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**Power, Knowledge and Pedagogy: An Analysis of the
Educational Exclusion of Dalits in Nepal**

By

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Kent at Canterbury for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

Power, Knowledge and Pedagogy: An Analysis of the Educational Exclusion of Dalits in Nepal

This thesis examines the educational exclusion of Dalits in Nepal. It analyses the extent to which the hierarchical caste system and educational policies and practices create exclusionary pressures upon Dalits. This analysis is based on the data obtained from literature and documents, autobiographical exploration and the ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Basipur village and Gauripur School in a Tarai District of Nepal.

This thesis is an attempt to listen to Dalit voices and experiences about educational exclusion as a part of the process of including the excluded. This representation of Dalit agency is richly contextualised within the changing political, cultural and socio-economic context of Nepal. The thesis seeks to challenge and contest the pathological stereotypes of Dalits. It contributes to the literature concerned with understanding culturally specific issues of educational inclusion and exclusion in Nepal.

This thesis analyses how schooling in Nepal has reproduced structural inequality and discrimination. Such exclusionary practices have been exacerbated by ambivalent policy texts. Indeed, the increased support for private schooling has maintained Dalits' exclusion from education and society. On the other hand, public schooling has also played a significant role in challenging the hierarchical caste structure and discriminatory discourses within society. Through developing a 'schooled identity', Dalit children build relationships with non-Dalit children. Such relationships have the potential to challenge and contest discriminatory ideologies for both Dalit and non-Dalit children.

This thesis suggests that developing inclusion involves a process of understanding and changing exclusionary and discriminatory power relations. This process of change involves a continuous political and social struggle.

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Abbreviations

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
ARNEC:	All Round National Education Committee
ASIP:	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
BPEP:	Basic and Primary Education Project/Programme
BS:	Bikram Sambat
CBS:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CERID:	Research Centre for Educational Innovations and Development
DANIDA:	Danish International Development Agency
DEO:	District Education Office
DEP:	District Education Plan
DfID:	Department of International Development
DNF:	Dalit NGO Federation
DOE:	Department of Education
EFA:	Education for All
FINNIDA:	Finish International Development Agency
f/n:	Field note
GO:	Governmental Organisation
HLNEC:	High Level National Education Commission
HMG:	His Majesty's Government
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INSEC:	Informal Sector Service Centre
JAICA:	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MOE:	Ministry of Education
MOES:	Ministry of Education and Sports
NDC:	National Dalit Commission

NEC:	National Education Commission
NESP:	National Education System Plan
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNEPC:	Nepal National Education Planning Commission
NORAD:	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPC:	National Planning Commission
NRSKS:	Nepal Rishikul Sadaya Kalyan Samaj
PEP:	Primary Education Project
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
r/d:	Research Diary
RP:	Resource Person
RRN:	Rural Reconstruction Nepal
SAP:	Structural Adjustment Programme
SIP:	School Improvement Plan
SLC:	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Managing Committee
TRSE:	Technical Review of School Education
UN:	United Nation
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE:	Universal Primary Education
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
VDC:	Village Development Committee
WB:	World Bank
WCAR:	World Conference Against Racism
WFP:	World Food Programme

Words from Nepali and Sanskrit Language

asprisyā: untouchable, low status people

asram: hermitage, four stage of life according to Hindu scriptures

bheti: offering, *dacchina*

brahma: according to Hindu mythology the creator or the first man, one of the three main god who creates the world and living things

brahmanic Hinduism: Hinduism that follows *brahmanic* ideology

brahmanic: ideology of hierarchical *varna* with the supremacy of Brahman and Kshatriya, ideology based on Manusmriti and *varnasram* system

dachhina: offering of some money and materials, *bheti*

dalan: inner courtyard

dasa: non-Aryan people from ancient Indus valley

dharma: piety, divine order, law and morality, rituals and social norms

guna: attribute

haliya: plough man, a bonded labour

jat/jati: caste

kamaiya: a bonded labour

karma: action, duty

karmakanda: ritual process

moksha: salvation, self-liberation, free from re-birth

mukhiya: local representative of traditional government, local community leader

niravasita: excluded, low status people

pandit/purohit: person who performs ritual activities/interprets Hindu mythological texts (generally Brahmin), a scholar

puja: pray, offering

pujari: priest

purusa: according to Hindu mythology the creator or the first man, *brahma*

rajas: passion

rajya: state, kingdom

rishi: ancient saint at the time of pre-Vedic and Vedic Hindu society

rishikul: descendants of rishi

sanskara: sacraments according to Hindu mythology,

saraswati: Hindu Goddess of education

sastra: knowledge, scripture, *vedic-brahmanic* doctrine

sattava: virtue, good attribute, calmness

sukumbasi: landless/poor/homeless people

tama: darkness, ignorance

tan, timi, tapai, hajur: second pronounces in hierarchical order from lower to upper

thar: surname, lineage

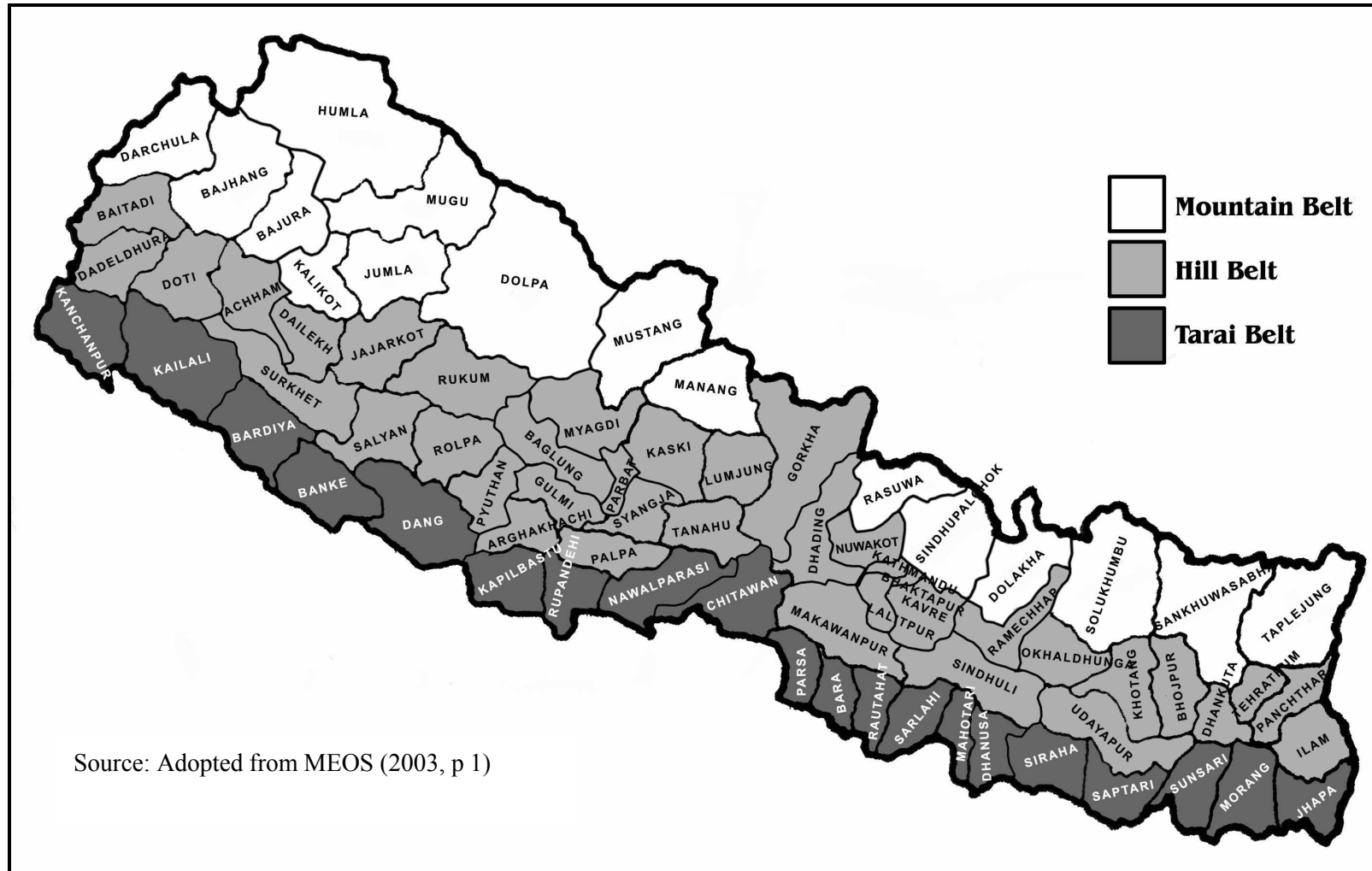
upanayana: initiation rite, ceremony to wear a sacred thread

varna: colour, hierarchical division of society into four strata

varnasamker: birth with mixed race, *varna* or caste

varnasram: a social system and duty fixed according to *varna*

Figure 1: A Map of Nepal with the Administrative Districts Division



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

Public schooling in Nepal, which mostly began after 1951, brought massive changes to educational participation. Before 1951, there were few schools and a large section of society, including Dalits¹, had no access to schooling. There was, in fact, a general prohibition for Dalits to participate in education. After the political change of 1951, both the number of schools and school enrolment increased rapidly. There was no formal prohibition for Dalits to participate in education, but due to the hierarchical caste system and the practice of untouchability, Dalits hardly participated. Besides, economically very poor people and the people speaking other languages than Nepali had difficulty in participating in education. As a result, prohibited educational provision changed only into a highly selective form.

In Nepalese society, Dalits still suffer from several discriminatory and exclusionary practices (see Dahal et al., 2003; Bhattachan et al., 2002; Kisan, 2002; Bishwakarma, 2003; NDC, 2060BS; Poudel, 2003). The legal requirement for non-discrimination has not been able to combat discrimination and exclusion of Dalits from education and society. As a result, despite the apparent availability of schools, many children from Dalit communities are still out from even primary school. The overall statistics of schooling and literacy of Dalits does not support the claim of inclusion of Dalits in education; although the government and donor agencies claim they are working for the inclusion of Dalits in education (see NPC, 2002).

After two and half decades of the government's announcement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and one and half decades of the commitment to Education For All (EFA), a large section of society, including Dalits, ethnic minorities and poor people, is

¹ Although the use of the term 'Dalit' is multiple and contested, in this thesis it is used for two interrelated meanings. First, the Dalits are a certain group of people who have been discriminated and excluded in society based on certain caste category. Second, Dalit is an identity that rejects casteism and symbolises the struggles for non-discrimination and inclusion (see chapter 5 for the further discussion).

still deprived of educational access, success and benefits. The data show that participation, retention and success in education of Dalits and economically weak people are still very low (see MOES, 2003; CERID, 1997; Poudel, 1998, 2002, 2003; TEAM Consultant, 2001; NPC, 2002; TRSE, 2006).

Low rates of literacy and school enrolment, high rates of dropout in the early years of schooling and a large number of unschooled children from the Dalit community show the continued exclusion of Dalits from education. The high dropout rates of Dalits in early years of schooling indicate that among school-enrolled Dalit children, the majority leave school within the first three years of their schooling. In the case of Madhesi Dalits, literacy rates and school enrolment rates are even lower than the Dalits from the hills (see Jha, 2003; Poudel, 2003). Similarly, early dropout rates of children from the Madhesi Dalit community are very high, and many children from the community are still out of school.

It should be noted that my fieldwork was carried out during a time of significant political upheaval. In the name of a People's War, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched an armed rebellion in Nepal from 1996 to 2006 with the aim of removing the Monarchy and establishing the 'People's Republic of Nepal' (see interview with Prachanda in Thapa ed., 2003). The immediate goal of the Maoist rebellion was to "capture power in the name of establishing 'new democracy'" (Muni, 2003, p 24). As a response to this Maoist rebellion, the king started to impose authoritarian measures in 2002, and he declared his direct rule in 2005. Because of the king's provocative stance, the Maoists and the army increased their fighting. This led in turn to an increase in killings, abductions, disappearances, bombings, road blockades and business and school closures.

In 2006, an Alliance between the Parliamentary Parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was agreed. The Alliance organised popular mass demonstrations in Nepal. The mass demonstrations forced the king to step-down from his authoritarian ambition. The Maoists are now participating in the new government and a new political situation has emerged².

² There is estimation that more than 13,200 people have been killed during the ten-year long insurgency (killing by the government is more than 8,300 and by the Maoist more than 4,900) and thousands of people were internally displaced by this conflict (see INSEC: www.inseconline.org). After the peace agreement, Maoists stopped the armed

This political upheaval fortunately did not affect my fieldwork too much since it was in a rural village where no armed battle was seen. However, the impact of the political situation in my research was unavoidable in two ways. First, the political situation has affected people's daily life and their aspirations and understanding. Second, the issue of exclusion and inclusion of Dalits has become a political agenda.

This research concentrated on the issue of educational exclusion of Madhesi Dalits. Its aim was to examine Dalits' inclusion in and exclusion from education by analysing school and social practices in relation to wider societal discourse and power relations. To analyse school and social practices and discourses, I conducted this research at Basipur village and Gauripur School. This research uncovers local (Dalits') struggles and discourses in relation to the historical exclusion and present societal structures and power relations. It challenges some of the prevailing discourses that construct Dalits' deficiency and vulnerability, and thereby explores some alternative discourses about Dalits' inclusion in and exclusion from education. In doing so, it discloses Dalits' resistance against exclusion and discrimination, and it includes their voices and struggles for inclusion and non-discrimination. Similarly, it challenges the government's claim of inclusive policy and practice to the Dalits in education by illustrating counter examples.

1.2 Research Questions

From my childhood, I was curious to question various discriminations, like the hierarchical caste system and the practice of untouchability in society (Chapter 4). When I read one of the most popular Nepalese short epics *Muna Madan* of Laxmi Prasad Devkota, I was influenced by its one line which says, '*Manisa thulo dilale hunchha jatale hudaina*' (a great person can be great by her/his work/idea but not by the caste position). It encouraged me to think about how the hierarchies have been created and practiced in society. However, two important questions were left unanswered. First, 'how was the hierarchical caste system began and subsequently extended?', and second, 'how can we eliminate such hierarchies and discriminations based on caste?' I set my research questions around these two issues in relation to the educational exclusion of

war in November 2006 and took part in the interim parliament and interim government with other political parties. The new constitution will be decided by a forthcoming constitutional assembly.

Dalits. Moreover, my autobiographical exploration (Chapter 4) further explains how I came to my research questions.

This research focused on the main research question: How are the Dalit children excluded from education in Nepal? To respond to the main research question, I extended my questions to the following four:

- What is the extent of exclusion of Dalit children from education?
- How is the exclusion of Dalit children to be explained?
- What are the barriers to participation in education for the Dalit community?
- What should be the response to the exclusion of the Dalit community from education?

1.3 Methodologies, Methods and Research Process

The research began with my autobiographical exploration (Chapter 4). This autobiographical exploration reflected my understanding on the one hand, and confusions and contradictions about the hierarchical and discriminatory practices in society, on the other. It also provided a background for the analysis of the Dalits' inclusion in and exclusion from education and society. Then, based on literature and documents, I examined the historical exclusion of Dalits from education and society (Chapter 5). To examine the exclusion and inclusion of Dalits (Chapters 7, 8 and 9), interviews, conversations and participant observations were concentrated on Basipur village and Gauripur School. Documents were also collected from governmental and non-governmental organisations, Gauripur School, newspapers and magazines.

Although I used three sets of data from three different sources, literature and documents, autobiography and ethnographic fieldwork simultaneously, my focus was on the voice of the Dalit people from Basipur village. I uncovered their views, perceptions and perspectives by analysing historical and present practices. In this way, I used a genealogical approach (Foucault, 1980, 1979, 1994) along with structure-agency integration (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990, 1977; Habermas, 1989, 1978; Mills, 1959; Ritzer, 1996) for the research. My methodological considerations allowed me to acknowledge multiple voices and perspectives. However, beyond the dominant discourse of society, my aim was to uncover some alternatives or the disguised voices

of the Dalits. In this way, methodologically, instead of claiming a universal truth or a neutral knowledge, my research reveals situated knowledge co-constructed by research participants with me (the researcher) in relation to the social and historical power relations. I contextualised the research methods and processes by maintaining reflexivity during the research process.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

This thesis is significant mainly in three ways. First, it is a new area of knowledge, as there is a lack of literature and research on the issue of the education of Madhesi Dalits. Some literature related to general issue of Nepalese Dalits has provided a context as well as a clue to the structure of discriminatory discourses and practices in society and education. However, such general literature does not specifically cover the issue of educational exclusion and inclusion of Madhesi Dalits, on which this thesis is concentrated.

Generally, literatures either try to show Dalits' incapability or deficiency by overlooking their strengths and skills (Sangraula, 2002), or present the cases of exclusion based on statistics or surveys (see CERID, 1997; Bhattachan et al., 2002). The literature that shows the incapability or deficiency of Dalits generally represents an ideology that constructs Dalits' inferiority whereby their implicit interest is to maintain existing relations and power. On the other hand, the literature based on statistics or surveys of the cases of exclusion try to unveil discriminatory and exclusionary practices of the state and society. Moreover, some literature, disclosing discriminations and exclusions, has attempted to suggest some ways of altering the present power relations so that non-discrimination and inclusion could be possible (see Kisan, 2002; Aahuti, 2060BS, 2005; Bishwakarma, 2003, 2060BS; INSEC, 1996, 2004; Bishwakarma, 2054BS; Bishwakarma, 2057BS; Lamgade, 2004; Sagar ed., 1996; Tamrakar, 2000, 2061BS; NDC, 2060BS; Jha, 2000, 2003; Neupane, 2005). However, there is still further need to analyse the diverse conditions and voices of Dalits, so that their voices and perspectives can be uncovered. Moreover, there is some literature on the issue of the education of Dalits in general, but it is hard to find any research or literature that concentrates on the issue of education of Dalits from Tarai.

Recently, the growing concerns in opposition to caste-based discrimination and the practice of untouchability have been publicised in various newspapers and in the publications of Dalit focused organisations, national and international NGOs, research institutes and the government. Likewise, some individual publications, research studies for research degrees and some papers presented at international or national conferences and seminars have shown such concerns about Dalits. Besides, based on statistics or survey, there are some studies on assessments of implementation status of the programmes and analyses of the situation of Dalits. These studies also suggest the strategies for Dalit empowerment and development to certain institutions or organisations who are working with Dalit issue (see TEAM Consultant 1999; Bhattachan et al. 2002; Sharma et al. 1994; Rajbhandary et al. 1999; Rana et al. 2001; Dahal et al. 2003; Action-Aid, 1998). Such studies have important influences on programme assessment and development for specific organisations with their specific development targets. However, the aims of such studies were to provide certain information to respective institutions within their own boundaries and needs. Again, these studies were mostly based on survey and quantitative data. As a result, it was difficult for these studies to represent socio-cultural complexities and power dynamics effectively. Again, none of these studies has focused on the issue of the educational exclusion of Dalits.

The book edited by Devkota (2002) is a good collection of critical essays about Nepalese Dalits and the issues of construction and representation of Dalits, but it concentrates neither on Madhesi Dalits nor on the educational exclusion of Dalits. There are a few research studies and writings by non-Nepalese people on the issues of Nepalese Dalits (see Caplan, 1972; Cameron 1998; Gellner and Quigley eds., 1999; Parish, 1997; Cox, 1994), but they do not focus on Madhesi Dalits or the educational exclusion of Dalits.

Some educational studies have included Dalit related issues. Jamison and Lockheed (1987) compared school attendance rates of so-called low-caste groups and so-called high-caste groups. Similarly, Ashby (1985) found that caste position was one of the determining factors in participation in schooling. Stash and Hannum (2001) also reported caste-based inequality in educational participation. A study by the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), social assessment of

educationally disadvantaged groups, gives a picture of the level of participation in education and shows the caste and ethnicity-based differentiation in educational participation (CERID, 1997). Some studies based on the evaluation of educational programme components related to the Dalits and disadvantaged groups have been commissioned by the Nepalese Ministry of Education (see TEAM Consult, 2001; CERID, 2002, 2005). Such quantitative data based reports show the level of participation in terms of school enrolments and scholastic achievements of pupils, but these studies have not explained how the exclusion of Dalits arises in schools and society.

A PhD thesis on the schooling of Dalits (Koirala, 1996) is an important study. It is a case study of a hill village of the Gorkha district of Nepal. The main aim of this thesis was to explore relationships between the Dalits and schools. This thesis reviewed historical and religious roots of caste-based stratification and oppression by stating various mechanisms of stratification, including economic, political, occupational, and personal, as well as the consequence of religious practices based on the *varnasram* system in Hinduism. The analysis of the Hindu caste system and stratification based on caste and the overview of Nepalese practice of schooling in relation to Dalits are important contributions of Koirala's research. The analysis of the Hindu caste system helps to explain Nepalese caste hierarchy and social stratification in general and educational exclusion in particular. Similarly, this research is an important beginning in hearing unheard issues and voices. The research process and method used by Koirala are important to understand the local realities from the Dalits' perspectives.

However, critics argue that there are some problematic assumptions in this thesis. For example, it suggests mass *sanskritisation*³ of Dalits to change Dalit caste culture and suggests a reinterpretation in Hindu religious knowledge to get rid of caste-based discrimination. *Sanskritisation*, as a process of changing caste-based hierarchies and discrimination, is itself questionable because it is a process of assimilating and adopting the practices, *sanskara* (ideals) of the dominant group (so-called high caste) by the other people to change their social position and location. Again, the researcher wants to give

³ *Sanskritisation* is "the process by which a low caste [so-called] or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology, and style of life of a high [so-called] and in particular a twice-born (*dwija*) caste [so-called]" (Srinivas 1989, p 56).

this responsibility for change in the Dalits' culture and practices to intellectuals and 'sensitive' elites. However, the potential role of so-called sensitive intellectuals or elites is questionable. The researcher seems silent about the roles, struggles and resistance of Dalits. To this regard, Parajuli (2002) commented that the researcher fears political disorder and social harming if Dalits develop critical consciousnesses about caste hierarchies and discriminations.

My MPhil dissertation (Poudel, 2003) was about the schooling of a Dalit community. It analysed the meaning of classroom practices as perceived by the pupils from the Dalit community. It identified some paradoxes about the concepts and practices of schooling. It analysed the reproduction and production processes of classroom practice, but did not explain sufficiently the resistance in education and society. Moreover, it did not analyse power dynamics within schools and society. However, it provided me with an important basis for this study. This study, on the other hand, has examined the inclusion and exclusion of a Madhesi Dalit community in and from education by analysing power, knowledge and pedagogical practices in the setting of a Tarai village and a secondary school with some wider perspectives than that of my previous study. Thus, this research has not only been conducted in a different setting from that of my previous research, but it has also addressed different issues and perspectives with some distinct methodological approaches.

The above-mentioned literatures were also useful bases for the beginning of my study, but the perspectives, issues, the community and the research processes in the above-discussed literatures are different from that of this study. These literatures, indeed, have not answered the following questions adequately. Why are Dalits not participating in education? How is the pedagogical practice not welcoming them? How can their exclusion and inclusion be interpreted? How are local power relations working to exclude Dalits from education? How are national policies and practices not contributing for inclusion of Dalits in education? How are Dalits struggling for inclusion in education and society?

Secondly, the knowledge produced by this thesis is significant as it uncovers some disguised and alternative discourses and voices of Dalits. Such knowledge could help to create some inclusive discourses in education. In other words, these discourses support the struggle of Dalits for their inclusion and recognition. They avoid normalising

discourses and practices, which construct Dalits as ‘backward’, ‘pathetic’ and ‘culturally deficient’. By avoiding such normalising discourses, this thesis explains how power and knowledge create and legitimise certain discourses of truth in society and in educational institutions.

Thirdly, this thesis is methodologically significant as it tries to explain educational exclusion and inclusion with Dalits’ perspectives in relation to structural variables, including caste, economic situation, policy-practice and structure of the state. A combination of reflexive ethnographic methods with a genealogical approach to understanding the exclusion of Dalits gives an appropriate space for analysing the multiplicity of perspectives and voices in the presence of constraints and opportunities from societal structures. The methodology I applied in this research has allowed me to construct situated meanings by acknowledging multiple perspectives.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis has ten chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the research context, research questions and methodology used in this research. It has also discussed the rationale for this study.

Chapter 2 discusses some conceptual and theoretical issues related to this research. It elaborates on the concept of power and knowledge in education, discusses multiple and disciplinary concepts of power, and explains the relationship between power, knowledge and truth. It also presents a brief overview of the concepts of reproduction, cultural production and resistance in education. Furthermore, it discusses Freire’s concepts of critical pedagogy. Finally, it describes the meaning of inclusive education.

Chapter 3 explains methodological considerations and describes methods and processes applied for this research. The first part discusses methodological understanding and perspectives, which provide epistemological and methodological insights for this research. It begins with a discussion on methodological discourses and tries to locate myself in this research by exploring my epistemological considerations. After introducing ethnography as a research method, it discusses the concepts and use of reflexivity and autobiography in ethnographic research. It discusses and justifies the use of genealogical method and structure-agency integration. The second part describes the research design, research methods and research processes used for this research. It also

includes a brief description of the methods and the process applied to analyse and interpret the data. The final section discusses ethical considerations and dilemmas for this research.

Chapter 4 presents an autobiographical exploration. It explores my understanding and experiences about caste hierarchy and exclusion. It also illustrates how my personal journey and struggles have been situated within these complex hierarchies, exclusion/inclusion and power relations. Beginning from my childhood, it describes some understanding as well as confusions about social practices and beliefs on the issue of caste hierarchy. The stories of my educational and professional journeys explain some historical and structural constraints and consequences, as well as my struggles.

Chapter 5 focuses on the existing literature and documents and discusses the issue of educational exclusion and inclusion of Dalits. It unmask the history of discrimination and exclusion in Nepalese society and uncovers the links between exclusionary history and recent practices. It analyses social differences, Hindu caste hierarchies and the practices of the state and explains the exclusion of Dalits in society and education. Before discussing exclusionary educational history and the present situation of Dalits, it analyses how the state and society have constructed Dalits, and how such constructions have been working to maintain hierarchical power relations in society.

Chapter 6 describes the research site of Basipur village and Gauripur School. It also describes the processes and activities used in selecting and entering the field. Finally, it explains how I developed and maintained field relations.

Chapter 7, based on observations of activities and events, and interviews with people from Basipur, discloses exclusion of Dalits from the Basipur community. It also unveils their struggles for inclusion in society. It discusses how Dalits from Basipur have been struggling to reconstruct their identity, and how they have been creating and appropriating alternate discourses and practices in order to alter traditional hierarchies and untouchability in society. Before analysing the Dalits' resistance to exclusion and struggles for inclusion in society, it presents some examples of various forms of exclusion of Dalits, and locates multi-faceted exclusions in society.

Chapter 8 analyses the school's practice by showing that school is a contested place with multiple meanings, discourses, perceptions and experiences. It also explains how

the school continues to exclude Dalits. It analyses people's perceptions about schooling and education and uncovers the Dalits' struggles for education.

Chapter 9 examines Dalits' exclusion from education based on educational policy analysis. It analyses recent educational policies in relation to inclusion and exclusion of Dalits and finds the links with exclusionary educational policy history. It also includes an analysis of policy-practice at school. Before discussing the consequences of Nepalese policy ideologies and foreign aid dependent development practices, it discusses various policy ideologies and their influences on Nepalese education policies.

Chapter 10 revisits the main issues. It also reviews the responses to the research questions. It includes some reflections about the use of theory and theorising. Similarly, it discusses the strengths and complexities of this thesis and suggests possible areas for further research. Finally, it presents the concluding remarks of this research.

Chapter 2

Conceptual and Theoretical Discussion

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes basic concepts and theories explicitly or implicitly discussed in this thesis. The purpose for including a conceptual and theoretical discussion in this thesis is two fold. The first purpose is to conceptualise basic terms and concepts and to facilitate their use in this thesis. The second purpose is to explore various ways of interpreting schooling and education. The understanding of such perspectives has contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the issue of educational exclusion and inclusion of Dalits. The main purpose of this research was to analyse educational exclusion of Dalits focusing on how power, knowledge and pedagogical practices interact to produce exclusionary or inclusive pressures in school and society. This chapter presents three interrelated conceptual and theoretical discussions: the concept of power and knowledge, multiple interpretations of the function of school and education, and the meaning of inclusion in education.

The concept of disciplinary and localised power helped me to explore local power relations and ‘power-knowledge’ dynamics. The power relations in society and school include some discourses and exclude others. Thus, to develop an alternative to exclusionary practices, the discourses and practices based on the voices, perspectives and struggles of excluded people need to be uncovered. The meaning of inclusive education ascertains that inclusive education is an alternative value and practice that responds to exclusionary discourses and practices in education. The concepts of local ‘power-knowledge’ dynamics and inclusive education helped me to analyse the exclusion of Dalits from society and education and urged for a contextual inclusive practice in school and society.

Among various interpretations of schooling, cultural reproduction theory perceives education as reproducing the culture and practice of the dominant section of society.

Resistance theory views schools not only as a means of reproducing the culture and practice of the dominant group, but also as producing new discourses and practices as well as resistance to suppression and exclusion. Such production and resistance give a space to develop education in such a way that it helps to reduce exclusion. Multiple explanations of the function of schooling helped me to explain the contested nature of school practice. Multiple explanations of the function of schooling also support a contextual interpretation of schooling and a contextual inclusive practice to respond to the exclusion of Dalits.

This chapter gives an overview of multiple perceptions of power and then describes the disciplinary concept of power. It also conceptualises power and knowledge in education. Then, it summarises various understandings and theoretical interpretations of education and schooling. Finally, it discusses the meaning of educational inclusion.

2.2 Concept of Power and Knowledge in Education

This section begins with the discussion of various perceptions of power. It then describes Foucault's concept of 'disciplinary power' and the relation between 'power-knowledge' and truth. It also discusses the relation between 'power-knowledge' and education. These concepts of power, knowledge and truth provide me with some useful input in understanding local power relations and the struggles of Dalits in society and school.

Power: Multiple Perceptions

There are multiple perceptions concerning power. Some people view power as a capacity held and exercised by agents (Westwood, 2002); that is, power is not a relation between people, but it is an attribute or property of either society or the individual (Tew, 2002). Marxists believe that power has a direct relation with the economy and the ideology of a certain group or class. Thus, power is synonymous with economic class and an ideology of domination, repression and coercion. Gramsci (1980) interpreted the Marxist concept of power as beyond the economic determinism. He argued that the ruling class exercises power not just through economic coercion and force, but also from consent using 'cultural hegemony' as a form of 'ideological apparatus'. Similarly, Poulantzas (1973) re-interprets the Marxist notion of power by arguing, "Political or ideological power is not the simple expression of economic power" (p 114). Moreover,

“By power we shall designate the capacity of social class to realise its specific objective interests” (Poulantzas, 1973, p 104).

Lukes (2005) conceptualised power as a dispositional concept, which includes an ability or capacity of people that may or may not be exercised. Power is not understood only as domination but there are ‘manifold ways in which power over others can be productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity’ (Lukes, 2005, p 109). According to Lukes, power is not only coercion, influence, authority, force and manipulation, but also the practice that secures the ‘consent to domination of willing subject’ (ibid, p 109).

According to Weber (1978), power is the possibility of imposing one’s will upon the other person, even against opposition. Weber associates classes, status, groups, and parties with the power by which someone attempts to achieve his/her will, even when there is a possibility of opposition from others. Therefore, Weber also perceived power as an individual’s possession or capacity.

Bourdieu perceives power as mediated through various types of capital so that power in the society depends on the accumulation of such capital. He describes economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which determines social position and power in society. Economic capital is related to financial resources. Social capital is a network of social relation and identity. In other words, social capital is 'an individual's or individual group's sphere of contact' (Grenfell and James, 1998, p 21). Cultural capital is the sum of dispositions, educational qualifications and access to cultural goods. Therefore, cultural capital is a reflection of social location. Bourdieu argues that through cultural capital, social divisions and other distinctions are made in society. The symbolic capital includes prestige and social honour, which can be gained through the impact of economic, social and cultural capital. Therefore, according to Bourdieu, these capitals are supportive to each other. To this regard, Grenfell and James (2004, p 510) write, “All capital - economic, social and cultural - is symbolic, and the prevailing configurations of it shape social practice.”

Bourdieu (1996) argues that the different forms of capital, which work as the forces and struggles within the field, are specific forms of power. He further argues that every power tries to be recognised as legitimate by using various strategies of reproduction. In

this process, symbolic power, ‘the power to secure recognition of power’ (Bourdieu 1990, p 131), is accumulated through various forms of capital and works as an indirect legitimisation and reproduction of hierarchy and domination.

On the other hand, Foucault (1979, 1980, 2001, 2001a, 2001c) proposes a micro-power, which disciplines the human body and mind by using various techniques of discipline. Foucault classifies concepts of power into two main forms: the sovereign and disciplinary conceptions. Power in the sovereign conception is a ‘possession’, which is owned by some people and can be redistributed to other people. Sovereign power functions through particular visible agents so that there is a possibility of visible direction or form of resistance. In this way, “sovereign power is attached to actors who have the legitimacy to make decisions and allocate values within communities” (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998, p 17). Most critical traditions based on the sovereign concept of power argue that some historically formed interests and social groups dominate and repress other social groups. Thus, the researchers and intellectuals from this sovereign concept of power tradition generally explain the “origins of domination and subjection in society” (ibid, p 17). The critical traditions based on the notion of sovereign power usually see power as regressive and centrally located, which generally undermines ‘productive’ and ‘localised’ power. The disciplinary concept of power, on the other hand, does not search the origin or centrality of power; rather, it believes that power comes from a number of points, including the local level. The next sub-section explores an alternative concept of power; that is, disciplinary power with localised and productive form.

Disciplinary Power: A Localised and Productive Power

A point of departure of Foucault’s conception of power from the conventional conception of power as individual property begins with the question ‘how is power exercised?’ instead of ‘who holds power?’ or ‘what is the legitimate basis of this power?’ According to Foucault, a concern with the foundations or origins of power, the process of attaining legitimacy, and the existence of the institutions that secure legitimacy are some of the problematic assumptions of the conventional analysis of power (see Dean, 1994). Commenting on the conventional conception of power, Foucault (1980, 1979) focuses more on productive power with multiple points of exercise, rather than regressive and centrally originated forms of power. Moreover,

beyond the concept of power confined to the state's laws, institutions, ideologies and structures, Foucault's concern was a new form of power deep-rooted within social relationships between individuals. Power is not a substance or a property of certain people or group as it is certain types of relations between individuals (Foucault, 1980, 2001a). The mechanism of disciplinary power is "rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980, p 39). Thus, disciplinary power, according to Foucault, is not exercised through a visible agent and has not any origin; it comes from everywhere and acts on and in everyone.

Foucault's notion of disciplinary power assumes that it functions on the micro level of society as a productive process. That is, power relations, as described by Foucault, are productive processes rather than regressive ones. Power produces objects, truths and political spaces by using techniques, knowledge and discourse (Masschelein, 2004). Foucault (1979, p 194) further describes the productive nature of power and says, "In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth."

When we acknowledge multiple forms of power, which are rooted in social practices and systems, the resistance to power obviously is not directed towards any single centre, so it is hard to find any single form of resistance. Moreover, the argument "when there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1979a, p 95) shows that resistance is an integral part of the power process. There is a possibility of multiple forms of resistance as there are multiple sources and forms of power. Multiple and fragmented forms of resistance acknowledges the diverse voices and subjectivities of individuals, but it does not give attention to a unified agency to organise resistance and change. In several situations, there is a need to organise some unified resistance against dominant discourses, rationalities and practices, which seem to be ignored in Foucault's concept of resistance.

Power, Knowledge and Truth

An important aspect of Foucault's concept of power is an alternative explanation of 'knowledge-power' relations. Opposing both of the ideas 'knowledge is a power' and 'power creates knowledge', Foucault (1980, p 52) proposes an integration of knowledge

and power with one another and explains, "...exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power." This 'power-knowledge' relation in Foucault's terms shows that there exists no knowledge when the power relation is interrupted. In other words, no 'pure knowledge' exists without any effect of power. At the same time, there is no power relation function without the presence of any knowledge. Thus, Foucault (1979) abandons the assumption that knowledge can exist only where power relations are suspended, and he argues that there is no 'knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (p 27).

In this perspective, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between 'power-knowledge' and truth. According to Foucault (1980, p133), truth can be taken as, "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements." He further argues, "Truth is not outside power or lacking in power" (ibid, p131). Again,

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

(Foucault, 1980, p 131)

The production of truth can be seen as the 'game of truth' or 'mechanism of truth', which might be played in a three dimensional space including knowledge, subjectivity and power (Simola et al., 1998, pp 65-69). Foucault's analysis of power as techniques of government includes three techniques: 'ordering of forces', 'disciplining practices' and 'individualising practices' (ibid, p 68). The ordering of forces is related to the multiplicity of power relation, and these forces exercise within the organisation, whereas disciplining practices means the techniques of power that are linked with the production of knowledge. The third technique, the individualising practice, is a process of connecting self and power, which also produces facts, subject domains, and rituals of truths (Simola et al., 1998).

In such a complex process of power, Foucault's concept of governmentality can be taken as a way to analyse power relations of individuals and groups of people or

institutions. Foucault uses governmentality in two ways: first, technologies of governing people by the state and state's institutions and second, people's self-understandings, regulation and governing techniques. Governmentality, thus, focuses both the techniques of the self and the institutional technologies as the art of government (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998). In this way, governmentality is an art of governing by others and themselves. As the techniques of government, governmentality is a power, and a form of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses. It is also the knowledge about these apparatuses and the state's judicial practices and its transformation into the administration (Foucault, 2001b).

Although Foucault does not fully believe in the power of the state and its apparatuses, he acknowledges the importance of centralised power in the modern state (Smart, 2002). Foucault (1980, p 122) argues,

I don't want to say that the state isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the state. In two senses: first of all because the state, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the state can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations.

On the other hand, in Foucault's terms, 'government' does not only mean the political structures and the state's practice, but also the 'conduct of individuals or groups' (Foucault, 2001a, p 341). In this sense, governmentality is an 'inescapable fact' of social life (Smart, 2002, p xiv). Moreover, governmentality also includes 'techniques of self' from which "individuals can affect their own bodies, souls, thoughts and conduct so as to form and transform themselves" (Smart, 2002, p 108). Thus, for Foucault, governmentality not only includes institutional (central and local) power relations, functions and rationalities, but also the self-governing practice of an individual.

Power and Knowledge in Education

A number of educational researchers and academics have applied Foucault's framework of power-knowledge in describing various aspects of education (see Ball, 1994; Olssen, 1999; Popkewitz, 1993; Gore, 1998; Naughton, 2005; Simola et al., 1998; Spencer, 2001). As a technique of power, 'governmentality' has been a widely used concept in educational research and writings (see Simola et al., 1998; Spencer, 2001). Using Foucault's framework, Simola et al. (1998) described pedagogy as the 'technology of

truth', which functions in a three dimensional space within any educational institution. These three dimensions are knowledge (techniques of discourse), subjectivity (techniques of self), and power (techniques of governmentality), in which knowledge is the techniques of discourse that interact with techniques of governmentality and the techniques of self. Simola et al (1998) further argue, "Foucault examines process and techniques for the production of truth, the constitution of truth-willing subject and the separation of true and false; that is, techniques of discourse, self, and government" (p 65).

School is not only a form of exemplification of the exercise of power, it is also an important site to develop and refine strategies and techniques of power (Marshall, 1990). Thus, educational sites can be seen as generators, distributors and appropriators of discourses (Ball, 1990), which generate and validate knowledge and power. Though Foucault does not provide a ready-made formula for analysing power in education, he, for example, considers 'the examination' as one of the main individualising techniques of disciplinary power within schools, which also includes hierarchical surveillance and normalising judgments (Jones, 1990). However, as the disciplinary techniques are not universal, there is a need to find empirically the techniques and process of power and knowledge in relation to specific time, place and people.

Foucault's concept of localised power and resistance gives an important tool to describe power relations within society and school. However, as argued by Walzer (1986) 'forgetting the political regime and the sovereign state' is a problem of Foucault's analysis of power. Walzer (1986) argues, "Every act of local resistance is an appeal for political or legal intervention from the centre" (p 66). Again, all disciplinary institutions including schools work within the state's law and general system. The state may sometimes control discretionary power and may colonise or stop the possibility of local resistance. Similarly, I agree with Foucault that the deterministic notion of power as well as the single centre of power is problematic; however, power relations based on caste, social position, culture and economy are also visible within society. Moreover, power has productive capacities, but at the same time domination, oppression and regression can also be seen within the power relations. To this regard, Foucault's concept of localised power is an important way to understand social relations and the activities of people. However, this may not be the total story of power relations in

society. Foucault himself rejects the notion of universalised theory, and thereby his argument gives space for supplementary or alternative discourses. Moreover, he did not reject the whole idea of regressive power, but he proposed another aspect of power. One of the strengths of Foucault's concept of power is that it provides an opportunity to uncover and value local power relations and struggles.

2.3 Various Interpretations of School Practice

There are different theoretical perspectives and explanations about the functions of education in society and the relationship between school and society. The works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim have influenced Western discourses in understanding implicit and explicit functions of education. Functionalists, who analyse educational function in Durkheim's framework, have the view that social reproduction is an important positive function of education. In the functionalist perspective, "the reproduction of the social structure, and cultural values supporting this structure, were seen as a requirement of coherent social systems, good and necessary for generational continuity" (Levinson et al., 2001, p 240). Both the liberals and critical theorists have criticised such a functionalist view of the function of education. For example, socialisation with universal values through education is a problematic notion because the concept of social and universal values itself is problematic. Similarly, the student as the passive receiver of knowledge is another problematic notion of those functionalists.

Marxists argue that social reproduction maintains the domination of certain groups over others. They view that there are class-based inequalities in the access to skills and knowledge, and these inequalities continue to work in schools (Levinson et al., 2001). Marxists view that such inequalities are determined by the individual's relationship to the means of production; in Marxists' terms, social class refers to economic class. Weber, on the other hand, sees social class as more than economic class. In his view, social class represents the status, occupation, and lifestyle of individuals. Moreover, social class shows how tastes, habits, and preferences are largely linked to the individual's position in the social hierarchy (ibid). In the Weberian perspective, the role of school can be described as the validation of certain statuses and styles over others. Although there are differences in the definition of social groups in Marxists and Weberian conflict perspectives, both perspectives argue that social reproduction ensures the dominance of certain groups over others (Levinson et al., 2001). Besides such

differences in defining class in Marxist and Weberian perspectives, Marxists argue objective structure plays dominant roles in shaping social practices, whereas Weberians emphasise human agency and their 'social action'. Although in comparison to the Marxist one-dimensional reduction of 'exploitative' principle, Weberians argue for multidimensional versions of 'domination', both inappropriately emphasise only one aspect; Marxists to the objective structure and Weberians to the individual agency - the social action. My argument here is that people's engagement and struggle for inclusion at school cannot be understood without considering their actions and meanings as well as different types of structural constraints and opportunities.

Reproduction Theories in Education

Different critical educators consider the main functions of schools as the reproduction of the dominant ideology, forms of knowledge, and the distribution of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labour (Giroux, 1983). There are at least three theories on reproduction in education. One views schools as the reproducers of different classes and social groups. They argue schools reproduce existing class relations in society by producing a class-based labour force. According to this theory, a society is stratified by class, race, caste and gender, and thereby schools help reproduce their position by providing class and group based knowledge and skills to pupils. As a result, they can occupy their respective places in the labour force. This theory of reproduction is known as the 'economic reproduction model', which is also called 'corresponding theory' (Giroux, 1983). This model of reproduction in education was initially the product of Bowles and Gintis' (1976) work. Their theory "posits that the hierarchically structured patterns of values, norms, and skills that characterise both the workforce and the dynamics of class interaction under capitalism are mirrored in the social dynamics of the daily classroom encounter" (Giroux, 1983, p 262). The theory argues that school is the mirror image of the social division of labour and society's class structure. For instance, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue, "The educational system serves-through the correspondence of its social relations with those of economic life-to reproduce economic inequality and to distort personal development" (p 48).

The next form of reproduction model takes school as an apparatus of the state, which produces and legitimises the economic and ideological imperatives that underlie the state political power (Giroux, 1983). This reproduction model is generally called

‘hegemonic-state reproduction model’, and it represents Gramsci’s idea of reproduction through ideological hegemony (ibid). Gramsci considers state hegemony as a process of maintaining the status quo in which the ruling class controls subordinates by using intellectuals and moral leadership (see Gramsci, 1980). The state uses its force as well as ideology to reproduce social relationships between those who are dominant and the subordinate. This theory believes that school also reproduces such dominant and subordinate relationships. Therefore, school is also an ideological apparatus of reproducing social relationships. Louis Althusser (1971) also argues that school reproduces the capitalist relation of production and is an ideological state apparatus to secure ruling class domination.

The third form of reproduction model is ‘cultural reproduction’ in education that sees a school’s function as the reproducer of the dominant culture through ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977, 1990). According to this theory, a school distributes legitimate knowledge, values, languages and models of style, and represents the dominant culture and their interests. Bourdieu accepts that school is not a direct mirror image of societal power relations. However, it works indirectly as a symbolic institution that reproduces existing power relations by producing and distributing the dominant culture. Bourdieu calls such pedagogical functions of indirect reproduction of domination as ‘symbolic violence’, and he argues that the school legitimises such reproduction through ‘misrecognition’. Bourdieu explains relations between society and schools and takes school as an institutional mechanism, which reproduces and legitimises an unequal social structure and culture. The school mechanism functions towards “reproducing the structure of relations between the classes by reproducing the unequal class distribution of cultural capital” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p 188). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) further argue that, in the name of technical function, a school conceals this social function, and it conserves and reproduces power and prestige to socially advantaged groups.

Let me briefly summarise the position of these three theories of reproduction in education. The economic reproduction model relates schools to the workplace. Similarly, it identifies the school’s role as a reproducer of the social division of labour. This theory observes class or structure based inequality in society and the school. However, this model of reproduction has not been able to capture the complexity of the

relationship between schools and other institutions, or between the workplace and the family. It lacks the cultural aspects of children and school. This theory does not consider the role of human agency as the theory is based on a structural analysis of society and schools.

Similarly, the hegemonic state model of reproduction deals with a state-led structural and macro-societal perspective. This theory totally ignores micro processes within the school; rather, this theory excludes human agency and everyday lives and struggles within school. This theory may represent only partial aspects of realities of a school's reproduction functions, but not a complete picture of realities. In this way, both reproduction theories, economic and hegemonic-state, do not consider the role of human agents in the reproduction process.

Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, on the other hand, argues that school reproduces the culture and values of the dominant group in society indirectly, so that the domination functions as a form of 'symbolic violence'. According to this theory, a school reproduces a certain 'habitus' (beliefs and dispositions) of the dominant group. In this theory, social structure plays an important role, although the 'habitus' of the individual and group provide some room for the roles of the human agent to influence the schools' reproduction role. Bourdieu argues that school generally reproduces 'habitus' and cultural capital of dominant groups. Although the cultural reproduction model has some wider perspectives than the economic and hegemonic-state reproduction models of schooling, it also has several weaknesses. For example, people have been struggling for the productive use of education by resisting the domination of certain people and groups. Such realities are lacking in reproduction theories. In this case, the weakest parts of Bourdieu's arguments are the lack of hope for changes from education, the lack of belief in the productive uses of education, and lack of recognition of people's resistance in schools and society. It also gives a deterministic notion of power and domination, as there is an overtly determined view of human agency and a view of the homogeneity of working class cultural forms and knowledge, which are problematic notions of this theory (Giroux, 1983). Therefore, cultural reproduction theory is often criticised by arguing that there are not sufficient spaces for social actors' subjective meanings and varied cultural and social meanings of education (see Willis, 1981; Giroux, 1983, 1983a).

The major problem related to the role of reproduction theories in education is that these theories not only devalue people's engagement, struggles for inclusion, and resistance against exclusion and discrimination, but also discourage people's hope and aspiration for what can be achieved through education. Moreover, these theories overlook the productive part of school, such as new or alternative discourses produced through education to change existing power relations and domination. Reproduction theories give good explanations of how a school benefits the dominant sector of society by reproducing existing power relations, but such explanations cannot give any alternatives to existing practice.

Cultural Production and Resistance in Education

To understand school culture, it is necessary to study its relatively autonomous sphere of 'lived experiences' and 'every day patterns of interaction' within and outside the school. Students also resist the dominating logic and restrictions underlying a school's rules and conventions. Giroux (1983) argues that schooling does more than reproduce inequalities; that is, school produces various acts of resistance and oppositional behaviours by the students. Willis mentions, "social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and a practical penetration of those structures" (1981, p 175). Giroux (1983) agrees that beyond the structural reproduction of working class subordination there is also the process of self-formulation within the working class itself.

Children enter school with some cultural forms such as knowledge, meanings, and disposition, which are already established in the family or their immediate environment. They interact with different social actors and institutions within and outside the school and redefine their understanding and meanings. In this process, they use and produce different cultures and construct their own meanings. Levinson and Holland (1996) consider schools as sites for the formulation of subjectivities through the production and consumption of cultural forms. As the site of formulation of subjectivity, school is the place of interaction between structural constraints and students' constructs. Such interaction produces individual culture and the meaning of the 'schooled person'. Levinson and Holland further explain the dialectical process of structure and agency. They say that the educated person is culturally produced in definite sites, and she/he

culturally produces particular cultural forms (1996, p 14). Thus, cultural production shows how people creatively occupy the space of education and schooling (ibid). Cultural production, as defined by Levinson et al., is “making the meanings by reflexive social actors in specific and diverse contexts of structured power” (2001, p 241). Levinson and Holland (1996) argue that cultural production provides a direction for understanding how human agency operates under powerful structural constraints.

Resistance, on the other hand, is a broader concept than that of cultural production. According to Giroux, “The concept of resistance must have a revealing function that contains a critique of domination and provides theoretical opportunities for self-reflection and struggle in the interest of social and self-emancipation” (1983, p 290). However, not all oppositional behaviours of students can be taken as resistance, and this leads to a problem of identifying resistance and its historical and cultural roots (Giroux, 1983, 1983a). For example, oppositional behaviours may not simply be a reaction to powerlessness; they might be an expression of power and domination. However, within a school, valuing the individual struggles and resistance of the students and teachers gives a hope for the productive use of education, and it encourages an alternative use of schooling beyond the reproduction of existing relations and power.

Dialogic Method and the Libertarian Pedagogy of Freire

Freire, opposing the claim of neutrality of traditional pedagogy, which treats ‘student as an object’ and ‘teacher as a subject’ and works in ‘depositing knowledge’ to students, proposes a partisan pedagogy for the oppressed. Such depositing activities, as he calls the ‘banking concept of education’, serve the interests of the oppressor rather than the oppressed (Freire, 2000). He suggests that pedagogy for the oppressed is an alternative pedagogy to the traditional one, which he calls ‘problem posing education’. It is an alteration of the traditional teacher-student relation. It works with establishing dialogue between students and teachers. With regard to problem posing education and dialogical method he writes, “Students as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (Freire, 2000, p 81). According to Freire, such alternative education works as “the practice of freedom-as opposed to education as the practice of domination” (ibid). Freire further explains, “The problem posing educator constantly re-forms his [sic] reflections in the reflection of the students. The students-no

longer docile listeners-are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.” (Freire, 2000, p 88)

As the basic condition of existence of such emancipatory dialogue, Freire suggests that both teachers and students need to be engaged in critical thinking. His dialogic method begins with some ‘generating themes’ within a ‘minimum thematic universe’. Using generating themes, teachers and students engage in critical dialogue to understand their world. Freire argues, “human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis, it is transformation of the world” (ibid, p 125). Therefore, the aim of such dialogue is to produce ‘liberating praxis’, which is the product of continuous engagement in ‘action-reflection-action’.

According to Freire, ‘conscientization’, the process by which a learner by breaking existing oppressive myths moves to a new level of critical awareness, is the main aim of liberating education. The ‘conscientization’ breaks the ‘culture of silence’ of the oppressed people and changes the oppressive power relations. A liberating pedagogy with dialogic method, according to Freire, not only contributes to understanding existing oppression, but also contributes to changing the ‘asymmetrical and dehumanising’ power relations into a liberating and humanising form. Freire suggests two stages of liberating pedagogy: pedagogy of the oppressed and pedagogy for all. In the first stage, “the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through praxis commit themselves to its transformation”, and in the second stage, when the oppression has already been transformed, pedagogy becomes “pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation” (ibid, p 54). Freire probably suggests the second stage, which may be different from the first, because he wants to make both the oppressor and oppressed free from the ‘fear of freedom’ whereby the oppressed may want to play the role of oppressor, and oppressor may be afraid of losing their oppression.

Freire’s liberating pedagogy is not only provocative in criticising the existing politics of schooling and pedagogy, but it is equally creative in proposing alternative forms of education and methodological details. I think this is the strongest and most attractive part of Freire’s pedagogy for educators who want to change existing politics of pedagogy. In this way, Freire’s liberating pedagogy has been a powerful tool to understand the situation of domination and deprivation for the suppressed, and to create a hope for the liberating roles of education.

In spite of such strong aspects in Freire's liberating education and his method, there are some difficulties for the effective use of dialogic pedagogy as a general pedagogy at schools. There are some theoretical as well as practical difficulties in the liberating praxis of Freire. Theoretically, it is difficult to find binary opposition between the oppressors and the oppressed, as his pedagogy seems to be silent regarding the existence of multiple oppressions, such as class, race, caste, and gender. The overlapping and fragmented nature of differences and oppression make it difficult to identify a unique oppressor or oppressed. Practically, it is difficult to find ideal educators in schools who use dialogic pedagogy to emancipate 'the others'. There is also a difficulty to change a traditional hierarchical teacher-student relationship into a dialogical form. At the same time, in many places, not only in school's structures, but also among teachers, they have been working within a broader frame of reproducing dominant discourses and power relations. In addition, without changing societal discrimination, changing teachers' attitude and values is a difficult task, and thereby the dialogic pedagogy is not possible without preparing teachers. In this case, it is difficult to decide whether the liberating praxis of Freire provides a practical hope of liberation, or a liberating 'utopia'. However, as in Giroux (2005), Freire's text needs to be read as an anti-colonial and post-colonial discourse directed at the historical and political context of colonial hegemony. Otherwise, there arise some problems if we consider Freire's libertarian pedagogy as a general theory of education.

In this section, I have overviewed some conceptual and theoretical positions that explain diverse views about the functions of school. These explanations support the view that schooling is not "a neutral or transparent process antiseptically removed from the concepts of power, politics, history, and context" (McLaren, 1995, p 30). But theories seem to be unable to develop sound alternative pedagogies, curricular vision and school structure and relations whereby subordinated groups can be included and emancipated. Again, a universal explanation of schools would be problematic for diverse contexts and needs. Therefore, most interpretations need to be taken as contextual. Thus, there is always a possibility of a new and alternate interpretation or re-interpretation of meaning, because a school's practice constitutes 'subjectivity' and 'discursive' struggles together with 'non-discursive' practices. In this context, McLaren mentions,

A pedagogy of liberation is one that is necessarily partial and incomplete, one that has no final answers. It is always in the making, part of an ongoing struggle for critical understanding, emancipatory forms of solidarity, and the reconstitution of democratic public life.

(McLaren, 1995, p 57)

However, in opposition to the neutral and apolitical function of a school, it is imperative to understand school's practices as cultural and political acts of creating and appropriating discourses. According to Foucault,

Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. ... What is education system, after all, if not the ritualisation of the world; if not a qualification of some fixing roles for speakers; if not the constitution of a (diffuse) doctrinal group; if not the distribution and an appropriation of discourse, with all its learning and its powers?

(Foucault, 1972, p 227)

2.4 Conceptualising Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a process of developing education for all. Specifically, it is the development of a school so that the school can respond to the diverse needs of students (Meijer et al., 1997; Rix and Simmons, 2005). Inclusion is the 'reform and restructuring of the school' in order to welcome all the students with diversity (Mittler, 2000). It is the 'extension of schools' to include diverse students (Clark et al., 1995). It is the "restructuring of the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality" (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006, p 65). Inclusive education is 'about responding to diversity', and it is 'about listening to unfamiliar voices' (Barton, 1998, p 85).

These definitions express the view that inclusive education is a process of addressing the diverse needs of the students in a school so that the school can reduce exclusion. Developing an inclusive school requires professional teachers with inclusive orientation and a flexible curriculum. Similarly, child centred teaching and collaborations are essential elements for an inclusive school. Without preparing for these requirements, it is difficult to plan and execute inclusive education in a school. On the other hand, without changing exclusionary social practices and policies, school alone may not be able to contribute sufficiently for the inclusive practice.

As a more comprehensive definition of inclusive education, I quote Tony Booth who defines inclusion as the process of “increasing participation in, and reducing exclusion from, the learning opportunities, cultures and communities of the mainstream” (Booth, 2003, p 2; also Booth, 2003a; Ainscow, 1999; Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Booth, 1995; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006). This definition recognises inclusion as a process of increasing participation in which participation is more than access to schooling. Participation involves active engagement in the learning process with a sense of belonging to the school in which recognition and acceptance are integral aspects of participation. Such recognition and acceptance value the diversities and individual differences of the learners. Thus, more than physical access and enrolment, participation involves an emotional attachment with the school, learning process, cultures and communities. Inclusive culture includes ‘transformational’ views rather than ‘assimilationist’ views, which recognises diversity as a good source of learning and teaching (Booth, 2003). Indeed, inclusion is more than integration, because

the word ‘integration’ tends to be used to describe a process of *assimilation* within which individual children are supported in order that they can participate in the existing (and largely unchanged) programme of the school; whereas ‘inclusion’ suggests a process of transformation such that schools are developed in response to the diversity of pupils who attend.

(Ainscow, 1999, p 148)

Thus, inclusion is far more than mainstreaming and integration; it is the process of increasing participation and ensuring rights and justice by removing barriers of participation in education. Moreover, it is a continuous process “about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference”; it is the “identification and removal of barriers” of “presence, participation and achievement of all students” with focusing on the students who are “at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or under-achievement” (Ainscow, 2005, p 9).

The above-mentioned concept of inclusive education suggests that there is a need to analyse exclusion and inclusion around the community and culture by focusing on school practice. Simultaneously, inclusion is a process, which continues to promote participation and reduce exclusionary pressures from school and from outside the school. Along with the school, the cultural value and practice of the community also give exclusionary or inclusive pressures to education because “communities and cultures are mutually sustaining” (Booth, 2003, p 3). In fact, a number of factors are

associated with the complex process of inclusion, which may differ from culture to culture, or situation to situation. However, it is necessary to assume that exclusion has a number of locations in society. Bernard (2000), for example, mentions that exclusion works at various levels of society including families and communities, schools and the educational system, government and national education policy, society as a whole, and the international community.

The international movement on 'Education for All' is an influential force to develop the concept and policies on inclusive education. Since the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (1990), international concern and cooperation, as well as national focuses on several countries, have been directed towards universal primary education. One of the main bases for the Education for All movement was the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), which affirms the right of children to relevant education. The guiding principle of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) incorporates the concept of inclusive schools and inclusive education. The Salamanca Statement is based on some fundamental principles such as, "every child has a fundamental right to education"; "education system should be designed to take into account children's diverse characteristics and needs"; "child-centre pedagogy"; "regular schools with inclusive orientation are most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving Education for All". Although these statements seem ambiguous, the Salamanca Statement encourages a global policy for inclusion. The Dakar World Education Forum (2000) explicitly included several values of inclusive education as a part of Education for All. For example, UNESCO (2000, p 16) states:

In order to attract and retain children from marginalised and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly, providing relevant content in an accessible and appealing format. Education systems must be inclusive, actively seeking out children who are not enrolled, and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners.

Major rationales for inclusive education involve rights and ethics as well as efficacy (Dyson, 1999; Lindsay, 2004). These rationales for inclusive education themselves encourage positive endeavour because they affirm the rights of children to education and promote social justice and value diversity. The practice mostly depends upon relevant policies, commitments and resources. As Booth (2005) mentions, inclusion is more than a concept, it is a value position that supports equity, respect for diversity or

differences, human rights and participation. Without incorporating and practicing such values, some technical and procedural activities in the name of inclusion may not contribute to inclusive education. Similarly, there is a need for a critical discourse related to inclusive education in each level of policy process and practices, for example, in Ainscow, Booth and Dyson's (2006) terms, there is a need of the "principled interruptions" for the change of values and practices into inclusive form. At the same time, there is a need to promote inclusive dialogues among excluded groups. Such dialogues among the excluded may contribute to defeating various exclusionary pressures in educational policy and practice.

Since inclusion is a process of reducing barriers of learning and participation, examination of exclusion and inclusion has to begin with identifying the children who have been experiencing difficulties in learning and participation and the types and locations of barriers or exclusionary pressures. After identifying children, barriers and locations of barriers, inclusive policies and practice need to be developed and executed. In the case of developing inclusive practice in a school, Booth and Ainscow (2002) suggest three groups of indices for developing schools: creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive policies, and evolving inclusive practices. These indices are a useful tool to understand and initiate inclusion in a school, though indices and indicators are contextual and cultural rather than universal. The task is to create culturally specific indicators to counter contextually specific exclusionary pressures.

2.5 Summary

Schools work in a complex context of 'power-knowledge' relations, and appropriate certain discourses. At the same time, people struggle for alternative discourses and oppose domination of so-called mainstream discourse. The 'power-knowledge' relations in school, the concept of local and productive power, and multiple interpretations of the function of school suggest school is 'a terrain of contestation' where "dominant and subordinate cultures negotiate about symbolic terms; students and teachers engage, accept, and sometimes resist the way school experiences and practices are named and legitimated" (McLaren, 1995, p 30). In this sense, school does not only reproduce dominant values and practices, but also produce new discourses, practices and relations. Thus, it also produces resistance on the part of subordinate groups as a self-emancipatory activity. The produced discourses give some power of inclusion to

excluded people. Besides, external agencies also support such resistance and emancipatory interest of subordinates. However, the nature of emancipation may be contextual or temporary.

Inclusive education consists of certain values and practices, which respond to the diverse culture and need of the children. It is a useful way to reduce exclusion by valuing multiple discourses, needs and practices in school. As community and school supplement each other, educational exclusion and inclusion need to be understood in relation to societal discourses, practices and power relations. Therefore, changing social and school practices into an inclusive form is a way of challenging and changing exclusionary discourses and existing power relations in society. In this way, understanding local power dynamics and uncovering alternative discourses help to explain exclusionary practices. They also help to identify and promote inclusive values and practices in school and society. The next chapter explores my methodological understanding and describes methods and process used in this research.

Chapter 3

Exploring Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter has two interrelated aims. The first aim is to discuss my methodological considerations for this research, and the second aim is to describe research methods, tools and processes used for this research. My methodological and epistemological considerations guided me to select research methods, tools and processes. Considering these relations between methodologies and research methods, I structure this chapter into two parts. The first part discusses the methodological issue of the research and locates me within these methodological discourses. The second part describes the methods and processes used for this research.

I used a reflexive ethnographic method for the field research and applied a genealogical approach for the analysis. My methodological assumption has given me an opportunity to analyse the issue by taking into consideration people's perceptions, voices and struggles, as well as related social and structural factors. I have tried to understand and interpret the multiple voices and meanings associated with the issue. In this way, I have co-constructed meaning and knowledge with the research participants, and thereby my autobiography is associated with the research process and this thesis. Among multiple voices and perspectives, I have tried to uncover the voices, perspectives and struggles, which are directed against hierarchical, discriminatory and exclusionary discourses in favour of non-hierarchical, non-discriminatory and inclusive values and practices.

My research design was a flexible plan for the research. The flexibility I employed during the research made my research process recursive, which helped me to maintain reflexivity in the whole processes of research. Using participant observations, unstructured and informal interviews, and conversations, I collected field data from Gauripur School and Basipur village. Besides this, I used several documents as data sources, and I used my autobiographical exploration to analyse the issue. However, during the analysis and interpretation, I focused on the field data that listened to the voices, perspectives, struggles and agency of Dalits.

Part I: Bringing the Ideas Together: Situating the Methodological Issues

This part concentrates on the conceptual understanding of methodological issues. It begins with the discussion of methodological discourses to locate myself in these discourses. It then discusses the methodological approaches for this research, which include reflexive ethnography and genealogical method. It also justifies the use of autobiography and a structure-agency integration approach to this research.

3.2 Locating the Methodological Discourses

Research methods include all the procedures and techniques of collecting and analysing data. There is a connection between the choice and use of research methods and researcher's theoretical and philosophical consideration. Brewer (Brewer, 2000) conceptualises the distinction between method and methodology by defining methods as the procedural rules; methodology is the "broad theoretical and philosophical frameworks into which these procedural rules fit" (p 2). It is similar to Hughes' (1990) concept of 'philosophy of research', which includes epistemological assumptions as well as research methods and techniques. Thus, methodology, more than providing research techniques, justifies the use of research method(s) to the particular research context (Griffiths, 1998; Clough and Nutbrown, 2002; Roberts-Holmes, 2005). Therefore, there is an inseparable link between epistemological and methodological questions and the selection and use of methods in research.

Methodological and epistemological consideration depends upon a researcher's position and perception about either value-explicit or value-free research (Griffiths, 1998; Carspecken, 1996). There are a number of contrasting views and practices within the academic field about neutral and value explicit research. According to Griffiths (1998), one position believes that facts are value free, so that a researcher has to work to find the facts in order to get objective knowledge. This position claims that a research can find neutral knowledge that is independent of the observer or researcher. Nowadays, such a claim of independent knowledge is not common in social science research. Social researchers, who have been distancing themselves from value-free knowledge, have been relying on a number of other viewpoints about neutrality, value-laden knowledge, and partisanship in research. These viewpoints can roughly be categorised into two distinct traditions. One of the viewpoints, as in Weber (1949, cited in Hammersley,

2000), suggests value-neutral research. Another viewpoint, as in Becker (1967, cited in Hammersley, 2000) and Gouldner (1962, cited in Hammersley, 2000), advocates value-driven and personally committed social research. However, recently there are other positions between the value-neutral and the value-driven epistemology. For example, there is epistemological value based research (Griffiths, 1998; Carspecken, 1996) and ethically reflexive research (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2006).

I do not claim that research can be neutral, objective and value-free, because my epistemological, methodological and ideological position demands an alternative way of thinking and doing research. My methodological consideration is based on the assumption that no knowledge is independent of the knower; facts are not value free. Rather, research is not only conceived with facts; it is an interpretation of meanings co-constructed by a researcher and research participants. Therefore, the researcher's presence is explicit in the research process as well as writing. Similarly, this research is guided by my values and ideology that oppose the authority of power and knowledge as well as hierarchies and differences based on caste. I disagree with the concept of single and universal authority of knowledge. I favour multiplicity of knowledge and understanding. Therefore, it is 'epistemological value' based research (see Griffiths, 1998; Carspecken, 1996). As in Gewirtz and Cribb's (2006) terms, it is 'ethically reflexive' research because it involves both reflexivity and ethics. Such ethical reflexivity, I consider, is the most important feature of social research. It demands a reflexive gaze on my position and values, situation of the research setting, and socio-cultural and historical consequences while doing the research and analysing and interpreting research findings.

3.3 Selecting Methods and Approaches

This section discusses methodological approaches for this research. It establishes reflexive ethnography as a research method and discusses the use of autobiography in ethnographic research. It also justifies the use of genealogical approach and structure-agency integration in this research.

Ethnography as a Research Method

Ethnography is a research method with a strong emphasis on a particular social phenomenon. Ethnography has a tendency to work primarily with 'unstructured' data, to

investigate a small number of cases in detail and to analyse data with an interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998, pp 110-111). Similarly, Pole and Morrison (2003, p 16) define it as follows:

Ethnography is an approach to social research based on the first-hand experience of social action within a discrete location, in which the objective is to collect data which will convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of those who inhabit that location.

These definitions show that in ethnographic research researchers go directly to the research field to understand underlying meanings and practices. A systematic data collection procedure to access the meaning and practice of the phenomenon is an important aspect of this method. Another important aspect is the spontaneous and natural setting for data collection, which generally conveys the subjective meanings of people.

These definitions take ethnography as the way of doing research, that is, fieldwork. Alternatively, there is also a view that ethnography is not only fieldwork, but it is also a 'perspective of research' (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998), which includes 'philosophical paradigms' (Brewer, 2000). However, it is difficult to separate methods from the theoretical, epistemological and philosophical understanding and positioning of the researcher. Thus, 'Ethnography-understood-as-the-qualitative method' (Wolcott, 1999) and 'ethnography-understood-as-fieldwork' (Burgess, 1997; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998) are interrelated concepts. It suggests that there is an inseparable link between the methods and methodologies of a research.

Ethnography is, then, a principal qualitative method in social research. Traditionally, natural sciences have used positivist scientific realism as the methodology for research, which has also influenced social sciences. The recent trend to adopt ethnography is a move away from a positivistic epistemology of research (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998). Ethnography uses qualitative methods and qualitative data, although there is no restriction on the use of some quantitative data (Pole and Morrison, 2003). It uses diverse approaches and techniques based on various theories and theoretical movements (see Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998; Hammersley, 1990; Gordon et al., 2001).

Traditionally, the interpretative approaches based on the 'humanistic model' of social research were dominant in ethnographic practice (Brewer, 2000; see Hughes, 1990). Beyond various interpretative ethnographic approaches, such as phenomenology

(Shultz, 1967), ethno-methodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), various anti-realist positions, including critical, post-structural and post-modern and constructivist, oppose a single apprehended social reality (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998). They claim that no method can represent reality accurately (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 1998; Brewer, 2000). Moreover, they view social realities as well as research methods as cultural and personal constructs so that research can offer only a socially constructed account of the world (Brewer, 2000, pp 23-24). Such post-structural and post-modern ethnographic work has challenged traditional norms of representation and legitimisation in ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Brewer, 2000). Along with questioning the representation of reality from ethnographic texts, they have challenged the use of traditional criteria of validity, reliability and generalization in social research.

Denzin and Lincoln characterise the present forms of ethnography: “The concept of the aloof observer has been abandoned. More action, participatory, and activist-oriented research is on the horizon. The search for grand narratives is being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and particular situation.” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, pp 28-29) In such a situation, the forms of ethnographic writing are multiple (Denzin, 2003). Moreover, “we are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multi-voiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and inter-textual representation” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p 38).

Reflexivity in ethnography demands critical gazes on the research process, setting and interpretation, and it does not rely on traditional criteria of internal and external validity. For example, Kincheloe and McLaren (1998; also see Denzin, 1997), as an alternative to the traditional criterion of valid information through the application of rigorous research methodology, propose ‘trustworthiness’ as an appropriate concept for evaluating research. Janesick (2003) further suggests that the terms validity, generalization and reliability do not fit in qualitative inquiry, so there is a need to replace these terms and their meanings to characterise the qualitative inquiry. Drawing upon Richardson, Janesick suggests ‘crystallization’ instead of triangulation. Crystallization “provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly practical understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know”

(Richardson, 2003, p 518). In a similar vein, Giroux (1983, cited in Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998, p 286) argues, “Methodological correctness will never guarantee valid data, nor does it reveal power interests within a body of information”. Nevertheless, this does not mean that methodology is not important, but it does claim that methodology does not guarantee validity.

The approaches and techniques of ethnographic research design and process are not unique. Ethnography uses participant observation, in-depth and unstructured interviews, documents and artefacts, life history, autobiography, personal narratives and other forms of biographic writings as data sources. Moreover, in ethnography, there is a growing agreement on the researchers’ involvement in the research setting and research process not only in data collection, but also as a data source. In this sense, ethnography is a process of co-construction of meaning by researcher and research participants. I used reflexive ethnographic method in this research. As the ethnographic tools for the data, I used participant observation and unstructured interviews and analysed documents and literatures.

Reflexivity in Ethnographic Research

In ethnographic research, reflexivity has two meanings: methodological and theoretical. Methodological reflexivity is a process of self-critique of the field, data and data collection process. The interpretation of data through theoretical and ideological reflections is theoretical reflexivity. Marcus (1998) named the first as ‘essential reflexivity’ and the second as ‘derived reflexivity’. Stanley’s (1996, cited in Brewer, 2000) two forms of reflexivity, ‘descriptive’ and ‘analytical’ are similar to that of Marcus’ above-discussed ‘essential’ and ‘derived reflexivity’.

There are various ways of using reflexivity in research. As described by Calas and Smircich (1992, cited in Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000, p 5), reflexivity “constantly assesses the relationship between knowledge and the way of doing knowledge”. For Steier (1991) reflexivity involves contextual recognition of various relationships embedded in the research process and activities. Reflexivity, in Davies’ terms, “expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it” (Davies, 1999, p 7). A reflexive researcher, according to Willig (2001), involves maintaining reflexivity in both senses, personal as well as

epistemological. Personal reflexivity includes reflection on how the researcher's values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, and social identities influence the research. Epistemological reflexivity reflects the assumptions about the world and knowledge and their implications for research and findings. Mills (1959) suggests the 'sociological imagination' as the process of reflexivity, which considers both history and biography and avoids 'any rigid set of procedures' in research (p 245).

The nature of reflexivity shows that being reflexive means being more critical about research methods, process, settings, data, result, and researcher's own identity, position and values. In other words, reflexivity is a process of being critical and doing ethnography more critically. Luttrell (2000) suggests that reflexivity means that something is to be learned in degrees rather than as an absolute; sustaining multiple as well as opposing situations; and expanding rather than narrowing psychic, social, cultural and political fields of analysis.

On the other hand, reflexivity for Bourdieu is an examination of the 'epistemological unconscious' (Kenway and McLeod, 2004, p 528; see, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp 36-46). As described by Wacquant, reflexivity according to Bourdieu is an examination of the limitations and biases in three sources: the social origin and relations of the researcher, the researchers' position within the field, and the 'intellectualist' point of view-which sees the world through certain spectacles (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p 39). Among these three aspects of reflexivity, the interrogation of intellectual bias or the scholastic point of view is Bourdieu's most original contribution to understand reflexivity in research practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Schirato and Webb, 2003; Kenway and McLeod, 2004). Therefore, the function of reflexivity in this context is to interrogate the scholastic viewpoint in relation to recent practice and history. Thus, reflexivity 'can help free intellectuals from their illusions' about themselves and about their 'passive and unconscious contribution to symbolic domination' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p 195). In this way, one of the main tasks of reflexivity is to interrogate intellectual or theoretical bias in research; in other words, it is a process of minimizing theoretical domination and subjection in the research practice.

Thus, reflexivity in research is not only the way to maintain methodological rigour, but also a commitment to the implication of research with some valued perspectives of

change. In other words, reflexivity is not a bracketing of the researcher's values during the research process, and it is not the way of maintaining value-neutrality. It involves disclosing and understanding the researcher's values in relation to the implications of research. This makes research ethically reflexive (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2006).

Autobiography in Ethnography

There is a tendency to include personal narratives of the researcher in qualitative research writings (Coffey, 1999; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997). Conventionally, ethnographers have been involved in studying 'others' by generally using biographical approaches to inquiry. But the implications of a reflexive approach are that "all ethnographic writing is to some extent autobiography" (Coffey, 1999, p 119). The growing practice of incorporating self in both the research process and writing shows concern about how the researcher 'makes sense of' and 'reflects on' her/his own experiences, interactions and position in the field (Coffey, 1999).

Davies (1999) argues that there are some dangers with autobiographical research. For instance, there is a possibility of focusing on the researcher's story rather than the research subjects. Similarly, there is a chance of describing individual achievements based on certain views of interpretation. My intention was to understand autobiography as a part of ethnographic work, which helped understand the social practices. Moreover, I have included my experiences before and during the research processes. My autobiography disclosed my involvement in the research process and helped me to maintain reflexivity in the research process and writing. Thus, autobiography in ethnography means "self-revelation and confession, and an appeal to subjectivity and lived experience" (Coffey, 1999, p 117). In other words, giving autobiographical space in ethnography is a process of accepting the researcher's existence, and thereby it helps to break 'silent authorship' in ethnography (Coffey, 1999; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997).

There are several ways of presenting the self in ethnographic writing. Coffey (1999), for example, describes three ways of presenting the self in ethnographic writing. First, the obvious way of writing self-narrative is to incorporate it in the field notes based on a personal account of daily field experiences. Field notes are generally personal and may not contribute to the public autobiography in ethnographic research in general. Second,

the partial autobiographical writing, usually written as a separate text from other ethnographic text, explores the research strategies and process. It is generally included as a part of the methodological chapter, description of field and research process, or as a methodological appendix. Such 'confessional tales' (Van Maanen, 1988; Atkinson, 1990) and personalised accounts of the research process usually explain the ethnographer as a research instrument; it also includes descriptions of researcher's involvement in the field and the development of research. Thus, such partial autobiographies do not analyse the self as a research subject. The third way of presenting the self in ethnographic writing takes the self as a subject and context of research. This includes tales of the self, which represent a combination of ethnography and autobiography. Coffey (1999, p 126), further, explains that these three ways of presenting self, construct different selves:

Field notes construct a private self and the confessional presents a questing, working, research self. The more overtly autobiographical writings present fragmented and multiple selves, embedded in and connected to the field and the text, in often complex ways.

The best way of working in ethnographic research is to negotiate and use the intersecting space of both the researcher and informant's selves. However, the ethnographer needs to be careful about 'self-indulgence' when he/she writes the text with a visible presence of authorship.

In my case, as a Nepalese person I was an insider in the wider socio-cultural contexts of the field, and I was working in the field of education in Nepal. At the same time, I was not an insider within the local culture and practice as I was living and working in a different place and my social and caste position did not match that of the people from the study field. In this context, I worked as both a researcher and as an informant. This made a good combination of ethnography and autobiography in my research. Such use of autobiography helped me make my ethnography reflexive. It also contributed to the visibility of my presence as a researcher in the research process and thesis.

Genealogical Method and Ethnography

Multiple perceptions and struggles are realities within educational discourses and practices. Official or legitimised knowledge does not represent the multiplicity of people's perceptions and struggles. Moreover, an official discourse, shaped by a historical process of legitimising certain knowledge, may have difficulties in explaining

people's daily practices. Such understanding of multiplicity of knowledge resembles Foucault's (1980, 1979) notion of local knowledge. Foucault suggests that there is a need to understand and uncover a local autonomous knowledge of struggles. Such uncovering opposes the subjugation by theoretical as well as official knowledge.

Genealogy, as described by Foucault, is a historical analysis of the problem, which influences the present lives and practice of people. In this sense, genealogy can be expressed as the 'writing the history of the present' but not the 'writing the past in terms of the present' (Foucault, 1979, p 31). Although genealogy is a historical analysis of the event, it differs from the conventional writings of histories in many ways. For instance, conventional history is generally based on the idea of single, uninterrupted, continuous, and stable progress over time; whereas genealogy works with disparity, dispersion, complexity and contingency (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000). In this way, genealogy rejects the ideas of the unique origin of knowledge and truths. Similarly, genealogy analyses historical emergence with a 'series of subjections' and struggles between various forces (Smart, 2002). By rejecting universal or grand knowledge and truth, genealogy relies on 'knowledge as perspectives' (ibid). Therefore,

Genealogy stands in opposition not only to the pursuit of the origin and to the idea of timeless and universal truths, but also to conceptions of the relentless progress of humanity. In place of the latter, genealogy uncovers the eternal play of dominations, the domain of violence, subjections and struggle.

(Smart, 2002, p 16)

As the historical process, the concern of genealogical analysis is the local, neglected and common form of knowledge. In this regard, Foucault (1980) argues that genealogy searches and describes some local and minor historical knowledge, and it attempts to emancipate such knowledge by opposing the subjection and coercion of theoretical, unitary, formal and so-called scientific knowledge. The validity of such local knowledge is 'not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought' (Foucault, 1980, p 81). In this way, genealogy is concerned with 'disreputable origins and unpalatable functions' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999, p 29), but does not rely on a single origin or any pre-determined knowledge.

The function of a genealogical approach is to uncover local knowledge, or 'subjected knowledge' (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1980, pp 81-83) classifies 'subjected

knowledge' into two categories: first, historical knowledge, generally taken as erudite, is disguised in a functionalist and systematising theory and second, the local and specific knowledge, which is said to have been disqualified by calling it an inadequate and naïve form of knowledge. Foucault (1994) defines genealogy as "the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today" (p 42). Thus, genealogy studies 'conjunctures of discourses' and searches for 'ruptures and breaks' in practices and identifies a new 'historical conjuncture' (Johannesson, 1998, p 304).

Genealogy studies the process of functioning power in an institution or society. It also analyses the process and mechanism of creating truth. It is the 'analysis of the relations, strategies and techniques of the exercise of power' and the 'conditions of knowledge production' (Dean, 1994, p 34). Therefore, genealogy examines the relationship between power, knowledge and truth by analysing their process of formation. Furthermore, it examines the process of forming truth by questioning: How is truth created? Or, what are the technologies of truth? Thus, genealogy studies how knowledge and power function in the presence of human subjectivity.

Foucault emphasises the 'subject-decentred' (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998) approach to analysing the mechanism of knowledge and power.

One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.

(Foucault, 1980, p 117)

From the above discussion, I find that a genealogical approach is a useful way to understand pedagogical processes in schools. This approach helped me to understand how pedagogical practice is constructed and how the knowledge, power and truth are interrelated in the particular school. Similarly, the genealogical approach provided me with an insight to explain the social construction and self-construction of Dalits in school and society. Moreover, the genealogical approach assisted uncovering and

analysing people's perceptions about education and school practice. It also encouraged me to look at the various 'modalities of power' that have been utilised in shaping the discourses in education. Importantly, it inspired me to understand how the official knowledge and discourses about the participation of Dalits in education have been 'concealing', 'dominating' and 'colonising' Dalits' understandings and practices. It was useful to understand individual power and subjectivity that oppose legitimised knowledge. In addition, a genealogical method provided an opportunity to analyse local power relations and knowledge within the school and community. As a result, it helped to emancipate local and productive knowledge from the subjection of some 'external-theoretical' or 'official' knowledge and power. However, genealogy did not suggest a complete process or tools for this research; it only provided guidelines for the research process and analysis. In this context, a combination of reflexive ethnography and genealogy provided me with a useful approach to this research.

There are affinities between genealogy and ethnography, even though they began and developed from different theoretical traditions (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003; Brown, 2003; Tamboukou, 2003; Dehli, 2003; Ball, 1994). Tamboukou and Ball (2003, p 3) described the following commonalities between ethnography and genealogy; they both,

- Interrogate the validity and universal authority of scientific knowledge
- Adopt a context-bound critical perspective
- Transgress closed theoretical and methodological systems
- Point to the limits of dominant power-knowledge regimes
- Recover excluded subjects and silenced voices
- Highlight the centrality of the body in socio-historical analyses
- Restore the political dimension of research.

It shows that reflexive ethnography and genealogy have theoretical as well as methodological commonalities. Brown (2003, p 77) argues, "Reflexivity includes keeping a genealogical eye on one's disciplinary training, on the desire for closure, for culture, for truth, the desire to produce a satisfying ethnography." Ball (1994) argues that like genealogy, ethnography is 'discursive' about 'giving voices to unheard' and concerns local 'power-knowledge relations'. In this way, reflexive ethnography with critical sensitivity has a close affinity with genealogy.

In my research, the inclusion and exclusion of Dalit children in and from education has been analysed with the help of ethnographic descriptions based on the data collected from the school and community. Ethnographic sources like, participant observations,

unstructured interviews, autobiography and documents provided the sources and bases for genealogical analysis from which I examined the power relations and discourses of truth within the school. This examination, for example, has shown how power has been exercised in the school and in the classroom, how discussions are made, and how the voices and perspectives of the Dalits and their children are unheard or heard. Similarly, this examination has opened up for consideration the viewpoints and voices of Dalits about school practices and their participation. Therefore, the examination of power relations and discourses of truth helped to explain the exclusion and inclusion of the Dalit children from and in education. In this way, I used both genealogical and ethnographical approaches to supplement each other in various aspects of my research process and writing.

Structure-Agency Integration

The aim of this research was to analyse both the social structure and people's practices and understanding related to schooling. Rejecting the ideas of structure and agency opposition, I have drawn on the dialectical relation between structure and agency and their integration. Among others, Giddens' 'structuration theory', Mills' 'sociological imagination', Habermas' concepts of 'life-world and system' and Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus and field' suggest dialectical relation between structure and agency. Giddens (1984), for example, considers structure and agency or actors as two sides of the same coin. In the same way, Habermas suggests connecting the system (structure) with the life-world (agency): "The fundamental problem of social theory is how to connect in a satisfactory way the two conceptual strategies indicated by the notion of 'system' and 'life-world'" (Habermas, 1978, cited in Ritzer, 1996, p 551). According to Mills (1959), the 'sociological imagination' is a form of structure-agency integration, which studies both history and biography and their relationships within society. Similarly, rejecting dichotomies between subjectivism and objectivism, Bourdieu (1993) proposes a dialectical relation between objective structure and subjective actor - the agency.

I intended to examine the exclusion and inclusion of Dalit children from and in schooling by analysing barriers of participation in education. Likewise, my intention was to uncover experiences, understanding and voices of the people from Basipur Dalit community about the pedagogical practices of the school and their participation in education. Similarly, I was interested to examine how power and knowledge have been

working to produce pedagogical discourses and practices that may contribute to the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others. For these, it was necessary to study people's understandings, perceptions, practices, meanings and values along with organisational and societal constructions and practices. As the structural variables, I mainly considered the Hindu caste system and the ideology of caste hierarchy, the state and its politics, school, and other central educational organisations. I considered their influence in shaping pedagogical discourses and practices (Chapter 5). At the same time, I analysed how Dalit adults and children perceive these pedagogical discourses and practices, and how they act and react in relation to these discourses and practices (Chapters 7 to 9).

Part II: Methodological Ideas into Practice: Describing Methods and Processes

The previous part provided the general methodological guidelines. It was difficult to determine in detail the steps of research method and activities prior to the research. In this case, Holliday (2002) rightly notes, “Decisions about what sort of data to collect will depend on what the researcher encounters in the research setting” (p 96). Moreover, Walford warned, “A careful, objective, step-by-step model of the research process is actually a fraud...” and any step-by-step model of research is in fact no more than a ‘myth of objectivity’ (Walford, 1991, cited in Holliday, 2002, p 7). However, the first part of this chapter helped situate me with some methodological approaches to this research, and thereby it has provided an important basis for selecting the methods and techniques for this research. Here, I will present a description of the methods and processes as applied in this research.

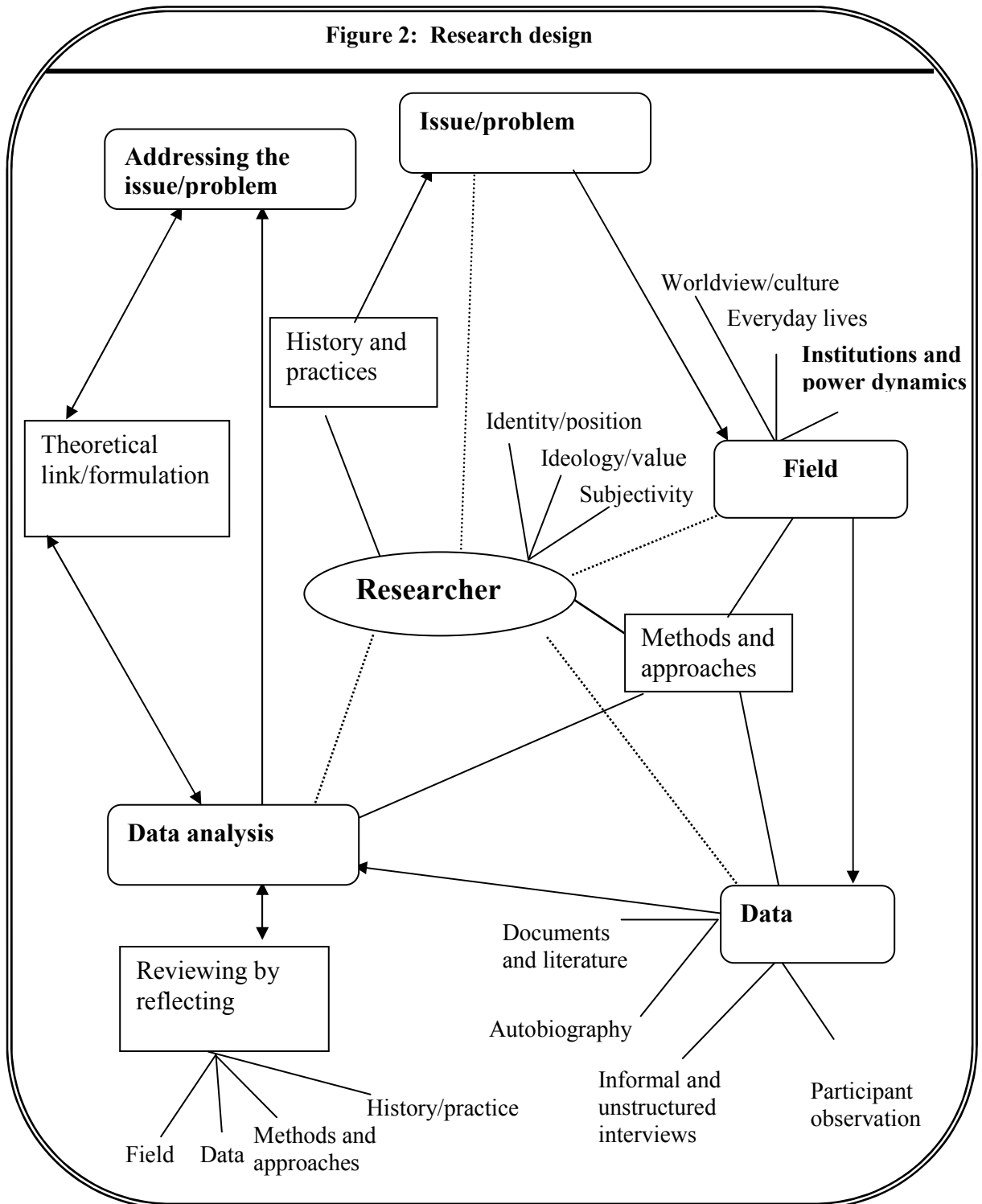
I conducted the field research in two phases. The ‘preliminary fieldwork’ was about six weeks long (March-April 2005). During that fieldwork, I collected documents and literature related to caste hierarchies, educational policies and practices, the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits, and I selected and gained access to the research site. Before selecting the research site, I conducted some informal and unstructured interviews with people working for Dalit related programmes in Kathmandu. I had conversations with four people working with Dalit-focused NGOs regarding the issue of Dalits, informal interviews with two government officers working on educational planning, discussions with two members of the National Dalit Commission, and I also interviewed two Dalit activists. These conversations, discussions and interviews provided me with some useful information about the situation of Dalits. It also helped to find documents and literature. From those conversations, I got some input for the selection of the research site.

After completing the preliminary fieldwork, I wrote my autobiographical exploration (Chapter 4) and methodological considerations (first part of this chapter) and then developed chapter 5 based on the literature and documents. Moreover, experiences from the first fieldwork helped me prepare a research design. The second phase of the fieldwork (November 2005-March 2006), the ‘main fieldwork’, was about five months long.

This part begins with discussing the research design applied to this research. It includes description about the selection and use of methods, tools and techniques for the field research. In addition, it includes the processes and techniques of data analysis and interpretation. Finally, it discusses ethical issues and dilemmas that appeared during this research.

3.4 Research Design

Due to the human subjectivities and diversity associated with the research site, it was difficult to set out detailed activities and processes prior to working in the research field. However, I set some general procedures and a plan for my fieldwork. An important question here is whether the pre-planned procedures are compatible with work in natural settings. Without procedures, it was difficult to work in the field. At the same time, such procedures could not capture fully the dynamism of the field. Therefore, I developed a “careful research design” (Brewer, 2000, p 57). Brewer (2000) defines research design as the strategic plan that sets out the broad structure of the research. An ethnographic research design is a flexible plan, so that researcher can apply it according to the nature and demand of the field, issues and methodological bases. The research design is the basic plan of a research, which includes strategy, conceptual framework, who or what will be studied, and what will be the tools and procedures for collecting and analysing materials (Punch, 2004). Besides, the research design ‘situates the researcher in the empirical world’ and ‘connects research questions to data’ (ibid, p 150). Based on my methodological considerations, I prepared a research design for my research. Figure 2 shows the research design I developed and used in this research.



The research process began with the selection of the problem, which I formulated based on the history and practice. The research questions were the elaboration of the issue and problem. After formulating the research questions (Chapter 1), I selected the research field. My research field was a Tarai village of Eastern Nepal with Dalit settlements and a secondary school. I understood the research field in relation to a specific place, space

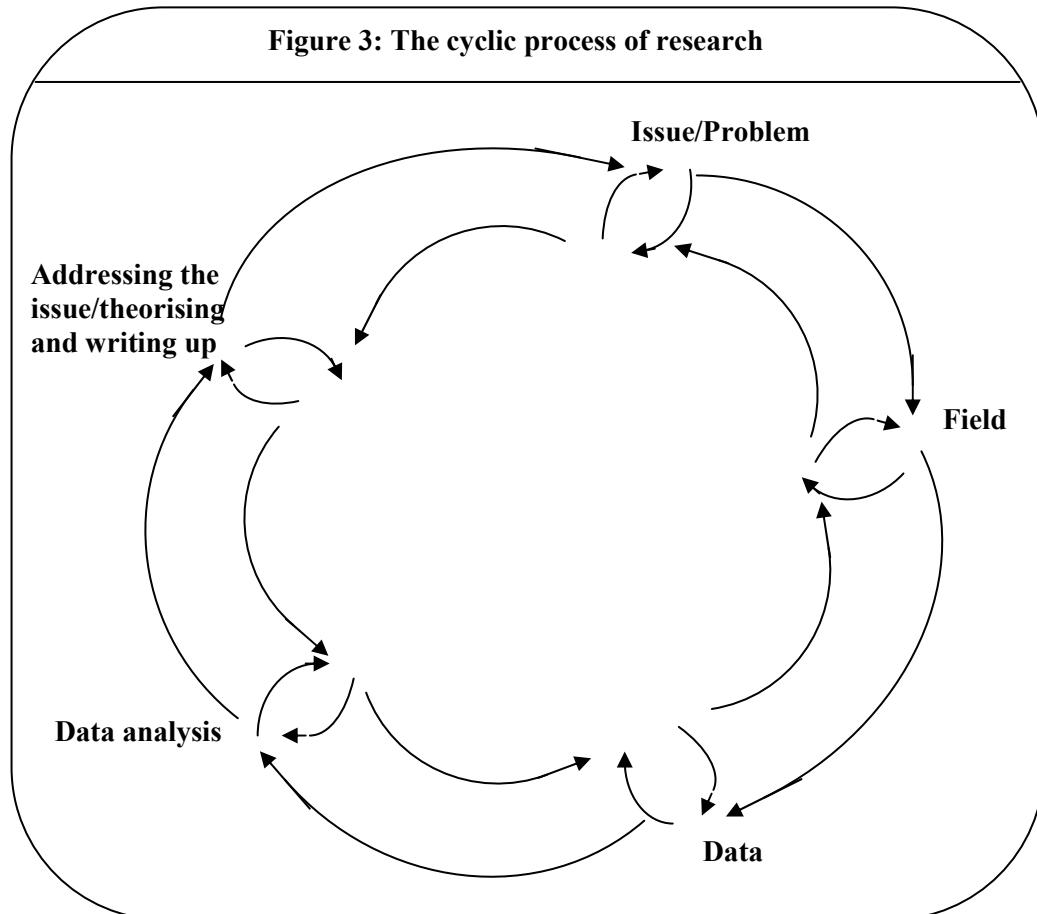
and time. Within these three dimensions, the research field consists of various sub-fields like culture, social institutions and power relations, and the everyday lives of the people. My concern was the Dalit community and the school. Therefore, socio-cultural practices, power relations and everyday lives of the people from Basipur village and the culture, and practice and power relations within Gauripur School were the focus of my research. Moreover, I tried to describe Basipur village and Gauripur School as a single community focusing on their interaction and power relations. After locating the field, I gained access to the field and got some information about its physical and social situation. Simultaneously, I made a plan to obtain data from mainly three data sources: documents and literature, autobiography, and school and community.

I consulted literature and documents relating to the history and practice of caste hierarchies, and educational history and practices in relation to the Dalit community in general, and Madhesi Dalits in particular. Based on the collected literature and documents, I prepared a draft about caste hierarchies and the schooling of Dalits in Nepal (Chapter 5). My autobiographical exploration (Chapter 4) also provided some important data by disclosing my own experiences.

The most important data source was the Dalit community and the school. I used mainly participant observation and informal interviews and conversations as the methods for data collection. However, I also conducted some semi-structured interviews and studied some documents. As part of the analysis, description of the field and field data and analysis and interpretation of data went on hand in hand during and after the data collection process. A description of the field provided reference and grounds for analysis and interpretation. Reflexivity about my position, value system, subjectivity and ideology in relation to the research problem, research field and data helped to balance the analysis and interpretation. After the draft analysis and interpretation, I reviewed the process; that is, I reviewed the research questions, field, data and my analysis and interpretation.

The research design shows that it was a flexible plan, which I adjusted according to the situation of the research site. The research, indeed, was a cyclic process, as I looked, interacted and restarted previous stages several times before going to the next stage. The research design presented in figure 2, for example, shows that when I was in the stage of data collection I interacted with my methods, processes and activities of data

collection. I judged not only their appropriateness against my field and the problem, but also rethought the analysis, time and resources. Similarly, I rethought my personal character, position and identity. Therefore, this research was recursive in nature (see, Roberts-Holmes, 2005). Figure 3 shows the cyclic process and recursive nature of this research.



3.5 Collecting, Managing and Analysing the Data

This section describes the methods, tools and processes used for data collection. It also describes how I recorded, managed and analysed the data.

Data Collection: Methods, Tools and Processes

The three activities of ‘experiencing’, ‘enquiring’ and ‘examining’ as discussed by Wolcott (1999, pp 44-61), are important in collecting field data. ‘Experiencing’ is related to hearing and seeing, which can be gained through participant observation, whereas ‘enquiring’ is a process of asking about the situation. As the means of asking questions, ‘enquiring’ generally proceeds through conversations and interviews.

‘Examining’ is the study of documents and archives, which are generally based on the views of other people. In this study, it was difficult to separate participant observations and interviews, as both of them were closely related and employed side-by-side. Moreover, participant observation includes a mixture of observation and interview (Delamont, 2004). However, identification of distinctions between observation and interview helped to place emphasis on experiencing or enquiring as required. The use of both participant observation and interviews provided opportunities to examine and enquire about the situation and the issue. Moreover, those methods not only provided multiple, alternative and supplementary ways of accessing data, but also assisted me to become reflexive.

Participant Observations

Participant observation was the combination of observation and participation, but it was different from both ‘pure observation’ and ‘pure participation’ (Bernard, 1995, cited in DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). In pure observation, to minimise the influences from the actions and behaviours of the researched, researchers try to maintain a distance from their actions and behaviours. I was not interested in pure observation because it was difficult to understand a complex social setting without participating and interacting with the community. In pure participation, during the field research a researcher himself/herself adopts the culture and identity of the community. I did not use pure participation in my fieldwork because I was participating in order to make my observations without concealing my identity as a researcher. By this means, my fieldwork and participant observation lay between two extreme cases-pure observation and pure participation.

However, there are various levels of participation and membership roles between two extremes of pure observation and pure participation. The nature of my participant observation in the community was a moderate level of participant observation among five continuums⁴ of participation as described by Spardley (1980). Moderate participation maintains a balance between being an insider and an outsider, and between participation and observation (ibid). Such participant observation involves data gathering in a natural setting: watching, observing and talking to people in order to

⁴ Spardley’s (1980) five continuums of participation, according to the level of participation of researcher, are non-participation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation.

discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities (Brewer, 2000, p 59). My membership role can be considered as peripheral, as in Adler and Adler's (1987) four categories of membership roles (cited in DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). At the school, the degree of my participation and membership roles were higher than that community, which can be equated as active participation within Spardley's five continuums and Adler and Adler's four types of membership roles⁵.

At the beginning of the observation, I tried to understand everything that went on in the community and the school. This 'descriptive observation' (Spardley, 1980) gave some general and wider information about the practices and their meanings. As part of the descriptive observation, I tried to identify and define the physical place and people's involvement and related activities (Spardley, 1980; Adler and Adler, 1998). For the descriptive observation, I began with observing as much as possible to understand 'what was going on there?' After the general descriptive observation, I focused on the interactions and activities of people from the school and the community and the classroom practices of the school. For this, I observed community and school meetings, work places, people's informal conversations, students' daily activities, their social relationships, and classroom practices. Finally, I selected some places, actors and activities to get an in-depth understanding. The focus of my observations was people's activities, social relations, interactions and the responses regarding inclusion and exclusion.

I used these three forms of observation starting from descriptive and moving to the focused and selective. However, there was more than one focused or selective observation within the same descriptive settings. Again, this was not a rule as every observation proceeds through these three stages, but awareness about these three forms of observation generally provided a good understanding of the situation. However, sometimes the observation began at different points and involved any of these stages. It depended on the familiarity of the situation. In other words, as I became familiar with the situation, I used more focused and selective observation. In table 1, I have included a summary of the main places, events and activities involved in my observations. The

⁵ Adler and Adler's (19987) four membership roles of the researcher, according as the level of participation, are no membership, peripheral membership, active membership and full membership. However, there is a correspondence between the Spardly's five continuums and Adler and Adler's four membership roles (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

table shows three main places in the first column and a brief description of the events and activities in the second column.

Table 1: Summary of observations: places, events and activities

Place	Description of observation (events/activities)
Basipur Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users group meeting (1) • Marriage preparation ceremony (2) • Non-formal education classes (2) • Informal gatherings of community people (several) • NGO and community people interaction (1) • Brick factory (1) and brick works (2) • Daily activities of community people and children • <i>saraswati puja</i> (ceremony to worship goddess of education) (1) • Health post (several times)
Gauripur School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' meeting organised to select SMC (1) • SMC informal meeting (2) • Teachers-parents' interactions (several) • NGO-teacher interactions (2) • Teachers' informal meetings/discussions (several) • Teachers' activities • Classroom teachings/activities • Students' plays, activities and assemblies • Students-students' interaction/discussions/talking • Teachers-students' interactions
Outside Basipur Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadaya Welfare Society meeting (1) • Meeting for anti-untouchability campaign (1) • Opening session of the Annual Conference and General assembly of Dalit Sewa Sangh (1) • Organisers' meeting at Dalit Sewa Sangh (2) • Leadership training session of Dalit Sewa Sangh (1)

N.B.: The numeral written in the bracket denotes times of observation.

Interviews

Along with participant observation, I used interviews to collect field data. More than simply a collection of participants' views, these interviews involved a "joint production of 'accounts' or 'versions' of experiences, emotions, identities, knowledge, opinions, truths, etc" (Rapley, 2004, p 16). The nature of the interviews I used in this study was 'non-directive', 'unstructured', 'non-standardised' and 'open ended' (Davies, 1999). These unstructured interviews were close to naturally occurring conversations.

For the interviews and conversations, I did not have any predetermined lists of participants. A number of interviews and conversations were situational encounters and some were context bound. Moreover, the suggestions of Dalit youths, Ranjit and Sanat, and Dalits students, Dan and Jayan, on approaching people for interviews and conversations also helped in locating participants. Besides this, willingness to participate in an interview or conversation was one of the most important criteria for the selection of participants. However, in the interviews, I tried to include people from different ages, different educational backgrounds, both genders, and different working backgrounds.

Some interviews were contextual, some were issues based, and some were general. I conducted six detailed interviews including two with Dalits villagers, two with Dalits pupils and two with teachers to sketch their struggles and lives, and to understand historical as well as present practices. Tables 2 and 3 show lists of the people who participated in interviews and conversations in this research. In table 2, I have included the names of the people who participated in interviews or conversations from Basipur village and Gauripur School, whereas in table 3, I have included the names of the people who participated in interviews or conversations from outside the Basipur village and Gauripur School.

Table 2: People participated in interviews or conversations from Basipur

	People who participated in interview or conversation	
People Place	Dalits	Non-Dalits
Basipur Village	<p>Parents/guardians/social workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dhaniya (52) • Jaguwa (late 30) • Jari (29) • Lal (early 40) • Mangala (29, woman) • Narayan (42) • Parudevi (24, woman) • Ranjit (27) • Sanat (40) • SMC member (44) • Sundar (42) • Udaya (38) ... <p>School dropouts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brijesh (21), • Lakhan (15) • Pratap (19) • Ravi (20) ... 	<p>Parents/guardians/social workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachhu (36) • Bindra (32) • Dambar (38) • Jaman (middle 50) • Kalka (37) • Nagendra (27) • Rabindra (32) • Ramjan (60) ... • Sabina (woman, 44), • SMC chair person (early 50) • SMC members (2 members of ages late 30 and late 40) • Tika (late 30) • Upendra (45) ...
Gauripur School	<p>Pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan (14) • Jayan (12) • Autar (11) • Sujit (13) ... 	<p>Pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bijaya (16) • Bijendra (15) • Binda (12, girl) • Bipin (14) • Kamala (15, girl) • Kapur (15) • Purindra (12) • Raghu (16) ... <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhima • Bijeshwor • Head teacher • Prabindra • Rajendra • Sarita (woman, volunteer teacher) ...

N.B.: The numeral written in the bracket denotes age of the person.

Table 3: People participated in interviews or conversations from outside Basipur

		People who participated in interviews or conversations	
People	Place	Dalits	Non-Dalits
Siraha		<p>People from NGOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dalit Sewa Sangh, • Sadaya Welfare Society, • Ram Welfare Society <p>Dalit activists/ people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jayandra, • Phula, • Mani, • Santosh • Badri • Satish ... 	<p>People from Government organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Education Officer, School Supervisor, • VDC staff <p>Non-Dalit people/teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ajaya, • Bindeshwor, • Ramniwash, • Amaresh • Resham • Damodar ...
Kathmandu		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government officers from DOE and MOES (3) • Chairperson and Member Secretary of National Dalit Commission (2) • NGO personnel (4) • People working at Dalit organisations (2) • Dalit activists (4) 	

N.B.: The numeral written in the bracket denotes number of people participated.

For the interviews, I did not use any assistant or mediator. I conducted all the interviews myself. There was no language barrier between the research participants and me, as they could speak the Nepali language and I could understand their first language-Maithili, even though I was unable to speak it fluently. There was no fixed sequence to questions, as the sequence was situational and differed from one individual to another. Most interview questions were open-ended, and I did not try to limit their answers. Such

flexibility demanded sufficient time and patience that I had tried to maintain by giving more than one session to the same interview. I managed flexibility not only in the use of questions, but also in time and place; that is, there was no fixed time and place for an interview. I set the time, place and dates by consultation with the participants. I tried to set a time and place in such a way that the participants would be able to express their views without hesitation and in a relaxed way. For example, I conducted some interview and conversation sessions with a Dalit youth, Ranjit, at his bicycle repair stall without hampering his work. I conducted a long conversation with a school leaver (dropout) Dalit when he was going with me to attend a meeting of Dalits in the next village. I conducted most of the conversations with teachers during informal sessions in the school playground, tea stalls or on the way to school or Jayanagar.

The rules for 'how to do' interviews were generally irrelevant because of the situational encountering nature of unstructured interviews (Brewer, 2000, p 67). I tried to allow research participants to express freely their voices, with less control by me as the researcher (Brewer, 2000; Denzin, 1989). In other words, the research participants were encouraged to answer in their 'own terms' (May, 1993, cited in Pole and Morrison, 2003). As a result, such interviews provided context bound and situational data (Brewer, 2000) and thereby produced contextual and situational knowledge. However, I tried to conduct interviews within a 'big theme or issue' (Wolcott, 1995) of inclusion and exclusion that helped to concentrate the interviews on the research questions.

While conducting such unstructured and informal interviews, I consciously used several situational techniques. For instance, I tried to note the verbal as well as non-verbal communication of the respondents, facilitated conversations using various probes and prompts, and respected participants' ideas even when I had reservations about them. Such activities involved becoming a 'good listener' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002), which contributed to the smooth running of interviews and conversations. During interviews, sometimes, I used 'repetition feedback' as well as 'summary feedback' (ibid) to facilitate continual responses or to make an issue and idea clearer. I tried to make interview questions as short as possible. Similarly, I tried to avoid more than one question at a time.

In addition to this, I sometimes asked for more explanation on a certain issue or idea by asking 'can you give me more details?' or 'please tell me more about this', or sometimes

I used 'naïve questions' (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002) that gave the participant an opportunity to explain the situation or issue in more detail. In some situations, I disclosed my experiences, understanding and views not only those that agreed with the research participants, but also some that were contrasting, too. Such disclosure facilitated natural conversation, and it encouraged more detail and depth of explanation. In this way, interviews were the product of 'cooperative work' (Rapley, 2004, p 20) or 'reciprocity' (Johnson, 2002, p 109) between interviewees and interviewer.

To minimise the 'Interviewer effect' (Brewer, 2000, p 65), I tried to understand the situational variables and differences such as age, caste and ethnicity, social position, educational background, and cultural and linguistic practices of the participants as well as those of my own. Such understanding encouraged me to become reflexive during the conducting and recording of interviews.

Use of Documents

Besides interviews, conversations and observations, I used a number of documents collected from various sources. I collected and used mainly two types of documents. The first type of documents was related to history and practices of caste hierarchies and the exclusion of Dalits. The second type of documents was related to the educational policies history and present practices. The analysis of such documents helped understand the issue of exclusion of Dalits in relation to wider social and political discourses and practices. Table 4 gives a summary of the sources and types of documents I collected and used in this thesis.

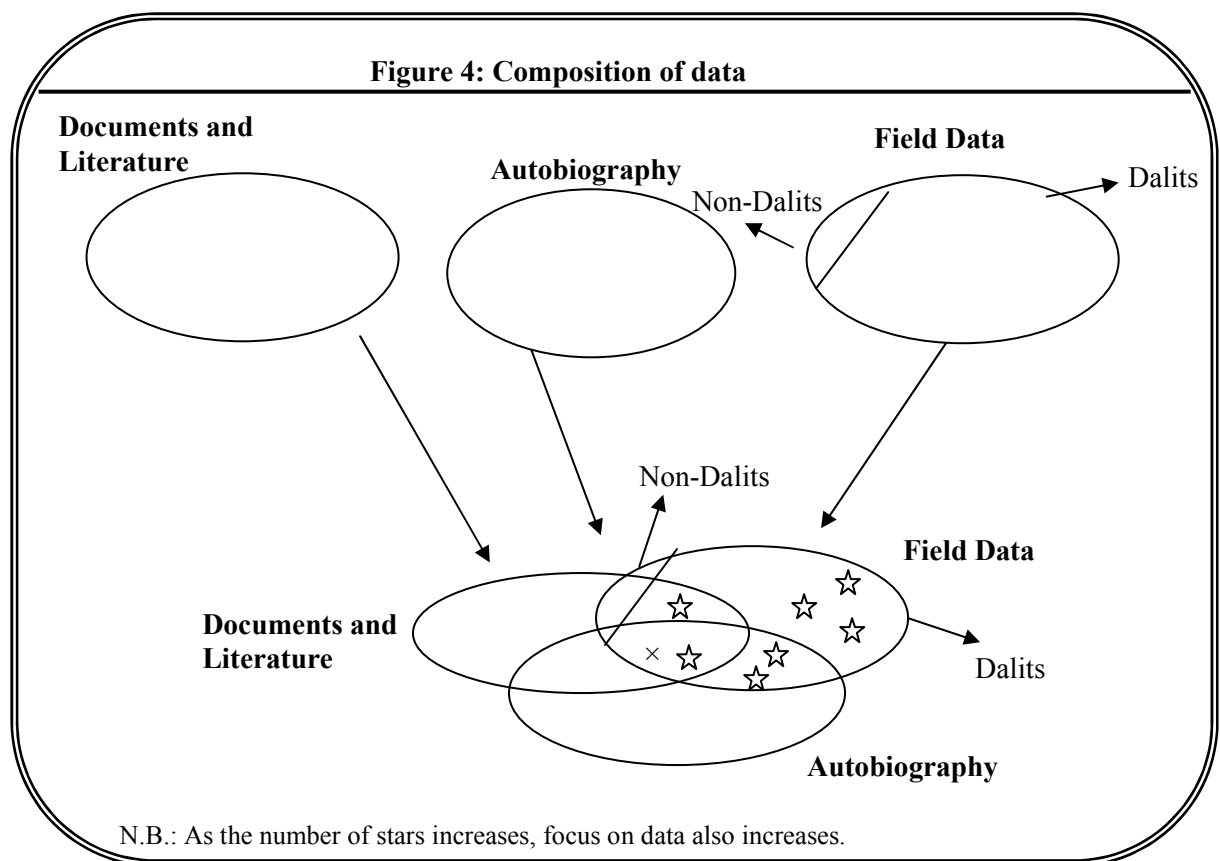
I got useful information and the sources of several documents during conversations with people working with the issue related to Dalits in Kathmandu. My visit to Dalit-focused NGOs also helped to identify further documents. Websites of various institutions including, Ministries and other agencies of the Government of Nepal, World Bank, UNICEF, DfID, UNESCO, UNDP, Janautthan Pratisthan and Kantipur Publication contributed a lot. My own working experience at the Ministry of Education in Nepal and previous involvement in writing and researching educational issues also contributed to gaining access to relevant documents.

Table 4: Collected documents: sources and types

Place	Description of documents and sources
Gauripur School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' records • Students' records • Teachers' meeting minute • SMC meeting minute • School's programmes and budgets • Government's circulars to the school
Siraha (Outside Basipur village)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEP and annual planning from DEO • Programmes of Dalits Sewa Sangh, some statistics and records
Kathmandu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various documents related to education policies and planning • Historic documents and literature on caste hierarchies and educational practices • Dalit related activities, studies, publications of MOES, DOE, NGOs, Dalit Organisations, CBS, NPC, NDC, WB, ADB, DfID
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various websites, including MOES, NPC, Janautthan Pratisthan, DNF, Kantipur Publication, WB, ADB, DfID, UNESCO

Let me summarise the relationships for the above-mentioned three sets of data obtained from the three different sources, documents and literature, autobiography, and research field. This summary is presented in figure 4. The three elliptical figures represent three different sets of data in which the field data are divided into two sections by a slant line: the data based on Dalits' perspectives and the data based on non-Dalits' perspectives. The figure shows that these three sets of data were not disconnected. For example, the part of the figure indicated with a cross (×) and a star together represent the data common to all three sources. Similarly, the part of the figure with two stars shows the common data between two sources, field and autobiography, whereas the part of the figure with a single star shows the data common to the sources, field, and documents and literature. The data from the non-intersecting parts of the figure were either disconnected or contradictory.

Although I used all three sets of data, my focus was on the field data from Basipur village and Gauripur School that revealed the Dalits’ voices, perspectives and struggles. I used other sets of non-overlapping data to compare and contrast the voices and perspectives; however, overlapping parts of data were also used to supplement the Dalits’ perspectives and struggles and to understand contrasting interpretations. In figure 4, the part of data set placed with three stars represents the most focused data, and the focus of data reduces continuously as the number of star decreases. That is, the more focused data in this research were the field data based on struggles and voices of the Dalits from Basipur village and Gauripur School.



Recording and Managing the Data

At the very beginning of this study, Professor Tony Booth suggested that I produce a research diary (r/d) throughout the study period. As I was not sure about the use of such a research diary, he simply asked me ‘let’s start with writing daily experiences, encounters and ideas whichever you find related to your research’. Right from that day, I began to maintain a research diary, and this diary worked as a useful resource for my

study. I also used this research diary to record some of the data from the fieldwork (especially data from the preliminary fieldwork), and I managed it throughout this study to note events and experiences related to my research. However, during the main fieldwork I used separate field notes (f/n) to record field data.

My experiences from previous research and the experiences from the preliminary fieldwork for this research suggested that the use of recording instruments (audio or video) generally breaks the flow of informal conversations in the natural setting. I felt more comfortable not using a tape recorder. Generally, I wrote the main points of the conversation immediately after the conversation or interview session, and sometimes I noted some important points during the interview.

During the fieldwork at the Basipur village and Gauripur School, I wrote 'jotted notes' (Nigel, 2003) immediately after the interview or conversations and observations. Whenever possible, I wrote jotted notes at the school's office, tea stalls or any other suitable places. This strategy of recording the field data was continued. During the fieldwork, I tried to write daily field notes and reflexive field notes on my laptop. Sometimes, it was difficult to finish writing the daily field notes in the evening, because sometimes the field notes were too long to complete with one evening, or sometimes I could not manage writing in the evening due to evening meetings and programmes. Viewing the fact that "anything not recorded is lost" (Delamont, 2004, p 225), I spent one day each week recording and managing the data.

However, the field notes were never 'complete' since until the stage of data categorisation and analysis I added and reflected on the situation. Indeed, mostly, when I was looking at the data, I felt engaged with the field, so that it was not possible to limit previously written notes and comments; that is, there was a possibility of some supplementary explanation of data. Along with the detailed description of the place, actors and activities/events, I wrote my comments on and understanding of the situations in these brief notes. I continuously interpreted and elaborated these brief notes during data categorisation and data analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The field data were about experiences, understandings and practices in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. The data analysis includes how Dalit people act and

react with social and school practices. It also revealed how Dalits have been struggling to live with new values of inclusion. My analysis and interpretation of data had a direct link with the field and my understandings. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation was a process of drawing meaning and knowledge by reflecting and balancing the field data, and the perspectives of the researcher and research participants. As described in Fetterman (1998), analyses of the data began with the beginning of the fieldwork and continued throughout the fieldwork and up to the final writing of the thesis.

Three Tasks: Description, Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is a combination of description, analysis and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). I described the field, the process, and activities of the fieldwork. The description of the field included physical as well as socio-cultural aspects, including societal power relations and the everyday life of people. The description also included a brief introduction to the research participants. Analysis is the process of understanding the meaning, which also includes sequencing and categorising the data. I categorised the data under various themes and grouped them into three broad sections: societal exclusion, exclusion from the school, and education policy practices and exclusion of Dalits. There were a number of sub-themes for each main theme. The data analysis also included interpretations and conclusions. Interpretations are the process by which an ethnographer attributes meaning to data (Brewer, 2000, p 122). Moreover, “thinking about how to represent our data also forces us to think about the meanings and understandings, voices, and experiences present in the data”(Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p 109). Thus, it was difficult to separate analysis and interpretation, as they went hand in hand.

Description of the field provided a context and background for the analysis and interpretation, even though there was no clear sequence or order of these tasks. Analysis was built upon the description as well as various data obtained from the community and school, including relationships, agreements and disagreements. It also gave rise to new meanings or explanation of Dalit exclusion supported by theoretical perspectives. Sometimes, interpretation included both support for a partial theoretical perspective as well as a disagreement with it and an argument for new meanings.

Although it was difficult to separate description, analysis and interpretation, the second part of this chapter describes methods and processes and chapter 6 describes places and people. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 have included all three aspects with a little description and some interpretations but mainly analysis. Chapter 10 mainly concentrates on interpretation with a little space for analysis.

Categorising and Coding the Data

After returning from the fieldwork, I wrote up extensive field notes. Categorisation and coding began with these extensive field notes that included interview transcriptions and observational notes with comments and reflections. I also had documents and data recorded in my research diary. I read all the data at least two times and wrote lists of related ‘main words’ separately in alphabetical order. I did not have any pre-set analytic categories so that I derived categories from the data. After preparing the list of these conceptual terms, I sat in front of my laptop with the field data and put down selected conceptual terms in a column just to the right side of each paragraph of my field notes and other data. I reviewed this again after completing assigning these elementary conceptual categories. These conceptual categories are the same as what Punch (2004) called ‘first order concepts’.

As second order concepts, I tried to categorise these conceptual categories into some more common categories of meanings. For this, I made several categories that gave some common theme with combination of these elementary categories. Finally, I grouped these second order concepts into three broader groups related to Dalits’ inclusion in and exclusion from the village, school and policy and practices, that was the third order concepts which I drew from the data. Finally, I set three field data based chapters with these third order concepts, which were developed based on second order concepts. The second order concepts with some revisions were included as the sub-heading of these chapters. I gave three codes, V, S and P for the third order concepts related to inclusion in and exclusion from the village, school, and policy and practice respectively, and V₁, V₂, V₃...; S₁, S₂, S₃ ...and P₁, P₂, P₃... for respective second order concepts. I wrote these second order concepts in a separate column just to the right side of the third order concepts. Such categorising and coding of data helped in ‘data reduction’ and ‘data display’ (Miles and Haberman, 1994, p 12) without losing the main ideas and concepts of the data. Indeed, coding was the “process of putting tags, names

or labels against pieces of the data” (Punch, 2004, p 204), which helped to get the themes from the data. Therefore, coding was a “mixture of data reduction and data compilation” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p 30).

After this categorisation and coding, I selected and accumulated pieces of data according to the categories and then I erased repeated and unimportant data. Finally, based on the selected set of data, I developed each sub-chapter. I developed the links between sub-chapters and between chapters during the writing process and added more sub-headings in various sub-chapters. During writing, I also included some additional descriptions and analyses as well as some interpretation of data. These processes were also part of the data analysis because more than classifying, categorising, coding, or collecting of data, analysis was ‘the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena’ (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p 108).

The knowledge, which was constructed, is an interpretation in relation to the research context and my own understandings. I interpreted ethnographic data within the macro context of society to explore the micro context. Therefore, I explored local truth and knowledge in relation to the wider social context.

3.6 Ethical Considerations and Dilemmas

This section discusses the ethics that I maintained in this research and explains the relationship between ethics and values. It also discusses some ethical issues and dilemmas that appeared during this research.

Ethics and Values

In my research, ethics involve broader values as well as methodological issues as discussed in the previous part of this chapter. In other words, ethics and values are intertwined. In addition to maintaining informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, the exposition of values was an important aspect of the ethics of my research. In the beginning of my research, I disclosed my value commitments and wrote my methodological consideration including my epistemological values. My autobiographical exploration (Chapter 4) also helped to disclose my understanding and value commitments. Similarly, in the research field, I explained the aims and processes of the research to the research participants, which also indirectly explained my commitment and values to the research participants.

On many occasions the value-laden nature of facts were made evident. For example, Dalit people have experienced multiple forms of exclusion, including exclusion from school. At the same time, most non-Dalits of Basipur have the view that Dalits themselves were responsible for their exclusion in education (Chapters 7 and 8). To me, ethics in this case is to unmask disguised or subjugated discourses related to Dalits' struggles and exclusion. Considering the social aim and values of this research, I have maintained the following ethics.

Protection of research participants' rights was one of the main ethics in my research. To protect the research participants' right I used informed consent as an important ethical principle. I explained my research aims and processes, probable research activities and the expected roles of the participants in the research in advance, whenever possible. Similarly, for new participants I explained the purpose of my conversation or interview to confirm his/her voluntary participation. In the case of younger children, after gaining consent from their parents, or sometimes from teachers, I gave attention to the interests of the children in participating in conversations. Initially, in some cases, in order to respect the children's interests, I postponed conversations, but due to a long-term engagement in the field, such a problematic situation hardly appeared in the later part of my fieldwork. However, when children as well as people from the community seemed uninterested in discussing some of the issues, I tried to respect and protect their interests and rights. In the case of children's participation in this research, I tried to listen and include their voices. In this way, I tried to protect the participants' right to participate or not, or even right to withdraw from participation by ensuring their voluntary participation through maintaining informed consent.

Right to privacy of the participants was another important ethical issue enacted in my research. For this purpose, I have maintained anonymity so that participants will not be identified in the data. Except in special cases, when permission was granted to use real names, the participants' names and their locations that identify the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms. Again, in most cases, it was difficult to use real names even with permission because it could have exposed the anonymity of the other people. Similarly, as another aspect of maintaining privacy I have tried not to reveal identity-specific data so that confidentiality of the participants can be maintained. I was careful not to probe the participants' personal matters and maintained confidentiality by not

disclosing such personal data even if participants told me. This does not mean that participants did not express strong views about the matters of caste discrimination and exclusion. I tried not to expose the data that may be harmful to anybody personally and the data that the participants did not want to expose publicly.

I disclosed my identification as a researcher and explained my purpose and process of research to the research participants. I exposed indirectly my value commitments on inclusive practices. In this way, I have not used any deceptive and fraudulent ways to approach any data from which I prevented misconduct of research. In a similar vein, honesty has been maintained in the writing as I have tried to be reflexive in interpreting people's views and voices, so that they are not intentionally misinterpreted or distorted.

Avoiding any physical, social and psychological harm not only to the participants and to society, but also avoiding such harm to me as a researcher and to the research community have been important ethics for this research. I have tried to avoid such harm to the research participants by providing information about my research and getting consent from the research participants and considering the socio-cultural complexity and power relations in the society.

Ethical Dilemmas

Maintaining ethics while researching social lives is not always as easy as I have described above. I had some ethical dilemmas during my research work. One of the dilemmas I faced was in managing the balance between the rights, commitment and purpose of this research as in O'Reilly (2005). Although I tried to maintain research participants' privacy, tried to protect their rights and did not engage in any deception, a general question remained unanswered about the purpose and use of this research. The question was, 'to what extent is it ethical to expose and use people's lives for the benefit of the researcher by giving an account of their lives to some external agency?' Again, I was trying to maintain anonymity and the research participants' right of privacy by not exposing the participants' identifiable data and information. At the same time, I was trying to justify my claims by presenting data as evidence. For example, the use of photos from the research site in this thesis may work as a hard evidence for some of my claims and argument, however, I could not use it due to the ethical problem related to anonymity. I have tried to be careful of both the issues of evidence and ethics by

maintaining necessary reflexivity, although balancing evidence and ethics in an ideal way is difficult. Indeed, managing the “balance between privacy and methodological relevance is tricky” (Ryen, 2004, p 237). However, through my awareness and reflexivity I tried to maintain a balance between evidence and ethics.

Along with the above-mentioned general ethical dilemmas, one of the ethical problems I faced was the issue of gaining consent on the use of children and young pupils as research participants in my research. Researchers generally get access through gatekeepers like a head teacher, community leaders or parents, but the pertinent question in this case is whether it is ethical to use the power or authority of a gatekeeper and other people to get the consent of vulnerable people. Although many research-communities suggest that this process of getting consent is a way of maintaining ethics, in my opinion it raises an ethical dilemma in the research. I tried to get consent from parents and sometimes teachers, but equally I respected the interests and willingness of the children. Moreover, as I tried to listen and incorporate the voices and concerns of the children, which also justify their involvement as research participants in this research (see, Roberts-Holmes, 2005).

My long-term involvement with the research site and community gave me an opportunity to understand the complexity of issues and the complexity of the local power dynamics. At the same time, this long-term involvement made it difficult to distance myself from local issues. People, during public meetings or personal conversations, generally, expected my views and comments on the issue, and if I withheld my views, they could have lost interest in working with me. But, sometimes, it was problematic to express my view, which may support or differ from their views. Such difficulties as maintaining distance and involving myself with local issues appeared on several occasions during my field research. In most cases, where it was possible, I gave my view, but in some cases, I did not express my interest and view about the issue discussed by keeping silent. However, in personal conversations and informal discussions with either Dalits or non-Dalits, I generally discussed issues such as discrimination towards Dalits more openly. Such discussions helped me to gain trust with both the Dalits and non-Dalits communities. People generally do not feel reserved with people who express his/her ideas openly, but they are also keen not to personally harm anybody.

3.7 Summary

The first part of this chapter has explored my methodological considerations and has reflected upon my assumption of the interrelation between facts and values. In other words, facts and values are inseparable, so that there is hardly any possibility of independent existence. The aim of my research was not to find neutral facts, but to analyse the facts and values together. As truths are historical and social, there is always a possibility of the existence of multiple truths. I have been interested to uncover some alternate truths and voices about the practice of schooling and participation of Dalits in education. Simultaneously, I have been opposing caste-based hierarchies and discrimination, so my implicit aim was to improve inclusiveness and justice in society in general and in education and schooling in particular. In doing so, the first part of this chapter has established reflexive ethnography as the method of researching the issue along with genealogy as an approach to analyse it by focusing on the dialectical relationship between structure and agency.

The aim of this research was to encourage and to improve the conditions for social justice by uncovering alternative and disguised discourses and knowledge. In order to do this, how power-knowledge has been working as the mechanism of creating certain truth(s) has been explained. Similarly, the aim has been to develop a counter-discourse that opposes caste-based stratification. In this way, like Kincheloe and McLaren's (1998) criterion, my research is linked with some critical traditions. The critical tradition based on Foucault "invites researchers to explore the ways in which discourses are implicated in relations of power and how power and knowledge serve as dialectically reinitiating practices that regulate what is considered reasonable and true" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998, p 264). I am not sure to what extent Foucault's readings have shaped my understanding of this research, but Turner (2005), rightly said, "Ethnographers who have read Foucault lose their innocence" (p 40). Moreover, a critical perspective in social research links social and cultural criticism as "all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998, p 263).

The second part of this chapter has described the research methods and processes I used in this research. It was difficult to set a fixed rule or any formula for the fieldwork, as I

was working in a complex social setting of an unpredictable nature. Burgess (2005) rightly said, “Field research involves the researcher in relationships with those studied; it is a social process in which the researcher plays a major part” (pp 28-29). However, my research design was a useful guideline for my ethnographic fieldwork in which creativity and reflexivity were essential in each step of the research process. Based on methodological considerations discussed in the first part, I used three sets of data obtained from different sources to analyse the issue. I obtained field data from ethnographic fieldwork at Basipur village and Gauripur School. I used participant observations and unstructured interviews as the methods for data collection. I also collected and used document and literatures related to the issues of education policy and practice as well as educational inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. Similarly, I also used my autobiography to analyse the issue of exclusion of Dalits. My main analytical focus was the field data that elicited Dalits’ views, struggles and their agency. In the next chapter, I present my autobiography, which explores my experiences and understanding regarding the issue of caste based discrimination and exclusion of Dalits.

Chapter 4

Self and the Research: An Autobiographical Exploration

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is two-fold: first, to explore and understand the self based on experiences and present practices in relation to the research problem and second, to identify and disclose my understanding and viewpoints about the research problem. Thus, along with describing who I am, this chapter explores my understanding and experiences related to the caste hierarchies, Dalits' exclusion and power relations in society. My personal journey and struggles have been situated within these complex hierarchies, exclusion and power relations. I have observed and comprehended hierarchies, exclusion and power relations in social and educational settings. Therefore, the inclusion of my experiences and understanding assisted me to perceive and analyse the issue of the educational exclusion of Dalits. Furthermore, it supplemented the field research as well as documents and literature study.

This chapter begins with a brief life history starting from my childhood. This includes some understanding as well as confusions about social practices and beliefs on the issue of caste hierarchy. It then shares some experiences from places where I lived and explores how I questioned hierarchies and differences. Stories of my educational and professional journeys contribute to the attempt to understand my agency within structural constraints.

4.2 Some Confusing Experiences of Childhood

I was born in a village of the eastern hilly district Dhankuta of Nepal and grew up with my grandparents. We lived in an extended family of four uncles and their wives, grandparents and my parents. My grandparents' roles were as parents, carers, educators as well as close friends, whom I could play with, share every pain and pleasure with, and feel safe with. I do not remember any event related to my mother because she died when I was four, but I do remember some of the events related to my elder sister.

Tragically, she died at the age of eight. After the death of my sister, I felt lonely even though I was living with other family members.

My family was Brahmin with some literacy tradition at home. At that time, literacy was not common to all families. In our family, it was generally limited to boys. Though we had some advantage due to the literacy tradition in our family, we were not in an advantageous economic position.

The practices of untouchability and caste hierarchy are rooted in Nepalese society, although some variations are found in personal practice and understanding. At my home, there was no restriction for the people from various non-Dalit castes to enter the house, sit, drink and eat together. Unlike, in other Brahmin families, non-Dalits (other than Brahmin) could have boiled-rice in places other than the dining area, where there was restriction on eating together. Dalits were not permitted to enter our home. They usually sat in the sitting room called *dalan*, i.e., the inner courtyard where we used to provide sitting mats for them. I used to speak to people of different ages using respectable words, such as ‘elder brother’, ‘younger brother’, ‘sister’, ‘uncle’, ‘aunt’, and so on. My grandmother usually used to say that to be a Dalit was not their fault, so we had to show respect according to their ages. Because of the deep-rooted caste system, she could not go beyond the system of caste hierarchy.

However, non-Dalit people could not eat and drink with Dalits. Though I could not find any justification for such practice of untouchability, it was a kind of culturally legitimised practice. There was no restriction to sit, eat and drink with the people from any caste, for the boys before *upanayan* (initiation, a ceremony to wear sacred thread) and for the girls before marriage.

As there was not any Dalit settlement in the neighbourhood, I did not get much experience of their culture and social relations. We had some neighbouring families from other castes, with whose children I usually played and sometimes we drank and ate in each other’s homes. Neighbouring families usually shared their experiences about social and personal matters and worked together in most social activities. We usually tried to learn the neighbours’ languages, cultures and rituals.

Most of the things about caste hierarchy and social practices were taken for granted, so people generally did not question the causes and practices of caste hierarchy. However,

I questioned my grandmother several times about caste hierarchy, and I always got unsatisfactory responses, like ‘god made it’; ‘it was the practice’; ‘caste came from their own actions (*karma*)’. Although the practice of caste hierarchy was taken for granted, I was not satisfied with the justifications of such caste-based hierarchy. I questioned myself about the concept and function of ‘god’ because I thought that if god made such an unjust system of promoting caste-based discrimination and untouchability, the concept and function of god is questionable. Again, if it was general practice, I sometimes questioned myself why such practice continued to exist, and how such a practice started.

In addition to the practice of untouchability, I experienced some of the explicit forms of caste-based (sometimes class-based) dominations and discriminations from conversations with Dalits. In Nepali, there are generally four types of second person pronouns: *tan*, *timi*, *tapai* and *hajur* in hierarchical order of non-honorific to honorific⁶. Besides this, some so-called elite families use another more honorific marker added to the non-finite verb: *baksiyos*. However, many people of various castes, except Dalits, use the non-honorific term *tan* for Dalits, irrespective of their ages. In contrast, most Dalits use the honorific terms *hajur* and *tapai* in talking to people from so-called higher castes. Such practice is still found in many places. However, I never used such discriminatory and dominating language to Dalits. As mentioned before, when I was younger, I used words of respect according to their ages.

As our family had a literacy tradition at home, one of the elder family members had to teach elementary literacy and numeracy to all the young boys (not usually to the girls). Some members, who seemed brilliant in reading, could generally continue Sanskrit education from some *pandits* at their homes or *asrams*, or sometimes they used to go to the *asrams* in India for further education in Sanskrit. My father and all the uncles had at least basic literacy skills. I also learnt basic reading and writing in Nepali language and calculation skills from my grandfather. At that time, there was one primary school for grades 1-5 with one pre-primary group in my village. Beyond that, there were no schools within walking distance from my village. After getting basic literacy, I was

⁶ The honorific and non-honorific pronouns in Nepali generally express hierarchical relations in which *tan* expresses the lowest in the hierarchy and *timi*, *tapai* and *hajur* respectively express ascending order of hierarchies. However, people also use *tan* and *timi* for closed, informal and equal relationships (especially between friends). Similarly, people also use *timi* as a loving word to children, younger people, friends and married partners.

admitted to primary school at the age of eight, where only two teachers were teaching all six grades with about seventy students altogether. At that school, I did not have any experience with Dalit children, as there were no Dalit children admitted. Since schooling had not been recognised as a necessity for children, a number of families did not send their children to school. This was more common in the Dalit community. However, I did not have any idea about Dalits' non-participation in schooling because schooling was not very common in my village, and there was an absence of understanding about Dalits' schooling.

With regard to religious practices, there were discriminations towards Dalits. For example, at the temple, which was rather far from my house, there was a tradition that a Dalit could not have the opportunity to worship and the priest used to give them flowers without touching them. Although the priest played ritual roles within the temple, the *mukhya* of the village (a Kshatriya), with the consultation of some family priest (*pandit*), generally set the rules and settled the issue within the village. The rules and decisions were generally based on Hindu mythology as interpreted by the *pandit*.

Caste hierarchy, untouchability and other social practices were generally legitimised in the name of traditional Hindu rules usually known as Hindu mythology. Social practices were based on those mythological rules, and people usually considered violations of such rules as taboos. The violators of such rules had to face social punishments such as social boycott and degradation from the existing caste position. Sometimes, people talked about the *naya muluki ain* (New Legal Code-1963) and stated that all people are equal as there is no discrimination in the ground of sex, race and caste. Then there would be no caste-based hierarchy. This Code could not change the social practices although it had prohibited caste-based discrimination in legal decisions. Social practice, in general, was still influenced by the old Legal Code of 1854 from which caste hierarchy was legally sanctioned.

4.3 The Tarai Village: Questioning Hierarchies and Differences

When I was nine, my family migrated to a village of rural Tarai of eastern Nepal. It was a new and exciting experience for me because I got a chance to see some cities on the way and lowland Tarai. I had the opportunity to travel by bus. At the same time, I became worried too, as I was missing my birthplace, friends, relatives, and I was

especially missing my grandparents. However, I had to adjust to the place and people as we had already moved there. In my new village, there were mixed settlements of various Pahadiya people: Brahmins, Kshatries, Rai and others. There were also Madhesies⁷: Rajbansi, Satar and Lohar. Satar and Lohar were generally considered as so-called lower caste people. In the Tarai village, various conflicts related to language, culture and ownership of land were apparent between Pahadiya and Madhesies. In the case of Madhesi Dalits, such conflicts were more serious as they were also facing caste-based discrimination from both Pahadiya and non-Dalit Madhesies. I observed such conflicts and complexities within the society during my school education at the Tarai village.

Sometimes, a simple incident plays an important role in shaping experiences, practices and values. I still remember an incident that happened when I was twelve. A cyclist in the Tarai village had beaten a cart (oxen cart) driver without any reason. Let me briefly describe that incident.

At the time, I was living with my family in a rural Tarai village of eastern Nepal. There was no transportation except bicycles and carts. In front of my house, there was a side road, the end of which was rather narrow and uneven. So, any cyclist had to wait until a cart passed. At that time, a Lohar (Dalit from Tarai) was driving a cart to the side road and at the same time, a cyclist (an economically well-off Pahadiya from non-Dalit caste) was coming from the opposite direction. As the cyclist was not able to cross, he stopped uneasily but safely. I was observing the situation from a distance of about fifty meters, and I was thinking that it was the fault of the cyclist. But, the cyclist abused the cart driver where the cyclist pulled the cart driver out from his cart and kicked him several times. I said, 'It's too much! Why is he beating the cart driver?' But, I was not able to convince the other people including some of my family members who were observing the situation that it was the fault of cyclist. Some people even started shouting at the cart driver.

Because of this incident, I started questioning social values, norms and discriminatory practices and their legitimacy. I have also been trying to find out and explain the process and causes of such discrimination and subjugation. From this experience, I became interested in the political struggles and human rights of Dalits.

⁷ Pahadiyas are the people traditionally living in Nepalese hills and mountains and Madhesis are the people traditionally living in Tarai of Nepal (the plain area).

4.4 Struggles for Education

I had already learnt basic literacy and numeracy skills, like reading and writing simple Nepali texts and doing four simple algorithms in arithmetic from my grandfather before moving to the Tarai village. In comparison to the previous hill village, there was easy access to schools in the Tarai village, as a lower secondary school (grades 1-7) was situated in our village and a secondary school (up to grade 10) was situated within one and half hours of walking distance. Schools charged monthly and yearly fees, and they collected donations for school building construction and the salaries for extra teachers appointed by school themselves. After a gap of one year, I started my schooling at a city called Dharan, which was far from my village. Then, I was only eleven. However, I had to manage everything including cooking and washing. My father was interested in Sanskrit education (a general tradition in some Brahmin families), which could generally provide some practical and theoretical knowledge concerning Hindu ritualistic practices and the skills to be a priest (*pandit*) afterwards. Though Sanskrit education was limited to the Brahmin males, some of the scholars had been trying to include the people of all the castes and women by explaining that there were no restrictions in participating in Sanskrit education for any caste and gender. It was difficult to include all castes and women due to various social and cultural practices. Then, Sanskrit education was free and the institute provided a free hostel, and generally, from grade eight, students were able to get a free meal twice a day. In addition to these guiding factors, the main cause for sending me to that institute was that one of my cousins was studying at the same institute at grade nine, with whom I had a very close relationship and he was happy to look after me.

My skill in basic literacy, which I learnt from my grandfather, was enough to be admitted at grade six. However, it was not easy to complete my studies. After completing grade six, as suggested by my cousin, I went back to my village and continued my education at the secondary school situated within about one and half hours walking distance from my house. My cousin advised me not to continue Sanskrit education. In his opinion, Sanskrit education had no scope in the future. Although the new education system plan also charged tuition fees in schools, it was still exempted for the students who were studying Sanskrit education.

The new education system (generally called, new education '*naya shiksha*') was the education system, the National Education System Plan (1971-1975), launched with US assistance. We, as school students, also felt some changes brought by this new education. For example, some common changes we observed were the centralised control system in educational administration, district-level, zone-level and national-level examinations, uniformity of textbooks, Nepali language as the medium of instruction with compulsory English language, vocational curriculum, some new subjects called civic education and history, and the introduction of school uniforms. At that time, people were also talking in favour of and against the new education system plan. Some were supporting the new education system and others were opposing it. Supporters claimed that it was nationalistic, and it provided vocational education. Those who opposed the education system argued that it was the deterioration in the quality of education. However, I did not have any understanding about either the nationalistic claims or the deterioration in quality at that time.

Some years later, I understood the intention of nationalistic education and the perception of the deterioration in the quality of education. For instance, that education system had tried to induct the loyalty to the existing form of non-party political system with the king's active leadership by appealing to the ideas of one language- Nepali and one national culture- Hindu in the name of nationalism. The system opposed people's sovereignty and all other forms of political systems, so one of the main aims of that new education system plan was to distort people's belief in the sovereignty of the people and diversity in language, culture, religion and ideology by introducing sovereignty of the monarch i.e., the Hindu king. In other words, the main aim of that education system was to indoctrinate a certain ideology that could support the sovereignty of an active Hindu king and to assimilate people to the dominant language and culture.

I found two types of oppositional views about the new education system plan in the name of the issue of quality. One was related to quality, as they perceived it, and another view was related to opposition to such indoctrination. For instance, some people viewed that it was not a high standard course; since their meaning of standard and quality was related to the English language, they felt that Nepali as the language of instruction would not be able to maintain the standard. However, other people had the idea that the curriculum reduced academic content by incorporating vocational content.

Some opposed the examination system stating that it would not be able to maintain quality as the system introduced continuous assessment as an integral part of students' grade promotion. In addition to this, many people opposed ideological indoctrination through the education system by indirectly using the issue of quality, as it was difficult to oppose the system and its indoctrination directly. The education system was launched in the name of so-called nationalism and national unity by the king, so opposition to the system was not allowed.

As I was admitted at grade seven at the secondary school of the Tarai village, it was very difficult for me to complete my studies. In the mornings and evenings, I had to do various chores at home. Therefore, throughout my school years, I used to study and do my homework after the evening meal. For me, there was no fixed time for bed, as it depended upon my homework and lessons that I needed to study. I am not sure how I studied in such a situation, but I had an ambition of getting at least a bachelor degree and at least working as a secondary school teacher when I started my schooling at grade six. Two years later, when I started class nine, I had recovered most of the courses and got a position within the first good students' group and was within the five good students of the class and passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination at the age of sixteen. One of the causes of my success was the encouragement and concerns from most of my teachers during my secondary school. The success was very important to me because it opened up the possibility of higher study, which might change my lifestyle. Similarly, this was a special prestige for me as I passed the SLC examination in a situation where the pass rate was very low (about one third) on average (even below 15% in most rural areas). There were very few SLC graduates in my village, and I was the first SLC graduate in my family.

Still, I did not have any Dalit classmate at school. There were very few students from the Madhesi community, and only a very small number of girls studied at school. I knew that a number of students left school at an early age due to not passing the examination. Others left due to adjustment problems with the school, teachers, classmates, subjects and courses of study.

For further study, there were no colleges within walking distance, so I had to go to a city. I started my college at Dhankuta with the support of some of my relatives. One of my cousins was studying at Dhankuta, so that solved my problem of accommodation.

From the support of my cousin and his parents, I completed a two-year college degree (equivalent to grade 12) from Dhankuta College. After completing that degree from Dhankuta College, I started to teach in a remote mountainous district of Nepal. I worked for two years as a lower secondary and secondary school teacher to earn some money and went to Kathmandu in order to study for a bachelor's degree, and continued with a master's degree in mathematics. I had been teaching at the school of the mountainous district along with one of my close friends, who had already completed a bachelor degree from the same college. After teaching for two years at the same school, we gave up teaching and began further study in Kathmandu.

My student life at university was active in the sense that I was teaching in a school as a part time mathematics teacher, participating in various student welfare activities, as well as activities related to political activism. At that time, most of the student welfare activities were related to some political activities to weaken the non-democratic political regime and to generate political awareness. At that time, all political parties were banned and a non-party system with the active leadership of the king was in practice. Students had been actively participating in various democratic movements; among such democratic movements, students had effectively contributed to the successful People's Movement of 1990. This movement was able to reinstate multi-party democracy with a constitutional monarchy. I was influenced by active political involvement in my student life. I developed some strong attitudes in opposition to various social discriminations based on caste, class, culture, language, religion and region. This contributed to shape the rest of my working life and value position. Similarly, I got the opportunity to discuss with some Dalit friends and students about the issue of untouchability and exclusion during the period when I was studying at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu.

Very few Dalit students were studying at the university, so there was no Dalit focussed student activity at the university. Different students' groups, political parties, and intellectuals had their own views about the inclusion of Dalits in political, social and educational life. Except for a very small fraction of student groups, who were supporting the active leadership of the king, all the students opposed the existing political system. In such a situation, people had the view that a democratic and participatory political system is the pre-requisite for Dalits' inclusion in various aspects of social, political and educational practices. However, there were different views about

the inclusion of Dalits. Some people, for example, viewed that within the multi-party democracy, the state would be able to implement inclusive policy, whereas the others viewed that it was a question of economy and representation of class, so there was a need for a proletarian government. Similarly, some people thought that the Hindu tradition and religious beliefs were the main problems, and others thought that low economic status was the main obstacle. Some people were also thinking that there was a need to change the practice and culture of various Dalit people. Not only non-Dalits, who were in opposition to caste based exclusion and differentiation, but also the Dalits were also engaged in such discourses of various ways of promoting Dalits' inclusion. On various occasions, I was also participating in these discourses with Dalits and non-Dalits. Such debates continue in Nepal as Dalits' participation in social, political and educational sectors is still very low, and they are still facing the problems of discrimination and exclusion.

4.5 Working at the Ministry of Education: Understanding Diversity

I have worked at the Nepalese Ministry of Education for fifteen years in various capacities, including School Supervisor, District Education Officer, Teacher Trainer and Curriculum and Textbook Developer. I started my job at the Ministry of Education as an Education Officer and School Supervisor and promoted to Under Secretary. During this job at the Ministry of Education, I gained some new understanding about society and social practices. In this way, I have enjoyed my work and developed a critical understanding about the system. I am critical not only of the practice of other people, but also critical of and reflexive about my own understandings and work. This leads me to re-evaluate my work as well as the work of the government and bureaucracy.

My understanding is that our public service, including education, is not service oriented; it is power and personal benefit centred. There were a number of factors that have been shaping the culture of public service: historical images and practices of the public service as the ruler and administrator but not service provider; social and family acceptance for misuse of power and money; low salaries; certain group's domination in higher positions; and lack of democratic practices.

During my job at the Ministry of Education, I worked with several teachers and schools in various communities. I gained some new experiences and understanding about social

and cultural diversity and multiplicity in meaning while working at the Far Western Development Region of Nepal. I observed some forms of traditional feudalistic domination, extreme caste-based domination and discrimination in society and different types of bonded labour like, *haliya*, and *kamaiya*. One of the situations that I encountered at a village reveals the reality of untouchability.

As a district education officer, I visited some schools. In a newly established secondary school, there was a ceremony of the school day with various activities including sports. I also observed some of the students' games, talked to some parents, teachers and members of the School Managing Committee about the school's activities and problems. After finishing the programme, I went to one of the local teachers' houses where I had to stay for that night. When we entered his house, one old man requested me to stay for a minute. When I stopped walking, the old man sprinkled water on me. I asked him, "What are you doing?" He replied me, "It is purification with holy water." Again, I asked him, "Why are you sprinkling such water?" He insisted, "You are just coming from outside where you may have touched untouchable caste people, so I have to sprinkle water for purification." I did not discuss this any more than that at that time. I had heard such stories, but I had not seen such practice, which was a new experience regarding the concept of untouchability. I was also going to attend the next day's programme at the school. Before leaving the house, I requested the old man to listen to me; I was going to speak about the way of purification. I also asked the old man whether he felt uneasiness about this or not. He said he would come to listen to me.

I spoke about the role of community and school for the inclusion of all children in school. I took a considerably long time on the issue of untouchability and caste by justifying the need to change the practice of untouchability and discrimination based on castes. That old man gave me special thanks for my comment on this issue and promised me that he would try to change some of his ideas and practices about untouchability.

I tried to analyse this event when I returned to my office. People had been practicing untouchability. On the other hand, they did not oppose my speech about untouchability, but rather supported it. It was because they had already felt that untouchability was an injustice, but they were practicing it as a social system and tradition, or because they did not want to argue with me, as I was the District Education Officer.

I worked for two and half years as a trainer in residential trainings programmes for school teachers and non-formal education facilitators (teachers). Those residential training programmes were not only limited to formal training contents, but they also provided several opportunities to understand the complexities of teachers' lives and social and cultural practices. They helped construct some shared meanings and alternative discourses about diversity and stratification. Several times, I utilised this

space to develop a self-reflexive attitude amongst the trainees as well as myself towards social and individual practice within school and society. The following example shows the practice of untouchability within the teacher community. It demonstrates how I utilised this space to oppose caste-based untouchability and exclusions.

Two trainee teachers were having their lunch at a separate table. Other trainee teachers and one of the trainers were having their lunch and talking together when the head teacher of the school and I came from a community meeting. The head teacher told me that both of the teachers were Dalits, so they were sitting separately. I was not happy with the situation, but it was not easy to change the practice, as the head teacher of that school was taking the responsibility of hosting this programme and I was coordinating the programme as a trainer. I discussed the situation with the head teacher. He agreed with me that it was not good, but he told me that it was difficult to change it. I assured him that his support would be sufficient for this, and all the trainees and the community would appreciate him, if he supported the change. Another trainer appreciated my idea, but, at the same time, he suggested that the better option was to leave it as it was because he thought our concern was to conduct training. I convinced him that it was the most important aspect of such residential training. I also talked to both the Dalit trainee teachers and I requested them to sit together for the meal, but they refused by saying that it would invite some disruptions to this training. They told me that such activities might be counter-productive for them, as they had to work and live in society. However, they were happy with my concerns. During the discussion with some other trainee teachers, I understood that it was a problem for two teachers who were also working as a family priest (*purohit/pandit*) in their villages; they feared losing such jobs when they ate with Dalits. They did not directly oppose my idea of rejecting the practice of untouchability. I suggested to both the *pandit* teachers to sit at a separate table for meals and help to change this practice. They agreed with this suggestion.

The third day of training was quite a sunny day. One table was in the sun where both the Dalit teachers generally sat for meals and the other tables were in the shade. As usual, both the Dalit teachers sat at the table in the sun and we three (the head teacher, another trainer and I) sat at the table in the shade. Before starting to have lunch, I asked the head teacher 'I am feeling pretty cold; can we move to the sunny place, please?' The head teacher and another trainer also said 'it's a good idea, let's move this table'. We moved to the place where both the Dalit teachers were sitting and we joined both the tables and sat with Dalit teachers together. Another six or seven teachers also joined us. After this, there was no separate table for the Dalit teachers.

During my job, besides these experiences as a trainer, I tried to understand inclusive curriculum and textbooks. Then, I studied some quantitative as well as qualitative description, analysis and interpretations on the issue of caste-based exclusion. I also wrote some articles relating to these issues of exclusions based on caste, culture, language and ethnicity.

This does not cover the whole story of my professional life; the other integral aspect of my career path is my involvement in writing. My involvement in various training programmes encouraged me to write something about the Nepalese education system and some general subjects related to pedagogy. I also wrote a book, which was published in 1993. The publication of the first edition of that book introduced me to the publishers, publication market and readers, which encouraged me to continue my involvement in the publication. Since then, I have been involved continuously in writing the textbooks and supplementary reading books useful to the students from elementary school to college level. By 2004, I wrote more than two dozen published books. At the same time, I took part in the writing of training materials, teacher support materials and textbooks for government publications and worked with some of the educational research projects.

4.6 Continuing the Higher Education

I did another master's degree in education during this job, attending an evening college at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. I realised that I needed some additional research skills. Therefore, I applied for some of the scholarship programmes and got an offer from Germany for a two-year MS course in industrial mathematics. I was intending to obtain a PhD degree and my interest had already shifted from mathematics to educational and social problems. As a result, I did not accept this scholarship. I waited for two years because the Ministry of Education, under the Basic and Primary Education Programme-II, had a plan for the higher education (MS/MPhil and PhD) of government officers. A number of officers were nominated for MS/MPhil and PhD, but not me. Then, I joined the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu to do a PhD as a part time student and began some preliminary work on it. I could not continue this study because on the one hand it was difficult to manage both work and study simultaneously. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education had prepared a list of possible candidates for MPhil study at the Danish University of Education with some criteria regarding educational qualifications, training and work experience. I was selected for MPhil study following an examination and interview conducted by the Danish University of Education. It took two and half years to complete the MPhil degree in education from the Danish University of Education, and I did not continue my PhD at Tribhuvan University.

During my MPhil study, I concentrated some of my term papers and dissertation on the issue of social differences and exclusion in Nepalese society in general and educational exclusion in particular. It was a good opportunity to understand the problem with some theoretical perspectives. I continued to develop my preliminary understanding about multiple realities and various perspectives relating to the phenomenon. My MPhil dissertation was on the classroom practice of a school in relation to a Dalit community of Nepal. That dissertation aimed to analyse meanings of classroom practice for the Dalit pupils, but I felt that there was a need of some more detailed study on the issue of exclusion of Dalit children in education. After completing my MPhil, I intended to continue research on the issues of educational exclusion, especially issues related to the exclusion of Dalit children from education. I developed a preliminary study proposal, applied for studentship to four different universities in the United Kingdom where I was invited for a selection interview at all the universities. As it was the first offer, I accepted the studentship from Canterbury Christ Church University.

4.7 Selection of the Research Topic

This study is related to the issue of educational exclusion of a Dalit community in Nepal. The community that I studied has a very low participation in education. They are still facing caste-based discriminations, and they are economically very poor. This is an under-researched issue. It was a kind of continuation of my MPhil study and of my other writings and study about social justice and inclusion. Similarly, this research area and topic have some link with my life experience, practices and value position. My worldviews are the products of my reflexive understanding of social practices along with the understanding of various social theories and literature.

Sometimes, people may see a contradiction between my way of thinking and writing with my present social position and identity. Some people, including some Dalits, perceive me as a so-called high caste, privileged, urbanised, well educated and government jobholder person with a relatively good economic condition. Sometimes, it is difficult to balance the paradoxical nature of my identity. However, as in the example already discussed, I have some strength from these positions and identities. From this strength, I am able to question and critique exclusionary practices in society. My understanding and value position have encouraged me to think critically. In this context, I was aware of these positions and identities while working on and talking about social

problems. Thus, I was always reflexive and critical about my identity, social position and my understanding and perceptions while doing this research.

During the fieldwork of my MPhil dissertation, I felt that the exclusion of Dalit pupils from education and society was more than that I had understood before. In this case, I felt that there was a need to analyse the effects of power and knowledge that shaped educational practices and discourses of inclusion and exclusion. This might enable me to see some alternative discourses about exclusion, inclusion and participation in education, which may not have matched the prevailing discourse of truth. The search for such alternative knowledge, power and voices was a kind of questioning of the subjugation and domination of certain ideologies and practices. Thus, more than the understanding the meaning and perception about classroom practice as in my MPhil dissertation, this study has analysed the relationship between power, knowledge and pedagogical practices in relation to the Dalit community.

However, I have further developed my research questions with some reformulation during the first three months of my study. Initially, I was interested in analysing the practice, so that the prevailing practice and discourse could be interrogated. After reformulation, I also included the question as to how an alternative discourse could be formed and practiced in order to include Dalits in education. Thus, by analysing power, knowledge and pedagogical practices, this research examined the exclusion and inclusion of the Dalit children and opened some perspectives and visions to increase their participation and inclusion.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has explored my understanding and experiences of caste hierarchies and exclusion of Dalits from educational and social participation. I have discussed my social position and my motivation for doing research on this issue. My struggles in education and professional life show a number of contradictions and dilemmas. Such struggles reflect socio-cultural dynamics and complexities as well as power relations in Nepalese society. This chapter has described who I am and why and how I have taken the issue of schooling of Dalits for this study. Therefore, I hoped that my autobiography might help the reader to position me with the issue of inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. Moreover, it has also indicated some methodological direction to this research and worked as a

source of data to analyse the issue. Along with structural constraints that I have faced as an individual, I have been constructing meaning for my work and life. This also justifies the methodological use of active agency within structural constraints in this research. This chapter has also contributed in disclosing my perspective, so it has helped me to maintain reflexivity as well as ethics in my research.

In addition to the methodological rationale of including my autobiographical exploration in this thesis, it has supplemented field data in a number of places in order to understand the practice of caste hierarchies, exclusion and social construction of Dalits. In other words, my autobiography gives some instances about how the powerful section of society with the use of power and knowledge has legitimised the concept of so-called purity and impurity, and how such construction and legitimisation have excluded the Dalits from education and society.

This autobiographical exploration was based on my everyday understanding and experiences about the exclusion and inclusion of Dalits. However, I still had unanswered questions about the exclusionary practices in society and school. For example, my autobiography still did not answer the following two questions appropriately: Why are Dalits still not participating in education? How are exclusionary pressures to Dalits working in schools and community? The field research further answered these questions. Thus, the ethnographic fieldwork with the genealogical approach not only supplemented my understanding, but also identified a new way of explaining and understanding the exclusion of Dalits. More precisely, my autobiographical exploration has explored stories of discriminations and exclusion of Dalits and has expressed my concerns and confusions about caste-based discrimination and exclusion. The field data based analysis explores Dalits' views and struggles and explains my concerns with a greater understanding of the issue of Dalits' exclusion.

However, by identifying the history and practice regarding inclusion and exclusion, my autobiography supplemented the analysis of the field data. It also supplemented my analysis of the historical exclusion of Dalits from education and society (Chapter 5). Similarly, it helped to explain a link between societal and educational exclusion of Dalits (Chapters 7 and 8). Moreover, it also helped to link recent policies and practices in education in the context of the exclusionary history of policies and practices (Chapter 9). In this way, my autobiography has also worked as a source of data for this research.

The next chapter, based on literature and documents, discusses the development of the hierarchical caste system and historical exclusion of Dalits in Hindu society in general and Nepalese society in particular.

Chapter 5

Caste Hierarchies, the State and the Education of Dalits: A Historical Overview

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the historical exclusion of Nepalese Dalits. This analysis explains the influences of the historical exclusion of Dalits on present social practices. It concentrates on three interrelated issues about the construction and exclusion of Dalits. First, it overviews the development of the caste practice in early Hindu society of the Indus valley. Second, it discusses the development of hierarchical caste practice and exclusion of Dalits in Nepal and shows the link between the *varna* and caste practice developed in the Indus valley and the Nepalese practice. Third, it illustrates a correspondence between the practice of caste hierarchy and educational exclusion of Dalits. Therefore, this chapter helps to explain hierarchy and differences practiced in Nepalese society, and it helps to analyse the historical construction of Dalits and their continued exclusion. It also helps to analyse the present status of Dalit exclusion and inclusion.

Brahmanic Hinduism and state power together worked to develop and extend caste hierarchy. There is a correspondence between the Hindu *varnasram* system and the Nepalese caste practice. Although there were indigenous forms of religious practices without a hierarchical caste-system, the influence of Brahmanic Hinduism, brought from Gangatic plain-based Hinduism, contributed in extending the hierarchical *varna* and caste system in Nepal (see Bista, 1991). And the practice of caste hierarchy was extended and legitimised by the rules of various kingdoms.

In the ancient Aryan society of the pre-Vedic period (before 1750 BC), there was no mention of *varna* division. When Aryans conquered the Indus valley (around 1500 BC), they began to distinguish between Aryan (conqueror) and non-Aryan (conquered-*dasa*) *varnas*. Aryan and non-Aryan divisions as well as elite and commoner distinction among Aryans established two classes in Early Vedic Society (1750-1200 BC) and

gradually extended a distinction between the ruling groups and the common people. In the Middle-Vedic Period (1200-850 BC), the ruling elites divided society into four occupational groups. The Brahmin and Kshatriya (warrior) together worked for this division, and they placed themselves in a privileged position. The classification of people into four *varnas* appeared for first time in Rig-Veda-X (around 1000 BC). However, occupational shift and *varna* mobility were still not prohibited until the Late-Vedic Period (850-500 BC), as there was no practice of untouchability. Occupational division and the development of slavery pushed Sudra to the bottom of the hierarchical *varna* division. Later Manusmriti (between 200-00 BC) and other Brahmanic texts not only fixed *varna* with birth, but also fixed a hierarchy of four *varnas* and generally restricted upward mobility.

The people who were disobedient towards *varna* and other social rules and practices were socially boycotted. They were considered as untouchable, and they were not included within the four *varna* classifications. Later practices tried to incorporate all the population into four *varna* divisions and then established hierarchical sub-groups within the *varnas*. Two hierarchical groups within the Sudra are also reflected in the caste-based Legal Code 1854 in Nepal, which classified impure caste into two groups: impure but touchable; impure and untouchable (see Hofer, 2004/1979). This hierarchy, along with the provision for downward mobility, continuously developed various hierarchical castes.

The powerful groups in society gained state power and placed themselves in a privileged class. Consequently, they developed various rules of daily practices based on caste hierarchies and sanctioned their privileges. The powerful group used various means, like the ideology of purity and *dharma* and status of occupation, to legitimise their privileges. As a result, by using such knowledge and power, the privileges of certain groups have been established and others have been oppressed. The monarchy, related to Kshatriya *varna*, and the priesthood, related to Brahmin *varna*, have been the key actors in this process of creating the 'truth' that helped maintain their privileges based on caste hierarchies. The history reveals that caste hierarchies and untouchability in Nepal has an ideological link with Purusukta of Rig-Veda-X and subsequent post-Vedic Brahmanical literature, like Manusmriti, but the practice of such hierarchies and untouchability had been legitimised by the king(s).

Despite the legal provision of non-discrimination and the government's claim of inclusive developmental initiatives, Dalits still suffer from discrimination and exclusion. Not only the monarchies from medieval kingdoms in Nepal, but also the concept and practice of the Hindu king in Nepal, since the unification in Nepal in 1768, contributed to continuing caste hierarchies, as the concept of Hindu king is based on Hindu *varnasram* based hierarchy.

The prohibition of Sudra in educational participation continued along with the introduction of hierarchical *varna* and the caste system. The exclusion of Nepalese Dalits in education was unaltered even since the extension of mass education in 1951. The impact of historical prohibition and exclusion of Dalits in education still exists, as their participation in education is very low.

This chapter discusses the diversity and differences in Nepalese society and then describes the Hindu caste hierarchies and social differences. It also discusses how caste has been working as a way of securing power and the supremacy of a certain group in society. This historical description explains how the Hindu *varnasram* system and state practice worked together to develop and legitimise the hierarchical caste system in Hindu society in general and in Nepal in particular. It gives a brief account of how Hinduism and the Nepalese state together worked to create exclusionary pressures on Dalits. It discusses the roles played by the Hindu *varnasram* system and Nepalese state in shaping educational participation. The historical overview of the practice of schooling in Nepal explains these roles and explores the historical continuity of exclusion of Dalits in education. Finally, it discusses distinct issues and the situation of Madhesi Dalits, the community focused on this research.

5.2 Diversity and Difference in the Nepalese Society

Nepal is known as the country of diversities. There exist physical as well as cultural, religious and linguistic diversities. Different ethnic groups have their own cultural and linguistic practices⁸. Along with religious diversity, religious syncretism has also been found in Nepalese society, especially in the case of Hindu, Buddhist and other local religions, which involve an animistic tradition (Bista, 1991). Along with these diversities, various types of conflicts, struggles and differentiations have been practised

⁸ CBS (2004), based on population census 2001, reports Nepalese society includes more than 100 different caste groups, 60 ethnic groups, 90 linguistic groups and 5 religious groups.

within and among these cultural, religious and linguistic groups (see Pradhan, 2002; Lawati, 2005; Bhattachan, 2003; Hachhethu, 2003; Bennett, 2005).

The political history of Nepal shows that the state’s policies and practices have not been supportive of equal valuing of diversities and inclusion, as they are based on so-called upper castes hegemony and domination (see Pradhan, 2002; Lawati, 2005; Bista, 1991). In Nepalese society, differences in status between groups are mostly based on caste, ethnicity, language, gender and class. The Legal Code of 1854, which was based on the Hindu caste hierarchy, was a key source of caste conflicts and discrimination in Nepalese society (see Hofer, 2004/1979).

Drawing upon various sources (Lawati, 2005; Bista, 1991; Pradhan, 2002; Hofer, 2004/1979; Bhattachan, 2003, 2001; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997; Sharma, 1997; Whelpton, 1997) along with conversations with the people from various castes and linguistic groups during my fieldwork, I roughly summarise the major socio-cultural and ethnic diversities, proximities and differences in Nepalese society in table 5.

Table 5: Socio-cultural and ethnic diversity in the Nepalese society

	Phahadiya	Madhesi	Other Ethnic Groups
Dalits	(a) Bishwakarma, Pariyar, Charmakar, Gandharva, Badi...	(f) Paswan, Tatma, Chamar (Ram), Dom (Marik), Musar (Sadaya), Lohar ...	Tharu, Danuwar, Darai, Kumal Chepang, Majhi...
	(b) Newar (Pode, Chyame...)		
Non - Dalits	(c) Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, Gurung, Thakali, Serpa ...	(g) Muslims	
	(d) Newar	(h) Maithili Brahmin, Rajput, Yadav ...	
	(e) Brahmin, Thakuri, Kshatriya		

In table 5, two dark vertical lines show three highly diverse groups: Pahadiya, Madhesi and other ethnic groups. The dark line between Dalits and non-Dalits indicates the two most diverse groups, and a similar level of difference is shown by another horizontal line between the groups (g) and (h). The other thin lines between the groups of people also show noticeable cultural differences between them.

Viewing differences and diversities based on language, religion and economic and social location among various sub-groups and individuals, some may argue that this is an over simplified classification of the complex diversity in the Nepalese society, or some may argue that they are artificially created differences. I agree that fixed classification and location of people is not possible, as individual differences and changing power relations make the location and identity of people variable. However, it gives a brief picture of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Nepal and shows a complexity of social and political struggles for identity, representation and inclusion.

More specifically, the awareness of this complex diversity and difference helps to reorganise Dalits' struggles for recognition and inclusion, and it gives some direction for the state's interventions for inclusion. It also indicates why the Dalit movement for inclusion, non-discrimination and identity is different from other social and political movements for identity and inclusion (see Sharma, 2007). Pradhan (2002) argues that in the case of Dalits, it is not only the state's practices, ruling elites and orthodox Brahmins, Kshatries and Thakuries that fail to support the emergence of an egalitarian and pluralistic society, but also ethnic activists. Interestingly, according to Pfaff-Czarnecka (1997) ethnic elites have utilised the same framework as the Hindu ruling elite. He points out, "Although the high-caste Hindu role in the Hinduisation process is crucial, the ethnic elites' contribution to the process should not be underestimated" (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997, p 454). Moreover, "Ethnic activists have not shown much solidarity with the Dalit castes, which are economically and politically more deprived than most of the ethnic groups" (Pradhan, 2002, p 16). Ethnic activism is a movement for identity and inclusion, which is mostly concentrated on the people from group (c) and theoretically includes other ethnic groups from the last column and the people from group (d) in table 5. Thus, the problems and issues of Dalits are distinct, and they often remain unchallenged by other groups of people.

5.3 *Varna* and Caste Hierarchies in the Early Hindu Society

The practices of hierarchies and differences based on *varna* and caste divisions have been linked with the practices of Vedic and post-Vedic Hindus in the Indus valley. There was no classification of society based on four *varnas*, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra in the pre-Vedic society of Indus valley, but the concepts of elites, commoners and *dasas* created a kind of class system in society. Aryans, after

conquering the Indus Valley, used *varna* to distinguish between Aryan and non-Aryan (*dasa*) (see Srinivas, 1991; Gupta, 2000). Consequently, the concepts of pure/impure, touchable/untouchable, castes and hierarchical *varnas* began around the end of the Vedic period (see Shastri, 2005/1940). Until the middle Vedic period, there was no restriction to choose or change occupation, and thereby there was no descent-based hierarchy among the Aryans. For instance, Rig-Veda (IX-112-3) gives an example of people involved in different occupations from the same family.

Development of Hierarchical Four *varnas*

The oldest Vedic literature dealing with the origin of four *varnas* is the hymn in the Purusukta of the Rig-Veda (X) (Prabhu, 2000/1941; Quigley, 1999; Gupta, 2000; Srinivas, 1991; Dumont, 1980). According to the hymn, different parts of the body of *purusa* (the first man or the creator) represent different *varnas* and their duties: the Brahman through his mouth, the Rajanya (Kshatriya) through his arms, the Vaisya through his thighs and the Sudra through his feet (Rig-Veda, X-90-11 and 12). It is interpreted that mouth, arms, thighs and feet are the symbolic expressions of different functions. Thus, *varna* at the Rig-Vedas (X) involved a social division of labour. Similarly, the *varna* seems to have been about open classes that do not restrict inter-*varna* marriage and taking food together (Prabhu, 2000/1941, p 286). Formation of Sudra *varna*, and a gradual increase in the distinction between the different *varnas* in terms of different rights and privileges are noticeable in the middle Vedic and late Vedic literatures (e.g. the Brahmanas, the Upanishads) developed after the Rig-Veda. The post-Vedic literatures, including the Manusmriti and other Brahmanic texts, extended the *varna* based differences and hierarchies in Hindu society (Prabhu, 2000/1941).

The Manusmriti was one such text that legitimised *varna* and caste hierarchy in Hindu society. The Manusmriti gives details about the *varnas* and castes as, “Manu’s description of *varna* system reveals, more or less, a rigid hierarchy with greater privileges to the Brahmins” (Bhargava, 1989, p 34). Manusmriti directly expressed that four *varnas* originated from different parts of the body of *brahma*: Brahman from mouth, Kshatriya from arms, Vaisya from thighs, and Sudra from feet (Manusmriti, 1-31). Manusmriti elaborated different *varnas*’ duties and restrictions. As a result, the differences and hierarchies among *varnas* have been widened and the *varna* position has

been fixed by birth. It also restricted upward mobility in the *varna* system, or rather there was only a possibility of downward mobility (Bhargava, 1989, p 36).

In the late Vedic period, Brahmin-Kshatriya supremacy and hegemony based on class division and exploitation were not only continued, but also extended and legitimised and then made more rigid and strict during the post-Vedic period by the Manusmriti. Gupta (2000) argues that the main aim of later interpretations of Vedas was to maintain a system of exploitation. For example, Manusmriti (9-322) states that, it is necessary for Brahman and Kshatriya to work together for the progress of both *varnas*. Kshatriya kings and the priestly Brahmins shared power and privileges by classifying the society into four groups and assigning various duties to them. There was a tradition of a Brahmins' function as being producing and interpreting various rules and regulations in the name of *dharma* and *sastras* where kings were legitimising such rules for their supremacy. They were balancing power between Brahmins and Kshatriyas and at the same time, they were legitimising their power and supremacy in the name of *dharma* and *sastras*. Without linking *varna* classification to political power as well as religious meaning, it would be difficult to explain how *varna* works in Hindu society.

Varna as an open class worked in Aryan society in various ways. Since the middle Vedic period, it began to be tied up with birth and privilege, but not in a strict sense. A number of examples of occupational choices and shifting of *varna* were found. Brahmapurana (223-53), for example, states that Sudra can be upgraded to Brahmin if he achieves 'goodness' (*guna-sattva*), and Brahman can be downgraded if he behaves badly through 'dullness' (*guna-tama*) (see Prabhu, 2000/1940). Although Mahabharata also describes the possibilities of *varna* mobility based on action (*karma*), it suggests people to stick to their duties based on *varna* (usually called *varna dharma*). For example, Mahabharata states, "Who sticks to the *dharma* of his own *varna* acquires great glory" (cited in Prabhu, 2000/1940, p 304). However, the upward *varna* mobility was prohibited by Manusmriti; as a result, *karma*, *guna* and *dharma*⁹ provide the ideological apparatus to maintain the *varna* system, rather the root of *varna* mobility.

⁹ Hindu literature (Brahmapurana, Gita) explained that there are three *gunas* (characteristics of a person): *sattva* (goodness or truth or purity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (dullness, darkness or ignorance). Based on Gita, Prabhu (2000/1941: 319) explained that "all the *karmas* i.e., activities and occupations necessary for social organisation, upkeep and progress are classified in accordance with these psychological apparatuses in the individual called *gunas*". Thus, *gunas* classified the *karma* (actions) of people into three categories in which these *karmas* determined re-birth and their status, which also fixed the *varna* and their *karma* (actions) and *varna dharma* (duties of the *varna*).

In addition to occupational classification, categorisation of people into Sudra was also related to slavery. For example, Manusmriti (8-415) categorised seven types of slaves who were taken as Sudras. The seven categories were the prisoners of war, those who had accepted slavery to get food, those who were sold as slave, those who given as a gift to work as slave, the children of a slave mother, those whose predecessors were working as slaves and those who had accepted slavery as a punishment or as a debt bond. Moreover, as mentioned in Manusmriti, Aryans or non-Aryans who did not accept or practise Aryan rules (*sanskara*) and the Aryans and their children who had marital relationship with Sudra were also categorised as Sudra (Manusmriti, 3-15,16, 10-41). Similarly, even Aryans who had antagonistic relations with dominant Aryans and who had opposed Aryans' ideas were also considered as Sudra by imposing downward mobility.

Varna, Caste and the Practice of Untouchability

There is not a clear indication of caste in Vedic and post-Vedic literature. However, there were different subgroups of mixed birth from inter-*varna* marriage, known as *varnasamker*, which could be interpreted as different forms of castes. Manusmriti also describes four *varnas* and fifty-seven *jatis* (castes) in the society in which *jatis* were the result of *varnasamker* (Prabhu, 2000/1941). However, *varnasamker* might initiate various castes, but occupational classification and the concept of purity and pollution have also played important roles in classifying population into various castes.

Sudras, until the end of Vedic period, were not considered as untouchable. For instance, Panini (500BC) describes Chandala and Mritapa as socially boycotted and untouchables; the ancient Pali literature included Chandala, Nishada, Vena, Rathakar and Pukka as vile or untouchables (Kisan, 2002, p 37-42). It shows that those untouchables were outside of the four *varnas*, and thus they were considered as another lower group, the 'fifth *varna*' (Kisan, 2002). However, there is a debate about the existence of a fifth *varna*. For instance, in one place Manusmriti denied the existence of a fifth *varna* (Manusmriti, 10-4) but in other places, it recognised some people as having lower status than Sudra such as, Aayogab, Kahata, Chandal, Patit, Pulkas, whose

As a result, people have to accept their functions, duties and position as the consequence of *karma*, *dharma* and *guna* of previous birth. This shows that *karma*, *dharma* and *guna* works as the psychological apparatuses of legitimising *varna* classification

touch was prohibited to other *varnas* (Manusmriti, 10-16, 4-79). According to Dumont (1980, p 71), the lowest groups were seen as outside the four *varnas*. On the other hand, there was an argument that 'there is no fifth *varna*', which shows a tendency in various sources to associate them with Sudra. The distinction between *niravasita* (excluded) or *asprisyas* (untouchable) and Sudra shows that there were people who were considered lower status than the Sudra (see Manusmriti- 10). Such distinctions created a separate fifth *varna* as the untouchables, and therefore, they were considered as 'out caste' people.

As discussed before, Manusmriti re-interpreted Rig-Veda's concept of *varna* and established a rigid duty and *varna-dharma*, which considered Sudra as an impure *varna* by claiming that their ancestors were created from the feet of *brahma*. Manusmriti also gave permission to *upanayan* (initiation ceremony to wear a sacred thread) only for the so-called twice born three *varnas* (Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya). Sudras were excluded from the *upanayana sanskara* as well as various religious activities related to so-called purity. As a result, the distinction between the so-called twice born *varna* and Sudra *varna* was fixed by labelling all Sudras as untouchables, irrespective of previous practices of untouchability. However, based on previous distinctions between Sudras and *asprisyas* (untouchables) and based on the occupational categories, Sudras were also divided into a number of hierarchical sub-groups. Because of the mixed *varna* or mixed caste marriage and further occupational classification, the number of castes and sub-castes with different hierarchies had continuously been increased.

However, despite my attempt to provide a single chronology, it needs to be made clear that Hinduism is not a single set of practices, literature, rituals or ideology. Bista (1991, p 29), for example, maintains that Hinduism represents a group of many religious systems practised in south Asia of the East Indus. There are also conflicting practices and beliefs among different traditions within Hinduism; for example, there are competing practices of supporting and opposing the authority of Vedas. In summarising the various forms of Hinduism, Michaels (2005) classifies Hindu religion into three main forms: the Brahmanic-Sanskritic Hinduism, Hindu folk or tribal religion (e.g. animistic), and various founded religions (e.g. Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Vaisnava sects, Saiva sects, Guri-ism). It has been argued that initially caste-based exclusions and untouchability were not found with both the founded and folk Hindu religious practices.

Some of the folk Hindu traditions later adapted caste-based exclusions and untouchability through the influence of Brahmanic Hinduism (Bista, 1991). This classification of Hinduism, however, is also debatable as some of the founded religious traditions, for example, Buddhists, do not classify themselves as a form of Hinduism.

5.4 Caste: A Way of Securing Power and Supremacy

Dumont's (1980) concept of caste as continuous hierarchy based on the ideology of purity and impurity seems problematic in a number of ways (see Das, 1982; Burghart, 1978, 1983; Marriott, 1989; Heesterman, 1985; Bayly, 1999; Dirks, 1992, 2003; Berreman, 1991; Gupta, 1991, 2000; Quigley, 1999; Parish, 1997; Michaels, 2005; Fuller, 1997). For instance, the concept of ritual hierarchy independent of power and based on a purity and impurity opposition contains a view based on a Brahmanical version of caste (Berreman, 1991). Gupta (1991, 2000) argues that there are discrete and multiple hierarchies instead of continuous hierarchies in society in which such hierarchies are not only the results of the caste, but also the representation of political-economic power relations. In this case, Dumont misunderstood the relationship between status and power, as he explains that ritual hierarchy assumes that status and power can be separated (Quigley, 1999).

Quigley writes that two oppositional interpretations of caste are predominant: idealistic and materialistic. The materialists interpret, "The idiom of purity and impurity through which caste differences are expressed must be 'simply' a means of legitimating and obscuring the 'true' nature of social divisions" (Quigley, 1999, pp 2-3). In contrast, idealists explain, "Caste is a cultural construct, the product of religious ideas: castes are higher or lower in relation to religiously conceived notions of purity and impurity" (ibid, p 3). Quigley for example, follows Hocart's (1950) concept of caste as neither idealistic nor materialistic, and took the third way of perceiving it. Hocart (1950) argues that there is a fundamental truth and a fundamental falsehood in both the idealistic and materialistic concepts of caste (cited in Quigley, 1999). For instance, his opposition to idealists is that caste society developed and sustained in a certain political territory i.e. the state. Simultaneously, inequalities in caste society are not hidden, but rather they are "highlighted, glorified, and perpetuated" (Quigley, 1999, p 3). Hocart (1950, p 38) argues, "Royalty and priesthood form a pair" (cited in Quigley, 1999, p 121). Quigley mentions, "If one begins with this assumption that 'Brahmins are the highest caste'-one

will never understand how the caste systems work” (Quigley, 1999, p 20; also Michaels, 2005, p 165). Even in Nepal, we can find a number of castes of Newars in Kathmandu, which were categorised and legitimated by the kings’ decision (Gellner, 1999). Indeed, the so-called Hindu tradition and rituals have been used to maintain the supremacy of ruling families.

In India, before 19th century, there were a number of religious traditions in practice, and thereby there was no strict and unified hierarchical Brahmanic Hinduism practiced (see Bayly, 1999; Dirks, 2003). Colonial rulers consolidated and extended Brahmanic Hindu based hierarchies as a basis of their colonial rule (Dirks, 2003), even though caste hierarchies in different and diverse forms were already in practice in Indian society, especially since the enforcement of Manusmriti. Bayly (1996) expresses that Western orientalist’s construction and colonial rules contributed to extend a rigid caste hierarchy and caste-based distinction in India. Before 19th century,

the boundaries between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’, ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’, ‘caste’ and ‘tribe’, even Hindu and Muslim were still much less clearly defined in everyday life than was later to be the case. Even in the thinking of colonial officials and their informants, much would change during the nineteenth century in ‘Orientalist’ conceptions of caste.

(Bayly, 1999, p 96)

For example, the legal surveys of the 1820s established caste as an indispensable part of Indian life. Dirks (2003) views that the extension of Brahmanic Hinduism based hierarchical castes with the concept of purity and impurity was the construction and impact of colonial rule in India, that is, “colonialism made caste what it is today” (ibid, p 5). In this way, caste has been used to maintain power and supremacy of certain people or group of people against other.

5.5 Castes, the Nepalese State and the Exclusion of Dalits

This section overviews the historical interaction between the caste system and the practices of the state. This overview explains historical roots of the exclusion of Dalits in Nepal. It begins with the indigenous religious practice and then describes the influences of Brahmanical Hinduism. It discusses how religion and the state worked together to introduce Brahmanic Hinduism based *varna* and caste hierarchy in Nepal. It also discusses later development concerning caste hierarchy and the issue of exclusion and inclusion of Dalits.

Early Indigenous practice

Multiple religious traditions have been practiced in Nepal. Samanism and Animistic traditions were practiced in Nepalese eastern and western hills. Saivanism, Vaisnavism and Brahmanism - the version of Hinduism brought from the Gangatic basin - were the various forms of Hinduism practiced in Nepal (Bista, 1991). Buddhism has always been the second largest religion of Nepal. The Buddhist Sakya brought Mahayan Buddhism from the northern Gangatic plain. An indigenous form of Buddhism - Vajrayan (Lamaism) also developed in the northern part of Nepal, was later adopted in Tibet (Bista, 1991). Although religious syncretism has been seen in Nepal, conflicts between Gangatic Hinduism and other religious traditions can also be observed. Caste hierarchies were not found in indigenous religious practices, including Samanism, animistic traditions, Buddhism and the early Hinduism practiced in Nepal.

Influence of Brahmanism and the Development of Caste Hierarchy

Hierarchical caste system in Nepal came along with Brahmanic Hinduism from Gangatic Hinduism. There were two possible causes behind the influence of the Gangatic Hindu tradition in Nepal. First, as an impact of the publicity of Shankaracharya's (a great Hindu from India, 788-820) religious views in Nepal, Buddhism and Buddhist institutions began to decline and the Hinduism and Hindu institutes began to extend (Bista, 1991). Second, when an Islamic ruler invaded north India, so-called high caste Hindus migrated to the Nepalese hills and Kathmandu Valley. They were active in preserving their religion and lifestyle, which was a cause of extending Gangatic Hinduism in Nepal (Sharma, 2002; Bista, 1991). As a result of extension of Gangatic Hinduism, caste-based hierarchy started to extend. Although caste hierarchy began with the influence of the Gangatic Hinduism, the work of various rulers had supported and extended caste-based hierarchy and differentiation. In this way, Gangatic basin-based Hinduism brought the existing form of the caste system to Nepal. Thus, the *varnasram* system of Hinduism was the root of the caste system in Nepal, which has been in practice since the Lichhavi Period (200-879) (Bista, 1991). In the case of Tarai, the king of Mithila (Eastern Tarai of Nepal - the centre was Janakpur) and the Sakya king of Kapilvastu were Kshatriyas, which shows *varna* based hierarchy was already in practice in the Tarai belt of Nepal.

State's Formal Sanction of Caste Division

The occupational divisions of people in four *varnas* and sixty-four *jaties* (castes) and a number of sub-castes declared by the Malla king of Kathmandu, Jayasthiti Malla (1360-1395), gave a more concrete shape to *varna* and caste division. He formalised the hierarchical caste system based on Hindu *varna* system (NDC, 2060BS; Dahal et al., 2003). Similarly, by dividing population into four *varnas* and thirty-six *jaties*, king Ram Shah (1606-1633) of a small hill kingdom Gorkha also promulgated a caste hierarchy-based legal system (NDC, 2060BS; Kisan, 2002). Although there were about fifty small kingdoms before the unification of Nepal, the *varna* and occupation based divisions of those two kingdoms, Kathmandu and Gorkha, were influential in two ways. First, these two kingdoms were influential, and second, Prithivi Narayan Shaha, a king of the Gorkha kingdom, led the unification of Nepal and declared Kathmandu as the capital of unified Nepal. Therefore, the practices of Kathmandu and Gorkha directly influenced the unified Nepal. As a result, after the unification of Nepalese states, Hindu hierarchical caste system continued in practice, as Prithivi Narayan Shaha wanted to develop Nepal as an *asal Hindu rajya* 'a true Hindu kingdom' (Sharma, 2002). Sharma (ibid) argued that by the middle of the 19th century, the ruler of Nepal became increasingly interested in imposing a more homogenous Hindu culture.

Moreover, in 1854, Janga Bahadur Rana promulgated the Muluki Ain 'Legal Code' (see Hofer, 2004/1979). The Code was based on so-called purity and impurity on Brahmanical Hindu traditions. It included all Hindus and non-Hindus in the same hierarchical system. The Code was not only an occupational division, but also legitimacy of the positions and privileges for some caste groups and discrimination and domination to the others. The code especially imposed discrimination and domination on the Dalits, the so-called impure caste groups.

In Legal Code 1854, there were five categories of castes within the two broad categories as presented in table 6. There were different rules in this Code that differentiated and excluded the so-called impure castes of category-II in legal as well as social practices. That classification was not limited with Hindus, or rather, that code categorised all the population, including Buddhists and Muslims, within these five groups.

Table 6: The caste groups of Legal Code 1854

1. Wearers of the holy cord (<i>tagadhari</i>)	Caste category I: Pure castes (<i>cokho jat</i>) or water-acceptable castes (<i>pani calnya jat</i>)
2. Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers (<i>namasinya matwali</i>)	
3. Enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers (<i>masinya matwali</i>)	
4. Impure, but touchable castes (<i>paninacalnya choi chito halnunaparnya</i>)	Caste category II: Impure castes or water-unacceptable castes (<i>pani nacalnya jat</i>)
5. Impure and untouchable castes (<i>pani nacalnya choi chito halnuparnya</i>)	

Source: Hofer (2004/1979, p 10)

Withdrawal of Legal Sanction of Caste hierarchy

The political change of 1951 reinstated state power to the king from the Rana Prime Minister, and ended more than a century of Rana regime. The king's active leadership continued until 1990 except for one and half years of parliamentary practice during 1959-1960. On the issue of caste hierarchy, in comparison to the Rana period, some positive changes were made in this period. Promulgation of Legal Code 1963 was an important positive step in opposition to caste-based discrimination, as it was the first formal announcement of state's withdrawal from the support for the caste hierarchy based legal system. However, during those thirty-nine years from 1951 to 1990, caste-based discriminations, exclusion and untouchability continued in social practice. So-called Hindu tradition and *sastras* and the previous Legal Code of 1854 were functioning in social practices. This suggests that the government was reluctant to implement the new provisions of Legal Code 1963. The Nepalese government ratified the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discriminations in 1971 (NDC, 2060aBS), but a number of provisions of this convention could not work properly. For example, the government did not make any effective legal provisions against the practice of untouchability. As a result, untouchability and caste-based discrimination continued in practice (Tamrakar, 2003).

Although the Legal Code of 1963 was a positive step towards prohibition of caste-based discrimination in legal matters, this Code still had some discriminatory provisions, as there was no provision against caste-based discrimination and untouchability. A

provision was added in 1992, but the Code, still in the name of tradition and custom, allowed restrictions to the Dalits to enter temple and other public places. This provision of the Code, however, has not been in function since 1993, as the Supreme Court of Nepal dismissed this provision by claiming that it contradicted the constitutional as well as other non-discriminatory legal provisions (NDC, 2060BS; Tamrakar, 2003). The 1991 Constitution of Nepal and the 2007 Interim Constitution of Nepal explicitly included the provision of non-discrimination and allowed the state positive discrimination of disadvantaged groups of people (HMG, 1991; Government of Nepal, 2007). Constitutional provisions indicate that now the Nepalese state formally does not support caste-based hierarchy.

Growing Concerns on Dalit Issue

There was optimism from the period of multiparty democracy¹⁰ that discrimination and untouchability would be eliminated with the implementation of inclusive policies in various aspects of social, political, economic and educational life. During this period, utilising the more open environment, various Dalits organisations¹¹, human rights groups, intellectuals and activists, NGOs, Dalit and non-Dalit individuals raised their voices in opposition to caste-based discrimination, exclusion and untouchability (Poudel, 2004a; Koirala, 1996; Kisan, 2002; Vishwakarma, 2002). As a result, Dalits' self-consciousness in opposition to discrimination, exclusion and untouchability began to strengthen.

Similarly, concerns against caste-based discrimination, exclusion and untouchability began on the part of civil society and intellectuals, including Dalits and non-Dalits. The role of the constitutional provision of non-discrimination and human rights was crucial in this regard. In the mean time, the third World Conference against Racism (WCAR) organised in Durban in 2001 provided an opportunity to educate people against caste-based discrimination. Although the Conference did not explicitly include the issue of caste-based discrimination, it encouraged working against caste-based discrimination. It

¹⁰ After the political change of 1990, a multiparty parliamentary democracy with constitutional monarchy was established in the place of non-party (Panchayati) political system of king's active leadership.

¹¹ Dalit Organisations in Nepal can be categorised into four groups: political organisations working as a sister organisation of political parties, social and cultural organisations, NGOs, and governmental organisations.

also put pressure on the government to implement effective policies in opposition to caste-based discrimination (NDC, 2060aBS).

Human rights organisations, NGOs working against caste-based discrimination, and other social organisations have established an international linkage, the International Dalit Solidarity Network, to work against caste and descent-based discrimination. The 2004 Kathmandu International Consultation on Caste-Based Discrimination, organised by this solidarity network, has identified a number of communities from twenty different countries who have been experiencing various types of caste like descent-based discrimination¹². Along with some differences, descent-based discrimination and exclusion is a common situation among these communities.

The government appeared to initiate some positive developments. For example, since the ninth five-year plan (NPC, 1997, 2002), the government has been incorporating some programmes focusing on the Dalits. In 1997, the Committee for Upliftment of Ignored, Oppressed and Downtrodden Group was formed. Similarly, in 2002 the National Dalit Commission was established as an autonomous body all of whose members were from the Dalit community and nominated by the government. As discussed earlier, there are various NGOs also working with Dalit focused areas and various donors have been providing funds to the government and NGOs in the name of Dalits' emancipation and elimination of caste-based discrimination, exclusion and untouchability¹³. However, as argued by Bishwakarma (2003, 2004) the changes brought by such programmes of the government and NGOs are hardly seen in most of the rural, poor and illiterate population of Dalits. Educated and urbanised Dalits and other non-Dalit activists got some benefits from these programmes.

Recently, the Peace Agreement of 2006, between the Parliamentarian Political Parties and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), has created a new context for the changes in social and political power relations and for the inclusion of Dalits and other excluded groups. The Maoist movement has contributed in creating a wider voice and

¹² Caste like discrimination is prevalent in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea Conakry, India, Japan, Kenya, Mauritania, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger and Yemen (Divakar, 2004).

¹³ Bilateral donors agencies like, USAID, DANIDA, DfID have been supporting several Dalit programmes; UN agencies like, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF are also working with some Dalit related programmes. Similarly, International NGOs like, Save the Children US, Action Aid Nepal, The Asian Foundation, Lutheran World Federation, CARE Nepal, OXFAM have been including some Dalit focused Programmes (Vishwakarma, 2004).

consciousness to question the relevance of the monarchy in Nepal. The Maoists have raised the issue against the exclusion and discrimination of Dalits and other ethnic groups. However, because of this war, more than 13,000 people directly lost their life, and it has affected thousands among their families and children. Other thousands of people have been internally displaced by this war (see INSEC: www.inseconline.org). Similarly, the war brought a stagnation of economic activities and damaged development infrastructure. It also increased the danger of losing freedom of expression and other personal rights of people due to the militarization of political activities, as there are possibilities for the emergence of new-armed groups and increasing crime and instability due to armed activities (see Gautam, 2006). However, people are hopeful for the positive changes from the recent political situation brought by the 2006 People's Movement and the Peace Agreement between Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and other political parties. There are expectations that the new political scenario will contribute to abolition of monarchic rule in the name of tradition or Hinduism, to end the violence and armed rebellions, and to reinstate the democratic political system (see Adhikari, 2006; Uprety, 2006; Bajracharya, 2006; Seadia, 2006; Shrestha, 2006). Most importantly, this political change has raised a hope of narrowing down the social differences, eliminating caste based discrimination and hierarchies, developing and increasing inclusive political participation and evolving inclusive social and educational policies and practices.

The Identification and Construction of Dalits

In Nepal, Dalits are not limited to a single linguistic or cultural group, or to a single occupation in one place or region. Dalits include various castes or caste groups, linguistic and cultural groups, occupational groups and are resident in almost all geographical regions of Nepal. They are involved in the production of various goods and services, various types of arts and music, and in the construction and development of various physical infrastructures. Thus, Dalits are a productive force and artistic people. But while others have benefited from their productive activities, artistic works and skills this contribution has not been properly recognised. They have received very low remuneration for their products and services. The occupations of Dalits' have also been degraded.

The term Dalit, probably brought from India, derived from the Marathi language and used to identify so-called untouchable castes in India, represents an ‘aspiration’ and a symbol of ‘struggle for change and revolution’ against casteism (Shah, 2001; Guru, 2001). Previously, the term ‘Harijan’ was used instead of Dalit in India, which was adopted by Gandhi in 1933, and can be translated as ‘people of God’ (Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 2000). The aim of Gandhi was to change the attitude and practice of untouchability by giving them an honourable name. Some leaders working against untouchability rejected the word ‘Harijan’, as they found the word itself insulting rather than respectful (Shah, 2001). In opposition to the Gandhian view of the anti-untouchable movement within the Hindu social system, Ambedkar appealed to the Dalits for organised struggle for their self-respect rather than depending on the sympathy of others (Shah, 2001).

In Nepal, the word Dalit is widely used in political and academic fields to denote the people who have been suffering from caste-based discrimination and exclusion (Bishwakarma, 2003; Aahuti, 2060BS; Aahuti, 2005; Bhattachan et al., 2002; Dahal et al., 2003; Vishwakarma, 2002). Most politicians, Dalit activists, Dalit-focused NGOs and academics use the term Dalit to refer so-called ‘untouchable’ caste groups categorised by the Old Legal Code of 1854 based on *varna* classification in Manusmriti and other orthodox Hindu literature. Some Dalits and non-Dalits have even taken the view that the word Dalit itself connotes insult (Kapali, 2001). However, as in Bhattachan et al. (2002), in Nepal as well as India the word Dalit “symbolises a struggle for recognition of self-identity, expression of historical reality of oppression due to caste-based untouchability and occupations, and a determination for creation of egalitarian society” (p 3).

Table 7 shows some of the debates and differences in defining and identifying Dalits in Nepal.

Table 7: Different definitions of the Nepalese Dalit sub-castes

Dalit castes defined by Ministry of Local Development, 1997	Dalit castes defined by Dahal et al., 2002	Dalit castes defined by the National Dalit Commission, 2003	Dalit castes classified by Jha, 2004
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lohar 2. Sunar 3. Kami 4. Damai 5. Sarki 6. Badi 7. Gaine 8. Kasai 9. Kusule 10. Kuche 11. Chyame 12. Ponde 13. Chamar 14. Dhobi 15. Paswan (Dusadh) 16. Tatma 17. Dom 18. Batar 19. Khatwe 20. Musar 21. Santhal 22. Satar 23. Halkhor 	<p>Hill</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kami 2. Damai 3. Sarki 4. Badi 5. Gaine <p>Tarai</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Tatma 7. Khatwe 8. Chamar 9. Dusadh 10. Musar 11. Batar 12. Dhobi 13. Dom 14. Halkhor <p>Newar</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Kusule 16. Khadgi (Kasai) 17. Pode 18. Chyame/Chyamkhal 19. Halahulu 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biswakarma (Kami, Sunar, Lohar, Tatma, Chunara, Aod) 2. Darji (Damai, Pariyar, Hudke, Dhobi) 3. Sarki (Mijar, Charmakar) 4. Badi 5. Gaine (Gandarva) 6. Kapali* 7. Khadgi* 8. Deula* 9. Kuche* 10. Tatma 11. Dusadh (Paswan, Hajara) 12. Dhobi* (Rajak) 13. Dom 14. Batar 15. Khatwe 16. Musar 17. Halkhor 18. Patharkatta 19. Chamar <p>* Castes that have asked not to be defined as Dalit.</p>	<p>Hill</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gandharva (Gaine) 2. Pariyar (Damai, Darji, Suchikar, Nagarchi, Dholi, Huduke) 3. Badi 4. Biswakarma (Kami, Lohar, Sunar, Oda, Chunara, Parki, Tamata) 5. Sarki (Mijar, Charmakar, Bhool) <p>Terai</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Kalar 7. Kakihaya 8. Kori 9. Khatik 10. Khatwe (Mandal, Khang) 11. Chamar (Ram, Mochi, Harijan, Rabidas) 12. Chidimar 13. Dom (Marik) 14. Tatma (Tanti, Das) 15. Dusadh (Paswan, Hajra) 16. Dhobi (Rajak) 17. Patharkatta 18. Pasi 19. Bantar 20. Musar 21. Mehatar (Halkhor) 22. Sarbhang/Sarbariya <p>Newar</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Chyame 24. Kasai 25. Kuche 26. Kusule 27. Pode

Source: WB, DfID (2006, p 56)

The Hill Dalits speak the Nepali language as their mother tongue, whereas Madhesi Dalits speak Tarai languages like Maithili, Awadhi or Bhojpuri. The total population of Dalits is about thirteen percent of the total population of Nepal as per the 2001 national census (CBS, 2004). There is a claim that some Dalit groups are still omitted from the census listing¹⁴ (Tamrakar, 2061BS; Bishwakarma 2004; BK, 2005; Aahuti, 2060BS).

Positive images and struggles of Dalits have been concealed by the dominant discourses. They have been seen negatively as deficit and powerless and 'pathetic' or 'pitiabile' people (Sangraula, 2002, p 156). Interestingly, several sources, governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as international development agencies prefer to use so-called 'neutral' terms like, disadvantaged, economically weak/poor, marginalised instead of using the term Dalits (see Pokharel, 2004; Bennett, 2005). The meaning of the term Dalit rejects caste hierarchies and supports non-discrimination and changes in hierarchical relation into an equal one by opposing the construction of Dalits as 'unchanging', 'uneducated' and 'untouchable' (Devkota, 2002a). Drawing upon Foucault's concept of power and truth, Devkota rightly argues, "The myth of untouchability is the formation of power" (ibid, p 48). In this case, the self-construction of a positive image is important for the Dalit movement.

5.6 The Historical Exclusion of Dalits from Education

In ancient Nepal, traditional knowledge, values and practices were transmitted from one generation to the next. At that time, there was no proper institutional system of education. Oral tradition and apprenticeship were the means of educating children (Sharma, 1986; Poudel, 2004; Koirala, 1996). However, in the Vedic and post-Vedic periods, the Hindu *varnasram* introduced a kind of institutional system. *Varnasram* is a social framework of Hindu society, which signifies division of labour, placement of social hierarchy and normative expectations of roles (Bhargave, 1989), and it is the fusion of two *dharmas* (duties): *varna dharma* and *asram dharma*. *Varna dharma* fixes the location, position, hierarchy and the roles and rules to each *varna*, whereas *asrams*

¹⁴ There is a claim that the population of Dalits is around 20% of the total population of Nepal (Bishwakarma, 2004). It is difficult to get the exact figure of Dalit population, as the definition itself is controversial. Some groups of people reject identification with the name Dalit. Similarly, some Dalit groups are missing in the national census report, and some already have changed their title to escape from caste-based discrimination and untouchability. The national census of 2001 has reported about 13% Dalit population in Nepal. If we take Dalits as the group of people who are categorised as so-called impure caste groups from hill, Tarai and Kathmandu, as in the Old Legal Code 1854 (see table 6), the population of Dalits may go up to 15% as it was nearly 15% in the 1991 census (see CBS, 1992).

are “regarded as schools of life, at several states of human existence, devised and organised towards the best likelihood for the individual to attain the goal of *moksha* (salvation)” (Bhargave, 1989, p 41). Every individual needs to pass through four different *asrams* in order to reach the ultimate goal of *moksha*. The student, householder, the hermit, and the ascetic constitute four separate *asrams*; namely, the *brahmacharya asram*, *grihastha asram*, *vanprastha asram* and *sannyasa asram*. In the *brahmacharya asram*, students need to study different *sastras* including Vedas in the gurus’ *asram* in a disciplined manner. Students were expected to be loyal to every order of the gurus. The *varna* rules do not allow Sudra to study the Vedas and other *sastras* and knowledge (Gautam sutra- 12, cited in Prasrit, 2058 BS; Manusmriti 4-80, 81). This shows that Sudras were out of the *asram* system, and consequently, they were excluded from educational participation.

The *Brahmacharya asram* was a stage of living, in which people used to learn literacy and other *sastras* (knowledge). At that time, Gurukul was the dominant educational system, in which the students were considered as the members of the guru’s (teacher) family (Cenkner, 1991). The ancient Hindu Gurukul education was based on Hindu *varnasram* system, and thereby the education was selective and discriminatory according to *varna*. Three *varnas* - Brahman, Kshatiya and Vaisya - had access to education, but the Sudras were excluded. Moreover, the limited space for admission in Gurukul education shows that it was selective even among the three upper *varnas*, and the guru had the sole authority to select students. ‘Low castes’ (so-called) were explicitly denied access to knowledge of religious texts, as they were not allowed to touch or read the books or even to listen to their words when read by others (Koirala, 1996, p 51).

In Nepal, before the beginning of mass schooling in the 1950s, traditional and indigenous as well as English-based formal schooling was in practice (Koirala, 1996; Sharma, 1986; Poudel, 2004). At that time, access to schooling was limited. Those schools were designed for the pupils of so-called high caste and ruling family. Teaching and learning were influenced by the Hindu tradition (Koirala, 1996; Poudel, 2003; Valentin, 2001; Parajuli, 2002). Besides, some Buddhist Gumbas (Monasteries) and Muslim Madarsas had provided religious education on a limited basis.

Mass Schooling and the Continuation of Exclusion of Dalits

After the political change of 1951, mass schooling began to expand. Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC), with the assistance of United States Overseas Mission reported to the government a plan for education in Nepal.¹⁵ The commission suggested universal and free primary education. This report further suggested that primary education should be made compulsory after developing infrastructure and preparing for the supply of teachers (NNEPC, 1956). Although the report described inequalities in participation in schooling based on gender, caste, and language, it did not suggest any special arrangement for girls, Dalits and linguistic minorities. In the case of caste issue, "throughout the report there is no mention of how the commission observes the caste discrimination, which from the early historical periods, has become one of the major issues of the society" (Devkota, 2002, p 27).

The report of NNEPC favoured linguistic and cultural assimilation and suggested Nepali language as the medium of instructions (NNEPC, 1956). The commission argued that the use of a local language other than Nepali inhibits the effective development of Nepali language. If the younger generation is taught with the use of Nepali as the basic language, the other languages will gradually disappear and greater national strength and unity will result (ibid, p 58-59). The report suggests, "No language other than Nepali shall be taught in the schools, because only few students need it, and to introduce any other language will be the barrier for the development of Nepali language" (ibid, p 63). Devkota (2002) views that such a single language policy for a multilingual country like Nepal involves a kind of internal colonisation process as for the language politics of Macaulay¹⁶ in colonial India.

¹⁵ The political change of 1951, not only changed the state leadership, but Nepal entered the outside world, and in the name of development, India, China and the United States began to provide bilateral funding. Consequently, quoting Fujikura (1996), Caddell (2002) notes that development agencies began to see Nepal as "development laboratory", a 'blank slate' and a 'textbook opportunity' to try out new approaches to social reform and aid provision" (p. 44-45, footnotes-21). To this regard, Caddell (2002: 49), for example, views, "One cannot discuss the emergence of Nepal's education system without reference to the extensive external (non-Nepali) influence on the development of national educational policy".

¹⁶ Thomas B. Macaulay was a Member of the Supreme Council for British-India. He worked as the president of Public Instruction in India and planned education for British-India. In relation to educational policy to India, he mentioned, "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay, 1952: 729). This clearly suggests that the aim of the education system of British-India was to maintain ideological hegemony by creating a group of educated class.

However, the changed environment and the NNEPC report helped to establish schools throughout the country¹⁷. The expansion of schooling was taken as the symbols of development and modernisation (Caddell, 2002). School education was taken as the prerequisite for getting a government job. But, the practice of caste-based differentiation and untouchability adversely affected Dalits' educational participation. As a result, very few Dalits participated in education during that period.

The expansion of schooling continued after the political change of 1960, as the king formed an All Round National Education Committee (ARNEC) in 1961, and a UNESCO advisory team was invited to work for educational change (Caddell, 2002). Some members of the All Round Education Commission (ARNEC, 1962) expressed their view that the mother tongue would be the appropriate medium of instruction in the early grades, but the report suggested Nepali as the medium of instruction in all grades, as in the NNEPC (1956).

In 1971, the government, with the help of US aid, launched the National Education System Plan (NESP) (MOE, 1971). The system changed structures and other technical aspects of education, but continued the main aim of nation building through education by homogenising culture and language. Moreover, the system took education as a national project that provided state monopoly in every aspect of educational decision-making and tried to control it through bureaucracy. During that period, a rapid expansion of schooling continued and the government introduced free primary education up to grade three in 1974. During the Panchayat period, in the name of national unity, homogenisation was intensified in the case of language and culture (Valentin, 2001). Valentin further argues, "In Panchayat period official Nepali National culture has been described by many observers as consisting of Nepali language, Hinduism and monarchy" (ibid, p 101).

The National Education Commission (NEC, 1991) was the first Education Commission after the political change of 1990. This Commission, for the first time, considered the linguistic and cultural diversity of Nepal and suggested that primary education should be taught in the mother tongue. The Commission identified caste and gender disparities

¹⁷ The expansion of schooling at that period can be seen from the data. The data show that from 1951 to 1960/61 the number of primary schools increased from 321 to 3,163 and secondary schools from 27 to 138 (ARNEC, 1962).

in education. It suggested special provisions for women, physically and mentally disabled people and economically and socially disadvantaged communities. The High Level National Education Commission (HLNEC, 1998) also suggested changes following the line of the 1991 NEC in relation to gender, caste, language, ethnicity and cultural diversity. However, substantial changes in the practice of schooling have not been reported in the case of girls, Dalits and other disadvantaged groups. The data show that along with the expansion of schooling there is gender, caste and ethnic differentiation in schooling.

Present Practice of Schooling and the Dalits

Despite the increase of schools and school enrolments, many children are still not enrolled in schools. The government sources show about 19 % of primary school age children (6-10 years age) were out of school in 2003¹⁸ (MOES, 2005; DOE, 2003). Nearly 46 % of the population (6+ years age) are still illiterate (UNDP, 2004; MOES, 2003). Although the data show a gradual decrease of the percentage of the children who are out of school, the completion rates at all levels of education¹⁹ are low due to high dropout. For example, the student retention rate to grade five was only 55.7 % in 2005 (TRSE, 2006). In the case of Dalits, the retention rate up to grade five was 7.9 % in 2005 (TRSE, 2006). Unschooling, illiterate and early dropout people are disproportionately high among Dalits, women, and some other minority groups (MOES, 2003; TRSE, 2006). This indicates that the present schooling is a process of social selection, which continues to produce and reproduce social differentiation and hierarchies (Valentin, 2001; Parajuli, 2002; Poudel, 2003). The Human Development Report of the UNDP (2004, p 48) points out that “government-subsidized education has benefited primarily the privileged”, and “exclusionary institutional arrangements” are not able to change existing discriminatory practices of schooling.

¹⁸ This is the official record of the government, for which some may question about the reliability of the source and the process of collection. Caddell (2005), for example, found that there is a possibility of creating the data such as the number of school going age children and enrolment to get additional teacher positions in schools. At the same time, this enrolment rate does not tell the accurate figure of schooled children, as there are high rates of early dropouts in each grade.

¹⁹ The present schooling system of Nepal includes primary (5 years), lower secondary (3 years), secondary (2 years) and higher secondary (2 years), but conventionally first (5+3+2) years generally considered as school education and higher secondary is considered as a part of university education. The higher secondary level was introduced in 1989, but the higher secondary is still not associated with school education (MOES, 2003).

The parallel development of private schools is another way of reproducing social differentiation. Most urban and sub-urban ruling elites, bureaucrats and the people of higher and middle economic classes send their children to English medium private schools. Most private schools have been getting high pass rates in the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations. The English medium private schools are generally taken as a symbol of power and prestige (Poudel, 2003; Sharma, 2005). Thus, private schools provide a new tool for social differentiation and hierarchy.

However, the government has been working to increase the access to schooling for all children. Nepal has implemented two phases of Basic and Primary Education Project, which started in 1991 with grants as well as a loan from several donor agencies and terminated in 2001. Now, similar programmes in the name of Education for All (EFA) have begun with the assistance of several donor agencies²⁰. The Nepalese government has developed an EFA core document, 2004-2009 and an EFA National Plan of Action 2001-2015 to reflect the commitment to the Dakar Forum to EFA 2000 (MOES, 2003). The government provides free textbooks and does not charge tuition fees for five years' primary education in government-funded schools. However, free education does not cover the costs of school uniforms, food, stationery, and it does not compensate for lost labour to families.

Since the 1990s, various discourses about the multiplicity of culture, languages and needs have appeared in Nepal. However, such discourses have not been reflected in pedagogical practice. In this context, Parajuli (2002, p 194) concludes, "Instead of propagating the values of social justice and equality as stated in the state documents, schooling has been contributing towards social stratification and hierarchy".

5.7 Madhesi Dalits: Some Distinct Issues of Discrimination and Exclusion

Madhesi Dalits have some distinct issues and struggles from that of hill Dalits. They are scattered across the Tarai belt of Nepal, making about 5% of the total population of Nepal and about 40% of the total population of Dalits in Nepal (CBS, 2004). They do not have a separate language as they speak the various languages of people in their localities, different from the Nepali language (Poudel, 2003; Pandeya, 2062BS; Jha,

²⁰ Denmark, Finland, Norway, DFID/UK and World Bank provide funds to Nepal as the pooling partners for EFA 2004-2009. UNICEF, WFP, ADB and Japan also provide funds as non-pooling partners (MOES, 2004).

2003). Sadayas, for example, speak Maithili or Bhojpuri in Eastern Tarai, Tharu in Chitwan, or Awadhi in Mid-Western Tarai as their first language. Almost all Madhesi Dalits follow the Hindu religion (Jha, 2003), though they are restricted from using various public places and services including entry to public temples. However, by 2002 Dalits' struggles against such discrimination, including entry to temples and other public places, gained some success (Vishwakarma, 2002; Bishwakarma et al., 2006). For example, Chamar (Ram) and other Dalits from the Siraha and Saptari districts of Eastern Nepal have organised various movements against untouchability and caste-based discrimination.

Traditionally, with the exception of Ram and Marik, almost all Madhesi Dalits have worked as agricultural and non-agricultural labourers with very low wages. Ram and Marik respectively have been involved in various types of leatherworks and weaving baskets and straw-mats (Jha, 2003). But due to technological change and industrial production, traditional occupations like leatherwork and bamboo and straw-based works are on the verge of extinction. There is an increasing tendency for Madhesi Dalits to work as industrial and household labourers in various Indian cities (Jha, 2000, 2003; Dahal et al., 2003). Lack of jobs and a kind of freedom from caste practice of the village are contributing factors to going to work in Indian cities. Most Madhesi Dalits are either landless or owners of a very small patch of land for their settlement. They live within the 'vicious circle of poverty' (Jha, 2000).

The educational participation of the Dalits community is very low in comparison to non-Dalit and the national average. Among Dalits, educational participation of Madhesi Dalits is even lower. For example, the average literacy rate in Nepal was 53.7% in 2001, whereas average literacy rate of Dalit community was 31% and the average literacy rate of Madhesi Dalits was only 21% (UNDP, 2004, p 175). Among Madhesi Dalits, around 50% of primary school age children are still out of school and most of the schooled children leave school in the early grades.

Jha (2000) argues that not only state and other non-Dalits led institutions and organisations, but also most of the organisations working with Dalits have excluded Madhesi Dalits. He asserts, "Madhesi Dalits are neglected not only by non-Dalit, but also by so-called Dalit organisations" (p 104). Madhesi Dalits have not been able to participate in and benefit from so-called Dalit-focused programmes and Dalit

organisations. The low level of participation of Madhesi Dalits in various Dalit organisations supports this argument.

5.8 Summary

This chapter has overviewed the situation of Dalits in general and Madhesi Dalits and their lack of educational participation in particular by analysing the historical influences of caste-based discrimination and exclusion. It has examined caste-based differentiation that has created barrier for Dalits' participation in education. It has analysed the historical roots of caste-based hierarchies, discrimination and exclusion in Nepalese society.

Caste-based differentiation has played a crucial role in the inclusion of some groups and the exclusion of others in social, political and educational participation. There are two main roots for caste-based discrimination and exclusion: first, the Hindu tradition based on the *varnasram* system and second, the practice of ruling class and castes to maintain their supremacy by using caste-based hierarchies. Both roots have worked together to shape caste-based hierarchies, differentiation and exclusion. Thus, caste-based hierarchies and untouchability are not only related to so-called ritual purity and impurity. It is also associated with the processes of power and knowledge, which create certain truths in society. In the process of gaining knowledge and power and constructing truth, *varna* and caste have been used as an instrument of differentiation and exclusion from which certain groups of people have been able to define their supremacy and power to control over other groups. As a result, the alternate power, knowledge and truth of a so-called inferior group have been subjugated for centuries. Consequently, caste hierarchies and untouchability have been legitimated.

In Nepalese society, hierarchies and differences between non-Dalits and Dalits are still strong, although there are multiple hierarchies and changing caste relationships among and between Dalits and Non-Dalits. Due to the impact of economic and occupational shifts, increasing access to education and growing concerns against untouchability and caste-based differentiation, the caste relationships have been changing. However, the image of Dalit constructed in various sources and organisations generally conceal the positive aspects, contributions and skills, and thereby present their negative images of

powerlessness and backwardness. This suggests that there is a need to represent Dalits from their own perspectives with historical and empirical analysis.

Dalits and other excluded people have suffered from historical legacies of exclusionary practices of schooling. As a result, the majority of the children from these communities are still excluded from education. Again, schooled children also receive different categories of education in private and public schools based on their economic and socio-cultural position. Moreover, retention rates up to the first five years of schooling indicate that most of the schooled children from various Dalit and other excluded groups leave school in their early years or do not pass their examinations. Therefore, educational practices work as an instrument of selection of children based on their socio-cultural and economic position. In other words, educational practices reproduce social differences and exclusion, rather than producing social equity and inclusion. In this case, the mismatches between the government's policies and programmes about inclusion of Dalits in education and the actual practices are also visible.

To analyse the educational exclusion of Dalits further, subsequent chapters (Chapters 7 to 9) of this thesis examine the socio-cultural complexities and power-knowledge mechanism within the society and school by obtaining empirical data from Basipur village and Gauripur School. The next chapter describes the research field and the field relations.

Chapter 6

Research Field and the Field Relations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research site. It includes a physical as well as a socio-cultural description of the research field. It also explains how I selected and entered the research site, and how I managed and sustained the field relations during my field research. This description provides a context for the subsequent chapters. This chapter is based on the observations of Basipur village and Gauripur School and interviews and conversations with teachers and people from Basipur.

6.2 Selecting Basipur as the Research Site

I was interested in the educational exclusion of the Madhesi Dalits in Nepal. I selected some Tarai districts (Siraha, Dhanusha, Sunsari and Chitwan) that have a large number of Dalit population. After selecting these four districts, I discussed with my colleagues, friends and teachers about the location and the situation of different Village Development Committees (VDCs), which have a large number of the Dalit population within these four districts. After getting information about the location and accessibility, I selected one of the VDC from Siraha District for my fieldwork. I selected the research field during my first fieldwork in March and April 2005. My research field includes Basipur village and Gauripur School.

The selection was based on my interest of studying educational issues related to Madhesi Dalits. Access to roads and possibility to work with people and to stay around the village during the fieldwork were also the bases for selecting Basipur village as the research site. As I wanted to study people's life, issues regarding educational exclusion and inclusion and pedagogical practices, people's participation in the research process were essential. Thus, willingness to take part in the process of research and the cooperative attitude of the community members also played a vital role in selection of research site. A further reason for selecting Basipur as the research site was that there was no armed conflict between rebels and the government forces in the immediate area.

The practices of Gauripur School and the community of Basipur village provided a 'bounded social setting' with 'interconnected data' (Holliday, 2002, pp 37-40). I obtained the data by using various observations, interviews, conversations and school documents. My research setting was 'sufficiently small', but there was the 'necessary richness of multifaceted data' (ibid). Besides the data from the main setting or 'core setting', I used literature, documents and my experiences related to school practices, social discrimination and education of Dalits in the wider context as the form of 'periphery data' (ibid, pp 40-43).

Along with analysing and identifying a small culture, I tried to link it with the wider cultural context of the caste hierarchy, state, politics and educational development. Thus, I extended the scope of the research field beyond the village and school, and I tried to link it with the district educational planning, NGOs' work and national policy and politics. Therefore, my research site was 'multi-layered' and 'multi-faceted'.

6.3 Description of the Research Site

This section briefly describes the physical location, socio-cultural practices and demography of Basipur village. Similarly, it presents a brief description of the location, physical condition and educational environment of Gauripur School. It also describes the socio-cultural complexity and power dynamics in the research setting.

Basipur Village

Basipur village consists of three small settlements: two Dalit settlements including Sadaya and Ram²¹ and a non-Dalits settlement of Chaudhari, Mahato and Shah. Basipur is the common name of the village including these three settlements within the radius of about 500 metres²². It lies in the Eastern Tarai district Siraha of Nepal. The village is about four kilometres south of Nepal's East-West Highway. There was no access to public transport to Basipur and its southern belt as far as the Indian border. Most people

²¹ Basipur Dalits prefer to use alternative terms Sadaya and Ram, instead of Musar and Chamar respectively because of degrading connotations of the words Musar and Ram (Conversations, Ranjit and Udaya). Non-Dalit people of Basipur, on the other hand, generally use the terms Musar and Chamar instead of Sadaya and Ram respectively. However, both Sadayas and Rams do not oppose directly with the words Musar and Chamar, and they consider Sadaya is a *thar*-surname of Musar and Ram is a *thar*-surname of Chamar, whereas Musar and Chamar indicate some caste categories.

²² In Basipur village, there were about 115 Sadaya households with 425 people, about 50 Ram households with 200 people and 80 non-Dalits households with 350 people (based on household survey data by Ranjit, Udaya and Bhima).

walk and some people (especially men) ride bicycles to the highway and the city Jayanagar. Although I have selected these three settlements and the school as the main research setting, there are crucial roles of neighbourhood settlements and villages in shaping the practices in the village and school.

All three communities of the village speak Maithili as their first language and Nepali as the second language. Concerning religious practice, they identify themselves as Hindu. Chhat is the most important religious festival of all the residents of Basipur village. It is a common religious festival to the Hindus from Tarai. Besides this, they celebrate Dipawali and some other local festivals; for example, Dinabadari is a traditional local festival of Sadaya. They also celebrate Dashain²³. People, on some special occasions, go to the small temple situated in Basipur village. Dalits also go to the temple, but they have to wait outside the temple to get some flowers from the *pujari*-priest. However, one of the Dalits groups - Sadaya - has a separate place for worshipping, a temple where no people from other castes go to worship (Conversations, Ranjit and Udaya).

Generally, girls from both Dalit communities of Basipur get married between the ages of twelve and sixteen and the boys between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Most of them have more than three children (Conversation, Ranjit and observation of meeting, f/n, 18 November 2005). There were both tendencies of arranged and self-choice marriage by the couple (the later is usually called love marriage). However, in the case of the non-Dalit community, self-choice marriage was rare, and the tendency of early marriage in non-Dalit community has been reduced in recent years. Divorce and re-marriage are possible in both Sadaya and Ram communities, but it is hard to get a divorce and re-marry for non-Dalit women. There were some cases of polygamy in the Dalit community (Conversation, Ranjit). The dowry system was not in practice in the Dalit community; in the case of non-Dalits of Basipur, dowry has been a socially accepted practice (Conversation, Bhima, f/n, 27 January 2006).

Most of the non-Dalit families have land to cultivate food grains. Most Dalits have only a small piece of land for settlement. A landless settlement committee has registered such a small piece of land with their names some years ago; otherwise, they would have been recognised as *sukumbasi* (landless people) forever. Traditionally, Sadayas used to live

²³ The most important social and religious festival for most of the hill Hindus, including hill Dalits, is Dashain. Hill people usually do not celebrate Chhat.

on hunting wild animals and birds, fishing and working as agricultural labourers. For some decades, their occupation has been limited to agricultural labourers with very low wages. For some years, a good number of Sadaya people have been working as brick labourers. At the same time, a good number of young people have been working as some industrial and household labourers in Indian cities like Delhi and Punjab. Although Rams used to work as cobblers, due to industrial production they have not been able to sustain their traditional occupation. Nowadays, Rams have also been working as brick labourers and agriculture labourers in the village and household and industrial labourers in Indian cities. A few of them have been working in some band groups at Jayanagar to play musical instruments, especially at the weddings of some economically well-off people. Such jobs are only seasonal and occasional. Because of the high dependency rate and low wages, most Dalits have great difficulty in meeting their basic needs.

Almost all Sadayas and Rams have small houses with only one room. The houses are fenced with very thin bamboo or wooden walls with a small height of about five to six feet. The roofs of the houses were made of hay. Almost all the houses look like huts, but not houses. In the very rainy season, Sadayas face the problem of flooding in their houses.

The adult literacy rate of Dalits is less than 10%. Only two Sadayas and two Rams from the Basipur Dalit community have passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination, and a few children were studying at school (no more than fifteen) during my first field visit. There were three non-formal education classes running during my first fieldwork (Observations, r/d, 23 March 2005). A Sadaya youth was conducting lessons for a non-formal education programme for children with the financial and technical support of an NGO. During my main fieldwork, it was found that most of the participants of this children's non-formal course (usually call out-of-school children's programme) were admitted to school, but they were not confident for their continuation of schooling (School record and conversations, head teacher, Ranjit, Bhima). I also found a number of primary school age Dalit children who were not attending school.

No Dalits from the Basipur Sadaya and Ram communities who passed the SLC examination got a professional job. However, contemporary non-Dalits communities who passed the SLC examination are able to get professional work. There was a

negligible participation of the Dalit community in school management and school decision-making process. However, there was a Dalit member²⁴ in the School Managing Committee (SMC) formed two years ago. The newly formed (November 2005) School Managing Committee (SMC) has also included a Dalit member.

Although transition from primary to secondary school is still low in the case of non-Dalits girls, most of the non-Dalit people enrol their children in primary school. Some economically well-off people from this village send their children to English medium private schools at Jayanagar, but the number of children attending private schools is small. In spite of the long distance, some non-Dalit children from this village also go to public school at Jayanagar. No Dalit children from Basipur village attended private schools, and no Dalit girl from the village was studying beyond grade 4.

Gauripur School

Gauripur School was established in 1954 with primary grades, and was upgraded to secondary school seven years ago. The government has provided for only one secondary teacher (School record). The school has appointed two teachers. To meet these costs, the school has been charging fees to the students who enrolled in grades six to ten. However, from 2005/2006 school was going to waive fees for all Dalit pupils up to grade ten, as the government was going to subsidise the waived fees to the public schools. The school also gets some money by letting its land for cultivation and a public pond for fishing (Conversation, head teacher, f/n, 14 November 2005). But the money from these sources was not sufficient for the school.

During my first field visit, there were only forty-two Dalit pupils out of 510 school enrolments. Among the forty-two Dalit pupils, more than twenty Dalits pupils were from another village and about ten were from another Dalit group called Das (Tatma) from the adjacent village (School record). A demographic survey of the village shows that there were more than 200 children of school age in the two Dalit settlements of Sadaya and Ram from where only ten students were attending school in the 2004/2005 session, but a good number of children were attending non-formal classes in the village. Among school enrolled Dalit children more than 50% left school without completing a

²⁴ New Educational Code has introduced a new provision for SMC selection. By this code, parents' meeting of respective school elects the members of SMC.

year of schooling, and no Dalit from Basipur village was studying beyond grade seven (School record). According to teachers and parents, the government's school enrolment campaign (Welcome to School Programme), which has scholarship provision for all primary schooled Dalit children (scholarship includes small amount of money to the parents, which is even not sufficient to buy a uniform to their children or hardly covers the cost of stationery to a pupil), contributed to enrolment. Non-formal education programmes for out of schoolchildren and the appeals of Dalits' organisations and Dalit activists also contributed to the enrolment of Dalit children at school. As a result, school enrolment was increased dramatically in the year 2005/2006. During my main field research, the enrolment was 900 where grade one comprised 389 enrolments.

All teachers and students were from the Madhesi community. They speak Nepali as a second language and Maithili as their first language. Among the school's thirteen teachers, one was a female, and another two female were volunteer teachers working from the beginning of this school year (2005/2006). The school had no Dalit teacher. Only four out of thirteen teachers were from Basipur village (School record). There was also a lack of adequate numbers of qualified teachers. Only four teachers were bachelor degree holders and only three teachers were appointed for secondary level.

Altogether, there were eight classrooms and one office room in the school building during my first fieldwork. Then, another building of two rooms was under construction with the financial and technical assistance of an NGO, and the construction of that building had been completed before my main fieldwork. The school has a playground of about 300ft × 400ft dimensions. Similarly, another one-room building was also constructed with the financial support from the Department of Education (DOE).

There was a Village Development Committee (VDC) building on the opposite edge of the playground, which has been used as the VDC office as well as a health post. This VDC office was closed due the threat of the rebels from Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (Conversation with VDC staff). People had to go to Jayanagar if they needed to contact VDC staff. School had a financial shortage when the VDC stopped financing to the salary of the school appointed teachers. Figure 5 shows the location of the research field and district wise distribution of Dalit population in Nepal, and Figure 6 is a sketch of Basipur village, where the area within the oval shape covers Basipur village and Gauripur School - the core research setting to this research.

Figure 5: Location of the research field and the distribution of Dalit population in Nepal

(Dalit population: as per cent of district, 2001)

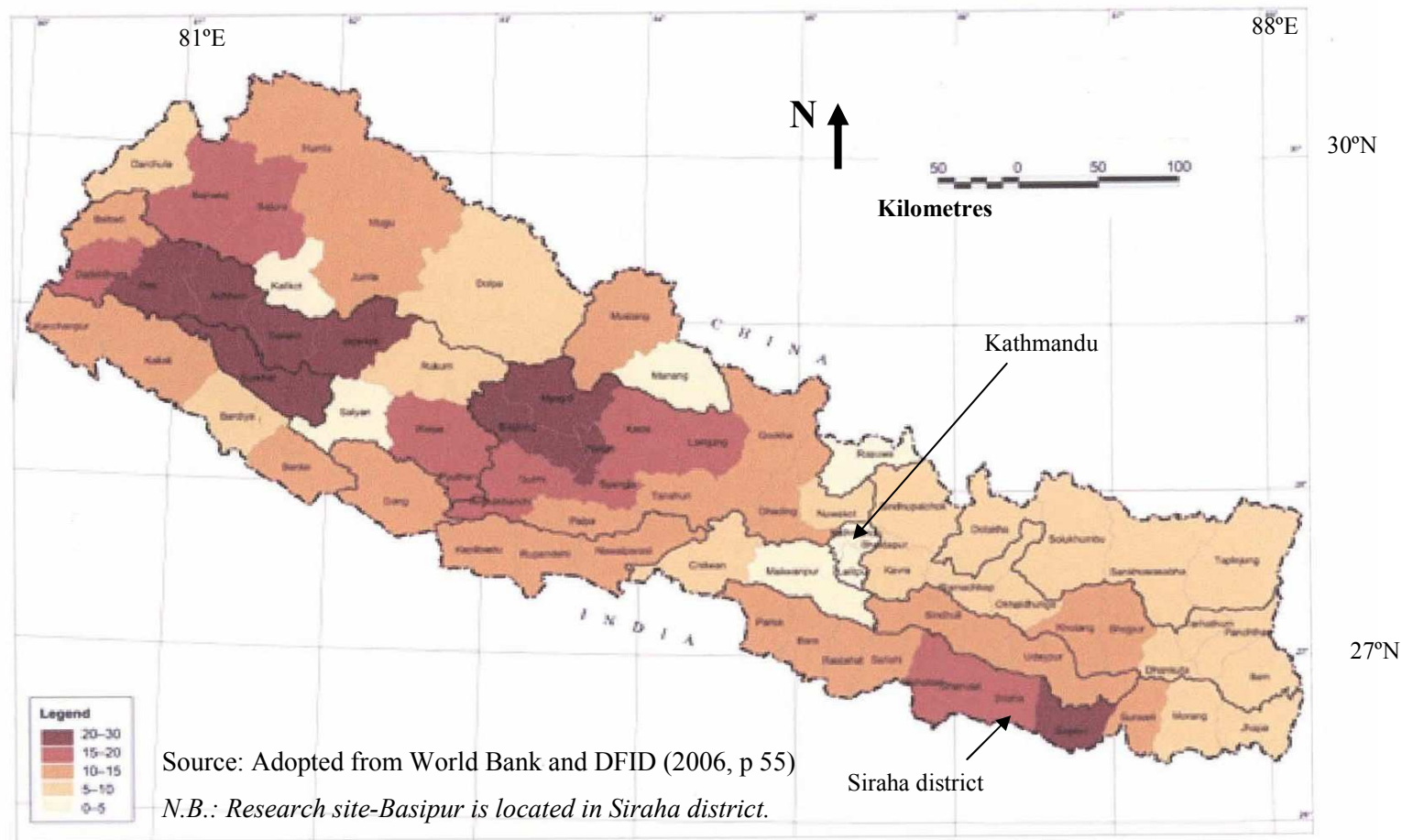
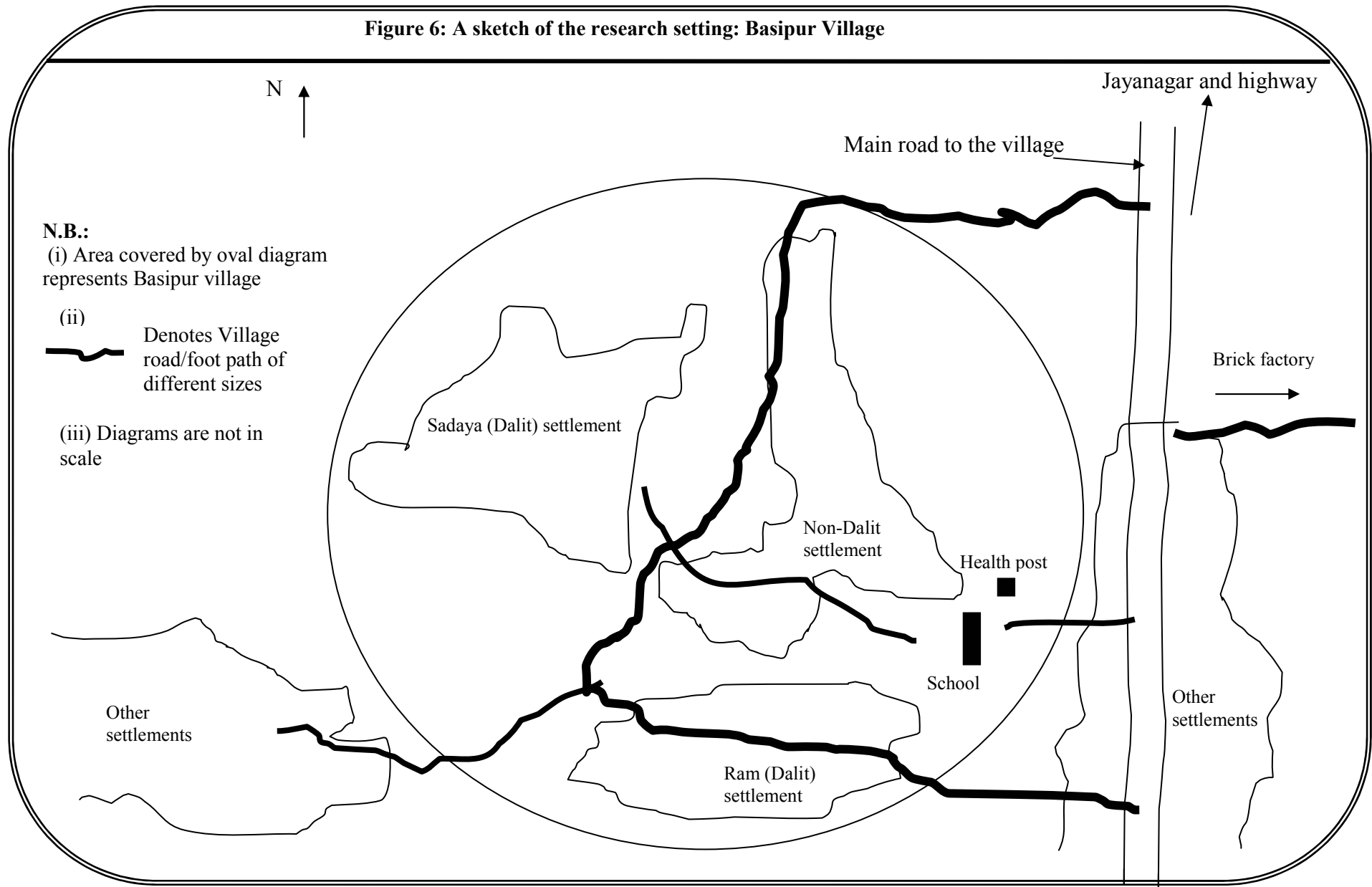


Figure 6: A sketch of the research setting: Basipur Village



Social Complexity of the Setting

Basipur village was a mixture of disagreements and conflicts as well as adjudication and settlement between Dalits and non-Dalits and amongst the different groups of Dalits and non-Dalits. Dalits felt excluded and discriminated in society, although they spoke the same language and practised similar religious traditions as non-Dalits. Most of the non-Dalits were not happy with the Dalits' opposition and alliance. As a result, conflicts between Dalits and non-Dalits were visible (Chapter 7). There was competition for holding power among the various non-Dalit groups (castes/sub-castes) and among the Dalits groups (castes/sub-castes). Very few examples of co-operation between Dalits and non-Dalits were found. Local election was one of the examples where the boundaries of alliances seemed to cross.

In spite of such conflicts, contradictions and competitions, people from Basipur village have the feeling of their own village and their own community. However, most non-Dalits still hesitate to maintain equal relationships with the Dalits. On the other hand, Dalits, opposing such dominant-subordinate relations, want to maintain an equal relationship with non-Dalits (Chapter 7).

6.4 Basipur Dalit, Dalit organisations and NGOs

Basipur Dalits have been involved in various Dalit organisations and NGOs. Dalit Sewa Sangh has been working as an NGO for four years. It has been working as a common Dalit organisation for the Dalits from the four Village Development Committees (VDCs) around Jayanagar. Basipur Dalits have been actively participating with Dalit Sewa Sangh, where four Dalits from Basipur have been working as organisers of Dalit Sewa Sangh. The organisers work with the Dalit community and organise meetings for social awareness campaigns (Conversations with Sanat and Chairperson of Dalit Sewa Sangh, f/n, 24 November 2005 and 14 January 2006). They are responsible for conducting and managing non-formal education programmes and other campaigns at villages. For three years, this organisation has been working as a partner NGO of Action Aid Nepal. They manage the office, staff and conduct non-formal education classes and other social awareness and skill development activities with the financial and technical assistance of Action Aid. Dalit Sewa Sangh has been working to create awareness against caste-based discrimination and untouchability. Similarly, programmes were also

designed to increase awareness in health and sanitation, education and other social practices (Observations of Dalit Sewa Sangh office and Annual Conference of the Sangh). Before working at Dalit Sewa Sangh, two Dalits from Basipur village had also worked with human rights campaigns and non-formal education programmes funded by some human rights groups (Interview, Sanat, f/n, 04 February 2006).

Other NGOs, like Nepal Rural Reconstruction (RRN) and Bhawani Integrated Rural Development Project, were also working with the Basipur Dalit community. Bhawani Integrated Rural Development Project has government funds for the Poverty Reduction Programme, in which it gives small seed money to the Dalits and other poor people to run their small business like, shops or cattle. This project has formed user groups for every fifteen to thirty users to manage the fund and re-invest the money into other schemes. RRN was helping Dalits as well as non-Dalits for small construction work, skills training and water and sanitation facilities (Conversations to RRN staff, Ranjit, Sanat, r/d, 22 March 2005).

In addition to this, different Dalit groups have their own organisations working in village, district and regional to national levels. Nepal Rishikul Sadaya Kalyan Samaj (Society) (NRSKS) is an organisation of Sadayas, and there are separate organisations of Ram and Dom (Marik), too. A number of Dalits from Basipur village have been members of their respective organisations (Conversations, Ranjit, Sanat, Udaya, Lal, Bhima, f/n, November-December 2005). Chamar (Ram) movements of Siraha and Saptari districts of Nepal have especially contributed to the formation and participation of these organisations. These movements have also contributed to strengthen anti-untouchability and anti-discriminatory movements in this area (Conversations with Udaya and Chairperson of Dalit Sewa Sangh, f/n, 20 and 24 November 2005).

Dalits have been struggling and resisting caste-based discriminatory practices in society; they still have to fight against caste-based hierarchical practice among the Dalits. A Dalit youth, Ranjit, said that internal caste hierarchies and practice of untouchability among the Dalits themselves has been weakening their anti-discriminatory movements. Recently, they have paid attention to minimise intra-Dalit hierarchies and untouchability by organising joint feasts, forming joint Dalit organisations and working together in social awareness and anti-discriminatory campaigns. Basipur Dalits have also organised

a joint feast, and they were trying to form a common village level Dalit organisation (Ranjit, interview, f/n, 8 November 2005).

6.5 Gaining Access to the Community and School

Entering the field, managing the first contact and establishing the rapport with people were important while gaining access to the research field. I gained entry to the community through a person who was coordinating the activities of an NGO working within various villages of Siraha district. A teacher of Gauripur School also helped me to get entry and access to the community. Before gaining access to the school and community, I went to the District Education Office (DEO) of Siraha and local Village Development Committee (VDC) office, and briefed them of my purpose and work. At the community and school, I explained my purpose and research interests clearly. As suggested by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), explaining the purpose and research project helped me gain access and establish a rapport with the community members and teachers of the school.

It was an overt entrée to the field (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002; Brewer, 2000; O'Reilly, 2005) as I had already disclosed my research project, process and purpose of working with school and community. In that way, my entry was negotiated with the school and the community. I got permission from the head teacher of Gauripur School and discussed my research project and fieldwork with some of the community members of the Dalit community, from which I got permission for the fieldwork and some assurances of cooperation. One of the youths (Ranjit) from the Basipur Dalit community, who has been involved in various community welfare activities in the village, helped me to enter the community. Although I could not find any problem of 'gatekeepers' while entering the research site, the head teacher of Gauripur School and Ranjit from the Dalit community can be considered as the 'gatekeepers' in this context.

Initially, some of the community members thought that I also wanted to launch some projects and thereby wanted to give some money to the community. I explained that I wanted to study why Dalits did not go to school, why they left school early, what difficulties they are facing in school and how the situation can be changed. I also requested their participation and co-operation for this study. Similarly, I clearly mentioned the research was for my study, not for any other projects. During my

fieldwork, I taught the students of various grades (grades 6 to 9) in Gauripur School. Such teaching was helpful to gain access to the students and community. It also contributed in minimising some psychological distances caused by my identity and position with community people and students.

My first contact with the Dalit community was with Ranjit who was one of the secondary school completers (ten years schooling) from the community. He was conducting non-formal literacy programmes for children with the assistance of an NGO. He was also working with some awareness programmes related to health, sanitation and education, and working against caste-based discrimination towards the Dalit community of Basipur. During my first fieldwork, I found that he was helpful, honest and appreciable. He invited me to his house and non-formal education classes at Basipur. These visits to Basipur village, Ranjit's house and non-formal education classes provided me with some opportunities to hold conversations with other community members. In this way, my first contact was very important, and he played a role as a key informant and assisted me for the further fieldwork within the community. In the case of school, there was no issue of the first contact because my identity as educational researcher with the working identity at the Ministry of Education helped with entry to the school. Moreover, the meeting with the head teacher and another teacher Prabindra helped in getting access to the school activities and classrooms and getting co-operation from the teachers.

I have taken rapport as the situation of 'trust and co-operation' between people of the field and the researcher (Jorgenson, 1989), so that it was more than establishment of communication between researcher and the people or the research participants. In addition to this, I was examining the inclusion and exclusion of the Dalit community, which may be an interest and concern of the community. As in DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), this was a kind of unannounced 'shared goal' between the research participants from the Dalit community and me as a researcher, which contributed a lot in increasing trust and co-operation. The establishment of trust and co-operation was a continuous process, which I developed and maintained during my fieldwork. However, initial fieldwork and contacts in the field helped find a way to establishing a rapport with the community. My first entrée to the field and the first contact at the field also worked as a good beginning for the establishment of a rapport with the community.

I had thought that teachers could be a way of gaining an easy access to the community, but I felt that it was rather difficult in my research. The situation that I encountered was after a two hour-long conversations with one of the schoolteachers from local community, when I asked him about a way of contacting community members from the Dalit community. He did not refuse directly to go to the Dalit settlement, but he suggested that it would be better to call one of the members of the community to school. I realised that this was an indirect refusal to go to the Dalit settlement. It indicated a strong sense of difference practiced between Dalits and non-Dalits and a complex power relation between them. I changed my strategy and gained access through one of the community members with the help of an NGO worker. In this way, I was flexible and reflexive on getting access and establishing a rapport with the community.

6.6 Managing the Field Relationships

Gaining access to Gauripur School and Basipur community was the beginning of establishing ‘trust and cooperation’ and ‘rapport’. It was equally important to develop and sustain relations continuously throughout the field research. Without managing sustainable relations, it was not possible to work in the field and to collect data related to the understanding, viewpoints and practices of the people. Indeed, to perform ethnographic research, “ethnographers need to trust the people they are working with and vice versa” (Brewer, 2000, p 85). In this way, maintaining relationships was the matter of mutual trust and cooperation between the people from the research site and the researcher.

Negotiating the Roles

I tried to understand the local culture, language, social practices and power relations and then adjusted my role accordingly. Initially, a teacher of Gauripur School (Prabindra) and a Dalit youth from Basipur village (Ranjit) helped me to understand the cultural practice and power relations, and slowly I built up confidence to perform my role as a researcher. I tried to minimise the influence of my professional and social identity during my field research, which helped me to maintain a research role. After working some days in the community, I felt that my identity as a researcher became stronger. As a result, people started to speak and share more easily and more confidently with me about their culture, power relations in the village, issues of inclusion and exclusion and

their aspirations. However, people shared their ideas, pain, joys and stories of struggles with me, not only identifying me as a researcher but they were also aware of my inclusive and anti-discriminatory value position.

In addition to maintaining informal and formal social and personal relations, I performed roles of participant observer, interviewer, classroom observer and teacher. The relationship developed among the community members, teachers and students helped to build trust, and thereby it helped to perform these roles in the community and school. For classroom observations and teaching, teachers and students helped me. However, it was not a challenging task for me, as my professional life was associated with classroom observations, teacher training and teaching.

Developing and Sustaining Relationships in the Field

Performing research work in the community and the school was a complex task as it depended upon sustainable relationships with the people. Establishment of ‘rapport’ and developing ‘trust’ were the most important parts of developing relationships in the field. The previous sections of this chapter have discussed how I began establishing rapport and trust in the complex social setting of Basipur village and Gauripur School. I tried to maintain and develop rapport and trust continuously because “trust and cooperation are not absolute; rather they are matters of degree” (Jorgenson, 1989, p 69). I was conscious about the situation that trust once gained might be withdrawn at any time, so I continuously maintained and developed trust and cooperation (Wolcott, 1995; Brewer, 2000).

In the initial days of my research, I explained my research aims, research processes and my expectations from the community and discussed direct as well as indirect uses of my research to teachers and people from Basipur Dalit community. Such activities were important to develop trust and cooperation with the people in voluntary basis. During the research process, I was not only listening to them, but also sharing my experiences, concerns, excitements and pains with them, which helped to maintain relations and to develop trust. Therefore, as in Brewer (2000), I continuously maintained honesty, communication, friendliness, openness and confidence building with the people from the research site.

‘Reciprocity’ and ‘tolerance for ambiguity’ (Wolcott, 1995) were important acts in developing and maintaining relationships and trust with the people in the research field. In several situations, for instance, I did not only listen to people’s experiences, struggles and ideas but also shared my experiences with them. However, in some cases I maintained my naivety, so that it would have not affected their responses and it would have not broken trust and cooperation. Sometimes, such naivety helped to get more ideas and explanations about the situation and issues from the people. For example, sometimes people wanted to listen to me about the issue rather than to share their experiences and ideas. When people knew I did not have much idea about the issue related to their village or school, they explained every detail.

Participating in local gatherings, meetings, celebrations, feasts and festivals also helped to develop and maintain relations, cooperation and trust with both the Dalit and non-Dalit people. Such participation helped to ‘negotiate and renegotiate’, ‘confirm and repeatedly reaffirm’ the trust and cooperation with the people (Brewer, 2000, p 86). However, there was a need for locating myself to develop trust as, “the actual research cannot take place without the trust of community, and one way to gain trust is to locate yourself” (Absolon and Willett, 2005, p 97). The location of myself helped to balance my social and researcher self and to increase trust and cooperation in my research. It also helped for the participation of the community people to my research.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has described the research setting. It has also described how I maintained and sustained relationships in the field. I conducted field research in a complex social setting. The setting includes the Dalit and non-Dalit community of Basipur village and students and teachers of Gauripur School and their everyday life, struggles, social relationships, voices, views and politics. Gaining access, establishing the rapport and developing a workable relationship with the people from the field were contextual acts in which I maintained reflexivity towards every situation. The most important task for developing sustainable relationships and doing fieldwork without any obstacle was to balance the social self and researcher self of the researcher. The next chapter analyses the issue of exclusion of Dalits by focusing on the perceptions and struggles of Basipur Dalits.

Chapter 7

Inclusion and Exclusion of Basipur Dalits: Perceptions and Struggles

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses how societal discourses and practices give rise to inclusive and exclusionary pressures on the Dalits. It explains perceptions of Basipur Dalits about their inclusion and exclusion and illustrates their struggles against exclusion. These struggles show how Dalits have been reconstructing their identity and how this identity reconstruction promotes inclusive values and practices in society.

Dalits of Basipur village have been struggling to reconstruct their identity by rejecting caste-based hierarchy and discrimination. Although there is heterogeneity amongst Dalits, their 'Dalit' identity is the rejection of caste hierarchy, and it is a struggle for inclusive values and practices. There are multiple factors that put exclusionary pressures upon Dalits in society. The struggles of Dalits are concentrated against three main external exclusionary factors: so-called religious belief and practice that support caste hierarchy, local power relations, and the government's inefficient practices for inclusion. To facilitate the development of the inclusive values and practices, Dalits have also been working to change their own beliefs and practices. In order to reconstruct their identity, Dalits oppose discrimination based on occupational practices. They reject their fixed occupational status by opposing traditionally assigned occupations.

This chapter begins with discussing the struggles of the Dalits from Basipur village in redefining their self and identity. It explains how Dalits, by creating and appropriating alternative discourses and practices, have been struggling to alter the traditional practice of hierarchies, differences and untouchability. Then, it illustrates the multiple forms of exclusion of Dalits from society and explores their struggle for inclusive values and practices. This chapter is based on interviews with the people from Basipur village and observations of their activities. It also uses some documented sources of data.

7.2. Struggles to Reconstruct the Self and Identity

A Dalit youth from Basipur village said, “We have been struggling for recognition and trying to understand ourselves” (Ranjit, f/n, 12 November 2005). This indicates that Dalits have been struggling to understand and reconstruct their identity. I have taken the following observational notes from a meeting organised by a Dalit group, Sadaya of Siraha district. It was an instance of the struggle of Dalits to understand and reconstruct their identity. The meeting was a regional interaction programme of Nepal Rishikul Sadaya Kalyan Samaj (NRSKS)²⁵ District Committee, Siraha. Participants of that meeting were sixty Sadaya people from different parts of the district, including four from Basipur village. I was the only non-Sadaya at that meeting, and I was invited as a guest. In addition to committee members, some activists from the Sadaya community of Siraha district also attended that meeting. They called on me to speak at the meeting where I explained my research aim as well as my research process. I also expressed good wishes for their fight against caste-based discrimination, poverty and exclusion and requested their cooperation for my research.

The meeting had two main objectives. The first objective was to understand caste-based hierarchies and untouchability and to discuss various ways of combating it. The second objective was to reconstruct their identity and self and to modify their personal habit and practice.

The district chairperson of NRSKS urged the Sadaya people to change those habits and customs that are creating barriers for the inclusion in society. He explained how Rams have changed several humiliating practices and customs. He suggested Sadayas learn from this change. He also explained how the committee has been working on the issue of Dalits and at the same time, he described how several organisations were helping to work on the issue of untouchability, human rights and discrimination. He explained that one of the positive aspects of the Dalits movements was the growing concern on the issue of Dalits at local as well as national and international levels. He also gave example of my research as a part of this concern and solidarity. However, he urged all the Sadaya people to create great movement for change in order to get benefits. He also requested them to send their children to school and to raise their voice for equal treatment at school, in society and

²⁵ Nepal Rishikul Sadaya Kalyan Samaj (Nepal Rishikul Sadaya Welfare Society-NRSKS) is a voluntary organisation of Sadaya community. The NRSKS has been working for the case of human right, especially in the case of the Dalits human rights; against caste-based discrimination, murder, rape and other atrocities to the Dalits; and various types of social awareness against bad social practices related to early marriage, polygamy, health and sanitation, liquor drinking habit, child labour, etc. Under the NRSKS district committee they formed five regional committees of NRSKS in Siraha district.

in governmental and non-governmental organisations. He said that many Dalit people still have to fight to get citizenship certificates.

(Observation, f/n, 19 November 2005)

Their most important driving force of participation in that meeting was to share experiences of struggles against exclusion and to strengthen and broaden their struggles for identity and inclusion in society. The meeting also showed the heterogeneity amongst Dalits themselves. During that meeting, I noticed that there was competition and contradiction between two groups of Madhesi Dalits: Sadaya and Ram. Some of them criticised the Ram community and said that the Rams had been trying to show their superiority to Sadayas, but they claimed that it was not true. They were claiming that historically Sadayas were superior to Rams. Even one of them said, “We (Sadaya) are the descendants of a Rishi²⁶ but their (Ram’s) ancestors are unknown.” This indicates that the complex hierarchical relationships based on caste have been influencing their relationships amongst Dalit communities.

Locating and Relocating the Self and Identity

During a conversation, a Dalit, 42, from Basipur village explained how hierarchical caste practice has made them ‘untouchable’. He thinks change in discriminatory values and practices are essential to change their so-called lower caste status. The struggle for non-discriminatory values and practices helps Dalits to construct a new identity. He said,

Poverty, untouchability and discrimination are the causes of being a Dalit. How can I say it is good to be a Dalit? But it is not the result of being Dalits. It is the result of discriminatory practice and thinking. So, our task is to change discriminatory practice and thinking.

(Sundar, f/n, 14 January 2006)

In a similar issue, a Dalit activist, who was involving with the activities of a Dalit-focused NGO, expressed the view that their identification with the word ‘Dalit’ helps to reconstruct their identity. He explained,

Sometimes, I think the meaning associated with the word ‘Dalits’ and our identification of Dalits have hindered us from being a respected citizen of Nepal and included member of the community. We cannot hide our identification as lower or untouchable caste anymore, even when we do not

²⁶ Rishikul’ means the descendant of Rishi. According to Hindu scriptures, Rishies were ancient saints of the Vedic and Pre-Vedic Hindu society.

use the word 'Dalits'. However, I am getting a new identification with the word 'Dalits', which is helping us to struggle against discrimination, fatalistic belief and exclusion. Again, we do not need to feel any regret of such identification because we were not the cause of discrimination and we have not been doing any injustice to the others. Actually, we have been fighting for justice, equality and inclusion. So, why should we regret?

(Jayandra, f/n, 24 November 2006)

Along with some differences in these two voices of Sundar and Jayandra, there exist basic similarities. For instance, both want to reconstruct the identity of Dalits, so that they could be included in society and be able to change social relationships by rejecting caste-based discrimination. In other words, they want to reconstruct Dalits' identity by changing their values as well as practices. They have been trying to reconstruct their identity using the term 'Dalit', which has non-discriminatory and non-degrading meanings.

On the other hand, I found several cases in which Dalits were hiding their surnames and castes to escape from the caste-based discrimination and untouchability. For example, the following news item posted in an E-bulletin explains a similar situation of Dalits falsifying surnames and castes to get rental flat/rooms in Kathmandu. Such falsification of their name/surname to the government security agency may bring about general legal action against them. However, giving their real name/surname may cause them to lose their place of living and weaken their possibility of finding rooms/flats. This problem is highlighted in this E-bulletin.

With the imposition of the new provision by the government to produce personal details including citizenship certificates to tenants to the landlords for security reasons, Dalits pretending their real identity fearing they would not find rooms to rent, are suffering these days. This new provision has posed a serious threat to the life of thousands of Dalit families living at rented apartments inside the valley who cannot bring their problems to the fore. A study shows that a large section of the Dalit community living in the rented apartments at the urban areas is destined to pretend their real identity.

(Jagaran Media Centre, E-bulletin, Issue 2, 19 September 2005,
www.jagaranmedia.org.np)

Two interrelated questions in this situation are, 'why do they hide their surnames/castes', and 'why do people from other castes not hide their surnames/castes?' However, in Basipur village, there is no question of hiding the surname or caste of any person, as people know each other. Again, it is not the solution to the problem of

discrimination, as it is not possible to hide the caste position of such a large population. Moreover, the concept of hiding their surnames/castes does not value diversities and differences among people.

However, Dalits have been struggling for a common identity to oppose caste-based discrimination and socio-economic, educational and political exclusions. The following field note explains the struggles for identity and inclusion of a Dalit in Basipur village.

Sanat, 40, was the first Dalit from the Basipur community to pass the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination. He has been working with a local Dalit NGO. He did not get any permanent professional job as was his expectation, but he is happy with his present activities and works. He said, "At least I got a chance to work with community people to understand caste-based discrimination and to raise an organised voice in opposition to discrimination in society. At the same time, we have been working to create awareness against various bad practices and superstitions within our Dalit community". They have also been trying to minimise intra-Dalit untouchability and hierarchies by organising joint feast, working together and forming Dalit associations and committees with the participation of all Dalit groups of the community.

He said that at least Dalit people began to recognise discrimination and at the same time, they began to oppose it. He thought it was a good sign for some positive change in Dalit community. He further said that Dalit people began to think who they have been and why they have been discriminated in society and why and how they have been living in such a difficult situation.

(Based on interview, Sanat, f/n, 10 February 2006)

Sanat has not only understood caste-based discrimination and exclusions, but also suffered from it. When he began to educate Dalit people against caste-based discrimination and exclusion in society, he felt more comfortable with his identity. In this way, Sanat has been working to reconstruct his Dalit identity as a symbol of struggle for justice and a form of resistance against discriminatory practices. Along with rejecting discriminatory discourses and practices, changing their own practices help them to construct a new Dalit identity. In this case, a Ram villager Udaya, 38, from Basipur village shared his struggles for the reconstruction of identity and self.

We have begun to realise our situation and been trying to understand how such discrimination is created and practiced in society, even though we are still suffering from poverty, discrimination and illiteracy. We have also changed some of our practices from which other people used to label us as uncivilised or dirty. We are continuing the process of changing such practices.

(Conversation, Udaya, f/n, 15 January 2006)

He was referring to the Chamar (Ram) movements especially concentrated in Siraha and Saptari districts of Nepal, which were directed against social discrimination and untouchability. The movement also encouraged them to change a number of humiliating practices related to social customs, work and eating habits. Udaya said that they have identified the practices that need to be abandoned because of health and safety reasons and degrading connotations associated with the practices. He also argued that these changes and abandonment of some traditional work were a way of ensuring the right of the Dalits in choosing their work and occupation.

Some non-Dalit people opposed such activities, struggles and political understanding amongst Dalits. For example, a non-Dalit social worker from Basipur village said, "These people must abandon identifying themselves Dalits, if they want change in the practice of untouchability" (Bachhu, f/n, 18 February 2006). He seemed unhappy with Dalit focused programmes, Dalits' opposition and alliance against caste based discrimination and their fighting against poverty. Similarly, a non-Dalit local political leader aggressively criticised the activities of Dalit based organisations and Dalit-focused NGOs.

Those people are creating jobs using 'Dalits' and giving them a new name, 'Dalits'. Do you think they will be able to change society? I think they are never going to change anything, as they are creating jobs and money and gaining prestige in the name of Dalits. Those NGOs have been creating difference by identifying some people as Dalit.

(Upendra, f/n, 16 January 2006)

In this case, the following suggestion of a social activist (non-Dalit) seems appropriate as he was responding to my explanation of such contradictory interpretations about the struggles of Dalits and activities and programmes of Dalit focused NGOs and other social organisations.

Obviously, he (the non-Dalit villager) is not happy with the changing power relations and the unity of Dalits. If you are in favour of the changes in existing power relations, hierarchies and discrimination in society, you should locate yourself somewhere different where your value position feels comfortable. But, it may be challenging to you. This does not mean I am overlooking the need of critical assessment and radical change for the programmes and activities of NGOs. My concern here is the attitude and intention of such criticism about Dalit-focused programmes and activities.

(Damodar, r/d, 20 March 2006)

Finally, I want to quote Udaya, a Dalit youth from Basipur village. He does not like to be insulted as a person of 'lower caste', 'untouchable', 'uncivilised' or 'backward'. He expressed his dissatisfaction in this way:

We have changed several traditional practices. How are we uncivilised and backward? We want to be identified in a different way but most non-Dalits identify us in a different way. We don't like to be known as backward and uncivilised.

(Udaya, interview, f/n, 15 January 2006)

This suggests that there is difficulty in fixing an identity and self for Dalit people. However, some non-Dalit people want to fix Dalit identity as 'backward', 'uncivilised', and 'dirty' or 'lower caste' people, and they want to create some discourse of difference based on such identity. Some non-Dalit people use this discourse of difference to legitimise the discrimination and exclusion of Dalits. On the other hand, Dalits reject such identification, and they want to identify with a new 'Dalit' identity. The identity with the word 'Dalit' rejects casteism and indicates their struggles for non-hierarchical relations in society.

However, many non-Dalit people, the government and many development/aid organisations still prefer to use terms like 'occupational castes', 'oppressed castes', 'backward classes', 'depressed castes', 'marginalised', 'disadvantaged groups' instead of using the term 'Dalits' (Bennett, 2005; WB, DfID, 2006). Moreover, some people still prefer to use offensive words, like 'untouchables' and 'lower castes' instead of the word Dalit. This refusal to "use the term Dalit deflects attention from caste-based discrimination that is still everyday reality and must be tackled head-on" (Bennett, 2005, p 26). Such refusal to use the term Dalit is still found in several government documents; for example, the planning document of ninth plan has mentioned 'higher caste group and downtrodden people' (see NPC, 1997, 13.7.2). The Tenth Plan document in several places uses the word 'lower caste' (see NPC, 2002, 23.4) to indicate Dalits, although in comparison to previous documents the tenth plan document has used the word Dalit widely. Similarly, in the summary of the Tenth Plan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 'backward people' is used to indicate Dalits (see NPC, 2003, p 54).

In this case, I agree with Devkota (2002a), as he argues that the dominant sector of society creates such meaning to differentiate between Dalits and non-Dalits by labelling

some people as 'backward' or 'uncivilised' and others as 'forward' or 'civilised'. For example, in India since the 1960s, the word Dalit has been in popular use for discriminated people from the caste hierarchy. The term Dalit is used to give a common and non-degrading term to represent a symbol of struggle and pride as well as an identity and an ideology of anti-casteism (see Shah, 2001; Guru, 2001; Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 2000). Nepalese Dalits also began to use the word Dalits with similar meaning around the 1970s (see Bhattachan, et al., 2002). However, some people are still defining Dalits as 'broken', 'destroyed', 'backward' or 'lower caste' people instead of conveying an alternative meaning of the term Dalit as the identity and ideology of anti-casteism.

This discussion explains how discourses or meanings have been created in society about Dalit identity. It indicates that using power and knowledge, certain discourse about the identity of Dalits has been legitimised in society. It also indicates Dalits' rejection of so-called 'lower caste' identification and their struggle for new identity. Dalits have been trying to reconstruct a new and common Dalit identity, although due to the individual differences or subjectivity, the construction and existence of a common and single 'Dalit' identity is difficult. It suggests that identity "is never complete, it is always in process, and constituted within representation", and "it is constantly produced and reproduced in practices of everyday life" (Weedon, 2004, p 155).

Searching for Alternative Discourses and Practices

The meeting of Sadaya people, as described in the beginning of this section, gives a strong message and story of struggle for some alternative values and practices. That meeting was creating and appropriating new discourses of non-discrimination and inclusion. On the other hand, they have also taken the issue of purity and impurity within the Dalit community by claiming that they (Sadaya) are the descendants of 'Rishi'. However, Dalits are active in searching for some new discourses and practices in opposition to caste hierarchies and differences.

Let me give more examples and instances of Dalit active engagement in creating and appropriating some alternate discourses and in challenging the existing discriminatory discourses and practices in society. I begin with an example of a parents' meeting at Gauripur School. I observed a parents' meeting organised by Gauripur School to select

the School Managing Committee (SMC). At that meeting, Dalits demanded an appropriate share in the committee, and they demanded the replacement of the previous chairperson and other members. The voice of the Dalits seemed organised as a good number of Dalits were participating in that meeting. The following excerpt from my observational notes explains more about the dispute between the existing discourse and an alternative discourse espoused by the Dalits.

Including three Dalits, eight people gave their names for the candidacy of the chairperson of SMC. The participants of the meeting requested all eight candidates for their meeting, so that they could select unanimously one person among them. They met together and tried to negotiate by discussing for about half an hour, but could not make any common agreement. Some people were saying that previously there usually used to be competition and compromise between two non-Dalit groups: Yadav and Chaudhari. Now, Dalits also appeared in this power game. Like most of the non-Dalit parents, one teacher (T₁) blamed the Dalits for creating disagreement. Moreover, he said, "Dalits have demanded excess. It is like a Nepali proverb: if you give people a finger, they will demand the palm".

Another teacher (T₂), who was listening to the conversation, did not agree with this argument. He said, "In my view, this is not the case. The Dalits are not creating the problem. It is their right to give candidacy, as the other five non-Dalits have. Again, they (Dalits) are agreeing to support one of the other candidates, but other non-Dalit candidates were not compromising. Anyway, this gathering will not elect a Dalit as the chairperson. In this way, ultimately this is a power game between Mahato, Yadav and Chaudhari." Again, T₁ argued, "There is no possibility of any Dalit chairperson because a Dalit does not have the capacity to hold the post of the chairperson."

(Observation, f/n, 17 November 2006)

It shows Dalits' resistances and struggles for the recognition and a search for an alternative discourse about their participation. It also demonstrates a non-Dalit teacher's pathological construction by blaming the Dalits as incapable people.

Dalits have been urging their participation in various issues in the village. Similarly, they have been opposing the prohibition of entering and worshipping in the temples. Interestingly, whenever Dalits are not treated well at religious activities, feasts and celebrations, they decline to participate in any such activities. For example, on the day of the Goddess *Saraswati*, Dalits themselves organised a separate worshipping ceremony (Based on observation, f/n, 03 February 2006).

Previously, except for the purpose of performing certain musical entertainment or doing some work, non-Dalits hardly ever invited Dalits to any feast or festival. Whenever, they invited Dalits, Dalits had to take their seats in a separate place, generally outside

the main place of feast, and they had to clean their plates and places, whereas non-Dalits did not have to do so. For some years, Dalits opposed such practices, and they did not participate in any ceremony and feast if they had to clean their plates. Dalits (Rams) from Basipur have also abandoned performing entertaining activities and playing drums. (Based on interview, Udaya, f/n, 15 January 2006)

Moreover, Dalits have been suffering from external discrimination and from intra-Dalit caste hierarchies. To minimise such intra-Dalit hierarchies, Dalits have also been working to appropriate new discourses and practices. The following excerpt from an interview with a Dalit youth from Basipur is an example that describes an activity directed towards minimising intra-Dalit hierarchies and establishing solidarity among Dalits.

Lekha: How was the joint feast of last Baishakh (May)?

Ranjit: It was good.

Lekha: Who participated at that feast?

Ranjit: Rams, Sadaya and Das (Tatmas).

Lekha: Didn't you invite non-Dalits?

Ranjit: We invited some non-Dalits but they did not come.

Lekha: If non-Dalits did not come, what was the purpose of that joint feast?

Ranjit: Actually, the purpose of that joint feast was to minimise intra-Dalit untouchability and discrimination. For this, this feast was successful.

Lekha: Oh! That was the case, but I was thinking differently. That's great! Can you explain in some detail how caste hierarchies are in practice among Madhesi Dalits?

Ranjit: Well, there are a number of castes among Dalits of Tarai. Paswan and Tatma (Das) consider themselves to be from higher castes. They are relatively better in education and economic situation. Previously, they did not use to take food with other Dalits. Rams and Sadayas, generally, do not take food together. Both of them claim superiority to each other. In Siraha and Saptari, there are a good number of Rams and Sadayas residing, and they have some unfair competitions too. However, Rams are ahead of the Sadayas in education, economic situation and reforming bad habits and traditions.

Lekha: You did not mention about Marik, what is their condition?

Ranjit: It is still difficult for Dom (Marik). Other Dalits also discriminate them as untouchable. Even they are still getting problems regarding drinking water. But we don't have any Dom (Marik) settlements in our village.

Lekha: Oh! That's the situation; I don't know such complexities among Madhesi Dalits. Let's talk some more about the same joint feast that we were

talking previously. How did you organise that joint feast? I mean, how did you collect the food for feast?

Ranjit: We collected rice from every household in the village, and we got some support from Dalit organisations.

(Interview transcript, 18 November 2005)

Searching for and appropriating new or alternative discourses and practices is not a straightforward process. Non-Dalit people, generally, do not want to alter existing power relations, so they have been creating and appropriating discourses that communicate their superiority over the Dalits. At the same time, the concepts of hierarchies and discrimination are also rooted within various Dalit communities. As a result, they have been practicing hierarchies among the Dalits (see Vishwakarma, 2004a). The above examples of Dalits' struggles to create and appropriate new discourses and practices indicate that they have not only been resisting external discriminatory discourses and practices, but also trying to change their own values and practices.

Construction of Similarity and Difference: A Game of Truth and Power

To discuss the practice of sameness and difference, let me begin with describing a movement of Basipur Dalits for increasing agricultural wages. Most Dalits of Basipur have been working as agricultural labourers. Last year, Dalits from Basipur village and some other neighbouring villages organised a movement demanding an increase in wages. They boycotted work for about two weeks. That movement was not only for Dalits, but also for non-Dalits who were working as agricultural labourers. However, non-Dalits labourers did not participate in that movement. Non-Dalit landholders interpreted that the movement was a conflict between Dalits and non-Dalits. One non-Dalit landless person said that the movement was right, as wages needed to be increased according to the market price. But he could not participate and could not speak for that movement because the landholders (non-Dalits) said that the movement was a conflict between Dalits and non-Dalits, and they said the conflict was created by Dalits (Jaman, conversation, 25 November 2005). According to one Dalit youth, Dalits wanted to create larger support, especially from landless non-Dalits, but it did not happen (Ranjit, based on interview, f/n, 18 November 2005), as landholders created another truth based on sameness and difference between Dalits and non-Dalits. Dalits were hopeful in creating a wider movement based on other variables of sameness and difference, for

example, based on poverty as well as based on the nature of work as an agricultural labourer. But they were not able to involve non-Dalits.

Here, I include one example that shows a case of changing variables of sameness and difference in order to discriminate against Dalits. Nowadays, it is difficult to justify differences and untouchability based on the caste differences, and thus, some non-Dalit people and some teachers argue that they do not believe in caste-based differences and untouchability. But they say that most of the Dalits and their homes are dirty. During the conversation with one teacher from Jiwanpur School, I asked him whether he ever visited any Dalit house. He replied that he had not yet visited any Dalit house. Again, when I questioned, "Without visiting their houses how did you know that Dalits' houses are dirty?" He replied, "Everyone knows the facts, we don't need to visit their houses" (Ajaya, f/n, 23 November 2005). This example shows that Ajaya (also some other non-Dalit teachers) still believes in caste based hierarchies and wants to differentiate against Dalits.

It can be seen that the construction of similarity and difference creates a discourse where the "dominant ideology relies on the processes of naturalising what are in fact culturally constructed values" (Boler and Zembylas, 2003, p 118). For instance, the above discussions show that most people from the non-Dalit community have been creating difference between Dalits and non-Dalits to legitimise existing power relations.

The differentiating criterion is not fixed; however, through these differences, people generally construct some truths and use these truths to gain power over another. For example, the meeting of Dalit people organised by Nepal Rishikul Sadaya Kalyan Samaj (NRSKS) as described in the beginning of this section shows not only the construction of similarity between Dalits and non-Dalits, but also the difference amongst Dalits themselves. The discussion of the meeting indicates that they were creating sameness within the Dalits of Tarai by identifying common problems of caste-based discrimination, untouchability and poverty. At the same time, they were constructing differences not only between non-Dalits and Dalits but also with other Dalits, especially between Sadaya and Ram. This creates a discourse of stratification within the Dalit community. They were trying to create new power in their superiority over Rams. The Ram community has had similar difficulties with the Sadaya community. For example, in a conversation a Ram said, "We have changed several

things which were humiliating us, but Sadayas have not been able to change anything on their part. So, we are more forward than Sadayas". (Narayan, f/n, 15 January 2006)

The discussions within this section indicate that most Dalits have been challenging both constructions: the fixed identity of Dalits, and their difference as deficit. Moreover, they have been reconstructing a new and situational identity, taking difference as a source for resistance and change. They reject 'the given' or 'labelled' identity and clearly disapprove of the concept of 'the fixed' or 'already determined' identity of Dalits.

7.3 Locating Exclusion

This section discusses and locates the multiple forms of exclusion of and discrimination towards Dalits in society.

Multiple Forms of Discrimination and Exclusion

The following examples show multiple forms of discriminatory and exclusionary practices towards Dalits.

Problems in Getting Birth and Citizenship Certificates

The following two examples show the discrimination from various state institutions that Dalits suffer from when getting their birth registration and citizenship certificates. An absence of citizenship certificates and birth registration means that a number of Dalits have been excluded from several basic civil rights, including property ownership, participating in election and enrolling their children in school.

An excerpt from an interview with a Dalit youth Ranjit from Basipur village:

You might have read in various newspapers that Dalits of various villages of this district still do not have citizenship certificates. As a result, their children do not have their birth certificates... The behaviour and attitude of VDC staff is also creating problems for the birth registration of children from our community. When people from the Dalit community go to the VDC for registration, the staff sometimes harass them by creating unnecessary obstacles or sometimes people from our community hesitate to explain the situation to VDC staff... There are also some problems on our part, as some people from our community are reluctant to do such registration. ... As I understand it, there are three causes behind this. First, some people have not understood its need. Second, some people hesitate to go to VDC for registration. Third, some people have either difficulty to manage registration fee or they do not want to pay for that.

(Ranjit, interview, f/n, 11 November 2005)

Response of VDC staff about this issue:

In a meeting with VDC staff, when I asked whether there is any problem of citizenship certificates and birth registration certificates for the Dalits, they said that there are some problems due to the Dalits themselves. They said, "We cannot recommend them without any written documents related to their parents' citizenships, birth registration or property ownership certificates. Submission of necessary documents and demand for citizenship certificates and birth certificates are their duty. Our duty is to check documents to give birth certificates." They gave a similar response when I asked them about the problem of school enrolment due to the absence of birth certificates for children.

(Based on conversation, VDC staff, f/n, 19 November 2005)

This represents a significant state barrier to Dalit inclusion into society. Dalits have politically collaborated to resist this highly problematic barrier.

Prohibition to Enter the Temple

The following excerpt from my field notes explains discrimination related to religious practice in the local community. It shows the prohibition of Dalits from entering the temple. This excerpt is based on conversations with Dalit people Sanat, Udaya and Ranjit from Basipur village.

Non-Dalit people do not give permission to worship in the local public temple. Last year, when one Dalit of this village entered the temple, some non-Dalits threatened him.

(f/n, 18 November 2005 and 15 January 2006)

Dalit people have been struggling against this religious discrimination to get equal rights with other Hindus. They take equal access to the temple as an issue of identity, recognition and self-respect.

Violence towards the Dalits and the Resistance by the Dalits

The following newspaper report shows various types of restrictions imposed on Dalits in society. It also indicates Dalits' struggles against the traditionally assigned caste-based functions.

Blockade imposed on Dalit village (from a newspaper report):

Rajbiraj, Saptari, Oct 16 - Some 'upper caste' locals of Sarakpura VDC in the district, have imposed a blockade on a Dalit hamlet in ward - 2 since Thursday evening, 'punishing' the latter for not playing drum during a local fete. Consequently, six Chamar (Dalit) families in the area have been prohibited from using the public path and denied access to rice mills,

medical shops and public taps. Some Dalits have even fled from the village and come to the district headquarters, Rajbiraj, seeking justice.

According to Dukhi Ram, one of the victims, last year, they had decided not to play the drum at the local fete held in Taradevi temple during Dashain, and also not to remove carcasses from the village. "Even our relatives shy away from us if we perform such jobs", said Dhuki Ram. According to him, they were compelled last year to play the drum but refused to throw away carcasses. "And they (upper caste people) themselves threw the carcasses from the area since last year the Chamars refused to do it," said Raj Kumar Mandal, chairman of Dalit Sudhar Sangh, an organization working for the welfare of oppressed Dalits in the area. The victims have accused the VDC chairperson, and others of imposing the blockade and depriving them of their basic needs.

(The Kathmandu Post, 16 October 2005)

The following example is also taken from a newspaper report about caste-based violence in society. It is an extreme case where discriminatory practice reached a condition of physical violence to the Dalits.

Mandals thrash 40 Dalit families (from a newspaper report):

Saptari, Jan 3 - A large group of Mandals, so-called 'upper caste' people, thrashed around forty Dalit families and ransacked their houses before setting some of them afire, over a trifle issue at Parhai area of Koiladi Madhepura village on Monday morning, according to the victims.

Over two-dozen Dalits were injured in the incident that lasted for two hours. A Dalit minor, grandson of Jaleswor Sada [Sadaya] had plucked some leaves of green vegetables at the farm of Jhawara Mandal, a local resident. Incensed at this, Jhawara's family and his men, armed with spears, spades and axes, stormed the Dalit settlement. Sada [Sadaya] along with his wife Shiwiya Devi and two-dozen Dalits were injured in the attack. "Mandals surrounded our settlement and attacked us and they prevented the injured from going to hospital," said Dhami Sada [Sadaya], a victim who managed to escape to Rajbiraj, the district headquarters.

The Sada [Sadaya] couple, critically wounded in the incident, are undergoing treatment. "They also looted several things including bicycles, utensils, radio sets and grain," said Shyama Devi, a victim.

(The Kathmandu Post, 03 January 2005)

These examples indicate that there are multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion of Dalits in society. These are examples of caste-based violence and atrocities against Dalits, which have a direct impact on and concern for Basipur village. One Dalit youth from Basipur village told me a similar story of violence from non-Dalits and resistance by the Dalits at another village. He said that for the last three years in Siraha and Saptari districts, several incidences of violence from non-Dalits and resistance from the Dalits

have occurred (Based on conversation, Narayan, f/n, 15 January 2006). Bhattachan et al. (2002) also identified more than 200 types of discriminatory practices against Dalits in Nepalese society.

The Exclusionary Pressures

The above four examples demonstrate the different types of exclusionary pressures faced by Dalits. The following are some of the exclusionary factors experienced by the Dalits from Basipur village.

Caste Hierarchies

For Dalits, the main root of exclusion is caste hierarchy, as there is a historical continuation of exclusion of Dalits in society. As discussed in chapter 5, there are two main roots for caste-based historical exclusion of Dalits. They are Manusmriti based Hindu *varnasram* system, and the state's enforcements and legitimacy of caste hierarchies. Due to the practice of untouchability, Dalits have still been excluded from some occupations and activities. For example, no Dalit from Basipur village has worked in any hotel or restaurant. Moreover, no Dalit thinks about opening a hotel, restaurant or tea stall. It was difficult for Dalits to sell milk up to three years ago, but this practice is now changing.

In an interview with a newspaper, a Dalit activist Padamsingh Bishwakarma shared an example of discriminatory attitude and behaviour towards Dalits:

Once, on the way from Pokhara to Baglung, I met a *pundit* on the road. I discussed the scriptures with him. While we were taking leave from each other, he asked me which *bahun* I was, and I said Bishwakarma. After that he began to address me as *timi* [non-honorific 2nd person pronoun], not *tapai* [honorific 2nd person pronoun]. I felt bad but such instances are common.

(Interview published at Himalkhabar Patrika, Issue 95, 24 May 2002)

I have also encountered several discriminatory attitudes and behaviours from non-Dalits towards Dalits. Some examples are included in chapter 4. The situation of Basipur village is not an exception as similar practices have been taking place for a long time. However, nowadays non-Dalit people have also begun to use age specific words for Dalits. Interestingly, some non-Dalit people prefer to use neutral language for Dalits, excluding both words '*tapai*' and '*timi/tain*', which seemed unusual. This hesitation to

use the respected word 'tapai' for Dalits is a way of maintaining hierarchical relations with Dalits²⁷.

Poverty

Poverty is a major exclusionary pressure faced by Dalits. One Dalit said, "Beside caste based discrimination we suffer from poverty. We all are very poor and landless; people in the society usually dominate the poor. Therefore, without tackling poverty the discrimination will continue" (Lal, conversation, f/n, 23 January 2006). Due to poverty, changes brought by legal amendments with prohibition of caste-based discrimination are hard to experience by Dalits. For instance, there is still difficulty for Dalits to get appropriate legal protection because they cannot pay the fees for legal consultation.

Again, one of the main causes of Dalit poverty was the historical prohibition in property ownership and restriction for occupational choice. Similarly, due to the traditional restriction on owning property and poorly paid seasonal work, Dalits could not buy any land. Poverty has also been working to limit Dalits' participation in social and political activities.

Government Practices

The problem of getting citizenship and birth registration certificates for Dalits gives evidence of the state's exclusionary practice. One Dalit explained the problem,

It is difficult for us to mention any problem at the government offices. We hesitate to go to the offices because they usually do not hear us and we cannot communicate effectively because our Nepali language is not so good. We usually get frightened of going to offices and meeting people.

(Ranjit, conversation, f/n, 9 February 2006)

This expression shows that the government's practices have been creating exclusions. The story of a Dalit school graduate, Sanat, indicates that being a Dalit he did not know any approachable people in politics or the government bureaucracy. Therefore, he did not get a permanent job in a government office, or in school teaching, whereas his non-Dalit contemporaries of similar qualifications have been working in schools and offices

²⁷ Here is an example of the use of word 'tapai', 'timi or tain' or 'neutral language' in conversations in Nepali. In Nepali, there are two normal ways of asking, 'where are you going? They are, 'kata jandai hunuhunchha?' and 'kata jandai chhau/chhas?' The former one is generally use to elder people with respect and the later one for young people or elder people without proper respect. Some non-Dalits, without using 'tapai' as in former question and 'timi/tan' as in later question, use an unusual way to ask for elder Dalits, which is like, 'kata jandai/katajandai ho?'(see also in chapter 5).

(Based on interview, Sanat, 04 February 2006). Similarly, Dalits from Basipur village have not been represented in local or national political leadership.

Local Power Dynamics

In Basipur village, non-Dalits generally do not want to include Dalits in local leadership, although Dalits now have some space due to their continual resistance. The parents' meeting organised for the selection of School Managing Committee (SMC) at Gauripur School indicates similar attempts to exclude Dalits by non-Dalits and resistance from Dalits (Section 7.2). Most non-Dalits have been trying to exclude Dalits using the traditional power of caste hierarchies.

Local power relations work to put exclusionary pressure on the Basipur Dalits. For instance, at one of the Dalits' settlements of Basipur village, a community building was started some four years ago. The building under construction has been used by Dalits to organise community meetings and to conduct non-formal education programmes, but it is still without a roof. Dalits have requested for the completion of the building at several organisations, including the VDC and NGOs. This year, one NGO showed interest. The NGO demanded a request letter from all the four user groups of their community. A joint meeting of the four user groups decided to request the completion of the building and sent a request letter to the NGO. But the NGO refused to give money for the construction and said that the head teacher of Gauripur School and the non-Dalit people from the Basipur village want to construct an additional school building rather than to complete the half built building. (Based on observation of user groups combining meeting and conversation with Sanat, f/n, 11 and 21 February 2006) This is an instance of exclusionary pressure brought about by local power relations.

This section has illustrated evidence of exclusionary practices against Basipur Dalits. These examples suggest that there are multiple exclusionary pressures faced by the Dalits. These exclusions are coming from multiple sources. The practice of hierarchical caste based on the Hindu *varnasram* system still excludes Dalits. This religious form of exclusion is compounded by the suffering due to poverty. The practices of the government and the socio-cultural practices based on local power relations have also created exclusionary pressures upon the Dalits.

7.4 Struggles for Inclusion

Dalits from Siraha and Saptari district of Nepal have started organised struggles against caste based discrimination, violence and exclusion. The struggles have influenced almost all Dalit villages within these two districts. I begin this section with an example of such a struggle. The following struggle of Janaki Ram was from the neighbouring village of my research field.

Janaki Ram, 40, from Saptari district narrated how she, along with her fellow villagers, underwent severe hardships when the so-called upper castes imposed 'economic blockade' on their community just because they did not throw a strong stinking carcass. Janaki Ram and her villagers were subjected to various other discriminations. They were boycotted from defecating around their houses and they were also prohibited from even buying daily essentials from the shops. However, they continued fighting [against] the discrimination and some other Dalits organisations and activists supported them get justice.

(Voice of Dalits, DNF, 2005)

This story of Janaki Ram describes the struggles of the Dalit community of Siraha and Saptari districts of Nepal against caste-based discrimination. The struggle was mainly directed towards abandoning some so-called degraded occupations, like cleaning carcasses (such as, cow, ox, buffalo, goat, dog, and cat). This was a struggle for the basic human right of choosing an occupation. It was also an opposition to the imposition of so-called social tradition set by non-Dalit people. The struggle has given a positive impact on the Dalit community, as they have been able to relocate their identity by abandoning some occupations, activities and eating habits. Most importantly, this movement has brought some anti-discriminatory consciousness to the Dalits. Most Dalits talked about that movement, and they felt proud of some of the changes brought by that movement to the Dalits' struggles for justice.

Inclusion: Perceptions and Understanding of Basipur Dalits

My conversations and observations suggest that no Dalit from Basipur village wants to be discriminated against. They clearly want to participate in social and religious gatherings and festivals in society without any obstacles, and they want to participate in local organisations including school and the VDC. In other words, Dalits of Basipur village have the ambition of an untouchability free society, and they want the abolition of caste-based hierarchical and discriminatory practice in society. However, sometimes

Dalits seem to have been discouraged due to the network of exclusionary factors and a weak and fragmented inclusive process. The following excerpt from my field notes shows similar discouragement and frustration of Dalits:

Several things are so related in our case, so that it is difficult to change the situation without tackling all the factors. As you know, we are suffering from caste hierarchies and discrimination, poverty, traditional practices, lack of education, and so on. When you see any one factor, you can easily find its networks with other factors.

(Narayan, conversation, f/n, 25 January 2006)

It indicates that the network of exclusion and deprivation suffered by Dalits cannot be altered without working simultaneously with education, poverty and anti-discriminatory campaigns. Along with struggling for recognition and association, Dalits have also been urging for a fair distribution of resources.

During a conversation about the situation of Dalits in the village, one Dalit expressed his sentiment and concern about discrimination and change as,

You see, who doesn't want respect, recognition and non-discrimination? Who doesn't want to see his/her children get education and change their lives? Similarly, who doesn't want to get better employment, high wages and a better life? These things are still remote and we have been struggling to bring them nearer.

(Jaguwa, conversation, f/n, 20 November 2005)

A Dalit youth Phula, after passing the SLC examination, trained as an Assistant Health Worker and tried to find jobs in the government as well as in private health institutions. He could not get a job due to his caste position. He has been living in nearby Jayanagar city in a small traditional type of house that he built some seven years ago. Nowadays, he is involved in an elementary medical practice in adjacent villages. Both Dalits as well as non-Dalits come to see him for elementary medical treatment and consultation.

Some Dalits, like me, are surviving on self-employment. Personally, for me and for the Dalit community, a proper job is much better than have such a self-employment occupation. The job gives relatively good and stable income, and for the Dalit community it will be an encouragement for education. It can also help to generate a feeling of being included.

(Phula, interview, f/n, 28 November 2005)

He further thought that without reserved quotas for jobs it would be difficult to get any job for a Dalit. He thinks Dalits need some reserved quotas for jobs, for admission and getting funds for higher study and for the participation in social and political institutions

and activities. He suggested that such reserved quotas need to come in targeted groups, for example, Dalit for the communities of Tarai.

Phula thinks the problem is not only related to the government but also to the local community, society and the Dalits themselves. He adds, however, without the government's support, they could not themselves solve the problems of exclusion and discrimination. He said,

I have seen some non-Dalit people also positive towards changing the situation and we Dalits are working for the change, but good support from the government is still lacking. So, we are meeting difficulties in this process of change.

(Phula, interview, 28 November 2005)

He told me that a non-Dalit teacher not only encouraged him to study but also gave him a place to stay and helped him with private tuition from which Phula able to continue his schooling and pass SLC examination.

Ranjit expressed his hope and said that they have been waiting for when they would not be discriminated against in any governmental or non-governmental offices based on their caste, language and complexion. Moreover, Ranjit said Dalits want to express their problems without any hesitation and fear of mistrust in any offices, and they want to feel free and secure while working or visiting public places including markets, temples and restaurants. He further said that they wanted to solve the problem of citizenship certificates and birth registration in their community (Based on conversation, Ranjit, f/n, 09 February 2006). A Dalit from Basipur village expressed his anger:

Sometimes, I ask myself how this is our society and our nation where not only the local community but also the state itself discriminate against my community and me. I don't have any answer to this question, but I am struggling for a non-discriminatory society where I would be proud of being a Nepali.

(Udaya, interview, f/n, 15 January 2006)

Udaya believes that some Dalits must become Members of Parliament (MPs), Ministers and other senior positions. He said that such participation is extremely important to increase the self-confidence of Dalits. Generally, economically well-off educated Dalits have been getting some political appointments and getting benefits from various funds and programmes provided by national and international NGOs and donor agencies. For example, as discussed in chapter 5, Bishwakarma (2003, 2004) also argued that such

benefits are heavily concentrated on the economically well-off, educated and urbanised Dalits. However, a new political formation in Nepal is creating more space for the struggle against political exclusion of Dalits.

Reducing Barriers to Inclusion

Manusmriti and other *brahmanic* literature, which are based on the so-called Hindu religious beliefs and practices of caste hierarchies and untouchability, are still major obstacles for the inclusion of Dalits. The state's simple announcement of non-discrimination is not sufficient to alter long rooted beliefs and social practices (Chapter 5). Moreover, the practice of the state is still anchored with several hierarchical relations including caste and class (Chapter 5 and Section 7.3). At the same time, lack of education has been inhibiting to create an alternative discourse of power on the part of Dalits. Seeing very few success stories from their community as well as several obstacles to change, there are some difficulties in creating any sense of hope within the Dalit community. This lack of hope on the part of a number of Dalits is still a powerful barrier to the inclusion of Dalits.

However, people have been listening to the radio, watching television and films and participating in different NGOs, Dalit organisations and political parties. These activities encourage them to oppose discriminatory ideas and help find some examples of socially as well as economically successful Dalits. Such examples of successful Dalits have an important influence on creating hope for Dalits.

Some non-Dalits highlight the issue of internal stratification of Dalits to justify hierarchies based on caste. For example, criticising Dalits, as one non-Dalit villager said:

Dalits complain about us because of the practice of untouchability, but they are also practising untouchability among the Dalits. If they change their practice of untouchability among themselves and change their habits, we will be ready to change our practice. Otherwise, it will remain in practice. Again, the practice itself is changing these days, but they [Dalits] are not changing.

(Nagendra, conversation, f/n, 24 January 2006)

Similarly, some non-Dalit villagers expressed their dissatisfaction with Dalit-focused programmes, NGOs and other organisations working for the Dalits. They claimed, "We have been working hard and struggling to get a better life. It is unanswered why we give

preference to the Dalits, as they are also free to do any work and get progress themselves” (Kalka, conversation, f/n, 24 January 2006). Such attitudes obviously try to maintain existing relations instead of promoting Dalit inclusion.

The gap between the government’s rhetoric and practice is itself creating confusion for the Dalits. For example, a Dalit said that in the name of inclusion, the government’s programmes seem ‘cosmetic’ (Lal, conversation, r/d, 28 January 2005). He indicated that lack of political participation in governance is one of the main inhibiting factors for the inclusion of the Dalits.

Despite such inhibiting factors to the inclusion of Dalits in society, there are a number of factors working to promote inclusion and to change existing hierarchical relations. Political resistance and struggle from the Dalits themselves to reduce exclusionary pressures are extremely significant in reducing barriers to inclusion. Dalits have been struggling against caste-based discriminations, untouchability and exclusion for a long time. The history of organised movement by the Dalits in Nepal began around the 1950s (see Kisan, 2002; Koirala, 1996; Bishwakarma, et al., 2006; Poudel, 2004a). In addition to this, solidarity groups, some human rights organisations, international and national NGOs, intellectuals and civil society have been playing important roles in generating struggle against discrimination.

The discussions within this section show that Dalits’ struggle for the inclusion is a part of developing a democratic society (see Booth, 2005; Lipsky and Gartner, 2004) and ensuring social justice in society (see Thomas and Vaughan, 2004). Dalit struggles for inclusion show that they want to change in their poverty, and they want equal respect and recognition in society. They also want to work together with the community as an included member of society. Therefore, inclusion has to insure at least three forms of justice: fairness in distribution (Rawls, 1971), recognition from society (Fraser, 1997, 2001; Gewirtz, 1998, 2006, Young, 1990), and association with society (Power and Gewirtz, 2001; Gewirtz, 1998, 2006).

7.5 Summary

Dalits from Basipur village have been resisting caste based hierarchies, untouchability and discrimination in society. They have been extending solidarity amongst Dalits and with politically supportive non-Dalits. They have been struggling to change traditional

beliefs about caste hierarchies and trying to understand exclusionary and discriminatory history and practices. Moreover, their struggles have also been directed towards changing their personal and social practices, which they identify as unhealthy and superstitious, and barriers to their inclusion. They seem successful in creating awareness against caste-based hierarchies and discriminatory social practices and in changing various social practices about which they feel shame and humiliation.

The problems of inclusion are also coming from the fragmentation and stratification in the Dalit movements. However, the reconstruction of Dalit identity and a search for alternative values, discourses and practices by Dalits are crucial factors for inclusion. Such reconstructions are powerful sources for creating positive aspiration and hope to the Dalits.

The pathological construction of Dalits as 'backward', 'uncivilised', 'pathetic' or 'pitiable' persons is problematic in a number of ways. These constructions create and maintain difference between Dalits and non-Dalits by which non-Dalits attain domination over Dalits. It disguises the competency, diligence, strength and self-confidence of Dalits and serves to construct their weaknesses and differences as deficit. Such normalisation of difference can be explained as, "the dominant culture [that] tries to 'fix' the meaning of signs, symbols, and representations to provide a 'common' worldview, disguising relations of power and privilege" (McLaren, 1988, p 183, cited in Boler and Zembylas, 2003, p 116). Such discourses of normalisation of difference have maintained the status quo in society by legitimising exclusionary discourses. The next chapter examines Basipur Dalits' exclusion from and inclusion in Gauripur School.

Chapter 8

Analysing School Practice: Exploring the Inclusion and Exclusion of Dalits

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the inclusion and exclusion of Basipur Dalits in and from Gauripur School. The examination is based on the analysis of school practice in the context of Dalits' exclusion from society. It analyses how discourses and practices have been created and legitimised at the school and how such discourses have produced inclusive or exclusionary pressures for Dalit pupils.

Historically, exclusionary social practice has brought prohibitions and exclusions in education in Nepal. For example, in the past, Dalits were prohibited from participating in education (Chapter 5). As an impact of such prohibition, educational participation of Dalits is still very low. Besides the historical influences, ineffective classroom practice and the lack of concern for the pupils in school create exclusionary pressures. The discriminatory practices in society (Chapter 7) give similar pressures at school, and the school excludes Dalits by excluding their voices and by creating barriers for their participation. School participation, success and benefit are heavily directed towards economically well-off non-Dalits. But the function and meaning of schooling differ among different people, as school is a contested place where multiple meanings, discourses, perceptions and experiences are at work. However, Dalits want to educate their children, as they find education is useful in changing discriminatory and exclusionary practices.

This chapter begins with the changing perceptions towards schooling, and then it discusses classroom practice at Gauripur School. It analyses Dalit children's exclusion from and inclusion in Gauripur School and discusses how Dalit people are excluded from school activities and decisions. After discussing teachers' roles in inclusion and the exclusion of Dalits, it explains how school is a contested space with multiple meanings and perceptions. The chapter is based on interviews with the students,

teachers, parents and other community members of Basipur village and observations of school practices. I also use some documented sources in this chapter.

8.2 Basipur Dalits and Schooling: Changing Perceptions

Gauripur School formally began in 1954 with primary grades. At that time, very few people from this village and neighbourhood villages had learnt basic literacy skills. Education was limited only to a few ruling families, their relatives and associates. Some economically well-off non-Dalit people used to hire private teachers to teach their children in their homes. Some people used to teach basic literacy to their own children. However, because of so-called religious tradition and caste-based legal provision of the state, Dalits were excluded from educational practices (Chapter 5). Sharing his experience, a sixty year-old non-Dalit of Basipur village said that education was limited to so-called upper castes and economically well-off males. Dalits were generally prohibited from school (Conversation, Ramjan, f/n, 26 January 2006).

One fifty-two year-old Dalit explained his perception about education when he was young:

When we were young, we didn't have any idea about the need for education. A few wealthy upper caste people used to hire teachers at their homes to teach their children. We thought that it was the business of upper caste wealthy people. When school opened in this village, relatively wealthy children from the same upper caste people used to go to school. We thought that the school was for upper caste and wealthy people.

(Dhaniya, conversation, f/n, 11 February 2006)

He explained the changing situation and perception about education and expressed some confusion regarding the function of education. He was happy with the changing situation that even Dalits and other poor people started to send their children to school. He still thinks that non-Dalits and relatively wealthy people get good benefits from school. A school graduate Dalit, Udaya, thought that he gained some ideas and powers to oppose caste based discriminations through education. For example, at least education has extended his social relationships, and thereby it has given him some opportunity to reflect upon his situation. He explained the role of education as follows:

Sanat and I continued our school and passed the SLC examination. Although our aim of getting an appropriate job after passing the SLC examination was not fulfilled, we are, to some extent, able to speak to other people, able to oppose caste based discrimination in society and able to communicate this

idea to other people in our community. Similarly, we have started a movement within our society to change some traditional beliefs and practices that were hindering us from changing discriminatory practices. The most important thing is that such movements have been generating some new thinking in opposition to caste hierarchies.

(Udaya, interview, 15 January 2006)

Sundar, 42, a Dalit from Basipur, was confused about schooling and education because people used to say that education provides a new job, better life and new knowledge, but he did not see this as true in the case of Dalits. He has seen that non-Dalits and economically well-off people have benefited from the education. Again, he was not happy with the attitude developed on the part of schooled Dalit youths, as they generally do not want to work at home, and they did not continue their education. However, he said that schooled youths could speak about discrimination. This, he thinks, is a positive impact of education.

Mangala, 29, a woman from the Dalit community who has participated in a non-formal education programme for nine months said that such non-formal education programmes were very good at changing their thinking and practices. A Dalit, Narayan, who has conducted such classes, said that in comparison to school, such programmes were powerful in bringing about changes in Dalits' thinking.

Brijesh, 21, a Dalit youth, who left school after completing grade eight expressed his confusion about schooling and said,

When I was young, I thought that education would give me a new job, new knowledge and better life; it would help in changing discriminatory practices; I would become a respected person after getting education. Now, I am not sure, whether education brought these things to me or not because I don't know what I got from schooling. I came out from the school with some frustrations, confusions and a negative attitude toward school because some wealthy people were sending their children to private English Schools and other students from wealthy and non-Dalit family were getting chances of private tuition, and they also got encouragement and supervision from their guardians, but we didn't. We didn't pass examinations. Moreover, you might have seen some of the people from Dalit community who passed the SLC examination, but no one is getting a job. At the same time, non-Dalits have their relationships with offices and politicians from which they have been getting jobs. Sometimes, from this situation a question arises in my mind 'Does school help us? Or, Are these schools for us?'

(Brijesh, conversation, f/n, 17 February 2006)

However, he recalls relationships developed with non-Dalit students. He thinks school helped to change his belief and attitude towards caste hierarchies, widened mobility and social contact and helped gain some capacity to oppose discrimination. He thought that school has indirectly contributed much in many ways.

Dan, a Dalit boy of grade eight, believes school helps minimise caste discrimination, gives knowledge about various things and widens relationships, opens the possibility of contact with the outer world, and it increases the power of opposing discriminations. He thought that even educated Dalits find it difficult to get appropriate jobs because non-Dalit people generally give preference to people from the non-Dalit community. However, he was hopeful that education provides the confidence to search for jobs (Interview, Dan, f/n, 06 February 2006).

It is difficult to find a single effect and perception about school and the role of school, as it varies with place, people and time. People from some groups got more benefits, as school is designed by a powerful section of society to gain more power with the use of knowledge gained from school. Dalits have benefited least from school, and their knowledge and discourses have been excluded from school and education. However, Dalits have been trying to use knowledge from school and education to gain the power of resistance and to oppose existing practices of discrimination and exclusion. From the use of alternative discourses and knowledge, they have been trying to gain more power in society - the power of opposing discriminatory practice and the power of obtaining new relationships.

8.3 The Classroom: A Ritual Practice

During my observations, I found that the classroom practices of Gauripur School were routine and formal. Generally, the daily routine and classroom teaching were not well managed. Classroom teachers do not consider students' diverse backgrounds. In the classrooms, there was hardly any direct discrimination towards the Dalits. But due to ineffective and non-diversified classroom practices, Dalits have suffered more and have faced exclusion.

Poorly Managed Daily Routine and Classroom Teaching

Let me begin with an example of classroom activities at Gauripur School. The following excerpt from a classroom observation shows there was no activity that could give some space for pupils' experiences and participation.

In grade two, only fifty-two students out of 116 attended the class. The teacher was reading one of the chapters from the social and environment education book. He was repeating the same text from the book and asking the students, 'Did you understand?' Most students did not respond, but teacher continued the lesson in a similar way.

(Observation, f/n, 15 November 2005)

I observed several classrooms where most of the teachers were hardly using any teaching-learning materials except textbooks; the use of chalkboards was also rare for the majority of classrooms.

Let me present another classroom observation, where the teacher conveyed knowledge from a textbook. Students were passively receiving the teacher's input without questioning and without discussing.

It was the tenth grade where a teacher was teaching Nepali. Students were attentive, even though the teacher was not using any audio-visual materials except chalk and board. His teaching was dominated by literary explanations rather than language development. Students were participating in answering the questions raised by the teacher. Students were generally listening to the teacher's lecture and also responding to teacher's questions rather than asking any questions and presenting their views. There was only one view passing from teacher to the students and the view was based on the textbook.

(Observation, f/n, 16 November 2005)

During my fieldwork at school, I taught mathematics to grades six to nine and found that very few students had basic curricular knowledge and skills. For instance, during my teaching at grade eight, I checked students' exercise books. I found that few students did their exercises properly, and a number of students were not able to do any exercises from their mathematics textbook.

The students from Gauripur School rarely get their work checked. Dan, a Dalit pupil of grade eight said that teachers sometimes ask students to do some exercises at home, but they never check them. Dan has done only a few exercises, but he does not know whether he has done it right or wrong (Conversation, f/n, 29 January 2006). Ravi, a Dalit from Basipur village, said that he thought he was good at studying because he

passed up to grade nine. When he was at school his work was rarely checked, and he rarely got any feedback from teachers. Now, he has lost his confidence because he did not pass his SLC examination and does not see any chance of passing it. (Conversation, f/n, 29 January 2006)

Teaching methods at Gauripur School seem to have been a teachers' personal choice, as they hardly ever discussed the issue of teaching and learning activities together. Their discussions were concentrated mainly on politics, school management, the school's financial and physical problems, their personal problems related to promotion and permanence in their jobs and their personal business and activities. Discussions about teaching and learning activities, students' progress and students' learning related problems were not found in the minutes of any teachers' meetings or the School Managing Committee (SMC) meeting minutes (Chapter 9).

During my fieldwork at Gauripur School, I did not see more than 20% students attending the morning assembly. Students said that it was a general tendency for some three or four years, as most of the teachers were also coming late. Regarding the issue of lateness, most of the students gave contrasting views from those of the teachers. The following excerpt also illustrates similar contradictory views of students and teachers:

Regarding the late coming of students, some teachers were blaming the parents/guardians for not cooking food for the children in time. Some teachers told me that it was due to the season of harvesting, when people were busy in harvesting, and they have difficulty to cook food timely. One teacher blamed the students for not being sincere. When I asked the students the same question, very few accepted the fact that they were sometimes late due to late cooking. Others expressed different views. They said that teachers usually came late, and thus nobody was questioning the late arrival of students. Therefore, they thought that there was no need for coming earlier.

(Conversations, students and teachers, f/n, 21 November 2005)

Bhima, a teacher from the local community, who regularly came to the students' assembly and conducted it, expressed some different views from that of the other teachers. He realised the situation that one of the main causes for the students' lateness was the teachers' lateness. The teachers who were late did not accept this. Bhima said that he had been fully engaged in the school's activities everyday from early hours in the morning to late hours in the afternoon. He said that the head teacher had asked him to do so. Another significant attraction for him was getting a good number of students

from grade one to eight for private tuition. Such private tuition makes an important contribution to his family income. He generally conducts this tuition in the school building in the morning.

Similarly, there were issues regarding the closing time of the school. I did not find any discussion among teachers, students and parents about the early closing of classes. Some teachers blamed the students that they did not stay after break time, and some argued that when students got hungry they went home. However, the teachers who were teaching until late afternoon in grades nine and ten were not convinced with these arguments. They said that teachers were not teaching the full day.

Resham, a youth from Basipur village, who teaches at the public secondary school at Jayanagar, thought that an encouraging classroom environment and enthusiastic teachers have an important power over and influence in student learning. But he expressed dissatisfaction with Gauripur School by saying,

The teaching and learning at Gauripur School is deteriorating day-by-day, as the school generally is not teaching more than half of the prescribed time. I am also teaching at a public school where every teacher has to come in on time and needs to stay the whole time at the school. We have to teach all the prescribed time in every period. You may have already observed the situation of Gauripur School where the actual teaching hours in the classroom is about half of the prescribed time. In such a situation, what can we expect from the students? You can see a similar situation in many public schools.

(Resham, conversation, f/n, 25 November 2005)

Besides this, frequent *bandas*²⁸ have brought disturbances in opening the schools and conducting the classes and thereby negatively affecting students' learning. The frequency of such disturbances has increased for about last three or four years due to the political situation. Resham (a teacher at a public school in Jayanagar) and Prabindra (a teacher at Gauripur School) said the teaching and learning of public schools is being deteriorating. They also viewed that the political situation has produced adverse effects

²⁸ In Nepal, political parties, students' organisations, teachers unions, labour unions have frequently been called for markets/business lock up, road close up and educational institutions close up (usually call *banda* or general strike) as a means of opposing government, gaining and showing power or giving pressures to fulfil their demands. Even some business organisations and associations and social and cultural organisations have begun to call similar *bandas*. Several cases of forceful and violent activities are also observed during *bandas*. In every *banda*, there was hardly any chance of opening of school, no matter of cause and type of *banda*.

on teaching and learning activities at schools. The children from poor families and the Dalit community have been suffering more seriously in comparison to the children from economically better-off families. Such disturbances and problems were less in private schools. However, the private schools are not accessible to the poor due to their high cost. Similarly, better-off families manage private tuition. Most students from better-off families have some possibility of parental guidance for their study, whereas such possibilities are generally lacking in the economically poor Dalit families.

Lack of an effective learning environment and poorly managed teaching are the general problems of Nepalese primary education (UNICEF, 2006). The above discussion indicates similar problems of ineffective and poorly managed teaching at Gauripur School. It also shows that pupils from the Dalit community and poor families have suffered more from poorly managed teaching.

Lack of Diversity in Teaching and Learning Practice

Teaching practice at school was based on uniform procedures to all students irrespective of students' diverse background, situation and needs. Sujit, a Dalit from Basipur village of grade seven, explained that the majority of students do not understand most of the teachers' lessons. Teachers are not sensitive to the students' diverse needs. They want silence in the class. They generally rely on the responses of very a few students who have high achievement. (Conversation, f/n, 18 January 2006)

Purindra, one of the achieving non-Dalits students of grade seven, explained that he has been taking private tuition regularly, and he has a good study environment at home. Otherwise, the school's teaching could not help him sufficiently. He further explained that his classmates, who just rely on classroom teaching and learning, have difficulty in succeeding. In the classroom, teachers generally do not give any attention to the students who are weak in their study. (Conversation, f/n, 18 January 2006)

The poorly managed classroom practices of Gauripur School lack interesting and stimulating teaching methods and lack a multiplicity of classroom activities. These classrooms do not encourage the students' active participation in the classroom teaching process. Moreover, the above discussion indicates that classroom practices of Gauripur School rarely consider the individual differences, interests and difficulties of the students. As a result, many children, especially children from poor and Dalit families,

are not able to cope with the school's teaching, and they experience exclusion from school. I discussed this issue of diversity in teaching with the head teachers and some other teachers. They said that many teachers were teaching without proper teacher training. Even teachers who did teacher education courses were not educated properly in the issue of diversity in teaching in their teacher education courses. As a result, teachers generally think uniform teaching practice is a way of giving equal opportunity to all (Based on conversations with teachers, 19 February 2006).

This section has demonstrated that because of poorly managed teaching, lack of diversity in teaching and lack of stimulating lessons, students from Gauripur School have been facing problems in their learning. For Dalit children, the situation creates a barrier to their success and participation in education.

8.4 Inclusion and Exclusion of Dalit Children

Dalit children have experienced several exclusionary pressures from the school. As discussed in the previous section, the ineffective teaching places exclusionary pressures on the pupils at Gauripur School. Lack of proper understanding of inclusive education by the people from government agencies and teachers create problems for inclusion. These people generally blame Dalits themselves for their exclusion from education. In the following interview with Sanat explained that teaching and learning activities of the school. Sanat also explained that teaching and learning activities of the school were not encouraging the Dalits.

The teaching and learning activities and social environment of school are not encouraging the Dalit pupils. Absence of Dalit teachers, crowded classrooms in early grades, negligence by the teachers, tendency towards private tuition and economic inability of Dalit children to attend private tuition classes are some school related discouraging factors for the Dalit children.

(Interview, Sanat, f/n, 10 February 2006)

This explains the discouraging situation for Dalit children at school, which creates barriers to participation in learning.

The Construction of Dalits' Culpability: Misconception about Inclusion

Teachers of Gauripur School claimed that there is no caste-based discrimination in school. In their view, students from all communities, including Dalits, are included in school. The head teacher of Gauripur School said,

Besides including all children in school, Dalit children get the additional facilities of scholarship money, and from this year, they don't have to pay fees up to grade ten. I think Dalits' culture and poverty are the main factors for their exclusion.

(Head teacher, conversation, 19 February 2006)

Similarly, an officer from the District Education Office (DEO) Siraha claimed that they have been working towards the inclusion of Dalits.

We have been working towards the inclusion of Dalits in education. Now, there are schools within walking distance in every village of this district. From this year, every schooled pupil from a Dalit community studying from grade one to five gets a scholarship. We have a plan for providing waived fees for all the Dalit students up to grade ten and some other programmes like booster scholarships for the first school-enrolled children in the family. But, it is hard to change Dalits.

(Conversation, an officer from DEO, r/d, 26 March 2005)

He was conceptualising inclusion in some narrow sense of access and a nominal monetary incentive without looking at the physical and social environment of the schools and the classrooms, economic and social pressures faced by Dalits, conditions of their achievement and success and opportunity to get jobs. Such conceptual misunderstanding has also been working to continue exclusionary practices in schools.

The above views of the head teacher and government officer blamed Dalit culture for their exclusion from education, by constructing Dalits' culpability for their exclusion. Opposing such constructions of Dalits, Bindra, a non-Dalit, for example, expressed the view that physical access to school was not sufficient for the Dalits' inclusion in education:

How do their (Dalits') children succeed in education, when they don't have physical and social environments for study at their homes? You may also have observed that the school's teaching is not sufficient, but they don't have money to send their children to private tuition. Teachers, their non-Dalit classmates and contemporaries hardly encourage them to study, and it is hard to see any encouragement from the local community either. How do those children from the community cope with such a difficult situation and with the situation of such a wide gap?

(Conversation, Bindra, f/n, 02 February 2006)

This suggests that recent practices are not sufficient to enable inclusive practice in schools. It is the misinterpretation of inclusive practice, if someone limits inclusion to physical access to school and uniform teaching to diverse pupils. The views of the head teacher and education officer misinterpret the meaning of inclusion and give Dalits the

responsibility for their own exclusion by blaming the Dalits and their culture. It is highly problematic for such powerfully positioned people to hold such discriminatory and ignorant views.

Non-Dalits from Basipur did not oppose Dalits' participation in education. However, most of them were not happy with scholarship money and the waiving of fees for Dalits in schools. One non-Dalit villager from Basipur village even angrily questioned me,

Dalits get every facility at school. They get scholarship money and they don't have to pay fees. But non-Dalits don't get these facilities at school. How have they been discriminated against?

(Tika, conversation, f/n, 18 February 2006)

At this time, I recall and reflect an incident that happened during my preliminary fieldwork at Basipur village. This incident also shows a depressing situation for Dalit children in education.

After meeting some villagers, I was coming back from a Dalit settlement of Basipur. A Dalit youth who was with me began talking to some villagers. I walked about fifteen metres ahead where six children of ages about from six to nine were playing on the road. After watching them playing for some minutes, I tried to talk to them by asking them the name of the game they were playing, and two of them responded. During this time, one young boy of twelve came and just watched me and heard the conversation with those children. I asked those children whether they were going to school. They just looked at each other and one of them said 'no' i.e., they were not going to school. Again, I tried to get their response by asking why they were not going to school. They did not respond. When I looked at the young boy, who had just come some minutes ago and was just watching our activities, he suddenly burst into laughter. When I asked him, 'Why are you laughing young man?' He said, 'They are the 'Musars' so I am laughing at your question, you know they don't go to school!'

(Observation/conversation, r/d, 03 April 2005)

The young boy was a non-Dalit from Basipur village studying in grade six at Gauripur School. The understanding and generalisation of non-Dalit people reflected the social construction of Dalits as deficient people. This pathological construction creates an exclusionary difference between Dalits and non-Dalits and discourages Dalit children from participating in education.

On the other hand, a Dalit youth, Udaya, explains the situation of Dalit pupils in school in a different way. Udaya explained that Dalit pupils from Basipur have been facing several problems at school due to unfamiliarity, lack of concern from the teachers,

ineffective teaching and increasing tendencies for private tuition. Udaya also explained how the situation de-motivates the Dalit pupils (Based on interview with Udaya, 15 January 2006). Similarly, another Dalit youth from Basipur explained the exclusion of Dalit children from school as follows:

School seems an alien place to Dalit pupils. There is hardly any pupil from the Dalit community studying in the higher grades. No Dalit teacher is working at school. In the classroom, they are not finding any example from their community. Teachers also generally do not care about their study; most of the teachers are motivated by private tuition, but Dalits don't have the money to attend such tuition classes. As a result, Dalit pupils are not doing well in their examinations.

(Ranjit, interview, f/n, 12 November 2005)

These explanations clearly contradict the arguments of various teachers, non-Dalit villagers and government officers. They argued that they were not discriminating and not excluding Dalits from school, and the only problem was with the Dalits themselves. Several times, teachers at Gauripur School told me that in the classroom and at the school, there was no caste-based discrimination. Some teachers even questioned me as to whether I saw any discrimination towards or exclusion of the Dalits in the classroom. One teacher asked a similar question where instead of giving a direct answer to this question, I showed him the above response of Ranjit. After reading, re-reading and keeping silence for some moments, he responded:

Actually, this is the real story for them, but I was not thinking this way. You see, people generally see and hear what they want to see or hear, or you can say people do not think from the position of others. The same thing might have happened to me. Now, I realise the situation.

(Prabindra, conversation, f/n, 07 February 2006)

At least, conceptually, he realised the complexity of inclusion and exclusion of Dalits at school. But some people want to hide the other part of the story, which they do not want to see. Therefore, they do not see discrimination and exclusion. Such misconception and misinterpretation generally constructs Dalits as being culturally deficient.

School Enrolment: Inconsistencies and Contradictions

As discussed in chapter 6, in comparison to previous years, school enrolment has dramatically increased at Gauripur School. However, Dalit parents as well as teachers of Gauripur School were unsure about the retention of Dalit children. At the same time, some people questioned the government's recent programmes related to school

enrolment because there were a number of inconsistencies that appeared in the policy. For example, the following classroom observation shows some inconsistencies.

It was the first period. I went to the classroom of grade one where Sarita, a female teacher, was taking students' attendance in a crowd of about 150 pupils sitting on not only the benches, but also elsewhere on the floor. I stayed in that class for about an hour. The first period was over, but Sarita was still taking their attendance. During that time, I talked to several pupils and checked their books and exercise books. Around 40% of the pupils were without any books. The attendance of pupils was around 40% of the total students. Among the absentees, the percentage was high in the case of Dalit pupils. Among Dalits, however, absenteeism of Paswan and Tatma (Das) was not so high as Sadaya and Ram.

(Observation, f/n, 15 November 2005)

This shows that more than 150 young children aged between five years and eight years were in a single room and about one third of them were sitting on the floor without any mat, and a poorly paid²⁹ and untrained teacher was conducting the class. This was the reality of inclusive education through increased enrolment. Without looking at the reality of schools and classrooms, the government and donors present the data of increased enrolment to justify their programmes and investment (see WB, DfID and ADB, 2006).

The above observation has raised a number of other issues and questions about the schooling of Dalits. For example, about 60% of enrolled students were absent, the rate of absenteeism was higher for Dalits, and a large number of students were without books, exercise books or pencils. In this context, the claim of access, enrolment, and participation seems absurd.

The following explanation by a local Dalit about the situation of Dalit children at the school indicates their continuous exclusion irrespective of the government's programmes and claims of the inclusion of Dalits. He explained the difficulties and discrimination faced by Dalit children in school.

You can see a number of such situations at school and in the community where Dalits have been discriminated against. For example, the situation at school is not friendly towards the Dalit students, as they are all non-Dalit teachers who themselves think they are superior to the Dalits, and these teachers discourage Dalit students indirectly. You might have seen behaviours of various non-Dalits and our opposition in the parents' meeting

²⁹ She was school appointed teacher who gets salary only about one third of other teachers' salary of the same level.

at school. That parents' meeting also indicates that there are still several barriers existing for us at school.

(Interview, Udaya, f/n, 20 November 2005)

The above discussions show that the school enrolment programme has not been supported by sufficient resources and essential inclusive values and practices. As a result, this programme has little impact on inclusion of Dalits in education.

Student's Perception about the SLC Examination and School Success

Dan, a Dalit pupil studying at grade eight, did not feel direct caste-based discrimination in school and in the classroom. However, he was worried about the SLC examination, as he was not able to take private tuition. Jayan, a Dalit student of grade six, was initially apprehensive about school. Now, he does not hesitate to play, to chat and to take part in playing and other activities with classmates and students from different grades. Bipin, a non-Dalit from grade eight, said that he and most of his classmates have not been practising any untouchability and discrimination in the school. However, they all realised that the school's teaching was not sufficient for their study. Therefore, Dalits and other poor people, who were not able to pay for private tuition, were not confident in their success at school. A Dalit villager Udaya explained the situation as follows:

One of the visible discriminations is that teachers are not teaching properly. As a result, without taking private tuition students are hardly able to gain success in their examinations. Generally, Dalit students are not able to pay for private tuition, and thereby they become weak in their study. When they become weak, they are slowly de-motivated in the study. Finally, they leave school without completing their studies.

(Interview, Udaya, f/n, 20 November 2005)

This explains the difficulty for the Dalit pupils in getting success in examinations. It also indicates how the school selects successful pupils and how Dalit pupils generally remain unsuccessful.

Ravi, a Dalit youth, explained the different experiences and perceptions regarding inclusion and exclusion based on his unsuccessful attempt at the SLC examination. After not passing the SLC examination, he began to rethink his school life and achievement. He questioned why he did not pass the SLC examination and how other non-Dalit students with good economic background were successful in education. Ravi, expressed his anger and frustration to me when I asked him what he was doing these days. He said:

I was a regular attender at school throughout my school life, and I got promotion regularly up to grade ten, but I did not pass the SLC examination. I failed four subjects. Now, I don't have any courage to re-sit the examination. My whole school life has wasted without any achievement. I was, actually, unaware of my position because teachers had never given any suggestions about my studies.

(Ravi, conversation, f/n, 04 February 2006)

Now, he thinks that his studies ended without any achievement. Lakhan, a fifteen year-old Dalit, left school two years ago when he was studying in grade eight and went to an Indian city, Punjab, to get a job. Lack of guidance and encouragement made him leave school (Conversation, Lakhan, r/d, 28 March 2005). Due to such indirect exclusion, Dalit pupils generally were de-motivated and finally most of them left school.

Few Dalit pupils have completed ten years of schooling, and getting a pass in the SLC examination is very difficult for them. Early dropping out from school or leaving school without passing the SLC is common for Dalit pupils. The school's selection and differentiation of pupils for their success in the SLC is unfavourable towards Dalits. The selection process discourages Dalit pupils and thereby works as an exclusionary factor for them.

This section has described how Dalit pupils have been facing exclusion from school. Most teachers and people from government agencies generally define inclusion in the very narrow sense of physical access to school and school enrolment. Without appreciating the difficulties faced by Dalits in their studies and without considering their differences, they construct Dalits as deficient. Such a discouraging situation creates exclusionary pressures on Dalits in their schooling.

In this case, the following explanation of a senior education officer shows the complexity of and contradiction related to the educational inclusion of Dalits.

The official discourses and practices form one side of the story, whereas the other side of our education system is that it does not welcome the Dalits and other linguistic and cultural groups as the system has been historically designed for the so-called high caste, high class and other elites. The system was not for the Dalits and other disadvantaged groups. Actually, we have been trying to assimilate them using our power, that is, the state's power. Showing and legitimising their inferiority and our supremacy, we have been creating and continuing the differences between them and us.

(Interview, 13 March 2005)

This indicates that historically the education system was developed for certain groups of people. As a result, other people have been excluded from education. In Nepal, the education system was designed for the Nepali language speaking and economically well-off non-Dalit people. Now, the government's practice is directed to assimilate people with this education system, but the system is not favourable to Dalits and other linguistic and cultural groups. As a result, the education system is not able to include those people; rather the education system has been creating and widening difference. This leads to a conclusion:

They [schools and colleges] were primarily designed therefore to be agents of social control, to regulate citizens, to socialize people into particular religious beliefs and into particular gendered, ethnic and sexual identities. They were also assigned the task of selecting, labelling and stratifying students by age and level of attainment.

(Baker et al., 2004, p 141)

It suggests the need for some radical change in school practice to make school inclusive and to change the school practices from assimilative to transformative.

8.5 Dalit Community and School Activities: Examining Participation

This section examines the participation and exclusion of Dalits at Gauripur School. It analyses Dalits' participation in the School Managing Committee (SMC) and school decisions. It also discusses how the absence of Dalit teachers at Gauripur School contributes to the exclusion of Dalit children.

Participation and Exclusion in School Management

At the parents' meeting organised for the selection of the SMC at Gauripur School, Dalits were demanding an equal share in the SMC. Most non-Dalits opposed the Dalits and their candidacy for the SMC chairperson (Chapter 7). One teacher spoke of his concern of the changing power relations in society. He told me that in recent years several Tarai villages like Basipur have difficulties due to the organised resistance from Dalits. According to him, it has been more challenging than in the hills. In the hills, Dalits are scattered and thinly settled, but several villages in the Tarai have a dense Dalit population. He was expressing his worry about the struggle of the Dalits for participation and inclusion in society. This indicates the concerns and worries of non-Dalits regarding the possibilities of changing power relations in society. But one teacher expressed a different view about the candidacy of Dalits for the SMC:

People think Dalits are creating problems. They always thought that Dalits were lower caste people, and that they had to obey non-Dalits. When we look at it from the Dalits' angle, they were actually trying to change the conventional hierarchical relationship into a new form - a community member of equal status.

(Conversation, f/n, 17 November 2005)

One of the re-selected SMC members (non-Dalit) said that there was a general tendency towards not inviting Dalits to any meeting and discussion at the school. The teachers and the SMC generally did not invite Dalits unless they had an official requirement. Udaya said that non-Dalits generally thought Dalits would oppose them and create obstacles for their work (Conversation, f/n, 20 November 2005). For example, the invitation for Dalit parents to attend the SMC selection meeting was an official requirement. There was also a fear of opposition from the Dalits. For example, one teacher commented,

Dalits are now opposing every small thing with a unified voice, and they have several organisational networks outside the village. Working in such a situation is difficult. Viewing such difficulties, we have been trying to get Dalits' participation and co-operation.

(Conversation, f/n, 17 November 2005)

Although Dalit participation in school management has increased in recent years, non-Dalit people generally do not want to include them. In this situation, Dalits felt excluded from school management and school decisions.

No Teaching Jobs for the Dalits

No Dalit from Basipur village has got a teaching job, and no Dalit teacher has worked at Gauripur School. It was difficult to get a teaching job for a Dalit whether the selection and appointment was done by the District Education Office (DEO), the teacher selection commission or the SMC. This suggests that both the SMC and the DEO were not interested in appointing a Dalit teacher. Ranjit, a Dalit youth, told me:

Look at the examples of Sanat and Jari. Sanat passed the SLC examination some twenty years ago and Jari thirteen years ago. During these years, they tried for jobs in several places but they didn't get any yet. The situation is the same in the case of the other SLC graduates from the Dalit community. On the other hand, most of the contemporary non-Dalits who passed the SLC examination either got teaching or some other jobs or acquired higher education and got other opportunities. This is one of the most discouraging situations for the parents as well as the pupils from the Dalit community for their schooling. However, we three Sanat, Jari and myself have been trying

to educate the Dalit community of this village in various ways including conducting literacy classes with the help of some Dalit organisations and NGOs.

(Interview, Ranjit, f/n, 09 February 2006)

This expression shows the exclusion of Dalits from the teaching profession. It also shows that such exclusion of Dalits from teaching job places exclusionary pressures on the Dalit pupils and their parents. Ranjit explained,

Sanat, Jari and other SLC holding Dalits approached to get teachers' posts in many places including this school. The DEO or SMC appointed teachers from other community/caste people, but they did not give any place to the Dalits. For two years, we have also heard that Dalits would get priority in teaching posts. However, the SMC and the head teacher did not give any space to us. Again, recently the teaching licence provision³⁰ also created an additional obstacle for the Dalits, who passed the SLC examination or a higher degree than SLC, to apply for a teaching post. Actually, educated Dalits from this village do not have any courage to fill in the forms and attend examinations to get a licence by spending money and time, because there is no sign of getting a teaching position.

(Interview, Ranjit, f/n, 09 February 2006)

This explains the contradiction between the government announcement and the practice of the issue of appointing Dalit teachers. In practice, Dalits have been facing exclusion from the teaching profession.

The following excerpt from the interview with a Dalit who has passed the SLC examination explains the difficulty in getting a get teaching job.

Sanat passed the written examination for the post of a permanent teacher, but the interview board did not select him. He explained the situation as, "It was difficult for me to get such permanent teaching job because I had neither any approachable person nor that much money (bribe) to buy the post. The selections were mostly based on either personal relations or money.

(Based on interview, Sanat, f/n, 10 February 2006)

The experiences of two non-Dalit teachers further explain how teachers are generally appointed. Bijeshwor, from the Basipur non-Dalit community, has been working as a teacher for twenty years, and his selection was based on a personal relationship. He said that when he was competing for the permanent teacher's post, he had a relationship with

³⁰ The government has introduced a new provision of compulsory teaching licence certificate for those who want to apply for school teaching job. Before that, minimum academic qualification only was the prerequisite for entering into school teaching job. To get teaching licence certificate, people having minimum academic degree (SLC equivalent for primary school teacher, grade 12 equivalent for lower secondary school teacher and bachelor degree in related subject for secondary school teacher) have to pass an examination conducted by Teacher Service Commission.

the District Panchayat Chairperson, so he was included in chairperson's quota (Conversation, Bijeshwor, f/n, 27 January 2006). Prabindra, another teacher, does not see any possibilities for Dalits to get a teacher's post. He said, "If even my wife paid some money as a bribe to get a permanent primary teacher's post, how does a Dalit get a teacher post?" (Conversation, f/n, 07 February 2006) In his understanding, the SMC is creating more obstacles for Dalits because local non-Dalits generally do not want a Dalit teacher in school. Such exclusionary and discriminatory practice towards Dalits from the teaching profession represents a major barrier to their inclusion in school and in society.

Dalit Parents' Poor Reception at School

Dalit parents were never invited to school to discuss their children's education and other school related issues except for official requirements. There was no practice of organising formal meetings for parents at school to discuss the students' progress and problems, but most non-Dalit parents informally discussed their children's progress and problem with teachers. In the case of Dalits, there was hardly any possibility of such informal discussions about their children. One Dalit youth said that he sometimes visited the school, but he got a feeling that the school generally behaved towards him as though he was an outsider (Interview, Udaya, f/n, 20 November 2005). Similarly, in reference to the SMC election, teachers and other non-Dalits said, 'they (the Dalits) are going to disturb the selection process' (Observation, f/n, 16 November 2005).

The above examples indicate that the school generally does not welcome Dalit people. Teachers and the SMC were trying to maintain existing power relations by excluding Dalits. Dalits were resisting such exclusion by urging for participation and inclusion in school activities and school decisions.

This section shows how Dalits have been excluded from school's activities and decisions. In recent years, there have been some policy provision for the inclusion of Dalits in school management, teaching and decision-making, but such policies have hardly been translated into practice (Chapter 9). Dalits have still experienced exclusions, as they are generally treated as 'the others' in the school.

8.6 Understanding Teachers' Role in the Inclusion and Exclusion of Dalits

Teachers are very important actors in school. The message from the government, external agencies and curriculum are also delivered or mediated through teachers. In fact, teachers “mediate policy through their activities in and out of the classroom, through their participation in the realisation of curriculum” (Clough, 2005, p 76). Thus, teachers' roles are crucial in including or excluding pupils. In order to analyse teachers' roles, it is necessary to understand teachers' activities, their lives, struggles and power relations in society and schools. Although teachers' individual differences also play important roles in shaping their practices, Dalits generally felt that the teachers' practices do not contribute to increasing Dalits' inclusion and participation in education.

Hesitations towards Inclusive Practice and Changing Power Relations

Teachers claim that they were not discriminating against students at the school. Dalit students also did not experience direct discrimination from the teachers in the classroom. However, Dalit pupils have experienced some indirect exclusion. Lack of full commitment to inclusion at school can be seen in the teachers' practices. For example, Dan of grade eight and Jayan of grade six think that due to irregular and non-effective classes, it has been difficult to pass the SLC examination without taking private tuition. It is rather difficult for them due to their poor economic condition. Teachers generally overlook issues like, good teaching and learning, regular classes and regular monitoring of students' progress and feedback for the students. Most economically able non-Dalit pupils, who were not going to private schools, take private tuition. Such overlooking by teachers shows that they were not realising the difficulties of Dalit pupils. As a result, they generally blame the Dalit children and their parents for not doing well in school.

Most teachers of Gauripur School were not happy with Dalits' demands for participation in school activities. The SMC selection activity of Gauripur School is an example of teachers' attitude towards Dalit participation at school. Teachers claimed that everyone has a right in this democratic process of SMC selection, yet, on the other hand, they were unhappy with Dalits' attempt for candidacy in the SMC. These are some examples of contradictory practices of teachers. This is also an instance of teachers' refusal to support changing power relations.

Dual Identity and Dual Roles of the Teacher

A teacher, as an educated person, knows that caste based discrimination is not justifiable and that is illegal. Thus, as a teacher he/she wants to show neutrality regarding the caste issue by claiming that he/she is not discriminating. On the other hand, teachers, as non-Dalit community members, try to maintain difference from Dalits. Their value positions may be discriminatory against Dalits. As a result, they usually argue that they were not discriminating against people based on caste, and they were 'neutral' concerning the caste issue. I tried to understand the meaning of the word 'neutral' in the discriminatory social situation and found that there was no such neutrality, because either people had to support hierarchies and discrimination, or they had to oppose it. Therefore, there was no space for being neutral in the caste issue for a member of the non-Dalit community. Indeed, 'neutrality' was no more than a way of supporting caste hierarchies and differences as, "Neutrality is an attempt to conceal the unequal distribution of power" (Ng, 2003, p 215).

Towards an Understanding of Teachers' Lives and Careers

Teachers have stories of struggles as well as frustrations. For instance, one teacher said, "People want to get success in education without patience, and some people are jealous of us, but they do not try to learn from our struggles to get education and to get a teaching job" (Bhima, interview, f/n, 28 January 2006). He further added, "What did I get from this teaching job as I am still working more than twelve hours daily, but I'm not able to send my children to an English medium private school?" (Bhima, interview, f/n, 28 January 2006) Another teacher who was sending his children to an English medium private school explained the problem of teachers as follows:

At least in my subject, students want to take private tuition, so that I'm managing my family expenses by giving some private tuition, but for other teachers who don't have sufficient land or other business they have difficulty in managing their family expenses

(Prabindra, interview, f/n, 07 February 2006).

Teachers also express their dissatisfaction with the 'lack of respect' given to teachers. A teacher, as an educated person in society, wants to convey a message of their powerfulness in society. This expectation of teachers was rarely fulfilled. In other words, education as a stratifying mechanism had not worked for them. They worked hard, equally at school and in private tuition or in the field of cultivation. Their

expectations of a better life and better education for their children always demanded more work and more struggle. Through becoming teachers, they had accumulated some cultural capital and power in society. However, they were continually frustrated due to their dual roles and unfulfilled expectations. This suggests that to change a school to a more inclusive form, there is a need for a greater understanding of the complexity of teachers' lives and careers.

8.7 School and the Classroom: Multiplicity and Contestation

There are a number of perceptions about schooling. Focusing on the Basipur Dalits and the Gauripur school, this section discusses these multiple and contested meanings and perceptions about schooling.

Reproduction of Cultural Capital

In order to explain school practice there is a need to answer an important question related to the function of school. This is, 'who benefited from education?' The discussions of previous sections indicate that school successes and benefits have been highly concentrated on those people who have better economic conditions. Dalits have been living at the bottom of the education ladder. In this case, the argument for school as human capital formation is questionable because school has been selecting and appropriating successful people based on their previous background of wealth and social location. In this sense, the school is reproducing and appropriating existing social capital and hierarchies in society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, 1977a, 1986).

Educational success, in terms of good grades, good jobs and more power, is distributed unevenly based on economic situation, caste position, language and cultural background. Therefore, Dalits liberation or empowerment through education is questionable.

Production of Alternative Discourses

There were a number of instances of students' creation and appropriation of some alternate discourses and practices in opposition to official discourses. For example, a teacher was teaching Nepali in grade ten. The topic was related to the life history of Nelson Mandela and his contribution to democracy and opposition to racial

discrimination in South Africa. The teacher explained some paragraphs of the passage highlighting his work and contribution, but neither the students nor the teacher spoke about the situation of Nepal, caste hierarchies and differences. (Based on observation, f/n, 16 November 2005) It was interesting to note that some similarities and connections between South African racist discrimination and Nepal's caste based discrimination were not made in the classroom. At break time, students were discussing and reflecting upon this lesson. One student said that Nepal also needed a good leader, whereas another said that Nepal was not suffering from racial discrimination as in South Africa. A third student said that Nepalese society was also suffering from caste discrimination that was similar to racial discrimination. A fourth student argued that discrimination was not serious these days, and at least in school and among the classmates, they were not practising discrimination. (Observation, f/n, 16 November 2005) It is interesting to note that this variety of views is related in the wider society. Perhaps the teacher did not allow this variety of views to be articulated in the classroom because the teacher would have been too uncomfortable and threatened by such a discussion.

The above discussion indicates that students were active creators of discourses. The students' conflicts and contradictions indicate that the classroom has not been working simply as a social and cultural reproducer. However, there is diversity of opinion amongst non-Dalit pupils. For example, Raghu, a non-Dalit of grade ten, thought that although hierarchies and discrimination were not good, he thought caste was a given and fixed condition. Bijaya, also a non-Dalit from grade ten, opposed this view of Raghu and argued that caste hierarchy was human created. (Conversations, 12 January 2006) The teachers' views and school activities attempt to demonstrate that school practice is non-political and neutral. Most Dalit pupils and Dalit school graduates think differently. They have experienced several exclusions from school, and they found school benefits heavily directed towards relatively well-off non-Dalits. However, from schooling they get some power to oppose caste-based discrimination. In this way, they have seen some political function of the school, and they use school knowledge for the political purpose of resisting caste hierarchy in society.

Along with the reproduction of existing so-called mainstream discourses Parajuli (2002), Valentin (2001), and Skinner and Holland (1996) also found that school produced some oppositional knowledge. This discussion shows that Dalits have been

trying to use school to create and appropriate new discourses and practices of non-discrimination. Thus, students were not only following classroom discourses, but they were constructing some alternative discourses (see Giroux, 1983, 1983a; Borman et al., 2001; Levinson and Holland, 1996).

Resistance and Hope

Students' active involvement in creating alternative discourses indicates that they resist many societal and school discourses. School helps to resist caste base discrimination and exclusion. Such resistance creates some new hope for their inclusion and non-discrimination. The following excerpt based on an interview with a Dalit student of grade eight shows his perception about education:

Dan of grade eight from the Basipur Dalit community thinks that school would provide some power to escape from discrimination. He knew that there were difficulties for Dalits to succeed in education, and it was very difficult for them to get a job. He, however, expressed the view that education is a provider of essential knowledge. Education widens possibilities of searching for jobs. He added that people would not be able to dominate and differentiate educated people. He also believed that educated people would be able to oppose discrimination. Although he has several difficulties to cope with school due to poverty and being a Dalit, he was very happy with this opportunity to study.

(f/n, 06 February 2006)

Therefore, for Dan school provides some power to resist caste hierarchy. From schooling, he has some hope of a better job and a better life. Such hope and self-belief can lead to positive changes.

Kapur, a grade nine pupil from the non-Dalit community, thinks he is gaining power from school to challenge social discrimination and injustice in society. He explained his understanding with an incident from when he was younger.

Once when I was studying fourth grade, I had eaten some food at one of the Dalits' home together with a Dalit playmate. That evening my mother questioned me, 'why did you eat at such lower caste people's home?', and she beat me. I could not oppose her that time, so I was just weeping and apologising. After that day, I hardly played with Dalit children for two years.

(Conversation, Kapur, f/n, 13 January 2006)

Now, he felt as if he had some power to oppose such a practice because of schooling. Indeed, he has discussed several times with his parents the issue of such discrimination. He thinks that he, to some extent, has been able to change his parents' attitude. Now, he

can invite his Dalit friends to his home and sit together. In his view, education can play an important role to change discriminatory practice and injustice in society.

Ravi, a Dalit, expressed his anger and frustration when I asked him what he was doing these days. He did not pass the SLC examination, and he does not like to work as an agricultural labourer or brick labourer. He questioned me: "What did school give me and what can I do now?" (Ravi, conversation, f/n, 04 February 2006, see also pp 168-169)

I did not have any answer to his question. Perhaps he gained the power of expressing his anger and frustration, and most importantly, he gained the power to question school practice. This power of questioning the rationality of the practices of school as well as societal practices is a way of developing resistance. Dalits who successfully passed the SLC examination from Basipur did not get a job; they have been working in opposition to social discrimination and caste hierarchies. They think that they have gained such power of opposition to exclusionary discourses and creation of a new discourse from schooling and education. Therefore, school helped them to create, expose and strengthen their political awareness. Thus, school can sometimes work as a site of developing resistance against discrimination and exclusion (see Giroux, 1983, 1983a).

The Schooled Identity

Schooled children acquire a 'schooled identity' with some positive image and a self-empowered feeling. Due to various exclusionary factors and obstacles in the school, educational success in school with a good grade is difficult for Dalits. However, Dalits as well as non-Dalits seemed happy with their engagement and association in school activities and school life and with their identity of 'schooled people'. Similarly, school graduates and school leavers have various memories of their school lives to tell. Some people want to ask many questions about the way school functions, the way of giving certain knowledge and values and the way of legitimising such knowledge and values by calling others as 'abnormal' or 'backward'. For example, Rabindra, 32, a non-Dalit, reflecting upon school learning and his experiences during the work and the course of his life, expressed his dissatisfaction with school teaching and learning (Conversation, f/n, 03 February 2006).

Although Dan, a Dalit student from grade eight, has experienced some exclusionary pressures in his schooling, he felt good about being a 'schooled' Dalit. He said that at the school he was able to socialise with the pupils of other castes, which helped minimise caste-based differences and untouchability. Similarly, he thought that he gained some important knowledge from school, which may be helpful for future life and searching for jobs. Although Ravi did not pass the SLC examination, when he was at school he thought that school had included him, as he was associated with school and his classmates. He adjusted slowly and became a 'schooled person' and he felt proud of it and enjoyed a kind of freedom from traditional discriminatory practices of caste. For Dalits, 'schooled identity' gives a power to speak and communicate with non-Dalits. (Based on conversation with Ravi, f/n, 04 February 2006) Such communication empowers the Dalits and helps them to challenge and resist discrimination.

Most students have common expectations of having a new educated (or schooled) identity and thereby gaining more knowledge and power. Some pupils (for example a Dalit pupil, Dan) think that school can increase an ability to oppose discrimination. A non-Dalit pupil (Bijaya) thinks that school will help him get a good job and become a respectable person. Students as well as parents think that 'schooled identity' itself has some positive images of a knowledgeable and modernised person with the attraction of getting better jobs and life chances.

This section has shown multiple perceptions about schooling and the function of schools. Dalit people have different experiences and perceptions about schooling. However, they want to educate their children, and they want to use education to gain the power of resistance against discrimination and exclusion. Moreover, they want to be included in education by changing exclusionary values and practices.

8.8 Summary

This chapter has illustrated a number of school related cases that create exclusionary pressures upon Dalit children. Dalits have been struggling for inclusion by opposing the exclusionary practices of the school. This research demonstrates that there are multiple perceptions, understandings and experiences about schooling. It illustrates the contested nature of classroom and school. This chapter has explained that Dalits have been struggling in opposition to exclusionary practices of school, and they are struggling to

change their own culture, practice and tradition. This demonstrates Dalit social and political agency.

However, there are still multi-faceted exclusions for the Dalit community at school. The following excerpt from an interview with a Dalit person from Basipur village summarises Dalits' exclusion from education.

People from our community want to relate the problem of enrolment and lack of continuation in schooling with poverty. That is a reality, but the problem is more than poverty. The culture and tradition of the Sadaya and Ram communities do not encourage our pupils and parents in education, rather they discourage. Again, the culture and tradition are the result of social practices. I mean the root cause of such culture and tradition is discrimination. Similarly, lack of employment opportunities or discouraging environment for educated, skilled and semi-skilled people of our community to get any job in government as well as non-governmental sector is another cause for low participation in education. A school's environment is not motivating Dalit children. Actually, there is a chain of problems of exclusion for the Dalits. For example, the poor economic situation, cultural tradition and discriminatory caste practices have been creating barriers in education. Lack of education again results in lack of an opportunity to get better jobs, social contact and power to oppose discriminatory practices that creates further economic hardships and exclusionary pressures.

(Udaya, interview, f/n, 20 November 2005)

This shows a 'vicious circle of exclusion' for Dalits. In addition to the iniquitous caste system, the discriminatory and unsympathetic attitude of many teachers towards Dalit pupils is still a major excluding factor (UNICEF, 2006).

Dalits have been trying to use education to oppose exclusion and discrimination. They want to use knowledge from education to generate the power to oppose discrimination. They also want to use education to create new discourses and practices that oppose existing exclusionary and discriminatory values and practices. The next chapter (Chapter 9) explains how education policies have affected Dalits' inclusion and exclusion.

Chapter 9

Education Policies and the Exclusion of Dalits

9.1 Introduction

The exclusion of Dalits from Gauripur School, as discussed in chapter 8, has indicated that education policies have not been effective in combating the exclusion of Dalits. Continuous exclusion of Dalit children in education raises some questions about the appropriateness of education policies. This chapter analyses Nepalese education policies and policy ideologies and explains how education policies have not been contributing sufficiently to the inclusion of Dalits. This chapter is based on policy document analysis as well as observational and interview data obtained from the research site.

Educational policies, more than texts, are discourses and practices. Olssen et al. (2004, p 68) explained, “Policy discourses are ‘texts’, they are at the same time, always more than texts; that is, they are always components of discourse and of social practice as well”. In the same manner, Ball (1994, p 15) pointed out that policy is not one or the other, but both the text and the discourse, and they are ‘implicit in each other’; “Discourses embody meaning and social relationships; they constitute both subjectivity and power relations” (Ball, 1990a, p 2). Educational policies are also implicit in the process of creating, disseminating and validating a certain discourse. In this way, “education policy is infused with economic, political and ideological contradictions” (Ball, 1990, p 211). Regarding the inclusion and exclusion of discourses, Foucault (1972, p 227) mentioned, “Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it”. In this connection, “discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power” (Foucault 1982, p 101, cited in Ball, 1990a, p 2) and at the same time, it is also “a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (ibid).

This chapter begins with an analysis of recent educational policies in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. It discusses the correspondence between exclusionary educational policy history and the recent exclusion of Dalits. The second section

describes school practices in relation to policy implementation and local policy formulation. It then searches the link between Nepalese educational policies and various policy ideologies. It also discusses the consequences of Nepalese policy ideologies and foreign aid dependent development practices in education in general and in Dalits' education in particular.

9.2 Education Policies and the Dalits

This section analyses Nepalese educational policies focusing on schooling of Dalits. It analyses recent policy texts, which gives an account of inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. It then links recent policy and practice to the exclusionary policy history of Nepalese education.

Recent Policy Status in Education

The report of the National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC-1954) was the first attempt at formulating comprehensive education policies in Nepal; education policies in the first five-year plan (1956-1960) were also based on that report of NNEPC (Government of Nepal, 1956). However, the issue of Dalits' education seemed unaddressed in those plans because most of the Dalits were out of educational participation and no policy document pronounced Dalits' issues. Evaluating the progress of the eighth plan, the ninth five-year plan (1997-2002) document says, "Children of the weaker section, scheduled caste, backward group and people living in remote areas are deprived of the opportunity for getting primary education" (NPC, 1997, 13.1). This was the first time the issue of Dalits' education was explicitly included in Nepalese policy documents. The ninth plan further states, "Education opportunity will be provided to children of backward ethnic tribes and oppressed classes" (NPC, 1997, 13.1). Since the fifth five-year plan (1975-80), the government has waived tuition fees for the students of the government-funded primary schools, and since the sixth five-year plan (1980-85), the government has provided textbooks free of charge for the students of government-funded primary schools. In addition to this, the government increased number of scholarship quotas to primary-schooled Dalit children. The scholarship included a very small amount of money, which hardly covers the student's stationery costs. That is, it did not cover the cost of school uniforms or food. The tenth plan (2002-2007) announced a similar amount of scholarship money to all

primary schooled Dalit children and an extension of the scholarship to secondary schools on the quota basis.

In addition to the scholarship provision for Dalit pupils at public primary school, the government is waiving the fees up to tenth grade for pupils from Dalits and other disadvantaged communities. The government policy also included provision of scholarships in private schools for students from Dalits and other disadvantaged communities, utilising proposed levy from private schools for the education to marginalized communities, regulating private schools' fees, and transferring school management to the community (NPC, 2002). The government assumes that the new programmes will contribute to increased participation of Dalits and other deprived populations in education (MOES, 2003; NPC, 2002). However, except providing a small amount of scholarships to Dalit pupils enrolled at primary grades and waived fees up to grade ten for the Dalit children, the other proposed programmes and changes have not brought the expected results (see TRSE, 2006; DOE, 2006). Again, policy-documents have been creating 'us' and 'them' by using the term 'backward' (or 'lower caste') for the Dalits and other excluded people. As I try to understand the meaning associated with the term 'backward', it creates and appropriates a discourse that blames Dalits for their exclusion instead of understanding how Dalits have been excluded from education.

In such a situation, the inclusion of Dalits in educational mainstream by reducing exclusionary pressures upon them is hard to achieve without altering the exclusionary value system and exclusionary mentality. For example, there is a provision in the policy document that priority should be given to Dalits when appointing teachers. The tenth plan document says that the participation of Dalit communities in education centres "will be increased by appointing Dalit females if available and in case they are not available other male members from that community will be appointed to school teaching posts" (NPC, 2002, 28.5.2). In practice, it is hard to find any case of recruitment preference given to the Dalits for the post of a teacher. Chapters 7 and 8 have described a similar situation at Basipur village and Gauripur School.

In addition to this, the ninth and tenth plans included some special targeted group programmes for Dalits. The National Dalit Commission was set up in 2002. It gives some opportunities to Dalit intellectuals and activists to participate in some aspects of

the government's policy process. However, there is still doubt about the substantial changes in Dalits' participation in policy process and benefit sharing, as the government's efforts have not been concentrated upon Dalits and other deprived people. For example, the situation is still not different as CERID explained some ten years ago:

Public subsidies that are biased in favour of the elite, protecting the interests of teachers' unions, university students, and the political elite at the expense of the communities, the poor, the disadvantaged and the parents.

(CERID, 1996, p 58)

Concerning the reports of various educational commissions, in comparison to previous reports (NNEPC-1954 and ARNEC-1962), two different reports of the 1991 National Education Commission (NEC) and the 1998 High Level National Education Commission (HLNEC) suggested some positive policy measures related to Dalits, ethnic minorities, the disabled, the poor and marginalized groups of people. Simultaneously, these reports recommended Education for All (EFA), which was a positive step towards the development of Universal Primary Education. In this connection, HLNEC (1998, preface) states, "In accordance with social justice, the government's responsibility for education should be focused towards Dalits, marginalized people, the disabled and remote areas". The practice, on the other hand, has been heavily influenced by traditional hierarchical and exclusionary mentalities. The overall educational policy ideology has been influenced by neo-liberalism, which is not contributing to the inclusion of the weaker sections of the society (Section 9.4). As in Sowton's conclusion (Sowton, 2004), the Nepalese educational system, instead of including the rural poor and people from educationally deprived groups, has been producing even more marginalization and exclusion. People from urban areas, who have a strong economy and who are already educated and conscious about rights and educational needs, have benefited from the Nepalese educational system.

Education for All and the Inclusion of Dalits

The international movement on EFA is an influential force for developing the concept of and policies on inclusive education. Since the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, international concern and cooperation as well as national focuses of several countries have been directed towards Universal Primary Education (UPE). One of the main bases for the EFA movement was the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which affirms the right of children to education. The guiding principle of the

Salamanca statements' for framework for action (UNESCO, 1994) incorporated the concept of inclusive schools and inclusive education. The Dakar World Education Forum 2000 has explicitly included several values of inclusive education as a part of the EFA (UNESCO, 2000). The Dakar Framework for Action acknowledged the need for inclusive education. EFA is "a moral and political movement for developing universal system based on equality, entitlement, participation and respect for diversity" (Booth, 2003, p 3). In this way, the policies of EFA are based on several basic values of inclusive education.

By incorporating six EFA goals from the Dakar World Education Forum, Nepal has included another goal as a part of EFA, which is related to medium of instruction in primary education. It states that one of the goals of EFA is to ensure "the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through the mother tongue" (MOES, 2003). The following two EFA goals are directly related to the educational inclusion of Dalit children:

- to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, the disabled, children in difficult circumstances and children belonging to ethnic minorities and Dalits, have access to free and compulsory good quality education;
- to achieve a 50% improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015, and to achieve an equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

(MOES, 2003)

The main strategies adopted by the Nepalese government to achieve access and equity are as follows: provision of incentives for both the students and the schools; recruitment of female teachers and teachers from Dalit, indigenous and disadvantaged communities; adaptation of inclusive education; and need-based literacy programmes coupled with income generating activities for the parents (MOES, 2003).

However, apart from a small amount of money for scholarships for Dalit children, other incentives have not been working effectively in favour of Dalits. Again, in most cases, school improvement block grants and additional grants have not been utilised to promote the inclusion of the targeted groups. For example, more than 175 pupils in grade one were found in a single classroom with a single teacher in a school, where the block grant has been used to hire teachers for higher grades (f/n, 15 November 2005, based on observational notes and document study).

In the EFA document of Nepal (MOES, 2003), there are still some contradictory visions. For example, the document states in one place that the challenges are,

the continued inertia of feudal social dynamics that used the system of caste hierarchy, ethnicity and language as a means of political and social domination by the elite over the poor and the disadvantaged. There has been a skewed environment of social opportunities in favour of the elite.

(MOES, 2003, p 3)

In contrast to this, the next paragraph of the same EFA document opposes these points by stating, “it would be only a limited view”, which eventually tries to overlook the power relations and domination mentioned in the previous sentence. This is an attempt to legitimise the policy ideology, probably, with some blame to poor and disadvantaged group for their deprivation. It also indicates the existence of some contrasting discourses and values concerning educational policies.

History of Exclusionary Education Policy

Public education in Nepal began after the political change in 1951. The Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC), formed by the government in 1954, suggested an educational plan for Nepal (NNEPC, 1956). The first five-year plan of Nepal (1956-61) set an educational policy with the objectives of universal primary education, national education and education based on individual needs (Government of Nepal, 1956). There were contradictory objectives in the plan, as the national or uniform education and individual need based education contradict each other. The single curriculum, uniformity of teaching practices and single language for instruction did not obviously maintain diversity and could not fulfil the individuals’ educational needs. Thus, it was useful for certain sectors of the society. However, education was conceptualised as a sign of development, and thereby schools were rapidly expanded, students enrolments increased and people were enthusiastically involved in opening and running schools. In the case of Dalits, it was not possible to get easy access to school due to the practice of caste-based untouchability (Chapter 5).

The report of the All Round National Education Committee (ARNEC) suggested some additional measures and changes, as its aim was to develop an education system that could produce citizens who were expected to be loyal to the party-less Panchayat system and the king (see ARNEC, 1962). The third five-year plan (1965-70) again set some contradictory policies. For example, the plan stated, “Following the Karachi plan

1962-63, HMG has adapted the policy of providing primary school facilities to all boys and girls by 1980” (National Planning Council, 1965, Chapter 22). There was also a plan of piloting free and compulsory primary education. At the same time, the plan stated a contradictory programme of reducing grants: “Grants given by the HMG to the primary schools will be gradually reduced” (National Planning Council, 1965, Chapter 22).

The document of the fourth five-year plan (1970-75) has shown that only 18% of primary school enrolled pupils were enrolled in secondary education. The plan was trying to stop the opening of secondary schools by stating, “During the plan period necessary restrictions will be made concerning the opening up schools and emphasis will be given to consolidation and improvement of the existing ones” (NPC, 1970, 13.1). This indicates that education policy tried not to provide education to all citizens but to limit it to some selected groups of people. At the same time, under the National Education System Plan (NESP-1971), the school system was totally controlled by the government bureaucracy. Instead of the previous grant system, direct funding and bureaucratic control were introduced. During the fifth (1975-80) and sixth (1980-85) five-year plans, the expansion of primary schools continued. The government started free primary education for grades one to three during the fifth plan and extended it up to grade five during the sixth plan period with free textbook provision for the first three grades. However, the National Education System Plan (NESP-1971) “represented a more aggressive attempt to mould the Nepali nation into a particular image, one which served the interests of the Panchayat rulers” (Caddell, 2002, p 55). The interests of the rulers were stated as the goals of education in the NESP document as,

To strengthen devotion to the crown, country, national unity and Panchayat system; to develop uniform traditions in education by bringing together various patterns under a single national policy; to limit the tradition of regional languages; to encourage financial and social mobility; and to fulfil manpower requirements essential for national development.

(MOE, 1971, p 1)

The opening of the private schools began during the sixth five-year plan period (1980-85). The concept of private schools and competitive schools was extended in the seventh five-year (1985-90) plan. It only encouraged private schools, but did not encourage public schools to compete with the others. Regarding private schooling, the

seventh plan stated, “Secondary Schools will be allowed to be established in the private sector on the basis of people’s participation” (NPC, 1985, Chapter 39). In relation to the competitive schools, it stated, “It is necessary to generate competitive feeling among schools, with this objective, some model schools will be opened during the plan period” (ibid). The neo-liberal policy agenda in education was intensified during this seventh plan period, which has been continuing into the successive eighth, ninth and recent tenth five-year plans. Private and competitive schools and education for human capital were the policy ideologies in Nepalese educational planning. However, centralised, national and single curriculum for school education; bureaucratic control; centralised planning; single and the government prepared textbooks for public schools; traditional form of teaching practice; and centralised testing and grading have been continuing in educational policy and practice. This indicates the neo-liberal and neo-conservative paradoxes in educational policy-making.

Since the first plan, either piloting or preparing free and compulsory primary education has been mentioned in most of the planning documents of Nepalese government. Such vague statements have also been seen in the tenth plan document. For example, without mentioning any timeframe or programmes, it has mentioned ‘the gradual implementation’ of the programme of compulsory primary education (NPC, 2002). Again, so-called free education is not free for the poor families because the system only waives monthly tuition fees and provides basic textbooks to the students. It does not cover the costs of school uniforms, meals and stationery.

More than five decades of policy history indicates that education policies have not contributed much to the inclusion of Dalits. Because of caste-based hierarchical social practices and economic hardship, Dalits have had difficulty in participating in education. Similarly, education policies have not contributed to the inclusion of Dalits in education. Since 1990, discussions about the need for the inclusion of Dalits in education with some policy-measures for reducing exclusions were begun. As a result, some targeted programmes for Dalits have been included in recent policy documents. However, the recent policy status, as discussed earlier in this section, indicates that educational policies have not contributed sufficiently to the inclusion of Dalits in education because policies and practices have not been contributing to altering exclusionary values and power relations.

9.3 Policy Practice at School

The previous section has analysed to what extent national education policies have included the issue of inclusion of Dalits in education. It has also provided an overview of exclusionary policy history in Nepal. Indeed, policy as a text has no meaning if it is not practised in school. As discussed in chapters 7 and 8, local socio-cultural complexities and power dynamics as well as individual differences remain influential elements to implement policy at school and in community level. Similarly, in addition to re-interpreting national education policy, schools have to formulate several policies to supplement national policies and to run the school. In this context, this section discusses the following two interrelated issues concerning local educational policy. How does Gauripur School re-interpret and implement policies related to inclusion of Dalits? How does the school formulate the policies at the local level?

This year, Gauripur School has distributed the first instalment of scholarship money to all parents of Dalit pupils enrolled in primary grades. The head teacher told me that it was the first time the school has distributed scholarships to all the Dalit pupils in grades one to five, even though the amount of the scholarships money was small. Previously, there used to be some quotas for the scholarships. For secondary grades, there were some quotas for scholarships in which the school used that money to waive the fees for some Dalit pupils. The head teacher said that from this year (2005/2006), the government is providing some money to the school to compensate for the waived fees for the Dalit pupils in secondary grades. Although scholarship provision contributed towards enrolment, it is still hard to say to what extent this provision contributes to the retention to the Dalit children at school. However, without changing practices and values, the inclusion of Dalits in education is hard to work at school.

Similarly, as described in chapter 8, the enrolment campaign for primary school age children encouraged or forced Dalits to send their children to school. But, as discussed in chapter 8, the classroom of grade one was crowded where more than 175 pupils were kept in a room without seats and a single untrained and poorly paid teacher conducted the class (Observation, f/n, 15 November 2005). The school and teachers did not pay any attention to this issue. One teacher, who teaches grade one, explained the situation by giving the example of that crowded classroom and said they (teachers) did not care about pupils' presence or absence due to this crowd. She further said they did not have

such practice of taking care and inviting parents to school. She also thought that it was not possible to do anything in such a mass of students (Conversation, Sarita, 15 November 2005).

The head teacher of Gauripur School viewed that various sectors of society including teachers have cooperated with the government's programmes of enrolment campaign. According to him, the government, on the one hand, expects all children aged six to ten to be enrolled at school and on the other hand, the programme has not been supplemented by any additional physical and material constructions. Neither has it given additional teacher posts. He states:

We are facing several difficulties due to the government's inconsistent policies and programmes. The crowded classroom of grade one is one of the results of the government's contradictory programmes. We are not able to hire additional teachers for grade one as we have been managing teachers at secondary level where the government has given only one teacher post to teach grades nine and ten. However, last year a local NGO supported to complete construction of this new two room building, otherwise we would have had to use the playground for this mass of students of grade one.

(Head teacher, conversation, 19 February 2006)

The head teacher explained the difficulties in getting local cooperation for school construction and financial support for the school. The Village Development Committee (VDC) stopped their financial support to school, as there is no VDC committee working for last three years³¹. Supporting the head teacher's explanation, one teacher argued that many local people, instead of giving support to school, want to rule them and oppose teachers. The head teacher added that the school and teachers have also suffered from local as well as national politics and local confrontation. One of the major components of EFA is related to the participation of local people in management. With this assumption of increasing local participation, as a donor conditionality, the government has started to handover public schools' management to the community on a voluntary basis with some attractive immediate financial incentives to the schools, which is still confusing and debatable, not only among teachers, but also among parents and community members. This contradiction is also reflected in the three year interim educational planning guidelines of the Ministry of Education (see MOES, 2006). On the

³¹ Previous VDC terminated three years ago but due to the conflicting political situation, no election is held to elect a new VDC.

other hand, the document prepared by the World Bank does not see such contradiction with this programme (see WB, DfID and ADB, 2006).

However, in the case of Dalits' educational participation, this change may not be able to alter existing exclusion and power relations because in several places schools and communities are not supportive of the inclusion of Dalits in education. The example from Gauripur School's School Managing Committee (SMC) selection as discussed in chapters 7 and 8 indicates that local power relations also exclude Dalits from the active participation in school management and decision-making. Moreover, Dalits have felt that the school's environment has not been supportive of their children. Teachers have not been giving attention to their children. Dalits said that without private tuition, it has been difficult for the students of Gauripur School to gain success. Taking private tuition has been difficult for Dalits due to poor economic condition (Chapter 8).

This shows several inconsistencies among the aims, policy statements and practices regarding the inclusion of Dalits in education. For example, there is a lack of inclusive values in the policies and programmes; as a result, the gap between policy statements and practices has not been narrowed down. Moreover, decentralisation is seen as a "present-day world fashion", result of "donor pressures" and "the result of uncoordinated personal interests, perceptions and understanding of the issue" (Parajuli, 2002, p 96). On the one hand, the local management of schools is very weak and does not have sufficient power, and on the other hand, local school management and local policy practices have not been contributing to the alteration of existing power relations. Caddell states:

Activities were largely directed from the centre, with a highly partial inclusion of district officials and other stakeholders into the decision-making process. Rather than offering opportunities for local voices to be heard, attempts at promoting district level data collection, analysis and planning appear more focused on transferring central-level concerns and responsibilities to the district and sub-district level. Opportunities for district and school level officials, parents and other stakeholders to influence priorities and voice concerns remain limited. In particular, communication remains largely focused on the extraction of data to meet national planning, monitoring and evaluation objectives as opposed to districts or school being able to set their own agendas.

(Caddell, 2005, pp 462-463)

Although I have some reservations about the use of the term 'stakeholder' in education, Caddell has rightly explained the policy process and practice of Nepal. It suggests that

recent management instruments like, School Improvement Plan (SIP), District Education Plan (DEP) and the Local Management of School are rhetorical as the value system and the mentality remains unchanged.

The government, for the last couple of years, has been advocating the implementation of locally developed policies and programmes in school through a locally developed SIP. An SIP seems to be a 'show-piece' for the public and donors. I have not found any programmes or funding based on SIP. For example, one officer from the Department of Education (DOE) said that they have not been able to use SIP in the planning process adequately. In this way, so-called local planning documents, such as the SIP and DEP are just vacuous. For the donors and the government, SIP and DEP seem a place to spend money and produce a myth of local policy, planning, ownership and participation. For example,

Preparation of SIP is mandatory to get an additional block grant from the District Education Office (DEO). Last year training for the preparation of SIP was held in the last month of the year. To get a block grant, I had to submit SIP within one week. Due to time constraints, I called one teacher, consulted with some DEO staff, wrote SIP within two days sitting in the district headquarters and submitted to DEO. The school was suffering from a financial crisis and the block grant was a relatively flexible budget, in which some budget can be used according to the needs of school. It was urgent to get that money to this school and so I did it within the limited time.

(Head teacher, Gauripur School, conversation, f/n, 14 November 2005)

This is an example of the myth of local participation. Interestingly, the head teacher of Gauripur School was not able to show me the SIP, and neither teachers nor SMC members knew about the plan. The head teacher told me that he prepared two copies of SIP of which he submitted one copy to District Education Office (DEO) and another copy to the local Resource Person (RP). The local RP has not returned that copy to him yet, and it was difficult to contact him and get it, as his job was already terminated. Teachers have heard the word SIP but most of them do not know much about 'SIP'. A teacher, Bhima, said that he did not know much about SIP, but he knew that the head teacher participated in SIP training.

The minutes of teachers' meetings show that no meeting has discussed the local education policies and programmes. For the last two years, only three teachers' meetings have been recorded in the minute book.

There are still a number of unanswered questions concerning SIP. For example, if it was a school's separate programme, why was SIP necessary to release funding from the DEO? Without changing existing structure of participation, how can inclusion be possible? What difference would be created with this new provision in the recent management system, participation and inclusion? In this way, it is hard to believe that SIP is an effective way of increasing local participation in education and reducing exclusion of Dalits and other excluded groups from education.

9.4 Policy Ideologies and Environment

The previous sections have analysed Nepalese educational policy documents and policy practice at school. This section discusses the influence of policy ideologies in Nepalese education policy. It also discusses the influences and impacts of foreign aid on Nepalese policy formulation and implementation.

Policy Ideologies in Nepalese Education

Before identifying educational policy ideologies of Nepalese policy, let me begin with a brief overview of some contrasting policy ideologies. Policy discourse brings ideological position(s). Trowler (2003) discusses three dominant political ideologies based on educational policy discourses. They are social democracy, neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism with their corresponding educational ideologies progressivism, traditionalism and enterprise, respectively. According to Trowler, progressivism emphasises personal development and social cooperation, whereas traditionalism emphasises order, hierarchies and cultural transmission. Enterprise emphasises competitiveness in a market environment. In this way, the main concern of education for social democrats is personal and social development. For neo-liberals, it is human capital development, and for neo-conservatives, it is socialisation into norms and values of the dominant culture. Besides these global ideological discourses, 'the third way' as a policy ideology, is an "attempt to transcend both old style social democracy and neo-liberalism" (Giddens, 1998, p 26).

Olssen et al. (2004) summarise contrasting frameworks for educational policy into two categories: utilitarianism based on 'choice' rationale, and social justice based on 'equity' and 'fairness' rationale. The utilitarian framework takes education as preferred goods. Therefore, it tries to gain maximum average benefits for all by maximising

aggregate gains, even if disparities are wider. The fairness framework, on the other hand, considers education as primary social goods, so that it advocates fairness based on the need to improve opportunities for the disadvantaged (ibid, pp 216-220). Instead of choice as justice, Rawls' alternative concept of social justice proposes 'justice as fairness'. For instance, Rawls (1971, p 107) writes, "Resources for education are not to be allotted solely or necessarily mainly according to their return as estimated in productive trained abilities, but also according to their worth in enriching the personal and social life of citizens, including here the less favoured". There are extensions of the scope of justice from distributive justice to three forms of justice: distributive, cultural and associational (Gewirtz, 1998, 2006; Cribb and Gewirtz, 2003). According to Fraser, distributive justice is concerned with economic exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation of appropriate conditions of living, whereas cultural justice is related to cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect (Fraser, 1997, 2001; Cribb and Gewirtz, 2003; Gewirtz, 1998, 2006). The associational justice is related to participation in decisions that affects their life and activities (Power and Gewirtz, 2001; Gewirtz, 1998, 2006). Young (1990) argues that justice, which is more than distribution, is the acknowledgement of group differences to challenge oppression, where oppression includes exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.

A group of high-ranking state bureaucrats and professional middle class people generally argue for 'neutral instrumentalism' (Apple, 2005, p 286) of control, measurement and efficiency that are influential in policy formulation. They often give "greater attention to traditional 'high-status' content, greater attention to testing, and a greater emphasis on schooling as a stratifying mechanism" (Apple, 2001, p 59).

However, in academic discussions, the constructionist discourse is popular in education. The aim of education for social constructionists is to empower marginalised groups and to maintain equity by changing the status quo (Trowler, 2003). Various academic discourses and educational policy researches have been using constructionist and other critical frameworks to analyse educational policy (Trowler, 2003; Olssen et al., 2004; Ball, 1990, 1994).

Educational policies in Nepal until the 1980s were heavily based on controlled and centralized curriculum and methods with the aim of reproducing traditional values and

practices. As a result, educational policies did not narrow down the social differences and caste hierarchies. At the same time, educational facilities were concentrated on relatively wealthy, advantaged and so-called higher caste people. Education mostly remained beneficial to the certain sector of society. The main aim of education was to legitimise certain culture and value - the culture of the ruling elite, Hindu values with supremacy of the king and one language - Nepali - in the name of nationalism. No policy included any agenda of inclusion of Dalits. However, despite bearing several discriminations and obstacles, some Dalits were able to go to school in some hill areas.

Nepalese state bureaucrats and policy makers, after the political changes of 1990, were still heavily influenced by neo-conservatism with its centralised curriculum, national examination and bureaucratic control. At the same time, the World Bank's ideologies of competition and privatisation have included aid conditionalities. As a result, both neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism have been working as the guiding policy ideologies of Nepalese education policy with a number of contradictions.

Foreign Aid and Education Policy Practice

Foreign aid in Nepal began in 1951 with US aid. The number of donors as well as volumes of aid continuously increased in subsequent years. Before execution of the first five-year plan in 1956, only USA and India had provided aid to Nepal (Acharya, 2002; Skar and Cederroth, 1997). During the first five-year plan period (1956-61), in addition to US and India, China and USSR began to provide aid to Nepal (ibid). Since then, Nepalese development projects and programmes have not only been heavily dependent on bilateral as well as multilateral foreign aid, but also donors have been influencing policy discourse and practice.

Recently, Nepal is receiving aid from multilateral donors like WB and ADB, UN agencies and bilateral donors such as Denmark, Finland, Norway, Japan, UK and USA. Besides this, a number of international NGOs have been assisting various development activities. In education, since 1950s, donors have not only been providing financial, technical or material assistance, but they have been influencing educational policy. US influence on Nepalese education was dominant until the early 1970s as NESP (1971) was prepared and launched with US assistance. However, UNESCO advisors also worked during 1960s and 1970s on Nepalese educational policy formulation. The

activities and advisory roles of UNESCO increased after the Karachi plan (1962) that announced universal primary education by 1980. When the World Bank began to invest in developing countries, the advisory roles of UNESCO in the education policy were weakened (Brock-Utne, 2002). A similar situation began in the Nepalese education sector when the World Bank appeared in the 1980s.

Since the 1980s, the World Bank's ideological domination has heavily influenced Nepalese policy discourse and practice in education. However, at that time, most of the donors have been working separately either on the project basis or component basis. For example, in the Primary Education Project (PEP) and the Basic and Primary Education Project-I (BPEP-I) donors were working with separate components, even though it seemed a common programme for participating donors. From the Basic and Primary Education Project-II (BPEP-II), instead of project orientation, programmes were incorporated within the government's regular system. Donors agreed BPEP as the common programme with a basket funding system. Interestingly, several donors were still interested in nominating separate advisors and trying to influence policy-making. Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) in its Country Assistance Paper, for example, mentions, "As one of Nepal's main donors, Denmark is in a good position to influence future policies within the primary education sector" (DANIDA, 1996, cited in Caddell, 2002, p 87). Despite such contradictions, competitions and diverse interests of donors, the World Bank has been playing a dominant role in education policy formulation.

However, after Jomtien Conference in 1990, instead of different agendas, interests and ideologies, most donors made a common understanding about the need of Education for All. It provided some common ground for their assistance. A number of issues related to the educational inclusion are explicitly included in the Dakar Education Forum (2000) for Education for All, and most aid agencies including the World Bank have at least theoretically agreed with EFA programmes. Joint funding for Nepalese Basic and Primary Education Programme and Education for All programmes can be seen as the product of a common agreement for the EFA programme.

Most of Nepal's development programmes and activities have depended on foreign aid with the aim of alleviating poverty and combating social differences. But, the development intervention initiated by foreign aid has not been able to reduce poverty

and social differences. Acharya and Acharya's following evaluation of the impact of foreign aid in Nepal, for example, explains a similar situation:

The infrastructure created by foreign aid over the years has benefited only a handful of urban people. It has failed to reach the bulk of the population, and reduce the poverty level. Instead, it has widened the economic and social disparities between peoples and regions. Nations and agencies that had extended economic aid to Nepal, with a few exceptions, have failed to accomplish what they had set out to.

(Acharya and Acharya, 2004, p 46)

The impact of foreign aid in education is not so different from this view, as increased access has not been able to promote participation, success and inclusion. As a result, caste, gender, ethnicity, economy and social origin based disparities in schooling have not been narrowed down. Many Dalit children, girls, and children from poor households are still deprived of primary education. The disparities have been widening due to the various types of public and private schools. The increasing number of private schools indicates the decreasing people's trust in public schools. The system of private schools and differences between private and public schools have continued to widen disparities. Whitty and Power (2002) conclude that the marketised education policies and practices bear "many contradictory elements and paradoxical tendencies" (p 104). Moreover, the neo-liberal educational development is creating 'loser' and 'victim' in society (Brock-Utne, 2002; Bonal, 2003).

Brock-Utne (2002), for example, explains the influences of the World Bank's development ideology in various LDCs in the 1980s and 1990s by maintaining:

The thinking of the World Bank on education in developing countries is closely linked to human capital theory and to the globalisation paradigm with its neo-liberal economic orthodoxy. The dominance of neo-liberal economics has been facilitated by the growing indebtedness of the poor. It is this indebtedness that enables the World Bank to put up conditionalities for the aid given to developing countries.

(Brock-Utne, 2002, p 60)

The Washington Consensus of the World Bank considers education as a process of 'human capital' formation, in which "there is no evidence that educational reforms encouraged by WB have generated the necessary conditions for educational development, while there is evidence that educational access and equality of educational opportunities have been seriously damaged by these policies" (Bonal, 2002, p 11). The

main effects on education are from the economic policies and other institutional reforms imposed by the loan conditionality of the WB, rather than direct influences on education policy (ibid).

In the late 1990s, however, the failure and criticism of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and market fundamentalism have forced policy change (Bonal, 2002, 2004; Acharya and Acharya, 2004; Brock-Utne, 2002; Klees, 2002). As the part of post-Washington Consensus in educational policy, the WB has begun a discourse of attacking poverty and building partnership for development (Bonal, 2002, 2004; WB, 2002; Klees, 2002). However, the World Bank's basic education policy features are still unaltered. The development model prescribed by so-called new strategy is "still based on the liberal macroeconomic framework, which critics have argued simply as a continuation of previous SAP programmes, with some adjustments" (Acharya and Acharya, 2004, p 85). The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is the new conditionality for qualifying for the World Bank's assistance. Although the World Bank claims that, the PRSP is locally 'generated and owned' and stakeholders 'widely participated' in the process of formulation, the reality seem different. For instance, the present PRSP of Nepal was prepared under the supervision of the Bank-funded staff (Acharya and Acharya, 2004), which means the World Bank is indirectly imposing its agenda of development. In education, however, the new policies and programmes proposed by the tenth plan of Nepal (2002-07) can be viewed as the consequence of this policy change of the Word Bank.

The World Bank states that recent education policies of the Bank are centred on the four global priorities in education: basic education for poor; early childhood development and school health; distance education, open learning and use of new technologies; and system reforms including curriculum and assessment, decentralisation, encouragement for private investment in education (WB, 2002). However, the new education policy of the World Bank is based on the assumption of an increased rate of return on education, privatisation, cost-recovery and decentralisation, which aim to contribute to poverty reduction through high economic growth (Bonal, 2004). It has been argued that poverty reduction is 'wishful thinking', but in practice, these policies produce exclusions and inequalities (ibid). The experiences based on the practice of the 1980s and 1990s show

that so-called economic growth, without redistribution, do not contribute to poverty reduction, but rather widens inequality (Klees, 2002).

Bilateral donors also impose conditionalities for assistance. Such conditionalities of multilateral as well as bilateral donors, for example, are related to consultation, technical advisors, material supply and structure of project implementation. The direct involvements of donors in policy, planning and implementation with their conditionalities have more effects that are adverse rather than positive ones on development activities and results. Foreign aid and the conditionalities of the World Bank have been bringing an adverse effect to policy formulation capacity and policy choices of recipient countries. For example,

Political marketing to get access to international funds becomes the main objective of recipient countries, changes the whole rationality of priorities and strategies for education and limits the number of options available. SAPs do not only reduce the national autonomy to set strategies. By being almost the unique source of funding, they have the power to restrict the scope of policy choices of developing countries.

(Bonal, 2002, p 8)

There is a similarity between this global influence of foreign aid along with the WB's policy ideology and the foreign aid dependency of Nepal. It can be described as:

All development activities are at present totally dependent on foreign aid; this reliance is further increasing.... Economic corruption, now so rampant in Nepal's political and bureaucratic circles, is essentially a bi-product of foreign aid. The country has thus also borne a high cost for having accepted foreign aid.... Nepal is now locked in the vicious circle of foreign aid dependency. Being so financially dependent on others, it is compelled to accept policies, programmes and activities suggested or imposed by donors, even if they are harmful overall.... The latest symbol of Nepal's continued dependence on foreign aid is the PRSP.

(Acharya and Acharya, 2004, p 84)

Education policies and practices are directly related to overall development policies and practices of the state. The impact of five decades of Nepalese development interventions brought about by a huge amount of foreign aid does not bring any encouraging results. For example, Panday (1999), reflecting upon his long experience on working with Nepalese bureaucracy and participating more than a decade in civil and political movements, writes:

At times, we promise ourselves the miracle to be achieved through the 'rapid growth' and 'all-round development' routes. At other times, we dream of the

pleasant journey to be taken through the strategic paths of ‘fulfilment of basic needs’ and ‘the Asian standard of living’. ‘Poverty alleviation’, ‘economic liberalisation’, ‘sustainable development’, and ‘human development’ are the more recent charms we have used in hypnotise ourselves, as we remain near standstill in a journey that does not seem to be going anywhere pleasant.

(Panday, 1999, p x)

Panday is referring to nearly five decades of contradictory development practices and the policy-making status in Nepal. The educational policy status and practice can be understood as the general policy status and development practices. Moreover, Nepalese history of development practice shows that development policies and plans, including education, seem only the ‘text’ or ‘words’, generally not tied up with the ‘world’ or the practice:

Development plans and programmes are full of concepts (words?) but little ideas, and even less conviction. We do not pay much attention to the ground reality with regard to the position and power of the forces of development as against the interests of the forces of status quo. We forget that a concept needs to be understood and translated in the context of the existing reality of a people for whom it is meant.

(Panday, 1999, p ix)

On the other hand, Nepalese development practice has created a new discourse of development, which further encourages the dichotomies between so-called developed and undeveloped people. For instance, “Those who had acquired some knowledge of so-called modern science and technology identified themselves as *bikasis* (developed), supposedly with a ‘modern’ outlook, and the rest as *abikasis* or *pakhe* (uncivilised or backward)” (Shrestha, 1998, p 45). Shrestha, describing the impact and forms of development ideology and practice, argues that the knowledge and resources of development in Nepal has been utilised by the ruling elite, as a power tool to create difference from the common people and to maintain their supremacy. Shrestha further explains the development ideology and its impact as,

Development was no longer just a concept. It becomes a social ideology, which fortified the already existing class. The majority of the wealthy class who also happened to be relatively more educated and enjoyed access to power aligned themselves with *bikas*, this becoming *bikas*.

(Shrestha, 1998, p 45)

The above discussions give a picture of Nepalese development discourses and practices. They reveal that there have been a number of changes in ‘words’ during the five

decades of development practices in Nepal. As a part of the overall development strategies of the Nepalese state, educational development has also been structured for the benefits of certain sectors of the society. As a result, large sections of rural people, Dalits, the poor and other marginalised people have been deprived of educational opportunities. The continued exclusion of Dalits from education is also a result of such differentiating practices. This has raised an important question about the relevancy of educational policies and programmes carried out with foreign aid. The important issue in this context is that for whom and for what purpose the development practices and aid policies have been working.

9.5 Summary

This chapter has illustrated that Nepalese education policy texts are the bi-products of contradictory ideological visions, commitments and policy interests. The continued exclusion of Dalits from education has not been ameliorated by recent policies and practices. Although EFA has a number of positive aspects for the inclusion of Dalits in education, the policies and practices are contradictory, so it has not been possible to contribute sufficiently to the inclusion of Dalits. Therefore, the idea of participatory policies and practices, and the process of ensuring human rights and justice through education policies and practices are still weak in Nepal.

The marketisation and privatisation policies and practices have been negatively affecting inclusive education. The private schools are not accessible to excluded people due to high cost and urban location. At the same time, in various communities, private schools have been discouraging public educational practices. For instance, in the case of Nepal, educational managers, schoolteachers from urban areas, policy makers, political leaders, bureaucrats and the higher and upper middle-classes seem reluctant to support public education, as they send their children to private schools. In such a situation, most of the public schools are considered inferior in comparison to private schools. Again, market-driven education creates 'winners and losers' by increasing competition (Barton, 2003, p 61). As a result, market-driven and private education encourages selection rather than inclusion. In Nepal, such marketised and private education instead of promoting inclusion continues exclusionary practices.

As Booth (2005) mentions, inclusion is more than a concept; it is a value position, which supports equity, respect for diversity, human rights and participation. Without incorporating such values, so-called 'inclusion' may not contribute to inclusive education. Moreover, "Values underlie all actions and plans of action, all practices within schools and all policies for the shaping of practice. All actions, practices and policies can be regarded therefore as the embodiment of moral arguments" (Booth, 2005). Therefore, while analysing Nepalese educational policies and practices we need to rethink the notion that failure to achieve inclusive practice is more than ineffective educational management and lack of resources, it is the result of imbedded values and discourses. It is the result of "the specific meanings and interpretations attached to targets and associated reform agendas" and the effects of "specific contextual factors and concerns" (Caddell, 2005, p 468).

Thus, there is a need for some critical discourses related to inclusive education in each level of policy process. At the same time, there is a need to promote inclusive dialogue among excluded groups. Although both of the aspects are equally important, dialogue among excluded groups is more urgent to develop inclusive education. Such dialogue contributes to defeating various exclusionary pressures in educational policy and practice. The voices and struggles of Dalits for inclusion are powerful factors for changing social practice and putting pressure on policy change. There is a need to examine the policies and practices of inclusive education by including the voices, stories and perceptions of excluded children.

Finally, there is a need to think and act 'against the grain' (Ng, 2003, p 214) of neutrality and normality. There is a need to support inclusive values with diversities and differences while working on policies and practices for inclusion. In order to work 'against the grain' there is a need to understand education as a contested space of struggles for meaning and power because "education represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations" (Mohanty, 1990, p 184, cited in Ng, 2003, p 214). Beyond technical and managerial rhetoric, education policies represent value commitment. Therefore, there is a need to review and reformulate policies by including values that are more inclusive and that affirm the struggle of Dalits. The marketised education policies initiated by the World Bank do not contribute to narrowing down social difference and exclusion in society. Although the World Bank's recent policy

documents speak about inclusive policy towards Dalits, poor and deprived people, the guiding policy ideology focusing on private education does not contribute to the reduction of social difference and exclusion of Dalits. Thus, there is a need for an alternative to recent neo-liberal policy discourse in education.

Chapter 10

Reflections and Concluding Observations: Revisiting the Main Issues

10.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to bring the issues and ideas together. There are direct as well as indirect impacts of social and political movements in Nepal and the issue of the exclusion and inclusion of Dalits. There were some shifts in people's aspirations and struggles during the three years of my research from 2004 to 2007. I started my research with the context of the general historical continuity of the exclusion of Dalits, armed rebellion of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and tripartite conflicts and political struggles between the king, parliamentary parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). After the king's attempt at taking state power in 2002, violence and uncertainty increased, as a result people's daily life became more vulnerable. The situation became more difficult when the king, with the help of the state military, took all state power, seized all public rights and declared a state of emergency in 2005. However, after the beginning of the peace process between the Maoist rebels and parliamentary political parties in 2006, the situation moved forward. The Democratic Movement in 2006 forced the king to step-down from his authoritarian position. Now there is hope for positive changes in relation to peace, democracy and inclusion of Dalits and other excluded people in governance and social and educational spheres.

As I was writing this final chapter, the transitional processes towards democracy and peace are continuing. Maoist rebels and parliamentary political parties have participated in an interim government. At this time, there is a need to deal mainly with three forms of post-conflict challenges efficiently: establishing a broad democratic political system and defeating any type of autocracy; controlling the rise of post-conflict small-armed groups and violence; and beginning post-conflict reconstruction and development (see Gautam, 2006). The issue of inclusion of Dalits is directly related to both the challenges of establishing democratic set up and reconstructing and developing

the state. The democratic political settlement may give space for the wider participation of Dalits, but continuous struggles for inclusion are still needed. Moreover, it is argued that the primary causes of Maoist conflict were disparity, conflicts and differentiations based on caste, class, language, ethnicity and regional disparities on development interventions (see Gautam, 2003; Bhattachan, 2001; Karki and Bhattarai, ed., 2004; Lindsay, 2005; Shrestha, 2004). Thus, the recent peace agreement and participation of political parties in the government will not be a long lasting solution of the problem, unless the above-mentioned issues of differentiation, disparity and poverty are addressed properly. However, the democratic set up and peace are the basic conditions for reducing exclusion and differentiation.

Besides the specific context of this research, the research was situated within the exclusionary and discriminatory discourses and practices brought by religious practice, state power and societal power relations. The change in discriminatory legal provisions by the government in 1963 has itself been a positive step towards inclusion. Although implication of such legal provisions seems very weak, it has provided some space for the resistance on the part of Dalits. Even though the direct impact of Dalit-focused programmes of government has hardly brought any change, such programmes and announcements have been useful in generating concerns on the issue of Dalits. The changes brought about by past political development have little contribution to the issue of inclusion of Dalits. However, especially since 1990, the political development of Nepal has contributed to raising anti-discriminatory consciousness. As a result, the political sectors as well as society began to discuss the issue of inclusion, and the concerns about inclusive values and practices in opposition to caste-based exclusion and discrimination have grown not only with the Dalits, but also on the part of non-Dalit people. The exclusion of Dalits from education is continuing, even though access to school has widened remarkably. Educational practices are directed mostly to create a cultural deficiency of Dalits, rather than looking at inefficient school practice and exclusionary values associated with the practice.

The issue of educational exclusion of Dalits is still unchallenged. Most importantly, changing long rooted social practices and power relations is not a task to be completed in any single attempt. Rather it is a continuous struggle of changing exclusionary values into inclusive values and accommodating these values into practice. In the future,

changes in the political context may demand contextualised movements for the inclusion of Dalits. In this way, this changed context has increased the significance of this research.

This chapter begins with summarising the main ideas and issues. It then discusses how I responded to my research question. It discusses theoretical proximity, differences and reservations brought about by this research. It also includes a discussion on the strengths, complexity and distinctiveness of this thesis.

10.2 Bringing the Main Issues Together

This study has demonstrated that multiple factors are responsible for the range of exclusionary pressures on Dalits in society and in education. Hierarchies, discriminations, economic and socio-cultural stratifications are the causes as well as effects of exclusionary practices in society. The history of hierarchical caste practice as discussed in chapter 5 has shown that the *varnasram* system based on Brahmanic-Hindu literature and the state's practices together work to legitimise the power and supremacy of the ruling group. Dalits were prohibited not only from choosing their occupation and in participating in educational and religious activities, but also from owning property. Such exclusions of Dalits in society and education are the result of discriminatory histories. Most social practices as well as the state's practices in Nepal still follow discriminatory ideas based on hierarchical power relations. As a result, simple withdrawal of the discriminatory legal provision has not contributed sufficiently to change discriminatory social practices.

Many non-Dalit people have been constructing the identity of Dalits as 'backward', 'uncivilised', 'lower caste' or 'deficient'. On the other hand, most Dalits as well as some non-Dalits have been opposing such construction and identification of Dalits, and they have been struggling for inclusive and non-discriminatory practices in society. Dalits have also been struggling to create and appropriate a positive identity for themselves.

The discriminatory historical practices have produced exclusionary pressures on Dalits in schooling. In addition to this, the school itself has produced and reproduced school discourses and a schooled identity. Although pupils' socio-economic situation and family history influences the way discourses are produced and reproduced, the

individual understanding of pupils and their struggles and reflections on the situation also contribute to the construction of their discourses. In most cases, the socio-historical practice of society and the practice of school mutually reinforce each other. However, the school has also produced some contrasting practices and discourses in socio-historical practices.

The situation of Dalit children in society and school shows that there have been multiple hindrances and exclusionary factors working to exclude them from schooling. For instance, a child without sufficient food, who has suffered from several discriminatory practices, who gets no material and psychological support for study at home and hardly any encouragement from school, cannot cope with the school situation. As a result, either he/she does not pass the examinations or leaves school early. Despite these difficulties, some Dalits have continued their school with some expectations of being educated and raising their status, of reducing discriminatory social practices, and of getting a better life and better jobs. Getting good jobs, changing discriminatory practices and raising status are hard to achieve even for those very few school graduate Dalits. However, schooled Dalits do get some power to oppose discriminatory practices in society. Similarly, they have some opportunities for wider social contact and wider alliances for resistance to discrimination and exclusion and for the accommodation of some new social values and practices. Even those Dalits who do not complete school education and leave school early have frustrations as well as some good memories of school life. They gain some power to question the discriminatory social system and exclusionary school practices. This suggests that school is “not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialisation or a site of instruction, but also as a cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation” (McLaren, 2003, p 70).

In contrast to the teachers’ arguments of non-discrimination, Basipur Dalits have experienced several exclusions at school. My research has shown examples where the school hardly pays attention to the diverse backgrounds and needs of the students; it hardly encourages the Dalit pupils in their study, but rather discourages them indirectly by blaming them for their poor performance, early dropout or non-enrolment. Due to poor teaching practice in school, it is hard to get success in examinations without taking private tuition, which Dalits and other pupils from economically weak families are not able to pay for. Similarly, other situations indirectly giving exclusionary pressures on

Dalit children in school are the lack of proper involvement of Dalits in school management and school decisions and their absence of involvement in teaching. Examples of exclusion from school indicate that school is still not functioning as an inclusive place for Dalits. Although teachers claimed that they have been maintaining neutrality with regard to the caste issue and have been including Dalits in school, the existing power relations in society have heavily influenced teachers' practices. Again, there is no neutral position in the caste issue as people either support or oppose caste hierarchy.

National as well as the school's local policies and practices generally guide school's activities and pedagogical practices. Chapter 9 of this thesis, in this context, has supplemented chapter 8 by explaining how and why policies do not contribute to inclusive practices in school. It shows that national as well as school's education policies do not encourage the reduction of existing exclusions and changes in power relations in school. Education policies have simply concentrated on providing physical access to the school and small monetary incentives for the Dalit parents. Small 'cosmetic' changes like a small amount of money for parents of primary schooled Dalit children and some psychological pressures on Dalit parents to enrol their children in school do not change exclusionary power relations. Educational policies and practices have not taken into account multiple exclusionary factors or the need for changes in pedagogical practices and pedagogical relations. As a result, Dalit children have experienced several exclusionary pressures to their schooling, and they have suffered from a non-encouraging environment at school. Again, education policies continue to create differences and stratifications. Marketised education policy has promoted private schools by suggesting that private schools provide quality education. Most Dalits and economically poor families, and families living in rural and geographically remote areas do not have access to these expensive private schools. As a result, education policies have produced more exclusion and stratification in society by creating private-public difference in education.

Dalits are not passive victims of structural relations, they have struggled to minimise exclusionary and discriminatory practices in society and school. Although they have felt that school has supported the economically better-off non-Dalits, Dalits have struggled to maximise benefits from school. For instance, Dalits have been gaining from their

education some power to oppose discriminatory discourses. They have also been gaining from education some power to produce and appropriate alternative discourses of non-discrimination and inclusion in school and society.

In this way, the three data based chapters of this thesis have discussed three interrelated issues regarding the exclusion of Dalits from society and education. Chapter 7 has analysed societal power relations, and Dalits' exclusion and their struggles for the inclusion in society. Chapter 8 has analysed Dalits' exclusion from school in relation to societal power relations and their struggles for educational inclusion. Analysis of school's practices in chapter 8, along with policy analysis in chapter 9, have given a picture of the exclusion of Dalits and their struggles, which show how the state's practice and local power dynamics work for inclusion of some (mostly economically better-off non-Dalit) and the exclusion of the others (mostly Dalits and economically less well-off). Chapter 5 has discussed historical and contextual factors like caste hierarchies and the state's practices that have promoted discrimination and exclusion of Dalits from education and society. My autobiographical exploration (Chapter 4) has not only situated me in this study, but also provided instances for the analysis of the issue of exclusion of Dalits. It also helped mediate the gaps between my perceptions and Dalits' practices and perceptions. In this way, this thesis has explained how Dalits have been excluded from education in Nepal by analysing interrelated issues of historical exclusions, societal construction and practices, school practice, and policy discourses and practices.

This thesis has been developed from three types of data source: field data from Basipur village and Gauripur School, literature and documents, and my autobiography. Although data from all three sources were important, the data obtained from the Dalit community of Basipur village and from the Dalit pupils of Gauripur School have worked as the core data from which I have uncovered their voices and perspectives. Uncovering people's perceptions, struggles, voices and perspectives have been the main methodological approach in which the constraints and opportunities provided by wider societal structures are also considered. Thus, the analysis has tried to integrate structural variables as well as personal agency through people's perceptions, activities and struggles. This thesis, using a genealogical approach, has unmasked alternative voices

of Dalits in relation to exclusionary history and practices by challenging dominant discourses about Dalits and their exclusion and inclusion.

10.3 Revisiting the Responses to the Research Questions

This section begins with the explanation of the extent and form of exclusion of Dalits in education. Then, it explains Dalits' exclusion by exploring Dalit people's perception. It also indicates the barriers to the participation of Dalits in education. Finally, it discusses possible alternatives to recent practices that may be helpful in reducing the exclusion of Dalits from education and in increasing their inclusion in education.

The Extent of Dalits' Exclusion from Education

Chapter 8 has illustrated that Dalits have experienced several exclusionary pressures in school. Most non-Dalits and teachers argue that there is no discrimination and exclusion against Dalits in school, whereas Dalits, on the other hand, identify and explain their experiences of exclusion in school. The traditional form of direct discrimination in school has changed into some new form of indirect exclusions, which are more psychological than physical. For instance, teachers generally do not encourage or give necessary feedback to Dalit pupils. Insufficient teaching in school demands private tuition, which is not possible for Dalits and other children from poor families. Without private tuition, students generally do not succeed in their School Leaving Certificate examination. Dalit pupils generally do not find any example or positive image of their community in any classroom discourses. Instead of encouraging Dalit pupils and understanding of their needs, negative labelling from teachers generally discourages Dalit children. This is a way of 'blaming the victim' (Ryan, 1976) in which "Psychologising school failure is a part of hidden curriculum that relieves teachers from the need to engage in pedagogical self-scrutiny or in any serious critique of their personal roles within the school, and the school's role within the wider society" (McLaren, 2005, p 236).

Teachers hardly ask Dalit pupils about their study or their parents and their activities at home, whereas in the case of non-Dalit pupils, teachers usually ask these things. This research has shown that Dalit parents feel that school does not treat them well, and teachers do not invite them to school to discuss their children's progress and problems related to their study. Although teachers try to show a non-discriminatory attitude, as

the non-Dalit community members, they generally do not want changes in the power relations with Dalits. Therefore, they hardly encourage Dalit participation and success in education. Again, school practices do not consider diverse backgrounds and situations with which the Dalit children find hard to cope. Similarly, in several cases, Dalit children go to school without having essential instruments and stationery, and sometimes without proper clothes. As a result, they feel excluded and humiliated.

A pertinent question here is how a child in such a difficult and non-encouraging situation with such exclusionary pressures can succeed in education. Even if a Dalit completes school education, she/he may not get job. Nor is she/he able to go for higher education. In this way, the opening of schools for Dalits and distributing a small amount of scholarships in terms of money to the parents do little towards the inclusion of Dalits in education. As discussed in chapter 9, education policies have not targeted altering existing power relations and exclusionary pressures on Dalits in education. Without reducing exclusionary pressures and without changing existing power relations in school and society, the inclusion of Dalits in education seems no more than just policy rhetoric. Such policy rhetoric instead of encouraging the self-confidence of Dalits helps to continue existing power relations and differences between Dalits and non-Dalits and thereby does not contribute to the reduction of exclusionary pressures on Dalit children at school.

Similarly, educational policies have been encouraging selection based on the economic capacity of people. Economically well-off children go to English medium private schools. The data of the recent School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations results shows that in comparison to public schools, in most of the private schools there is a four times greater chance of getting through the examinations, and the chance of getting good marks in SLC examination is very low for a student from a public school. Since access to these private schools is based on economic capacity as well as urban living, most Dalits have no access to those private schools. Interestingly, the people who develop and execute education policies, develop curricula, write books and speak about educational inclusion, with some exceptions, all send their children to private schools. As a result, their stated commitment to a more inclusive education seems insincere.

Interpreting Dalits' Exclusion: Searching the Voices of Dalits

Basipur Dalits perceive schooling as essential to them. They think that lack of education is one of the main causes of discrimination and poverty. At the same time, they felt that economically well-off non-Dalits have gained more benefits from education. Dalits felt excluded from education. The previous sub-section explained the extent and forms of Dalits' exclusion from education. There are a number of interpretations and explanations about Dalits' exclusion from education and society. Although my aim here is to search and explain Dalits' exclusion in their terms, I begin with some other interpretations, which generally contrast with Dalits' interpretations.

Mostly non-Dalit people see exclusion of Dalits as the result of their own cultural practices, non-receptive behaviours and lack of study culture, and therefore they think Dalits themselves are responsible for their exclusion. They justify their claim by arguing that there is no legal barrier to participating in education. They think Dalits have been getting support from the government and NGOs. The government's interpretation and practice still mostly reflects similar pathological construction of Dalits' deficiency. This interpretation of exclusion of Dalits, generally, intends to continue existing power relations and supremacy of non-Dalits over Dalits. I prefer to say that this construction of Dalits' deficiency is an 'exclusionary ideology' of 'status quo' group.

Another group of people, mostly non-Dalit intellectuals, religious and social reformers and a few Dalits interpret Dalits' exclusion slightly different way. They mostly identify Dalit culture as the most contributing factor to their exclusion. To alter exclusion, they appeal to Dalits to change their culture to so-called advanced culture through '*sanskritisation*'. Although both have the similar constructions of Dalits as a culturally deficit group, the second, I prefer to call it an 'assimilationist ideology', intends to include Dalits by assimilating them with the dominant culture and practice. However, assimilation does not want transformation of power relations and nor does it value cultural diversity.

Some people think the exclusion of Dalits from education is a technological and managerial matter. Therefore, those people think exclusion of Dalits from education is the result of inefficient management and poor pedagogical technology. This apolitical idea does not consider the effect of the value system and societal power relations

towards the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. This technical or managerial myth with an apolitical solution for inclusion does not contribute to changing the existing exclusionary value system and power relations, and thereby it helps to maintain exclusionary practices.

Most Dalits explain three main causes for the continued exclusion of Dalits: Hindu religious practices, the state's exclusionary practices, and poverty. The historical practice of caste hierarchy based on Hindu religious practices has still been influencing the state and social practices. The lack of participation of Dalits in governance and non-inclusive practices of the government continue to create exclusionary pressure upon Dalits. Dalits' poverty has a direct link with the religious prohibition of property ownership and societal prohibition on Dalits to choose their occupation. Thus, Dalits' exclusion from education needs to be explained in the context of exclusionary pressures coming from these three sources. Again, hierarchical religious practice along with local power relations formulates local discourses to maintain the power and privileges of non-Dalits in society. They continuously maintain this power relationship of domination and subordination.

In society, Dalits want to change existing hierarchical caste practice, existing relations of power and privileges of certain people. Most importantly, they want to regenerate their identity with a non-discriminatory and non-hierarchical image. Therefore, they want to change the labelled negative identification of so-called 'deficit', 'lower caste' and 'backward' into positive form. For this, they want to change imposed identification, works and professions, cultural practices and customs that give negative connotations of degraded meanings.

In most cases, school and social practice sustain each other. Therefore, the exclusion of Dalits from school cannot be explained without linking social discourses and practices. Social practices comprise socio-cultural practices, religious practices and local power relations. Historical factors and current power relations mostly determine social and school practices. Historically, Dalits are discriminated against in society and excluded from education. Presently, most non-Dalit people do not want to change historical power relations between Dalits and non-Dalits. As a result, exclusionary practices are continuing in society and school. Sometimes, school produces some different or

contrasting knowledge and discourses to that of societal, but in the case of Dalits, school maintains the existing relations of power.

Barriers to the Participation of Dalits in Education

This research has indicated that educational exclusion is the result of several barriers to the participation of Dalits in education. The main barriers are, historical exclusions based on caste and the continuing practices of a hierarchical caste system; poverty; weak, fragmented and unconcerned policies and practices; inefficient and exclusionary practices of schools; the social construction of Dalits as having a negative image and identity; local power relations; and the cultures, practices and self-construction of Dalits themselves.

Historical exclusion of Dalits in society has been one of the main barriers for the participation of Dalits in education. The existing practice of a hierarchical caste and caste-based discrimination of Dalits is a result of the continuation of historical exclusions. Poverty and educational exclusion are the results of the historical prohibition on property rights, occupational choice and educational participation. The historical and present discriminatory practices and poverty have not only created barriers for educational participation, but also work to exclude Dalits from social and religious practices and maintain domination over Dalits by non-Dalits in society. Moreover, as a process of creating differences and showing the supremacy of non-Dalits, the state and the powerful sections of society have constructed Dalits as 'uncivilised', 'dirty', 'lower caste', 'untouchable', 'deficient', and so on. Such discourses constructed by powerful sections in society have worked as a tool of discrimination of and domination over Dalits. Such negative constructions not only hide Dalits' struggles, skills and contribution, but also humiliate Dalits and discourage them from participating and gaining success in education. It also covers up their suppression. The powerful sections of society, including local and wider, using such discriminatory discourses and practices, maintain existing relations of power and exclusionary practices.

Lack of encouragement, inefficient school practices and ineffective policies also hinder Dalits' participation in education. School practices and education policies, without looking at the multiple forms of exclusion and barriers to participation, have been trying

to blame the Dalits for their non-participation. Thus, instead of correcting weak practices and changing exclusionary practices and values, they have been trying to locate the problem among Dalits themselves. Moreover, all these barriers are interrelated and in most cases, mutually support each other. They operate in combination, and therefore there is difficulty in identifying a single barrier to the participation of Dalits in education.

Possible Alternatives to Recent Practices

Chapters 8 and 9 illustrated that recent policies and practices do not contribute to the inclusion of Dalits in education. These chapters along with chapter 7 have identified a number of alternative and opposing voices to recent discourses and practices concerning the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. Based on such opposing and alternate discourses, I have indicated some alternative ways to develop inclusive practices in education. However, due to the multiple exclusionary pressures and multiple barriers for Dalits to participate in education, it is not possible to find a single solution that reduces exclusion and develops inclusive practices. The barriers and forms of exclusion of Dalits discussed earlier in this section urge that there is a need to understand the multiplicity and complexity of exclusion. It also suggests that there should be an integrated approach to respond to the multiple exclusionary pressures on the Dalits. For example, policies and practices for reducing caste-based discrimination, addressing poverty, changing social and school practices need to work together. Most importantly, developing effective policy and practice for inclusion is not just a technical and managerial matter, but rather it is a value commitment. This research has shown that the lack of value commitment of policy developers and implementers towards inclusion is still a major obstacle to development for inclusion. Therefore, the activities for inclusion need to be directed towards development and appropriation of inclusive values and then incorporation of these values into practices.

As inclusion is a process of reducing barriers and increasing participation, it can only be possible when Dalits themselves, individually or in a group, resist exclusion and work for their own inclusion. Similarly, cooperation with other people and institutions supportive of inclusive values and practices is essential to generate effective resistance and inclusive practices. The main task of such a joint effort is not only to create anti-untouchability and anti-discriminatory awareness of Dalits, but also to educate non-

Dalits so that they could change their discriminatory idea and practices. This joint effort can influence or put pressure on the government, community and school for the continuous development of inclusive values and practices.

After creating anti-discriminatory awareness, there remains an important question: How can these struggles and resistances be used to change and then stabilise policies and practices? In this case, the most important aspect of the development of inclusion is to change the thinking and practice of teachers, policy planners, implementers and people from the government bureaucracy as well as people from various development agencies. Continued resistance, struggles and dialogues by Dalits as well as supportive organisations and individuals to produce and appropriate new discourses of inclusive values and practices could be useful to change and stabilise inclusive values and practice.

The discourses of a negative and powerless Dalit identity created by the non-Dalit needs to be interrogated and deconstructed. Such interrogation and deconstruction of the dominant discourses uncovers a positive image of the contribution, struggles and multiple and alternative identities of Dalits. It also uncovers the perspective of Dalits on the issue of their inclusion, exclusion and identities. These discourses of identity reconstruction, giving it a positive and non-degraded meaning, are an important source for Dalits' self-confidence and inclusion in society and education.

Provision for Dalit participation in school management and school decisions, appointment of Dalit teachers in schools, employment and economic support to Dalit parents, and legal awareness and protection to Dalits will also contribute to Dalits' inclusion in education. Similarly, changing teacher practices and attitudes towards inclusive values and their implications for practice is urgently needed for the inclusion of Dalits in education. For this, there is a need to change teacher education, so that it will be helpful to change teachers' attitudes and practices towards a more inclusive direction.

The voices for the pro-Dalit policies and practices in the government and international community are still weak. They need to be continuously intensified. In this case, as suggested by Escobar (1995), there is a need to deconstruct existing development discourses, which are based on 'top-down', 'ethnocentric' and 'technocratic'

approaches. Such deconstructions help the creation of alternatives that represent Dalits' perspectives. He further suggests, "... instead of grand alternatives, what is needed is the investigation of alternative representations and practices in concrete local settings" (Escobar, 1995, p 19). Thus, this research questions the appropriateness of recent policies based on neo-liberalism for the inclusion of Dalits, and it encourages the incorporation of alternative policies based on the local reality of Dalits.

Who will be the actors for the change in this complex situation, where the state as well as societal practices is still not directed to change existing power relation and Dalits themselves remain classified into different hierarchical castes and sub-caste groups? In fact, every one who favours non-discriminatory social practice and every one who likes democracy, justice and equality can contribute to inclusion. However, Dalits' struggles for inclusion and justice, and their resistance to exclusion are important acts for change. For these struggles, there is a need of alliances with the Dalit community with supportive individuals, teachers, intellectuals and civil society.

10.4 Theories and Theorising: Some Problems and Possibilities

The analysis of the data has disclosed local perspectives about the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits. I have tried to disclose Dalits' understandings and voices about their inclusion and exclusion and the struggles against discrimination. The previous section of this chapter has summarised the main themes and findings and revisited the responses to the research questions. I have tried to explain and interpret these meanings and knowledge with some theoretical perspectives as discussed in chapter 2. I have included some explanations about theoretical affinities, differences and gaps in relation to the issue of inclusion, exclusion and power relations in a number of places in previous chapters. Identification of such gaps gives some alternative or supplementary theoretical position or indicates the inadequacies of the theories to interpret diverse issues. The gap also indicates that a single theory developed in some dissimilar contexts cannot always capture the multiple perspectives and diverse situations related to the issue. Mostly, these theories were developed in the Western social context or some other specific cultural context, which are different from the context of the hierarchical caste-based society in Nepal. Again, many theories are based on certain assumptions about society and social phenomena. For example, structural theories do not value the struggles and subjectivities of the individual agent. Agency theories do not consider the structural

constraints and opportunities where an individual works. This research has considered both the perceptions and struggles of individuals, and the structural effects coming from the state, caste, poverty and other socio-cultural factors.

Again, there always remains the possibility of multiple meanings and interpretations, and any attempt to interpret everything from a theoretical point of view may de-value this diversity of meaning and interpretation. An important finding from this research is that a unique, essential and neutral meaning or knowledge is difficult to find. The interaction of power, social structure and individual subjectivity produces complex and contested knowledge and meaning in society.

Nevertheless, in chapter 2, I have reviewed various concepts of power, knowledge and the process of construction of truth and some theoretical interpretations about the schooling and education. The aim of this review was neither to search for a unique theoretical position nor to base this research on a fixed theory. Rather, it was a search for various perceptions and understandings, while envisaging the possibility of multiple interpretations and perspectives. At the same time, it has given me an opportunity to think about the implications of my analysis for the theories I have encountered and has helped in the search for supplementary interpretations.

Foucault's (1980) explanation of the way in which knowledge and power work together to construct certain truths is a useful concept in analysing social constructions about Dalits. It is also useful to explain how local power relations function in society, and how these relations influence the pedagogical practices of school. However, beyond Foucault's concept of individual subjectivity i.e. the 'technique of self', Dalits, individually as well as in groups, have been resisting exclusionary and discriminatory values and practices. That is, although subjective meanings and struggles of individuals are very important, sometimes without organised resistance it is difficult to change societal power relations and exclusionary pressures. The struggles of Dalits for the inclusive values and practices and for their positive image indicate that Dalits are generating individual as well as group resistance.

However, Foucault does not reject the possibility of group resistance and the creation of alternative discourses by the group, but he emphasises individual subjectivity. For instance, the other dimensions of power, 'technique of governmentality' and 'technique

of discourse' give such a possibility for group resistance. For example, Foucault once said, "the domination of group, a caste, or a class, together with resistance and revolts that domination comes up against ...they manifest in a massive and global form, at all levels of the whole social body" (Foucault, 2001a, p 348). Although power is a productive process and a disciplining technique, power still works as the process of domination and coercion. More importantly, local and productive power affirms individuals' meaning - the subjectivity; it values their power of generating their own discourses and practices and gives a power to individuals to reject external or so-called dominant discourses and practices. This analysis shows that the discourse of a singular and unique Dalit identity is no more than a way of maintaining existing power relations. It also discriminates against Dalits by creating discourses of difference as deficiency of Dalits. Therefore, it is problematic to define the unique and real Dalit identity. Not all Dalits define their identity in the same way. There are individuals as well a caste/sub-caste and regional complexities and differences in their identity, even though they do all share caste hierarchy based exclusion. Thus, it is difficult to find a unique identity of Dalit based on both the concepts of 'sameness' and 'difference'. The essentialist logic of 'sameness' is the way of overlooking differences by imposing dominant norm and culture to the diverse population. It tries to assimilate people to the dominant culture through an ideological and cultural hegemony. The essentialist logic of 'difference' normalises the differences by creating binary opposition and viewing such difference is natural. Generally, essentialists think natural difference is based on the capacity or character of an individual or group, and they reject the idea that difference is a socially and historically created phenomenon. Thus, these concepts of 'sameness' and 'difference' ignore the non-essential concept of difference as, "a social and historical construction that is constitutive of the power to represent meanings" (McLaren, 1995, p 125).

The analysis of data shows that schooling and education more generally cannot be neutral and apolitical, as schooling appropriates and construct certain discourses of truth, which generally represent the value of the dominant section of society. At the same time, people have different perceptions and interpretations of school, some competing and some non-competing. Almost all people, including Dalits, want to be educated and want to use school knowledge to gain power and to improve their living

standard and quality, even though school success and benefits have been heavily concentrated on economically well-off non-Dalit people. Since getting a better job is still difficult for the Dalits, they mainly perceive that education provides them with some power to resist exclusion in school and society and to develop new social relationships. On the other hand, non-Dalits generally think education gives them a better job, social prestige and power.

Multiple perceptions and multiple functions of school suggest that school not only appropriates the official discourses, but also produces opposing and alternative discourses. It indicates that school does not only reproduce existing social relations and dominant culture as explained by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990; also Bourdieu, 1977a), but it also produces new culture and resistances as in Giroux (1983, 1983a; also Willis, 1981). Social reproduction theories like Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) based on the reproduction of structural relations do not give space for individual struggle and activities. Bourdieu gives some spaces for agency in the form of habitus, but it does not value people's struggle and resistance in the school. Beyond Bourdieu's concepts of 'symbolic violence' and 'misrecognition' of symbolic violence, Dalits have tried to educate their children to generate the power of resistance. They have already understood that there are difficulties in gaining success in school, and they know that it is difficult for them to get benefits such as jobs and power in society from success at school.

This research supports the argument that school has also been functioning to reproduce existing power relations, but reproduction theories fail to recognise resistance and the production of alternative power through education. In other words, in reproduction theories, there is a lack of hope for those who have been discriminated against and excluded from society and school, as these theories do not acknowledge their struggles for resistance and inclusion. However, resistance theory, as described by Giroux (1983), has given a space for people's hope by identifying resistance at school and pedagogical practices. Resistance recognises the struggle for inclusion of excluded people. Such resistance involves people's struggles and require us to recognise the role of agency to oppose structural constraints. Again, the question of how to accommodate this resistance is still unanswered. The expectation of excluded groups is not only to oppose exclusion from school; they want to be properly included in the school. Such inclusion

needs to encourage Dalits to participate and gain success in education and to use education as a productive process to improve their living. Here, two important questions occur: To what extent does resistance contribute to inclusion or to the development of inclusive practice in school? What is an inclusive pedagogy?

Giroux argues that resistance includes not only opposition to subordination, but also accommodation. Drawing from Freire's critical literacy, he explains resistance as pedagogy, which includes opposition as well as accommodation:

Students must be given critical literacy skills that not only help them understand why they resist, but also allow them to recognise what this society has made of them and how it must, in part, be analysed and reconstituted so that it can generate the conditions for critical reflection and rather than passivity and indignation.

(Giroux, 1983, p 231)

Giroux's concept of resistance involves 'critical reflection', and it is an understanding of social complexity and power relations and an effort to change exclusionary practices. Resistance includes critical reflection of school practices with the aim of changing practice so that exclusion can be reduced. Thus, resistance does not only interrogate differences and the exclusion practiced at school, but also unmask the voices and discourses that contribute to the transformation of existing power relations so that exclusion can be reduced. It does not only focus on macro-structural differences, but also on micro-individual or local differences because "people can be situated very differently in the *same totalizing structures of oppression*" (McLaren, 1995, p 132).

Such resistance help to understand society, social conditions and students' own position critically by using 'action-reflection' as in Freire (2000). My concern is with regard to the possibilities of such pedagogy in practice. In this context, the following two questions are important. How can resistance pedagogy function in schools? Who teaches resistance to students? Moreover, it can be difficult to gain the teachers' interest in resistance pedagogy, as they are part of the complex power-knowledge relations in society and school. In this case, resistance pedagogy (Giroux, 1983, 1983a) and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed or dialogic pedagogy (Freire, 2000) are theoretically very important, though there remain practical problems in their implementation. Such pedagogy can be practically useful in adult literacy programmes, which comprise mostly people that are often free from the structural constraints of the state institutions.

Similarly, Giroux and McLaren's argument for the need for an alternative pedagogy is illuminating. However, the problem is that without understanding the complexity of teachers' lives and power relations in society and school, the role of the teachers as 'transformative intellectuals' either seems utopian or involves a structural myth of searching a grand idea and an external institution or power to change discrimination and exclusion.

This discussion shows my proximity to as well as difference from theoretical interpretations of schooling and indicates my reservations. However, due to the contested nature and multiple perceptions about schools' functions, it is difficult to explain everything from a single theoretical perspective. In a similar way, local and discursive struggles and practices are hard to address fully by some theories developed in different situations. Moreover, it is difficult to get a single solution to the issue that explains how excluded people can be included because inclusion has relative meanings and contextual specificities. This leads me, therefore, to agree with the following conclusion of Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006): "a methodology for developing inclusive practices must take account of the social processes of learning that go on within particular contexts" (p 132). However, the theoretical and conceptual awareness discussed in this thesis and a search for some connections of the issue with these theoretical and conceptual propositions have helped me to reflect on the overall research process, writing and my claims.

10.5 The Thesis: A Mixture of Strength and Complexity

This thesis is unique in the sense that the knowledge I have claimed is different from the existing dominant discourses about Dalits' identity and their exclusion from and inclusion in education. Moreover, methodologically I have used some different ways of seeing the issues and claiming new knowledge which acknowledges multiple voices and perspectives. Similarly, as an example of reflexive learning, this research has helped me to strengthen my value commitment to inclusion, anti-discrimination and anti-casteism.

The knowledge claimed in this thesis is an alternative to the dominant societal discourse on Dalits' identity and their exclusion from education. It has unmasked and represented some disguised and dominated discourses and searched for the voices of Dalits. This thesis explains how Dalits have been excluded from schooling, and it indicates some

alternative discourses regarding the inclusion of Dalits in education. It also acknowledges multiple voices and perspectives, but it does not claim essential knowledge based on single perspectives or theories. It has recognised the contextual, multiple and dynamic nature of social and educational issues.

This thesis argues that existing discourses and practices are constructed in the context of constraints and opportunities handed down from historical structures. Most importantly, power and knowledge are integral aspects of the process of constructing and appropriating discourses and practices. They create certain truths. For example, the construction of so-called lower and upper castes, untouchability and the single unique and deficit identity of Dalits, constructed from dominant discourses, are reinforced by discriminatory practices. Such discourses of truth created by the use of power and knowledge enable some to gain power over others by constructing their 'difference' and excluding them. Exposition of alternative discourses regarding Dalits' identity and their educational exclusion and inclusion deconstructs the exclusionary and discriminatory discourses and practices related to Dalits. In this way, the knowledge claimed in this thesis has theoretical as well as practical significance.

This research has methodological strengths as it has maintained reflexivity in the process of research and writing. Learning about the complexity and dynamism of society and social issues is an important aspect of this research. If we look beyond the so-called 'essentialised', 'universalised' or 'grand' discourses of truth, there may be a number of contrasting voices and truths suppressed and disguised by the dominant discourses. In this way, this research has not only given answers to some of my questions, but has also provided some new ways of looking at the issue of the educational exclusion of Dalits.

A complexity of this research came from my social identity and social position. In the context of hierarchical societal context, none of my social identities, such as a Brahmin, educated, government official and Nepali language speaking person with relatively better economic condition, matches the Dalit community. In this context, some important questions arise concerning my work: How did I represent the voices and perspectives of Dalits in my thesis? How did Dalits trust me? How can I say my research is different and I understand their perspective? In chapter 6, I have described how I managed relationships in the research site, and in the second part of chapter 3, I

have described how I worked with this complexity. These descriptions give some response to the above questions by explaining how I work with reflexivity in the field. Indeed, my value position and my questions about discriminatory practices and discourses from a young age have guided me in such a way that I was able to disclose alternative voices and struggles of Dalits. My overt anti-casteism is a basis upon which the Dalits were able to trust me. Reflexivity on social construction and practice has contributed to an understanding of the perspectives of Dalits and their struggles.

Next, communicating this research to diverse readers and presenting a balanced thesis without losing my value commitments and the perspectives of the Dalits is also a complex and challenging task. During the process of writing this thesis, I had an image of the research site, which includes the Dalit community and their struggles and perceptions and societal constructions and power relations. At the same time, during the writing, I thought about the coherence of my arguments, so that this thesis could be communicable to my supervisors, supervisory panel and the examiners in the UK. Similarly, I thought about the diverse readers of my thesis, especially in Nepal and tried to present my arguments in this thesis in order to unveil perspectives alternative to the dominant one. In this context, two possibilities are unavoidable: the possibility of the existence of difference in values and political interests, and the possibility of multiple interpretations of my findings. However, I have considered such complexities and challenges as an opportunity to explore value commitments for an inclusive society.

10.6 Suggestion for Further Research

Inclusion is a continuous process of increasing participation and reducing barriers to participation in education, which has situational and contextual meanings. The diverse contexts of Dalits in Nepal may need a diversified approach to understanding exclusion and to developing inclusive practices in schools. It is difficult to assess such a diverse context in a single piece of research, so context based research could be significant to understand exclusion and to develop inclusive practice, as this research is based on the particular context of Madhesi Dalits.

One of the important areas of further research will be the analysis of curriculum and textbook of schools, so that the roles and effects of curriculum and textbook in inclusion and exclusion can be interrogated. Another research area will be the analysis of teacher

education curricula and teacher education practices to explain how inclusive values are included or excluded. The issue related to Dalit women and girls' participation in education would be an important area of studying inclusion in and exclusion from education for Dalits. Comparative studies, between hill Dalits and Madhesi Dalits, or between various groups of Dalits, between urban and rural Dalits, between regions, between language groups and between schools are important for the analysis of the inclusion and exclusion of Dalits in and from education. Similarly, comparative studies between Nepalese Dalits and Dalits from other countries will also be significant for the development of inclusive practices. A study of the impact, roles and forms of adult literacy programmes will be imperative for developing critical literacy programmes. Action research is very important for developing a contextualised 'index for inclusion' (see Booth and Ainscow, 2002) in education. Some detailed life history based studies of Dalits will also be possible areas for further research. Dalits' political movements against discrimination and exclusion will also be another possible area for further research.

10.7 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the data obtained from the ethnographic fieldwork, autobiographical exploration and documents and literature has incorporated people's understandings, practices and struggles. The analysis of data shows that perceiving Dalits as backward and pitiable, and blaming them for their non-inclusion are problematic constructions, which do not acknowledge the perspectives and struggles of Dalits. This study has shown that such pathological constructions and blame are no more than a way of discouraging the self-confidence of Dalits. Moreover, such pathological constructions and blame conceal the exclusionary practices of school and society as well as ineffective government policies and practices for inclusion. Indeed, such constructions try to universalise the notion of the caste system, which 'ultimately overlook the exact mechanisms through which power is exercised' and preclude 'the possibility and understanding of political action' (Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007, p 112).

Similarly, the tendency to look at only the formal setting of school, without considering socio-cultural factors, economic situations and power relations in society and school, does not contribute to the inclusion of Dalits in education. Most non-Dalits including most teachers argue that school is fair to all children, yet at the same time, school

assigns unequal success and benefit through a discourse of ability or capacity. The important question concealed by the so-called discourse of neutrality is, 'what and whose ability and capacity are considered by the school?' More precisely, instead of considering diversities, such a discourse of neutrality of school practices generally constructs deficiency of excluded pupils and blames them for their non-inclusion. Again, 'valuing diversity' is inadequate for changing recent exclusionary practice or producing 'radical alternatives'. Indeed, "Their 'difference' cannot be understood in neutral terms. When difference, or particular versions of difference, is only permitted to a few, then that difference has to be understood in terms of social relations of domination and subordination. These social relations cannot be explored through the depoliticalised narrative of 'valuing diversity'" (Benjamin, 2005, p187).

Dalits have been actively engaged in various political struggles for inclusive values and practices in society and at school by resisting discrimination and exclusion. The main use of education for them, at this time, is to increase knowledge and power for this struggle in opposition to exclusion and for the development of inclusive values and practices in society and school. They have actively been participating in such struggles with some hope of developing a more non-discriminatory and inclusive society and inclusive schools. Their aim is not only to participate in education, but also to get success and benefit from education. The multi-faceted exclusionary factors and barriers to inclusion are still strong. As a result, there is a need for continual and intensive struggle of Dalits for their inclusion. In this way, "schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle for power relations" (McLaren, 2005, p 255).

The government's policies and programmes are based on a technical and managerial solution to the problem. Without changing exclusionary values and practices and without reducing multi-faceted exclusionary factors and barriers, such policies have had hardly any practical significance. Activities not based on inclusive values "may represent a fashion statement or the presentation of image compliance" (Booth, 2005). Thus, developing inclusion in education is a process of challenging existing values, developing new values and accommodating these values into practices. It 'requires a new way of thinking'; this new way of thinking not only focuses on the practice, but also engages in addressing and challenging 'the thinking behind existing ways of working' (Ainscow, 2007, p 6).

Challenging existing exclusionary values and practices, developing new values and incorporating these values into practices are complex tasks. For this, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006, 2004) suggest the collaboration of practitioners and academics for the development of inclusive values and practices in school and community. Such collaboration helps to 'interrupt' existing thinking and practice and facilitate new values and practices (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006, 2004; Ainscow, 2005). Indeed, this research also supports the idea that both the processes of 'interruption' and 'development' are equally important for the development of inclusion in education. In the case of the development of the inclusion of Dalits in education, there is a need for intensive interruptions by which the voices and perspectives of the excluded can be incorporated, and resistance against discrimination and exclusion can be generated and promoted. Similarly, viewing the non-contribution of recent policies for the Dalits' inclusion in education, there is a need for the extension of the scope of such interruptions from policy practice to policy discourse. Moreover, educating non-Dalit people and development actors, including policy makers, curriculum planners, teachers, people working with the government and the community people towards inclusive values and practices is equally as urgent as educating Dalits about the same issue. These activities of interrupting existing ways of thinking and practices initiate the development of new ways of thinking and working and initiate the implementation of new development into practice.

Finally, I would like to express my concern about peace, democracy and inclusion in Nepal. I respect and admire the contribution of the Nepalese people who have struggled for peace, a democratic political system and the inclusion of Dalits and other excluded people in the social, political and educational spheres. I am content because I perceive this research as a part of that wider political struggle. Now, people are optimistic for the transformation of Nepalese society due to recent political developments. This changing political environment may provide an opportunity for widening inclusive discourse in society. Such discourses would give direction to and pressure on the government and development agencies for inclusive policies and practices. However, this is a period of transition to democracy and peace, which seems both fluid and challenging. The democratic transformation of governance with the inclusion of Dalits as well as ethnic, cultural and regional diversity and difference is the most important task for the

transformation of Nepalese society. This political transformation is providing hope and space for Dalits and other excluded people to continue their struggle towards a more inclusive society.

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