

CHAPTER-II

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THE LAHAN MUNICIPALITY

This chapter comprises of population and housing condition, religion, literacy status, economy, infra structure, health and hygiene of the caste and community living in Lahan. It also presents a detail description of the Chamars.

Lahan municipality lies in Siraha district of Eastern Development Region. It covers an area of 20.23 sq. km. According to Population Census 2001, this municipality had a density of 1,367 persons per sq. km. It was declared municipality in 1975. Its socio-economic characteristics are described below.

POPULATION PROFILE:

Lahan municipality spreads in 10 wards which accounts 5262 households with an average number of 526 households/wards and average household size 5.2. Comparatively the ward number one has more household followed by ward 5 and 3. The municipality comprises of 27,654 population representing 52.5 per cent male and 47.5 per cent female (Table-1).

TABLE 01: NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION BY SEX

Ward	No. of Households	Population					Average Household Size
		Total	Male	%	Female	%	
0	5262	27654	14532	52.5	13122	47.5	5.26
1	1035	4684	2550	9.2	2134	7.7	4.53
2	316	1823	899	3.3	924	3.4	5.77
3	556	3156	1704	6.2	1452	5.3	5.68
4	541	3057	1548	5.6	1509	5.5	5.65
5	606	3527	1780	6.4	1747	6.3	5.82
6	441	2199	1158	4.2	1041	3.8	4.99
7	382	2042	1132	4.1	910	3.3	5.35
8	520	2796	1503	5.4	1293	4.7	5.38
9	342	1811	894	3.2	917	3.3	5.30
10	523	2559	1364	4.9	1195	4.3	4.89

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

The distribution of population by five years age group and sex show relatively leading proportion in age group 5-9 (14.6%) followed by 10-14 (12.2%) and 0-4 (12.1%) respectively. Out of the total population the majority 56.5 per cent falls in economically active (15-59) age group. By gender, male population leads in most of the age group below 15 years. In the age group of 60 and above there are 3 per cent female population.

Out of the total population of Lahan Municipality, 522 people own the citizenship of other countries representing the highest (98.1%) from India. The others are from Bangladesh 0.8 per cent, others 0.2 per cent from China, and the rest from other Asian countries. Comparatively ward number 3, 1, 8 and 7 has a higher number of foreign citizenship.

Most of the population of Lahan municipality (94.3%) are native born and 86 per cent born in the same district. Out of the total foreign born (1565) population 29 per cent are male and 71 per cent female. Ward number 3, 7, 4 and 8 has comparatively higher number of foreign born population. Among the native born population 14.1 per cent are born in the other district with rural born remarkably higher than urban born (Table-2).

TABLE 02: POPULATION BY PLACE OF BIRTH AND SEX

Sex	Total Population	Foreign Born	Native Born
Both Sexes	27654 (100%)	1565 (5.6%)	26089 (94.3%)
Male	14532 (52.5%)	448 (1.6%)	14084 (50.9%)
Female	13122 (47.5%)	1117 (4.0%)	12005 (43.4%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

The population aged 10 and above is 20,269 representing 67.2 per cent married, 31.4 per cent living single and 1.4 per cent not stated. Out of the total married population 48 per cent are male and 52 per cent female. The majority (92

%) have single spouse, 2.4 per cent remarried and 3.4 per cent widow. The proportion of divorced and separated is very low in comparison to those living with one spouse. Only 0.14 per cent population is divorced (Table-3).

TABLE 03: POPULATION AGED 10 YEARS AND ABOVE BY MARITAL STATUS AND SEX

Sex	Total Population	Population							Marital Status not Stated
		Single	MARRIED AND LIVING WITH			Widow/Widower	Divorced	Separated	
			One Spouse	More than One Spouse	Remarried				
Both	20269	6364	12522	255	333	461	19	21	293
Sexes	(73.2%)	(31.3%)	(61.7%)	(1.3%)	(1.6%)	(2.3%)	(0.1%)	(0.1%)	(1.4%)
Male	10714	3945	5946	255	253	112	4	8	191
	(52.8%)	(36.8%)	(55.5%)	(2.4%)	(2.4%)	(1.1%)	(0.03%)	(0.07%)	(1.8%)
Female	9555	2419	6576	0	80	350	15	13	101
	(47.2%)	(25.3%)	(68.8%)	(0%)	(0.8%)	(3.7)	(0.2%)	(0.1%)	(1.1%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

HOUSING CONDITIONS:

Type of house unit can be one of the many indicators of the quality of life of an urban household. Based on the use of building materials, four broad categories of house or housing unit in municipality can be sorted. These are pakki or concrete (brick and cement, cement and iron), semi pakki or partly concrete (partly brick and cement), kachha or non concrete (local materials: stone, mud and wood) and others. The house/housing units composition in the municipality is dominated by non pakki ones. About 40 % of the house/housing units in whole municipality are pakki types. However, significant variation in composition can be noticed in different wards. The proportion of non pakki types are considerable high in the ward no. 2, 4, 5 and 9 i.e. above 70 %. Among the non pakki ones, semi kachhi is common type in most wards.

FEMALE OWNERSHIP ON HOUSE AND LAND:

Gender disparity in ownership is highly acute. The traditional pattern of ownership prevails in the municipality where male commands over ownership on the basic assets like house and land. In all wards, more than 86.4% of women do not have ownership on either land or house or both. This implies vast majority of women are devoid of ownership rights making them economically and socially vulnerable (Table-4).

TABLE 04: OWNERSHIP ON HOUSE AND LAND

Ward	Total	Ownership of Female On			No Ownership
		House Only	Land Only	Both House and Land	
0	5262	333 (6.3%)	28 (0.5%)	356 (6.8%)	4545 (86.4%)
1	1035	21 (2.1%)	4 (0.4%)	88 (8.5%)	922 (89.0%)
2	316	32 (10.1%)	0 (0%)	7 (2.2%)	277 (87.6%)
3	556	18 (3.2%)	1 (0.2)	59 (10.6%)	478 (85.9)
4	541	67 (12.4%)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.6%)	470 (86.8%)
5	606	3 (0.5%)	16 (2.6%)	62 (10.2%)	525 (86.6%)
6	441	50 (11.3%)	2 (0.5%)	29 (6.6%)	360 (81.6%)
7	382	38 (9.9%)	0 (0%)	31 (8.1%)	313 (81.9%)
8	520	63 (12.1%)	2 (0.4%)	16 (3.1%)	439 (84.4%)
9	342	12 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	37 (10.8%)	293 (85.7%)
10	523	29 (5.5%)	2 (0.4%)	24 (4.6%)	468 (89.5%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

GENDER AND HOUSEHOLD HEAD:

Gender is a cross cutting issue and without concerning gender analysis, study may be biased. Participation in social sphere, education status, economic condition etc. shows the status of development of any gender. Household head is

also the unit of analysis. There is a clear cut gender imbalance in terms of household head in the municipality. Male overwhelmingly dominates the number of household head i.e. 9 % of the total. In an average, there are about 8 male headed households for each female counterpart.

LITERACY STATUS:

Education is one of the measuring indicators of human development index. Therefore, education status shows the living condition of population.

Of the total population 6 years of age and over (23332) in Lahan municipality, 55.7 percent is literate. Male literacy is 69.1 percent and female 40.8 percent. Compared with national average, the total literacy rate is slightly higher (national average 53.7 percent) (Table-5).

TABLE 05: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY LITERACY STATUS

Sex	Population Aged 6 Years and Above	Population			Literacy not Stated
		Illiterate		Literate	
		Can't Read and Write	Can Read Only		
Both Sexes	23332 (100%)	9109 (39.01%)	1017 (4.4%)	13002 (55.7%)	204 (0.9%)
Male	12312 (52.8%)	3251 (13.9%)	432 (1.8%)	8506 (36.5%)	124 (0.5%)
Female	11020 (47.2%)	5858 (25.1%)	585 (2.5%)	4497 (19.3%)	80 (0.3%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:

Among total literate population (13002) in the municipality 35.2 percent has attained Primary education only, 16.7 percent Lower Secondary and 12.2 percent Secondary education. Literates with SLC constituted 15.5 percent. The proportion attaining higher education i.e., beyond SLC is 12.8 percent only.

RELIGION:

Religion is another indicator to analyze the population. It is found that religious syncretism is highly practiced in study area though different religious people live there. An overwhelming majority is of Hindu population 24323(87.9%). The remaining population belongs to Islam 2829(10.2%), Bouddha 420(1.5%), Kirat 40(0.1%), Christian 22(0.1%), Jain 3(0.01%) and other religion 17(0.06%) (Table-6).

TABLE 06: POPULATION BY RELIGION

Total Population	Population						
Total	Hindu	Bouddha	Islam	Kirat	Christian	Jain	Other
27654.00	24323 (87.9%)	420 (1.5%)	2829 (10.2%)	40 (0.1%)	22 (0.07%)	3 (0.01%)	17 (0.06%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

CASTE AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION:

Caste and ethnicity are the basic component to analyze the population. All caste and ethnic groups are not equal in all dimensions. Therefore, caste and ethnic distribution gives clear cut picture while studying. There are many caste/ethnic groups in the municipality. Among them Muslim (10.3 percent), Tharu (10.0 percent), Koiri (8.0 percent), Sudhi (5.3 percent), Dusad/Paswan/Pasi (5.2 percent), Yadav (4.9 percent), Brahman-hill (4.7 percent), Dhanuk (4.4 percent), Baniya (4.3 percent), Musahar (3.9 percent) and Teli (3.7 percent) are the main caste/ethnic groups. Others are Haluwai (2.9 percent), Chamar/Harijan/Ram (2.6 percent), Chhetri (2.6 percent), Kumhar (1.8 percent), Newar (1.6 percent), Mallah (1.6 percent), Marwadi (1.6 percent), Tatma (1.4 percent), Kayastha (1.2 percent), Kewat (1.2 percent) and Kami (1.0 percent). Other caste/ethnic groups with less than 1 percent population each in the municipality are Hajam/Thakur, Kalwar, Rajput, Khatwe, Sonar, Halkhor, Manjhi, Kumal, Sanyasi, Kurmi, Brahman-terai, Sarki. Magar, Bangali, Santhal/Sattar, Gharti/Bhujel, Rai, Dhobi, Kanu, Damai/Dholi, Dom and Barae (Table-7).

TABLE 07: POPULATION BY CASTE / ETHNIC GROUP

Caste Name	No. of Population	Percent
Chhetri	710	2.6
Brahman - Hill	1287	4.7
Magar	148	0.5
Tharu	2726	9.8
Newal	430	1.5
Muslim	2838	10.3
Kami	269	1.0
Yadav	1350	4.9
Rai	115	0.4
Damai/Dholi	94	0.3
Sarki	139	0.5
Teli	1034	3.7
CHAMAR/ HARIJAN/ RAM	729	2.6
Koiri	2208	8.0
Kurmi	170	0.6
Sanyasi	155	0.5
Dhanuk	1215	4.4
Musahar	1066	3.9
Dusadh/Paswan/Pasi	1432	5.2
Sonar	189	0.9
Kewat	330	1.2
Brahman – Tarai	132	0.5
Baniya	1181	4.3
Gharti/Bhujel	97	0.4
Mallah	444	1.6
Kalwar	242	0.9
Kumal	163	0.6
Hajam/Thakur	253	0.9
Kanu	79	0.3
Sudhi	1456	5.3
Tatma	385	1.4
Khatwe	208	0.8
Dhobi	86	0.3
Majhi	181	0.7
Kumhar	510	1.8
Haluwai	814	2.9
Rajput	228	0.8
Kayastha	331	1.2
Marwadi	456	1.6
Santhal/Sattaar	113	0.4
Barae	59	0.2
Bangali	105	0.4
Dom	51	0.2
Halkhor	179	0.6
Unidentified Caste	871	3.1
Others	396	1.4
Total	27654	100

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004 based on Population Census, 2001.

MOTHER TONGUE:

Language is a means to communicate with each other. Without language it is impossible to share feelings and emotions with each other. Maithili is the mother tongue of 72.4 percent population in Lahan municipality. Other linguistic groups are Nepali (10.9 percent), Tharu (10.0 percent), Marwari (Rajasthani) (1.4 percent), Newari (0.5 percent), Hindi (0.5 percent) and Bangla (0.4 percent) (Table-8).

TABLE 08: POPULATION BY MOTHER TONGUE

Mother Tongue Name	Total Population
Nepali	3019 (10.9%)
Maithili	20011 (72.4%)
Tharu	2778 (10.0%)
Newar	141 (0.5%)
Urdu	256 (0.9%)
Hindi	134 (0.5%)
Bangla	108 (0.4%)
Marwari (Rajasthani)	398 (1.4%)
Unknown Language	666 (2.4%)
Others	143 (0.5%)
Total	27654 (100%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION:

As Nepal is a country of an overwhelmingly agricultural based economy, the primary source of income of the people is land. Therefore, it is necessary to look up at the ownership of land to understand the extent of basic economy of population. It is interesting to see that the municipal households with land use for agricultural purpose are lesser than (28%) the household with no land used for agricultural purpose. Most of the wards have relatively lesser the proportion of the land use for agricultural purpose, however some wards i.e., 5, 7 and 8 consists only about 11% of the land used for agricultural purpose in this municipality (Table-9).

TABLE 09: NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH LAND USED FOR AGRICULTURE PURPOSE

Total Number of Households	Household with Land used for Agriculture Purpose	Household with no Land Used for Agriculture Purpose
5262 (100%)	1471 (28.0%)	3791 (72.0%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

OCCUPATION:

Excluding the ownership of land, the other major means of livelihood of the people is the sale of their traditional occupation. There are number of households which have small scale household economic activities of the municipality. More than 69% of the households have no economic activity in the municipality. Only about 18% of the total households have adopted business and about 4% have services. Other activities are very less. The figure shows that most of the business activities are concentrated in ward no. 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 which consist about 81% of the total households of this municipality.

The data indicates the employed population 10 years of age and above by occupation by sex. Almost 23 percent of the populations are engaged as service workers and shop and market sales workers in this municipality. Similarly, it is followed by skilled and semi-skilled agricultural and fishery workers (22%), craft related activities (20%) and elementary occupations which consist of about 18% of the total households of this municipality. The remaining populations are in other sectors, i.e. professional and technical as well as non-technical sectors. Moreover, the service related works ranks as the first important occupation on which about 23% of male and 22% of female are involved where as in elementary occupation this proportion is 18% male and 18% female. Likewise, the agriculture is also contributing factors which consists about 19% of the male and 38% female are involved. Other occupations are dominated by the male population.

In the case of communication, telephone facility is available in all wards but it is very limited in ward no 2 and 9 of the municipality. More than 30 percent households of all wards, except in ward no 2 and 8, of the municipality have radio. Television is also available in all wards of the municipality.

Many households in all wards have motor car, motorcycle, and refrigerator. Such facilities are comparatively more available in ward no 1, 4 and 7 (Table-10).

TABLE 10: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE OF AVAILABLE FACILITIES

No. of House hold	Households with Facility of								Facility not Stated
	Radio	Television	Bicycle	Motor Car	Motor Cycle	Other Vehicle	Refrigerator	Telephone	
5262	1652 (31.38%)	1903 (36.18%)	2490 (47.32%)	83 (1.58%)	323 (6.14%)	148 (2.81%)	179 (3.40%)	596 (11.31%)	1914 (36.35%)

Source: Lahan Municipality, 2004.

HEALTH AND SANITATION:

Households of Lahan Municipality get drinking water from various sources. Piped water (tap), tubewell, and well are the major sources of drinking water in Lahan municipality. Out of the total households of the municipality, about 70 percent households receive drinking water from tubewell and about 22 percent gets pipe water. Besides these sources, about 4 percent households fetch water from the well and about 2 percent households are depending on other sources. Although the proportions of households, fetching drinking water from natural spring and river/stream are very negligible, nevertheless, some households of Lahan fetch drinking water from these sources.

The proportion of households depending on different source of drinking water is varying in different wards of the municipality. However, tubewell is observed as the primary source of drinking water in each ward. The percentage of households using piped drinking water is ranging from 5 percent in ward no. 2 as the least served ward to 50 percent in ward no. 7 as the highest served ward. Although piped water could be considered as relatively reliable and safer source of drinking water, significant proportion of households of the municipality are depending on tubewell and well. The proportions of households getting drinking water from well is about 18 percent in ward no. 4, about 1 percent households of most of the wards are depending in well for drinking water. Similarly, about 6 percent households in ward no. 8 use other source of water than stated here and about 6 percent household of both 6 and 8 no. wards do not state about their source of drinking water.

In Lahan Municipality, modern flush toilet is available only in about 35 percent of the total households. The proportion of households using ordinary toilet is about 7 percent. Rest of the 56 percent households of Lahan Municipality use

open toilet. Moreover, about 3 percent households of the municipality do not state about the toilet they are using.

The proportion of household with different toilet facility is varying in different wards with the leading proportion of households not having toilets in most of the wards. The proportion of households having no toilet is ranging from 15 percent in ward no. 7 as the least, to 90 percent in ward no. 2 as the highest. Similarly, the proportions of households using ordinary toilet are 16, 13 and 12 percent [as the top three] in ward no. 3, 6 and 7, respectively. Contrary to this, the proportion of households having modern toilet is ranging from 6 percent in ward no 2 to 70 percent in ward no. 7. Notable proportion of households of ward no. 1, 6 and 8 do not state about the use of toilet in Lahan Municipality.

CHAMARS OF LAHAN:

In the Terai area of Nepal, The Chamars are also known as the Ram, Mochi and Ravidas. They are notified as the Chamar and Mochi in these areas. Similarly, in Nepal the 3 Chamars belong to a lower level in the hierarchy of scheduled castes and the other castes in general. Their origin as a occupational caste of leather-workers having a lower social status placed them in the lowest stratum in the hierarchical division of the people in Hindu society. Traditionally, the tanners of leather, they prepare goods of skin, they are the manufacturer of leather articles and as the makers of shoes belong to a well-defined class in Nepal. Chamars living in Nepal are found similar in all aspects of economic and social life.

The word leather (hide) Charman, Charma, is known in both the older and the later portions of the Rig Veda, in the Atharva Veda, in the books of the Yajur Vedic Schools, in the Brahmins and in the later literature. The old literature also knows the shoemaker as Charmakar. Shoes made of skins and of leather, are

mentioned in Mahabharat, Ramayan and Vishnu Puran. Thus, the occupations of tanner and leather were fully developed in ancient India.

Probably from the early Aryan times, the lower class who belonged to the common labourers and those who, on account of the disgusting aspects of their work and life, were deemed to be unclean and untouchable. Manu's famous passage is: "All those tribes in this world, which are excluded from those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet (of Brahman), are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mlecchas (barbarians) or that of the Aryans.

Chamar is Terai origin caste. It is generally said that the Terai origin castes of Nepal migrated from India from the very early period.

In India, Chamars are basically landless and traditionally work on skins and hides. They are also engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, government and private services as unskilled labourers. Most of the elderly members of the community are uneducated, but gradually, formal education for boys is being favoured but not for girls. Boys discontinue their studies due to social and economic reasons. Economically, the Chamar is a most valuable element in the society and his function is the rough toil and drudgery of the community. Nearly always a poor man, Chamar, as a rural labourer, generally has plenty to do.

The struggle for subsistence among the lower castes, who do not in general own the means of production, is indeed bitter and hard. So searching for the means of livelihood the Chamars entered Nepal, which had similarities in climate, culture, religion and open border between Nepal and India from the very beginning of the human civilization.

POPULATION OF CHAMARS:

Population Size: The population size of the Chamars, during field work was 941. The growth of nearly 212 in 5 years, an increase almost conforms to the rate of growth for the village as a whole. The factors which have contributed to the increase in their population include mainly decline in death rate, steady birth rate and immigration. Due to the absence of proper records, the number of immigration could not be ascertained. According to the respondents, about 5-10 families have come and settled in the village during the movement. Their positions as individual caste with respect to their numerical strength in the village have changed during the movement.

The information shows that majority of the Chamar population lives in ward no.1. Among the total populations of Chamars 43.5 percent live in this ward. Where as there is no any Chamar in ward no.3, 7 and 8(Table-11).

TABLE 11: NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD BY WARD

Ward No.	No. of Household	%
Ward No. 1	70	43.5
Ward No. 2	20	12.4
Ward No. 4	1	0.6
Ward No. 5	3	1.8
Ward No. 6	18	11.2
Ward No. 9	10	6.2
Ward No. 10	39	24.2
Total	161	100

Source: Field survey, 2006

The total number of population of Chamars in study area is measured 941. This number varies from the Census Survey 2001. Because this study was done in 2006. So this is new one. Similarly the majority of the Chamar population lives in ward number one. Among the total population of Chamars of study area 40.38

percent lives in this ward i.e. 380. Second largest number of Chamar resides in ward number ten which comprise of 27.41 % (258), where as there is no any Chamar in ward number three, seven and eight.

Age is one of the determining factors for development index. If the country has higher number of economically active population; the higher will be the rate of development and vice versa. In Nepal economically active population is lesser than economically inactive population. The case is also more or less comparable to the study area.

The data shows that the total number of population of Chamars is 941. The percentage of female population is 51.75 where as the population of male is 48.25 percent. Among the various age groups of both sexes, the majority of percentage is found in female population of 18-50 age groups. The percentage is 20.72 out of the total population of Chamars and 40.04 percent of the total female population of Chamars.

The distribution of Chamar population in the study area are found as follows:

TABLE 12: POPULATION OF CHAMARS BY AGE AND SEX

Lahan Municipality/ Ward no	Female Population of Family	Male Population of Family	Total	Female Population (0-5 Age Group)	Male Population (0-5 Age Group)	Female Population (6-10 Age Group)	Male Population (6-10 Age Group)	Female Population (11-17 Age Group)	Male Population (11-17 Age Group)	Female Population (18-50 Age Group)	Male Population (18-50 Age Group)	Female Population (51 and above)	Male Population (51 and above)
Ward No. 1	192 (20.4%)	188 (20%)	380 (40.4%)	44	40	29	35	17	22	87	81	16	9
Ward no. 2	53 (5.6%)	45 (4.8%)	98 (10.4%)	23	16	5	5	1	2	22	23	1	0
ward no. 4	6 (0.6%)	5 (0.5%)	11 (1.2%)	1	1	2	1	2	0	2	2	0	0
ward no 5	5 (0.5%)	6 (0.6%)	11 (1.2%)	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	4	1	0
ward no 6	52 (5.5%)	46 (4.9%)	98 (1.4%)	12	10	9	9	6	3	19	20	7	3
ward no 9	46 (4.9%)	39 (4.1%)	85 (9%)	9	8	12	4	5	7	12	13	7	7
ward no 10	133 (14.1%)	125 (14.3%)	258 (27.4%)	37	24	14	25	11	12	50	50	21	13
Total	487 (51.7%)	454 (48.3%)	941 (100%)	127	102	71	79	42	47	195	193	53	32

Source: Field survey, 2006

LITERACY STATUS OF CHAMARS:

In spite of the existence of the schools in each ward of municipality, most of the Chamars are found to be uneducated. Although, the Chamars community of Lahan municipality are aware of the importance of education to some extent but a high rate of children are not attending school due to poverty and other reasons. This information indicates that the illiteracy among the Chamars likely to increase in the coming days.

Among 941 of the Chamars only 115 (12.2%) males and 56 (5.9 %) females are literate. They studied only up to higher secondary. None of them had any technical qualifications or training, or special skills in arts or science. The educational statuses of these 171 literate are as follows: up to primary- male- 62, female-41, lower secondary male-23, female-11, and secondary male-18, female-4, higher secondary male-12. There have no female in the higher secondary level.

TABLE -13: LITERACY STATUS OF CHAMAR BY SEX

Ward	Literate		Illiterate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	47 (5.0%)	26 (2.8%)	160 (17.0%)	139 (14.8%)
2	11 (1.2%)	6 (0.6%)	47 (5.0%)	34 (3.6%)
4	3 (0.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
5	2 (0.2%)	0 (0%)	5.0 (0.5%)	4.0 (0.4%)
6	13 (1.4%)	6 (0.6%)	50 (5.3%)	36 (3.8%)
9	9 (1.0%)	3 (0.3%)	40 (4.3%)	33 (3.5%)
10	30 (3.2%)	15 (1.6%)	123 (13.1%)	99 (10.5%)
Total	115 (12.2%)	56 (5.9%)	425 (45.2%)	345 (36.7%)

Source: Field survey, 2006

The information indicates that the majority of Chamars of both sexes are found from the schooling level to primary level. The numbers of people who are upgrading in school are reducing from lower secondary to secondary and from secondary to higher secondary level respectively.

Drop out rate of children at the primary level of education is high. In spite of primary education being free, inability to purchase basic things like books, school uniform etc. lead to the increase in drop out rate of the children at the primary level.

Poor management of the school, humiliating behaviour of the teachers and children of so-called high caste were the factors that led to drop out. Only few are able to reach secondary level of education, and those who took higher secondary education were not able to continue their education due to poverty.

ECONOMY OF CHAMARS:

Economically the Chamar is a most valuable caste in the society, and its function is the rough toil and drudgery of the community. Though always poor, as a rural labourer, Chamars generally have plenty to do. Their work is distributed over the year as follows: For five months, from June to November, he works in the field with a plough; for two months, November and December, he is engaged in reaping the autumn crops; In January and February he is occupied with buildings and other forms of earth work; in March and April he is busy harvesting, and in May he does little earth work. In between he does whatever work comes to him. However, economic changes are taking place, and Chamars are changing their traditional profession.

OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN:

The information pertaining to the occupational pattern of the Chamars during the movement reveals that they mostly worked as agricultural labourers, small business holders and servicemen.

The occupational pattern of the Chamar population during the movement is given in table 14. The table reveals that both change and diversification of occupation has taken place among them. It also points out that agricultural labour no longer forms the main occupation. On the contrary, agriculture has become the most important occupation. 82% of their total working population is engaged in agriculture. Next to agricultural labour, 4.3 percent is engaged in service, 3.7% in small business, 1.9% in farming, 1.2% in shoe mending, similarly, 0.6% are engaged in tailoring and as mester. All working women work as agricultural labourers in the village or are engaged in their traditional work (domestic worker), primarily because they lack both education and skill for other types of employment and are also not willing to go out of village for work. The following table shows the occupation followed by Chamars:

TABLE -14: OCCUPATIONS BY CATEGORY OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Occupations	No. of Household	%
No response	9	5.6
Labour	132	82.0
Local small business	6	3.7
Service (Job)	7	4.3
Farming	3	1.9
Tailoring	1	0.6
Shoe mending	2	1.2
Mester	1	0.6
Total	161	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2006

LAND HOLDING PATTERN:

Land is the only one defined resources in underdeveloped societies. Without ownership of land one cannot access towards any resources and opportunities. The landless people in Nepal are mostly Dalit groups as a whole. Though the Terai is considered the granary of Nepal, the percentage of landless people is found to be highest in the Terai. The landlessness is more prominent in the Terai. Many Chamars have settled themselves in the land owned by landlords of the study area, and they were used as labourers to farm their land. In the study area Bataiya land (sharing or lease land), Mohi land (tenancy land), and Numbari land (own land) are found. The information shows that the 98.1% of the Chamar have no Bataiya land, 98.8% have no Mohi land and 34.2% Chamars have no land to stay. (Among the total number of Chamars, 65.8 percent have some numberi land (own land) having ownership. But who have their numberi (own land), they are also in the bottom of the landownership (Table -15).

TABLE 15: LAND HOLDING PATTERN OF THE CHAMAR HOUSEHOLDS

Area	Household		
	Bataiya Land	Mohi Land	Nambari Land
No Land	158 (98.2%)	159 (98.8%)	55 (34.2%)
0-4 kattha	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	84 (52.1%)
5-9 Kattha	1 (0.6%)	-	13 (8.1%)
10-14 Kattha	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	3 (1.9%)
Above 14 Kattha	-	-	6 (3.7%)
Total	161 (100.0%)	161 (100.0%)	161 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2006

INCOME:

Occupation and income are closely related. The monthly income of the Chamar families, as per available information during the movement, ranged between Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 4,000+. Five families 3.1 percent have highest monthly income above Rs.4, 000.

Along with the change in occupation, income of the Chamars has also changed and increased considerably. The majority i.e. about 37.9 percent have monthly income ranging between Rs. 3,000 and Rs.3,499. About 26.1 percent families have monthly income of about Rs. 3,500 to Rs.3, 599. Similarly, 11.8 percent have ranged between Rs.2, 500 to 2,999, 15.5 percent have ranged between Rs.2, 000 to 2,499 and 5.6 percent have ranged between Rs.1,500 to 1,999. The average family income has been calculated to be about Rs. 3,041.25. The distribution of the families on the basis of monthly income is given in Table-16.

TABLE -16: MONTHLY INCOME OF THE FAMILY

Income (In Rs.)	Number of families
1500 to 1999	9 (5.6%)
2000 to 2499	25 (15.5%)
2500 to 2999	19 (11.8%)
3000 to 3499	61 (37.9%)
3500 to 3999	42 (26.1%)
4000 +	5 (3.1%)
Total	161 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Among all the present occupations, agriculture and business provide highest income and agricultural labour the lowest.

EXPENDITURE:

The expenditure pattern of the Chamars has been changed. Now they also spend their income in different items except food. Still they spend majority of income, about 60 percent on food. Similarly, 10 percent on clothing, 5 percent on social obligation, education, recreation and buying housing commodities. They also spend about 2 percent on health and 8 percent on different other items (Table-17).

TABLE -17: EXPENDITURE PATTERN

Item of Expenditure	% of the Income Spend by the Respondents
Food	60
Clothing	10
Social obligation	5
Education	5
Housing and housing commodities	5
Health	2
Recreation	5
Miscellaneous	8
Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The table reveals (i) that there has been significant addition in the list of the items of expenditure, (ii) decrease in the expenditure on food, and increase in expenditure on education, housing and recreation. This reveals their desire to have an improved standard of living. Change in occupation followed by increased income and change in aspiration have contributed to this change.

INDEBTEDNESS:

Indebtedness has remained a widespread phenomenon and is common to all people irrespective of caste, even though the proportion of indebted population among the Chamars has fallen during the movement. Of the total 161 Chamar

families during the movement 118(73.3%) were stated to be in debt and their amount of loan ranged between Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 12,000. Loans were usually taken for family maintenance and performance of social obligations from the village money lenders only.

Construction of houses, purchase of bullocks or buffaloes, cows, goats, radio, cycle and performance of social obligations has been stated to be common factors for incurring loans among them. Sources of loan include relatives, friends, private moneylenders (Landlords) and banks. Of all these sources, bank and relatives are most important, as about 38 percent of the indebted families among the Chamars have taken loan from the bank.

LIVESTOCK:

The ownership of livestock among the Chamars in 2006 was determined by the economic utility of the animals and these were confined to cows, buffaloes, poultry and goats. All the 161 families during the said period owned some livestock. While ownership of goat and poultry were common to all the families, twenty five families have a cow each. Goats have owned by almost all families. In absence of proper data, it has not been possible to compare the ownership of livestock between the Chamars and others.

The ownership of livestock among the Chamars is now determined, along with the previous factors i.e. the economic utility of the animals, by the social attitude towards the domestication of any particular animal. Total number of these animals owned by them is 428. Distribution of the livestock owned by them is as follows: buffaloes-12, bullocks-20, cows-35, goat-185 and poultry-176. The 148 families (about 92% of the total), majority of who are early residents and have their own house, possess all these 428 livestock. Of the total families owning

livestock, three families who are working as agriculturists, have both bullocks and buffaloes. The families having buffaloes and cows domesticate them mainly for the purpose of selling milk.

TRADE AND COMMERCE:

Trade and commerce is practically confined to the Baniyas of the village. The entry of the Chamars into trade and commerce have resulted into further diversification of their occupations and greater involvement in the village economic life. There are a total of 9 shops of Chamars in Lahan. The distribution of the shops is as follows: grocery shops-2, vegetable/fruit shops-4, tailoring shop-1 and shoe mending-2.

The Chamar shop owners are all young people. They all regard themselves as young entrepreneurs and as such are willing to take risks by investing money in some new ventures. They have been largely inspired to improve their position by caste leaders and have been greatly encouraged and assisted by elders and their own caste meeting. Their shops are mainly located in the bazaar of the village. The customers of these shops are not only confined to their own caste members or lower castes but also include the higher caste people of village and its surroundings. In fact, the Chamar tailoring shop draws a large number of higher caste people, as they regard the owner of the shop as a master (skilled) tailor, who is well conversant with new designs and fashions.

Milk selling is considered by the Chamars in particular and the villagers in general as a good source of secondary income and it has been taken up by families, irrespective of castes, who have surplus milk. The selling of milk is a new trend in the village. The desire to change and improve economic conditions by supplementing their income has promoted them to be engaged in this business.

RELIGION:

The religion plays a vital role to regulate society and culture. It is the super structure of society and culture in general. The Chamars society is also one of those kinds. It is already mentioned that untouchability is the outcome of Hindu Varna system, so religion plays an important role in the study area too. All 161 household, follow Hindu religion in the study area.

The literature shows that Dalits have no right to entry in Hindu temples, ban on worshipping, restriction for reading the Hindu religious books. Similarly, many Dalits believe that psychological effect is the greatest effect of caste-based untouchability that have dominoes effect on others. Inferiority complex or lack of self-respect and self-confidence, attitude to tolerate stoically than to protest or revolt and accept untouchability as destiny are three such effects.

The Chamars of Nepal believe in Hindu religion. They worship the sun. On the birth day of the lord Krishna people fast and no one begins to eat until about mid-night when the moon rises. Women worship the moon, so that the children may escape disease. Rivers receive special consideration as great satisfiers of life.

The Chamars accept the doctrines of transmigration and Karma, and this belief explains many death customs: and, for the most part. these ideas exercise a dumb, depressing, fatalistic influence upon them. There are, however, certain sects of the Chamars which teach that Guru- Worship will issue in a permanent release from the round of births.

For the most part, Chamars are denied admission into Hindu temples. Their offerings are, however, accepted; and they may stand in front of the entrance and look in. Brahmans accept food and cash from Chamars, although they do not touch them.

There are many shrines in which the Chamar has great faith, and from which miracles of healing have been reported. Such shrines are places of pilgrimage.

RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICES:

The respondent Chamars are used to worship a few deities like kalimata, and sitalamai and a number of spirits, viz, 'Bhut', 'chudel', 'pret', 'pisach' and 'Rakshasas.' A brief description of all these deities and spirits indicating the purpose of their worship is given below:

Kalimata: Kalimata is regarded as omnipotent and a source of strength. She is believed to protect her devotees from the pischas (demons) and can be satisfied only by offering blood. Therefore, rituals connected with kalimata always involve sacrifice of animals.

Sitalamai: Sitalamai is worshipped for protection against diseases, like small-pox, cholera and plague. It is believed that if displeased, she throws the seeds of these diseases in all directions and upon whom so ever it falls they will be attacked with the diseases. She, like kalimata, can be pleased by offering blood and animal sacrifices.

Bhut: Bhut is the disembodied spirit of a person who has died a violent death by accident, suicide, capital punishment or had been killed by another spirit whose funeral ceremony has not been performed. The term "Bhut" is also used in a more general sense to mean a malevolent spirit. Bhut is worshipped so that it may not do any mischief to the worshipper.

Chudel: Regarded as the ghost of a woman, chudel is greatly feared. A woman who had died while unclean or pregnant or in child birth is supposed to

assume the form of a Chudel. She is described as having pendent breasts, large projecting teeth, thick lips, uncombed hair and a black tongue, all giving a dreadful appearance. Her displeasure, it is believed, bring death and disease to the family.

Pret: pret or paret (female pretin) is viewed as the ghost of a deformer or defective person. The ghost of a child dying prematurely or a still born child may be called paret. The pret is malicious and needs to be pleased.

Pisach: pisach is a demon resulting from men's vices and is, in reality, the spiritual embodiment of some vice, as that of the spirit of a thief or insane person.

Rakshasas: Rakshasas are considered to be ogres or giants found in trees, in birds and sometimes animate dead body. They devour human beings, and eat raw flesh and carrion. They cause vomiting, indigestion and other problems to the people. Among different categories of Rakshasas are the Deo a gigantic, powerful, stupid, long-lipped, cannibal, Bir- a malignant village demon of great prowess, who amongst other things brings diseases upon cattle, and often lives on trees.

In the case of Chamars of the study area, the entire households are Hindu. In the Hindu worshiping societies, they have been found to have added a number of deities in their list for the purpose of worship in their desire to reduce the gap between them and the higher castes.

Rama: Rama, it is considered, protects the mankind from the evil influence of the demons and contributes to the happiness of life. It is believed that he is easily pleased through devotion of the soul and is worshipped without making any animal sacrifice. He is worshipped also for protection against demons.

Krishna: Krishna is another god, who is also worshipped with the objective of securing protection from all evils of life. He symbolizes the indestructibility and infinity of the spirit of man, and one is, there fore, beholden to him as the incarnation of god. At the hour of death, one should hold fast to the thought that one is unshaken and indestructible. Efforts are made to put into practice in their day-to-day work, the ideals ascribed to him. No animal sacrifice is required to worship him.

Shiva: Shiva is regarded as protector and destroyer of the world. He can be easily propitiated and once propitiated, his protection is ensured to his followers from all miseries of life. He does not require any elaborate worship and any animal sacrifice either.

Motivation: Their religious beliefs and practices are traditionally oriented towards protection from diseases, death and destruction, and obtaining blessings for leading a happy life through solution of the problems of every day life. Of all these, it is worth noting, that they attached greater importance to the solution of the problems of everyday life.

Modes of Worship: Animal sacrifice, lighting of lamps and burning incense comprised the main modes of worship among them in recent days and the worship is performed by the elderly men of their own caste or caste priests.

Place of Worships: They were not allowed to worship in the temples in the past. They had separate shrines to worship their deities and spirits. In recent days while continuing the practices of worshipping their deities and spirits in their own shrines, they have also started offering their prayers in the village temples of Rama, Krishna and Shiva, on special occasions.

RITUALS RELATING TO BIRTH:

It has been commonly believed by all the villagers over the ages that conception is controlled not by man, but by god. Generally, a woman feels shy to disclose her pregnancy. It is the distaste and vomiting, which develop during the first few months of her pregnancy that gives a clue to the elderly women. Thereafter, they make enquiries and confirm the fact of conception, and then only they break the news to others.

After the confirmation of pregnancy, several restrictions were imposed and still are being imposed on the pregnant women, on her diet and movements. She is asked to avoid walking on uneven surfaces and to visit haunted places or houses which are supposed to cause the birth of still-born babies, because of the fear of miscarriage, instead she is given improved nutritional diet including milk, ghee etc, depending on the economic condition of her family. Workload of the women is gradually reduced and after the 6th or 7th month, work in field and other work involving exertion is completely prohibited.

As pregnancy advances, she is gradually segregated and, in some cases where the family can afford it, she is allowed to sleep in a different room, usually with an elderly woman of the family guarding her. Mostly during the period of confinement, the woman does not go to her parent's house. The delivery is usually conducted with the help of the village dhai (mid wife), a Chamar woman, who cuts the umbilical cord and buries the placenta on the ground near the bed of the mother. The dhai's fee in the earlier period amounted to be about 50 to 100 rupees, which was mostly paid in kind, whereas it varies from Rs.150 to Rs.250, and generally in case of a male child or first child, the dhai is paid more than 250 rupees.

On the Chhathis or the sixth day following the birth, Chhathi Puja, common to all castes, is performed in which the elderly female members of the family participate. It is believed that "during sixth night following the birth, the fortune of the child is decided and imprinted on it". In the morning of the sixth day, both the child and its mother are anointed and given a ceremonial bath. The floor of the house is plastered with a thick paste of clay and cow dung. In the evening the mother-in-law or an elderly women of the family lights a holy fire near the mother's bed and throws camphor and pieces of wood into the fire. Songs are sung and are chorused by other women who gather there to witness the ceremony and when it is over, sweets like halwa, laddoo etc. are distributed. On the seventh day, Satwa is observed when women folk gather again to sing before the main entrance of the house, where a swastika symbol is made of cow dung.

Kaun pujan is performed on the twenty first day following the birth to signify the end of the period of pollution for the mother after child birth. On this day, the child and mother are again given a bath and anointment and dressed in new garments. The floor of the room is again plastered with cow dung and clay. From this day, the new mother resumes her family work, as she is no more considered unclean.

RITUALS RELATING TO DEATH:

The Chamars, like other Hindus, usually cremate their dead, except the child below the age of 5 years, who is usually buried. After death, according to the prevailing practices, the corps is wrapped in new cloth and placed on the pier or arthi, made of grass and wood by the caste members. In some cases, where one can afford it, a silver coin is also put into the mouth of the dead person.

When the funeral procession is ready to start, the husband of the deceased, if the dead person is a married woman, marks the forehead of the dead several times with vermilion. In case of a man, his widow marks the forehead, using the fingers of the dead husband. In both cases, marking on the forehead indicates the dissolution of marriage. The Arthi is first lifted by the near relatives, and afterward carried by other relatives and friends. This is traditional common practice among all castes. With the procession, fire from the house is carried in an earthen pot or a place of dried cow dung for securing protection from evil spirits.

According to the practice common to all castes, after the body has been taken away from the house, all the water vessels are emptied and such other earthen pots that the deceased had touched before his or her death, are broken. In some cases, water is sprinkled over the bed to make it cool for the spirit of the dead.

As a convention common to all castes, the pier on its way to the cremation ground is placed on the ground only once from a certain distance from the house and village habitation and 'pinda dan' is performed. Moreover, at the crematorium, a pyre of cow dung cake and wood is prepared. The sheets of cloth wrapped round the dead are taken away by the Bahangis. Then the mouth, ear and nose of the dead body are sealed with ghee according to the instructions of the experienced caste members, in some cases by caste priest, who attend the funeral, and then the corpse is placed on pyre. After taking several rounds, of the pyre, ghee, barley and camphor are sprinkled by the male next of kin on it, like eldest son, who sets the pyre on fire accompanied with chanting of mantras at the instance of the caste priests. When the dead body has been largely consumed by fire, the son or the brother of the deceased perform the kapal kriya, common practice for all castes, by striking the skull of the corpse thrice with a bamboo pole to release the soul, as they believe it remains locked up in skull and must be

broken to let it free. All persons attending the funeral then return to the house of the deceased and after observing silence for few minutes praying for peace of the soul of the departed sprinkle water towards their back and get complete bath before leaving for their respective houses.

In some cases, on the third day following the cremation, the ashes of the dead person called phool (bones) are collected by the near relatives and placed in a small coloured vessel away from the house. They are later consigned along with some coins to the water of the river Balan. This practice is very common among the higher caste Hindus. The Chamars have also started adopting this practice. An earthen lamp is kept burning at the place of death during the following nine nights.

On the 13th day following the death the caste priest, is called to perform the termi ceremony (ceremony performed on the 13th day after the death of the deceased person) so as to grant peace to the soul of the dead and guarantee a place in heaven as well as for the purification of the family. In termi, relatives, particularly the persons who accompanied the funeral procession are invited and treated to a feast. A year after the death, the well to do families performs solash ceremony also known as kaj, when the caste members are again treated to a feast.

FAMILY:

More than 55 percent Chamars are found living in joint families, (joint family consists of two or more nuclear families consisting of a man, his wife, growing up sons and daughters-in-law, their children and minor sons and daughters residing in a single dwelling and sharing food together). Among the total household, 45 percent of them are found to be living in nuclear families. Preference for living in a nuclear family has seemed to be a common trend among other caste members even though it is more marked among them in comparison to

others castes, particularly higher castes, mainly because of their desire to avoid conflicts between the mother and daughter-in-law.

Authority in the Family: The authority in the family was exclusively in the hands of the male head of the family. Like in all other families in the village as well as the area, the male head of the family used to take all decisions, like marriage of children, occupation of children, entering into legal suits, taking of loans and construction of houses. Rarely did he consult any other members of the family.

The situation in the past has changed and some sharing of authority has been observed. No doubt the male head of the family takes all important decisions, but in the process of taking the decision he consults his wife and grown up children which was not done during the earlier times.

Sharing of a house by two families, which has been a rare phenomenon in the past, has become very common. The acute accommodation problem, it is interesting to note, has forced them to have the same house of their parents even while they live in nuclear families. The land allotted to them for construction of their houses is very inadequate in proportion to their present population, due to this shortage of unavailable habitational land; it has been of their parent's house, but cooking, eating and sleeping separately and living their own life, apart from their parents.

MARRIAGE:

Concept of Marriage: The marriage is traditionally considered by all the Chamars as a sacrament and not a contract. They believe that marriage helps one to practice "Dharma" and complete the life cycle of the individuals. This of course does not mean that they do not allow dissolution of marriage; on the contrary, they

allow dissolution of marriage and divorce on several grounds. For instances, a man can seek dissolution of marriage and divorce his wife on the grounds of her disobedience, bad character, barrenness and chronic illness. A woman can ask for divorce from her husband on account of cruelty, impotency, inability to maintain her and chronic illness. But all cases of dissolution of marriage and divorce will have to be approved by their respective caste meeting. Since the last several years, there have been only two instances of divorce. One of these cases was brought out by males for barrenness and sickness of his wife. Only in one case a woman asked for divorce because of cruelty of her husband.

Arrangement of Marriage: Marriages are usually arranged by the parents or relatives of the parties. Women are rarely consulted. Of course, the elderly female relatives have some say in the discussion of the marriage negotiation, and their opinion carries weight. Self-arranged marriages, which was practically unknown in the past, have started taking place, where the parents only concede to the desire of their children, including daughter, in the selection of their spouses. During the last seven years, two self-arranged marriages; all within the caste have taken place. The marriage becomes binding only when the ceremony is performed and the consent of the relatives of both parties to marriage, if arranged by the parents, is obtained.

Age at Marriage: Marriage among the Chamars in the earlier period used to take place at an early age. Girl got married usually between 5 to 10 years and the boys between 10 to 15 years. The primary reason for their preference for early marriage was the desire among the parents to get their daughters married immediately after puberty. Another reason is the parents desire to get rid of their responsibilities by arranging marriage of their children at an early age, as failure to do so bring condemnation. Even these days, early marriage has still remained a

prevalent practice even though the age of marriage has increased comparatively, that is for a boy from 15 to 20 years and for a girl from 10 to 15 years.

Marriage Ceremonies: The marriage ceremonies of the Chamars start with the performance of mangni. The betrothal ceremony, known as mangni, is performed on an auspicious day after the selection of the groom. The father and relatives of the girl visit the house of the boy, apply a tilak on his forehead and give him some money and clothing. Gur (crude sugar) is then distributed among the relatives and others present on the occasion. After tilak, the parents of the boy send to the girl some gifts consisting of laddoos (Sweets) and clothes.

The ceremony following mangni consists in of a chithi (letter) smeared with marks of turmeric which is sent by the girl's parents. The letter containing the marriage date and timing is accompanied with some sweets (gur/shakkar) through the intermediary to the boy's father on an appointed day. The boy's family after receiving the sweets distributes it and ties a sacred red thread at the right wrist of the boy. The boy's family then confirms the date after consulting the family priests and relatives. A few days before the marriage, both the bride and groom take bath with batna for cleaning their body.

On the day of marriage, before the departure of the marriage party to the bride's place, the bridegroom wears on clothes mostly brought by his maternal uncle. The dress includes a turban, a vest, a pyjama, a kachja, a sehra and a finger ring. After this the groom starts for the village of the bride with a number of persons accompanying him. The persons who accompany him are collectively known as the barat. On arrival at the village, the family members of the girl welcome the boy with some money, sweets and then the boy is brought with his barat in a resting-house and accommodated there. Similarly, the female relative of the bride offers some money and sweets to the bridegroom on behalf of the bride's

parents. The bride-groom's father then sends a sari and ornaments through the go-between, who puts these articles on the lap of the bride. Before the actual marriage when the boy comes to the girls' house, he receives a welcome at the threshold known as barohi and then the red cloth wrapped around the bride is tied to the parna of the dress of bridegroom. Pheras (circumambulation) generally take place in the afternoon at an auspicious time previously fixed, and the bride's father performs the kanyadan (giving of the bride). After kanyadan, a feast is given to all the members of the barat, by the bride's family. Bidai (departure) ceremony takes place on the day following the marriage after lunch. Close to the end of the whole process of marriage is the reception of the bride at the groom's village. This reception consists of a number of rituals including mukh-dikhana, kangan-kholna.

Gauna, which marks the end of the whole process of marriage, takes place when the girl's parent's feel that she is matured enough to be a wife, and a mother. Previously Gauna used to take place three to five years after the marriage but now, due to increase in the age of marriage, it takes place within one year and some times immediately after the marriage.

Marriage Expenditures: There has been considerable increase in the expenditure in marriage on dowry, jewelry, clothes, transport and feast. The total wedding expenditure ranged between Rs.4, 000 to 5,000 earlier, whereas now it varies between NRs.20, 000 to NRs. 40,000. The payment of bride price, which was prevalent earlier has however now been replaced by payment of dowry.

DRESS:

The Chamars faced no restriction with regard to their dress pattern in the past, even though the males used to wear dhotis up to the knee and females rarely used more than two clothes. The younger and elderly men used dhoti and kurta.

The young male children used mostly half pants and shirts. The women and girls used loose pyjama and kameez. During the winter, in addition to these clothes, they used a kind of warm cloth called as kambal. The clothes used by them were usually dirty and tattered.

These days, they are using a variety of dresses. Along with dhotis and kurtas, they have started wearing trousers and shirts or pyjama and kurta. The women have started wearing sari. The unmarried and young girls have started using relatively light pyjama and kameez inside the village and a salwar suit and kameez, outside the village. Juti or unlaced shoe, made locally as per order, has remained the most common footwear of both sexes in the village during these two periods.

ORNAMENTS:

Ornaments worn by Chamar women, like all other caste women are varied both qualitatively and quantitatively from other caste women. They constitute both the sringar (adornment) of a women as well as the barometer of her family's economic position. The women use ornaments for head, ears, nose, wrist and foot. In the earlier period, these ornaments were mostly made of zinc and silver, whereas now some of them especially for the ear, nose and neck are made of gold. Women have recently more or less stopped using cheaper ornaments.

FOOD HABIT:

In the earlier period, majority of the Chamars were non-vegetarians. Their non-vegetarian diet included beef, mutton, chicken, egg and fish. Normally they used to take two major meals, one in the noon and other in the evening and one minor meal in the morning, although the number and nature of the diet differed on the basis of the economic conditions of the family and the season which was

applicable to others also. The food pattern of the Chamars has almost remained the same from past to present. Some of them have started taking only vegetarian food. Those taking non-vegetarian diet have also stopped taking beef as the influence of higher caste Hindus.

HABITATION AND HOUSING:

With regard to the habitational site of the Chamar there has been no change from the past to the present. They, like the untouchables in all the villages of Nepal, live at the outskirts of the village since the time of their settlement. They are neither permitted to construct their houses in the centre of the village nor given any house to live on rent.

All the families had their own house. The houses usually have one or two room. They in general, as per the respondents, lacked ventilation and proper sanitation. None of the houses have any separate place that could be used as a bathroom.

FESTIVALS:

The Chamars of the village neither had nor have any festival which can be termed as the characteristic festival of their own community. Celebration of any festivals, which can be grouped into two categories, the festivals for the families and kin groups, namely teej, makar sankranti and sankat chouth and the festivals for the whole village viz. barorha, jaithka –dushera, janam asthami, dushera, diwali, sivratri, and holi were very uncommon , mainly because of their poor economic condition.

Even in the recent days, they do not celebrate all these festivals. Of all these festivals, they celebrate teej, sivratri, holi with great enthusiasm and zeal. Teej

festival is celebrated by the young girls, especially the married ones, on the 3rd day of 'sawan' (July-August). Holi is also celebrated, although the Holi bon- fire is organized separately, and they narrate the same popular legend of prahlad and Harnakush as to the origin of the festival. Janamstami, Dushera and Ram navami, which are considered as the main festivals of the higher castes, are celebrated, but not so elaborately as by the higher castes.

They have taken up the festivals of higher caste Hindus of the village, but they do not celebrate them with the meticulousness of the latter. As a result, celebration of the festivals has not helped them very much in their aim of identifying themselves with the higher castes.

DAILY ROUTINE:

Daily routine of the Chamars has remained almost the same and very simple. This routine is mostly in the line of other castes in the village. The difference, which existed then and still exists is that, apart from the elderly people who regularly spend some time in prayer, the rest except a few do not spend any time in prayer. Some elderly people, both men and women have recently taken up the practices of spending one to two hours in the morning in prayer. This offering of prayer, according to many Chamar people. is a new trend, because previously the Chamar rarely spent any time in prayer. The people get up early, often one or two hours before sunrise, except the young and the sick. While the males, after cleaning the surroundings of their house including the place where they keep their cattle go out of the fields for their morning ablution, women after morning business divide themselves, in case the family has more than one woman, according to various tasks of cooking, cleaning of the house and cleaning the children as well as washing their soiled clothes.

After the morning food, the men go to work, and the women continue their daily round of household duties. The children play within the village or remain with their mothers. At mid-day, the men, who work in the village or in the surrounding villages, return, for their meal after which the women takes their meals, the children eat either with the father or the mother. After the meal, the males either go for work or take rest or gossip in groups, while enjoying the smokes. The women, after their meal, mostly gossip for one or two hours. A few of them of course, do some stitching or knitting work or some other lighter work. After this women resume their work until light fades out.

In the evening, the men sit in their houses mostly with smokes or in an open courtyard where friends and relatives from other house also gather. They talk about their past, present and future life and prevailing social and political situations. The atmosphere occasionally brightens up with a rumor about a family intrigue or the illicit conjugal life of a person or a case of litigation. After an hour or two, they go back to their houses, take the evening meal and then go to bed. The women join them after the meal and the children are already in bed for an hour or more.

This is the general routine. It is repeated every day without any variation, except on occasions when the annual festivals or religious ceremonies take place in the village or in the locality or a social function like a marriage or a kaj is held in the family. Visits of relatives from distant places also slightly change the daily routine but such occasions are not very frequent.

CASTE MEETING:

The Chamars of villages traditionally have a well-organized caste meeting system, which binds them together as well as work as an instrument of change. The Chamars, individually or in groups, respect and fear the decisions of the

meeting, be it their own village or the larger area of neighbouring villages. To defy the expressed decision of the meeting is simply unthinkable to the vast majority of them.

The village level caste meeting consists of two elderly people; membership of this meeting is mostly hereditary. Women cannot become members of this meeting. These two members nominate one to work as Myanjan (pradhan). The post of the Myanjan in the village area is often hereditary. The meeting usually takes place once a month, but the meetings may also be summoned by members who have referred their dispute to the Myanjan.

The meeting mainly exercises jurisdiction over the following cases: 1) illicit sexual relations, such as the discovery of pregnancy of a widow or unmarried girls, of adultery or of other illicit function: 2) matters pertaining to marriage, remarriage and divorce of their caste members, especially when these create problems in the families concerned, because of refusal to give in marriage the daughters after betrothal, 3) quarrel between the families in connection with money transactions and debts, housing, land etc. and 4) violation of caste rules concerning commensality. The meeting decides the cases on the basis of merits and then imposes punishments which may be in cash or kind or both.

The cases which have been brought before the village meeting during the last 20 years are mostly related to marriage or violations of caste rules concerning commensality. The meeting has also worked as a watch dog of the villages' meeting decisions, particularly in relation to the matters which affect their intra- and inter-caste relationships, both inside and outside the village.

The larger area which comprises of many villages is the supreme body among the Chamars and it has final decisions making powers in the issues

pertaining to its caste members. The size of this area is not fixed, as it depends on the strength of the caste members in the villages as well as the effectiveness of the individual caste meeting in the villages. Usually it has a Myanjan, mostly a hereditary post, known as Choudhary, who is assisted by four other persons from other villages known as 'Shayak' or 'Chokrat', selected by the Choudhary. The Choudhary of this area wields enormous power and exercises it through the chokrat and the village caste meeting is within his own jurisdiction.

The meeting normally deals with inter – and intra- caste relations, village fractions among the caste members and sometimes the feasts to be given to celebrate a marriage or a 'kaj'.

The meeting of the supreme body does not take place regularly. It meets at a central village, only when it has to decide an extra ordinary case which affect the inter caste and intra caste relationship, and is attended by the adult members of the caste. For example, once it meets to discuss their religious practices vis-vis the practices of other castes and the changes to be brought about in their religious practices to fall in line with other caste Hindu. In these meetings, beside the members of village the members of the outside villages also participate. The decisions in these meetings are taken on majority vote basis. However, in the absence of proper records, it is difficult to indicate the exact number of meeting of these larger caste bodies. In all those meeting, it has dealt with the cases, along with other thing, which affect the status of the caste members. It is this meeting, which had initiated several changes, like adoption of Sanskritic deities and modes and motivation, for worship, forbidding the acceptance of dowry, promoting vegetarianism and has also supported the actions of the individual caste members aiming at change of position in the social hierarchy.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

Domestic violence has been described as when one adult in a family misuses their power to control another. It is the establishment of control and fear in a family through violence and other forms of abuse. The violence may involve physical abuse, sexual assault and threats. Sometimes it is more subtle, like making someone feel worthless, not letting them have any money, or not allowing them to leave the home.

In most cases, the victims are women and children, although the woman is usually the primary target. Many women in Nepal Terai are the victims of domestic violence. There are different forms of domestic violence in Nepal. That is psychological abuse, social abuse, financial abuse, physical assault or sexual assault. It can be criminal and include physical assault or injury (hitting, beating, shoving etc.), sexual abuse (forced sexual activity), or stalking, Dowry death or harassment, mental and physical torture, sexual trafficking and public humiliation.

Women are the basic indicators of social and economic development. Any behavioural change in the role of a woman brings changes in social, economic and demographic structure of the society. As the Nepali society is organized in patriarchal model, the status of women is lower to that of male in every field of life-social, economic and political.

The status of Dalit women in Nepal society is not very different to that of Nepali women in general. Women are more sufferers than male within the chamar society. Their social and economic status is much lower to that of male. They depend on male in every aspects of the life. In the study area chamar women are in sub-ordinate position. They are not heard properly, so the domestic violence is still in practice. The causes of violence as women say, is due to the higher rate of

alcohol drinking and gambling among Chamars. Women are the primary victims of domestic violence within the family and community at large.

Most of the cases of domestic violence in the study area are found to be of mental or physical torture 41(25.5%), Dowry Death or Harassment 18(11.2%) and sexual abuse 16(9.9%). Only 2(1.2%) cases are found as Sexual Trafficking and Public Humiliation. Majority 84(52.2%) of the respondents were not willing to give the answer because they hesitated to expose their behaviour against Women (Table-18).

TABLE -18: DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY TYPE

Type of Violence	No. of Cases
Sexual Abuse	16 (9.9%)
Dowry Death or Harassment	18 (11.2%)
Sexual Trafficking and Public Humiliation	2 (1.2%)
Mental or Physical Torture	41 (25.5%)
Not Response	84 (52.2%)
Total	161 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2006

HEALTH SERVICE PRACTICES:

Chamars have poor health due to their poor living conditions, unhygienic food habits within their communities. There are high morbidity conditions, especially among women and children. Chamars do not have knowledge of nutritious food and balanced diet, hence resulting in malnutrition among children and women. They have higher prevalence of uterus prolapse and sexually transmitted disease. Due to illiteracy, fear and shame, they usually hesitate to seek remedy and treatment from certified medical doctor.

Chamars are very backward with respect to sanitation and water supply. There are open drains which results in collection of water in front of the houses, creating puddles and, thereby causing great hardships to the people. There are no separate latrine and bathrooms. A covered place in the house is usually used by females for bathroom cum urinal purpose. The men folk use the creaks and corners of their dwelling sites or adjoining gardens for the purposes of both latrines and urinals. These all things are happening the cares of illiteracy, ignorance, poor condition etc. As a number of people believe in sorcery (beliefs in ghost, spirits, and witches and reliance on Dhani, Jhankri and home treatment), health seeking behaviour particularly the chamar people in the study area are found as follows: (Table-19).

TABLE-19: HEALTH SERVICE PRACTICES

Cases	No. of respondents	%
People using service of Dhami	51	31.7
People using services of health posts	30	18.6
People using services of home treatment	80	49.7
Total responses	161	100

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The above table shows that most of the respondents 80(49.7%) are using the services of home treatment while they need health services.

PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY AT THE PUBLIC PLACE:

The caste-based discrimination to Dalit is found every where in Nepal as well as the study area. There are many existing practices of caste-based discrimination which have been lumped into major broad social categories. They are, denial of entry in the neighbour's houses, local hotels, temple etc., accuse to

common resources such as using the water tap, well, pond etc. is obtained. Denial to participate in public activities or entry to public places such as the religious function, forced labourers to carry the dead animal. The practices of untouchability at the study area have been divided into 3 cases, untouchability at public places, at schools and at neighbours.

The majority of the Chamars 136(84.5%) have the practice untouchability at neighbours, similarly 16(9.9%) at public places and 9(5.6%) at the school (Table-20)

TABLE 20: PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Cases	No. of Population
Practice of untouchability at public place	16 (9.9%)
Practice of untouchability at school	9 (5.6%)
Practice of untouchability at neighbours	136 (84.5%)
Total	161 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2006

POLITICAL LIFE OF THE CHAMAR:

I have made an attempt to explain their political life indicating their consciousness, association and participation, both in and outside the village, in order to delineate their political life before the movement.

Political Consciousness:

The Chamars of the village did not involve themselves in any significant political activity. Their political consciousness was at a very low level. They had heard about national leaders and the parties, but had no information beyond that.

They had no idea about party policies. Politics as such was considered by them, to be a domain of the rich, higher caste people and the educated few. They had no idea about the intricacies of politics or practice and also never perceived politics as an instrument of change of status.

This was true not only to them, but also to other caste members, with certain exceptions of the higher caste members, whose involvement, whatever little it might be in politics, was confined to the Municipality. In a sense, politics in the village revolved mostly around factional activities, alignments and realignments within these factions based on caste and economic influence.

The Chamars are found to be a rather political conscious group. They are aware about the national problems viz. poverty, increase in prices, importance of vote, ideologies of different political parties, important leaders and their background. They are also conscious of the intricacies of politics in their village life, and also of the roles played by different political leaders including their caste leaders in ameliorating their conditions and in improving their status. They even know that their support, to a party adds strength to the party. They also realize that they should not and indeed cannot stay away from politics for long but should bargain for their votes in the Municipality election in order to strengthen their power and influence both in and outside the village.

Political Association:

The Chamars had no political association before the movement. They were neither sympathizer nor members of any political party. They had heard vaguely of the Political Parties, but were not clear how their involvement can help the Political Parties as well as themselves.

They are observed to be the supporters and members of the Political Parties, some of them were members. Some of them were also its active members. Gradual awareness about politics gravitated them towards the ruling party. Support to the ruling party, is considered to be a common phenomena among all the lower castes. The village and its neighbouring areas in general are strong holds of Nepali Congress. Opposition parties (Communist) have not been able to establish their roots in these areas, primarily because the people felt that their interest could be best served under the Congress rule. Other parties in the opposition are not considered to be in a position to deliver the goods as far as they were concerned.

Their association with the then ruling Congress party was usually a matter of convenience, rather than of ideology. The majority of the respondents, whosoever talked of their political association with the Congress, said “we cannot expect to get anything if we support a party which has no all Nepal standing and cannot form a government. A party which has influence throughout the country and can form a government can only deliver the goods. The Congress fulfils all these conditions. The Congress wants our (lower castes) support for coming to power and we support the congress because we feel that after coming to power it will protect us from exploitation, and help us in changing our conditions”.

The political association of the Chamars have contributed further to their economic prosperity and increased their influence, thereby improving their status in the village. For instance, getting financial loans and land on lease have become comparatively easier because of their association with the then ruling Congress party. Villagers have begun coming to active members of the Congress, and even to their friends and relatives who have influence over them in their homes, for advice and assistance in matters of their own interests, viz. seeking higher contacts

for employment of their children etc. This can be regarded as an example of their influence as a result of their political participation.

Their political association has also resulted in individual contacts and visits of the Congress leaders to their houses in marriages or other festivals which, furthermore, has helped to improve their influence and status. A prominent Congress leader visited the village a number of times and in all his visits he spent a few minutes with the Chamar leaders discussing their problems. Between them and other lower castes, the former have greater political association and influence on their leaders.

Political Participation:

Before the movement Chamars had no political participation because of their lack of political consciousness and absence of political associations.

The situation has substantially changed. Increased political awareness and close association with the then ruling party (Congress) have resulted in political participation of a few Chamar leaders in both regional and local politics, especially during and after the parliamentary elections. The nature of the participation in these elections was more in the form of organizers of the campaign. In the parliamentary election, the political party leaders organised several meetings and contacted individual families, besides meeting the caste leaders in the villages, and in all these meetings and contacts, they were helped whenever necessary by Chamar leaders. They (Chamar leaders) organised several meetings in different villages and in all these meetings they appealed to their caste members and other lower caste members to cast their votes. They also organised door to door campaigns. Due to their hard work and sincere efforts the Congress

was successful in securing the support of the lower caste mass and in polling a large number of votes.

The contacts of Chamar leaders with the Congress party not only continued after the election, but also it increased. The efforts of these leaders made strong impact on the minds of the political elites who frequently sent for them and entrusted them with various responsibilities in connection with the party's organizational work.

The Municipality election provided opportunities to their leaders to carry on their political activities in the village and they fully utilized these opportunities. The election, apparently held on the non-political lines was not free from political influence. In this election, besides helping their higher caste friends to receive nominations they also secured nominations for chamar as a candidate in the Municipality. The political leaders also entrusted them (Chamar leaders) with the over all responsibilities of the campaign for the contestants, particularly among the lower castes. Their efforts again proved to be helpful.

The Political leaders sought their support not only in all local political events like election, but also in solving many problems relating to the lower castes in the neighbouring villages. They are often asked to meet and talk to them, who come and approach the party leaders for settlement of his problems and to deal with the problems of the concerned authorities.