Western Hill.
Above 65	Western Mountain, Far Western Mountain.

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report- 2001*(Katmandu, United Nation Development Programme), p. 134.

Table 3.6 explains that the Western and the Far Western mountainous Regions have the maximum malnourished children. However Nepal has more than 50 % of malnourished children except the Eastern Tarai and the Far Western Tarai. Among the *jirel* community in the districts of Dolaka and Sindhui Palchok, ante natal care is not practiced and pregnancy is based on self identifying process by the to be mother herself. They continue to drink, smoke during their pregnancy period also. The community regards birth as polluting. “Most of the births take place in the non ventilated ground floor. Some births take place in animal shed also.”⁷²

⁷¹ *A New Agenda for Women's Health and Nutrition*, n. 15, p.19.

⁷² Pashupati Nepal, “Maternal and Child Health Status in Jirel Community”, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 26. no. 2, July 1999. p,286.

Poor ante natal care and attended delivery: The birth attended by skilled health staff was only 12 % during the period 1995- 2000 while the physician available per 100,000 people was 4 during the period 1990-1999. "Poorer women are even less likely to have skilled assistance at delivery than to seek antenatal care."⁷³

Education: Raising Health Consciousness among Poor Women

Education and health inter- relation has been widely accepted. The positive aspect being that education delays the age of marriage of the girls, and therefore, it has a definite role in reducing the fertility. Education increases the poor women's capability to work and also increase their opportunity cost of time. Poor but educated mothers are also expected to value the education of the children in future. "The relationship between child mortality risks and many of the community characteristics considered here vary substantially by the level of maternal education. For instance, the quality of water supply is important for promoting child survival, but only for the children of less- well educated mother, the net effect for children of better- educated mothers is negligible."⁷⁴ "More highly educated women are both more likely to use any kind of care and to have their children immunized."⁷⁵

The most important contribution made by the education on the poor women is the reproductive choice and the decision on their fertility behavior. Educating on their family planning and the reproductive related diseases may not appear to be important for the poor. Poor women may not be easily available to such education programmes at times due to their engagement in the works and ignorance. "In initial stages, however, family planning programmes do not work

⁷³ *The State of World Population 2002*, n. 6, p. 36.

⁷⁴ Narayan Shastri, "Community Characteristics, Individual and Household Attributes an Child Survival in Brazil." *Demography*, vol. 33, no. 2, May 1996, p. 226.

⁷⁵ Anne R. Pebley, Noren Goleman, "Prenatal and Delivery Care and Childhood Immunisation in Gaetamala: Do Family and Community Matter?", *Demography*, vol.33, no.2, May 1996, p. 239.

on their own: it matters greatly if women have a measure of education and autonomy.”⁷⁶

In Nepal education plays an important role in birth spacing. “Younger women with post- secondary level education wait longer for the third child than those with elementary or no education. An interesting finding that emerges for this group is that women in the “other” category of occupation (which includes students, the unemployed, housemaids etc.) wait longer before having their first baby than the women in agricultural occupations (B= - 1.124). And younger women whose husbands are involved in a business or cottage industry conceive their first child earlier than those whose husbands are in agriculture (B=0.251). But the women whose husbands are service holders wait longer for the second child than their peers whose husbands are in agricultural work (B= -0.245).”⁷⁷

In the cluster of fifteen districts in the far and the mid- western regions of Nepal, Subedi analyses, “this cluster can be considered as a plateau of high fertility. Districts in this cluster, which covers all three ecological regions but only the mid and far- west regions (with exception of Palpa), consistently demonstrate very high CWRs and high infant mortality rates. Female literacy is very low and there is wide variation in contraceptive prevalence rates.”⁷⁸

John C. Caldwell argues that mass education may bring fertility decline because education of a child have an indirect impact on the parents in the way that they may feel to change the traditional roles for educated children. Further education may increase the family expectation, dependency and bring cultural changes too. Some shift in fertility decline is expected with the maternal education. Education will even influence the socio-cultural relationship and indirectly affect the reduction of fertility. “Where large proportions of women are

⁷⁶ Partha Dasgupta, n. 38, p.355.

⁷⁷ Values have been derived from cox regression for the first, the second, and the third birth interval by taking into consideration the socio-economic and demographic variables. A positive value of B indicates a higher chances of pregnancy and consequently a shorter birth interval leading to higher fertility. Juhee V. Suwal, n.41, p.24.

⁷⁸ Bhim P. Subedi, n. 47, p.153.

educated, the fertility of even uneducated and modestly educated women is lower than corresponding levels in settings where most women are poorly educated.”⁷⁹

TABLE 3. 7
THE CO-RELATION OF FEMALE ADULT LITERACY AND FEMALE LIFE EXPECTANCY IN NEPAL BY KARL PEARSON'S METHOD

Regions	Female Adult Literacy (% age 15 and above) 2000	Female Life Expectancy at birth (years) 2000			
	X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
Eastern Mountain	34.9	53.1	1218.01	2819.61	1853.19
Eastern Hill	43.6	66.5	1900.96	4422.25	2899.4
Eastern Tarai	41	63	1681	3969	2583
Central Mountain	34.9	58.9	1218.01	3469.21	2055.61
Central Hills	44.8	59.5	2007.04	3540.25	2665.6
Central Tarai	22.1	64.3	488.41	4134.49	1421.03
Western Mountain	34.9	58.1	1218.01	3375.61	2027.69
Western Hill	41.8	64.7	1747.24	4186.09	2704.46
Western Tarai	36.3	49.1	1317.69	2410.81	1782.33
Mid- Western Mountain	14.9	45.1	222.01	2034.01	671.99
Mid- Western Hill	31.9	59.5	1017.61	3540.25	1898.05
Mid- Western Tarai	34.1	62.4	1162.81	3893.76	2127.84
Far-Western Mountain	14.9	42.2	222.01	1780.84	628.78
Far-Western Hill	16.4	58.1	268.96	3375.61	952.84
Far-Western Tarai	31.3	57.7	979.69	3329.29	1806.01

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001* (Kathmandu , United Nations Development Fund, 2001), p. 132.

$$r \text{ (co- relation)} = \frac{n[(Z_{xy}) - (Z_x)(Z_y)]}{\sqrt{[nZ_x^2 - (Z_x)^2] * [nZ_y^2 - (Z_y)^2]}}$$

r = 0.600054061

The explanation arrived from Table 3.7 is that there exist a positive co-relation between the female adult literacy and the female life expectancy at birth in Nepal. This means that there is a significant explanation for the life

⁷⁹ John Cleland and Shireen Jeebhoy, “Maternal Schooling and Fertility: Evidence from Censuses and Surveys “, in Roger Jeffery and Alaka M Basu (ed.), *Girls' Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in South Asia* (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1996), p. 105.

expectancy being influenced by the literacy of the female. Female life expectancy at birth was taken because it indicates the number of years the infant girl would live if the given pattern of the mortality was to exist throughout the life. Because in Nepal the gender biasness are visible in every stage of life. "The discrimination the women faces as girls affects the nutrition status of their children through their own small size as adults. Small women have a greater risk of having low birth weight children and some would argue- of obstetric complications due to smaller pelvic size."⁸⁰

Education may not also be the factor always responsible for the safe maternal and the children's health. Such finding is projected by the studies carried out in three villages located in the eastern Kathmandu valley in Nepal by Laston, Schumann, Black, Dahal on the role of hygiene, nutritional status and the risk of the diarrhoeal disease among the pre-school children and their mother. They found that education was not important for the occurrence of the diarrhoea. Although the maternal education and the household income is related to the incidence of the dirtiness of the child but there was a negative relation between the maternal education and the hygienic behavior of the children. "Maternal education was negatively associated with more ingestion behaviors. The level of the mother's education was also associated with hand washing but in an unexpected positive direction. This suggests that less educated mothers were more likely to wash their hands. It may be that uneducated mothers may perceive increased contamination in their environment and washed their hands more frequently as a result."⁸¹ Thus their analysis found out that education operating through the environmental factors affect the incidence of the diarrhoea occurrences.

⁸⁰ Lawrence Haddad, "Women's Status: Levels Determinants, Consequences for Malnutrition, Interventions, and Policy, *Asian Development Review*, "vol. 17, no,1,2, 1999, p.96.

⁸¹ Sandra L. Laston, Debra A. Schumann, Robert E. Black and Dilli R. Dahal, "Children and Mothers at Risk for Diarrheal Disease in Nepal." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 20, no.1, January 1993, p. 63.

Women's Health Programmes

HMG/N has primarily aimed at making primary health services accessible to the rural population and especially to women as they play an important role in family planning. Emphasizing on the reproductive roles of the women, Nepal is increasingly taking steps to facilitate the modern methods of the medical health facilities in the interior parts. Health workers, teachers, village health workers have been increased, to play an important role in the health awareness and health campaign. "The health policy (July 1997) sets following targets to be achieved by 2000 : (i) reduction of the infant mortality rate to 50 per thousand; (ii) reduction of the under- five mortality rate to 70 per thousand; (iii) reduction of the total fertility rate to four; (iv) reduction of the maternal mortality rate to four per thousand live births; and (v) increase in the life expectancy of the population to 65 years. HMG/N intends to accomplish the stated targets through a mix of preventive, promotive, and curative health services."⁸²

For achieving greater goals Nepal in the Seventh Year Plan (1985-90) emphasized on the nutritional aspect of the children, pregnant mothers, vaccination of the children, supply of the medicines including the *Jeevan Jal* to prevent dehydration, nutritious food. etc. the eight plan emphasized on the maternal and the child health care facilities in the rural areas, expanding the pediatric health services, family planning etc. to reduce infant mortality *Jeevan Suraksah* (life protection programme has been introduced in the Siraha district. This is a first kind of the project to reduce the maternal and the infant mortality rates in the country.

HMG/N has made the decision to implement the small irrigation programme as a package programme to improve food and the nutritional status in the forty four districts of the mountainous and the hilly region which are deficient in food. New regulation has been initiated by the HMG/N. "According to the new regulation, pharmaceutical shops will be classified into different standard of medicines that they are licensed to sell. Many expert claim the new regulation

⁸² *Women in Nepal*, n.1, p. 54.

will help to ensure the quality of medicines in the market.”⁸³ To bring equal distribution and to deal against the counterfeited and sub standard pharmaceutical products, The public health expenditure by the Nepal government is 1.6 % of the total GDP in 2000 and the private is the 3.6% of the total GDP for the same year.

Despite the remarkable increase in the health facilities by expansion of the health posts and sub health posts, “the quality of the health services at the rural health institutions is very poor or, often unavailable because of the lack of medical supplies and supporting facilities, as well as shortages in health personal.”⁸⁴ Further the ethnicity, castes poses a challenge for the accessibility of the health services. “Lack of engagement become evident when the participation of *dalits* is compared with that of advantaged groups, a difference shaper than that for gender. Among *dalits*, 75 per cent either do not participate or participate very little in the planning of village health services, compared to 58 per cent of the advantaged groups.”⁸⁵

The United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Population Fund and World Health Organisation are the organizations that play a primary role in facilitating health services in Nepal. The United Nations Children’s Fund, has funded the Nepal multiple indicators survey to bring forth gender–segregated data on health. The World Health Organisation (WHO)/Nepal facilitates women’s health care. Its programmes are basically target the fecundity women whose are in the age group of the 15-49 years, “adolescent and the menopausal health needs of Nepalese women remain outside the scope of WHO programs.”⁸⁶ WHO has kept prevention and medication of the Japanese encephalitis in its priority agenda because “most of the donors are refusing to support the government in controlling this diseases.”⁸⁷ United Nations Population Fund in Nepal has changed its

⁸³ “New Pharma Regulations Soon”, *Kathmandu Post*, 2/11/2002, in *South Asian Green File*, vol. 8, no. 4, November 1 to 30, 2002, p. 49.

⁸⁴ *Nepal Human Development Report- 2001*, n. 62, p. 42.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 40-41.

⁸⁶ *Women in Nepal*, n. 1, p. 81.

⁸⁷ “WHO Pledges Support to Fight Japanese Encephalitis”, *Kathmandu Post*, 1/9/2002, in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 8, no.2, September 1 to 30, 2002, p. 62.

emphasis from fertility towards the greater emphasis on the reproductive health care. It considers the “women’s development as the basis for human development.”⁸⁸

Hence, women’s health condition still remains a crucial issue in Nepal. Much of the disadvantages in this sector may be said to be due to the poor infrastructure facilities and the geographical inaccessibility. There is a significant room for the improvement in the health of poor women. Participatory approach at the grassroots levels could be a possible way for the successful for improving the efficiency in accessing and distribution of health facilities.

⁸⁸ *Women in Nepal*, n. 1, p. 81.

Chapter IV

EDUCATION AND POOR WOMEN IN NEPAL

Introduction

The word education is derived from the Latin word “educare”, “educere”, and “educio” which cumulatively mean to nurture, rear, train and bring up. “Education is a conscious, deliberate or non-deliberate process of balanced harmonious and maximum development of the innate powers of the individual-aesthetic, cultural, emotional, intellectual, physical, religious, social, spiritual and vocational”.¹

Education is necessary for the socio-economic development of a society. A minimum level of education is required to develop competence among the individuals and make them aware of the social welfare, rights and duties of an individual. Education is an individual’s right. It has proved to be the best way for developing a sustainable growth. Among all rights the right to education would encourage the women to develop fully their individual, moral and the intellectual qualities. Because “women have been accorded an inferior social status. Coupled with retrograde social customs like, sati, marriage, dowry, social boycott of widows, etc., women experience several accumulated disadvantages. They not only face gender discrimination of various degrees and types at different levels, but also suffer the most sexual harassment, atrocities and crimes. All these factors coupled with the low female literacy rate, make the role of education as an agent of social change very challenging.”²

Educational System: Women’s Historical Deprivation

The educational system in Nepal evolved out of experiments and amalgamation of different systems of education at different stages of

¹ J. Agarwal, *Philosophical and Sociological Perspectives on Education* (New Delhi, Shipra Publication, 2000), p. 11.

² Jaya Indira Sen, *Education for Women’s Empowerment* (Delhi, Konark Publishing, 2001), pp. 4-5.

development since ancient times. “State did not interfere much in the affairs of traditional educational institutions (i.e. Sanskrit schools and Buddhist Monastries), as enrolment in these institutions was already restricted to high caste Hindus and Buddhist monks.”³ During the reign of the Malla dynasty, education was imparted with no social restriction. But “no evidence is found for the provision for the women.”⁴

The imperialist, Prithivi Narayan Shah ignored the expansion of education in the eighteenth century. He expelled the missionaries altogether from the country due to suspicion. Since no improvements were made in the education, it remained under the influence of the religion till 1846. “Since regulated admission into educational institutions, state did not interfere much in the affairs of educational institutions. Neither state imposed much restrictions on traditional educational institutions, nor educated youth from these institutions posed any threat to the rulers.”⁵

During the Rana regime from 1846-1950, education became more deplorable as its needs and values for the development of the society were not recognized. At most, education was a private affair and remained elite biased. “Traditionally, education used to be the upper class and a powerful symbol of status.”⁶ Private tutors were employed by those who could afford to teach their children at home. It was under such circumstances that the girls coming from rich and elitist background could receive education at home. The lower class had no such resources to provide these facilities of education for their children. “In the beginning, the first school was confined to the palace itself. But, even after the educational institutions were established outside the palace, admission was made strictly to higher Rana children and some others who could obtain permission from rulers. The Rana regime was fearful of the idea of giving education to

³ Daram Vir, *Educational and Polity in Nepal: An Asian Experiment* (New Delhi, Northern Book Center, 1998), p. 143.

⁴ Ibid., p. 30

⁵ Ibid., p.31.

⁶ Madhu Raman Acharya, *Nepal Culture Shift: Reinventing Culture in the Himalayan Kingdom* (Delhi, Adroit Publishers, 2002), p. 172.

common people lest they should not be awakened and be conscious of their rights.”⁷

Women’s education system set forth a new era during the reign of Padma Shamsheer Rana. Women’s higher education in Nepal was given new dimension when two women colleges ‘Padma Kanya Vidhyashala’ and ‘ Padma Kanya College’ were established. In the year 1948, when a written constitution- Nepal *Sarkarko Baidhanik Kanoon* (The Government of Nepal Act 2004), was framed under the Rana regime, it made a provision for free education. But its practicability of the provision was hindered by the elitist trend of the Rana regime. The common population and the women had less access to education. The “century old Rana regime did not make any contribution to the promotion and protection of the rights of women.”⁸

The next phase of education expansion took place between the periods after 1951 when the Nepali Congress became an important democratic factor in the home government. In the year 1952, the National Board of Education was formed to formulate educational plan. The National Education Planning Commission of set up under the recommendation of the Board, “surveyed the educational situation in the country of that time, assessed the needs, and prepared a report on it. The report specifically mentioned the need for intensification of vocational education for making the people self-reliant.”⁹ The commission also recommended the establishment of university. Hence, a University Project Commission was set up in the year 1955 and the first university in Nepal, Tribhuvan University was established in 1959.

⁷ DharamVir, n. 3, p.143.

⁸ Yubaraj Sangroula, Geeta Pathak, *Gender and Nepalese Prespective*, (Kathmandu, Pairavi Prakashan, 2002), p. 16.

⁹ Siddhi B. Ranjithkar, *Development Efforts in Nepal: A Historical Perspectives* (Kathmandu, Ekta Books, 1996), p. 113.

TABLE 4.1
NUMBER OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGES

Number of Schools and Colleges	2007 BS (1950)
Primary School	321
Lower Secondary School	11
Secondary School	458
Higher Secondary School	-
College And Campus	1
University	-

Source: www.nepalnet.org.np/mahilaweb/education_and_training/facts-figures.htm.

In the post 1951 Nepal established an educational system to reach the mass by introducing free primary education for all children. With reference to Table 4.1, there were 321 primary schools in the year 1950. But the numbers of the secondary schools superceded the former. Though steps taken to develop the education, legal rights and the property right of the women, the practice of the child marriage, polygamy prevailed in the society which hindered the education of women. The greatest disadvantage was the provision in the Interim Constitution of 1951, which “did not expressly mention women as a disadvantaged class.”¹⁰

The expansion of education system during the period 1960s was emphasized more on the quantitative increase. “The educational system in Nepal until 1971 was primarily oriented to produce trained people for white collar jobs.”¹¹ Political experiments with Partyless Panchayat System and the democracy after the 1990 and the reformation in the constitutional Laws were also one of the prime reasons for the weak contribution towards the expansion of educational systems for the women. “The liberal Democratic Constitution itself contains serious flaws. The education system, in turn, has done little to

¹⁰ Yubaraj Sangroula and Geeta Pathak, n.8, p. 17.

¹¹ Siddhi B. Ranjithkar, n.9, p. 114.

discourage large gaps in attainments of men and women, upper and lower caste groups, rural and urban residents and so forth.”¹²

The elitist based politics proved to have a restrictive response towards the education system. “The case of Nepal presents a fascinating example between two important sub-systems of a wider social system, namely, education and polity. For system maintenance, it is essential that all its sub-systems are in equilibrium and function within their boundaries. They either do not overlap each other or do not conflict with each other. If they do so, in long run, it would mean the endangering of the social system itself. In the case of Nepalese society, it is no doubt true that polity and education have interacted significantly, but at times it appears that the polity considered education as a threat to itself and adopted a restrictive policy towards it.”¹³

Vir further explained the relation of education and the polity by putting forward a hypothesis, says that

- “1. Education and polity are significantly related and in constant interplay with each other. The change in one is likely to cause the change in the other.
2. In the interplay of education and polity, the latter appears to control and direct the former.
3. In a closed stratified society the facilities and opportunities of education are unevenly distributed with the explicit or implicit consent and support of the polity.
4. The growth and expansion of education creates new demands and pressures on the polity and the polity.
5. With the increase in quantity and quality of education, it is likely that the opportunities for peoples’ participation in political process may increase.

¹² Chaitanya Mishra, “Nepal : Five Years Following the Social Summit”. *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1. January 2000, p. 14.

¹³ Dharam Vir, n.3, p. 144.

Consequently, a closed monopolistic polity tends to open up a bit and provides a room for competitive politics.”¹⁴

Contribution towards the education system by the women’s movement could not make much impact towards education among the women. Women, seen as a relative subordinated individual in the Nepalese society, do not share one common ideology, the reason being the diversified multi ethno-cultures. “Of the many ways in which that can occur (hijacking or subordination of women’s issues for example), probably the most prevalent is to strengthen entrenched middle-class and upper-class interests in the guise of universal women’s liberation. Rights may be acquired but restricted, in practice, to women of the middle and upper classes, thus further dividing their interests from those of more disadvantaged women and further disenfranchising those who are most vulnerable.”¹⁵

Further, most of the mobilisations among the women were dictated by the political agenda and the biasness even among the Nepali Women’s Organizations. These women’s organizations were formed by kins of the political leaders. “Dibya Kiorala, founder of the *Mahila Samiti*, was mother of B.P. Koirala, who later became the leader of Nepali Congress. Revanta Kumari Acharya, the wife of Tanka Prasad Acharya (leader of the Praja Parishad), created the *Adarsh Mahila Sangh* (Model Women’s Organisation) in 1947. The *Nepal Mahila Sangh* (Nepal Women’s Organisation) formed in 1948 was led by Mangala Devi Singh, the wife of Ganesh Man Singh, another prominent leader of Nepali Congress.”¹⁶ These organizations fought for the discriminations of the women and demanded for their development. Though they “aim at improving women’s lives- they were concerned with women’s education and with women’s

¹⁴ Daram Vir, n.3,pp. 144-45.

¹⁵ Mary Des Chene, “The Simplicity and Complexity of Women’s Movements” *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, vol. 2, no.2, December 1997, p. 294.

¹⁶ Stephenie Tawa Lama, “Remarks on the Political within the Nepali Women’s Movement”, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, vol. 2, no.2, December 1997, pp. 327-28.

voting rights- but their main agenda was to mobilized women to support the struggle waged by the democrats against Rana regime.”¹⁷

During the plan period educational position of the women could not make much improvements though education for women remained important policy aspects during the plan periods. The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997- 2002) set forth the objectives of national development by developing the human resources to eliminate poverty and raise the standard of living. It provided for “equal participation of women is to be promoted by incorporating specific policies, targets, and programs for women in sectoral development policies and plans. Special laws are promised for increasing women’s participation at all levels of decision making, for establishing women’s rights in landownership and for technical training in all fields.”¹⁸

In the area of higher education, it further proposed that “scholarship programs for women, backward ethnic groups and *dalit* (down trodden) class shall be effectively implemented.”¹⁹ But after much of the high sounding proposals, “as far as the government planners are concerned, among the 15 chapters that comprised the Ninth Plan document, they have placed the section on education right at the end, and only as one of seven sections under chapter title ‘Social Service and Social Security’.”²⁰

TABLE 4.2
FEMALE LITERACY RATE

Adult Literacy		Youth Literacy	
Female rate (% age 15 and above)	Female rate as % of male rate	Female rate (% age 15-24)	Female rate as % of male rate
2001	2001	2001	2001
25.2	42	44.4	57

Source: *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 320.

¹⁷ Stephenie Yawa Lama, n.16, p. 328.

¹⁸ *Women in Nepal* (Manila, Asian Development Bank Programmes Department West Division 1, December 1999), p. 66.

¹⁹ *Sixth Session of the Regional Committee, 10 November, 2000* (Bangkok, UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2001), p. 78.

²⁰ Shanta Dixit , “Education, Deception, State and Society”, in Kanak Mani Dixit (ed.), *State of Nepal* (Lalitpur, Shastri Ramachandran Himal Books, 2002), p.200.

Given the low literacy rates, with reference to the Table 4.2 only 25.2 % of the total women above age group of 15 years know how to read and write. Given the age group between 15- 24 years the literate women are still very low at 42 % only. There are many reasons for underestimating education of women. The most important being the continued exclusion of the women from the caste and the ethnic tribes, “because of the caste barriers, near – zero access to literacy and low skill levels, the artisan- caste women suffer economic and social indignity bestowed on them by ignorance and exploitative social relations inherited from history.”²¹

Periodic political experiments, subordination of women and the patriarchal relationship, inaccessibility of resources have prevented education to be the important policy aspect in Nepal among the poor women. ‘Education for all’ may be high sounding and comforting to the women population, the needs for sending girls to schools may have permeated the vast rural poor population, “but the problem that remains is the value of what is imparted in the classroom.”²²

Education and Women in Nepal

Women are the most deprived sections in Nepal. The Human Development Report of Nepal, 2001 opens up optimistically by quoting that “development efforts become meaningful only when they serve and benefit the people for whom they are initiated. Only by listening to people’s voices and addressing their needs can the fight against poverty be won and human development realized”²³ But Nepal faces a grim situation in capability poverty which is largely attributable to the mass illiteracy among whom women constitutes the larger share.

In Nepal, women are not encouraged to get educated because of the traditional roles of the women in the house and the conservative attitude of the society. Yet the education of women has been recognized in the Directive

²¹ Devendra Raj Pandey, *Nepal's Failed Development, Reflections on the Mission and the Maladies* (Kathmandu, Nepal South Asia Center, 1999), p. 85.

²² Santa Dixit, n.20, p.196.

²³ *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nations Development Programme,2001),p.9.

Principles and Policies of the State. Article 26(10) says, “the state shall pursue such policies in matters of education, health and society security of orphans, helpless women, the aged, the disabled and incapable persons as will ensure their protection and welfare.”²⁴

Recognizing the importance of the education of women and the low participation rate of the women in Nepal as well as the low status of the women in the society, education has been given a different meaning to the girls where the women’s role is seen to be crucial for the upliftment of the future generation. “Increased levels of female education will be crucial for their participation in development, but whilst provision of free education for women would help, it would make very little difference without a change in the ingrained social attitudes which encourage parents to decide which of their children will go to school and for how long, and to keep girls at home to help with households chores. Such selection by parents is not only discriminatory and unfair, it is also counter productive in strict economic terms, because educated women will be in a better position than their male counterparts to teach their own daughters about social issues which have an impact primarily on the female population and to encourage them to challenge social constraints by demanding equal rights with their brothers from the earliest age.”²⁵

The present scenario of the education status among the women is described below.

Literacy rates among women in Nepal: Adult literacy rate “is the percentage of people ages 15 and over who cannot with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life.”²⁶ The female literacy rates in Nepal was only 35.4 % in the year 2000 compared to the male literacy rates of 65.8 % for the same year reflecting a wide gender gap. “Gender

²⁴ Dhungel, Adhikari, Bhandari and Murgatroyd, *Commentary on the Nepalese Constitution* (Kathmandu, Del, 1998), p.210.

²⁵ Dhungel, Adhikari, Bhandari and Murgatroyd, n.24, p.218

²⁶ *World Development Indicators, 2002* (Washington D.C., The World Bank, 2002), p. 101.

differences in other domains of life, thus is being reconstituted in differential access to opportunities to literacy.”²⁷

TABLE 4.3
FEMALE LITERACY RATES (%)

Female Literacy Rates % , 2000	Development Regions
Below 15	Mid Western Mountain, Far Western Mountain
15-20	Far Western Hills
20-25	Central Tarai
25-30	-
30-35	Eastern Mountain, Central Mountain, Western Mountain, Mid Western Tarai, Far Western Tarai
35-40	Western Tarai, Mid Western Hill
Above 40	Eastern Hill, Eastern Tarai, Central Hill, Western Hill

Source; *Nepal Human Development Report 2001*(Kathmandu, United Nations Development Programme, 2001), p. 132.

Table 4.3 shows that the adult female literacy is the least in the Mid Western Mountain and the Far Western Mountain with only 14.9%. There is no region where the female literacy is more than 50%. The highest literacy of 45 % is found in the Central hills. Eastern Hill, Eastern Tarai, Central Hill and Western Hill have more literate women in Nepal. Such low level of literacy among the women in Nepal indicates that females are largely inaccessible to education. “Discrimination against enrolment of girls in primary schools exists in all geographical regions and social groups, including in the urban areas.”²⁸ “Gender differentials in education endure because those persons who bear the private cost of schooling for girls and women fail to receive the full benefits of their investments. This is especially true because much of the pay off in educating women is broadly social”.²⁹

²⁷ *Nepal Human Development Report, 1998* (Kathmandu, Nepal South Asian Centre 1998), p.77.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.78.

²⁹ Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill (ed.), *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits and Policies* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press), p. 23

Gross Enrolment Ratio: The gross enrollment ratio is the total enrolment in a specific level of education to the total population in the same level of education at a particular point of time. The gross enrolment ratio “is the ratio of the total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown.”³⁰ The combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio for Nepal was 64 % in the year 2000-01, placing her higher than India which had a 56 % for the same year. Pakistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh do not fare better than Nepal in the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, in 2000-01.

**TABLE 4.4
GROSS ENROLLMENT RATIO IN NEPAL**

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary And Secondary
Male-Female	113	42	5	80
Male	129	51	-	92
Female	96	33	-	67

Source: *Statistical Year Book, 1999*, UNESCO, p. 11-327.

Table 4.4 shows that the gross enrollment ratio for the female decreased to half in the secondary level indicating a poor participation in the secondary level. On the other hand, the primary gross enrolment ratios are quite high for the female at 96. Immediate analysis cannot be done because gross enrollment ratio is affected by some short-term factors. “High incidence of grade- repetition also increases the share of overage children in given level of education and hence gross enrolment ratio may tend to be high. Similar is the effect of late entry. Improved access and participation, on one hand and gains in internal efficiency, on the other.”³¹

Expected year of schooling is yet another factor that can explain the literacy status. The expected year of schooling may be defined as the average numbers of the formal schooling received by the children including the number of years of repetition. Table 4.5 indicates that the expected years of schooling is

³⁰ *World Development Indicators, 2002*, n. 26, p. 93.

³¹ Yash Aggarwal, *An Assessment of Trends in Access and Retention* (New Delhi, Educational Consultants India Limited, 2000), P. 56

the same for both the sexes. The expected year of schooling in Nepal for both male and female is thirteen years. A prime factor that contributes to the low level of the year of schooling is “the fact that the primary schooling is ‘free’, households do have to incur some direct financial cost in spending their children to schools. A large number of households, extremely income-poor as they are, find it impossible to incur these costs.”³²

TABLE 4.5
YEARS OF EXPECTED SCHOOLING IN NEPAL

Gender	Years of Expected Schooling 1998
Male	13
Female	13

Source: *World Development Indicators 2002*, (Washington D.C, The World Bank 2002.), p. 99.

TABLE 4.6
FEMALE ENROLMENT IN NEPAL

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank	Net Primary Enrolment		Net Secondary Enrolment		Gross Tertiary Enrolment	
	Female ratio (%) 2000-01	Ratio of females to males 2000-1	Female ratio (%) 2000-01	Ratio of females to males 2000-1	Female ratio (%) 2000-01	Ratio of females to males 2000-1
143 Nepal	67	0.87	-	-	2	0.27

Source: *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 320.

“The net enrolment ratio is the ratio of the number of children of official school age (as defined by the national education system) who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official schooling”³³ Table 4.6 explains that the net enrolment ratio in primary schools Nepal for the females was 67 % in the year 2003 with ratio of females to males at 0.87. The net enrolment ratio is age specific and is a better option than the gross enrolment ratio. It shows that a large number of girl children are deprived from enhancing their capability.

³² *Nepal Human Development Report*, 1998, n 27, p. 79.

³³ *World Development Indicators*, 2002, n. 26, p. 93.

Education and Poor Women in Nepal

Primary Education

Universal primary education is the most common declared objectives of a developing country. A minimum level of education is a basic human right. Education can also be seen as the investment, which is an essential component part of the development. Universal primary education is popular because it is the most common agenda for the political parties and other cause being the reduction in the regional disparities and male-female imbalances. Primary education is the most essential and important stage of education. It “provides children with basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills along with an elementary understanding of such subjects as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music.”³⁴

Nepal has significantly contributed towards the development of the basic and primary education to raise the human capability as a process to reduce poverty. Education has been the priority area in the basic social sectors for human development in Nepal. At present out of the total 14 % of the national budget is set aside for education. And a half of the allocation of financial resources is allocated for the development of the basic and the primary education. But the low status of a girl can be assumed to be the main reason for the low average schooling of girls in most developing countries including Nepal. “There is a tendency for members of those groups who were the last to be brought into the system to be among the advanced groups to proceed to post primary education while others do not. During periods of educational expansion qualitative problems exacerbated, and this is particularly the case in those areas and among those groups with previously low enrolments ratio.”³⁵

The main causes for the low enrolment among the poor girls and women in the primary levels are as follows:

³⁴ *World Development Indicators, 2002*, n. 26, p. 93.

³⁵ Mark Bray, *Universal Primary Education in Nigeria, A Study of Kanto State*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 3.

Poverty: Education development in a society is a positive contribution for human development as it further contributes towards the growth of economy. “Grinding poverty is the highest barrier to education in South Asia making the direct costs of schooling and the opportunity costs of forgone child labor too expensive for many families.”³⁶

“The manifestation of poverty can be discerned in terms of the relatively low quantity and quality of food intake and low levels of health, education and habitat of the poor.”³⁷ And in poverty girls are the first victims to be deprived of education. Development in education though brings efficiency, quality, access and equity in gender, often among the poor families education depends on choice. Such choices are largely gender biased. “Even when there is only one school, parents are making choices. Given high levels of poverty and a low- quality education, parents may choose not to send their children to school.”³⁷ In Sri Lanka, with high human development comparatively to the other countries in the South Asia the poor curtails in education to fulfill the minimum basic needs. “The farmer would have to limit his basic needs such as health, children’s education and shelter, which is essential for him to lead a better life, thereby worsening his social conditions.”³⁸

In Nepal, since half of the population is poor, an extended earning hand in the household becomes priority factor than investing in the education of a child. In some families the household makes it a point that the eldest receives the required necessary education while the other children are sent to earn and work for income generation. In such environment a poor girl child are the least cared to be given education. “As long as there is no resource crunch in the family, the primary school age girls may get to go to school. But as soon as the resource

³⁶ Sharukh Khan, “South Asia”, in Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill (ed.), *Women’s Education in Developing Countries* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 211.

³⁷ Arif A. Waqif, “A Conceptual Approach to National and Regional Harmonization for Employment Generation and Poverty Alleviation, *South Asian Survey*, vol. 2, No.2, July-December, 1995, p. 201.

³⁷ Harry Anthony Patrinos, David Lakshmanan Ariasingam, *Decentralization of Education, Demand- Side Financing* (Washington D.C., The World Bank, 1997) p. 5.

³⁸ Ranjith Samaranayake, “Poverty In Sri Lanka: Entitlement And Deprivation Analysis”, *South Asian Survey*, vol. 2, No. 1, Jan-Jun 1995, p.52.

constraint arises, the first casualty is the female child's education."³⁹ With reference to Table 4.7, only 42 % of females completed the primary school comparatively to 70 % of males in the year 1999-2000.

TABLE 4.7
PRIMARY COMPLETION RATE (% OF ALL CHILDREN WHO COMPLETED
PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Year	Total	Male	Female
1999-2000	57	70	42

Source: *World Development Indicators 2002* (Washington D.C, The World Bank 2002.), p.95.

The patriarchy system and the household responsibilities of women deprive them of education. Poor Parents do not find it necessary to send the girl child to school since they feel that investment on their daughter's ^{education} brings no returns. They are regarded as the property of the other household after their marriage. "When parents are asked in surveys why they are not sending their girl children to school, one of the often repeated answers is that, "they will go to other people's house (*arkako ghar zane*) so what is the use of educating them?"⁴⁰ "Clason reports that poor rural parents in Nepal view female education as immoral."⁴¹

Sometimes parents from the disadvantaged groups and poor households feel that neither primary nor secondary education will help them or their children. Hence they take a little interest in the educational programmes. "This can be attributed to pervasive traditional patriarchal thinking family work load, and lack of female role models."⁴²

In Nepal poor are affected by the present system of the educational structure. At present the education system in Nepal is a double structured – the public and the private. The quality of the education is different in these within these two structural systems. "High fees in the private schools and the emerging

³⁹ *Women in Nepal*, n. 18 p. 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴¹ Sharukh Khan, n.36, p. 224.

⁴² *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001*, n. 23, p. 38.

dichotomy in the private and public education systems are other major issues. Girl children from poor households have much less access to private schools.”⁴³

The management of the school system also affects the girl children from the poor households. Because “large share of salaries in the annual budget of the public schools leaves very little for educational materials and extra- curricular activities.”⁴⁴ Deprivation of the necessary infrastructures like the blackboards, toilets, separate setting arrangements for boys and girls are seen as an important factors especially for girls to attend schools. On the other hand the private educational system caters for the quality of education. But they are only within the reach of the affordable ones and are largely situated in the urban areas. “These general state of affairs may further deepen the societal divide between the rich and the poor, eventually increasing the social conflict already fueled by wide development disparities throughout the country.”⁴⁵

Income is one of the important determinants that can initiate division between the poor and the non-poor for education of the girl children. “The rich have abandoned the public education system, to the point where many middle and upper- class families are sending their children to selected schools in India.”⁴⁶ The quality-equipped private schools are generally urban biased in location, which are out of the reach for the poor and the rural people.

Education can be used appropriately to justify the culture of poverty among the females in Nepal. More over the girl child coming from an under privileged environment tend to have a qualitatively a different set of behavior. Such distinct set of culture prevails due to the “increasingly work burdens of the girl children at home (including care of younger as well as older male siblings), and thus higher ‘opportunity costs’, cultural and economic constraints related to the dispensability of educational capability for girls and women, etc.,- appear to

⁴³ *Women in Nepal*, n. 18, p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Nepal Human Development Report, 2001*, n. 23 , p. 39

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.39.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.39

start impacting on the enhancement of girls educational capability at early age and educational level.”⁴⁷

Low level of education among the poor women may less inspire and motivate them to develop interest in acquiring knowledge. They may undeniably drop out of school. “The distinction between dropouts and repeaters is also a distinction between the poverty culture impinging on education (the so-called economic cause); and the education factor leading to wastage. The repeater is traced to the poor, irrelevant (urban industry oriented) curriculum which makes no sense to the child from the rural agricultural family, or what is equally important to poor pedagogy (unmotivated teaching and non- learning.”⁴⁸

“The culture of poor makes the parents and school age children fatalistic, erodes their self-confidence, lowers their self-esteem, further reduces their aspirations, and makes the school age child follow the parental footsteps of helplessness, pessimism and defeatism. Parents provide no example or stimulation to the child, and so, from early childhood whether in school or outside no one expects him/her to succeed, and so neither does the child.”⁴⁹

Distance and the catchment area: Nepal, being a rugged terrain, distance and the catchment areas of the school play an important factor for a girl child’s enrolment and the retention in schools. “Except for isolated case, virtually all children in Nepal are now within 30 minutes of a primary school.”⁵⁰ In Nepal the mode of traveling, distances traveled and expenses the individual has to incur on board and lodging are important factors for education

Distance to school is an important factor for a girl because thirty minutes of walk to a primary school (mode of traveling not referred) is also strenuous to a girl going to attend a primary school after completing her household works. As

⁴⁷ Madhu Raman Acharya, *Nepal Culture Shift ! Reinventing Culture in the Himalayan Kingdom* (Delhi, Adroit Publishers, 2002), p. 171.

⁴⁸ Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, “Poverty and Education”, in Devendra Thakur, D.N. Thakur ,ed., *Primary Education an Adult Literacy* (New Delhi, Deep And Deep Publicatytions, 1997), p. 140.

⁴⁹ Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, n.49, p. 144.

⁵⁰ *Nepal Human Develoment Report 2001*, n. 23,p. 38

cited by Clason "given the rugged terrain in Nepal, the remoteness of schools can be an important reason for low female enrolment."⁵¹

Household works: Apart from the facilities necessary for the expansion of education, another compelling factor hindering women's education are the cultural attitudes of the Nepalese society. This is due to the traditional patriarchal thinking, the house and the family responsibilities and lack of necessary infrastructures to suit the environment of the poor women. "Even if a school is within reach and functioning, children are often needed to work on the land or look after younger siblings."⁵²

In Nepal the household works being the prime responsibilities of the females, education is not considered to be the important especially for females. Girls labor is more demanded in the works related to households and providing the care facilities to the household members and also in the farm works. "Girls in the 6-9 age groups have been reported to be working 2.6 to 4.5 hours per day compared to boy's 1.7 to 2.9 hours per day."⁵³

One of the main criteria for the expansion of the non- formal education for the women is to cater those deprived and the poor women who are unable to fulfill their desire of reading and learning. Though Nepal has made far-reaching efforts for the development of the women's education but there still hangs obscurity in terms of facilitating women to get educated. "Some people think that evening time is most unsuitable for women because they work the whole day, cook and feed all the family member before she is free for literacy classes, by that time she gets tired and she wants to skip the literacy class. In addition, in the evening, women need an escort to go to literacy class, or they have to form a group of a few women to go to literacy class, that is another inconvenience."⁵⁴

Infrastructure: Teachers are the most important resources for a primary education where the teaching aids and the infrastructure are limited especially in

⁵¹ Sharuk R. Khan, n.36, p. 230.

⁵² Ommar Sattaur, *Nepal New Horizons?* (Oxfam, Oxford, 1996) p. 37.

⁵³ Meena Acharya, *The Statistical Profile on Nepalese Women: An Update in the Policy Context* (Kathmandu, Institute for Integrated Development Studies, 1994),p. 44.

⁵⁴ Siddhi B. Ranjitkar, n. 9, p. 121

rural areas. “The constraints, moreover, is the availability of trained and qualified teachers who rarely prepared to go there.”⁵⁵

A teacher plays a vital role in generating quality in the learning techniques. Female teachers are considered to be a necessary ingredient in the promotion of the girl’s education in the rural areas. “The lack of trained teachers is one of the major issues of schooling in Nepal. Trained teachers on the other hand, face a lack of opportunities for follow-up professional development programmes.”⁵⁶ But sometimes it is a practical difficult for the women teachers to travel a long distances to take classes especially in the inaccessible areas in Nepal. “Demoralized school teachers do not provide students with a high quality education.”⁵⁷

Such few trained teachers are not a problem only in Nepal. Even in Bangladesh, primary education has been given considerable emphasis and to increase the quality of the education have also increased the budgetary allocation. But the maximum utilization has not reaped from such high supply from the government. “Lack of qualified teachers is a big impediment teacher-pupil contract time in Bangladesh’s primary schools rarely exceeds ninety minutes a day, compared with international norms of around four to five hours and a national targets of two hours. The situation is aggravated by irregular teacher attendance. Surveys shows that as many as half the teachers are absent at a time, and it is not uncommon for schools to have a single teacher for more than a hundred children at different grade levels.”⁵⁸

Language in Nepal is one such issue that can bring progress or block the progress of the development in the country’s multi- ethnic and multi-lingual environment. “From the very beginning Nepal has been inhabited by diverse

⁵⁵ Gunanidhi Sharma, “Infrastructure, Service Delivery and Accessibility in Mountains and Hills of Nepal”, *Economic Journal of Development Issues*, vol. 3, no. 1, Jan-June 2000, p. 20.

⁵⁶ *Education and National Development in Asia: Trends, Issues, Policies and Strategies* (Manila, Asian Development Bank, 2001), p. 41.

⁵⁷ *Jobs, Poverty and Working Conditions in South Asia* (Washington, The World Bank, 1995), p. 14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14.

tribes with different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Because of the physical divisions of the country and the difficult nature of its terrain, these tribes have developed some degree of isolation from each other.”⁵⁹ Languages in Nepal carry the distinct flavor of each tribes and sub-tribes. Most of the tribes communicate in their own mother tongue. On the other hand schools use Nepali language as the chief medium of instruction. Many of these tribes are not well versed in Nepali language, which becomes a deterrent factor for the educating a poor girl child.

The non-availability of the books in the mother tongue also poses a hindrance to read and write for the children coming from diverse communities. With a view to bring the issue of the mother tongue as the chief medium of instruction in Nepal, Yadav opines that “the non- use of the mother tongue of the non- Nepali speaking pupil as a medium of instruction is known to be one of the conclusive contributing factors to the high rate of attrition in primary education in Nepal.”⁶⁰

Secondary Education and Tertiary Education

Secondary education “completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level, and aims at laying the foundations for life long learning an human development, by offering more subject- or- skill- oriented instruction using more specialized teachers.”⁶¹ Secondary education means “that stage of studies of any kind which follows primary or elementary education and the aims of which may include the preparing of pupils for access to higher education.”⁶²

On the other hand, tertiary education is defined as the “education, whether or not leading to an advanced research qualification normally requires, as a

⁵⁹ Rishikesh Saha, *An Introduction to Nepal* (Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2001) p. 35

⁶⁰ Ramawater Yadav, “The Use of Mother Tongue in Primary Education: The Nepalese Context”, *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 19 No 2, July 1992, p179

⁶¹ *World Development Indicators, 2000* , n. 26, p. 3.

⁶² *The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific*, (Bangkok, UNESCO Principal Regional Office For Asia And The Pacific, 1997), p.5

minimum conditions of admission, the successful completion of education at the secondary level”⁶³

The main reasons for low level of secondary education level among the poor households in Nepal are as follows:

Early marriage: The customary tendencies are sometimes very intense as a consequence, women from a poor household do not have any opportunities to develop their ability on such customary compulsion for the girls is their marriage. In Nepal parents marry their daughter off at a very early age. Girls hardly would have approached 15 years when they are married off. Early marriage may occur due to economic constraints but getting rid of the poor daughters and sisters to another household also play a significant role in the early marriage of the poor girls. Parents generally see their daughters as the members of the other household. Therefore marriage becomes an important factor for the education for the females. “Another compelling factor hindering women’s education in general is the fact that girls are transferred to their affiance households after marriage, with the result that parents have no claim on their work or income as adult women, when parents are asked in surveys why they are not sending their girl children to school, one of the often repeated answers is that “they will go to other people’s houses.”⁶⁴

Shyam Thapa in his findings as ethnicity as the determining factor for girl’s child marriage concludes, “The level of development has an independent, but relatively weak, association with the district level prevalence of girl child marriage. The result confirm that ethnicity is the principle factor in determining the district level variations in the prevalence of girl child marriage.”⁶⁵

Table 4.8 explains that there is a drop in the ratio of girls attending to secondary schools as compared to the boys. The ratio of the girls to boys receiving secondary education in 2000-01 was 0.69 compared to the primary education where the ratio was at 0.79. In Nepal “the onset of adolescence, which

⁶³ *World Development Indicators, 2002*, n. 26, p. 93.

⁶⁴ Shyam Thapa, “Girl Child Marriage in Nepal: Its Prevalence and Correlates”, *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, July 1996, p 369

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

means the period of gender seclusion, early marriage and the ideology and practice of a dependent and non- autonomous marital life severely and systematically discourages continued enrolment of girls in secondary schools.”⁶⁶ There may be other reasons like income constraints also that debar the girls enrolment in the secondary education. Because “primary education is free in Nepal, but fees are charged for secondary schooling.”⁶⁷ In tertiary education there is further drop of the girls education and the proportion of girls to boys in tertiary education is 0.25.

Economic activities: Women’s work burden in the rural Nepal is generally farm works, which carries no salary, holiday or any benefit from excess workloads. The farm work activities of the women are not defined as the

TABLE 4.8
RATIO OF GIRLS TO BOYS IN PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY
EDUCATION

Country	Ratio of Girls to Boys		
	In Primary Education 2000-01	In Secondary Education 2000-01	In Tertiary Education 2000-01
Nepal	0.79	0.69	0.25

Source: *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 204.

economic activities. In spite of the tremendous pressure in the farm work from cutting, planting to sowing and reaping activities poor women generally wake up early in the morning to work late at night completing the day’s work. In such conditions they hardly find time for education. Their farming activities get even more heightened during the farming season. “During the months of *asar* and *saun* (mid- June to mid- August) work schedule is hectic due to plantation activity, women get up soon after midnight, and prepare meal and *khaja* (snacks) before dawn. They carry the meal and *khaja* to field. The *hali* (ploughman) should be fed with rice before other workers arrive. In the field, women harvest corn,

⁶⁶ *Nepal Human Development Report, 1998*, n.27, p. 78.

⁶⁷ Omar Sattaur, n.52, p. 37.

remove corn stalks for rice plantation. They not only work all day doing plantation, they also carry corn back home finding their way home in twinkling star- light. Yet feeding the animals and the family remains waiting for them. After such long exhausting day, they have very little rest/sleep and have to wake up for early in order to begin another hectic day.”⁶⁸

Even in the dry season, when there is not enough farm work to be done poor women are occupied in the other economic activities such as collecting firewood and amassing in the households for the future use in winter, or they remain occupied by making baskets, mats ropes for household purposes. It has been observed that using better technologies to lessen their burden, the workloads of the economic activities have actually increased. Chhetri observes, “they are required to work harder to feed their cattle and buffaloes well to ensure that they produce more milk as well as to produce more and quality crops in their farms so that the family could earn some extra income regularly.”⁶⁹ Because of the heavier work loads the poor women are unable to participate in the community development activities.

Lack of immediate individual benefit: In terms of the private investment and the cost of education bore by the poor parents in Nepal, they least consider their daughters to progress further in the secondary level. For them the individual economic returns are not immediate. Poor families expect early benefits of investment in education especially for a girl child because in Nepal, “related to poverty is the demand that children especially girls carry out the household works.”⁷⁰

Inclination towards low waged occupation: Income generation among poor women is a good indicator to assess the independent decision making in the household. But low literacy rates among the females in Nepal are reflected in the nature of work participation in the economy. They are largely confined to those economic activities that require low skills. Women in Nepal are largely confined

⁶⁸ Gyanu Chhetri, “A Social and Cultural Perspective of Women and Community Forestry in Nepal”, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, January 2001, p. 59.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁰ Sharukh Khan, n.36, p.224.

to the rudimentary and the traditional activities like sewing, cutting, stitching, knitting which are low market accessibility. Low literacy rate has largely hampered the development of the poor women. Regmi opines that Nepalese women exhibit “low management ability and less changelessness and stability in their personality.”⁷¹ Such stableness and changelessness generates low awareness of the economic status among the poor women.

Education is a powerful mechanism to determine the status of the individual in a job market. Because educated individuals do bear a competitive gain in the labor market than the uneducated ones. One of the main reasons for literacy gap is the sex discrimination. Sex discrimination in Nepal is ingrained in the socio- cultural practices, in the political and the economic participation in the market which prevents the women to develop their latent talents by which a large number of the potential work force are left behind. Berta Estene-Volart, presents a theoretical and empirical model using schooling differentials between male and the female for relating sex discrimination and the economic consequences in a country. The male and the female schooling ratios predicts that the increase in the ratio have a negative impact on the growth rates of the economy. “It is very difficult to measure sex discrimination. However, as we have seen, discriminating economies will tend to have larger education differentials between men and women, although this is not necessarily true for countries where wages are relatively high. In general, more discrimination against women will tend to be reflected in larger education differentials between women and men, hence, the model predicts that for **weakly** discriminating economies there is a positive correlation between the ratio of female to male education and growth, while for **strongly** discriminating economies this correlation is negative. In particular, the model predicts a U-shaped relationship between female-to-male primary education ratios and growth.”⁷²

⁷¹ Murari P. Regmi, “Investigating in Nepalese Female Personality”, *Contributoin to Nepalese Studies*, Vol 23, No 2, July, 1996, p.446. To assess the personality and the behavior of the Nepalese women, Regmi has used the uchhida- krarpelin standardized psycho diagonistic list which is a combination of movement, variation and concentration in equal proportion.

⁷² Berta Estene-Volart, “Sex Discrimination and Growth”, *IMF Working Paper*, WP/0084, April, 2000, p. 19.

Poor Women Poor Education: Impact

With half of the population illiterate, the economic status of the women is also reflected in their participation in professional and the administrative jobs. Table 4.9 explains that the regions, which have higher number of literacy rates among the women, have high percentage of working females both in the professional jobs and the administrative jobs. But the overall picture of the women participation of the females in the economy is grim. "The low level of work force participation rates of women in the countries of South Asia must be seen in conjunction with the high levels of fertility that characterized these countries. The burden of child bearing and child – rearing that they impose on women limits their ability to under take the additional burden of participation in economic activity."⁷³

TABLE 4.9
FEMALE LITERACY, WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL JOBS AND ADMINISTRATIVE
JOBS IN NEPAL (%)

Regions	Adult female Literacy Rate	Women in professional jobs	Women in administrative jobs
Eastern Mountain	34.9	28.01	3.19
Eastern Hill	43.6	13.31	5.3
Eastern Tarai	41	15.23	9.28
Central Mountain	34.9	21.69	6.87
Central Hills	44.8	28.38	16.1
Central Tarai	22.1	18.27	9.59
Western Mountain	34.9	16.67	8.2
Western Hill	41.8	21.64	14.28
Western Tarai	36.3	20.2	9.7
Mid- Western Mountain	14.9	4.28	4.93
Mid- Western Hill	31.9	8.46	8.65
Mid- Western Tarai	34.1	19.58	7.35
Far-Western Mountain	14.9	16.67	3.64
Far-Western Hill	16.4	9.4	3.33
Far-Western Tarai	31.3	28.71	5.26

Source: *Nepal Human Development Report 2001* (Kathmandu, United Nations Development Programme, 2001), p . 133.

⁷³ T. Anant, K. Sundaram. S.Tendulkar, *Employment and Labor in South Asia* (New Delhi, South Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team, International Labor Organization, 1999), p. 29.

It is true in case of Nepal that the discriminatory attitude of the patriarchal society poses to be hindrances for the accessibility of education among the poor women and earning opportunities outside the household become limited. Female are concentrated in those industries which required low aptitude skill or industries where fixed capital is lowest such as textiles which caters to the domestic markets only. The concentration of low skilled women in textile industry may be because of the textile industry in Nepal caters to the domestic market. "The Nepalese textile industry has no connection with the ready-made garment industry. The former is totally for domestic market finished product consumers (and probably a fraction to bordering Indian markets) whereas the latter is totally for the export market (predominantly U.S.A)."⁷⁴ Women are also concentrated as the semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the consumer industries as food, drinks, tobacco, packing industry.

Agriculture, the area where the women are mostly concentrated also faces marginalizing of women due to their low skill to adjust with the new technologies. Their knowledge in the agriculture remains rudimentary as a result of which subsistence type of agriculture is prevalent in Nepal. It is observed that women are progressively becoming feminized in agriculture in Nepal. Much is true, as it is observed that male migration is more from the rural areas and large part of the agricultural jobs are carried out by the poor women. "Once a young man and a woman gets the high school education in a rural village, she or he is an educated person. The next logical step is to leave the village for a urban area or the capital city to look for jobs because there is no labor dignity for educated people to work in the paddy fields. Working on physical labor is considered a job of the non- educated people. This has not only to do with work ethics but with education system as a whole."⁷⁵

The income from agriculture is still very low and poor women reap less from agriculture even after toiling hard. Because of the low returns from the

⁷⁴ Kishore K. Guru- Ghahana and Nav Raj Dahal, *Industrial Relations System in Nepal* (Nepal, Nepal Foundation For Advanced Studies, 1996), p. 28.

⁷⁵ Madhu Raman Acharya , *Nepal Culture Shift ! Reinventing Culture in the Himalayan Kingdom* (Delhi, Adroit Publishers, 2002),p. 171.

agriculture many women are diverted towards earning in those industries, which requires low skill. "Many of the workers in these industries belong to the hill areas near Katmandu who have migrated in search of off-farm employment. They work in these industries for very low wages, for long hours and under extremely difficult and unhealthy working conditions."⁷⁶

Role of Funding Agencies in Women's Education

External funding agencies play important role in the expansion of education in Nepal. It has given a boost to expand and perpetuate the existing formal and basic education systems including the traditional patterns. The Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) in Nepal is funded by the World Bank. It was started in the year 1992 especially emphasizing the development of education according to the needs and the requirements of the girl child both at the local level by identifying the root problems faced by a girl child from poor households in Nepal. "The major emphasis of the BPEP is on raising community awareness and on the encouragement of community involvement."⁷⁷ The programme also emphasized on the scholarships for the girls at the primary, secondary and the intermediate level, recruitment of the female teachers, propagation through the media and emphasized on the community awareness programmes.

The ILO- IPEC/ declaration Project, which supports the elimination of bonded labor has six action programmes and has recently approved \$486,042 towards education of the backward society through education of the NGOs like the Backward Society for Education (BASE), Boat for Community Development (BCD), Creation of Creative Society (CCS), Group or International Solidarity (GRINSO), Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) and Shree Tarun Club (STC). "The fund is expected to benefit nearly 12, 000 ex-kamaiya children for mainstream in the national education system and also to provide support to out-

⁷⁶ Kishore K. Guru- Ghanana, 74, p.21.

⁷⁷ *Women in Nepal*, n.18.p. 58

of-school programme, Non- Formal Education (NFE) and pre-vocational education and training to about 5, 000 freed, adult kamaiyas.”⁷⁸

On the projects funded by the Asian Development Bank for the development of the girl’s education, Meena Acharya opines,

“Continuation of revision to books and reading materials, recruitment of female teachers, and the wider provision of scholarship programs for girls;

Integration of gender as a specific subject in all primary/ secondary school teachers’ training;

Specific efforts to cater to girls in the 10-17 age groups, for example by splitting school hours into two, four-hour shifts, allocating more resources for girls’ hostels, providing more scholarships to girls, recruiting and training more female teachers, and providing day- care centers attached to schools

Giving special attention to gender issues in physical structures and buildings funded by ADB, e.g. convenient toilets, special reading and common rooms for girls in selected areas where strict purdha is practiced, etc”.⁷⁹

HMG/N introduced a policy to involve NGOs in non-formal education program implementation. Recognizing the girl’s requirement in the literacy, the *cheli-beti* programme was launched to direct at the school age girls who are not able to go to school. It was an Education for Rural Development project launched in 1981 in four districts of *Seti* zone. “The *chelibeti* programme is a program of the ministry of Education. It is directed at school- age girls who are not in school with objectives of preparing them for school entrance at appropriate levels. It is very well received by the rural population.”⁸⁰

The poor country like Nepal, looks forward to the developed countries for leadership and guidance. Educational institute, educational facilities and infrastructure are based on the ideology of developed nation, which are also the prime funding agencies. In spite of the proliferation of the multilateral agencies

⁷⁸ “ILO Approves Fund to Support Freed Kamaiyas”, *Kathmandu Post*, 2/11/2002 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 8, no.4, November 1 to 30, 2002, p.40.

⁷⁹ *Women in Nepal*, n. 18, p. 101

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

and the commitments made by the local government and the numerous NGOs, education has not infiltrated to the deepest roots of the society especially to the indigenous people. Such is the case with the *Pahari*, an ethnic minority group living in the Sindhuli district. It has been reported that they “are on the brink of extinction due to lack of education.”⁸¹

Another similar case is observed among the *Rautes* who are the only surviving hunter tribe in the country. They have become endangered due to the lack of education and the lack of awareness programme in the community. “Not a single member of this tribe, which is on the brink of extinction due to the lack of proper protection measures, has received primary or pre- primary education.”⁸² Of late some children have started going to school simply because they see other children doing so.

It is indeed important to quote that a large number of multinational agencies and the non-governmental organizations have played a great role in the development of education among women. But what may be interesting is sometimes among the poor household in Nepal, “retention of literacy is important but its interpretation may be different For e.g., some people interpreted the retention of literacy as follows: a women may not be able to read and write after sometimes of her graduation from an adult literacy course but, if her daughter is in school and if she has a kitchen garden and a good sanitation, then it is the retention of literacy for her.”⁸³ Hence in Nepal those agencies, which have trained to impart education, based in a specific model and education preparing for a certain kind of work may find them more difficult to fulfill their purpose of imparting a meaningful education.

⁸¹ “Pahari in the Brink of Extinction”. *Kathmandu Post*, 4/7/2002 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 7, no. 12, July 1 to 31, 2002, p. 39.

⁸² “Raute: An Endangered Tribe”, *Kathmandu Post*, 6/7/2002 in *South Asia Green File*, vol. 7, no. 12, July 1 to 31, 2002, p. 39.

⁸³ Siddhi B. Ranjitkar, n.54, p. 120.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Does “gender” symbolise the biological identities? Does it solve the masculinity and the femininity behaviour in the society? The answer resides in every ones heart-that its performance in the society is widely acclaimed by the societal norms which have emerged from traditional ethos to the present form, where the functioning differs between cultures.

Gender issue is an important aspect that prevails in our daily life. Its relevance in the subject of poverty makes us understand the relative differences between men and women. These few but, significant differences underline the issues of gender gap, inequalities and discriminations. Moreover, it facilitates us to understand the circumstances through which such differences are created and widely misunderstood.

It is a widely accepted phenomenon that poor women are less educated and have low level of participation in the economy. They are also placed in a subordinate position in a household. Though the Marxist feminists have identified capitalism as the primary cause of women’s subordination, radical feminists points out at the patriarchy to be the prime cause for women’s subordination in both private and social relationships. Such views lead one to understand that human race comprises of two categories- male and female. It tends to build up separate and dualistic ideologies on the basis of sex category rather than gender. By focusing on gender we hope to integrate the gender category and the constraints of being femininity and masculinity in every spheres of social divisions and inequalities.

Relative poverty can be significantly used when we do a comparative study within gender. It will be much of a positive advantage to compare based on some notion of circumstances within gender. Such comparative analysis can be fruitful to give an insight into the living standards or possession of basic necessities, provision of amenities by the states, market accessibility, social participation etc.

Gender reflects the distribution and division of the meager and the limited resources among the members of the poor households. Gender reflects the differences in voicelessness, powerlessness and vulnerabilities that affect the different members in poor households. These are the factors that often affect the women members more than the males.

Gender is a social construct and so is the gendering process. The gendering processes and the created gender specific domains are created by cultures. Women generally attend to the domestic chores everyday, take care of the household members and attend to their needs. Their multiplicity of the work activities sometimes overlap and it become tough to differentiate the economic work activities outside and inside the household.

There arises certain ambiguity when we refer the term domestic work activities of women. Since such works have a dualistic meaning and may refer to maintain the home or to the works that are paid for the domestic help. Similarly the reproductive work, a woman performs, have dualistic meaning as it may refer to giving birth, and at the same time may mean maintaining the social interactions.

Among the poor women physical labour is the only assets that they can afford to spend to earn, is it a universal truth? Unfortunately, but such labourous work activities vary with time and intensity of work levels. The irony of the situation is that – women are hapless and the cheapest labour available at the country side, which are being exploited now and then, whenever the opportunity looms large.

Prolonged working hours with no extra-curricular activities and basic amenities deprive women folk, their off-springs any further growth which degrades the complete human resource and the country at large. It has been widely observed that the poorer the country the more hours the women tend to work. For the poor women in developing countries poverty is very much a women issue at least in the part because of dualistic roles that women have to perform both inside and the outside the households.

Needs are the sum outcome of two crucial factors- social and cultural, however they differ in the intensity and bridge between two genders. Unfortunately, the fact remains not only to the dietary habit but, to the prevailing social and cultural ethos and customs which have engraved its roots in our way of life thereby, becoming a form of cancer, eating us from very inside of our civilization.

The most important aspect of the deprived group “woman”, - is not that she is vulnerable to the society, but she is the one who is haunted and unfortunately, we forget the fact that she is the “Creator” – who never takes the credit – but always had and has sacrificed her tomorrow for her today.

If we say today, that the women is the – Flag bearer of our tomorrow, than why are we keeping our tomorrow malnourished- are we looking and waiting eagerly for a malnourished, misunderstood, and a society full of prejudice or we shall look for a “society which provides equality, prosperity and a sense of pride among the fellow citizen which will takes to a new horizon”.

The next major factor, which is making our society hollow within itself is –The malnutrition since time immemorial. It has been witnessed that the weaker gender, “women” has always been bearing the brunt since Post Vedic Era and the World over since the colonialisaton period. The brunt of poor health is not only in the form of social boycott but also economically, which tends to break the very back bone of the widely appreciated group.

The pain goes beyond the horizon when the issue comes about the female foeticide, inspite of the civilization approaching the 22nd century society. The big question comes that - are we the same individual that we call ourselves a part of progressive society. Do we still have to see babies being born with HIV positive cases. Do our inner self permits us to venture into such nefarious act?

The answer lies in the proper education starting from the basic elementary education to the highest level – to which the girl child would like to pursue. Unfortunately we are living in a society which call itself a scientifically progressive one, however it discourages education based on gender bias.

Though the women of yesteryears and present are struggling for their survival not only for their self, however but for saving the degrading natural/geographical environment, they are giving their today for our tomorrow.

We have seen the whole gamut of women empowerment, however the most important fact that always will remain within us is that “can the women do some thing for our society? I would say- Yes, lets give it a hand and make ourselves a nation which will serve as a light house to the rest?”

Poverty is a fertile ground for breeding gender discriminations. In a poor household the gendered biasness towards girls are manifested in the work performances, allocation and distribution of resources, investing of financial assets in building capabilities etc. When we analyse the position of the deprived and poor women in Nepal, the picture that appears to us is still grim and bleak with more than half of the women population entrapped in poverty trap.

Nepal has entered the millennium century with women who are discriminated in every aspects of life. The patriarchal society still subordinates and oppresses the women, though the relative status of the women may differ culturally. Such contrasted difference of status among women can be witnessed among the Tibeto- Nepalese communities and those from tarai. The former group enjoys more autonomy in decision making than the latter. But Nepal being a Hindu country, patriarchy has strong root and is largely responsible for the nurturing of poverty among the women.

Historically, women’s discrimination is as old as the social laws. But such instances of discrimination can be traced back to the 14th century A.D. when the code of human justice *Manab Nyaya Shastra* was promulgated by King *Jayasthiti Malla*. As defined in the code, women’s status was related to father, husbands or any other male members. Inter caste marriage was prohibited and if such evens took place, they were heavily penalized with severe punishments. Women had to perform sati or the act of self immolation when their husband died.

The next important law that heavily discriminated women was *Muluk-i-ain* that was a codification of all Hindu laws of land, civil, matrimonial, criminal, religious and customary. It was framed under the premiership of Jang Bahadur Rana. *Muluk-i-ain* relegated women to inferior position. Moreover a child's identity was not associated with mother. In the year 1963, the new *Muluki ain* replaced the old. But it did little to do against the discrimination of women. The new laws permitted husbands to marry if women were infertile, suffers from permanent disability, loses her speech, eyesight, It excludes daughters from sharing property rights. It also excludes daughters and wives form any form of maintenance.

Later, an amendment to this law recognized the right of parental property for unmarried daughters of 35 years. But the same could be forfeited if marriage of daughters take place. Married women are entitled to property right if they have completed 15 years then only they can have a share in the husbands property. Extra-marital affairs also terminate the right to husband's property. The statutory law during 1951 did not show any interest in accepting equality of status to women. Child marriages and violence against women took place. Even the interim constitution of Nepal, 1951 could not make any progress in giving property right for women. Though the constitution of Nepal 1962 granted right to equality before law, it did not provide for any judicial review for any inconsistence legislation. Even the new constitution of 1990 perpetuates the discrimination of women by not recognizing the women right to transfer the nationality to their children.

Patriarchy has relegated women to a subordinate position. The relatively lower position of the women in the Nepalese society confine women to their traditional roles of taking care of the family members, looking after all the members of the households and also is largely responsible for doing farm works . For a poor Nepali woman a day is very busy. Even during off farm works they are busy with other works which can be both productive and non-productive that can contribute towards increasing asset like making ropes, mats, butter, collecting and stocking firewoods for future etc.

Patriarchy in Nepal is manifested in the strong preference for son. Since sons are regarded as the prime income earner. Religious practices also requires the presence of sons. Salvation from death is one such religious practice for strong preference of son. Contrastingly daughters are unimportant in such society and they are brought up as other's property, to be submissive and sacrifice for the betterment of the male members. Such biasness is observed in preference of education to the male members while the girl children are left behind to look after the siblings and share the works burdens of the mothers.

It is not always that women are subordinated and suppressed, in some cases especially in the Tibeto-Mongoloid communities, the eldest surviving female member in a household is a female they are considered to play a major role in the distribution of land resources among the children, budgetary decisions and in the decision making processes. But along with such important roles, their traditional roles of being the care giver and the nurturer in a household is not forgotten. Their traditional roles are still confined to looking after the household members, livestock, fetching water, etc.

The institution of patriarchy influences the life of poor Nepalese women throughout their lifecycle. Sex discrimination at birth may yet not be a very prominent issue because much of the reason are due to the inaccessibility to the health posts and also the births through the 'traditional methods' are unaccounted. Among the low caste *Raute* in the Tarai region, "they are satisfied even if it is a daughter, as sex of the child does not make much of a difference to them, since they accept this infant as a gift from the Lord."¹

But gender bias begins at a very early age for girls. Girls are meant to carry out the household burdens. Gender segregation are manifested in the food allocation, nature of work activities with specific gendered domains of work activities. Deprivation of resources have relegated women to occupy an inferior position and are held unimportant in the society.

¹ Rajesh Gautam and Asoke Thapa Magar, *Tribal Ethnography of Nepal- Vol. -II*, (Delhi, Book Faith India, 1994)p. 207.

Low status of the women have largely contributed towards the low literacy rates among the women and further even have deprived them from the active participation in the economy. Women, due to their low capability and skillness are largely concentrated in the low waged workforces and in the agriculture.

Health is as important capability that determines the poverty of the women and indeed it contributes largely towards assessment of poor women in poverty trap. For poor women, health is associated with the bodily well-being which means that they are capable of bearing a children. But in reality, poor women are more sick. Poor and the deprived women are denied basic health care facilities. The prevalence of poverty among women and economic dependence, violence and other forms of discrimination, the limited right over their reproductive lives and lack of influence in decision- making are few realities that bear and have adverse affect on their health.

It has been observed that lack of nutritious food, inadequate access to safe water, sanitation facilities and fuel supplies, particularly in rural and poor urban areas, the poor housing conditions have an overall negative effect on their health. Because these aspects are mostly associated with the everyday work performances of poor women. The huge work burdens of poor women deprives them of their rights to accessibility to basic health amenities.

The poor women are deprived of simple care and attendance of the health care system. Due to the income constraints, the poor women are less access to health care, and the services they do have are low in quality. Hence they are less likely to recover completely from illness, and die earlier. But on the other hand, they fall deeper into poverty due to the loss of working time and their inability to cope up with the health strains.

The health of poor women in Nepal are affected by income constraints, inaccessibility to the health care centers, inadequate health infrastructures and largely due to the ignorance of the health problems. Hence, it has been observed that the poor women from the inaccessible areas of the mountains rely much on the traditional practices with less chances of perfect cure. Such practices

aggravate the women diseases related to reproduction. "the prolapsed uterus affects the poorest of the poor women in areas where health facilities are scanty, and it is a problem that women do not talk about."²

Poor women's health has also been aggravated by the environmental degradations. Fetching drinking water is an example of a simple but tremendous work loads that aggravates the health problem of the poor women in Nepal. Poor women are forced to collect water from far receding sources of spring water, in areas where there is no provision of the drinking water supply. They often spend more time and energy in such process. Inadequate access to safe drinking water and unhygienic practices causes dysentery, diarrhoea, worm infection, skin diseases and other water borne diseases.

The cumulative factors of patriarchy, prolonged work burdens of work loads for the poor women, low status and voicelessness have deprived the poor women of education. Though Nepal gives free education at the primary level, there exist gender gap in education. Though the gains in education is raising modestly in Nepal, but they are hardly perceivable. Constraints of resources and cultural factors are the prime reasons that make a girl's education unimportant.

Geographical inaccessibility is another prime factor for the school attending girls. As the location of the schools are far from their homes, poor parents do not see the resourceful contribution of the education for future. To the poor distant location of schools are wastage of time and energy which could be fruitfully used in attending the domestic chores.

Moreover poor parents do not prefer education to be an important asset for the daughters because, they do not reap the benefit immediately and also the individual returns from girls are very low. Further, education was less priority for the parents feel that their daughters are other's property..

The poor education among the poor Nepalese women is also much historically associated. Education did not figure as an important agenda during the pre democratic era where education was considered as a elitist achievement.

² Bijaya Subba, Devendra Adhikari and Teeka Bhattarai, "The Neglected Case of the Fallen Womb", *Himal*, vol, 26, no. 4, April 2003, p. 22.

Even during the democracy the fear of conflict between the polity and the educated mass movement have deprived the government to take a strong stand for the development of the education among the poor girls and deprived women

Nepal will be entering the next millennium with half of the illiterate population. Although Nepal's literacy rates of 43 % (Human Development Report of 2003) is much higher than what was in half century back, the present trend indicates that Nepal will usher into the next millennium with more illiterate women as the development of women in Nepal is a daunting challenge. There is severe gender gap in the era of the information, knowledge and communication.

Access to basic amenities such as the drinking water and adequate sanitation have not reached to serve the rural population especially in the distant mountains where poverty resides to its greatest. Although government have provided for the reachable source of drinking water, the quality of the drinking water is doubtful even in important urban areas like Kathmandu. A very high disease burden among the poor Nepalese women is due to the unsafe drinking water.

Education and health sectors do not only face the inefficiency in services, in a resource strain country , but ineffective utilization of the available resources is the greatest challenge. Sometimes inappropriate populist policies make an unnecessary dent in the financially crunched situations.

The participatory approach has been the best way for the development of the poor women especially in the remote areas where the poverty has many faces. In fact the 'invisible development' in Nepal is largely due to the contribution made by the funding agencies and non-government organizations. The initial spurt of the education until the establishment of the New Education System Plan in 1971 was largely due to the initiatives of the Non-Governmental Organisations.

Import of the western concept and its implantation for the positive development of the poor Nepalese women cannot be successful. An important reason to point is the given the large –diversified nature of the ethno-cultures of

the society. Caste wise and class wise poor women have different issues. A poor Brahmin woman differ from a poor Sherpa woman. Geographically isolated rural women have different identical environments than the urban of the Kathmandu area.

Gender analysis for the poor women in Nepal cannot be perceived in generic terms. Even the movements carried out by the different women's group lack a common ideological platform from where they can share and resolve the needs of the poor women.

A small contribution by men can bring large changes in the life of poor women. Though education is a vital ingredient, is necessary to bring the scattered consciousness to demand for the deprived rights and the numerous gender issues afflicting the poor women in Nepal. Therefore, reconceptualisation of woman as a Nepali woman with a common historical and social background must be created and understood to raise a united voice of progress.

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