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TRENDS IN
DALIT
WRITING

Understanding Knowledge Production for Policymaking

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Note from Samata Foundation

The Dalit community is one of the most marginalized communities in Nepal. Dalit exclusion from the social, economic, and political spheres has also translated to exclusion from knowledge production. Although writings on Dalits have been published for over six decades, the numbers are still sparse.

What has been written and not written about Dalits? Who writes? What are the reasons behind certain groups writing more on Dalits and others less? These questions are of interest for many, especially those working toward Dalit liberation. These questions are also important to understanding the type of knowledge produced on Dalits because knowledge that is produced shapes narratives, perspectives, and eventually policies affecting the community. For this reason, Samata Foundation conducted a study of the writings produced on Nepal's Dalit community to understand major trends in Dalit writings and its influences, focusing specifically on Dalit political demands, movements, and organizations. This exercise has enabled us to assess the possibilities and limitations of knowledge production on Dalits.

Dalit support and participation is found in almost every sociopolitical movement in Nepal, but the Dalit agenda is lost amidst larger national questions. This trend is evident in writings on the Dalit community as well. In the earlier movements and writings, Dalits were viewed by non-Dalits with pity and sympathy. Today, the voice of human rights is emerging and gaining strength. "Trends in Dalit Writings" studies this voice of both Dalits and non-Dalits for Dalit liberation. Strengthening the Dalit voice through writings and knowledge production is imperative if the Dalit Movement is to ensure Dalit rights during the process of state restructuring and nation building. This paper hopes to encourage the government, Dalit, and non-Dalit civil society organizations, scholars, activists, and journalists in enhancing knowledge production on Dalits and consequently strengthening the Dalit narrative

Limited research on Dalits is one of the weakest aspects of the Dalit movement. In order to add to the knowledge produced on Dalits, Samata

Foundation has worked for almost two years reviewing what has been produced on Dalits so far. The Foundation is grateful to the research team led by Erisha Suwal. It is also grateful to Dr. Krishna Bhattachan, Rajkumar Trikhatri, Bhakta Biswokarma, and other scholars who have provided feedback on the research. The Foundation also thanks Pustak Ojha and Bharat Nepali from Rights, Democracy and Inclusion Fund.

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Erisha Suwal

This review is dedicated to

Suvash K. Darnal

June 8, 1980 – August 15, 2011

A visionary, a fierce activist, and a true leader whose commitment to making the Dalit voice heard has made it possible to research and publish this review.

Abstract

Writings on Nepal's Dalit community are sparse and relatively young. However, in recent years, knowledge production on Dalits in Nepal has seen a steep increase although one that is still slow compared to that on Janjati and other privileged groups including Brahmins, Chhetris, and Newars. Here, knowledge production refers to the creation of knowledge in its myriad of forms be they writings in literature, academic research, I/NGO reports, governmental and political party writings, or audio and visual productions. The process of knowledge production has advanced in tandem with the Dalit Movement and supplemented it because political action alone is not enough for social change.

This paper provides a broad review of writings on Dalits from around the 1940s to the present. It focuses on written texts found in legal codes, literature, academia, social and political movements, the development sector, and the media to historicize and highlight the major trends and trajectories in Dalit writings. In the past, efforts have been taken to compile writings on Dalits and to publish an annotated bibliography. However, a review that looks into the emergence and evolution of Dalit writings has not been undertaken. This paper aims to fill this void. It is based on thirteen in-depth interviews with Dalit and non-Dalit scholars, researchers, journalists, and activists; extensive desk-review; and a sample dataset of writings on Nepali Dalits. The sample dataset is a compilation, categorization, and dissection of writings on Nepali Dalits.

The review of writings reveals a strong trend within Dalit writings of shifting away from seeking sympathy and favors from the ruling class to claiming rights and power. The shift has helped to change the perspectives of Dalits and non-Dalits towards the Dalit condition. This change in perspective is particularly visible in literature where Dalits are today presented as powerful protagonists. Also evident from the progression in the writings and the thoughts that they manifest is that Dalits have been relentlessly advancing their agenda by aligning with contemporary progressive powers whether it is the Nepali Congress during the Rana and Panchayat period, the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxists Leninist during the multiparty

democracy, or the United Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists during the People's War. Each stage in the Dalit Movement and each alliance with different political parties have yielded only incremental gains. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Dalit Movement today is focused on inclusion and ensuring that the Dalit question is addressed in a federal Nepal.

The review shows that the trends in writings in terms of the topics that researchers, writers, journalists and others choose reflect the trends in politics. In academia, recent researchers focus on questions of identity, citizenship, and resistance more than culture. In development, political inclusion is the new focus. Similarly, in print media, current issues of federalism and affirmative action dominate. Although writings on Dalits have come a long way, there is immense work left to be done in documenting the change and progression. This is because Dalit writing, which has matured since the 1940s, is still young.

Studying the trends in Dalit knowledge production is particularly important for designing policies that effectively address Dalit concerns. Knowing what has been written and not written will highlight where more research is needed and from what angle. This will give direction to policies related to knowledge production. Once research on Dalit issues is underway, it will help policymakers to design informed policies. This paper provides policy recommendations based on the review.

Introduction

To map any group's place in a society, the first step is to map the group's history. In Nepal, the only history that is written and taught is that of the kings and powerful people. Dalits played an important role in the unification of what we know as the modern Nepal. However, nothing is mentioned about the Dalits in the historical records. Since non-Dalits are not aware of the sorrows and problems of Dalits, they did not produce writings that truly reflected the realities of the Dalits. Their writing cannot pave or guide the way for Dalit *mukti* [liberation]. Aahuti has said: *pasina gandhako basna aaranma ghan ra khalanti chalaune loha dampatilai matra mahasus hunchha* (Only a blacksmith couple who toil with iron and fire know the smell of sweat). Dalits themselves have to move forward to search their own history and to write it.¹

Padam Sundas is a Dalit activist and one of the earliest Dalit poets. In addition to chairing Samata Foundaton's board, Padam Sundas is the president of the Dalit Sahityatatha Sanskriti Pratisthan, a foundation that informally started to publish important writings on the sociopolitical struggles of the Dalit community.

The Dalit community is at the bottom of the Hindu caste hierarchy that has divided Nepali society into four levels. The Brahmins, or priests, are at the top; followed by Kshtriyas, who are kings and warriors; Vaishyas, who are merchants; and Sudras, who are peasants and laborers. Outside the four castes are the "Untouchables" who are considered "impure" because of the nature of their work. Formerly referred to as "Untouchables," they now call themselves "Dalit," which means "oppressed" or "crushed." The word today

1 Interview with Padam Sundas, September 11, 2011. For full interview see Box 1.

connotes a collective identity of a community that makes anywhere between 13 to 21 percent of Nepal's population (Lal 2012).² Dalit rights activists and leaders of the Nepali Dalit movement claim that their movement established the word "Dalit" as a political identity for the community.

Sundas' desire to have Dalits write their own history is a desire to weave a Dalit narrative that is not distorted by non-Dalits.³ Sundas implicitly acknowledges the existence of Dalit history by saying that Dalits have to *search* for it and write it; a Nepali Dalit narrative exists but is hidden by oppression. Therefore the search starts with exploring what already exists.

This paper aims to provide an objective review of writings on Dalits by answering the following questions: What is written on Dalits? Who wrote it? What are the trends and trajectories? What are the debates surrounding writings on Dalits? And, what influenced the writings? Narratives, of course, are not limited to written texts but include all forms of expression: songs, dances, works of art, and traditional oral stories. How the Dalit narratives are formed through these expressions can be topics for future research. The focus of this review is the written text.

Tracing what is written on the Dalits of Nepal is an essential exercise for two main reasons. First, it is important to have a historicized understanding of what has been done and not done related to Dalit knowledge production. Here, knowledge production means a process by which knowledge is produced by those who have access to conventional or non-conventional ways of creating knowledge. The phrase implies that knowledge does not simply exist, but is socially constructed and indicative of the existing power structure and its intentions in relation to how it wants to govern the powerless.⁴ The paper will not discuss the theories and arguments on knowledge production because the objective is to broadly review the writings and highlight major trends. The paper will not review all writings on Nepali Dalits. It will review selected works that set the trend or break away from previous paths. Therefore, the paper is a broad stroke that paints the overall picture of writings on Dalits. The review encourages others to

2 According to the National census 2001, the Dalit population is 13%.

3 Gayatri Spivak links history with narrative saying "the production of historical accounts is the discursive narrativization of events."

4 For theoretical discussions see Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969.

conduct a nuanced study of each section or perhaps even to review all major writings on Nepali Dalits. In summation, the review searches for (1) textual evidence that formalized discriminatory practices against the Untouchables who later called themselves “Dalit” to represent a collective identity; (2) writings on Dalits; (3) trends that the writings follow; and (4) the political and ideological forces that influence or have influenced the trends.

Second, understanding what kind of knowledge has been produced and not produced is essential in analyzing how this knowledge has shaped and will shape the Dalit discourse and ultimately the Dalit Movement. The links between knowledge production and political movements and transitions and their implications in the creation of power dynamics are apparent. Referring to how the evolution of sociology depends on political transitions, Chaitanya Mishra explains:

The emergence and the specific nature of evolution of sociology is also predicated on the nature of the transition, i.e. what and which political and economic structures and regions, ideologies, institutions, classes, groups are driving the transition, how the dominant structures are negotiating the transition with other, less dominant structures and the relative strength of the other less powerful but nonetheless competing structures. The more powerful generally usurp the right to characterize and “speak for” the less powerful. (2005, 98)

Mishra’s observation on sociology applies to writings on Dalits as well because these writings have been shaped by the nature of sociopolitical movements against untouchability, which is practiced in many ways, including not drinking water offered by Dalits, not allowing Dalits and non-Dalits to marry, forcing Dalits to dispose of dead cows, or prohibiting Dalits from entering temples. Moreover, the power structures that came to exist defined what issues related to the Dalits were raised, who was writing, and what perspectives were used. The review will examine the extent to which the powerful have “spoken for” the Dalit community. Furthermore, the review will assess whether this trend of speaking for the less powerful exists within the Dalit community. Looking at the trends within Dalit writings will reveal the thoughts influencing the Dalit Movement.

The paper is divided into two parts. Part one is qualitative and part two is quantitative. It was challenging to merge the two parts due to the

parameters under which the sample data was developed. Part one presents the historical trend of writings on Dalits. This part is further divided into sections based on the source of writings and can be considered as areas of knowledge production. The sections are: legal codes, literature, sociopolitical movements, academia, the development sector, and the press. The sequence of the sections does not indicate a linear historical progression. The sections are interconnected and overlapping. Writings in one area usually influence those in another, and writings in two different sections were often occurring simultaneously. Each section provides a historical account of how the Dalit interest emerged and developed in each area of knowledge production and highlights works that have been influential.

Part two is quantitative and based on a database that compiles writings on Dalits in Nepal. This part dissects a sample of 267 entries of writings on Dalits to answer some of the research questions such as who writes on Dalits and what are the most popular topics. The research questions will be discussed further in the methodology section.

Two major limitations of the paper are its constrained access to all writings (both in English and Nepali) on Nepali Dalits and its dependency on writings in English. It would be interesting to do this same review based on primary sources such as political pamphlets produced during the early stages of the Dalit Movement or the first newspaper article on Dalits. To compile and archive all written texts on Dalits would require immense time and resources. This review paper can perhaps be a preface to such an effort. It is important to note that the research and writing of this report occurred prior to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (CA) on May 27, 2012 and does not reflect the political context after the CA dissolution.

Part One

Emergence and Evolution of Dalit Writings

Knowledge produced on a group is important to the narrative that the group develops and the discourse that it shapes. It highlights issues of importance. It frames arguments and in that way it frames the demands and claims that the community, particularly an excluded one such as the Dalits, make from the state and society. At the same time, knowledge produced also indicates the interests and agendas of both Dalits and non-Dalits related to caste-based discrimination and untouchability.

The Dalit narrative exists to negate the identity that was created by the rulers based on religious grounds. It has evolved since the earliest expressions of dissent and outbursts against the caste system. Different political movements—democratic, Communist, Maoist—that Dalits have participated in influenced the Dalit Movement. External forces of change brought in by development have also left their mark on the Dalit narrative by introducing new philosophies, ideas, and approaches to identifying problems and searching for solutions. To review writings that have shaped the Dalit narrative, the paper has identified six main areas of textual knowledge production. They include legal codes, literature, sociopolitical movements, academia, development, and the press. Part one is subdivided into the identified areas. This section is primarily based on a desk review; in-depth interviews with scholars in anthropology and sociology, Dalit studies,

and the Madhesh; and three consultations carried out in Dhanusha, Saptari, and Kathmandu to ascertain what research areas related to Dalits needed more work.

The Caste-System in Nepal: Legal codes and dalit identity

Different legal codes decreed by kings and later prime ministers established the caste system in Nepal. Through legal provisions for one group and restrictions for another, the ruling elite created the identity of Untouchables.⁵ Therefore, it is not only the dichotomy of “pure” and “polluted” created by legal codes but the favoring of one group over another that has created the Dalit identity. The Dalit narrative begins with the creation of this identity. It continues as a constant struggle to end discrimination and marginalization resulting from the biased use of this identity by the state.

Prior to legal codes, religious texts such as the Rig-Veda brought Hindu concepts of caste premised on division of labor into practice and influenced social organization. Different rulers used the religious justifications—sometimes with the help of Brahmin priests, as in the case of Jayasthiti Malla—to divide society into different castes and therefore organize it. In the process, caste divisions were legally institutionalized. Consequently, practices of discrimination and untouchability emerged as the state “accorded differential privileges and obligations to each caste and sub-caste” (Bennett 2005, 6). Therefore, textual evidence of the formalization of the caste system and the practice of untouchability provide the point of departure for the Dalit narrative.

Aahuti’s recent book *Nepalma Varna Byawastha ra Barga Sangharsha* (Caste System and Class Struggle in Nepal) explains in detail how Nepali society was organized along caste hierarchies.⁶ In AD 200 under the Lichhavi rule in the present day Bagmati Valley, the caste system was instituted with four castes and eighteen Jatis (Aahuti 2010, 15). References to this system are made in a Lichhavi stone inscription, which can be considered the first text on

5 For more on the role of state’s discriminatory legal codes in forming collective political identities, see Mahmood Mamdani’s *Citizens and Subject*, 1996.

6 The political implications of this book will be discussed in the section *Academia and the Dalit Subject*.

caste division in society (Bajracharya 1974). Although it does not mention untouchability, caste-based discrimination is evident from the different degrees of restrictions and punishments decreed on different castes. By AD 600 untouchability was brought into practice. Evidence for this can be found in Lichhavi king Amsuverma's writings. The Malla Dynasty followed the Lichhavis and continued the Hinduization of society in the Bagmati Valley. In AD 1360 Jasyasthiti Malla divided the society into four castes and sixty-four Jatis and legally implemented the practice of untouchability. In the early seventeenth century, Ram Shah modified the caste system by dividing the society into four castes and thirty-six Jatis (Aahuti 2010, 16). The caste divisions continued with varied forms of privilege and punishment based on caste. These divisions were cemented when Jung Bahadur Rana formulated the *Muluki Ain* or Country Code of 1854. The *Muluki Ain* became the first legal code to define Untouchables as *pani nachalne chhoiee chhito halnu parne* (literally, "untouchable, sprinkling of holy water required for the purification of body") and to place them at the bottom of the social structure (Bhattachan et al. 2003, xiii).

While the above constitutional reforms and legal codes divided society and created the Dalit identity in the political sphere, other legal codes have aimed to rectify past practices. King Mahendra abolished the practice of untouchability in 1963. Since then, the 1990 constitution and the interim constitution of 2008 have declared an end to caste-based discrimination and untouchability. The adoption of the Caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Act in May 2011 was a milestone in criminalizing caste-based discrimination and untouchability practices.

Constitutional and legal acts and provisions against caste-based discrimination and untouchability are central to the Dalit narrative. The acts are, to some extent, an accomplishment of the Dalit movement. They raise the bargaining power of Dalits to demand effective implementation. However, weak implementation and enforcement of such laws and acts means Dalits still face discrimination. Numerous writings exist on the weakness of legal codes protecting Dalits, particularly in the press. However, evaluations of various government policies are missing.⁷

7 Consultation with Madheshi Dalit and non-Dalit youth in Kanchanpur, Saptari, April 11, 2011.

Dalits in Literature: Victimized and Voiced

Outside of legal codes, early texts pertinent to Dalits were found in literature. In general, progressive reviewers have divided Dalit writings into three stages (Pandey 2006; Bhattarai 2006). The first stage is from 1950 to 1959. Writings during this decade focused on the widespread exploitation and injustices that the Dalits suffered from a class perspective. They did not specifically focus on Dalit problems but on the problems of caste-based discrimination. The second stage is from 1960 to 1978 and it continues the trends from the previous period of writing about caste-based discrimination. What is new are expressions of discontent with the law against caste-based discrimination. There is no definitive line for when the third stage began, but some argue it started after 1978 while others argue that it started only after the reestablishment of democracy in 1990 (Pandey 2009). Under a democratic regime, literature flourished. However, the politicization of society did not spare literature. While Dalit awareness was raised, the Dalit problem was also “NGO-ized,” that is, it was framed in terms of an NGO’s mission, vision, goals, and projects.

Before Dalits started writing on their experiences, which did not happen until 1951 with the end of the Rana regime, it was the non-Dalits who raised their voices against untouchability. The oligarchic Rana regime (1846–1951) had suffocated literary expressions of social conditions. It had limited educational opportunities to a small circle of aristocrats in hopes that this modest allowance would quell expressions of social grievances that could spark rebellious movements against the regime. But the oppressive conditions and heavy censorship did not stop writers from writing about caste-based discrimination. At a time when the world was engulfed in a wave of decolonization, political actions against the Rana regime were surging. These actions found creative outlets in literature. A Dalit Constituent Assembly member, activist, and literary figure, Aahuti, rightly states that “culture and society are inalienable to the cause, and within this, the role of literature cannot be overlooked” (Dhungel 2011).

Early literary rebellion against caste-based discrimination and untouchability started in the mid-eighteenth century with poems written by saints of the Josmani Cult, a religious movement, during the 1850s (Pandey 2006, 53). The Josmani Cult inspired “a new poetry, socially conscious, rebellious in

spirit [and] critical of popular Hinduism” (Das 1991, 152), and saints were often jailed for it (Pandey 2006, 53). Yogmaya Neupane continued the trend started by the Josmani saints and wrote against the caste system (Chapagain 2009, 2). Neither the saints nor Neupane treated the problem of Dalits or untouchability separately; they looked at the larger problems of the caste system.

A long period of silence followed Josmani poems on caste-based discrimination and untouchability. Laxmi Prasad Devkota broke the silence when he wrote *Muna Madan*, first published in 1936. A line in his short epic is repeatedly quoted: “*Manisthulodil le hunchhajat le hundaina*” (A man’s greatness comes from his heart and not his caste). Despite being a Brahmin, he detested the hierarchies that the caste system created and the injustices that are allowed. Devkota wrote many poems against the caste system. In “*Ek Sundari Chyamini*” (One Beautiful Chyamini, 1956), his protagonist, for the first time, is a Dalit woman. He breaks new grounds by going against the cultural norms by romantically appreciating a Dalit woman’s beauty (Pandey 2006, 56). Bal Krishna Sam and Modnath Prashrit followed with the novels *Chiso Chulho* (Cold Oven) and *Manav* (Human), respectively. Dr. Pandey claims that although *Chiso Chulho* is limited by the writer’s personal experiences of belonging to a high caste, its importance lies in the fact that it is the first novel with a Dalit protagonist at a time when opposition to caste-based discrimination was emerging as a peripheral trend and had not entered mainstream literature (56).

The fall of the Rana regime opened new spaces for writers to write on the caste system and untouchability. The late 1940s and early 1950s also saw the formation and rise of the communist movement in Nepal. Consequently, the view that class struggle is necessary to liberate the proletariat from existing injustices permeated the world of Dalit literature. Muktinath Timilsina’s novel *Ko Achhut?* (Who is Untouchable?), published in 1954, stands out. It identified the class problem within the practice of caste discrimination and recognized that caste discrimination cannot be eliminated if it is not seen as part of a class struggle (Bhattarai 2006, 99).

King Mahendra’s *Panchayat* system replaced the democratic sojourn that followed the Rana regime. He also declared an end to caste-based discrimination in the revised Muluki Ain of 1963. The new act, which did

not bring satisfactory social changes and restrictive rules, added fuel to the communist and Dalit movements. During the Panchayat rule, writers wrote sarcastically of how the act had achieved nothing. Suman Shrapati's "Banda Dhoka Khuleko" (Closed Door Opened) is an example.

In 1990, *Jana Aandolan I* (People's Movement I) brought in multiparty democracy. Political freedoms heralded a new wave of writings on Dalits. Prior to *Jana Aandolan I*, writings on Dalit issues were not necessarily centered on Dalit realities. In such writings Dalit problems were seen as part of the larger problem of feudal exploitation (Pandey 2006). Dalits were lumped into the larger community of the poor, powerless, and voiceless. From the progressive angle, Dalits were treated solely as part of the proletariat. Their class identity overshadowed their caste identity. Although such writings continued after the democratic movement, the writings during the multiparty democracy period started to center on Dalit problems. Khagendra Sangroula's *Junkiriko Sangeet* (Firefly's Song) is important in portraying a realistic picture of Dalit life in western life. It is also controversial as progressive literary critics like Ninu Chapagain and Ramesh P. Bhattarai argue that the novel had more negative aspects than positive. They argue that although the protagonist is a Dalit, he is given no leadership, and the novel encourages NGO-ization of the Dalit movement. Moreover, unlike Sangroula's previous stories on Dalit issues, the novel breaks from past ideas of the class struggle (Chapagain 2009, 7). Sharad Paudel's *Likhe*, followed by *Simana Waripari* (Across a Border), was also published around the same time as *Junkiri ko Sangeet*. Paudel's two novels were well received among critics for raising the Dalit issue with caution and sensitivity (Bhattarai 2006, 103).

Pariijat, who had published strong stories like *Naikape Sarkini* (Sarkini from Naikap) wrote poems such as "Juthi Damainiko Abhiwiyakti" (Expressions of a Damai Woman) and "Euti Swasni Manchhe" (A Woman). The poems are noteworthy for presenting Dalit female protagonists and providing creative insights into caste based exploitation from a class angle. Shrawan Mukarung's poem "Bise Nagarchiko Bayan," published in 2010, is a recent poem that has stirred the Nepali community. Bise Nagarchi was a tailor and close adviser to King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who unified Nepal (Pokharel 2005). When the government evicted Nagarchi's descendents in 2005,

Mukarung wrote the poem against oppression that the Nagarchis faced as Dalits. The poem became so popular that people paid for tickets to its recital. It was also recited in Hong Kong. Bise Nargarchi is still referred to when talking about Dalit sentiments.⁸ Therefore, with Mukarung's poem we see a new trend where a wider community is able to relate to the oppression that Dalits have faced for centuries.

As most of the early writings in literature originated from writers outside of the Dalit community, the reader has to be cognizant of the perspectives presented. Khangendra Sangroula, although a non-Dalit writer himself, is critical of writers who belong to his camp. When once asked in an interview how Dalit life is depicted in Nepali literature he answered:

Dalit life has been depicted in Nepali literature mainly from two angles. In the depiction from the first angle, Dalits are presented as pitiable characters within Nepali society. In this section of literature, Dalits are given a *barabicharo* image, or an image of "pathetic, pitiful creatures." Dalits are poor, Dalits are miserable, Dalits are weak, Dalits suffer from a lack of self-esteem, Dalits are voiceless, therefore Dalits are suited for pitying, etc. The general ill fortune of Dalits depicted from the second angle isn't different from the image projected by the first. However, the Dalits depicted from this angle are called upon to raise their fists against the hurtful and exploitative social and political structures, which have reached them to their present hellish state. . . . This angle does not bother to enter the inner reaches of Dalits' present condition, or to describe or show the many dimensions of Dalit life in a social and historical context, and in an external and internal way. It only resorts to gross generalizations, and recommends that social and political powers be attacked all at once. (2005, 156)

Sangroula encapsulates the non-Dalit perspective on Dalit life and cautions us about the limitations of the early literary writings on Dalits, which tended to victimize the subject. Padam Sundas holds similar perspectives (see Box 1). As literature played a crucial role in shaping collective community perceptions of the "self" and the "other" and, consequently, the power relations based on those identities, non-Dalits' views of the victimized Dalit dominated the Dalit discourse. Dalits' negligible access to education and publication meant that the Dalit voice was too soft to be heard. The few

⁸ Interview with Padam Sundas, September 11, 2011.

who received education, Sangroula argues, did not have opportunities for sociological grounding “to examine life in deep, expansive and subtle ways” and ended up writing in the same perspective as the non-Dalits (2002, 156).

The earliest Dalit writer in Nepali literature was Jawahar Roka. Born to a Dalit father and a Brahmin mother, Roka learned to read and write from his mother. He entered the Nepali literature scene in 1963. Between 1963 and 1980, Roka published three poetry books and wrote twelve stories (eleven of which were published in the collection *Warrant*), and one novel titled *Fesuwa*. *Negiyar* is his unpublished novel (Bishwokarma 2000, 29). In the second phase of his writing career from 1981 to 1993, he published essays, stories, a novella titled *Subash ko Sindur*, and a philosophical book titled *Ambedkar versus Hindubaad* (Ambedkar versus Hinduism) (30). His writings were inspired from his personal life and he also wrote on social economics and political and gender inequalities (19). Although Roka was loyal to the Panchayat system, he used sarcasm as a tool to criticize caste systems to protest the inequalities and injustices it created. Roka contributed to Dalit literature not only by writing but also by creating the Dalit Literature Academy. Urmila Biswokarma sheds light on Roka’s life and work in her book *Dalit Sahityakar Jawahar Roka* (Dalit Litterateur Jawahar Roka). Roka also served as the editor for *Jamara* (1971), *Mukti* (1971), and *Muktichakra* (1991) (Bishwokarma, 24).⁹

Other Dalit writers who started writing during the Panchayat system are T.R. Bishwokarma and Padam Sundas, who started their careers in literature and Dalit activism through poetry. T.R. Bishwokarma’s poems include “Bhakkulai Rango” in *Sanjiwani*, where he deals with inhuman treatment of the poor and underprivileged. He, however, refrains from directly touching on Dalit issues. Padam Sundas’ poem titled “Tyo Yuwak” was against caste-based discrimination and was published in 1964 in Nepal Rajkiya Pragya Pratisthan’s *Himani* magazine. During the repressive Panchayat rule, the three Dalit poets pioneered expressions of Dalit consciousness in their literary works. Roka and Sundas continued to write poems against the caste system after multiparty democracy was installed because Dalit problems did not end in 1990s; they were only starting to get serious attention. Sundas’

9 *Jamara* was published by Rani Mills Secondary School, *Mukti* and *Muktichakra* by Nepal National Dalit and All People’s Development Council.

poem “Mero Kabita” is noteworthy for its sentiment that expresses reproach at not being able to deliver an effective Dalit movement despite decades of commitment (Pandey 2006, 69).

Ranendra Barali, like Jawahar Roka, started his writing career by publishing articles on Dalit history. He is one of the few Dalit writers who, through poems, stories, novels, and plays, has brought the Dalit problem and condition to the surface. Some of his publications are *Dalit Jatiya Sangharshako Itihaas* (*Dalit Caste Struggle*, a historical account), *Bhagat Sarwajit Biswokarma* (a biography), *Itihasko Ek Pauka* (a novel), *Afnai Byatha* (*My Problems*, a play), *Dalitko Dailo* (*Dalit's Port*, a story collection), and *Samudrapariko Uphar* (*Gift from Across the Sea*, a travel memoir).

Aahuti's writings that appeared after *Jana Aandolan I* are important literary contributions for their philosophical take, rooted in Marxism, on Dalit problems and struggles. However, his novel *Naya Ghar*, according to Pandey, follows previous trends and does not put Dalits at the centre and is written from the perspective of Brahminism. On the other hand, Aahuti's poem “Gahugoro Africa,” published in 1993, is a vanguard piece where he compares Untouchables to African Americans in the United States and pushes the Dalit Movement to find inspirations beyond South Asia and to see the Dalit problem through the the lens of segregation. In 2003, Aahuti wrote *Skhalan* (*Crossing moral boundaries*), a novel that brings to life the political and economic struggle of Dalits (Bhattarai 2006, 103). Although few in number, Aahuti's publications have made him a leading Dalit writer. He has made a mark among both Dalit and non-Dalit writers. (See Annex 1 for a list of Dalit writers.)

Most of the literature on Dalits focuses on Hill Dalits. According to Bhattarai, very little is written in literature about Dalits in Kathmandu and the Madhesh (2006, 120). Contemporary writer Narayan Dhakal's story, “Arthatantra” (*Economics*), published in his collection *Shaharyantra*, can be considered a literary piece on Kathmandu Dalits. However, it gives only the impression that the story is about a Dalit because it has a Dalit (Chyame) protagonist. It does not dwell on Dalit problems. More recently, *Sino Aandolan* or *Chamar Aandolan* of 2000, the Maoists' People's War (1996–2006), and the Madhesh Movement (2007) unearthed the grievances of groups neglected by the state and brought their voices to the forefront. Rishiraj Baral, Ismaili,

and Ghanshyam Dhakal are some of the few writers who have made the plight of Madheshi Dalits their subjects.

Debates on what is Dalit literature have also emerged along with fictional writings on Dalits.¹⁰ Two questions lie at the heart of the debate on Dalit literature: who wrote it and what was its message. Some argue that for literature to be considered Dalit literature, it should be written by Dalits and should be a true reflection of Dalit problems and challenges. It must also encourage Dalits to unite and organize a movement for liberation. Without the message of Dalit liberation, it is said that the literature cannot be considered Dalit literature. Others argue that literature written by both Dalits and non-Dalits reflecting the life of Dalits can be considered Dalit literature.

Literature on the Dalits of Nepal illustrates that the Dalit narrative has moved from seeking sympathy to claiming rights and power. Communist ideologies have heavily influenced the Dalit narrative because they convinced many Dalit thinkers that class struggle was the only means to Dalit liberation. While the communist influence raised the Dalit political consciousness, it also confused the Dalit narrative by focusing on one aspect of the Dalit identity: class and caste-based occupation. At present, the view on achieving Dalit liberation is shifting away from communist tendencies. There are debates on whether or not Dalits can be considered proletarians because the widespread belief today of some Dalit thinkers disillusioned by the communist movement is that Dalits have a lower status in society than the proletariat.¹¹ Aahuti has claimed that it is time for Dalits to rethink whether class struggle will solve the fundamental problems arising from caste hierarchies.¹² While the debates continue, the evolution of writings in literature indicates a clear trajectory: the Dalit voice is gaining power and Dalit characters are gaining dignity. At the same time, however, Madheshi Dalits remain largely voiceless.

10 This question is related to that of Dalit aesthetics, similar to Black Aesthetics that was started by the Black Art Movement in the United States. For further information see Ninu Chapagain's article "Dalit in Nepali Literature" (Rupantaran: Samaj Adhyayan, Kartik 4, 2063 BS) and his book "Dalit Aesthetics and Literature" (2068 BS).

11 Interview with Arjun Biswakarma.

12 Ibid.

Box 1

Mr. Padam Sundas talks about the journey of Dalit Sahityatatha Sankriti Pratisthan - Foundation for Dalit Literature and Culture

To map any group's place in a society, the first step is to map the group's history. In Nepal, the only history that is written and taught is that of the kings and powerful people. Dalits played an important role in the unification of what we know as the modern Nepal. However, nothing is mentioned about the Dalits in the historical records. When you investigate Dalits' contribution to building the nation, you can find that Bishey Nagarchi, a Dalit, gave good advice on raising funds for King Prithvi Narayan Shah's unification campaign. Bhim Nidhi Tiwari wrote a five-volume book with each volume documenting different scenarios of Nepal's unification campaign and one of the chapters was on Bishey Nagarchi. I published the chapter separately in 1988 on my own.

Whatever non-Dalits have written about Dalits, none of that has been able to touch the hearts and souls of the Dalits. Since non-Dalits are not aware of the sorrows and problems of Dalits, they did not produce writings that truly reflected the realities of the Dalits. For this reason, what non-Dalits write can never pave or guide the way for Dalit liberation. Dalits themselves have to move forward to search their own history and to write it.

Dalit literature suffered because there were not many writers and those who wrote did not have the financial strength to publish themselves. Recognizing the need to support aspiring Dalit writers and the need for a Dalit literary society, Aahuti, Jawahar Roka, Ramsharan Darnal, and I established the Dalit Sahitya Pratisthan (Foundation for Dalit Literature) in 1992. Jawahar Roka became president and I became vice-president. The Foundation was fully funded by the founders' personal investments.

The Foundation for Dalit Literature started tracking the progress and happenings on Dalit literature. It organized discussions and conferences. As many Dalit writers faced serious financial constraints, I started the Ratnamaya Dalit Sahitya Samrakchhan Samiti (Ratnamaya Dalit Literature

Conservation Committee) in memory of my mother. He reasoned that instead of spending money on annual condolence rituals, he could support Dalit literature. The Committee became a sister wing of the Foundation for Dalit Literature and started to publish both fiction and non-fiction books on Dalits.

Initially the Dalit Sahitya Pratisthan focused on literature. However, during the search for history the importance of folk culture and presenting it with dignity in modern contexts was realized. Along with history, Dalit culture had to be investigated as well. With this mindset, Dalit Sahitya Pratisthan was transformed into Dalit Sahitya Tatha Sanskriti Pratisthan (Foundation for Dalit Literature and Culture).

The Foundation is nationwide one with nine literary figures, including Aahuti, as a member. It has a General Assembly of thirty-four literary figures. Since it is a self-funded foundation, it continues to survive as a Dalit literary council despite financial struggles. Since the Foundation's existence, there have been more writers and the feeling among Dalits that they need to write more is increasing.

Sociopolitical Writings and the Dalit Activist

Dalits proudly consider their movement as Nepal's oldest political movement because it pre-dates the formation of the Nepali Congress (NC). Literary expressions of social conditions and grievances accompany political movements and have a symbiotic relation. Literature and political movements fuel each other and grow in return. As more Dalits became politically active, they started writing on caste discrimination. The increase in writings available on Dalits helped raise consciousness on the situation of Dalits among Dalits and non-Dalits, and enhanced the Dalit Movement. This section briefly traces the Dalit social movement in terms of political organizations because they were the central site of knowledge production and opinion formation. Pamphlets, brochure, bulletins, newsletters, and magazines published by the organizations provided the space for Dalit political activists to insert the Dalit agenda during and after the struggle for democracy. They also enabled the community to assert its right to access power.

During political movements against the Rana regimes, Dalits started their own movement by organizing themselves. Sarbajit Biswakarma founded the first Dalit organization, *Vishwa Sarvajan Sangh*, in 1947 in Butwal. By publishing about the organization and caste-based discrimination, Sarbajit became the first person to politically oppose the caste system in writing (Kisan 2005, 90). Sarbajit was educated in India on Hindu scriptures and had a strong foundation to criticize the Hindu practice of untouchability. He was arrested for his publications. At the same time, in Kathmandu, Saharshanath Kapali formed the Tailor's Union to teach about caste discrimination and promote professional unity (91). Between 1947 and 1957, six more Dalit organizations were founded (91). However, it was only when *Nepal Rashtriya Pariganit Parishad* (National Council for the Scheduled Castes in Nepal) was formed that the Dalit community had its first bulletin, "Samaj Sewa," edited by T.R. Biswakarma (94).

By the late 1950s, the Dalit movement started to witness political factions, leadership disputes, and organizational restructuring as the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) emerged to challenge the NC (Kisan 2005, 95). Consequently, *Nepal Rashtriya Pariganit Parishad* evolved into *Rashtriya Acchut Mukti Parishad* (National Council for the Liberation from Untouchability). *Mukti Parishad*, under the editorship of T.R. Biswakarma, published "Mukti," the first Dalit magazine (95). It was a propaganda magazine for Mukti Parishad. Its articles subtly criticized the Panchayat rule.

Dalit organizations continued to evolve through mergers and splits. In this process, the *Nepal Rashtriya Dalit Jana Bikash Parishad* (National Council for Dalit/People's Development in Nepal) was formed. T.R. Biswakarma was part of this organization as well, and in 1970, he edited the second Dalit magazine, *Dalit Aawaz*. *Sanjiwani* was the third Dalit-focused magazine published during the Panchayat period, publishing writings on literature. *Mukti* and *Dalit Aawaz* focused on organizational activities and raising Dalit consciousness.¹³

Bulletins and magazines published during the Panchayat period focused on contemporary issues and occasionally published literature. Staying within the boundaries of the state structure, the publications provided a platform for political organizations to request "favors" from the king for actions

13 Interview with Padam Sundas, September 11, 2011.

against caste-based discrimination and untouchability instead of demanding rights.¹⁴ Besides writings in bulletins and magazines, other forms of political writings such as memorandums and petitions presented to the king help reveal Dalit status, level of political consciousness, and view and approach toward Dalit liberation. Access to the memorandums and petitions would have clearly illustrated where the Dalit movement stood.

As the anti-Panchayat movement gathered momentum in late 1970s, the Dalit movement came to a conclusion that Nepali society first needed democracy in order to eliminate caste discrimination. With this spirit, *Samaj Sudhar Manch* (Forum for Social Reform) published a newsletter called "Pratinidhi" (Kisan 2005, 99). Unfortunately, the newsletter did not last after two editions and ended after the 1980 referendum. The post-Panchayat era saw new Dalit organizations being formed and magazines published. This new batch of organizations openly demanded Dalit rights and representation.

In tandem with the emergence of intellectual organizations in the mainstream, the Dalit community also established *Nepal Utpidit Dalit Jatiya Mukti Samaj* in 1993 (Vishwakarma 2005, 33). It was one of the earliest intellectual organizations with activists and leaders such as Tilak Pariyar, Padmalal BK, Aahuti, and Padam Sundas. The Samaj published *Samanata*, which was a key magazine published during the early years of multiparty democracy. According to Padam Sandas, *Samanata* played a critical role by laying out the guidelines for the Dalit movement under a democratic context. It was a progressive magazine that published writings on the need for Dalits' own political ideology, political solutions, inclusion, and quotas.¹⁵ It articulated that the Dalit problem came from the Hindu religion and the feudal system and discussed what the Dalits' primary agenda should be. It identified allies and opposition, and the direction to be taken. The direction advocated was a progressive one. Padam Sundas says: "Dalits will always align with the progressive forces because our problem cannot be addressed any other way. Our movement is the oldest and most advanced, because what we demand, for example the secular state, is sometimes too progressive for our progressive politicians."¹⁶

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

At present, *Dalit Sandesh*, *Jana Utthan*, *Nepali Munch*, and *Samanata Sandesh* are prominent magazines writing on Dalit issues.¹⁷ *Dalit Sandesh*, affiliated with the UCPN (M), encourages intellectual discussions from the hardliner's perspective.¹⁸ While political party influences have infiltrated Dalit magazines, the magazines have reached a level where they can question political party leaders. Many other magazines also exist, but they are published by NGOs or other non-political organizations. These magazines will be discussed further in the section *Press and the Dalit Beat*.

Besides, political writing in magazines, *Bisheshashikar ra Arakshanko Rajniti* (Politics of Special Rights and Reservations, 2007) is an important book within sociopolitical writing. Edited by Purna Basnet and Suvash Darnal, the book was published by Jagaran Media Center. The book stimulated discussions on special rights, reservations, and proportional representations of Dalits when preparations for the 2008 CA elections were underway.

Suvash Darnal's *A Land of Our Own: Conversations with Dalit Members of Constituent Assembly* (2009) also fits into this section because it gives insights into how the Dalit CA members view the past and future of the Dalit Movement. Darnal, a Dalit activist, leader, and journalist, interviews fifty Dalit CA members "to find out the particulars of Dalit rights related issues being incorporated into the new constitution, and the preparations done and strategies adopted by the CA members to ensure the inclusion of issues they advocate" (2009, 17). The inclusion of fifty Dalits in the Constituent Assembly is a significant achievement for the entire Dalit Movement. The importance of this book lies in the perspective that it presents of Dalit leaders on pertinent questions related to the movement.

The progression of writings produced by social and political Dalit activists since the end of the Rana regime, through the Panchayat Period, advent of democracy, and the Maoists' People's War, evidences an immense growth in the Dalit voice. While writings requested favors under the Panchayat system, Dalits soon started demanding rights and today they are claiming power and a share of the state. At the same time, the claim for rights and power still has weaknesses. While the Dalit agency has grown, the political demands of today are no different from the request for favors of the

17 Interview with Rana B. Ramtel, April 29, 2011. Also found in Bishwokarma, forthcoming.

18 Interview with Rana B. Ramtel, April 29, 2011.

Panchayat period because the Dalit community still expects everything to be handed down by the state; only the language has changed.¹⁹

Another trend is political fragmentation of organizations and activists evident in the philosophical and political inclinations of their writings. Topics covered in the early political writings were on easing caste-based discrimination; later, demands for quotas, reservations, and representation in the political system emerged. In terms of the source of political writings, earlier such writing came from political organizations that were influenced by various political parties but not directly affiliated. Later, however, the political writings came from party wings or sister organizations of various political parties as mouthpieces.

Academia and the Dalit subject

Academic writings on Dalits remain weak. Various factors created this situation. First, academic research in the social sciences as a whole started and grew only recently. Second, Dalit interests are treated as secondary to issues of national politics or communities that have received attention for various reasons. Third, education levels within the Dalit community have been negligible. Dalits make up less than 1 percent of those with a bachelor's degree and above (Bennett 2006, xxiv). The void left by academia has been filled to some extent by the world of development that includes NGOs, INGOs, and national and international research centers and think tanks. Writings from this sector will be discussed in the next section.

According to Steven Folmar, the earliest academic writings on Dalits were in the form of ethnographies that emerged in the 1970s (Folmar 2010, 75). Patricia Caplan's *Priest and Cobblers: A Study of Social Change in a Hindu Village in Western Nepal* (1972), based on a field study that ended in the 1960s, is one of the earliest ethnographies on Dalits. Caplan detailed economic, cultural, and political interactions between Dalits and non-Dalits. Her descriptive analysis exposed explicit and implicit ways of oppression and discrimination that the high caste Brahmins inflicted on low caste cobblers. Similarly, Bengt-Erik Borgstrom in *The Patron and the Panca: Village Values and Panchayat Democracy in Nepal*, published in 1980, "examined the effects of local politics on inter-caste relations with high caste[s]" (Folmar

¹⁹ Ibid.

2010, 75). Both the ethnographies studied Dalit relationships with others in the community. Ethnography focusing solely on Dalits started only in the 1990s (Folmar 2010, 75). Maskerinek (1995) wrote on shamans, Tingey (1994) on *pachaibaaja* (instruments traditionally played by Damai musicians), and Weisethaunet (1998) on Gaine minstrels (Folmar 2010, 75).

Carole Tingey's *Auspicious Music in a Changing Society: The Damai Musicians of Nepal* is a "thorough and detailed musical ethnography which sets out to cover as many angles as possible, in order to draw as complete a picture as possible of the Damai and their music" (Clayton 1994, 395). Ram Sharan Darnal, who is from the Damai caste, wrote extensively on music and musical instruments in Nepal. He has published more than a dozen books including *Nepali Baja* (Nepali Musical Instruments) and *Sangeetko Bistrit Awalokan* (Close Observation of Music) on culture and musical instruments. More than a dozen of his manuscripts remain unpublished.²⁰ His work borders ethnographic research as he provides detailed descriptions of historical origins and cultural usage and practices related to musical instruments. With his contributions to documenting Dalit music, he can be considered one of the earliest Dalit musical ethnographers in Nepal.

Mary Cameroon's book, *On the Edge of the Auspicious*, first published in 1998, is an ethnographic study of gender and caste relations from the perspective of low caste women in far-western Nepal and how the two social constructs affect life. This book gave a voice to the female perspective at a time when women's issues were moving away from the framework of development to that of rights (Bennett 2006, xx). Her writing "Rural Dalit Women and Work: The Impact of Social and Economic Change" (2002) explores the conditions of Dalit women and the changes in their work. Her works in medical anthropology such as "Untouchable Healing: A Dalit Ayurvedic Doctor from Nepal Suffers His Country's Ills" (2009) is a study of the life and struggles of a Dalit Ayurvedic doctor. She has also commented on identity politics through "Considering Dalits and Political Identity in Imagining a New Nepal."

Beyond ethnographies, academic research in other social sciences on Dalits is bleak. Chaitanya Mishra affirms this:

20 Interview with Padam Sundas, September 11, 2011.

Even as ethnography and ethnic studies has been in “full bloom” for several decades, the extreme lack of attention on the Dalits by sociologists remains both curious and sad. This inattention must be regarded as a serious flaw within the sociology of Nepal. Indeed, the omnipresent and powerful caste system as a whole has received far less attention than ethnicity and several other themes. The Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka and Whelpton volume is no exception, except for a relatively peripheral treatment of the caste system among the Newars by Gellner. The politically and culturally “excluded” have also been excluded within the intellectual discourse by Nepali academics. As far as international academics are concerned, could it be that those interested in the caste system and the Dalits find neighbouring India more interesting instead? (Mishra 2005, 117).

Stevan Folmar agrees with Mishra and adds that the study of Nepali Dalits was limited because Dalit concerns were viewed as “secondary to current issues of global interest to the academic community or to emergent socio-political events in modern Nepal; in contrast, Dalit issues are seen as chronic and perhaps uninteresting” (Folmar 2010, 77). Understanding why little was written about Dalits of Nepal is key to ascertaining the variables that can be addressed in order to increase studies on Nepali Dalits. Following ethnography, research based on sociological theories and methods became the next widely used framework for studies on Dalits because the researchers were focused on questions related to Dalit society and culture.²¹ The Dalit discourse has expanded from sociology and ethnography to economics and politics as the awareness and activism in the latter spheres has grown among Dalits and non-Dalits.²²

Knowledge production on the Dalits follows the international trends and national sociopolitical events. If the 1990s witnessed writings from the development perspective, the 2000s saw writings on rights-based approaches, inclusion, and the Dalit political struggle. Folmar himself wrote on the marginalization of Dalits in the process of development and tourism (2010, 75). Other examples of development practices influencing interest in the Dalit subject are Bidhyanath Koirala’s dissertation “Schooling and the Dalits of Nepal” (1993) and Laurie A. Vasily’s dissertation titled “Reading one’s life: A case study of an adult educational participatory action research curriculum development project for Nepali Dalit social justice” (2006).

21 Interview with Yam B. Kisan, September 5, 2011.

22 Ibid.

In academia, primarily non-Nepali writers conducted research on the Dalits in the early stages. This is perhaps because Nepali researchers, who tended to be non-Dalits as they had better access to education, may have found the method of researching Dalits challenging (Folmar 2010, 75–77).²³ Nonetheless, by the late 1990s Nepali researchers also started conducting research and investigations on Dalits. Within the Nepali producers of knowledge, non-Dalits first contributed to academic studies "whose foci are on the application of research to development concerns" (Folmar 2010, 75). As education opportunities widened to include Dalits, Dalits started conducting research and writing on their own community after the turn of the millennium.

Two books written by Dalits on their community's social and economic struggle are key. They are Yam Bahardur Kisan's *The Nepali Dalit Social Movement* (2005) and Aahuti's *Nepalma Varna Byawastha ra Barga Sangharsha* (Caste System and Class Struggle in Nepal) published in 2010. Rama Lohani-Chase, in her review, says that prior to Kisan's book, "no previous book-length study of the Dalit movement in Nepal exist[ed]" (Lohani-Chase 2007, 78). The only other publication in English that looks at the history of the Dalit Movement is an essay by Hira Lal Vishwakarma in *The Dalits of Nepal: Issues and Challenges*. Kisan's book is based on diverse resources from Hindu religious texts to Marxist theories. However, as Kisan himself views the Maoist position on Dalits as the most revolutionary, the philosophical perspectives of the book have Marxist and Maoist undertones. Kisan's book fills a major void in Dalit literature by providing a chronological account of the Dalit movement. However, there is still space and need for a deeper analysis of the Dalit movement and the interaction of the Dalit movement with that of other minority communities including Madheshis and Janjatis.²⁴ In his book, Kisan provides an overview on the Dalit Movement in Nepal. In doing so, he mentions the different writings in the form of bulletins, newsletters, magazines, memorandums, and petitions that were produced by the Dalit Movement. However, he does not explain their importance to the Dalit Movement in terms of how the writings shaped the movement and provided philosophical grounding.

23 In reference to Moffat (1979), Folmar briefly explains that working or living with Dalits for research purposes had its costs.

24 Interview with Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan, August 24, 2011.

Aahuti's *Nepalma Varna Byawastha ra Barga Sangharsha* is a landmark book. Chapters of the book have also been included in the curriculum of graduate studies on sociology and anthropology. Aahuti provides fresh and strong analysis on the Dalit problem, expanding the conceptual frameworks that previously were not talked about in the Dalit discourse. He examines both the class and caste structures and struggles, to provide philosophical grounding for the Dalit sociopolitical movement. Drawing primarily from Marxist theory, he views the struggle of the Dalits to be against religious and feudal structures and systems. Therefore, he says that the Dalit movement is against institutions that perpetuate religious feudalism. Based on such analysis, he provides foresight and guidance on where the movement should head.

Inclusion became a popular topic of discussion and research in the 2000s because of the Maoists' movement and because it is one of the four pillars in Nepal's Tenth Plan or the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (National Planning Commission 2003, 37). Along with inclusion, the topic gaining currency in this decade is federalism and identity politics. Uddhab Pyakhurel's dissertation "Social Exclusion and Inclusion: Sociological Study of Nepali Dalits" and Samridhhi Kharel's thesis "The Dialectics of Identity and Resistance among Dalits in Nepal" are on the topics of inclusion and identity. Both these writings, in their own unique ways, are related to the dynamics of the Dalit Movement. While the decade from 2000 to 2010 was dominated by the inclusion agenda, we cannot tell with certainty what new agenda will dominate the political and development discourse, and therefore influence academic research, in the near future.

Academic interest on the Dalit subject grew in the late 1960s from ethnographies that focused on relations between different caste hierarchies and culture. Academic research on Dalits has gradually expanded from the realms of ethnography and sociology to evaluations of development priorities such as education programs and women's empowerment. At present, there is increased interest in contemporary political issues of citizenship, political resistance, and identity from the political sciences. While the political agency of Dalits is increasingly recognized in the research, Dalit agency within academia remains weak because there are far fewer Dalit researchers.

Development and Dalit Beneficiaries

Development actors and their agendas have played a critical role in shaping the Dalit narrative. They have problematized the Dalit condition and compelled society to address its ill practices and search for solutions. With the advent of democracy, non-governmental and civil society organizations funded by INGOs and bilateral and multilateral agencies emerged and started work. Along with development and empowerment interventions, the external agencies and the NGOs that they supported produced numerous reports, magazines, and research papers. More often than not, their written productions are progress reports highlighting their work, or situational reports justifying continuation of their work. Regardless of the underlying objectives, such productions shed light on the conditions under which Dalit communities live and the efforts taken to address their economic, political, and social deprivations.

Trends within the development sector can be demarcated into four stages.²⁵ First, pre-1990s development interventions adopted a blanket approach focusing on economic development for poverty alleviation.²⁶ Second, the early 1990s continued the focus on poverty alleviation but targeted disadvantaged groups (Bennet 2006, 48). Third, a rights-based approach was adopted in the mid-1990s after Nepal ratified Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Fourth, late 1990s and 2000s became the “era of inclusion.” Therefore development objectives have moved from a strong focus on social and economic indicators of poverty alleviation to protection of rights and now to inclusion. Unlike the previous two agendas of poverty alleviation and human rights, the inclusion agenda takes a more holistic approach because it looks into economic, social, political, and cultural barriers to individual and communal progress, while advocating for equality.

When development interventions took a blanket approach, interventions specific to Dalits were non-existent. By early 1990s economic development programs and activities targeted Dalits as they fell into the larger category of disadvantaged groups. The Eighth-Plan (1992–1997), which focused on poverty alleviation, addressed caste for the first time. Bennett says:

²⁵ Interview with Hira Vishwakarma, April 28, 2012.

²⁶ Ibid.

It was the first public document to address the caste/ethnic issue, albeit indirectly and incompletely. The plan disaggregated the “poor” and attempted to target particular ethnic and caste groups under the somewhat vague and unspecified category of “disadvantaged target groups.” (2006, 48–49)

In the mid-1990s, the first analysis on Dalits and human rights, funded by USAID through Save the Children US, was carried out in six districts (Vishwakarma 2004, 4). The research justified operation of the Basic Education for Least Educated (BELE) program. Therefore, early development interventions targeted at Dalits were related to the fundamental human rights of access to education. The first Dalit-led NGO was established in this stage: USAID funded Save the Children US, which helped establish Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO) in 1992.²⁷

Dalit-led NGOs grew in the mid- and late-1990s as research demonstrated a need for development interventions targeting the Dalit community. The Asia Foundation helped to “birth and nurture” Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) (Vishwakarma 2004, 6), founded in 1994. The Dalit Welfare Organization was established in 1994, Jana Utthan Pratisthan (JUP-Nepal) in 1995, and the Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), a federation of over one hundred NGOs, in 1996. DANIDA has been providing support to DNF, DWO, FEDO and JUP for advocacy programs that are primarily rights-based (Vishwakarma 2004, 4). Among these, JUP-Nepal specialized in Dalit rights. These organizations published reports, magazines, and books, which increased knowledge about Nepal’s Dalits. The Government’s Ninth Plan, which for the first time mentioned Dalits by name, also encouraged further work targeting this community (Bennett 2006, 49). It was during this time that the Government established two institutions to research and contribute to policies on Dalits. They are the Dalit Bikas Samiti and the National Dalit Commission (NDC). The NDC has come out with the official list of Dalit groups and sub-groups. This official list is an important written text that clearly categorizes who is a Dalit.

Additionally, the NDC together with CARE Nepal, ActionAid, and Save the Children US published the National Dalit Strategy Report that was prepared for the National Planning Commission in 2002. It conducted a situational

27 Ibid.

analysis on Dalits to provide brief overviews on the cultural context of all the Dalit sub-groups and data on their socioeconomic condition, health status, and political participation. Based on the analysis, it offers strategies for Dalit upliftment and lays out an action plan. This report was produced in lieu with the Tenth Plan to bring Dalits into the mainstream of development efforts. Its results are therefore aimed at convincing the government to adopt the strategies and plans proposed. It is this type of report that has guided policies on Dalits.

By the 2000s, inclusion was the dominant objective because the People's War was waged against the deep inequalities based on caste, ethnicity, and gender perpetuated by social exclusion, and because the international community, in response, pressured the then government to ensure that social inclusion was a primary objective in the Tenth Plan. The objective to ensure social inclusion meant that development interventions in this period specifically targeted Dalits instead of lumping them into the "disadvantaged" category.

Fighting for inclusion in media, Dalit activists and journalists under the leadership of Suvash Darnal and Rem Biswokarma established JMC in 2000, one of the largest Dalit NGOs that aims to be a hub for Dalit news. JMC's plays a critical role in generating and compiling news and information on Dalits and enhancing dialogue on Dalit issues. Since it is a mediahouse, its productions are further discussed in the section *Press and the Dalit Beat*.

DFID (UK Department for International Development) is a late comer but through its Enabling State Programme (ESP), it is today the largest supporter of the Dalit movement working mainly in the area of political empowerment through "national level advocacy programmes" (Vishwakarma 2004, 4). In 2003, DFID funded the Dalit Empowerment and Inclusion Project (DEIP). Extensive research went into this project. A key publication is NNDSWO's basic profile of all sub-groups within the Dalit community. This is an important work that documents the cultural identity of different groups.²⁸

Along with the focus on inclusion, the new millennium also saw growth in initiatives to create knowledge on Dalits. Interest in quantitative evidence for the Dalit community's condition and exclusion became a new element.

28 Ibid.

The reports *Existing Practices of Caste-Based Untouchability in Nepal and Strategy for a Campaign for its Elimination* and *Unequal Citizens, Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* are important for their arguments based on empirical evidence.

ActionAid's study *Existing Practices of Caste-Based Untouchability in Nepal and Strategy for a Campaign for its Elimination* by Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan, Kamala Hemchuri, Yogendra Gurung, and Chakra Man Biswakarma was published in 2003. Employing both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, the study investigates the practices and perceptions toward untouchability. The major contribution of the study to the Dalit discourse is its finding based on empirical evidence that there are 205 practices of untouchability. This finding has been cited frequently and perhaps requires further investigation as to whether or not the 205 practices still exist. Lynn Bennett's *Unequal Citizens, Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*, a social exclusion assessment carried out by the World Bank and DFID in 2006, is a must read for those interested in understanding the frameworks for gender and social inclusion that will potentially guide Nepal's policies for at least the next decade. At the time when the advocates of social inclusion were demanding inclusive policies, Bennett's report provided strong empirical justifications. It explains why inclusion is needed and what the barriers are.²⁹ It also provides an overview of the policies and plans to institutionalize inclusion.

The latest addition to the increasing number of reports backed by strong evidence is a report published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) titled *Opening Doors to Equality: Access to Justice for Dalits in Nepal in 2011*. The report is based on cases from far-western Nepal and focuses on the role of the legal framework and the justice system in ending caste-based discrimination. This report is particularly important because it urges the Government to make the legal framework stronger to address caste-based discrimination. It provides a detailed evaluation of different acts that have attempted to end untouchability and criminalize caste-based discrimination. The report hints at a new trend of finding legal solutions in addition to political solutions, a practice embedded in the inclusion demand.

²⁹ Ibid.

The publication of the above reports emphasized the need for research especially with quantitative facts to support normative claims. National and international development actors recognized that the creation of knowledge, particularly that backed by quantitative evidence, is as essential as projects aimed at empowering communities through education, income generation, or healthcare. Consequently, funding and focus on research grew in the past decade. For example, JICA supported a student to conduct a doctoral thesis on Gaine music (Vishwakarma 2004, 4). The Social Inclusion Research Fund includes research on Dalits as one of its six group-specific themes.³⁰ The Rights, Democracy and Inclusion Fund partners with different Dalit organizations to produce knowledge for policy advocacy and dialogue for Dalit mainstreaming.³¹

Development interventions and the knowledge that it has produced has informed, empowered, and organized Dalit communities to demand their rights and their share of development and the state. Writings produced in this sector over the years evidence the changes that have arrived in the development sector since its first interventions. In terms of topics of interest, early writings focused on economic development and then rights, while now they take a holistic approach with the broader demand for inclusion. Research methodology today is more focused on data collection. Writings produced from the development sector have strengthened the case for an equal Dalit identity and citizenship, encouraged Dalit communities to organize, justified further interventions and the establishment of NGOs, articulated Dalit demands, and advocated for solutions.

Press and the Dalit beat

The Dalit voice in the media is young. For a long time, *Gorkhapatra*, written in Nepali, and its sister paper, *The Rising Nepal*, written in English, were the only newspapers. “More than newspapers for the voiceless, they were newspaper for the Kings and power holders,” Rem B. Biswokarma, chairperson of JMC, said of *the newspapers*. It was only after *Jana Aandolan I* that the general public recognized the importance of media in sustaining democracy and advocating social transformation. Thus, media boomed in a

30 See <http://www.socialinclusion.org.np/procedure-guideline-detail-2.html>

31 See <http://www.rdf.org.np/projects/project.php?projectid=223#approach>

democratic environment. However, Dalit issues did not receive significant attention until 1993.³²

Many factors resulted in the increase in publications of Dalit issues in mainstream papers. First, international development interventions premised on rights-based approach raised awareness on Dalit rights. Second, political movements demanding social transformation and the rights of marginalized communities continued as a legacy of *Jana Aandolan I*. Dalit communities that had organized during the democratic movement were further helped by political parties, INGOs, and NGOs to raise Dalit issues. Third, existing media houses realized that they needed to be more inclusive if they wanted to become national media houses.³³

Recognizing the increasing importance of media for any movement and the dearth of Dalit writers and media outlets that supported the Dalit cause, *Nepal Rastriya Dalit Patrakar Sangh* (National Dalit Journalist Union) was established in 1999. A year later, JMC was established with three primary objectives: (1) to conduct media activism against untouchability, (2) to raise Dalit issues and sensitize non-Dalits, and (3) to start an alternative media outlet. Among all its activities aimed at making Dalit voices heard, its vehement campaign to publish news and articles related to Dalits and written by Dalits in mainstream media houses played a significant role in bringing attention to Dalit issues. JMC's efforts together with other forces (INGOs and the Maoists' People's War), focusing on social inclusion and marginalized voices, culminated in intensifying the hunger among Dalit and non-Dalits to understand Dalit issues.

The Chamar movement that occurred in 2001 only whetted this hunger and added the Madheshi voice to the Dalit movement. Despite being the hub of Dalit news, JMC still has an NGO status, which affects its news coverage and the way it is viewed by the public. There is no commercially sustainable Dalit media outlet, which is a major drawback in strengthening the Dalit voice in the press or the larger media.³⁴

In the past decade, news coverage on Dalit issues has increased, however, compared to the media coverage that other issues and groups enjoy,

32 Interview with Rem Biswokarma, April 8, 2012.

33 Ibid.

34 Interview with Rana B. Ramtel. April 29, 2012.

Dalit issues continue to remain in the shadows. J. B. Biswokarma, in his forthcoming publication *Nepali Media ra Dalit* (Nepali Media and Dalits), conducts an extensive and in-depth study on how the Dalit agenda has been raised and represented in the media—newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. He explores what the nature of the news is, what impression it makes on society, and what can be done to present the realities of Dalits to the public (Biswokarma, forthcoming). He deconstructs Nepali media to assess Dalit representation. Some of his findings are highlighted below to illustrate the trend in press coverage of Dalits.

Media coverage on Dalits focuses on incidents of exploitation, violations of human rights, and injustices. Nuanced analysis and critical thinking on the underlying reasons—the structural violence—that lead to discriminatory incidents is limited. (See Box 2: Rem Biswokarma on the future of Dalit voice.) Based on a survey conducted in 2008 of nine dailies published in Kathmandu, it was estimated that a daily newspaper publishes an average of fifty-eight news pieces (Biswokarma forthcoming). Of the fifty-eight news pieces, an average of two are related to Dalits. Of the total published news pieces, 43 percent are about assaults and attacks on Dalits, 21.5 percent on exclusion, 17 percent on displacement, 7 percent on threats that Dalits receive, 2.5 percent on disagreements by Dalits, and 0.5 percent on the progress of cases filed by Dalits (29).

Data on the number of editorials and op-eds published in 2004, 2005, and 2008 (See Annex 2) portray a dismal picture of Dalit representation in the media. News articles on the Dalit community are primarily about events and programs. The next most popular issues for newspapers are the education of Dalits, the Dalit movement, caste-based occupations, Dalit women, inter-caste marriages, and incidents of oppression. The low number of opinion pieces indicates that Nepali citizens and columnists do not dwell on the Dalit issues much. Moreover, the lower number of Dalit editorials implies that the Dalit issue is not a high priority issue for most newspapers. The data also shows that Dalit issues are covered by Nepali dailies more than their English counterparts, but there are fewer English dailies to begin with. J.B. Biswokarma points out that, compared to 2004, there were fewer editorials and opinion pieces in 2008. He reasons that national political events took precedence over Dalit issues.

To supplement mainstream newspapers that occasionally cover Dalit issues, the Nepali Dalit community has published a variety of monthly, biweekly and quarterly papers, namely, *Samanata*, *Nepali Manch*, *Dalit Khabar*, *Jana Utthan*, *Nawa Samanata*, *Dalit Sandesh*, *Dalit Nigrani*, *Samata Sandesh*, *Janabodh*, *Muktiboth*, *Marg Darshan*, *Manav Maryada*, *Mukti Aandolan*, *Muktiko Awaaz*, *Parishrami*, *Jijibisha*, *Nawa Janautthan*, *Utpidit Bidhyardhi Awaz*, *Samanata Abhiyaan*, *Ratriya Pratibodh*, *Lukeko Awaz*, and *Mukti-Path* (Biswokarma, forthcoming, 28).

According to J.B. Biswokarma, as of January 2012, there were thirty-three magazines focusing on the Dalit agenda. This thirty-three includes the three published during the Panchayat period. The section *Sociopolitical Writings and the Dalit Activist* already discusses the historic magazines—*Mukti*, *Dalit Awaaji*, and *Sanjiwini*—published during the Dalit Movement and the democratic movement. Here, the focus is on magazines that have been published after 1990. Thirty out of the total thirty-three magazines are published from Kathmandu and three from outside the Valley (Biswokarma). That the majority of the magazines are published in Kathmandu indicates that it is central-level discourse on Dalit issues rather than local issues that gets more attention. Twelve out of the thirty-three magazines are produced by NGOs, and therefore focus on the “mission,” “vision,” and “goal” of the NGOs and their activities; ten are produced by political organizations; eight by Dalit leaders; two by publishing agencies; and one by the government (51–52). Once again, these numbers are indicative of the type of content published in most of the magazines.

Among the above listed magazines, *Jana Utthan*, *Dalit Sandesh*, *Dalit Khabar*, and *Nepali Munch* are the most prominent. *Jana Utthan* and *Nepali Munch* are similar in that they are news- and issue-based magazines, whereas *Dalit Sandesh* leans toward the political thoughts of the Maoist hardliners.³⁵ A survey of popular topics in *Nepali Manch*, *Jana Utthan*, *Dalit Sandesh*, and *Dalit Khabar* indicates that the Dalit movement is the most popular topic followed by inclusion in the Constituent Assembly and state restructuring, and cultural aspects of the Dalit community (Biswokarma). Rana B. Ramtel, editor of *Jana Utthan*, reaffirms this as he says, “Right now, we do not have a constitution that is why the focus is on politics.”³⁶

35 Interview with Rana B. Ramtel, April 29, 2012.

36 Ibid.

Unlike newspapers, magazines contribute more toward inspiring readers into organizing a Dalit movement, demanding social transformation, and starting intellectual discussions on Dalit problems (Biswokarma, forthcoming). Magazines today also serve as a reference to the Dalit CA members and are capable of evaluating government policies and holding political leaders accountable, which was not possible prior to *Jana Aandolan II* (2006) and the formation of the Republic.³⁷ This is a major trend within the world of print media. However, deeper investigation into and analysis of the Dalit problem is lacking. One primary limitation, Biswokarma opines, is that the magazines target Dalits as their readers. Widening the readership is essential (69).

J.B. Biswokarma's analysis, while significant, is ultimately limited in that it lumps all Dalit issues into one. While treating all Dalit issues as one is methodologically easier, it makes the quintessential mistake of treating Dalits as a homogeneous group. Madheshi Dalits within the Dalit community fall behind the Hill Dalits. Bhola Paswan, a journalist from Saptari who has been dedicated to raising the issues of Madheshi Dalits, points out that the magazines mentioned earlier focus mostly on the issues of Hill Dalits. *Bahujan Awaaz*, first published in 2012, is the only magazine that focused on Madheshi Dalit issues. Unfortunately, it published only two or three volumes.³⁸ Paswan explains that Madheshi Dalit issues started to get media attention after the Chamar movement in 1999. Along with the media, NGOs and INGOs also started to pay attention to Madheshi Dalit issues.

Similar to J.B. Biswokarma, Paswan argues that news reported on Madheshi Dalits tends to focus on Dalits killed, raped, or violated. Feature articles on the impact of untouchability practices aimed at raising awareness among people with the power to encourage societal changes are limited. When asked why Madheshi Dalit issues are covered less than those of Hill Dalits, Paswan explained that it might be because Hill Dalits speak languages similar to those of the groups in power. Further complicating the issue is the fact that Dalit journalists reporting on local issues suffer from discrimination within the field in terms of the remunerations they receive. Paswan opines that, in the current context, media coverage does not raise issues that could advance the Dalit movement.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Interview with Bhola Paswan, April 4, 2012.

Both Paswan and Biswokarma agree that a fundamental reason behind the limited media coverage of Dalits is because of low representation of Dalits in the media. According to Biswokarma a mere 1.53 percent of a total of 1,240 journalists are Dalits (Biswokarma, forthcoming, 43). Moreover, he says, “The society understands Dalit problems as a Dalit concern and fail to see it as a social and national problem” (47). Based on JMC’s study, 38 percent of news articles published in the years 2004 and 2005 were written by Dalits while 62 percent were written by non-Dalits (37). Rana B. Ramtel estimates that 80 percent of Dalit journalists are Pahadi Dalits while about 20 percent are Madheshi Dalits. The female Dalit voice is almost non-existent. Binod Pahadi, Umesh Bagchand, Hira L. Vishwokarma, Prakashchandra Pariyar, Gobind Nepali, Baburam Biswokarma, and Pabitra Sunar were the few Dalit

Box 2

Rem Biswokarma on the future of the Dalit voice*

The majority of Dalits involved with the media express that the way Dalits and their issues are represented in the media is superficial. “It is only a superficial introduction to the Dalit problem,” Rem says. The Dalit voice in the media therefore needs to grow to dig deeper into the Dalit problem. According to Rem, the Dalit voice should look into identity politics. Should Dalit identity continue to exist or should it be assimilated into the larger Brahmin culture? The Dalit voice should critically analyze the objectives of the Dalit movement. Is the objective development, rights, or justice? These questions bear a greater significance as the Dalit movement within the context of the rapidly changing political landscape in Nepal has reached a confusing point. This is a time when the Dalit voice should express philosophical grounding and ideological guidance. Rem, like other Dalit activists, is convinced that this is a time to take advantage of the higher bargaining power that historically marginalized groups have. Therefore, instead of emotional demands for Dalit liberation and instead of being influenced and fractured by party politics, it is time to move the movement forward with a clear understanding of why Dalit liberation is needed. The media should raise these issues.

** Excerpt translated from interview*

writers writing in mainstream newspapers when Dalit issues started to get some attention.³⁹

Many other young journalists followed them to fight for Dalit rights. The increase means that Dalit representation within the media is expanding. However, media representation and coverage of Dalit issues is still far from satisfactory. Martin Chautari's *Nepali Media ma Dalit ra Janjati* (Dalits and Janjatis in Nepali Media) and *Chhapama Dalit* (Dalits in Press) are very helpful assessing media representation of Dalits. They are important resources that help in understanding what is published on Dalits, who published it, and to what extent it has forwarded the Dalit movement. The two books are the first of their kind because they compile articles published on Dalits on different topics and written from different perspectives.

Media admittedly has a short attention span, but, as the 'fourth state,' the amount of attention it pays to Dalit issues is dismal. A relatively small number of news articles and op-eds are written on Dalits. Moreover, such articles tend to be superficial in that they do not delve into structural and policy-level issues. This tendency is being corrected in current times, but still remains. The focus of press coverage on Dalits has expanded from writings on discrimination and violations of human rights to Dalit inclusion. Federalism is the biggest debate in Dalit magazines today. Only three to four magazines exist that can be considered independent from political parties or NGOs. This is a very small number for a group that represents anywhere between 13 to 21 percent of the country's population. Low representation of Dalits in the press and the absence of commercially sustainable Dalit media houses have resulted in limited writings on Dalits.

39 Interview with Rem Biswokarma, April 8, 2012.

Part Two

Dalit Writings in Numbers

This part of the review is based on analysis of a sample dataset (267 entries) built to compile all forms of writings on Nepali Dalits. The compilation process included Internet research, bibliographic study, the mapping of Dalit resources in various institutions (see Annex 2), and interviews with prominent contributors to Dalit studies and the social sciences. The data entered are books, research papers, theses, journal articles, and other forms of writings on Nepali Dalits. Ideally, the database would include all forms of literature, audio, video, and print. The selection of entries is relatively random, but is limited to writings that were easily accessible. Although the database includes writings in English and Nepali, there are fewer Nepali writings. This is caused by limitations in timely access to Nepali writings. Keeping this limitation in mind, the database needs to be treated as only a sample. The sample does not include newspaper articles and short research papers.

The entries are categorized according to theme, sub-themes, sub-groups within the larger Dalit community, research locations, background of the writer, and source of production. The questions that guided the categorization and analysis are as follows:

- What are the themes and sub-themes?

- What is the trend in Dalit literature?
- What form of literature is common? Books? Research papers?
- Who is writing? Dalits? Non-Dalits? Nepalis? Non-Nepalis? Males? Females?
- Who is publishing? INGOs? NGOs? Universities?
- What sub-groups are written about? Madheshi Dalit? Pahadi Dalit?
- What region is focused? Madhesh? Pahad?

The categorization process is organic because the categories are created only for the entries. A list of categories was not created beforehand. For example, the different theme categories are social, political, and educational. They were created after writings on education were entered. Themes and other categories have been assigned by reading the abstracts, summaries, introductions, and conclusions.

An in-depth study of all the writings has not been conducted to assign the categories. This is a major limitation of the paper as it prevents assigning refined categories. Moreover, writing usually has more than one theme. The overlapping of themes makes it difficult to categorize some writings. At the same time, differences in perspectives on which theme category a particular writing should belong to will always remain.

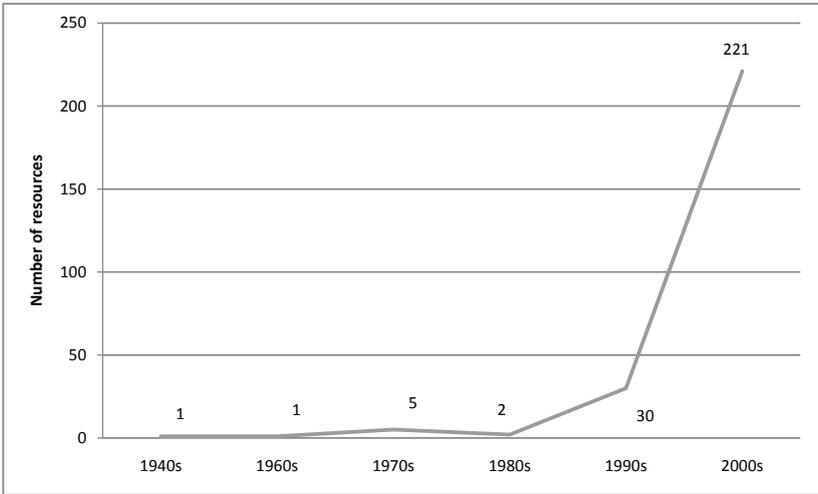
Major Findings

Historical Trend

Figure 1 illustrates the general trend of writings on Dalits produced since the 1940s. As explained, writings on Dalits date back to the 1940s when the Dalit movement began. An increase in writings on Dalits is seen starting in the 1990s with the democratic movement. The increase is steeper for the 2000s because of various reasons. For one, recent writings are easily accessible. Those produced by the Social Inclusion Research Fund also add to the steepness.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Madheshi Movement mainstreamed the issues of Madheshi Dalits. This opened new areas and communities to study.

⁴⁰ Social Inclusion Research Fund established in 2005 and has been producing scientific research on minority groups.

Figure 1: Historical trend from sample data

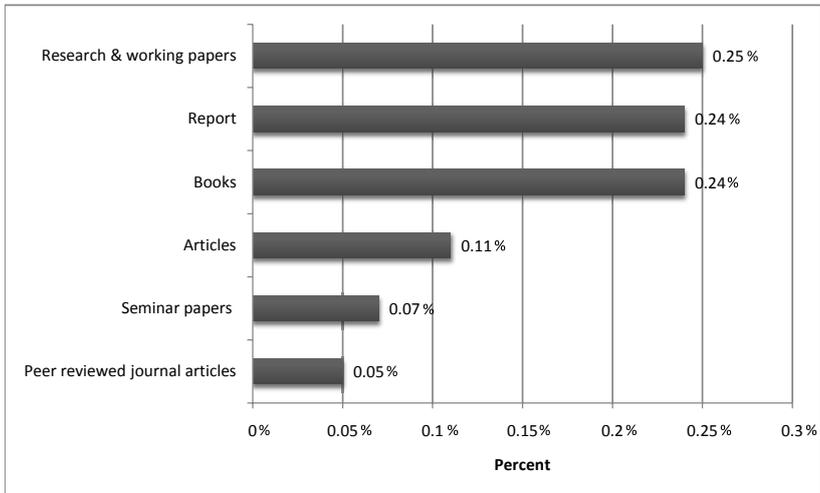


Total : 260. Date of publication missing for others. Limitations in sample collection can result in skewed depiction of trend.

Type Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates that research papers and working papers constitute the largest form of writing on Dalits, followed by books and reports. The government and the development sector largely produce reports. Journal articles, both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed, have space to grow especially as the academic sector continues to develop. During the course of the review, it was discovered that work to publish Nepal's first academic journal—Journal of Dalit Studies—is ongoing.⁴¹ (Three types of writing—non peer-reviewed journal articles, unpublished research papers, and theses—are not included in the figure because each type constitutes about 1 percent of the sample.)

41 Interview with Dr. Purna Nepali, September 30, 2011.

Figure 2: **Type of resources**

Total: 267 entries.

Source Analysis

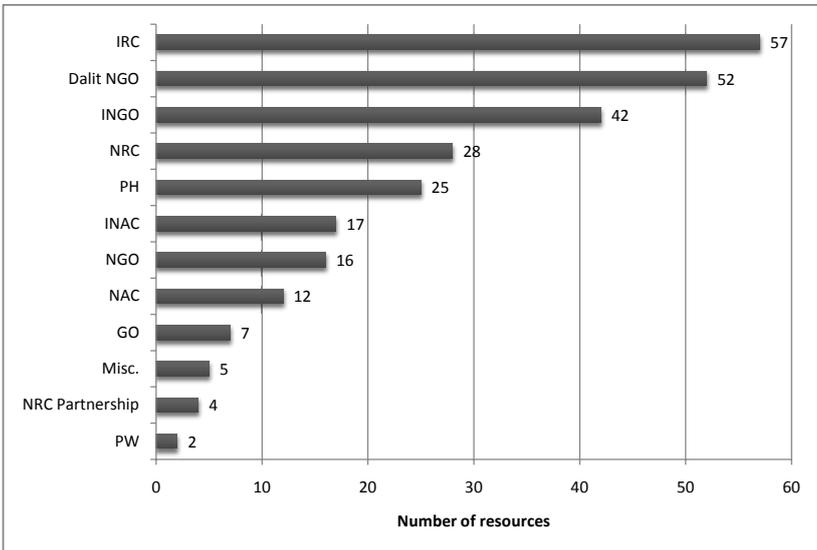
An analysis of the producers of knowledge on Dalits shows that international research centers have written most of the writings on Dalits (see Figure 3). The high number for international research can be explained because of the presence of the Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) in Nepal since 2005. SIRF encourages scientific research on socially excluded groups. It has selected the following research topics for Dalits:⁴²

- Incentive for Inter-caste Marriage with Dalits
- Views and Practices of Dalits and Non-Dalits on Untouchability and Caste Hierarchy
- Dalits and Identity Issues: Caste Mobility among Dalits
- Land and Dalit Rights
- Religious and Cultural Processes in Dalit Society

42 Social Inclusion Research Fund, <http://www.socialinclusion.org.np/procedure-guideline-detail-2.html>

Second to international research centers are Dalit NGOs, which is expected. Other NGOs are the third biggest contributors of knowledge production on Dalits. The figure indicates that the government produces relatively fewer numbers of articles on Dalits. However, this is more a limitation of the sample. Further work on including writings from the government needs to be undertaken. Although such limitations exist, what is important to note is that writings from academia, both national and international, fall behind those from international research centers and the development world. While the focus should not be on quantity alone, the low numbers of writings produced from the academic world evidences the amount of interest that students and academicians have on Dalits. This reaffirms Chaitanya Mishra's observation in his review.

Figure 3: **Producers of knowledge on Dalits**



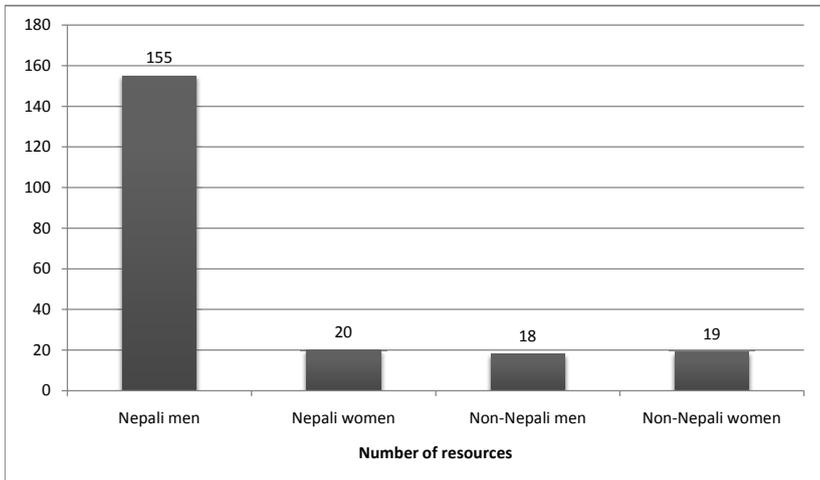
Total: 267 entries

Table 1: Sources

| Institutions | Legend |
|---|-----------------|
| National Academic Institutions | NAC |
| International Academic Institutions | INAC |
| Government | GO |
| INGOs | INGO |
| NGOs | NGO |
| Dalit NGOs | Dalit NGO |
| International Research Centers | IRC |
| National Research Centers | NRC |
| National Research Centers and INGO Partnerships | NRC partnership |
| Publishing Houses | PH |
| Political Wings | PW |

An analysis of the writer's background is illustrated below. Nationality can be traced for 212 entries. Among the 212 entries, 175 written by Nepali nationals have been further categorized into Dalits and non-Dalits. As expected, Nepali writers writing on Dalit issues exceed the number of non-Nepalis (see Figure 4).

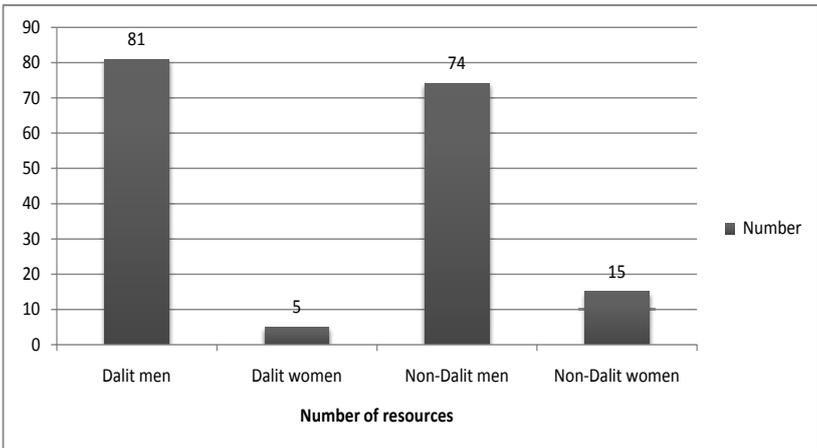
Figure 4: Writer's background by nationality



Total: 212 entries

Among Nepali writers (see Figure 5) there are almost an equal number of Dalit and non-Dalit writers. The former has 86 entries, while the latter has 89 entries. This contradicts the assumption that more non-Dalit writers write on Dalits because they have a greater advantage in terms of educational opportunities. What is disheartening here is the extremely low number of female writers, whether they are Nepali or non-Nepali, Dalit or Non-Dalit. Non-Dalit women write three times more than Dalit women. Therefore, sex-disaggregation of the writers' background indicates that a gendered perspective that comes from having more female writers is limited. This compels us to question the perspective used in the large number of writings written on gender, which will be discussed in the Sub-Group section.

Figure 5: Nepali writer's background by gender



Total: 175 entries

Theme Analysis

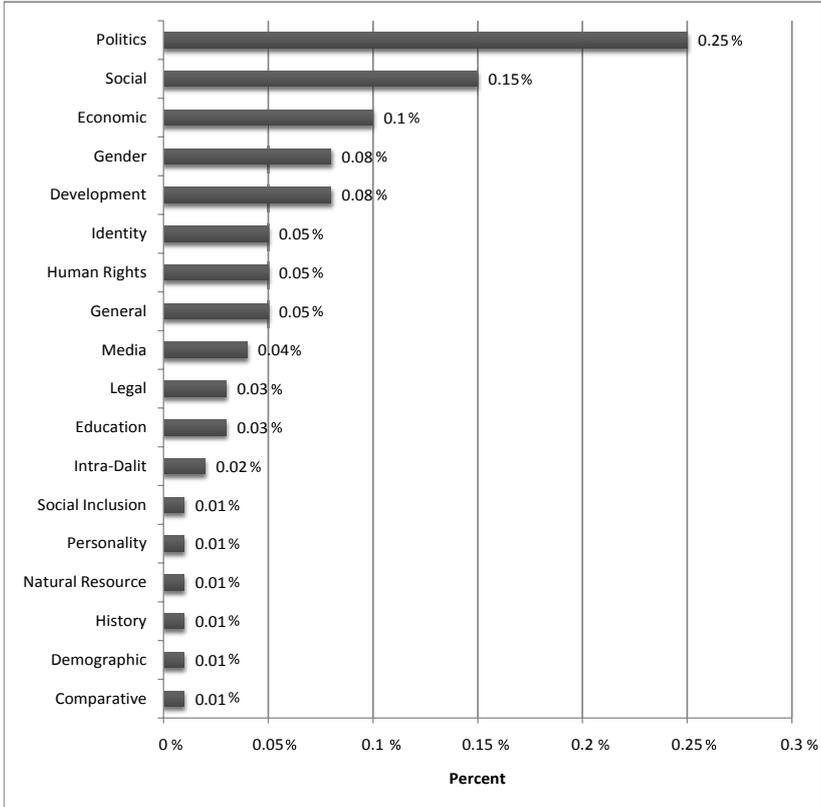
The sample of 267 entries of articles was divided into different themes. Table 3 provides a brief description of what each theme entails.⁴³

Table 2: Description of themes

| Themes | What is included? |
|-------------------|--|
| Comparative | Regional comparisons, global perspective |
| Demographic | Population and census |
| Development | Related |
| Economics | Labor, microfinance, caste-based occupation, land, poverty |
| Education | Education status, access |
| Gender | Inclusion, case-based occupation, status, health |
| History | Historical background |
| Human rights | Rights related |
| Identity | Understanding of Dalit identity, complexities, identity politics |
| Intra-Dalit | Intra-Dalit discrimination, comparative studies |
| Legal | Law, judiciary's role, <i>Muluki Ain</i> |
| Media | Media related |
| Natural resources | Community forests, ecology, natural resources |
| Personality | About Dalit leaders and personalities |
| Politics | Inclusion and exclusion, governance, constituent assembly, federalism, citizenship, political movements |
| Social inclusion | Broad understanding of social inclusion |
| Social | Discrimination, religious practices, cultural and social practices, untouchability, caste-based occupation |
| General | Case studies, situational analysis |

⁴³ To understand which topics related to Dalits have to be researched, two consultations with Dalit and non-Dalit youth and students were held in Dhanusha and Saptari in November 2011. See Annex 4 for the list of suggested topics.

Figure 6: Themes



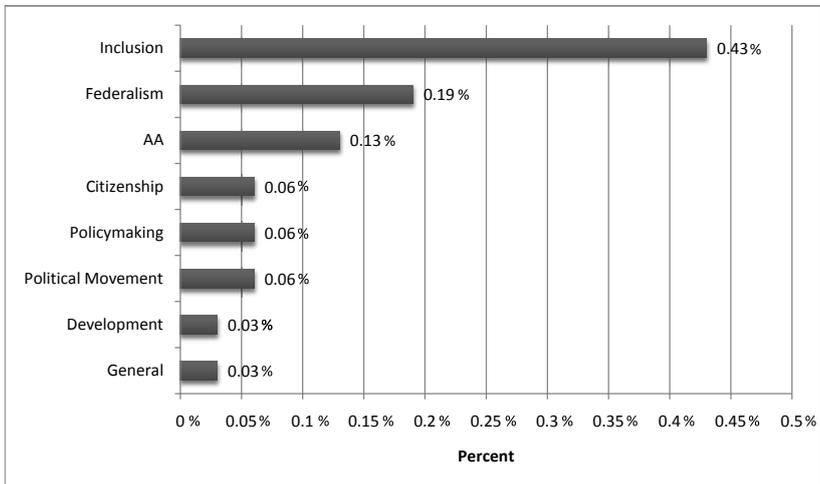
Total: 267 entries. The themes are based on what the writers have emphasized.

Figure 6 illustrates the thematic trends in Dalit studies based on the sample. Politics is the most popular theme, with 25 percent of entries. It is followed by Social with 15 percent, and Economic with 10 percent. Studies comparing situations of Nepali Dalits with Dalits in other parts of the world are limited. Similarly, there is scope and need for studies on demography, history, intra-Dalit discrimination, natural-resource management, personalities, and social inclusion. Many of the themes above overlap. For example, entries on Education could have been included in Social. However, it has been kept separate to highlight the fact that it is a theme that writers treat differently from the broader themes in which it could be placed.

It could be argued that the above themes are rooted in the development discourse and that they should instead be formed indigenously based on the Dalit Movement and political ideologies. The method employed for categorization of the themes is based on the topics selected and emphasized by the writers. The themes could have been categorized based on themes rising from the Dalit Movement and political thoughts. Regardless of the method employed, it is important to consider that the development sector's influence on the writer's topic selection is inevitable.

Within politics, 43 percent of the entries are about inclusion. Here, *Inclusion* refers to Dalit inclusion in the CA, the constitution-making process, and state and local governance. Inclusion is followed by Federalism (19 percent) and Affirmative Action (13 percent). (See Figure 7.)

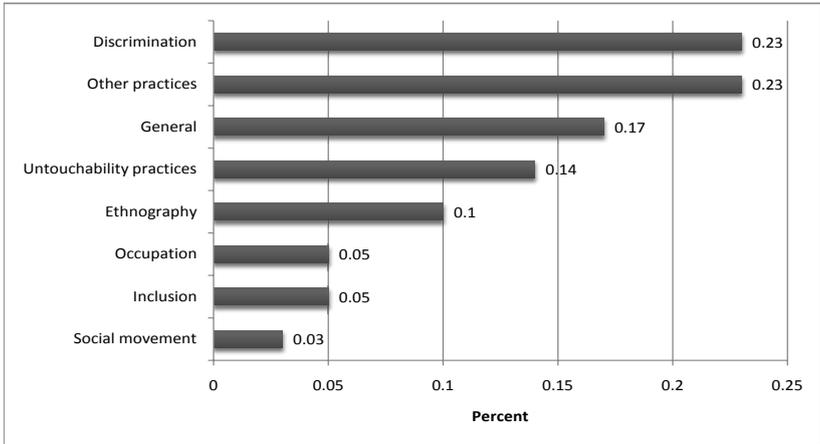
Figure 7: **Sub-themes within politics**



Total: 63 entries.

Within the social theme, the most popular sub-themes are Discrimination and Social Practices (23 percent each) and General Studies. *Practices* refers to writings on sociocultural practices followed by different groups within the Dalits. *General* refers to descriptive writings on the social status of Dalits. (See Figure 8.)

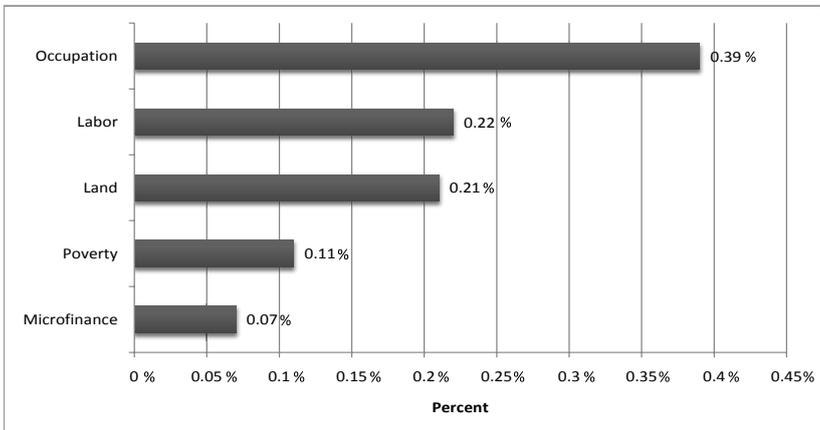
Figure 8: **Sub-themes within social**



Total: 40 entries.

Within the theme of economics, 39 percent of the entries were on caste-based occupation while 21 percent were on labor. Topics within Labor included trends in labor and descriptions on different formal and informal labor systems. Another 21 percent of writings were on Dalits and landlessness or systems of land divisions. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9: **Sub-themes within Economics**



Total: 28 entries.

Sub-group Analysis

Fifty-eight out of the 267 entries specify a sub-group within the Dalit community as the focus. Table 3 provides the breakdown of different sub-groups. While there are 23 writings on Madheshi Dalit, there are only 12 writings on Pahade Dalit. This contradicts the general conviction that more has been written on Pahade Dalit than Madheshi Dalit. Entries for Madheshi Dalits are perhaps high because the sample contains entries primarily from the 2000s. This is also a time period where writings on Madheshi Dalits increased following the Chamar movement of 2000 and Madhesh movement of 2007. Although the sample may present a skewed picture, given the political context, it can be said that writings on Madheshi Dalits have been increasing recently.

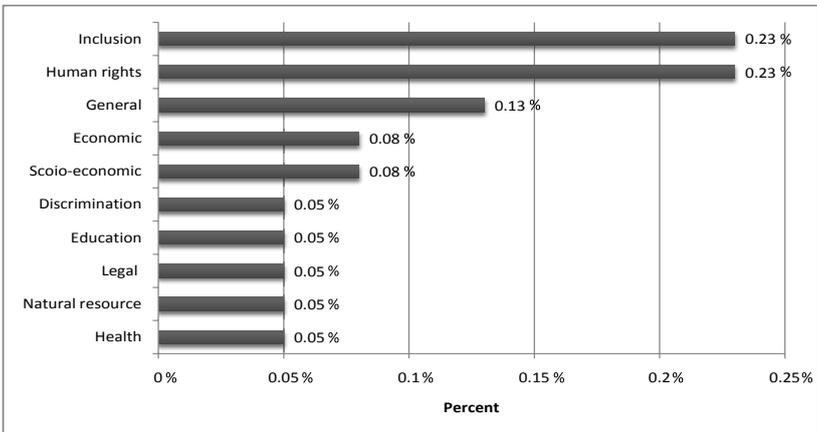
Table 3: Sub-groups

| Groups | Number of resources |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Madheshi Dalit | 23 |
| Pahadi Dalit | 12 |
| Youth and children | 4 |
| Gender | 22 |
| Labour systems (Hali, Haliya) | 2 |

Within the Dalit community, writings on gender and women are also substantial. This is perhaps a positive consequence of development interventions promoting gendered perspectives and the spread of the feminist wave. Looking into the topics within gender it is found that inclusion of women in social, economic, and political spheres of society and human rights of Dalit women are the most popular topics (see Figure 10).

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Figure 10: Sub-Themes within Gender

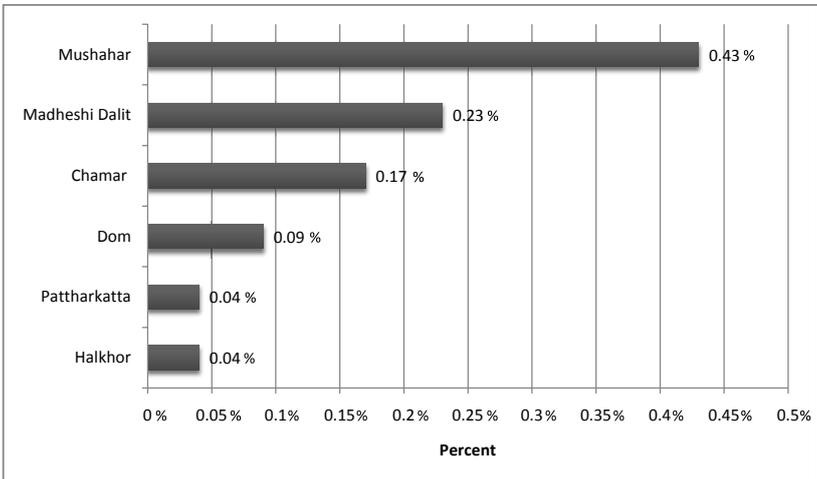


Total: 22 entries.

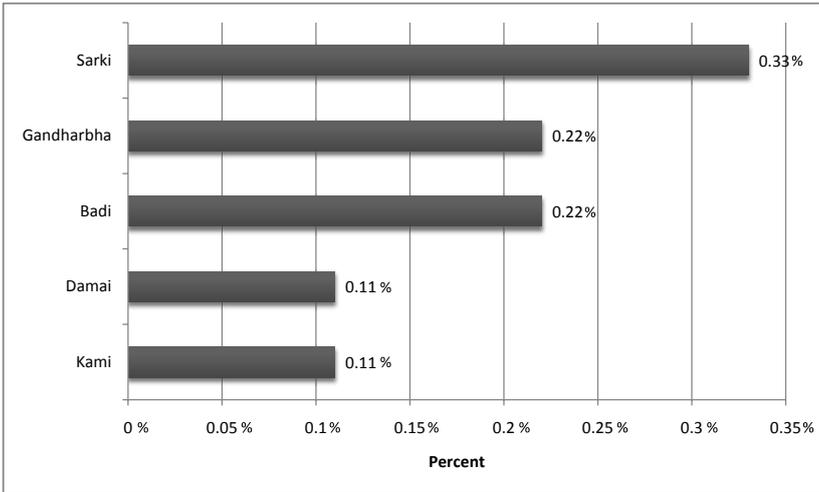
Deeper categorization of Madheshi Dalit shows that many writings are on the Mushahar community (45 percent), followed by Chamar (17 percent). Not all of the 23 writings can be categorized on the basis of different groups of Madheshi Dalits; 27 percent of the writings refer to the broader category. Only the sub-groups within the Madheshi Dalit category that are specified are shown in Figure 11. Similarly, among the Pahadi Dalits, Sarki and Damai are written about the most (see Figure 12).

Absence of a sub-group either from Madheshi Dalit or Pahadi Dalit does not necessarily mean exclusion of the sub-group in intellectual discourse. Keeping this in mind, it is still important to note that certain sub-groups are written about more than others. The underlying reasons for this selective behavior need to be further studied.

Figure11: Madheshi Dalits



Total: 23 entries.

Figure 12: **Pahade Dalit**

Total: 9 entries.

The trend depicted by categorization of sub-groups indicates to some extent what geographic areas get more attention because the sub-groups are located in particular areas of the country. Twenty-two out of 57 writings that specify research or study areas are conducted in the Eastern Development Region. The ethnic area of focus is Madheshi. Saptari has the highest number of writings, followed by Siraha.

Table 4: **Research Locations**

| Development Region | No. of resources |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Eastern | 22 |
| Central | 15 |
| Western | 15 |
| Mid-western | 4 |
| Far-western | 1 |
| Total | 57 |

The population of Dalits is mostly centered in the Eastern and Mid- and Far-western development regions. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the

Mid- and Far-western regions that tend to be neglected in all aspects of development policies also get relatively little attention from researchers. The relatively higher number for research on Dalits living in the Central Development Region can be for two reasons. First, there have been higher levels of interest on Newar Dalits because they are located in the Kathmandu Valley, which is easily accessible, and, second, parts of the ethnically defined territory with high Dalit populations in Madhesh fall within the Central Development Region.

Conclusion

Writings on Dalits have come a long way and faced many challenges. What exists is an accomplishment for the Dalit movement. However, writings on Nepali Dalits are in a nascent stage. The dearth is still stark. The changes in the writings on Dalits run parallel with the changes in construction of the Dalit identity and the development of the Dalit Movement. Changes in national politics, whether the end of the Rana regime, the introduction of multiparty democracy, or the beginning of a republic, have also influenced what is written about Dalits.

Dalit identity as a collective political identity was created when caste-based discrimination and untouchability were constitutionally and legally codified and permitted. Despite strong restrictions on freedom of expression during the Rana regime and the Panchayat period, writings against caste-based discrimination found space in Nepali literature and were spearheaded by non-Dalits who opposed the injustices of the caste system. Dalits were seen as victims and their problems were seen as part of the larger problem of caste-based discrimination. The Dalit voice emerged in the 1940s. A drastic change can be observed in the way Dalits were presented in literature at that time. From expressing sympathy and pity towards Dalits, writings expressed a powerful change where Dalit characters had agency and demanded rights. This shift from being subjects of pity to citizens demanding rights is a key trajectory in Dalit writings not just in literature but other areas of knowledge production as well.

Around the time when the Indian independence movement was gaining momentum, Nepali Dalits started their political movement. Political writings on Dalits started as Dalit activists came to the front and organized their

community. Political writings and literature fed into each other. Writings from both areas focused on raising awareness of the Dalit situation and the need to organize for Dalit liberation. The Communist Party, which was in its nascency in the early 1950s, capitalized on Dalit grievances and heavily influenced writings on Dalits. Such writings treated Dalits as part of the proletariat and saw the class struggle as the only way to Dalit liberation. This perspective dominates writings on Dalits produced in literature and those produced by sociopolitical organizations leading or supporting the Dalit movement. That said, writings by Dalit activists affiliated with political organizations also tended to be propaganda pieces. The central trajectory within sociopolitical writings is that earlier activists requested concessions and favors, whereas now they demand rights whether they are expressed as a demand for legal amendments, the formation of a Dalit commission, or special rights under a federal Nepal.

Staying away from propagating a communist class struggle, were writings produced from the academia and the development world. Academic studies on the Dalits started in the 1970s. They started from the sociological and ethnographic perspectives that gave insights into Dalit life, culture, and relationships with other communities. With the changing political and social landscape, academic interests have moved from the previous standpoints of sociology and ethnography to other disciplines in the humanities such as economics and development-related topics such as education and empowerment. More recently the academic interest has shifted to the politics behind being a Dalit, with the latest studies conducted on Dalit land rights, identity, social inclusion, and calls for federalism with concrete demands, such as 20 percent representation in all government agencies after accounting for proportional and special rights.⁴⁴ The gradual change in the areas of interest from sociology to political science seems only natural. The community needed to be first understood internally and in relation to others. This understanding exposed the deprivation, which, along with influences from the development sector, led to investigations on the causes of the deprivation and discrimination. Lastly, with raised political consciousness particularly on the rights of minorities, and a claim to the state and power through federalism, academic writings on Dalit identity and

44 Pamphlet distributed by the Dalit Citizen Society when it initiated the “Warning Campaign for Dalit Friendly Constitutions” on April 27, 2012.

the Dalit space in the federal state have recently grown.

Similarly, writings in the development sector that focused on social and economic welfare took up a rights-based approach. Inclusion became a research interest within the development sector in the 2000s. This shows that while earlier development interventions sympathized with Dalits, recent interventions recognize the Dalit agency as citizens, who are, unfortunately, treated unequally.

The trend in the so-called fourth state illustrates that there is limited news coverage on Dalits and there are few Dalit reporters. Sporadic news on Dalit issues was published throughout; however, it was not until the mid-1990s that Dalits gained substantial news coverage. Although the quantity of news pieces, opinion pieces, and editorials written on Dalit issues has increased compared to coverage in the early 1990s when it just began, the numbers still need to grow. Moreover, the quality has a long way to go. Dalit journalists argue that print media cover stories about violence and discrimination against Dalits. What is needed is a deeper analysis of the root causes and evolving nature of ad hoc informal rules of discrimination, an evaluation of policies and development interventions aimed at Dalit liberation, and an assessment of the actions of Dalit leaders in politics and civil society. A fundamental challenge is to increase the number of Dalits in all tiers of journalism.

While the quantitative review provides insights on what has been done and not done in the field of Dalit studies, the findings are premised within the constraints of the study. A larger sample size including arts and literature on Dalits, government documents and reports, and most importantly more writings in Nepali could enrich the study. Nonetheless, analysis of the sample data reveals key trends.

As the Nepali Dalit community has been in a constant struggle for political, social, and economic justice, it is only natural that studies in these areas will be high. Within political issues, the question of inclusion in politics and governance is prominent. Within social issues, writings on the discrimination against and social practices of Dalit communities are more numerous than those on Dalit social movements. Lastly, within economics, writings on caste-based occupation are plenty. This indicates that inclusion, discrimination,

and caste-based occupations of the Dalits are considered either more interesting or of higher importance by individuals and institutions writing on the Nepali Dalit community. Second to political, economic, and social issues, are areas such as development, gender, human rights, and identity. In the future, an increase in the focus on Dalit identity is likely because of debates on federalism.

The sample data also indicates that there are limited writings on the following areas: demography, education, history, intra-Dalit relationships and discrimination, legal issues, media, Dalits and natural resource management, and Dalits who have made significant contributions to the community and social inclusion. Research in these themes is imperative to enhance the Dalit debate within the context of state reconstruction.

Moving from what knowledge is produced to who is producing the knowledge on Nepali Dalits, the review indicates that research centers, especially international ones, are taking the lead. It is disappointing to see that Nepali academic institutions are behind their international counterparts in augmenting studies on the Dalits. This situation can be mitigated by including Dalit studies in university curriculums and ensuring that Dalit academics are represented in every department of a university.⁴⁵

In terms of the writers' background, 39 out of 213 writers are women. Because women, particularly Dalit women, have the lowest levels of education, there is an exigent need to invest in Dalit women's education for research and writing in order to produce a Dalit narrative that is respectful to the female voice.

Knowledge production on Dalits has an impact greater than raising awareness on Dalit issues. It shapes the Dalit narrative, the Dalit collective identity, and subsequently the demands that Dalits will make for social, political, and economic justice. In the long run, written texts on Dalits will form Dalit history. The richer and fuller the documentation of Dalit life, the richer the history. This review already shows the strong trajectory of the Dalit Movement evidenced by the writings available. Themes and topics within the writings on Nepali Dalits have moved from opposing cultural

45 Consultation on review of Dalit studies in Nepal. Comment by Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan, April 12, 2011.

practices to discriminatory political and social structures. They have shifted from sympathizing and pitying Dalits to recognizing Dalit agency. They have moved from requesting favors to claiming rights. The Dalit struggle is old and has been going on for decades, but mature writings on Dalits have just sprouted. The argumentative Dalit voice is still young.

Recent focus on identity and the Dalit space in federalism is encouraging and puts the spotlight on Dalits as Dalits and not as part of euphemisms like “marginalized,” “disadvantaged,” “ultra poor,” and “proletariat.” The current status of Dalit writings indicates that the Dalit narrative is heading in the right direction. However, confusions loom because political ideologies and influences dominate academic and scientific studies on what policies are best for Dalits. Time and money needs to be invested into unbiased scholarly research on Nepali Dalits.

Going Forward

Dalit Narrative

Looking at the progression of Dalit writings from the Josmani saints to current day writers, journalists, academics, and activists, writings on Dalits and the Dalit narrative have made a remarkable journey. Credit needs to be given to all the writers who have written on Dalit issues that have exposed social injustices, celebrated Dalit culture, highlighted Dalit skills, and sparked movements. These writings have contributed to building and shaping the Dalit narrative. However, the Dalit narrative remains an undercurrent because the Dalit question has always been in the shadows of, or lumped into, larger questions. The Josmani saints and early non-Dalit literary figures wrote against caste-based discrimination. Democratic movements against the Ranas, the Panchayat system, and the feudal system as claimed by the Maoists have always found willing supporters in the Dalit community because the Dalits have strong grievances against any state that comes into power since the power has been unable to address all Dalit problems. The Dalit narrative therefore leans on the larger narrative of the nation, subjects, proletariat, or marginalized community struggling for democracy or social justice. Reviewing writings that institutionalized the discrimination and those that have supported the struggle to end caste-based discrimination both from inside and outside the Dalit Movement indicate how the Dalit narrative has adapted itself to the surrounding narratives to gain incremental changes in its status.

It is now time for the Dalit narrative to stand on its own because the solutions that work for major movements that Dalits have been a part of do not work specifically for Dalits. Dalit issues gain and lose momentum with the political

waves that pass them. While other movements have either succeeded or failed, the Dalit movement continues. For this reason, the Dalit narrative needs to shift away from the communist tendencies to a new stage where it will tackle the problem of caste-based discrimination and untouchability head-on.

Recommendations

From the perspective of policymakers, knowledge production is key to making informed policies for the Dalits. There are topics that are popular and others that remain in the shadows. Limited access to education and trainings, publication houses, and the press has hindered Dalit writers from expressing themselves. Higher capacity among Dalits to write and publish would enrich knowledge produced on Dalits. Only after Dalit knowledge production is mainstreamed and enriched, will the Dalit discourse reach levels necessary to formulate effective policies and create an environment for pro-Dalit policymaking and governance. This requires a collective effort from different stakeholders in knowledge production, and it requires policy interventions from the government. Specifically:

To the Nepal Academy of Literature:

1. Increase Dalit representation in the Academic Council. At present there are eight members from Brahmin-Chhetri community, two Janajatis, and one Madheshi.⁴⁶
2. Prioritize the publication of Dalit writers. Government publication houses such as *Sajha Prakashan* should prioritize literary works from the Dalit community.
3. Allocate additional budget for publication on Pahadi and Madheshi Dalits and provide incentives, such as awards, to encourage Dalit writers.

To organizations involved in the sociopolitical Dalit movement:

4. Archive all historical documents (pamphlets, memoranda, and photos, among others) that served as a means of communication and documentation of the Dalit movement.
5. Maintain existing documents pertaining to the Dalit movement.

46 Interview with Bairagi Kaila, Chancellor of Nepal Academy, September 13, 2012.

To academic institutions:

6. Establish a Dalit Studies department, similar to area studies, that looks at understanding Dalit issues through multidisciplinary perspectives in universities and campuses affiliated with Tribhuvan University.
7. Increase Dalit representation in leadership positions within different departments of universities.
8. Encourage master's and PhD students to write their theses on Dalit-related topics. For this, academic institutions should arrange grants and fellowships for thesis research.
9. Similarly, encourage professors to research Dalit issues.

To national and international actors in the development sector:

10. Continue necessary research and studies to support the case of social inclusion. The review highlights that in the development sector, topics of knowledge production are influenced by international trends whether they are economic development for poverty reduction, the protection and promotion of rights, or gender equality. On the other hand, social inclusion is a trend that emerged from communities experiencing systematic exclusion and was one of the underlying causes of the Civil War. The development sector, which has already conducted research on topics related to social inclusion, should continue research supporting social inclusion.
11. Provide technical support to carry out comprehensive research based on robust methods that meet international standards.
12. Ensure Dalit representation and meaningful participation in utilization of donor funds for research on Dalits.

To the press and other media-persons:

13. Develop an alternative media under Dalit leadership that covers and follows marginalized issues. The Dalit community has a special vantage point—it looks at all of Nepali society from the ground up. This vantage point should be employed to generate news and views on various local and national issues.
14. Increase Dalit representation in all tiers of the media.
15. Increase news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials on Dalits issues.

Such coverage should provide deeper analysis of the problems of social injustices and structural discrimination rather than be limited to reporting acts of discrimination.

To the National Dalit Commission:

16. As a government body that is responsible for protecting Dalit rights and responding to Dalit issues, the National Dalit Commission should ensure that:
 - a. The government provides the necessary budget for research on the Dalit community and that the budget is properly utilized.
 - b. Provisions for research and data collection on Dalit communities, which are included in the Commission's list of policies and actions, are implemented.
 - c. Priority is given to research areas that are currently in the shadows but are crucial for making policies aimed at improving the social, economic, and political situations of the Dalit community. These areas include the review and assessment of the implementation of policies on caste-discrimination; Dalit history; Dalit access to natural resources; citizenship; traditional occupations and the Dalit contribution to the national economy; poverty outcomes of the Dalit community; and intra-Dalit discrimination. The Commission should also prioritize research on sub-groups within the Dalit communities to better understand their conditions.

Annexes

Annex 1:

Dalit writers in literature

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Aahuti (Biswobhakta Dulal) | Diliram Biswokarma | Pragya Santoshi |
| Amrit Pariyar | Dipendra Rasaili | Prakash Baraili |
| Anjana Bishankhe | Ganga Biswokarma | Prakash Darnal |
| Arjun Biswokarma | Gaunle Sailo | Prem B.K. |
| B.K. Rashi | Gyandendra Gadai | Prerana Biswokarma |
| B.K. Sewak | H.B. Ramtel | Purana Singh Dayal |
| B.N. Begari | Hira Vishwokarma | Purna Nepali Ankur |
| B.R. Pyasi | Janardhan Biyogi | Purna Prakash Biswokarma |
| Baburam Biswokarma | Jangabahadur Biswokarma | Pushkar Biswokarma |
| Baburam Pyasi | Jawahar roka | Rabiman Lamjel |
| Bal Sundas | Jayaram Sundas | Rabin Pariyar |
| Balbahadur Darji | Jhalak Sunar | Rajendra Uperakoti |
| Bashu Biswokarma | Jitu Gautam | Rajkumar Bagar |
| Bhagatsingh B.K. | Kamal B.K. | Ram Basu |
| Bikram Nepali | Kamala Hemchuri | Ram Krishna Deula |
| Bimjhana Biswokarma | Khem Nepali | Rambhadur Nepali |
| Binod Pahadi | Khyamu Gaunle Biswokarma | Ramkumari B.K. |
| Bir Singh | Kiran Darnal | Ramsharan Darnal |
| Bishnu B.K. | Kisan Premi | Ranendra Barali |
| Chakraman Biswokarma | Krishna Barali | Ratna B.K. |
| Chandrabindu | Krishna Pariyar | Resbahadur B.K. |
| Chhabilal Biswokarma | Laxmi Rasaili | Rudra Bahadur |
| Chhatra Bahadur Nepali | Lokbahadur Basel | Samsher Gahatraj |
| Chitra Sikaru | Lokdarshan Biswokarma | Sangeeta Nepali |
| D.B. Nepali | Lokesh Biswokarma | Sanubhai Biswokarma |
| Dabala Bahadur B.K. | Mankumari Nepali | Sarita Pariyar |
| Dalbir Baraili | Manoharlal Nepali | Saroj Dillu |
| Dambar Pahadi | Mithaidebi Biswokarma | Shobha Dulal |
| Dan Bahadur B. K. | Motilal Nepali | Som Biswokarma |
| Danbahadur Biswokarma | Narabahadur Sunar | Sundar Tikhatri |
| Devendra Sakten | Narasingh Biswokarma | Suvash Darnal |
| Dhanbahadur Nepali | Narayan Ranapal | T.R. Biswokarma |
| Dhankumari Sunar | Padam Lekali | Tanuja Ghale |
| Dhurba Pariyar | Padam Sundas | Tikaram Rasaiuli |
| Dhurbasatya | Padamlal Biswokarma | Urmila Devi Biswokarma |
| Dikbahadur Biswokarma | Panchkumari Pariyar | Yogmaya Darji |
| Dilip Pariyar | Pawitra Sunar | |

Annex 2:

Total news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials on Dalits published in major newspapers in the year 2004, 2005, and 2008 (Biswokarma, forthcoming: 30, 36, and 39).

| Name of newspaper | Total news articles | Total opinion pieces | Total editorials | Total |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Kantipur | 1210 | 68 | 5 | 1283 |
| Gorkhapatra | 1113 | 65 | 14 | 1192 |
| Annapurna Post | 953 | 72 | 16 | 1041 |
| Nepal Samacharpatra | 782 | 50 | 3 | 835 |
| Rajdhani | 804 | 55 | 10 | 869 |
| Himalaya Times | 829 | 36 | 15 | 880 |
| The Himalayan Times (Eng.) | 221 | 4 | 3 | 228 |
| The Rising Nepal (Eng.) | 140 | 5 | 9 | 154 |
| The Kathmandu Post (Eng.) | 148 | 9 | 4 | 161 |
| NagarikDainik | 203 | 20 | 1 | 224 |
| NayaPatrika | 223 | 24 | 3 | 250 |
| Republica (Eng.) | 67 | 4 | 0 | 71 |
| Total | 6693 | 412 | 83 | 7188 |

Source: JMC 2004, 2005, 2008.

Annex 3:

Available number of writings and resources on Dalits and social inclusion in different institutions⁴⁷

| S.N. | Institution | Total Number of Books | Total Entries on Dalit |
|------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Dalit NGO Federation(DNF) | 1256 | 23 |
| 2 | Social Baha Science | 30,000 | 163 |
| 3 | Jagaran Media Center | 694 | 259 |
| 4 | Martin Chautari | 18000 | 230 |
| 5 | Action Aid | - | 19 |
| 6 | CNAS | - | 25 ⁴⁸ |
| 7 | FEDO | 256 | 100 |
| 8 | NNDSWO | 213 | 30 |
| 10 | LANCAU | 270 | 87 |
| 11 | COCAP | 612 | 14 |
| 13 | KVPL | 60,000 | 12 |
| 14 | Kaiser Library | 33,613 | 7 |
| 15 | JUP | - | 35 |
| 16 | National Library | 91,000 | 26 |
| 18 | BikashSamiti | 1,009 | 77 |
| | Total | 23,6923 | 1107 |

47 Total entries include the number of results (books, CDs, DVDs among others) provided by the online library search and interviews with the organizations as of February 2012.

48 For CNAS, the number indicates the number of articles published on Dalits or the caste system.

Annex 4:

Summary of suggestions given by youth in consultations held in Dhanusha and Saptari in November 2011 on what topics related to Dalits need more research

1. Comparative studies on social, economic, and political status and accesses of sub-groups within the Dalit community and their inter-relations. For example, comparative studies of Dom and Mushahar or Pahadi and Madheshi Dalit
2. Intra-Dalit discrimination and untouchability issues
3. Theological study on the origins of untouchability
4. Occupational changes and trends: Dalits who leave their traditional profession are better off
5. Madheshi Dalit inclusion with special focus on Madheshi women
6. Deeper understanding of the causes of oppression
7. Evaluation of budget allocated for Dalits at local levels
8. Affirmative action
9. The impact of Dalit NGOs on reaching Dalit communities
10. Evaluation of implementation of policies targeted at Dalits
 - a. Education: Scholarship policy evaluation, behavior of teachers
 - b. Health: Private hospitals have committed to treating at least 10 percent Dalits and the poor for free and receive government funding for this purpose. However, they are not providing the services.
 - c. Implications of the policy to promote inter-caste marriage with monetary incentives
11. No uniformity in wages provided to agricultural laborers. Government rules not followed.
12. Migrant worker issues: changes brought in social dynamics by the increase in migrant workers.

Additionally, youth suggested that researchers should not limit themselves to researching in communities that are closer to the highway and easily accessible. They should travel to inner Madhesh, which has not been reached by researchers.

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Bhola Paswan, researcher at Samata Foundation and journalist at Naya Patrika for Madhesh Beat. April 4, 2012. Lalitpur.

Chaitanya Mishra, professor at the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University. August 15, 2011. Kathmandu.

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Hira Vishwakarma, Dalit scholar. April 28, 2012. Lalitpur.

Jagat Basnet, director at Community Self Reliance Centre. September 11, 2011. Kathmandu.

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Krishna B. Bhattachan, associate professor at the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University. August 24, 2011. Kathmandu.

Padam Sundas, board chair of Samata Foundation, poet, activist. September 31, 2011. Lalitpur.

Purna Nepali, executive director of COLARP and board member of Institute for Dalit Studies. September 30, 2011. Lalitpur.

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About Samata Foundation

Samata Foundation was established in 2008. The Foundation was first established as Nepal Dalit Studies Centre in association with Jagaran Media Centre. It now operates as a profit-making non-profit sharing company. The Foundation supports the government and the citizenry to better understand Dalits and other marginalized communities. Through research, publications, trainings, and discussions and dialogues, the Foundation carries out research-based policy advocacy. The Foundation believes that scholarly knowledge and intellectual discussions play a central role in transforming the country to a lawful, equal, and inclusive republic and to developing leadership among the marginalized communities.

Within a short span of time, Samata Foundation has established itself at national and international levels as a think tank that researches policy issues of Dalits. Since 2009, the Foundation has conducted research and advocated for policy interventions to protect Dalit rights in the new constitution. The Foundation has compiled a profile of Dalit CA members, provided national and international research material to CA members, and translated important works on Dalits from English and other languages to Nepali. Furthermore, the Foundation has reviewed and analyzed the proposals presented by the committees from a Dalit perspective and provided recommendations that the Dalit CA members can reference.

In June 2010, Samata Foundation organized an international conference "Dynamics of Caste, Identity and Inclusion of Dalits," which was the first of its kind in Nepal. The conference was attended by over a hundred scholars, human rights activists, academics, researchers, and representatives from civil society from twelve different countries. The conference was successful

in presenting twenty-four papers and bringing together individuals and organizations engaged in the Dalit Movement and social inclusion. It also expanded the international network for the Foundation and other organizations leading the Dalit movement.

Samata Foundation published Dalit leader and writer Aahuti's book, titled *Nepalma Varna Byawastha ra Barga Sangharsha* (Caste System and Class Struggle in Nepal) in 2010. Along with historicizing the Dalit movement, the book provides direction and guidance for the future. The book has been included in the master's-level Sociology and Anthropology curriculum of Tribhuvan University.

In 2011, the Foundation published a policy paper *Confusion in Dalit Transformation in the New Constitution of Nepal*. High-level discussions based on the policy paper were also organized. This year the Foundation published *Satta-Bimarsh ra Dalit: Ambedkar, Drishtikon ra Biwechana* (Power Discourse and Dalit: Ambedkar, Perspectives and Analysis) with the aim of learning about Dalit representation in the Indian experience. At present, the Foundation is working on policy papers on the electoral system and Dalit representation and a situational report on Doms.

Late Suvash Darnal, the foundation's managing director, sowed the seed of a dream to establish an open university and a press. His dreams live on as Samata continues to grow. The Foundation has four research fellows from the Dalit community. Dr. Narendra Mangal Joshi and Dr. Rabindra Roy, with their years of experience in research, facilitate and guide the research fellows. The Foundation has a strong management team and network with other civil society organizations, which are pushing the social inclusion agenda forward. Samata Foundation's board members are:

Padam Sundas, chairperson; Dr. Madan Pariyar, member; Dr. Sumitra Manandhar Gurung, member; Thakurnath Dhakal, member; and Sarita Pariyar, member.