



UIT

THE ARCTIC
UNIVERSITY
OF NORWAY

Center for Sami Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education

Indentured Servitude to Post-Freedom Predicament
A Study of Oppression of Young Tharu Kamlari Women of Dang, Nepal

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Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies

November 2016



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A Thesis Submitted

by

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Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies

SESAM/ UIT The Arctic University of Norway

November 2016

Supervisor

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**DEDICATED TO YOUNG THARU KAMLARI WOMEN WHO HAVE
BEEN STRUGGLING HARD FOR FREEDOM AND A BETTER LIFE**

*'SWARTHI BATU HO HAMAR DAI BABA
KA KAR JANMA DELO TA CHHAI HAN
DUKH DENA MAAN RAHA TA DAI BABA
KA KAR JANMA DELO TA CHHAI HAN'*

*MY FATHER, MY MOTHER, YOU MUST BE SELFISH
WHY DID YOU GIVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER
MY FATHER, MY MOTHER, YOU WANT ME TO SUFFER
THEN, WHY DID YOU GIVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER*

-SUMA THARU

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the **Center for Sami Studies** for giving me the opportunity to pursue the degree of Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies and for creating such a favorable academic environment for the accomplishment of this present research. The teaching, practical excursions and exercises really honed my academic capability to carry out this research.

Similarly, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed supervisor Professor **Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv** for her insight, kindness, encouragement and constructive advice throughout this research; this study could not have been done without her kind supervision. Likewise, **I am highly obliged** to Associate Professor **Camilla Brattland**, Associate Professor **Torjer Olsen**, Professor and the Academic Coordinator **Else Grete Broderstad**, **Rachel Issa Djesa**, **Velina Ninkova**, **Hildegunn Brunlan** and **Kanako Uzawa** for their incredible academic and administrative assistance.

Thanks goes to **Helen Jennings** for her kind proofreading. Moreover, I am also indebted to the **University Library of the UIT-The Arctic University of Norway** for providing efficient library facilities. I also owe my thanks to all of my **Research Participants** for their kind co-operation. The assistance from **District Education Office Dang**, **SWAN**, **BASE**, **FKDF** was excellent.

On a personal note, I am indebted to my parents: my late father **Nanda Ram Basnet** and my mother **Humawoti Basnet** for their inspiration that gave me the strength to pursue my passion. A special thanks goes to my wife Mrs. **Geeta KC Basnet** for her genuine support and encouragement; **Zenith** and **Julian**, my boys, whose smiles have always encouraged me while going through this work. Finally, I am beholden to my all friends, specifically, the **MIS14** group, who have directly or indirectly co-operated with me in bringing this research work to completion.

Bhakta Bahadur Basnet

Tromsø, Norway

November, 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABBREVIATIONS	iv
GLOSSARY	v
ABSTRACT	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. RESEARCH INTRODUCTION	1
1.2. RESEARCH INTEREST	1
1.3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH	3
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	4
2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	7
2.1. INTRODUCTION	7
2.2. THE SETTING	8
2.3. GAINING FIELD ACCESS	9
2.4. SELECTION AND SIZE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	9
2.5. DATA COLLECTION	10
2.5.1. INTERVIEWS	11
2.5.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION	12
2.5.3. OBSERVATION	12
2.5.4. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS	13
2.6. RESEARCH CHALLENGES AND REFLEXIVITY	13
2.6.1. BEING AN INSIDER AND AN OUTSIDER	14
2.6.2. PHYSICAL RISKS: MORE THAN ANTICIPATED	14
2.6.3. THE EMOTIONAL ASPECT	16
2.7. ETHICS	17
3. THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION	19
3.1. INTRODUCTION	19
3.2. THE CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY	19
3.3. ASPECTS OF INTERSECTIONALITY	21
3.4. THE CONCEPT OF MATRIX OF DOMINATION	23
3.5. ASPECTS OF MATRIX OF DOMINATION	24
3.5.1. INTERSECTING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION	25
3.5.2. DOMAINS OF POWER	26
4. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	29

4.1.	INDENTURED SERVITUDE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW.....	29
4.2.	LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR PROHIBITING SLAVERY IN NEPAL	30
4.3.	THARU PEOPLE: THE VICTIMS OF HISTORICAL EXPLOITATION	31
4.4.	THE KAMLARI SYSTEM	37
5.	LIFE IN THE SERVITUDE AND MULTIPLE OPPRESSIONS	41
5.1.	EXPECTATION OF EDUCATION LEADING INTO BONDAGE.....	42
5.2.	ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION DURING THE SERVITUDE	45
5.3.	POVERTY PUSHED INTO BONDAGE.....	48
6.	POST-FREEDOM PREDICAMENT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY	53
6.1.	SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AFTER FREEDOM	55
6.2.	CHALLENGES OF GOING SCHOOL AFTER FREEDOM	58
6.3.	ABUSE CONTINUES IN POST-FREEDOM CONTEXT.....	62
7.	KAMLARIS: THE VICTIMS OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF OPPRESSIONS	67
7.1.	OPPRESSION BASED ON ETHNICITY	69
7.2.	OPPRESSION BASED ON GENDER	72
7.3.	OPPRESSION BASED ON CLASS	74
8.	CONCLUSION.....	77
	REFERENCES	81
	APPENDIX-I	90
	APPENDIX-II.....	91

ABBREVIATIONS

ASI	Anti-Slavery International
BASE	Backward Society Education
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CRC	Combahee River Collection
FKDF	Freed Kamlari Development Forum
FNC	Friends for Needy Children
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NYF	Nepal Youth Foundation
OMCT	World Organization Against Torture
SWAN	Society Welfare Action Nepal
UN	United Nations Organization

GLOSSARY

<i>Aaloo Budhi</i>	Dumb old lady (Nepali slang)
<i>Bhainsbar</i>	Young Tharu boy assigned the duty of taking care of buffaloes of landlords
<i>Birta</i>	Land gifted to royal elites by the king
<i>Brahmin</i>	Top ranked caste in the hierarchal caste division in Hinduism
<i>Bukrahi</i>	Wife of bonded slave (Kamaiya) working in landlord's house
<i>Chegar</i>	Young Tharu boy assigned the duty of taking care of goats of landlords
<i>Chhetri/Kshatriya</i>	Second ranked caste in the hierarchal caste division in Hinduism
<i>Gaibar</i>	Young Tharu boy assigned the duty of taking care of cows of landlords
<i>Jamindar</i>	Local elites/landlords owning lots of land who take Tharu people into bondage
<i>Janajati</i>	Tribal people/ethnic groups
<i>Jhumri</i>	Lean, thin/malnourished (Nepali slang)
<i>Kamaiya</i>	Adult male Tharu bonded labour
<i>Kamlari</i>	Young Tharu women bonded labour
<i>Maghi</i>	One of the biggest festivals of Tharu when the annual contract of bondage is renewed
<i>Muluki Ain</i>	First legal code introduced in Nepal
<i>Naya Muluk</i>	Four districts inhabited by Tharu of western Nepal returned by the East India Company
<i>Rupees</i>	Nepalese currency
<i>Shudra</i>	The lowest ranked caste in hierarchal caste division in Hinduism
<i>Terai</i>	The southern plain fertile land of Nepal
<i>Tharu</i>	One of the marginalized indigenous group of Nepal
<i>Vaishya</i>	The second lowest ranked caste in hierarchal caste division in Hinduism

ABSTRACT

This study reflects on the predicament of the young Tharu Kamalri women after their legal emancipation in 2013, who had formerly been subjected to be the victims of bonded servitude in the name of the Kamlari system prevailing in Dang district of western Nepal. This study presents and analyses the accounts of the lives of young Kamlari women during their years in servitude, along with their experiences after they gained freedom. The freedom they obtained did not always bring the changes they expected. This study assumes that the much awaited freedom could not overcome the legacy of the evils of bonded servitude that existed from historical times, specifically, victimizing the young women of Tharu indigenous community. This study seeks to examine how the historical and systemic injustice and the socio-economic disparity occurred on a multidimensional basis, specifically victimizing the young Tharu women, forcing them to enter into bondage, thus continuing their oppression. While doing so, this study incorporates the theory of intersectionality to explore how the young Tharu women have been forced to be victims of bonded servitude owing to the intersection of multiple oppressions based on their ethnicity, class and gender.

Key Words: Kamlari System, Bonded Servitude, Tharu Indigenous People, Oppression Based on Ethnicity, Class, and Gender, Intersectionality, Post-Freedom Predicament.

Chapter I

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

The present research is based on the study of Kamlaris, the young women from Tharu, an indigenous community living in western Nepal, who have been the victims of systematic oppression under the practice of bonded servitude. Kamlari refers to the hard working women from Tharu indigenous community who would enter into servitude at an early age in order to pay back their family debt and to earn the favour of the masters to get land for sharecropping. Specifically, the present study is focussed on the analysis of the experiences of Kamlaris' life under servitude, as well as their predicament after their freedom that was officially declared on 13 July 2013.

This thesis is primarily concerned with analysing the factors responsible for pushing the Kamalaris into debt bondage, and the exploration of inherent structural deficiencies that inhibit real freedom even after attainment of legal freedom. Kamlaris, who entered into the bondage in their childhood, spent several years in servitude being engaged in domestic chores like cooking, washing, cleaning and babysitting. However, they have often been the victims of physical and verbal abuse during their life in servitude. Although their much awaited freedom from bondage was officially declared in 2013, real freedom for the Kamlaris has yet to materialise. Their hardships still hinder their empowerment. Thus, the present study offers an analysis of the intersection of three factors: gender, ethnicity and class, which shape the lived experiences of the Kamlaris. Their unique experiences in servitude and the legacy of that servitude has influenced their freedom. I have incorporated concepts like 'matrix of domination' and 'interlocking systems of oppression', formulated in the domain of intersectionality, as a theoretical framework of my study.

1.2. RESEARCH INTEREST

My interest in writing this thesis on the Kamlari came from my own experiences in the Tharu community. My research participants were Kamlaris belonging to the Tharu indigenous community who have been historically living in the Dang district. My family has also been living among the Tharu community, in the same district, for a long time although I do not belong to the Tharu group.

My forefathers led a nomadic life in the hills of western Nepal; they kept cattle and survived on the trade of milk and milk products. At that time, the Dang district was hit by a malaria epidemic, hence no one lived there except Tharu people. My grandfather migrated to the Dang district from the hills and settled there. Malaria was in the process of being eradicated during that time, so the plain and fertile land of Dang was being usurped by the high caste hill migrants. My grandfather was still grazing buffaloes and cows for milk. My father, following the tradition, travelled to different places within Dang searching for pasture land for grazing cattle. My father finally decided to give up the traditional way of living, as he saw people making their living from agriculture in the fertile land of Dang. So, he decided to settle in the plains. Since my father had no land to cultivate, he opted to start borrowing the land from landlords, often referred as Jamindars; this is known as sharecropping. Since then, my family have become quite familiar with Tharu people as they also used to survive on sharecropping the land of Jamindar. So, I was born in this context in the Tharu community.

Since my father had Tharu friends who used to work together in the field, I also got the chance to get acquainted with them since childhood. I grew up playing with the Tharu boys. I began attending school along with the Tharu boys, and always wondered why the girls of Tharu never attended school. The economic status of my family and the neighbouring Tharu families was the same; all of us were landless, surviving on sharecropping on the landlord's land. But, when my sister got opportunity to go to school, her friends, the Tharu daughters, went into debt bondage instead. As I grew up, I began to understand the socio-economic and political condition of my society. I have always been interested in Tharu people, asking my father lots of questions about them.

The most striking incident that really invoked my interest to carry out this thesis, was witnessing the daughter of my childhood Tharu friend, being sent into servitude. One of my Tharu friends left school in grade 4 and got married at the age of 14. At the time I had completed my bachelor's degree, he had a daughter of 7 years old who was sent into the bondage. Several years have passed since my childhood and people have experienced several changes in the socio-economic and political scenario of the country, however, the oppression of the daughters of Tharu remains the same. I have read several newspaper articles regarding the exploitation of Kamlaris in servitude, as well as their plight even after their official freedom. I have long sought an opportunity to delve further into this issue and I took my chance with this study. Therefore, I am inclined to explore the existing loopholes of the system that is forcing several generations of Tharu women to enter into bonded servitude.

1.3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The matter of indentured servitude in Nepal among Tharu people has drawn the attention of many researchers. Basically, the writings have focussed on the Kamaiya system, the male version of bonded servitude, which saw emancipation in 2002. Arjun Karki, addressing the problem of bonded slavery, argues that unless the structural problem of bonded slavery is addressed, bans and formulation of laws, the historical problem of the Kamaiya system will continue to survive and structural conditions may reproduce chronic inequalities (Karki, 2001:125). Although the Kamaiya system got legally banned, government policy does not seem to have eliminated Kamaiya practice; it simply shifted the bonded arrangements from adults to children.

Traditionally, children of Kamaiya families, specifically daughters, worked alongside adults for an employer or a landlord, but now, a few adults work on an annual contract basis, and instead more and more children are taking back their parents' previous roles (Giri, 2009:600) giving rise to the Kamlari system, a female version of bonded servitude. Here, Giri links how the Kamlari practice was reminiscent of the Kamaiya system. Similarly, Purwaningrum Maelanny, hinting towards the prevalence of child labour in the form of Kamlari system, mentions "the fact that the practice of Kamaiya bonded child labour in the mid and far-western Terai is still widely practiced a decade after the abolition of Kamaiya system raises the essential question about what preserves the practice" (Maelanny, 2012: 54).

There are several books and articles written by local, national and international writers/researchers about the history, culture and identity of the Tharu peoples as well as about the Kamaiya system. Good examples include: Rankin's *Kamaiya Practice in Western Nepal: Perspective on Debt Bondage* (1990), Guneratne's *Many Tongues, One Peoples: The Making of Tharu Identity in Nepal* (2002), Cheria, Kandangwa and Upadhyaya's *Liberation is not Enough: The Kamaiya Movement in Nepal* (2005).

Although, much have been written/researched about bonded slavery in Nepal, to my knowledge, writing that focuses on the post-freedom predicament of Kamlaris are scarce. Much more has been written about their supposed empowerment. One of the NGOs, Nepal Youth Foundation, was active in the empowerment of Kamlari girls and mentions their empowerment in its reports. As Frost writes about the amazing transformation that is going on Nepal, vulnerable girls rescued from the Kamlari system have become free and are becoming powerful young women with vocational skills (Frost, 2009). Additionally, there is

a significant autobiographical work entitled *Kamlari Dekhi Sabhasad Samma* (From Kamlari to the Member of Parliament, 2013)) by a former Kamlari Shanta Chaudhary who explores her experience of working as a bonded slave since her childhood and her amazing transformation on being elected as a Member of Parliament of Nepal. This book illustrates the curse of being a Tharu daughter - to be compelled to work as a Kamlari - along with a strong message of empowerment.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As I have mentioned, my focus in this present study is on the systematic oppression of the young Kamlari women, both during years of servitude and even since 'freedom'. Despite changes in law that formally granted the Kamlari freedom and assumed empowerment, they are still in lack of real emancipation and empowerment. In this regard, my project is guided by a central research question that is stated as: 'What factors can explain why the previously indentured young Kamlari women do not experience freedom despite the legal reforms?' This central research question is supported by following sub-questions:

- What factors are responsible to shape the life experiences of young Tharu women transforming them into Kamlaris?
- What are the challenges that the freed Kamlaris are coping with after freedom?
- What sorts of oppression did Kamlaris undergo during servitude and what is their condition in the post-freedom context?

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As I have mentioned, research has been conducted about the issue of bonded slavery in Nepal, however, to my knowledge, specific research regarding the predicament of the Tharu Kamlari women post emancipation has been limited. Hence, this research can offer an important account of the journey of Tharu Kamlari women from the handcuffs of indentured servitude to being independent individuals seeking their way towards full empowerment. Moreover, the current project explores the existing loopholes in the measures adopted by the concerned agencies and authorities, including the NGOs, to free Kamlari women, which might provoke reconsideration of structural deficiencies.

In addition, the issues raised by this research, I hope, can serve a source of motivation and knowledge for the freed Kamlari women, as well as the activists for their next steps. Since the current project explores the plight of the oppressed Kamlari women, it can offer a voice for their concerns. Yet another aspect that may justify the significance of this research is that it

may urge policy makers to make appropriate policies to overcome the harsh situation the Kamlari women are coping with, post 'freedom'. This project garners the history of Tharu people, from how they became landless and eventually ended up in bonded servitude. My hope is that this work offers a useful and unique source of information on the topic.

Since the freedom of Kamlari women is so relatively recent in Nepal, and there are several indentured women who are still not free from bonded servitude, this research might influence the mind set of people regarding the Kamlari and offer ways towards real emancipation. Last but not least, this study contributes to viewing the issue of Kamlaris from a different angle, revealing the core mechanisms that contribute to their systematic oppression; the angle of intersectionality. The problem of the Kamalari system has been that it has either been viewed as an issue of gender or class discrimination. However, this study views the issue of Kamlari via the intersectional perspective, assuming that the Kamlaris have been subjected to the historical systematic oppression, owing to the intersections of oppressions based on gender, ethnicity and class. Hence, this study contributes the idea that a multiplicity of oppressions have been faced by the Kamlaris, all intertwined and based on their gender, class and ethnicity.

Chapter II

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss the methodological approach that I adopted during the process of collecting data in the field, as well as the accomplishment of this completed project. In fact, the research method is essential since it is the way of making the observation systematic, describing the ways of collecting evidence and indicating the tools and techniques used in data collection (Cavaye, 1996: 237). In a way, a research methodology summarizes the research process, foretells how the research will proceed, and begins with the choice of research paradigm that signifies the study. Chilisa suggests that research methodology is:

Guided by philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values and the theoretical framework that informs comprehension, interpretation, choice of literature, and research practice on a given topic (Chilisa, 2012: 160-161).

For me, as a researcher of the sensitive issue of the women of an indigenous group, to adopt an appropriate research methodology is very important. In this regard, Hanson asserts:

Understanding and finding research methodologies that are culturally complex, culturally appropriate, community based, participatory and feminist, while conscious of power relations still apparent in the research process, is increasingly required in a complex global system of geopolitical and identity diverse relationships (Hanson, 2012: 95).

In fact, as Hanson suggests, comprehension and adoption of the appropriate research methodology is really important for me, as the use of appropriate methodological approach frames the research scientific and reliable research.

Here, I discuss the methodological aspects pertaining my project, including discussion of my study area, gaining access in the field, selection and size of informants, data collection method, challenges, reflexivity and ethics.

2.2. THE SETTING

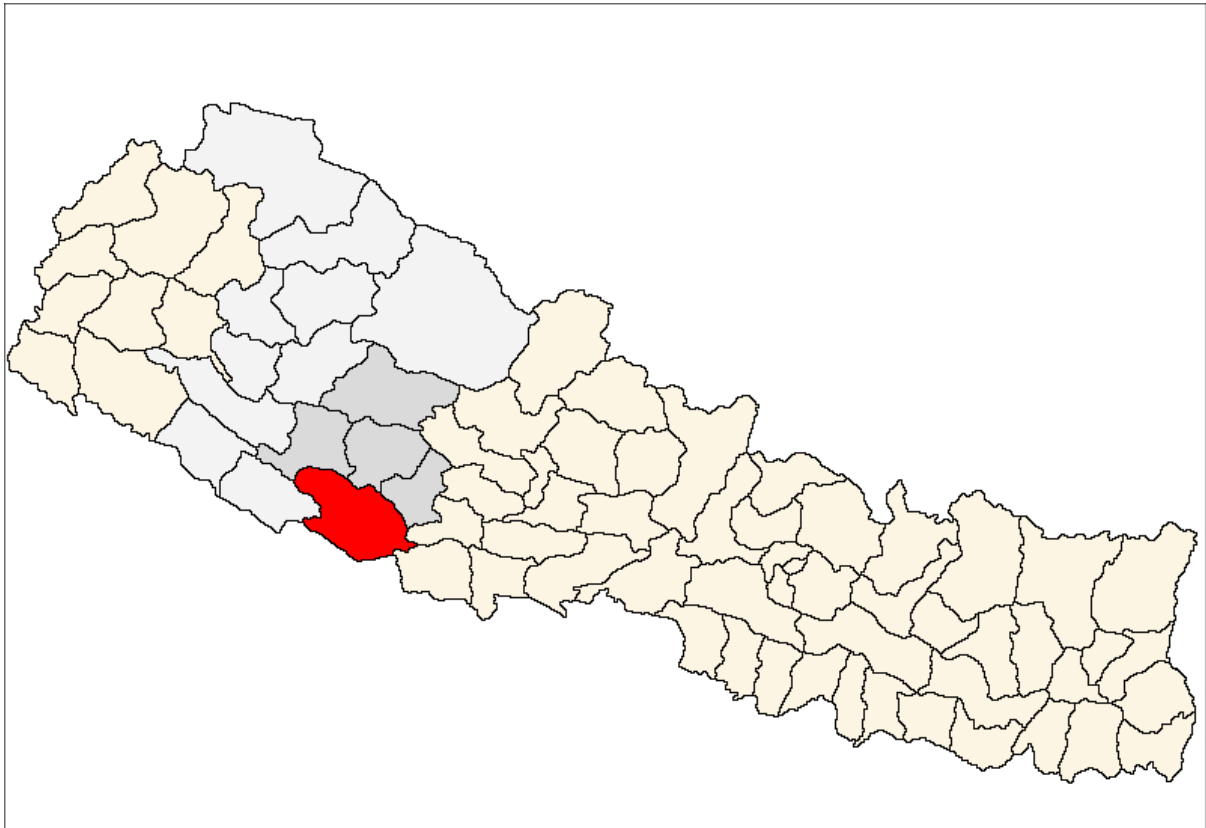


Fig: Map of Nepal showing Dang district, my field area, in shaded region.

I visited Nepal, my homeland, a mountainous landlocked country sandwiched between two giant nations, China and India, that lies in South Asia with an area of 147, 181 square kilometres. In spite of its small territory, Nepal shares a diversity of landscapes from snow-capped mountains to the fertile basins of the Terai region that has enriched the country with ethnic diversity. The census of 2011 reported that there are 125 ethnic groups officially recognized in Nepal within a total population of 23,151,423. The ethnic group that I am focussing on is the Tharu, that accounts for 6.6% of the total population of the country (CBS, 2014).

My study area includes the different locations of the Dang district in Western Nepal, that has been historically inhabited by the Tharu people, and is hence the area infamous for the practice of bonded servitude. As the BBC noted, at least 20,000 girls in western Nepal were working as indentured domestic servants in 2007 (Haviland, BBC News, 2007). In fact, my study area was multi-sited, since access to informants was not possible from just one site, although it was all within the area of Dang district. I had to cover different locations to gain

access. Although ‘multi-sited ethnography is a complex strategy confronting the ethnographer with methodological and practical problems’ (Nadai and Maeder, 2009: 242), the positive aspect of such multi-sited ethnography is that it offers us the space to make a comparison and contrast between the elegant data by switching locations (Nadai & Maeder, 2009: 242)) and exploring people in motion. Multi-sited fieldwork also enabled me to visit more NGO’s dispersed across the district.

2.3. GAINING FIELD ACCESS

While conducting qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to plan access to fieldwork, since this will take up much time (Johl & Renganathan, 2010: 42). I also had to spend significant time to get in touch with my informants because my it was not possible for me to get full access on my own. Gaining access is not so simple and doesn’t always go as planned, as I discovered on my field work. In fact, it requires the ‘combination of strategic planning, hard work and dumb luck’ (Van Maanen and Kolb, 1985: 11). For me, gaining access was not so easy despite my acquaintance with the geographical and socio-economic framework. It was after the declaration of freedom in 2013, that most of the Kamlaris had been rescued from their masters’ house. So, it was not possible for me to meet them at the masters’ houses. If there are any left to be rescued, the masters would certainly try to conceal the truth and would never bring forth the case of bonded servitude existing in their house. Hence, I had to go through the local NGOs and government agencies active in the campaign of rescue and rehabilitation of the Kamlaris after freedom. However, it was still not easy to get access to research participants, since some of the NGOs that kept word for me to assist in establishing my contact with the research participants ultimately failed to deliver their promises. I had consequently to switch frequently between NGOs and locations. Ultimately, the government agency, the District Education Office of Dang, assisted me in making contact with my research participants. NGOs like Freed Kamlari Development Forum, Help Society Nepal, BASE and SWAN also made significant contribution in bringing me into contact with research participants.

2.4. SELECTION AND SIZE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Since my research seeks to explore the post-freedom predicament along with the simultaneously oppressed state of Kamlari women from Tharu community in western Nepal, I had to find research participants who were the victims of the practice of bonded servitude. In selecting my research participants, I applied the purposive sampling method that is ‘virtually synonymous to qualitative research’ (Palys, 2008: 697). Finally, I was able to

select female research participants from the Tharu community who had undergone the experiences of life under bonded servitude in the form of Kamlari, applying homogenous sampling technique of purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling method helps to make the selection of informants holding similar characteristics that ‘enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study’ (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003: 78). My selection of informants was based on common characteristics of gender, ethnicity and the experiences of life under bondage. I visited an organization that runs some skill oriented programs for freed Kamlaris, where I selected some of my research participants. I also visited a hostel (a rehabilitation center) where the rescued Kamlaris, who have either lost their families or become very impoverished are housed; I was able to select some of my research participants from there. Hence, all of my research participants belong to the Tharu indigenous community, all of them are females aged between 19-26, and all of them have worked in bonded slavery since childhood, and have been leading a free life after being either rescued or freed after attaining freedom.

I did not go for a large number of participants and opted for quality interviews with 13 key research participants in the field, along with additional interviews with other people who have been working for the welfare of freed Kamlaris. It is generally believed that the sample size in qualitative research should not be too large, for that creates difficulty in extracting the essence from dense data (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007: 242). Yet, as Sandelowski notes, numbers too are important to ensure adequacy of sampling strategy (Sandelowski, 1995: 179); the sample should not be too small for analysis and data saturation (Flick, 1998). My sample size is considered appropriate for a Masters level dissertation.

2.5. DATA COLLECTION

In the context of social science research, usually, qualitative, quantitative and mixed research approaches are used, however, the researcher needs to apply appropriate methodological approaches based on the essence of required research data (Acharya, 2006:11). I am incorporating a descriptive qualitative research method in order to gather the required data for my research. Data collection is one of the significant aspects to be taken into consideration and handled with care in the field for a qualitative research. The techniques that I have incorporated in order to gather primary data for my project are illuminated below.

2.5.1. INTERVIEWS

When it comes to the use of tools for the data collection, primarily, to accumulate primary data, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth personal interviews using the ‘purposive sampling method’ commonly adopted in social science research (Bryman, 2001: 312). A semi-structured interview method, according to Chilisa, is the focussed interview method that focuses on the issue to be covered (Chilisa, 2012: 204). The interview, ‘a conversation with purpose’ (Kahn and Cannell, 1957: 149), was really a great achievement for me in accumulating essential data.

My interview process involved open-ended questions that revolved around the life experiences of the key research participants during servitude and post freedom. I had prepared some guiding questions grounded on the theme of my project that led me into more detail in the course of the interview. My research participants were really interested and eager to narrate their experiences and their co-operation is worth mentioning. I endeavoured to put my informants at ease, as Spradley suggests, and conducted the interviews as friendly conversations (Spradley, 1979: 58). Some of issues that my guiding questions did not touch were raised by my research participants themselves. They told me useful details about the different aspects of their lives during their servitude, and also after they were freed.

I initially thought I would tape record my interviews, but although my participants seemed quite happy with that, I eventually decided against it. I was fortunate to have the help of one of the freed Kamlaris as an interpreter/facilitator with the interviews, extremely valuable given that I was a male interviewing females. I and my assistant discussed the basic themes of our interview with the research participants and we let them choose which of us should conduct the interviews.

With regard to linguistics obstacles, I had to conduct interviews in two languages; Nepali and Tharu. Some of the research participants were not fluent in the Nepali language, hence the interviews frequently switched between the Nepali and Tharu languages. Working in two languages at once was not easy and ‘language differences may have consequences, because concepts in one language may be understood differently in another language’ (Van Nes et al, 2010: 313). I have a good command of both languages and I was very cautious regarding the translation while keeping the notes. As a matter of fact, I kept all the notes in English, even though the interviews were conducted either in the Nepali or in Tharu language. I coped with the challenge of ‘on the spot’ instant translation, since for me, it takes more time to hand

write in Nepali or Tharu script as compared to English. This way of translating and writing was really challenging, but I did my best.

2.5.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

In addition to the in-depth interviews, I conducted focus group discussions among my research participants in order to collect data. Focus group discussions encourage participants to exchange their knowledge, experiences and points of view regarding issues and help in generating useful data (Kitzinger, 1995: 299). Furthermore, focus group discussions are useful to get inside not only what the research participants think, but also ‘how they think’ (Kitzinger, 1995: 299). Focus group discussions can generate additional material in the required data since the participants ‘listen, reflect on what is said, and in the light of this consider their own standpoint further’ (Finch and Lewis, 2003: 171). I opted to conduct focus group discussions since the participants can influence each other in discussion by creating a natural circumstance as in real life (Kreuger and Casey, 2000:11) that revolves around the central theme and adds more to it.

In conducting focus group discussions, my assistant helped me to form the groups by selecting the participants of the discussion. We conducted two focus group discussions: one in the hostel and another in one of the Kamlari welfare organizations. All of the participants were the freed Kamlari women who were either living in hostels to pursue further education or who had been studying and working in the capital city after their freedom, but had returned to the hostel owing to the devastation of earthquake in the capital city. The major issues discussed in the groups related to the reasons why they had entered into bondage, their experiences during servitude, and their circumstances after freedom. The focus group discussions were really useful in collecting information regarding their common experience of life during servitude and after freedom. I became familiar with their attitudes regarding life before and after emancipation. In fact, the participants enthusiastically discussed many matters concerning bonded servitude, freedom and empowerment. The discussion was helpful in exploring the plight of the Kamlaris and their empowerment, and revealed the realities of their suffering.

2.5.3. OBSERVATION

Although, I did not plan to use observation technique during the process of data collection, once in the field, I realized that observation too, could contribute and enrich my data. Observation technique assists in generating direct and immediate data devoid of the effect of

‘interpretation, artificial experimental conditions, memory, or other factors’ (Page, 2004: 1037). In fact, my observation was focussed in two field sites; first in the hostel where the freed Kamlaris reside for rehabilitation and the second, in one of the NGOs I visited, that runs different skill oriented vocational programs for the freed Kamlaris, along with programs for trauma counselling and career building. As I visited these two sites, I observed the things and activities there that helped to accumulate additional information regarding my project. For instance, my observation was helpful in giving me an idea of the life lived by the Kamlaris in the post-freedom scenario. For instance, I could clearly note the lack of seasonal clothes, dearth of balanced diet, educational materials, essential medicines, lack of financial resource in case of sickness and many other resources that reflected their predicament. Similarly, I could also observe the aspiring faces whose scars of suffering of servitude were concealed by the smile as the hands were busy in knitting, weaving and sewing.

2.5.4. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Regarding the secondary data, I was able to access different important books and reports during my field visit. I was able to get two important books directly linked to my research: the first is entitled ‘*Lawajuni*’ and discusses the new life of Kamlaris after being freed, while the is ‘*Jivan Badalneharu*’ that illustrates the struggle of Kamlaris for freedom. Additionally, one of the NGOs helped me greatly by providing the collection of newspaper reports from the local paper that had covered the various issues of Kamlaris. Besides these, I watched various documentaries regarding the Kamlari freedom movement, problems of Kamlaris and their empowerment. I read/watched interviews of political leaders and Kamlari activists concerned about the issue. Additionally, I was given an autobiography ‘*Kamlari Dekhi Sabhasahad Samma*’ that translates *From Bonded Servitude to Member of Parliament* by of a former Kamlari woman Shanta Chaudhary, in which she narrates her journey from indentured servitude to becoming a member of parliament. This book is of great significance for my project. I am still in the process of accessing various documents related to my projects. While leaving for the field from here, my plan was to visit the Central Library of Tribhuvan University, where I could access different research papers, dissertations, reports and books helpful for me; this did not happen owing to lack of time.

2.6. RESEARCH CHALLENGES AND REFLEXIVITY

While carrying out systematic research, whether the researcher is an insider or an outsider, it is very difficult to deal with the varied aspects as the researcher has to display his/her deepest

sincerity in every step from the topic selection to publishing the outcome (Wolff and Pant, 1993:139). Being a researcher, I also faced many challenges discussed below.

2.6.1. BEING AN INSIDER AND AN OUTSIDER

Particularly when it comes to the context of research by an outsider, the degree and intensity of challenges are comparatively higher (Wilson, 2001: 214), and the level of challenge increases more if the researcher plans to conduct research on a vulnerable community, which certainly applied in my case. Although I have lived among the Tharu, I do not belong to that specific indigenous community and that obviously makes me an outsider. I am an outsider in terms of both ethnicity and gender. I am a male from a different ethnic group. Being an outsider, it is a challenging task to represent and give voice to the oppressed and exploited indigenous people. As Smith argues ‘indigenous peoples must set the agenda for change themselves, not simply react to an agenda that has been laid out for us by others’ (Smith, 2000: 210). The challenge for me is obvious as I am setting an agenda for change in Tharu Kamlari women whilst being an outsider male. In fact, I was frightened that my research participants might not assist me in data collection process, considering me an outsider. However, all went fine as planned. My research participants perceived me as an insider since I share the same economic class and geography. As I have lived in the Tharu community since my childhood, I know their language and culture. We even share some of our traditions. Hence, it was relatively easy to deal with my research participants since I had prior knowledge regarding their condition.

I was certainly aware that I might face challenges of being an outsider and a male specifically regarding the context of interview. Some of the key research participants were women with whom I had been quite familiar for a long time. I was quite careful in the interviews not to express my own views on matters being discussed. I was aware of the risk of researchers answering questions asked by the respondents or providing personal opinions on the matters discussed (Fontana and Frey, 2005: 660). While some of my research participants hesitated to open up with me, a male stranger, during the interview in the Tharu socio-cultural dimension, the frequent interaction of my female facilitator eased matters greatly.

2.6.2. PHYSICAL RISKS: MORE THAN ANTICIPATED

Visiting a field is not free from risks. The risks of physical harm, including infectious diseases, are inevitable in the field specifically for those who visit developing countries (Bloor M, Fincham B. and Sampson H, 2010: 45). I was quite aware about this fact, yet, I

underestimated the risks as I felt that that the place I visited was my homeland. I assumed that I could handle the possible risks comfortably as I had undergone a thorough risk assessment, safety and first aid course at the university as a preparation for my fieldwork. Additionally, I had some idea of what might be the possible risk factors in the field. Yet the risks I encountered turned out to be more severe than I had expected.

I visited Nepal in the monsoon season when Dang district receives maximum rainfall. So, it rained throughout the whole duration of my field visit. Owing to excessive rain, the roads and the streets were muddy and slippery with puddles which slowed my field work. The rivers on my way flooded owing to the continuous rainfall and affected my travel arrangements. There were several instances of accidents as the vehicles got carried down by the flood during the monsoon. Even though I had witnessed such accidents since my childhood, I was scared and quite cautious too.

Managing my means of transportation presented challenges. I was in dire need of a vehicle since I had to wander around several NGOs that are located far from each other. The local public vehicles are overcrowded and offer an unreliable service. Private taxis are very expensive, hence, I managed with the assistance of one of my friends to get from place to place on his motorbike. Unfortunately, one day, there was an accident as my motorbike slipped off the muddy and slippery country road resulting a slight dislocation of the joint of my left ankle. There was no hospital nearby, so the locals suggested I should see a local traditional healer from the Tharu community. I was really scared in case I had a fracture, however the healer convinced me that that it was merely a sprain; I was treated with a traditional massage using herbal oils from medicinal plants. It took almost 5 days before I felt fully recovered.

In addition to the above mentioned challenges, the hot climate posed many difficulties during the fieldwork. The temperature was high, reaching between 35-40 degrees Celsius, that made me feel lethargic and dehydrated, although I thought I was well prepared to tackle the scorching sun. In fact, continuous sweating created some obstacles during the interviews process too. To be frank, I had never thought of it, however, the act of wiping off the sweat from the body time and again during the interview process really hindered smooth conversation. Moreover, usually during the monsoon, the area is full of mosquitoes. And there is the risk of infections of grave diseases like encephalitis, meningitis, dengue and malaria. I was aware of this situation as well and prepared for it; I had carried some mosquito

repellent balm to apply on skin in order to repel the mosquitoes. Yet I still experienced problems, especially at nights, which were stressful owing to the continuous irritating buzz of the mosquitoes and hot climatic conditions. Fans could help for both mosquitoes and high temperature, but Nepal experiences power cuts, so the purchase of a mosquito net was the key thing that helped.

Apart from mosquito bites, there is also the risk of snakebite in that area especially during the rainy season. Various species of poisonous snakes are found there including the dangerous cobra and karate. There are several incidents of deaths due to snakebite in Dang district and I was quite aware of this fact. Even so, on one night I had a narrow escape when I narrowly avoided a snake while going to the outside latrines. The risks were more real than I realised, but I managed to conduct my fieldwork and return with my data.

2.6.3. THE EMOTIONAL ASPECT

I had no any idea regarding the emotional aspect that a researcher undergoes during the fieldwork and had not thought of it when I left for the fieldwork. Yet I admit that I encountered a range of emotions in the field. Although, ‘it has become increasingly fashionable for individual researchers to personalise their accounts of fieldwork’ (Dickinson Swift, V. et al, 2009:61), however the researchers tend to conceal the emotional effect and there has been little systematic attempt to reflect upon their experiences and emotions that are reported in any comprehensive, collective or epistemological sense. (Coffey, 1999: 1). I am not going to conceal the emotional part of my research here since I had my first-hand experience of it in the field.

Although I was quite aware about the fact that I had been there as a researcher, still the sorrowful stories of their struggle and sufferings touched me a lot. I observed their daily life that was full of scarcity and struggle. I noticed some of them suffering from chronic disease but lacked enough resources for treatment. I heard their stories of being targeted for abuse in the public sphere, being stigmatized as Kamlari. I sometimes felt as if I was myself bearing their pain. Hearing their stories and observing their condition was very painful. As Gilbert asserts, being a qualitative researcher, it becomes the responsibility of the researcher to see the world via the eyes of the informants using ourselves as a research instrument and therefore we must experience our research both ‘intellectually and emotionally’ (Gilbert, 2001: 9). So, I could not detach myself from their sorrowful lived experiences: I felt so sorry for the pain that they had to tolerate.

Moreover, being a citizen of that country and a resident of the same district, it was really hard for me to hold my emotions. Besides, I was also a human being interviewing them. I would like to remember the line of Heidegger in this context who contends, 'I cannot look at the world objectively because the world is not, and cannot possibly be, outside me, since I am and always have been since birth in the world existing as part of it. I am inextricably linked to all other entities in the world-wide web of significance' (Heidegger cited in Watts, 2001: 12). I was a human observer and 'the observer cannot be neatly disentangled from the observed in the activity of inquiring into construction' (Guba and Lincoln cited in Schwandt, 1994: 128). As a researcher, I should see research not only as an intellectual exercise but also 'as a process of exploration and discovery that is felt deeply' (Gilbert, 2001: 9). It can be argued that our knowledge is not a matter of objectivity and cannot be dissociated from our bodies, experiences and emotions, but it is created through our experiences of the world as a sensuous and affective activity (Hubbard et al., 2001: 126) that encompasses the emotions that the human possess.

The best way that I discovered to handle my emotions during my field visit was to take enough breaks during the interview process and interactions, so that we could get some time to change our topic of discussion for a while and feel refreshed. Sometimes, we even cracked some jokes and laughed out. We switched our discussion to various topics, however, I was quite aware of the fact that I was there with an objective. So, I tried my best to gather adequate information pertaining my research.

2.7. ETHICS

Research ethics, the set of moral and professional behaviours of a researcher, checks and balances the unlimited power of researcher and respects the research subjects which consequently minimizes the possibilities of the research being chaotic (Baker, 1994). Thus, ethics signifies respondent's partnership to balance the researcher's power influence on subjectivity (Thody, 2006:143). The issue of ethics is very important and sensitive for a research project specifically when it comes to the research of indigenous women as here. My research participants were women who were 'vulnerable', as Moore and Miller define the vulnerable, namely deprived of making their own life choices, lacking the self-determinism, personal decision and independence (1999: 1034). I really had to act cautiously in the field during my interviews and it was a big challenge loaded with ethical issues. Based on my own research, experience and wide range of reading, I concluded that my research participants are

the vulnerable as Nyamathi contends, namely those who are ‘impoverished, disenfranchised, and subject to discrimination, intolerance, subordination and stigma (1998:65).

Generally, in the third world context as my own, the women have very insignificant access to the public domain that can be very problematic for an outsider researcher to gain access as ‘women are extremely busy, and time to sit and talk may be restricted to the late evenings ...women are rarely given roles as official spokespersons for a community thus they are not the first people outsiders are likely to encounter’ (Scheyvens and Leslie, 2000:119). To address this issue, I managed to appoint a female activist as a facilitator belonging to the same community who works for their welfare. For ethical reasons, I avoided questions about sensitive issues like sexual and emotional abuse of the Kamlaris during and after servitude. Yet, during interviews, several women opened up about such matters which my female assistant handled with care.

Regarding ethical issues in my research project, I used the method of free prior informed consent and carefully handled the confidentiality and privacy of my research subjects, though Wilson suggests to reveal the real identity of the research subject under consent since it could be clarified that who we are really talking about (Wilson, 2008: 63). However, the reluctance of my informants to be identified ethically guided me to anonymize them. I had previously planned to include some pictures in my thesis. However, I did not find my research participants comfortable with that. Hence, I did not capture any pictures of them. As per the wish of my research participants, I have not included any such element that helps in identifying my research participants.

In the course of my field visit, there was some expectation of financial aid from my project, a misunderstanding of my academic purposes that I had to manage carefully. It was hard not to give some financial aid to the most impoverished, but I hope that the main value of my research to my participants will be through giving voice to their plight.

Chapter III

3. THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

My current thesis is based on the experiences of Kamlari women during the period of their servitude and the continuation of their hardships even after their freedom from the bondage. Since the Kamlaris faced discrimination based on their gender, class and ethnicity, the concept of intersectionality serves as an appropriate theoretical apparatus to analyse the experiences of my research participants. Hence, in this chapter I will discuss the theoretical concepts that are conceptualized in the domain of Intersectionality; specifically, the concept of ‘matrix of domination’ that explains the way women become the victim when the forces of race, gender and class intersect with each other.

3.2. THE CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The concept of intersectionality seeks to explore the various layers of biological, social, economic and cultural factors that intersect with each other and are responsible for the marginalization of women. ‘Intersectionality may be defined as a theory to analyse how social and cultural categories intertwine’ where the relationship between these social and cultural categories like gender, race, ethnicity and class are examined (Knudsen, 2006: 61). The theory proposes that the identity of an individual is constructed out of multiple elements like that of gender, class, ethnicity and age that are inextricably entangled with each other (De Francisco et al, 2014:9). Since the theory of intersectionality highlights the diverse and marginalized positions, the categories of race, gender, ethnicity and class add complexity to the intersectionality resulting the transitions in the identities (Knudsen, 2006: 61). In other words, the identities of women who have been the victims of the intersections of these categories keeps on changing. I will illustrate with an examples: Let’s say, a baby, a biologically girl, is born to a Tharu parents. At the moment the baby is identified as a girl, she begins to face gender discrimination. Then, her ethnicity intercepts her identity and now she is known to be a Tharu girl. Now she faces the discrimination based on her gender and ethnicity. Similarly, her economic status too intersects with her gender and ethnicity and she gets identified as poor Tharu girl. Ultimately, she encounters the discrimination based on her gender, ethnicity and class. The intersection of all these elements contribute to push her into the bonded servitude granting her a new identity of a poor Tharu Kamlari women.

The concepts of elaborating the term ‘intersections’ was in a wide discussion during the early 1980’s as the various publications by Mohanty, Moraga and Anzaldúa, Hooks and Smith contributed in the domain of antiracist feminist theory. The root of intersectionality lies on the political movement of Black women, Latina and Chicana Women and the other women of color (Caratathis, 2014: 306). The credit of introducing the concept of intersectionality goes to Kimberle Crenshaw who posits the view that the theoretical framework of intersectionality seeks to assist on examining how the systemic historical injustice and socio-economic disparity occur on a multidimensional basis specifically victimizing women of colour (Crenshaw, 1989:140). Intersectionality in other words, ‘refers to a form of relationship between social structures, specifically one in which social structures combine to create social categories to which certain experiences and forms of oppression are unique’ (Weldon, 2008: 196). In fact, intersectionality enforces to examine the experience of marginalized (black) women in separate since they ‘face many problems and their unique perspectives, identities, and experiences, cannot be derived from an examination of the experiences and position of either, black men or white women’ (Weldon, 2008: 194). Intersectionality, in contrary to traditional feminism, seeks to address the unique experiences of women who have been the victim of systematic domination since the historical times as they had no privilege of either being men, white or rich.

Although, the concept of intersectionality was formulated in the domain black feminism in order to theorize the unique identity, experiences and social position of black women in the US, however, this theory is applicable to the marginalized women holding unique experiences of being exploited as a result of the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity (Weldon, 2008: 193). Thus, the reason behind my choice to set up intersectionality as a theoretical framework is to examine the unique experiences of my research participants who have been subjected to the continuous subjugation because they belong to the minority poverty-stricken Tharu indigenous community.

Although intersectionality is rooted in mainstream feminism, however, the need for departing from mainstream feminism is, that it is the monistic approach that merely focuses on gender discrimination without excavating other elements like poverty and ethnicity which equally contribute for their historical exploitation. It sounds reasonable to stick to the framework of intersectionality for me because ‘as opposed to examining gender, race, class and nation, as separate systems of oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another’ (Collins 1998: 63). As a matter of fact, intersectionality seeks to

examine the interplay of multiple elements at once that contribute to the systematic domination of women. The theory of intersectionality strongly opposes the traditional feminists' claim that merely the gender analysis acts as a remedy for women's oppression. Rather, intersectionality proposes that 'women's lives are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression' specifically focussing on the idea that the 'oppression is not a singular process or a binary political relation, but is better understood as constituted by multiple, converging, or interwoven systems' (Caratathis, 2014: 314). Gender as a single analytical tool, as proposed by intersectionality, fails to explore typical experiences as a woman who face the issues of race, class and ethnicity and 'consequently, scholars and theorists who endorse this theory must attend to a myriad overlapping and mutually reinforcing oppressions that many women face in addition to gender (Samuels and Ross-Sheriff, 2008: 5).

Kemeberele Crenshaw while defining intersectionality and the situation of black women gives an analogy of the traffic in an intersection. She clarifies the idea by assuming an intersection where two roads meet. If an accident occurs in an intersection, the reason behind the accident can be from the vehicles travelling from any direction and sometimes from all the four directions (Crenshaw, 1989: 149). This analogy is quite applicable in the case of my research participants. The Kamlaris are also injured at the intersection as the class discrimination strikes from one direction, ethnicity discrimination strikes from another, and gender discrimination strikes from yet another direction. Hence, their experiences are different from the experiences of others owing to the overlapping of various forces. Crenshaw also critiques on the single axis framework of gender discrimination that overlooks the other facets of discrimination. She points out that the single categorical axis of gender discrimination 'erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group' (Crenshaw, 1989: 140). As 'this focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989: 140), Crenshaw emphasizes on the framework of intersectionality that can conceptualize, identify as well as can be a remedy of the multiple discrimination.

3.3. ASPECTS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Crenshaw, in her popular 1991 essay 'Mapping the Margins', puts forward a threefold definition of intersectionality. She puts structural intersectionality, the concept that is widely

practiced in the literature, at the first place in her threefold definition of intersectionality. She states that the structural intersectionality refers to ‘the ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender makes our actual experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different than that of white women’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1245). Structural intersectionality differentiates the experiences of women of colour and the mainstream women illustrating how the women of color are subjected to be the victims of violence and abuse owing to their peculiar positioning in the intersections. Regarding the context of my research participants, structural intersectionality is handy in order to analyse the domestic violence that they suffered during their years of servitude. Let’s take, for instance, the daughters of Tharu and the daughters of landowners who are at the top of caste hierarchy. The daughters of Tharu, owing to their position at the intersection, fall in the claptrap of bondage where they get physically abused. However, the daughters of landowners do not undergo such experience of domestic violence as their position differs from the Tharu daughters; although they too are women but are rich and belong to high caste. Since their lives do not get shaped by the intersections of ethnicity, class and gender, they seldom experience the physical violence as the Kamlaris do.

Moreover, Crenshaw discusses about political intersectionality as second aspect of intersectionality that illustrates the fact that historically, feminist and antiracist politics in the U.S. ‘have functioned in tandem to marginalize issues facing Black women’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1245). Incorporating the concept of intersectionality with the theory of feminism, she further argues, ‘women of colour are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1252). She argues that both the anti-racists and the feminists fail to interrogate the intersections of race and gender. Antiracism, while confronting the racial discriminations tends to carry on the gender discrimination whereas the feminism while interrogating gender discrimination is likely to neglect racial discrimination. Crenshaw argues that the women of colour are left to make a choice between these two inadequate approaches of antiracism or feminism that ‘constitutes a denial of a fundamental dimension of our subordination’ (Crenshaw, 1991: 1252). As feminist and antiracist politics have historically functioned to marginalize black women in the context of the US, the case is similar with my research participants. In the geographical context of my research participants, there have been several movements based on ethnicity or indigeneity demanding for equal treatment. Tharu people have been raising the agenda of ongoing discrimination based on their ethnicity. However, that particular political agenda

fails to address issue pertaining a typical Tharu Kamlari women. Similarly, the feminists too have staged several political movements asking for gender equality. But the fact is that, the issue they raise, in other hand, overshadows the oppression faced by Kamlari women based on their ethnicity and class. Hence, the concept of political intersectionality, as illuminated by Crenshaw is quite applicable in the context of my analysis.

Finally, Crenshaw presents representational intersectionality as her third aspect of intersectionality pertaining the representation of women of colour. Here, she is concerned about how the women of colour have been historically marginalized by the construction of their images. The phenomena of the representation of the women of colour via cultural images tends to omit out the intersection of race and gender. She further argues that the analysis of 'representational intersectionality would include both the ways in which these images are produced through a confluence of prevalent narrative of race and gender, as well as a recognition of how contemporary critiques of racist and sexist representation marginalize women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991: 1283). In fact, the images of Tharu Kamlari women of being humble, docile, meek, feeble, ignorant, illiterate, that have been continually created in our local setting have contributed a lot for the enslavement of my research participants. I have myself heard many locally created myths about them that are designed to oppress them.

3.4. THE CONCEPT OF MATRIX OF DOMINATION

Patricia Hills Collins, one of the significant contributors to the theory of intersectionality defines intersectionality as an 'analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization which shape Black women's experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women' (Collins, 2000: 299). I intend to apply her concept in my own context where my research participants, Kamlari women will be at the centre of my reference since the experiences shaped by these systems are similar to both the black women and Kamlari women. As Collins defines intersectionality, she asserts that there are multiple intersections of the elements of social inequality that she calls the matrix of domination.

To continue, I can see Collin's concept of matrix of domination is rooted on the 'concept of interlocking systems of oppressions' postulated by Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist group of Boston, in their writing 'A Black Feminist Statement'. The Combahee River Collective (CRC) call for a major focus of Black feminists' politics on struggling against the systems of oppression that are interlocking like the oppression of sex, class and

race and also assert that ‘the synthesis of these oppression creates the conditions of our lives’ (CRC 1977/1981/1983: 210). The CRC point out the need of going against the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that victimizes the women of colour. In fact, the CRC, during the 1970’s detected the need for an integrative theoretical approach in order to challenge the multiple oppression which they referred as interlocking systems of oppression. Belkhir credits the Black Feminism for generating integrated approach in order to dissect the interlocking systems of oppressions. He asserts that the concept of interlocking systems of oppression was not even taken into any significant consideration by any theorists until the emergence of Black Feminism in the US, hence, the concept of the interlocking systems of oppression ‘is one of the greatest gifts of black women’s studies to social theory as a whole’ (Belkhir 2009: 303). As Belkhir asserts, this integrative concept of interlocking systems of oppression is applicable for critically analysing the experiences of the women of color, Kamlari women for instance, whose lives are shaped by the interplay of the forces of gender class and ethnicity.

Moreover, the concept of ‘matrix of domination’ i.e. the concept of interlocking systems of oppression, according to Collins is ‘the overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society’ (Collins, 2000: 299). She primarily focuses on the systems of race, gender and class which she also refers as the interlocking system of oppression. Oppression, according to Collins is ‘an unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society’ (Collins, 2000: 299). She identifies the systems of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity as the major constituents of oppression. Concentrating her focus on the interlocking systems of oppression; the matrix of domination, Collins rejects the idea of additive approach to oppression. She contends, ‘instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, Black feminist thought, sees these distinctive systems of oppression as being part of one overarching structure of domination’ (Collins, 1990: 222). The variables like race, gender, class and ethnicity are interconnected with each other that predominantly play a significant role for the subordination of black women for Collins’ context and the plight of the Kamlari women in mine.

3.5. ASPECTS OF MATRIX OF DOMINATION

For Collins, the first aspect of the matrix of domination has to do with the particular ‘arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality,

citizenship status, ethnicity and age' and the second aspect includes the particular organization of structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power (Collins, 2000: 299).

3.5.1. INTERSECTING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

The first aspect of the matrix of domination, intersecting systems of oppression, focuses on how the interplay of these various variables affect the lives of under-privileged women like black women and the Kamlari women. Primarily she focuses on the interconnectedness of race, gender and class which eventually open up the space for other variables like ethnicity, sexuality, age and religion. The overlapping of these various elements ultimately tend to marginalize the women who are subjected to have different experiences owing to the circumstances created by the intersection. Collins, using African-American women's experiences as a lens, argues that 'race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation as forms of oppression work together in distinctive ways to produce a distinctive U.S. matrix of domination' (Collins, 2000: 276). Similarly, regarding the context of the experiences of Kamlari women, the overlapping of ethnicity, class and gender constitute a distinctive matrix of domination.

As a matter of fact, the major reason behind the plight of Kamlari women even in the post-freedom context is the crisscrossing of the systems of ethnicity, class and gender. Kamlari, who belong to Tharu indigenous group, are dominated for being the minority marginalized group. At the same time, they have been facing gender based discrimination. In addition to it, they come from an economically impoverished family. Hence, their ethnicity, class and gender are connected with each other that is responsible for their oppression. They were oppressed during their enslavement owing to this intersection and are still facing the similar situation even after being free. The matrix of domination what Ritzer calls 'vectors of oppression and privilege' (Ritzer, 2007: 204), is responsible for the historical oppression of the Kamlari women. If we compare the lived experiences of the Kamlari women and her mistress, there are significant differences. Although they both fall under same gender and probably the mistress might also experience gender based discrimination. However, the mistress has the privilege of belonging to the caste that is at the top of hierarchy and with that the privilege of being rich. In contrary, the cross-cutting of discrimination based on ethnicity, class and gender shape different experiences for the Kamlari women where they are doubly marginalized.

3.5.2. DOMAINS OF POWER

Collins, discussing about the second aspect of matrix of domination, asserts that any distinctive matrix of domination is organized via four interrelated domains of power; structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal where each domain serves its particular purpose (Collins, 2000: 276). Collins bases her concepts placing the experiences of black women at the centre of her analysis whereas I would use her concepts to analyse the experience of Kamlari women.

The first domain of power Collins discusses about is the structural domain of power that organizes oppression. According to her, the structural domain of power refers to the organized social institutions like academia, labour market, law, economy, media and other institutions that are organized reproduce the subordination of black women time and again (Collins, 2000: 277). Her point is that the structural domain of power functions in a large scale for the subordination, since the social institutions are organized for it and it's very hard to change their tendency of subordination. She mentions the example of black women being deprived of exercising their right to vote even after being legally granted the right to vote. Structural domain of power functions the same way for Kamlari women. The social institutions are so organized to subordinate the Kamlari women that they are yet in the deplorable condition even after the freedom. Owing to strongly organized institutions, the declaration for their freedom was belated and the predicament still continues.

Furthermore, the disciplinary domain of power that Collins mentions, manages oppression maintaining power relations. She specifically refers to the bureaucracy and its mechanisms to maintain oppression. Regarding the disciplinary domain of power, Collins mentions the analogy of an egg. Egg, from a distant, looks smooth however, it has lots of rugged surface upon close inspection (Collins, 2000: 281-282). Similar is the case with the bureaucracy. It seems as if it is promoting justice and equality, however, the undercurrents of discrimination are in it. In the context of Kamlari women, the ones who hold the positions in bureaucracy and advocate for social justice, equality and child rights themselves practice the bonded slavery at their house. The double standards maintained by the bureaucrats too is responsible for the oppression of Kamlaris in Nepal.

Moreover, Collins also discusses about the hegemonic domain of power that deals with the ideology, culture and consciousness and makes a link between structural, disciplinary and interpersonal domain of power (Collins, 2000: 284). The ruling class, in order to continue

their rule by referring others inferior, manipulate the ideas, images, symbols and ideologies (Collins, 2000: 285). The hegemonic domain of power as discussed by Collins is quite applicable in the context of Kamlari women. The upper caste people in the society condemn the traditional cultural practice of alcohol consumption of the Tharu people. They hold the view that the Tharu people should be ruled and controlled since they drink alcohol and they are inferior. The ruling class in the context of Nepal has been able to develop the ideology that the Tharu daughter must go into the servitude, it's has been taken in the way as if it's the culture of Tharu people to send their daughter into the bondage.

An interpersonal domain of power encompasses the personal interactions and the relationships that affects our daily life. According to Collins, 'the interpersonal domain functions through routinized, day-to-day practices of how people treat one another' (Collins, 2000: 287). She mentions the instances of black women being followed in a store and black student being treated unfairly at school. In fact, we have lots of interactions during the walks of our life and treatment we receive from others influencing our life. As the black women suffer sexism and racism in their daily interaction, the Kamlari women too fall the victim of discrimination in their daily life. My research participants have lots of experiences of being maltreated, abused and discriminated in their daily walk of life. The freed Kamlari women who have joined school have been the victims of bullying.

Hence, analysing my fieldwork experiences, the data I collected and overall situation of my research participants, it is the intersection of class, gender and ethnicity that is responsible for the subordination of the Kamlari women. The system of class discrimination, gender discrimination and the discrimination based on their ethnicity is so deeply rooted in the Nepalese society that the Kamlaris are still able to get rid of the effects of the bondage even after they got freedom. Therefore, to analyse the experiences of my research participants during their servitude and their post-freedom predicament, the concept of intersectionality along with matrix of domination serves as an appropriate tool for my thesis.

Chapter IV

4. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

4.1. INDENTURED SERVITUDE: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

My thesis deals primarily with the issue of bonded servitude in the western part of Nepal and how that has affected females, girls to be more specific, of the indigenous community called Tharu. The dehumanizing practice of slavery that exists in various forms was practiced in Nepal in the name of the Kamaiya system, and still continues to be in the form of the Kamlari system. Before discussing the nature of these systems, it might be useful to provide an historical overview of indentured servitude in general.

Indentured servitude is a practice of slavery based on the contracts where workers are paid a certain amount of money for the fixed duration of the time stated in the agreement. Article 1(a) of the United Nations' 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery defines debt bondage as 'the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or of those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined' United Nations –Treaty Series, 1957:41). The system has prevailed in the world in different forms in different historical timelines. It can be sometimes forced as well and sometimes remains voluntary. The system of indentured servitude was well in practice even in the ancient Greek civilization too. As Croix argues, indentured servitude was widespread in the ancient Greek states in the form of bonded slavery except in the city of Athens where Solomon abolished it in early 594 BC (Croix, 1981:137).

Such system of slavery was initiated in Virginia by 1620s in the modern society as an apparatus to transport European workers to the New World of America by the British Empire. However, it gradually diminished owing to the introduction of black slavery and it again prevailed in 19th century as the Asian workers were transported to Caribbean and South African sugar plantation and lasted legally until 1917 when it was finally abolished (Galenson 1984: 1). Historically, the system of bonded slavery has been directly associated to the race specific, caste specific, gender specific and class specific people. As the time went on changing and the world got modernized that gradually pushed such practices aside, however, the traces can still be detected in the modern societies.

Today, indentured servitude still exists in South Asia, especially in Nepal, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in the form of bonded slavery. Despite the formulation of comprehensive legislations to abolish bonded slavery by the concerned South Asian nations, millions of bonded slaves still are working under bondage (Chatterjee 2014: 131). The bonded slavery was abolished in India, Pakistan and Nepal in 1976, 1995 and 2000 respectively, however the problem still exists. The various figures reflect the grim picture of the existing scenario of bonded slavery in the South Asian region. South Asia alone holds the share of 84-88% of the bonded slaves out of total 20.5 million bonded slaves of the world in 2011 (Kara 2012: 3). The ILO Report of 2005 estimates that there are around 12.3 million people who had been working under bonded servitude/forced labour/slavery including those who had been trafficked into these conditions (ILO. 2005: 10). The Report also states that the majority of the 9.5 million people in forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region were in debt bondage (ILO. 2005: 13). Bonded labour has also been recognized as a contemporary form of slavery by the United Nations together with trafficking and sexual slavery (Kvalbein 2007: 1).

4.2. LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR PROHIBITING SLAVERY IN NEPAL

Slavery in Nepal existed since the historical times, where the elite class were free to keep the slaves and trade them. Until 1924 there no such legal provision for prohibiting the institution of slavery in Nepal. The institution of slavery was so deeply rooted that around sixty thousand slaves served the population of 5.6 million where the families were forced to split up, the slaves were inherited, transferred and even traded (Miers, 2003: 189). However, the credit of introducing prohibiting activities on the institution goes to the then Prime Minister of Nepal, Chandra Shumsher Rana who made a plea in a mass gathering in 1924 to end the system by freeing the slaves and compensating the owners (Miers, 2003: 189). Rana, who proposed for the abolishment of slavery stated that the world blames us that 'we yet nurture the hated institution of slavery' though the land retains its fame for its brave people (Rana, 1994: 10). The first provision to end the slavery system in Nepal came into effect in 1925 as an anti-slavery office was built and travelled across the country to settle the disputes and issues after the freedom was declared.

Although the initiative action taken by Chandra Shumsher stirred many debates and conflicts, it was however a great effort for acting against the deep rooted system. Despite his action, the system still prevailed in Nepal although the country experienced various political changes, movements and governments. Nepal has ratified almost all of the anti-slavery UN conventions, however it lacked its strength in an effective implementation of them. Nepal has

ratified major conventions that are against the slavery like ILO Convention 29 on Forced or Compulsory Labour; ILO Convention 105 on Abolition of Forced Labour; ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, and ILO Convention No.182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour (Anti-Slavery, 2009:4). Nepal has also ratified the United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery 1956 on 1963 and this was the convention that equated bonded labour with slavery (Quirk, 2011:2007). Despite having agreed upon such international legal provisions on discontinuing the system of slavery in Nepal, bonded slavery still was deeply rooted in Nepal. In fact, Nepal lacked the specific legal codes to stop the widespread bonded slavery, hence the BBC reported as ‘Bonded labour and slavery is legal in Nepal. The system is based on a tribal tradition’ (BBC News, November 15, 1997). Bonded labour was deeply rooted in the agricultural society of Nepal and it was specifically associated with the Tharu indigenous community residing in the southern plains of Nepal in the name of the Kamaiya system.

Until the 1990s the freedom movement of Kamaiya was not voiced, as there was the rule of Rana autocracy and the people had no freedom of speech. However, after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, people became optimistic and began raising voice against Kamaiya system and began demanding their rights for freedom (OMCT, 2006: 13). Various national and international organizations working for the welfare of the Kamaiyas began advocating for the freedom of Tharu people from the chains of bondage and the Government of Nepal acknowledged the existence of Kamaiya system as a form of bonded labor in Nepal in 1995 (GEFONT/ASI, 2007: 37). The Kamaiya ‘freedom movement’ got intensified with the support of human right activists, NGOs and INGOs that was able to build immense pressure on the government which ultimately forced the parliament to declare the Kamaiya system as an illegal practice in 2000 (Upadhyaya, 2008: 25). The declaration of their freedom was eventually was formally introduced as ‘Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act 2002’ that legally ended bonded labour in Nepal.

4.3. THARU PEOPLE: THE VICTIMS OF HISTORICAL EXPLOITATION

Tharu is one of the major indigenous communities living in the southern plains of Nepal known as Terai that is rich in alluvial soil appropriate for the cultivation of various types of crops. Tharu people represent 6.6% of the total population of Nepal. Before Terai area was inhabited by the other people, it was a covered with dense forest rich in wildlife. The Terai region, during eighteenth century was a place of wilderness, rich in dense tropical forest

consequently hit with the epidemic of malaria. This region in the mid eighteenth century gradually emerged as an area for potential economic prosperity for various aspects of forest products, timber, elephants and most importantly its alluvial soil for cultivation and hence for revenue of land (Guneratne, 1998: 754). The Tharu were the only settlers there, since the hill people were unable to settle owing to the fear of malaria. To take advantage of the Terai region, the Nepal government required a large number of human labour since the Tharu people alone couldn't meet the labour need. Owing to the fear of malarial infection, hill people declined to migrate towards this region. Hence, in order to flourish economic activities in this region, the government encouraged the migration of people from India (Regmi, 1978: 139-51). The flow of migration from India to some extent, was responsible for degrading the situation of Tharu people.

It is reported that Tharu people have become genetically immune against the malarial infection (Guneratne, 2002) so that they could survive in the Terai area. However, along with modernization, The Tharu people were gradually marginalized due to the migration of hill tribes to the plain Tharu land after 1950s as the epidemic of malaria was eradicated due to the introduction of insecticides and the traditionally land owning Tharu people were displaced by the other majority hill tribes (Karki, 2001:74). The eradication of malaria from Terai region marked a significant flow of hill tribes to the southern plains rich in cultivable lands. The southern plains of Nepal after the eradication of malaria was known as Naya Muluk, a new land. This new land includes my study area too. The new land with abundant possibilities eventually became a new destination for the migrants from hills and across the Indian border as well. Moreover, the lands of these areas had been distributed to the civil servants, high ranked army personnel and the royal personages as a reward/grants or for enhancing the land revenue by the state known as Birta in Nepali. Such provision of grants ultimately led to the eviction of the Tharu - the original inhabitants - since they had no any legal ownership of the land (Sharma et al, 1998: 11).

Regarding the context of granting huge area land as the rewards, I would like to mention one of the stories narrated by one of my informants that reflects how the high caste people were able to own the land. One of the elderly peoples from Tharu community narrates the story this way. This story is related with the land of Dang district, my hometown as well the study area.

Once, Dang was ruled by a king who used to live in the hills of Mahabharat range known as Chillikot. Dang was heavily infected by malaria so very few people lived here with us. The king had a family priest known as Pundit who belonged to higher Brahmin caste. He served in the palace performing all rituals from birth rites to funeral rites. He always used to take a bath early in the morning and used to put his wet undergarments in one of the corners of the palace without letting them dry. One day, the king caught a sight of it and inquired the priest out of curiosity. The priest replied that he owned no land to spread his wet clothes to let them dry. Hearing this, the king instantly granted huge area of land of the valley of Dang as a reward for his service. He was granted the Birta, he owned vast area of land where our forefathers had been inhabiting for historical times. But unfortunately we were forced to abandon the land as it was the king's order and we had no legal documents for owning the land. The priest became very rich and so did his further generations. Our community was marginalized this way being deprived of our ownership to land. We had no options to survive except serving and pleasing the descendants of the priest. (An elderly Tharu man)

The above story vividly reflects how the traditional land owning Tharu people were evicted from their traditional land and the high caste people close to the palace owned the land. The hill people belonged to so called upper caste like Brahmin and Chhetri as per the hierarchical caste division in Hinduism. The Hindu religious scripture places Brahmins to the highest rank assigning them the task of teaching and priest. Similarly, in the second rank comes Chhetri who were rulers and served in the army. Since people from these two castes enjoyed the privileges from historical times, they were educated. They were so cunning that they got the hold of Tharu land by various means in the course of time. Unlike, Tharu people are ranked towards the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The settlers from the hills who belonged to high caste group became dominant and economically powerful than the Tharu community which ultimately established a space for systematic exploitation of Tharu people (Robertson, 1997:92). The first law introduced in Nepal in 1854 known as Muluki Ain also categorizes Tharu people as 'enslavable' and 'alcohol drinkers' (Guneratne, 1998:755). Tharu people were taken as the people who could be easily dominated, exploited and kept as the domestic slaves. Such notion was widespread among the higher castes of people. So, they always tried to exploit Tharu people in many cases. Such continuous exploitation of Tharu people since

the historical times kept them away from their ownership of land. The Tharu people worked hard, cleared the forest to make it cultivable, but ultimately to be handed over to the cunning hill migrants. The hill migrants belonging to the upper caste left no stones unturned in order to take hold of the cultivable land that the Tharu owned. I would like to share such instances here as narrated by another elderly Tharu people.

The hill migrants used to have seasonal migration. During the winter they used to migrate downhill to the valley as there was no risk of mosquito bites. They used to bring a variety of fruits and other products from the hills. We have heard the stories that the cunning hill people were able to own our land by exchanging it with a couple of pieces of lemon. They used to come to us and pretended to keep a good friendship with us. We are welcoming people of simple nature. We often provided them the shelter and offered them the food and even gifts. Once, the Tharu family offered a hill migrant few pieces of eggs as gift. But the hill migrants instead of taking them with him asked the Tharu family to take care of those eggs so that he can collect them in the next winter and left. The Tharu family kept the eggs for hatching hence got the chicken. The hill migrant didn't return for years and the number of chicken went on increasing. The Tharu family made money out of it and added land with that. However, the hill migrant returned after several years and asked for the eggs. Eventually, he was able to claim the land that was made from the chicken. Similarly, once a hill migrant was offered a pumpkin by the host Tharu family. He asked for a small piece of land to plant the pumpkin seeds and got as well. As he returned next time, he claimed the whole land that the creeper pumpkin had occupied. (An elderly Tharu informant)

Such stories of usurpation of the Tharu land are being transferred from generations to generations in the Tharu families. According to the elderly Tharu people who I met in my field, the Tharu people are honest and have trust in others. Hence, there subjugation throughout history. Moreover, the cadastral survey was introduced in Nepal in 1964 and most of the arable land was registered in the name of the cunning hill migrants since the hill migrants had their good relations as well as access to the bureaucracy (Sharma et al, 1998: 11). Most of the Tharu people were deprived of their traditionally owning land during that cadastral survey. Being illiterate, the Tharu people had no access to the bureaucracy and they

also feared the administrative staff. In addition to it, they were reluctant to register the land in their names due to being scared of huge tax that they had to pay after owning more land. Hence, the Tharu people who once owned the land were eventually deprived of land. Similarly, before 1964 there were limited number of landlords known as Jamindars who possessed lots of land who specifically belonged to the royal family. However cadastral survey of 1964 determined the limitation of land that an individual Jamindar could hold. Hence, the number of Jamindars increased and so did the number of agricultural labourers.

The Tharu people who settled in the southern plains of Nepal since the historical times despite the adversity of malarial infection have been subjected to structural domination. Owing to their lack of access to other developmental aspects of the society, they were deprived of education. They live in a joint family and bear more children taking children as the source of income after they grow up. They always had to work hard in order to feed a large family as they had no land, or the land they possessed didn't suffice to feed the increasing size of the family. The situation created what was responsible for them to borrow money from the landlords at a high interest rate. The money that Tharu borrow from the landlords is known as Saunki. The landlords were so cunning that they used to make an agreement paper as proof of lending money however used to mention more money than they actually lent to the needy Tharu people. The Tharu people were not aware about this fact of fraudulent activities of the landlords. Day by day, the amount they had to pay back continued increasing however the Tharu people always struggled to feed the family. To pay the debt back was not an easy task for them, they were stuck in the system.

LANDLESSNESS TO DEBT BONDAGE

Being evicted from their traditional land rights, the Tharu people had no options left except either working as agricultural labourer in the landlord's house or borrowing money from the landlords. As one of my informant states that the lavish lifestyle continued even after the loss of land and family size increased as well that led to the predicament. Most of the informants argue that Tharu people were in fact encouraged by the landlords to go for hefty spending during the auspicious occasions like marriage and festival so that they had to borrow money from the landlords and eventually ended up in entering into the servitude. Then they started to work in the landlord's house in order to repay the debt and make their living. They were paid too less to repay the debt. Hence, the amount with interest went on increasing. To tackle the situation, other members of the family too began to enter into the work. Such hard working

man are known as Kamaiya in Tharu language. However, the one who used to work in the landlord's house to pay the debt were called Kamaiya. They worked but were not able to pay the debt and it continued to the other generations too that emerged as a system of bonded slavery known as Kamaiya system.

The table below illustrates the number of Tharu people affected by the system of bonded servitude in the five districts of western Nepal.

District	Kamaiya A	Kamaiya B	Kamaiya C	Total
Dang	5,652	2,281	8,385	16,318
Banke	4,318	1,033	1,559	6,910
Bardiya	21,088	6,673	5,567	33,528
Kailali	16,824	19,666	8,454	44,944
Kanchanpur	6,711	4737	3,464	14,609
Total	54,393	34,390	27,326	116,309

Table: Total number of families affected by Kamaiya system in Nepal. (BASE, Kamaiya report, 1995:7)

The above table suggests that about 116,309 Tharu people have been affected by bonded servitude in the five districts of western Nepal. Kamaiya group A refers to the landless and homeless bonded slaves whose whole family members have entered into the debt bondage. Kamaiya group B refers to those who have inhabited in unregistered land and some of the family members entered into bondage. Whereas, landowning bonded slaves are categorized as Kamaiya group C.

The Tharu people entered into the Kamaiya system either to pay the debt back or to get some piece of land to cultivate as sharecropping to feed their family. They used to have the verbal contract and it was renewed each year on the occasion of Maghi festival, one of the biggest festivals of Tharu community. The Kamaiya used to get certain quantity of grains as wages as well. This system of debt bondage used to get transferred from generations to generations. Although Kamaiya system existed since the historical time, it was first noted by anthropologists in the 1960s, however it was exposed as one of the dehumanizing systems only during 1990s after the re-establishment of democracy in Nepal and some actions were

taken against it (Robertson, 1997: 81). The female partner of Kamaiya is known as Bukrahi who had to work in the landlord's house without wages or for some pieces of old clothes and food. Besides, the children of the Kamaiya family too used to work in the landlord's house in the name of Gaibar (cow herder), Bhainsbar (buffalo herder) and Chegar (goat herder). In a sense, the whole family had to be enslaved in the bondage in one way or other. The system got institutionalized in the then Nepalese society of western Terai. And if the head of the family died before he could pay the debt back, it would be the responsibility of his son to go into the bondage and continue the system.

However, various NGOs became active for the freedom movement of Kamaiya after the 90s that really had some outputs. Though there were some movements before 90s but were not well organized, systematic and merely the spontaneous expression against the exploitation that were not strong enough to be heard (Karki, 2001: 123). Such movements were suppressed by the administration and Kamaiya were even more exploited by the landlords. The head of the administration, bureaucrats and politicians all came from majority community hence there was reluctance in addressing the issue. However along with the re-introduction of democracy in 1990s, the scenario changed and the Kamaiya movement got the momentum along with the assistance of various NGOs and INGOs that advocated for the freedom of Kamaiya. With lots of ups and downs, the Kamaiya movement was able to exert immense pressure on the government that finally led to their freedom in 2000 and legally the system was abolished in 2002 with the introduction of Kamaiya Prohibition Act 2002.

4.4. THE KAMLARI SYSTEM

Although the Kamaiya system was abolished, however the situation of the freed Kamaiya didn't improve as expected due to lack of effective plans and policies to rehabilitate the freed Kamaiya families. As Karki (2001:125) argues, if a movement fails to address structural issues of the problem, bans and formulation of laws, the historical problem like the Kamaiya system will continue to survive and structural conditions may reproduce chronic inequalities. The lack of alternative ways to make the living ultimately led the Kamaiya families to continue the servitude again, however it was in the form of Kamlari system, a gender specific bonded slavery associated to the daughters of Kamaiya. After the freedom, the landlords no longer granted them their land for sharecropping and the government too failed to deliver its promise of offering alternative sources of living after the freedom. Hence in order to convince the landlords for getting their land back for sharecropping, they started to send their daughters into the servitude.

The word Kamlari refers to the hard working women, specifically a minor who is assigned to work in the landlord's house as a domestic servant. Educational Directives for Freed Kamlaris 2011 defines Kamlari as one of the existing social evils that pushes the young women economically impoverished Tharu families into bondage for minimum wages or no wages either paying back the debt or to get favour for earning land for share cropping from the Jamindars (KC, 2015: 5-6). Like of Kamaiya system, this system too sustains on verbal annual contract and gets renewed each year. Actually, Kamlari system initiated together with the Kamaiya system. Since the breadwinner of the family used to work as Kamaiya in the Jamindar's house, the children too used to follow them. The parents used to feel free to let their children work since they used to get food and hence they could save some grain. The boys were assigned the duty of cattle rearing whereas the girls had to perform the indoor duties like washing the clothes, cleaning the dishes, keeping the house and the premises neat and tidy. The daughters of Kamaiya who worked hard in the Jamindar's house began to be referred as Kamlari that got institutionalized afterwards.

Moreover, owing to rapid growth of population, the Tharu people felt the dearth of land for sharecropping. In a sense, there used to be a competition to get the land for sharecropping from the landlord. One who had more daughters were given the land for sharecropping since the landlords used to get more Kamlari at their home for domestic work. It was a kind of compulsion to send their daughters to work as Kamlari in order to get the land for sharecropping in return. Those who had no daughters hardly got land for sharecropping that made their livelihood difficult. After the abolishment of Kamaiya system in 2000 A.D., the daughters of Tharu became the major source of income for the family. The daughters were sent to work at master's house either to pay back the interest of the debt of their grandparents or to convince the Jamindars to provide them some land for share cropping or to make some income for the poverty-stricken family.

The Kamlaris usually entered into the servitude at their early age and spent several years in their masters' house. Their contracted is renewed annually on the occasion of Maghi festival. Kamlaris used to be transported far away from their birth place usually to the urban areas because the rich elites generally live in urban areas. In most of the cases, it has been found that a master transferring his Kamlari to another master. Kamlaris were transported to other places without the consent of their parents. The Kamlaris were treated as objects and were transported to groom's house as an item of dowry after the daughter of master got married. They often became the victims of physical and mental exploitation. They spent several years

in the enslavement being deprived of their basic right of freedom and being subjected to the all sorts of abuse.

However, gradually, the news of suffering of young Kamlari women began drawing the attention of medias. The news of Kamlaris being burnt, raped and murdered by the masters worked as catalyst for oppressed Kamlaris to raise voice against their oppression. The Kamlaris began uniting to fight for their freedom. They staged various programs to exert pressure on the government demanding their freedom. Different NGOs, INGOs and media stood for their support. Eventually, owing to the immense domestic and international pressure, the government was forced to put ban on Kamlari system July 13, 2013. However, this system still prevails behind the walls due to lack of strong implementation of the laws formulated against the system.

Chapter V

5. LIFE IN THE SERVITUDE AND MULTIPLE OPPRESSIONS

This chapter discusses the experiences of my research participants during the years into their servitude. The data presented here comprises of the interviews with my research participants who have been freed from bondage, however, their experiences presented here, are before they were emancipated. These are the accounts of their experiences when they were forced in to servitude. It also includes the multiple oppression they underwent in the time of bondage. All the experiences presented are the outcome of the intersection of oppression based on ethnicity, class and gender. During my interaction with the research participants, they forwarded the common view that they had to enter servitude and were subjected to various sorts of suffering since they were poor, females and because they came from the Tharu community.

Life in servitude was loaded with lots of risks, exploitation and abuse. Regarding this, I would like to mention the experience of Shanta Chaudhary. Shanta Chaudhary is the first member of the parliament of Nepal to represent the Kamlaris of Nepal. She herself entered into the servitude at the age of eight in 1989 and was given freedom in 2006, after spending almost 18 years of her life in bondage. In her autobiographical book entitled *Kamlari Dekhi Sabhashad Samma* (From Bonded Slave to the Member of Parliament), she notes the forms of abuse and exploitation she experienced by her as a Kamlari. According to her, Kamlaris are like a machine, they are forced to work hard continuously by the demand of the masters (29). She also writes about the physical abuse that Kamlari had to undergo in the bondage. ‘Most of my Kamlari friends had been already either sexually abused or raped by the masters and their sons and were often impregnated. So, I was always scared of being sexually assaulted and always stayed very alert (32),’. She also states that she had to get married at the age of fifteen in an attempt to reduce the risk of being sexually abused. Life in servitude was so bad that she had to carry heavy loads even in her third trimester of her pregnancy, the masters’ did not display even the slightest bit of feeling or humanity (43). She states that she had worked for seven different masters as a Kamlari, experiencing and witnessing various degree and intensity of abuse and exploitation. Her experiences of exploitation are similar with my research participants that I discuss here.

Most of the research participants during the interview told me that they expected something more than their existing situation, but as they entered into the servitude however they had to face the different but harsh reality. The families that took young Tharu women as Kamlari are from high caste and are rich due to owning lots of land. Hence, the girls who were taken into servitude expected some improvement in their life in the master's house. Kamlaris are usually deprived of good food, clothes and education in their own house due to lack of sufficient economic resources. The masters would verbally make a promise to provide the Kamlari young women with good food, clothes as well as sending them to nearby school. The enticing words of the masters to provide various facilities to the girls significantly helped to attract the innocent poverty-stricken girls in to servitude. Specifically, the promise for education played a pivotal role as a magnetic force for the Tharu families to make an annual contract to send their daughters to work in the master's house (Giri, 2010: 161).

5.1. EXPECTATION OF EDUCATION LEADING INTO BONDAGE

All of my research participants were at school attending age when they had to enter in to bonded slavery. They all witnessed their brothers and other friends going school while they had to join their masters' house instead. Being a male dominated society, the daughters are not prioritized to attend school. In one hand, there is a common assumption that daughters should be taught to hold household activities instead of sending them school, on the other hand, the parents couldn't afford their daughters' education. Hence all of my research participants were deprived of getting a formal school education but always had expectations of attending during their servitude.

My first interaction was with my research participant, whose economic condition of the family forced her to go into the servitude. She was the fourth among her 5 sisters and two brothers. It was in 2003 when she was just 11 years old and her master approached her parents to take her as a Kamlari. Although the government had put ban on the Kamaiya system, discouraging all other forms of slavery, the practice of sending young Tharu women into bondage was still widely practiced. Her parents were not able to send her and others to school as they were living in extreme poverty. Her master was a high class government official who owned lots of land in her village. Her parents were given some land for sharecropping. She had to be sent to work in order to continue the sharecropping. Her parents didn't feel comfortable sending her at her tender age. However, the master convinced the parents with the promise that she would be merely given the job of babysitting. She would be treated as their own daughter and would be provided with the opportunity of attending

school. Hearing such words from her master, my research participant was quite interested to go to work in their house and her parents too were well convinced. She says, 'I was dreaming of going school and wearing pretty dresses. I could hear my father pleading with my master to take care of me well. I was hiding behind the wall and listening to them with curiosity and interest.'

However, her dreams of getting a new life in the master's house got shattered as she had to cover all the household chores there. Her expectations of getting delicious dishes was merely confined into some left over food stuff and stale food. Instead of going school, she had to clean all the dishes and sweep the whole house and floor. She said that she used to get so tired of washing lots of clothes and bedsheets. 'My mistress was so rude to me that she always shouted at me for my petty mistakes and sometimes she used to hit me with a stick. I had to sleep on the floor underneath the staircase on a thin tattered mattress and a blanket that was not thick enough to keep me warm during winter,' she says. She was physically and verbally abused time and again. She puts her experience this way:

Instead of sending me school, they assigned me difficult tasks to perform. Their pet dog got more respect and care than me. The food for the dog was better than me. I wouldn't get food as a punishment for my mistakes that I committed unknowingly. If I didn't iron their clothes properly, I used to get that hot iron on my back. I was not allowed to go out and I had to be totally confined within the walls. If I dared to run away, the city was so big as compared to my village and it was a totally strange place for me to make my way back home. They always treated me as if I were not of their kind; as if I belonged to different species than mankind. My mistress used to tell me I was had to work hard in their house in order to please and satisfy them because I was born to a Tharu family and I had to work hard as I was a Kamlari. My failure to satisfy them would directly affect my family since my parents wouldn't get the master's land for sharecropping and would have nothing to eat. So, I was scared of this fact and worked for my family although I used to regret being born to a Tharu family as a Kamlari. (Research participant 1)

The story my first research participant mentioned above vividly exposes that masters didn't keep their promise of sending them to school and providing good food and clothes. That was all done to persuade the young Tharu women to enter in to servitude after Kamaiya system

was banned in 2000. the Masters took advantage of Tharu family not having enough resources to run the family, the masters had many different strategies to attract the young Tharu women into servitude, such strategies so often worked. In fact, the lavish lifestyle of the master's family often worked as a catalyst for most of my research participants to expect more in the masters' house; specifically, when it came to getting the opportunity for education, however the reality was always different. And most importantly, all the maltreatment she had to bear in her masters' house was because of her Tharu origin, her gender and her poverty. Her ethnicity, class and gender got entangled creating a space for her exploitation.

Providing education was one of the major attracting factors that the Jamindars have used to get young Tharu women to work for them as Kamlari. From my discussion with my research participants, what I found is that most of the masters make a promise to send them to school just to convince the girls but eventually fail to deliver their promise. Only few of the masters have kept their promise but the young Tharu women had to struggle a lot for that. The more facilities they get in the master's house, the more they suffer. My research participant went to work as a Kamlari just to get an education. Her family was living in utter poverty and so was given no other choice. Although she had a strong desire to go to school, her situation prevented her from doing so. She admits that her parents had to struggle hard to gather grains for a daily meal so she couldn't think of going school. She further adds

My family was poverty stricken. We didn't have sufficient food to eat for our large family. So, to send me to school was an impossible dream for my parents because they could never afford for my school dress, books and other educational material. Although education is free in the government schools, still it was just a dream for me. So, I was hoping someone would offer me educational facility so that I could work for them as a Kamlari. And I got one. My master was a government official. He proposed my family to send me to his house so that I could read and work as well. He also put a condition that if I went school, my parents would get no money as my wages. Although my parents were not willing to send me for no money, I insisted for it as I was going to get school. I was happy to get a chance to go school. But it was not so easy for me. The pressure of household work was so much that I was always late to class. My friends mocked me for not having a good school dress. I barely got enough sleep at night. I had to wake up early in order to

accomplish my morning work. otherwise I wouldn't be able to make my way to school. I had to eat stale and leftover food items. I got punished for minor mistakes. I was given the tasks beyond my physical capacity and if I failed to do, I got verbally abused. My nights used to pass on with me weeping and weeping. I had never imagined that my dream for going school would cost so much. Later, I couldn't go school due to the work load. I got neither education nor money. My childhood all went in vain. (Research participant 2)

Here, her story vividly reflects how she underwent immense suffering just for the sake of getting education. She had to barter her childhood freedom for education however eventually she even failed to attain it. Her initial expectations of attending school entering the servitude turned out to be a harsh reality. Due to the pressure of her work, she was obliged to halt her educational journey. Although her master enrolled her in a school he deliberately created an unfavourable environment for her to continue with it. 'I don't blame anyone for it. I have to blame myself and my fate. I was destined to be born in a poor Tharu family as a daughter and I had to suffer a lot working as a Kamlari. It was what written in my fate hence I had to go through it,' she says.

5.2. ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION DURING THE SERVITUDE

The young Tharu women who entered into servitude were often subjected to excessive exploitation at their masters' house. They were assigned hard physical labor beyond their capacity. According the research participants, there used to several instances physical and verbal abuse under servitude. The masters' family always behaved rudely. Some of them were beaten physically, assaulted sexually and even were let to starve for several days.

One of my research participants has similar experience during the servitude. The economic condition of her family was very poor. The family was totally dependent on the loan borrowed from local Jamindar who used to stay in the city. According to her, the amount borrowed from Jamindar increased every year since the rate of interest was high and the family had no other ways to make money to pay back the loan. Her parents had no other options except to send her to work in Jamindar's house in the city, so that her annual wages would gradually reduce the burden of the loan. She entered into bondage in 2001. 'As a matter of fact, I was sold. I was just 6 years old when I was sold,' she says. She was forced to do hard physical work even at her tender age. She continues, 'Since I was just 6 years old, I

had no idea why I was leaving my home. Yet, I was expecting something good in the city; pretty dresses, and there are lots of cars and vehicles in the city. The better life in the city as explained by my mistress had made a good impression in my child psychology.’ She was sent to work as a Kamlari to redeem her family from debt although she was not aware of this fact and she couldn’t understand that at that time. ‘I had seen girls like me going to their master’s house but I really had no idea why,’ she says. She further tells of her experience of working in debt bondage this way:

My mistress was alone in her house and it was all my responsibility to keep that house clean and tidy. I had to cook food for her, clean the dishes and wash her clothes. I had to prepare different varieties of vegetables for her but I was not even allowed to even taste any. She had an expensive luxurious car that had to be washed every day. Sometimes she used to take me for shopping to load and unload the stuff however she never allowed me to sit in the seats of the car, I had to squat in the back. She used to tell me that the seats were for her rich guests so I, being a Kamlari, had no right to use those seats. Her behaviour used to hurt me a lot. But I was compelled to do what she said. I often felt as if I were in prison when she used to lock the doors from outside confining me to the inside while she left for the office. If she noticed anything missing, she would accuse me of theft and beat me with a bamboo stick. I got often beaten for my minor mistakes. Sometimes she pulled me by my hair that used to give me intense pain. Sometimes she wouldn’t let me eat food for several days as a punishment (Research participant 3)

The experience mentioned above, by my research participant, clearly reflects how the young daughters of Tharu parents had to undergo the immense suffering at their tender age. Even at the age of six she had to work like an adult in others’ houses, being away from her home and parents. She said that she used to feel so lonely in her mistress’s house and had no option except missing her home and recollecting the childhood memories spent with her other family members. ‘If I were born as a son, I could have climbed the wall to escape from that home. I used to feel that I was weak and scared to fight for my freedom because I was a girl,’ she expresses her view on how she feels of being born as a girl to a Tharu family. She further says, ‘my brothers too worked as Kamaiya in local Jamindar’s house, however they used to go home after completing their duty for the day. They were with the family, but I was cut off

from my family. I was not even allowed to visit my family during the festivals. I used to think - that it's all because I was a girl.'

The way my research participant tells her story, it seems that she thinks the gender disparity that prevails in her community, is largely responsible for pushing her to have such bitter experiences in life. Her lack of strong will power, determination and strength to fight back initially was in fact the result of her internalization of the concept that girls are weaker as compared to the boys. Hence, she couldn't even utter any word as she was being continuously abused both physically and verbally.

Most of the freed Kamlaris who I interacted with during my field visit were transported to big cities, as the rich Jamindars of village used to stay in the cities holding high posts. Some of them were politicians who even advocated for the basic human rights but ironically themselves kept Kamlaris at home and exploited them. One of my research participants worked as a Kamlari for a local based Jamindar. Although she didn't have to be miles away from her home, as she contends, still her woes and suffering in the master's house were no less than that of cities. As others, she too had to go to work at the age of 9. While other children of her age went school, she had to rear the cattle for her master. In her words, 'I could hardly bear the pain in my heart when I used to see the children of my age heading towards school as I stood by the side of the cattle that I had to take care of.' Her master had promised her parents to send her to school, however he just enrolled her name in the school but never sent her there. She had lots of work to do. 'I almost worked like a machine but I never got any credit,'. She further explains:

I had to wake up early in the morning and clean the cattle shed. There were around half a score of cattle including cows and buffaloes that I had to take care of. I had to collect grass for them, collect their dung and even milk them. I have been hurt often by the cows while milking them but never got the treatment. Cleaning, sweeping, washing, cooking and many other stuffs were in my daily routine. I used to get so tired both physically and mentally after but I had very little time to sleep. My master often made me massage his body. I used to feel so uncomfortable but I had to do it. He was an alcoholic who used to send me to buy alcohol for him from the local market secretly. But his wife used to beat me hard for buying him alcohol. It was really hell for me. When my master was drunk, he often lost his control and used to behave

wildly. I used to get so scared that he would abuse me physically. So, I used to hide in the cow shed. My life as a Kamlari is full of nightmares that still scares me a lot (Research participant 4).

In fact, she had to spend 5 years of her childhood in her master's house doing all those domestic chores and being deprived of going to school. Although her name was enrolled in the school, she never passed her exams, since she never got the opportunity to actually go to school and got no time to study for her exams. She complained to her parents about the maltreatment she received there, but her parents tried to convince her to go back to work since her work at the master's house was one of the only sources to feed her family. Almost all of the young Kamlari women had the similar situation that they had no other choice. They had to bear all the physical, verbal and mental abuse during the duration of their work. Every year their contract used to be renewed with some extra attractive packages offered by the masters, however their condition never improved rather the intensity of abuse increased day by day.

According to her, there was nothing that she could or her parents could do in order to stop such bad treatment by the masters. Her master belonged to a high class and caste so that no one could speak a word against him. Going against the masters was equivalent to die out of hunger because those Tharu families who were compelled to send their daughters into servitude were landless and had to solely depend on masters for everything they needed. 'Our poverty was the weakest point that the masters always were seeking to take advantage of it,' she concludes. Hence, her childhood was struck with the oppression based on ethnicity, gender and class from all sides at once.

5.3. POVERTY PUSHED INTO BONDAGE

Poverty is one of the major factors that pushed daughters Tharu into bondage. The Tharu families are deprived of any sources of income. Hence, they use their daughters as a source of income sending them into bondage. Neither the parents are able to send their daughters to school nor do they have alternative resources to feed the children. Therefore, sending into bondage remains as an option without alternatives. The research participants contend that most of the parents are willing to send their daughter into bondage so that they can tackle the poverty to some extent.

As the entrance of Tharu girls into servitude at their early age continued, my research participant that I am presenting here too entered into the servitude at the age of 9 in 2004. Although she wanted to go to school, she couldn't since her parents couldn't afford her

education. She had no brothers but six sisters. According to her, her parents kept on giving birth to her sisters in a hope of getting a son. Her parents also worked in the Jamindar's house and also got some land of Jamindar for sharecropping. It was only the means for their livelihood. Usually, the Jamindars used to visit the Tharu village during one of the most Tharu festivals Maghi. The Tharu people celebrate it being gathered together. This is the time to make new contracts for the Kamaiya and Kamlaris and to renew the contracts. Here, my research participant narrates how she was obliged to go into the servitude and shares her experience of it.

It was Maghi festival when my master talked to my father about sending me to his house as a Kamlari. He came to our house; he had brought lots of expensive drinks for my father. He offered all the drinks to my father to please him and convince him. In our culture, drinking is most accepted and it's regarded as valuable gift. He had also brought some new clothes for me that actually played a vital role in attracting me. He convinced me that he would offer me lots of new clothes if I worked for him. There was a long bargaining process regarding my 'price' between my parents and master. Finally, it was all set for 3000 rupees annually along with a set of new clothes per year and sending me to school. It was the verbal agreement and I along with my family were happy with it. I was glad, since I would get something new to wear and my parents were happy as they would receive some money annually so that their economic burden could be eased. I worked for almost six years in their house and I was tired of working there. When I used to discuss about my freedom with them, they used to buy a new set of clothes for me that made me happy. Each year they used to promise me to send me to school, however they postponed each year and never sent me to school. The load of work increased everyday but my wages were always the same. I still wonder how I was trapped into the Kamlari system by a set of new clothes (Research participant 5).

Here, her story reflects on how these young Tharu women were attracted towards the Kamlari system by the use of petty things like a new set of clothes. Although, a new set of clothes for them used to be of great importance since they had to put on old tattered clothes all the time. However, the fact is that these girls could not decipher what was hidden behind that new set of clothes. They were not able to calculate why they had to make such big sacrifices in order

to get that new set of clothes. Even though every masters made the promise to send the girls to school during their tenure, these promises were never kept.

During my interaction with my research participants, I found out that most of their parents worked as bonded slaves in the master's house too. If the parents work there, then their children too, in a long term go to work with them and become a part of the bonded system. The story of another research participant suggests so. Here is her story about how she became the victim of this system as her parents too had been.

My parents worked as the bonded slaves in a landlord's house. Since my parents worked there, I was also obliged to work there as a Kamlari and did lots of household stuff when I was still a child of just 11 years old. However, my parents got freedom in 2000 when the government abolished the Kamaiya system under which my parents were working and I also enjoyed freedom for some time. But my freedom didn't last longer. We used to live in a joint family and we were 27 members in our family. We had no land of our own to feed ourselves. So, in order to get the sufficient land for sharecropping from the landlord, I had to go back to servitude again. I had to work hard under difficult circumstances (Research participant 6).

It was her poverty that compelled her to go back in to servitude again. The large number of family members too creates a problem. She had 27 members in her family and the family had to accumulate huge resources to run that family. 'In fact, our community thinks that many working hands accumulate more income, hence they go on increasing the number of children. But ultimately it's the opposite,' she points out the problem and adds,

I had no hopes in my life for a better future. I was just working in the landlord's house so that the 27 members of my family could get something to eat. I used to think that I was born to work for others but not for myself. My little joy was just stuck getting the clothes discarded by the landlord's children - were new for me, and the leftover food from them - was delicious for my empty stomach. I always wished that I was born to a rich family so that all the members of my family would have been happy and together (Research participant 6).

As she narrates her story regarding her experience in servitude, it is quite obvious that it is her poverty that pushed her back to the servitude even after her newly earned freedom.

Although she was young in age, she had to bear the responsibility of 27 members of her family by going into bondage even despite being legally free. If she was reluctant to go to work, her family could have lost the Jamindar's land for sharecropping resulting the lack of resources to feed the family. She had to re-join her work in order to ensure that her family gets enough land for sharecropping. Otherwise there were many other Tharu families who were willing to send their daughters to work as a Kamlari in order to get that land for sharecropping.

During my interaction with the research participants, large family size was a common for all. Almost all of them lived in joint family and had lots of brothers and sisters. Almost all of them had the view that a big family can have result in a bigger income which can ensure the bread and clothes for the family. Regarding this issue, I got an opportunity to talk with one of the Tharu activists of Dang District, Mr Gaddulal Chaudhary who is active in the rescue and rehabilitation campaign of Kamlaris. According to him, poverty leads to high birth rate in Tharu community. He says,

Since Tharu people are poor, they are deprived of education and are deprived of means of contraceptives as well. They think that if they got more children, they would have more income by sending the children to work. in addition to it, the importance of a son also leads to many births. As they live in a joint family system, taking care of the babies is not a big problem for them because the many members who can up-bring the children. Hence the number of children goes on increasing and so does the number of mouths to eat. Eventually, they end up in sending their children to work as Kamlari (Chaudhary, G.)

As Chaudhary mentions, my research participant had to sacrifice her childhood in the Kamlari system in order to feed the large number of family members. Her dreams of going school and to lead a free life was not fulfilled since she had her responsibility for her family. She had to suffer a lot in the servitude tolerating all kinds of physical and mental torture.

Analysing the stories shared by my different research participants, it is quite obvious that the young Tharu women had to enter into the bondage at their early age of childhood and had to undergo immense physical and mental torture. Landlessness, poverty, lack of education and awareness are among the major factors that push them into servitude. The tendency of all of the masters is found to be deceptive. They tend to attract them by offering attractive packages

of education, good food, good clothes and good life, however, they didn't keep their promise at all. Instead of adding the facilities for Kamalris, they went on adding the burden of work. they had to lead such miserable lives that even when sick with diarrhoea, they weren't given any medicine or rest nor were taken to the doctor. Similarly, they had to continue to work even having several wounds and cuts in their hands. The fact is, that they were not given love, respect an even mere human dignity. All of my research participants look back to their years in servitude as an imprisonment. They say that they were imprisoned as a penalty of being born as a daughter in a poor Tharu family.

The experiences of all of my research participants during their servitude is full of exploitation. They have been subjected to continuous maltreatment including physical and verbal abuse. They had been assigned difficult physical tasks beyond their capacity. They were neither served with good food and clothes nor were they well paid. They have been the victims of physical violence and abuse. All of these experiences have been shaped by the intersection of oppression based on their ethnicity, class and gender. As they come from the historically marginalized and oppressed indigenous Tharu community, they have to be oppressed these days too. Additionally, they are poor. They lack the means of production. They are deprived of land for cultivation. Hence, poverty ultimately push them towards the evils of bondage. Similarly, they are women, who have been the victims of historical oppression in the hands of patriarchy. All of these three factors; ethnicity, gender and class interact and shape their unique experiences in the bondage.

Chapter VI

6. POST-FREEDOM PREDICAMENT: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

This chapter reflects upon the plight of freed Kamlaris after they got legally liberated in 2013, particularly touching the socio-economic and psychological adversities that existed even after their freedom. Kamaiya system; the system in which the male adults work as bonded slaves, was banned in Nepal from 17th July, 2000 by the introduction of ‘Kamaiya Prohibition Act’, however, it didn’t address the issue of freedom for the Kamlaris (Lawajuni, 2014: 14). Most of my respondents argue that the government had sexist eyes of disparity to declare the freedom of Kamaiya prior to Kamlaris. According to them, freedom for both Kamaiya and Kamlari should have been declared together. Although the government declared freedom for Kamaiya, it had no rigid plans and policies for their rehabilitation which, in many ways made the situation worse. Now, neither the male adults were allowed to work but nor did they have land and other resources to support their living. Hence, the only option they had was to send their daughters into the servitude so that they could get land for sharecropping as well as get some money for their livelihood. In fact, the step taken by the government for discouraging bonded servitude was encouraging child slavery in the form of Kamlari system. In the post-kamaiya freedom period, the Kamlari system became even more widespread.

As the Kamlari system became more common, so did the cases of abuse and violence among Kamlaris. The news about their exploitation began dragging the attention of various national and international organizations as well as the human rights activists. Consequently, Nepal’s Youth Foundation lead a campaign of rescuing the Kamlaris in Dang district from the year 2000 and was able to rescue 36 girls from the bondage on that year (KC, 2015: 10). The campaign gained gradual momentum and so was able to get more attention from the authorities.

Gradually, socio-political consciousness began to emerge among the Kamlari girls and began raising their voice against the system, demanding for their rights of freedom and education. In assistance of the various concerned agencies and NGOs like Nepal Youth Foundation, Backward Society Education, they went for continuous strikes and ultimately the government addressed their issue of freedom on 18th July, 2013 and it was then that Kamlari practice was officially banned. Regarding the announcement of freedom, Pun writes, ‘the government officially announced on Thursday the abolishment of the Kamlari practice, raising not only hopes for a start to legal action against those who hire young girls as Kamlaris, but also fears

that the hopes will be dashed' (Pun, 2013). Reflecting on the experiences of freed Kamlaris in the post-freedom context, it can be argued that their hopes have been dashed.

The following table shows the statistics of Kamlaris of five districts of western Nepal in the post-freedom context.

S.N.	Districts	Total no. of Kamlaris	No. of rescued Kamlaris	Yet to be rescued
1	Dang	5182	5146	30
2	Banke	583	538	24
3	Bardiya	2715	2613	175
4	Kailali	3350	3116	73
5	Kanchanpur	1150	1050	22
Total		12980	12493	324

Table: Statistics of Kamlaris in December, 2014 (Lawajuni, 2015: 4)

The above table reflects the status of Kamlaris after Kamlari system was legally banned in Nepal in 2013. The table shows that there are still 324 young Tharu women working in servitude despite the legal ban on the system. The statistics above clearly indicates that the declaration of freedom was not so effective. There is the lack of effective implementation of the law. The table depicts the statistics of the Kamlaris who were encountered however, there are many other working in servitude even after freedom who are working behind the walls. Either the masters do not reveal the fact about Kamlaris or the parents of the Kamlaris and Kamlaris themselves hesitate to get exposed fearing that they could lose their source of income derived from the servitude.

Eventually, the long awaited freedom for those victimized Tharu daughters knocked on the door, but everything didn't go as expected. According to my research participants, the freedom came with lots of hypes and the expectations were pretty high. But the reality was totally different. The much hyped freedom just gave them a flash of momentary happiness. The freed Kamlari girls were really worried about what the next since they had no any alternative ways to lead their life. Freedom was really loaded with tons of challenges to overcome. Here, I will discuss some of the factors that were really responsible for the plight of Kamalris in the post-freedom scenario.

6.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AFTER FREEDOM

The Post-freedom period was a period of transition hence the freed Kamlaris found it so hard to re-adjust in the society. The Kamlaris returned to their society after spending several years in servitude. They entered into servitude in their tender age and returned back in their adolescence, society had changed a lot during that period. Hence, they had lots of obstacles to handle in order to adjust in their own society. They came back to the society with lots of aspirations and dreams of a bright future. However, the society was not ready enough to adopt them. The aspirations of the freed Kamlaris was eventually eclipsed with the negative attitude of the society towards them.

Regarding her experience of returning back to her society, one of my research participants contends that the society treated her as if she was a ‘contaminated’ being. She found the society totally prejudiced towards since she was a slave. According to her, she was treated as if she was an outsider, she was different and had some contagious disease. She further states:

Upon my return to the society, I didn't feel that the society was ready to accept me. I had been in bonded slavery for 9 years and everything had changed. My childhood friends had all grown up and didn't even bother to talk to me. The society had the assumption that I must have been sexually abused during my service. Hence, the society had negative attitude towards me. Basically, they suspected my chastity and accordingly warned their children to maintain distance from me. It really hurt me a lot. As a matter of fact, they behaved as if I had returned from a brothel. I got rescued by a NGO and returned home. I expected to start a new life after my freedom. But the things went opposite. The society developed a kind of hatredness for me. Although my family welcomed me, but the society was not welcoming. I had never even imagined that my freedom would yield such circumstances. The post-freedom situation was so harsh for me; neither I could return back to the servitude nor the society could adopt me. Despite the full support of my family, I always got lonely. I was not able to make any friends. I couldn't join the school either. That phase of my life was really the most disgusting phase of my life (Research participant 7).

Analysing her experience in a post-freedom scenario, one can assume that the freedom that she eventually got was merely confined to the formal act of putting a ban on the Kamlari

system that lacked concrete welfare plans for the future. The government lacked proper plans and policies for the rehabilitation of freed Kamlaris. Hence they had to go through such experiences. She was punished for the crime she didn't commit. It was the society that was responsible for sending her into the servitude before because of her gender, ethnicity and class were created by the same society under which she was one of the victims. The society was responsible for all the adverse circumstance created in front of her. Her dream of initiating a new life for her bright future ultimately got shattered by the negative attitude that the society held for her after her freedom. In her case, the freedom brought more woes than happiness. In one hand, her freedom made an end to the only source of income for her family, and in other hand she couldn't adjust well in the society. Since she was a vulnerable young Tharu women, the society raised questions regarding her chastity and her character. The hard earned freedom just brought more sorrow in her case.

Moreover, rehabilitation was one of the major challenges after the freedom was announced. The Kamlaris spent several years in the servitude and hence their way of living got quite changed and they found it difficult to adjust in their community. It was not only the society, in some cases even the families were reluctant to welcome their daughters back home after their freedom. For some families the money and grains concerned them more than their daughters' freedom. Those families were really scared of losing the land they got from sharecropping from their landlords. They used to get land for sharecropping in return for sending their daughters into bondage. Regarding the context, my another research participant shares her story this way.

During the heyday of the Kamlari freedom movement in Nepal, I got into contact with a Non-Government Organization named FNC (Friends of Needy Children). The members of FNC promised me to rescue from the bondage and provide me with a good education. In fact, I got rescued, I got freedom but I was confused. I was not able to go to school instantly after my rescue as the organization ran out of the funds to send me to school. My family was not economically strong enough to send school either. And I was scared that my family would lose the land from landlord for sharecropping. So, I resumed my work. But this time, I didn't stay in my landlord's house. I walked to work from my own house (Research participant 8).

Here, it is obvious that the above mentioned research participant had to re-join the Kamlari system even after her rescue and freedom. Despite the fact that the practice of Kamlari had been declared illegal by that time, she had the compulsion to return back to the servitude due to the now degraded economic condition of her family. Just the introduction of a law does not suffice to put ban on Kamlari system, the aspect of its strong implementation in practical life is important that is lacking in the post-freedom context of Nepal. This instance clearly reflects that the freedom that she got didn't turn out to be the freedom she longed for. She wanted to join school, however couldn't do it due to a dearth of resources. She further narrates:

I worked under bondage for a year even after my rescue. Ultimately in 2013 the FNC was able to enrol me in a school nearby. Now, my daily routine was changed. Instead of walking to the landlord's house, I rather walked towards school. My hands that were accustomed in handling broom to sweep floor now enjoyed pen and copy. But unfortunately, my family couldn't participate in my happiness. As an outcome of my steps towards school, we lost the land for sharecropping. To get the land back for sharecropping, my elder uncle proposed to send all the female members of our family to work in landlord's house in a routine. However, all female members didn't agree on it. As a result, there was a conflict in the family and consequently my family had to be separated from the other members. My freedom brought conflict in my family resulting the split of my big family. We had no land of our own. The grains that we had collected when we were in a joint family too got divided during the family separation. My happiness of freedom was totally overshadowed by the family problem. Each and every moment I felt that I was the one who is responsible for the plight of my family. As a matter of fact, my family got ruined after the government declared our freedom (Research participant 8).

Here, she states that the freedom instead of bringing prosperity and happiness to her family, brought more pain instead. According to her, her father also used to work as a Kamaiya to a Jamindar's house. In 2000, he got freedom from the bondage as the government put ban on Kamaiya system. The government brought the policy of distributing some land to the landless freed Kamaiya families. However, her family was deprived of this government scheme because the Jamaindar didn't recommend her father as a Kamaiya. She contends that neither

her freedom nor her father's freedom did bring happiness in her family. She accuses the 'freedom' law as a 'grand failure' since the condition of her family got worse owing to the 'freedom'. 'At least we survived well in the bondage,' she says.

To sum up, the post-freedom plight of these young Kamlari women was specifically triggered by the lack of social adjustment, economic impoverishment accompanied by the family disintegration. The Kamlari girls whom returned back to the society and family with a better hope of their future had to face the social barrier of discrimination created by the society itself. In the other hand, they had no any alternative sources of income to support themselves and the family. Hence, financial crisis was responsible for bringing conflicts in the family. These girls got hardships ahead in the post-freedom scenario before they could erase the scars of their past; their life in servitude.

6.2. CHALLENGES OF GOING SCHOOL AFTER FREEDOM

The Kamlaris who had been to the servitude for several years since their childhood were deprived of going school. Most of them were willing to go into servitude in a hope of getting a chance to attend school as their masters used to make a promise that way. However ultimately they were deprived of getting an education. Hence, their major concern after getting freedom was to attend school in order to be educated because they had the idea that illiteracy was one of the major factors that pushed them towards the darkness of servitude. Most of them were assisted by different NGOs and INGOs to go to school. Yet, it was not so easy for them to join school after returning back from servitude.

According to my research participants, the problem of being over-aged was a major obstacle for them to handle in the school and classroom. Since they had to work in servitude during their school going age, they had to be enrolled in lower grades despite their over age after they came back from the servitude. One of my research participants says that she was the tallest, biggest and most matured student in her class. Although she was interested in going school, she didn't feel comfortable in sitting in the classroom. All of her classmates were around the age of 9-10 however she was about 16. She had been admitted in grade four. Although she had not taken any formal classes prior to that, she had learnt something by herself during her years in servitude. The problem for her was that she was the weakest student in her class. No one of her classmates was ready to share the bench with her in the classroom. She got no friends at all in her school. Regarding her experience at school, she contends:

After they came to know that I had joined the school returned from Kamlari system, they always had biased attitude for me. They often used to bully me uttering Kamlari Kamlari repeatedly. It was really so annoying. I used to get surrounded by other students who were younger than me and continuously targeting me for being a freed Kamlari. Perhaps some of them might have had kept Kamlari in their house and they might have tried to treat me the way they treated the girl kept in bondage in their house. (Research participant 9)

She says that the teachers were very helpful and supportive, however her classmates were not friendly to her. She further says, ‘they often called me *Aaloo Budhi Aaloo Budhi* (dumb old lady). I was the character of mockery for them and they always made fun of my poor study progress.’

Consequently, she couldn’t continue her school. According to her, her expectations after getting freedom went totally upside down. She couldn’t do what she wished for even after being a ‘freed’ human being. She equates the harassment inside the servitude and outside the servitude. For her, freedom meant nothing because her past was still haunting her time and again. The life of Kamlari was a past for her. She desperately wanted to erase the experiences of her past however she failed to do so. She says,

I felt as if I was a doomed girl, a cursed girl. Being cursed, I was born to a poor Tharu family as a daughter what made me go into the servitude and the term Kamlari was tagged into me in such a way that I couldn’t remove it even after being freed from that system. I want to erase the scars of Kamlari from my life, but the society goes on adding more even after the freedom (Research Participant 9).

As a matter of fact, she was not able to continue her study owing to the immense bullying she experienced at her school for being a Kamlari girl. Hence, the freedom she attained was far from her expectation. Her situation didn’t improve even after being out of the evils of Kamlari system.

Similarly, another research participant too shares the similar experiences. She was also over-aged as compared to her other classmates. Her classmates made fun of her of being older than them. Specifically, they used to mock at her dress up. Her parents couldn’t afford for her neat and clean school dress. So, she had to put on the old dress that she got from her master during the servitude. She used to get the old clothes abandoned by the children of her master. They

were rugged and tattered. The shoes too were shabby. Regarding the bullies, she received from her classmates, she says,

They often criticized me for wearing old clothes. They used to call me Jhumri for being malnourished and dressed up in tattered clothes. I had to tolerate a lots of humiliation from my classmates in the school. Hence my journey to school from the servitude was not a happy journey although I had a better anticipation for it. My steps felt so heavy while stepping towards school because of my dress (Research participant 10).

As a result, she couldn't concentrate on her studies and couldn't do well in her studies. The economic condition of her family was not good enough to afford for her new dress so she couldn't ask for it. 'I tried to be indifferent towards their sarcastic remarks regarding my dress up, however it used to give intolerable pain inside me. I always cried on the way back to home,' she further shares her views, 'I always wished that I was born to a rich family. If I had been born to a rich upper caste family, I wouldn't have to be in the servitude and I wouldn't have to face such harsh situation. At least I should have been born as a son so that I wouldn't have to become a Kamalri.'

Even though the freed Kamalris got an opportunity to continue their study, however the circumstances were such that they were not able to take advantage of the opportunities provided to them. There were other factors that continued bothering them hovering around them. Specifically, the deteriorated economic status of their family after their freedom was responsible for it to some extent. The families were struggling manage grains to eat so that they were not able to fulfil the academic demand of their freed daughters. More than that, the treatment of their fellow students towards them was them more. They were frequently targeted for being involved in the Kamlari system. The term Kamalri was taken by their classmates as the term that has a negative connotation. Therefore, they were typically biased.

Moreover, the young Kamlari women who had lost their parents during their servitude, who were orphans, whose economic condition was so poor to up-bring them after freedom were rehabilitated in the hostels opened for the needy Kamlaris. The rescued Kamalri who had nowhere to go were kept in such hostels. Such hostels are funded by different NGOs, INGOs and the government. During my field visit I visited one of these hostels and interacted with the freed Kamalris who are living there and continuing their studies. Although they have received some of the facilities, however whatever they receive is not enough for them.

Although they receive scholarship grants from the government and other NGOs and INGOs, however the amount is so minimum that doesn't suffice even to manage their educational materials.

One of my research participants living in the hostel told me that the amount that is allocated for them doesn't come directly in their hands. That is spent in purchasing food items and for other management purpose. The hostel in-charge also commented that the hostel run for them is running on donations and lacks resources for providing enough facilities. My research participant told me that they do not get good food due to lack of resources. She also said that it was so difficult for them to manage the educational material like books, pens, copies and other essential items owing to the dearth of sufficient funds. According to her, they do not possess seasonal clothes. She further elaborates,

It is so hard to live here during the winter because we do not have good blankets. We do don't have woollen sweaters, coats and other thick clothes for winter. So, it's extremely terrible to live here. And during summer, it is so hot that we can hardly bear it. but we have no fans. If I had my parents back home, I would have gone to them. I don't have my parents so I have to stay here no matter how worse the situation is (Research participant 11).

All of my research participants there argued that running hostel for the vulnerable and needy freed Kamlaris like them was really a positive move. However, they were quite disappointed at the government for not providing enough resources for them. All of them had the same question that why do they have to suffer even after they got freedom. Some of them even commented that their life in the servitude was better than that post 'freedom'. They suffer a lot in case of sickness since they do not have funds allocated for medical charges. If they fall sick, they have no options expect begging for funds in order to get treatment. Some of the girls living there are the victims of chronic diseases. Comparatively, their condition is worse than others. Due to lack of seasonal clothes and balanced diet, they are prone to sickness and they don't have money for the treatment. Therefore, they are living in a post freedom predicament.

The freed Kamlaris somehow are struggling to get education leaving their woes aside. However, they are worried about their future. Since Nepal suffers the problem of unemployment, they seemed to be quite concerned about their career in the future. Regarding this context, one of my research participants puts her views as,

Our childhood has been confiscated, our opportunities have been seized and still we are struggling to enter into the mainstream academic institutions. But it is not going to be easy for us. The children born to other communities, rich families, high class families are enjoying the various facilities and doing well in studies. Although we have been deprived of even the minimum facilities, yet we have been struggling. But we think of competing with those who are getting opportunities and facilities. We, Kamlari girls don't have any allocated reservations for the employment opportunities. So, it is obvious that we do have to suffer more owing to career opportunities after the completion of our studies; the predicament continues (Research participant 12).

Here, her prediction of the future scenario reflects the predicament even continues in the future too. The major problem is that there were no special provisions made for the freed Kamlari girls for their empowerment and employment. The fact is that the Kamlari girls have to compete with other privileged groups. It is obvious that the privileged group always has upper hand in every aspect. So, the freed young Kamlari women are scared of their further marginalization in the days to come.

6.3. ABUSE CONTINUES IN POST-FREEDOM CONTEXT

The Kamlaris went through lots of suffering during the servitude. They were subjected to be the victims of different sorts of abuse including physical, verbal and sexual. According to the statistics, 5 Kamalari have either been murdered or have committed suicide, 15 have been the victims of rape, 23 have become the mother due to sexual exploitation by their masters and 23 girls have been still missing during the servitude (Lawajuni, 2014: 4). This statistic vividly reflects the intensity of the abuse of Kamlari girls. The episodes of abuse didn't go down even after the freedom. The five Kamlaris who have been murdered in their servitude were either burnt or strangled to death. The activists working for the welfare of Kamlaris believe that they were murdered after either being raped or being beaten to the death by the masters. Among 28 complaints of sexual abuse of Kamlaris during their bondage, the administration has just taken 5 reports into consideration whereas other complaints have been turned down (KC, 2015: 18). The masters who have been accused of abuse have the political access so that they get easily defended.

Indeed, the Kamalris had to face various sorts of abuse after their freedom. After they got freedom, they were in the phase of transition. Hence the girl traffickers tried to take the

advantage of their vulnerability and made several attempts of abusing them and trafficking them. One of my research participants had fallen victim in the hands of traffickers. According to her, she was quite depressed after her freedom she had nothing to do for her living. Her family was living in a miserable condition due to poverty. Hence she was seeking an opportunity to make money to support her family. The traffickers, taking the advantage of her situation, convinced her to take to India for a better job. Her parents along with her were convinced and she went with them. However, to her utter dismay, she was sold to a circus show where she had to perform obscene dances on the stage. She was frequently raped by the circus owner. Luckily she managed to flee away from the circus and made her way back to home. Regarding this context, she further adds,

The freedom that I got which I took as a boon really turned out to be a curse for me. The situation created by my freedom was responsible for my further abuse and exploitation. I was left with no other alternatives to manage income to support myself and my family after my freedom so I got trapped in the net of the traffickers in an expectation of better life. There are several other young women like me who have been victims of traffickers (Research participant 13).

The case discussed above is one of the representative stories. There are such several cases of abuse even after the freedom is granted. The young Kamalri women are often targeted by the local goons. They spare no chance to abuse them. According to my research participants, verbal abuse was quite common for them. ‘When we go for a walk in the street or market for shopping, it’s very common that we hear bad words from the local goons. They often tease us, use obscene words and even attempt to make proposals for sex,’ one of my research participants has to say regarding this context. According to her, the goons think that the freed Kamalri girls are ready to do anything for money thinking that they run out of money instantly after returning back from the servitude. ‘The bad people think that we have no one to speak for us and protect us, so they try to abuse us. In the master’s house I used to feel a kind safety but now I feel totally insecure to go out,’ she says.

During my field visit, I got a chance to interact with a freed Kamlari who had been the victim of rape after her freedom. She was a rescued Kamlari girl who had been staying at the hostel. She was a bit mentally challenged owing to the traumatic experiences during her years of servitude. Since her rescue, she was in care of the hostel established for the rehabilitation of

freed Kamlaris. Once, she had been to her home for a festival vacation. While she was returning back to the hostel, the driver and his helper of the public bus transported her to a next town instead of letting her get off from the bus in the station nearby her hostel. They sought the advantage of her mental condition and skipped her station to the next town. She was raped by two men that night and was transported to her hostel next morning. She didn't tell anyone about that incident for several days. It seemed as if nothing had happened, everything was normal. However, later on the men who had raped her began talking in the public about her rape. They were found to be boasting about raping her. Her friends told me that the men who raped her were talking about that incident as if that was the matter of pride. As they revealed the incident themselves, the victim inquired and ultimately a case was filed against the two men who had raped her. The culprits acted as if these freed Kamlari young women can be abused.

As I discussed this issue with my other research participants, they viewed it as an outcome of being a Kamlari. According to them, if the victim was any other normal girl from another caste who was not the victim of bonded servitude, they would have never thought of committing such a terrible crime. What they did was just taking the advantage of the vulnerability of freed Kamalris. The culprits were not even scared of the crime they committed. Instead of being scared, they fearlessly tried to gossip about their deed. Their such activity clearly suggests that deliberately undermined the case since the victim was a freed Kamlari. They acted as if the freed Kamlaris are to be dominated and exploited since they are poor and in fragile condition. My research participants' view was that they were often viewed by the local goons as if they were the sex workers. 'We are free from the bondage, but we are not safe. The society has negative eyes on us. The society seeks to take advantage of our destitute situation and poverty. They think that Kamlaris are one who can be treated anyway they like because Kamlaris are born to suffer,' my research participant has to say regarding that context. They really seemed to be scared of the situation they were in after their freedom.

Owing to the political instability and prevalence of corruption in Nepal, impunity is rampant. Hence, some sections of the society seek to take advantage of the weaknesses of such vulnerable people. During my stay in the field, I even got chance to observe some incidents by my own eyes. The hostel where I visited had no water resource inside itself. So, the 'freed' Kamlaris living in the hostel had to visit the water well nearby in order to collect water for cooking, drinking and cleaning purposes. As my research participants had told me earlier, I

found some local goons hiding in the bushes and waiting for them to visit the well for filling water. As my research subjects approached the well, the boys began throwing small pebbles towards them. They started whistling towards them and even used some flirting words. They had really bad intentions regarding the freed Kamlaris. There used to be other women and girls except Kamlaris going to the well, however the targets of the boys were the Kamlaris. It is obvious that the assailants were never afraid of making attempts to abuse my research participants.

Moreover, my research participants also told me that the bad guys often tried to sneak inside the hostel area to seek for a chance to abuse them; at least verbally. The boys deliberately played football near the boundary wall of the hostel and deliberately threw the ball inside the hostel area so that they could enter into the hostel. Although the entrance for any outsider is prohibited inside the hostel premises, the boys found ways to take a chance of abusing the girls. The girls, despite making attempts to resist those offensive activities, feared getting hurt when they are alone. According to them, the episodes of abuse didn't end here. During the night, the boys often tried to climb up to the windows and tried to poke the sleeping girls with the stick or hands by inserting them from the windows that had no panes. The girls living in the hostel told me that they used to get so scared of such activities during the night. The goons spared no chances to abuse them. After the frequent complaints, the window panes were fixed and so these sorts of incidents stopped.

To sum up, the condition of freed Kamlaris in the post-freedom scenario has not improved as per the expectations. Although, there have been some efforts of empowerment from both sectors; NGOs, INGOs and government sectors like that of providing skill oriented trainings, scholarships and other sorts of educational facilities. They do have lots of challenges to face in the days to come. They have to fight with the society to assert their own identity erasing the stigmas attached to them that are prevalent in the society. They have to struggle hard to manage the alternative economic resources to support themselves and the family. As a matter of fact, it seems that their condition might get even worse if the government and other concerned agencies fail to make proper provision for the upliftment of their hitherto condition.

Chapter VII

7. KAMLARIS: THE VICTIMS OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF OPPRESSIONS

In this chapter, I will discuss how the young Kamlari women have been the victims of multiple oppressions; oppression based on their ethnicity, class and gender. The issues of oppressions and the post-freedom predicament that I have discussed in 5th and 6th chapter are all the outcome of intersection of threefold oppression that the young Tharu Kamlari women underwent in their servitude and are still experiencing after freedom. They were forced into the bondage, were oppressed and exploited in the bondage and are still suffering after attaining legal freedom. The reason behind all sorts of their oppression is the interplay of the interconnectedness of the oppression based on their ethnicity, class and gender.

Women around the globe have been historically relegated to the margins at the hands of patriarchy. Women basically fall under the category of poor and when it comes to the context of developing countries, 'the number of women in poverty in the rural areas of developing countries is growing faster than the number of men' (Mehra, 1997:142). Comparatively, the status of developing countries of third world is miserable as the different forces are responsible for their multiple marginalization. Spivak prefers the term of a gendered subaltern to the victimized women of third world setting and argues that the women in this setting are suffering more as the dominating forces of sex, class and race come into action for their plight and predicament that ultimately push them into the gloom of a shadow (Spivak, 1988: 287).

Tharu Kamlari girls too are the obvious victims of the dominant forces of race, class and gender since they are; females by gender, poor by class and indigenous by race. They are in such destitute condition that neither they have agency to be heard nor are they resourced in order to voice for themselves. Moreover, their essence has been crushed into the hitherto evils of bonded slavery. Regarding such predicament of the women who have been handcuffed in the bondage, Herzfeld contends that the system of slavery has its multiple effects and the ripples of its effects affects both men, women and children, however, there are circumstantial slavery like practice that are gender specific and poverty and marginalization of women of minority groups along with the 'social complicity, and lack of political will to address the issue, are central to slavery's existence' (Herzfeld, 2002:50). In addition to it, the women, specifically from indigenous communities are more prone to the effects of double marginalization like in the case of Tharu Kamlaris of Nepal as Gutierrez argues that the

women of colour; i.e. women from ethnic minorities are vulnerable for the what she calls “double jeopardy” of racism and sexism since they have been rendered with the state of powerlessness that deprives them from having access to the social resources imparting direct impact on their livelihood and experiences (Gutierrez, 1990: 149).

Furthermore, regarding the context of subordination of women in the third world scenario, they have been vividly exposed to the dark sides of marginalization in the modern global capitalist system of material and social relations. The matter of subjugation of women in the third world setting ‘has always been ideologically conceived as an integral part of the natural order and perpetuated by cultural praxis, religion, education, and other social institutions’ (Acosta Bellen and Bose, 1990:299). Similarly, some of the scholars argue that women are treated as the colony and they have been physically and mentally colonized by the materialistic world of patriarchy. Relating the plight of women to the status of the colonies Werlhof notes, ‘women and colonies are both low-wage and non-wage producers, share structural subordination and dependency, and are overwhelmingly poor’ (Werlhof, 1988:25). Hence, the Tharu Kamlari girls too, have the similar fate as of the colonies where their own existence has been denied and subdued at the hands of patriarchy, capitalism and racism eventually yielding the harsh situation of ‘double marginalization’.

This chapter reflects upon the data presented in the previous chapters that depict the oppression of Kamlaris during their several years in the servitude along with their predicament in the post-freedom scenario. As I view the overall scenario of Kamlaris from their entrance to servitude to the plight after freedom, obviously, it is the intersections of multiple element of oppressions like the discrimination based on gender, class and ethnicity. As the theory of intersectionality asserts that the lived experiences of the women of color are shaped by the interplay of overlapping of multiple oppressions, similar is the case with the experiences of Kamlaris during their servitude as well as in the post-freedom context. Kamlaris belong to the Tharu people; the historically marginalized indigenous groups. They face the discrimination based on their ethnicity from the people of mainstream caste. Similarly, Kamlari also face the discrimination based on their gender. In addition to it, they come from economically impoverished families. Here, regarding this context, they also face the discrimination based on their economic status. Hence, they have been the subjected to be the victims of bonded slavery and its harsh impacts owing to the simultaneous intersection of class, gender and ethnicity. Therefore, this section focuses on the discussion regarding the factors that forced Kamlaris to enter into the bonded slavery and also the factors that are

responsible for their plight even after the freedom. The factors that are being discussed are the oppression based on ethnicity, the oppression based on gender and the oppression based on class and these forms of oppressions are discussed individually here.

7.1. OPPRESSION BASED ON ETHNICITY

In this section, I will be focussed on how the Tharu people are historically oppressed based on their ethnicity. The theory of intersectionality proposes race as one of the elements to intersect with other elements like gender and class that shape the lived experiences of the women of colour. I prefer to interchange the term race with ethnicity in this study. The global understanding of race that is affiliated with the biological traits of the human being doesn't apply in the context of Nepal because the term ethnicity that belongs to the cultural realm of people is often in practice. Even some argue that race can be interchanged with the term ethnicity since the concept of ethnicity too is related to race (Miles and Brown, 2003). Race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests between different groups of people, and hence it is guided by the interests and politics of privileging some groups over others (Omi and Winant, 2002: 123). As the women of colour around the globe face racial discrimination, the Kamlari women of Tharu community face the oppression based on their ethnicity.

Nepal, a multi-ethnic country, has a long history of categorization of people into different caste groups. Social hierarchy in Nepal has been historically expressed through a caste system that emanates from Hinduism, and over time the caste system has transformed into an endemic social system where the degree of discrimination has been so intensified that if the ethnic minorities 'opt to defy traditional exploitative, discriminatory and humiliating roles, they face social sanctions and boycotts that further restrict any opportunity to overcome discrimination, discrimination-related poverty and dependency on employers or landlords (Upadhyaya, 2008: 14). The social hierarchy of caste system categorizes people into four major categories; Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra where Brahmin tops the hierarchy and Shudra lies down at the bottom. Though, the caste system referred by the Hindu religious scriptures was originally based on the types of work that people do. For instance, the people who performed religious functions and teaching were categorized as Brahmin, the people who ruled the kings and fought wars were put in the category of Kshatriya, and the people engaged in business were categorized as Vaishya and the people who performed other works that were considered to be of lower standard were put in the

category of Shudra. However, these categories were appropriated as a to create social hierarchy in order to suppress the people of lower categories in the modern times in Nepal.

Tharu people have been subjected to the systematic oppression owing to the existing hierarchal categorization. Tharu people have been identified as Janajati that refers to the tribal people and have been placed under Vaishya caste. The first legal code introduced in Nepal in 1854 known as *Muluki Ain* categorizes Tharu people as ‘enslavable’ and ‘alcohol drinkers’ (Guneratne, 1998:755). It vividly indicates that Tharu people have been facing the oppression based on their ethnicity. Since they are placed under a lower caste group and are termed as enslavable, they have been the victims of continuous oppression from the historical times. Being categorized as lower caste ethnicities, for Tharu, Nepal’s caste system functions as the most suppressive force in their lives (Calato, 2015: 14). The caste system is so deeply rooted in Nepal as Calato further argues that it determines the people’s status that one is born with without any opportunities to change and with each new generation the effects of the caste system seem to dissipate.

Moreover, as a consequence of the hierarchal categorization, Tharu people began to be enslaved by the people who are placed at the top of the hierarchy like Brahmin and Kshatriya. Regarding the context of the continuing oppression pertaining to ethnicity, Upadhyaya argues that ‘the risk of bondage is massively exacerbated when the chronically poor are simultaneously subjected to extensive social discrimination arising from their membership of a particular caste, ethnic and/or religious minority’ (Upadhyaya, 2008: 14). Hence the system of bonded slavery prevailed in Nepal that was specifically targeted to Tharu people giving rise to the Kamaiya system where male adults went into servitude and later oppression made a shift to the women of Tharu in the name of Kamlari system. Thus, ethnicity functions as one of the major elements for Kamlari women to force them to enter into the bondage that ultimately intersect with other elements like gender and class intensifying the degree of oppression yielding their plight.

Furthermore, all of my research participants have the experience of receiving lowest degree of respect while being addressed by their masters during the servitude and the same continues in the post-freedom scenario as well. Unlike in English language, Nepali language has four types of ‘you’ to address someone based on the level of respect. The lowest level of ‘you’ is referred as ‘ta’ that connotes the rudeness, domination and disrespect. ‘Timi’ is neutral level of ‘you’ whereas ‘tapai’ and ‘hajur’ are placed at the highest level of ‘you’ that reflect highest

degree of respect. All of my research participants contend that they were always addressed as 'ta' by their masters whereas they had to address their masters and their whole family members with the word 'hajur' displaying their humble respect. Even the kids from the masters' family used the word 'ta' to refer to the Kamlaris. However, the Kamlaris had to respect even the kids with the word 'hajur'. The masters always tried to be least respectful towards the Kamlaris since they belonged to the higher caste. And they taught the same to their children. The tendency of being least respectful still continues even after their freedom. To state it in other ways, it is the common practice of high caste groups to be disrespectful towards Tharu people. They believe that the Tharu people shouldn't be respected since they are placed towards the bottom of the hierarchy and they are meant to be enslaved.

To continue, all of my research participants come from Tharu community. During my interaction, it was obviously stated that one of the major risk factors of joining the Kamlari system was their ethnicity. Since they belong to the marginalized ethnic community, they are subjected to the negativity of the system of bonded servitude. The reason behind Kamlari system being specifically associated with Tharu women is their ethnicity. The ongoing historical and systematic domination of Tharu people, from the elites of high caste groups affected the whole Tharu community; specifically, the women. Referring to the other women from other ethnic groups, my research participants argue that their experiences have been shaped differently than others. The pejorative terms like enslavable and alcohol drinkers are still in practice that continue to subdue their position in society. As the black women face the racial discrimination based on their color, the Tharu women face the discrimination based on their ethnicity and their cultural traits. Drinking alcohol is one of the significant cultural practices of Tharu people. Alcohol is essential for any religious and cultural functions in that community, however, the same cultural practice is being used by the elites to render their position as inferior. In some cases, I even got to know that the elites were able to convince the parents of Kamlaris for the enslavement, by pleasing them by offering the adequate supply of alcohol.

Hence, it can be asserted that ethnicity serves as one of the major social elements that is responsible for the destitution of Kamlaris during their servitude and still hinder their empowerment efforts in the post-freedom scenario. Oppression based on their ethnicity strikes from one direction along with discriminatory practices based on gender and class strike from the other which simultaneously shape the lived experiences of Kamlaris.

7.2. OPPRESSION BASED ON GENDER

This section reflects on how Tharu women have been pushed into the servitude and have been facing the oppression based on their gender. As gender discrimination has been a global issue, women in the context of Nepal too have been suffering the gender based oppression in every aspect of their life. Gender based discrimination in Nepal is directly linked with the traditional culture being deeply rooted in the society that creates the hierarchal relationship between male and female (Pokharel, 2008: 81). Nepal is a male dominated society where the discrimination based on gender begins right after the birth and continues for life. Gender based discrimination is widely practiced in Nepal that certain established gender norms restrain women in various aspects of private and public life. The patriarchy is responsible to hinder the empowerment efforts of women in Nepal that often expects to dominate women and exercise male chauvinism. The male dominated society is essentially oriented towards prioritizing the birth of son, as the son is considered to have culturally accepted characteristics status and economic potentiality. It results in creating wide gap between male and female and eventually provides a space to more discriminatory practices towards women.

Tharu women have been the victims of historical subjugation. They have been subjected to the maltreatment from the males outside their ethnicity along with the males of their own community. Before 1950s, Tharu settlement area of Nepal where my field work was centred was not inhabited by other ethnic people except Tharus due to widespread epidemic of malaria. In that setting, the Tharu women of post-marriageable age were regarded to be witches by the people of other caste who also believed that the Tharu women could change a stranger into wild animals and even kill them by injecting high fever (Guneratne, 2009: 23). The Tharu women were serotyped as witches and the land of Tharu was considered to be the witch land (Crooke, 1896: 405). The oppression of women within the Tharu community offered a space for outsiders to project their images of negative connotations.

Moreover, the Tharu women are not the exception of gender based oppression. Being born as a daughter in the context of Nepal, specifically, in the Tharu family, is linked with household work. The daughters are considered to be the one who is assigned the duty of fulfilling domestic chores. It is a common expectation of the Tharu parents that every girl has to learn the domestic chores like cooking, washing, cleaning and baby sitting in their early age so that they can run their family properly after marriage. Hence, the tendency of sending daughters in to bondage is comparatively higher than that of sending their sons. The reason behind it is that the parents expect their daughters to 'learn both household and agricultural skills, which

are essential aspects of their adult life, rather than to earn family income' (Giri, 2010: 38). Since the daughters are taken to be the future assets of others after marriage, they are usually not taken as an appropriate reason for investment in education and empowerment. As a result, the daughter is either kept engaged in domestic chores or are sent in to bondage. Therefore, the women in Tharu community experience gender based discrimination since childhood.

Tharu community, being a male dominated community, has been continuing gender based bias in various other aspects. The women are deprived of their role during the process of decision making. For instance, the head of the Tharu community is always a male. Females are not considered to possess the capacity of leadership and decision making. Regarding the performance of rituals, Tharu males perform the role of practitioners and women merely witness the ritual. The women have limited participation and many lines of restrictions have been drawn in order to dissociate the women from worshipping gods and spirits and these lines are deliberately drawn by the males in order to alienate women from their role of making decisions (Maslak, 2003: 155). Since the women are deprived of their roles in decision making, they can't resist on sending their daughter into the servitude. If the male, the head of the family, decides to send his daughter into the bondage, his decision becomes the final decision. It doesn't matter whether the mother agrees him or not, whether the daughter herself willing or not. The women's voice in the Tharu community is so suppressed that even if they oppose the decision of going into the servitude, they never get heard. Rather, they are likely to be the victim of violence in charge of attempting to oppose the decision made by the male.

The labor market in the context of Nepal is also not untouched by the effects of gender discrimination. The Tharu women are not equally paid with their male counterparts and often are subjected to abuse and violence in the workplace. In addition to it, if the landlord of a village calls for the whole family for labor, only male heads are counted in terms of making payments. The female labor is undermined and sometimes is just considered to be worthy of a meal provided to them. Importantly, the male base bonded slavery, Kamaiya system got outlawed in 2000 whereas women based, specifically girls, Kamlari system was only outlawed in 2013. Kamaiya and Kamlari system are the practices of bonded servitude of similar nature. However, the reason behind belated freedom of Kamlaris is that the Kamlari system is gendered. Since the whole system is governed by patriarchy, male voices of Kamaiya were heard prior to the female voices of Kamlari. After the Kamaiya system got outlawed in 2000, the government ran a rehabilitation program by distributing certain area of

land. However, only the males were considered for the land titles, females, who had also been in bondage, were not counted for the land titles (Upadhyaya, 2008: 14). This is an instance how oppression based on gender functions in relegating the position of Tharu women to the margins.

Regarding the context of gender discrimination, almost all of my research participants shared a common view that they regretted being born as a daughter. They wished if they were born a boy so that they could flee away from the bondage and struggle against the oppression. To be born as a girl in the Tharu family is to be destined to go into the servitude. Their predicament even in the post-freedom scenario prevails since they are female because they have internalized the ideologies created by patriarchy that they are weak and lack strength to go against the system. Hence, the Kamlaris, along with the oppression based on ethnicity, are also struck by the gender based oppression at the same time.

7.3. OPPRESSION BASED ON CLASS

In this section, I will discuss the class based oppression of Tharu women who have been the victims of bonded servitude. The Kamlaris, along with oppression based on ethnicity and gender, also suffer from the oppression based on economic class. Tharu people, the inhabitants of the plain fertile basins of Southern Nepal, were systematically deprived of their land rights in various historical episodes. They settled in the Terai region of Nepal by clearing the forest in the despite the adversity of epidemic of malaria. They worked hard to transform the dense jungle into cultivable fertile land. However, they got marginalized in their own land due to the migration of hill tribes after the epidemic of malaria was taken under control after 1950s as a result of malaria eradication campaign. The fertile soil attracted hill tribes who ultimately displaced the Tharu people limiting them as a minority in their own traditional land. Tharu people, who once were the landowners became landless. By the 1912, most of the cultivable land of Dang, my study area, was owned by Tharus. Tharus were the landlords during 1912, however the situation went upside down by 1960s due to encroachment of hill tribes. McDonough argues that by 1960s, 80% of the Tharus living in Dang were tenants who didn't own land of their own and 90% of the Tharu land was in the possession of hill tribes (McDonough, 1997: 281). It eventually established the relationship between hill tribes and Tharu as that of oppressor and the oppressed. The various land reform acts were introduced that systematically deprived Tharu people from their land rights. Hence, Tharu people became landless and were forced to live in utter poverty.

The economy of Nepal is based on agriculture and hence ownership of land is considered to be the determining factor of creating hierarchy of rich and poor. Since Tharu people were deprived of their land rights, they are poor. Their poverty ultimately led them to enter into the bonded slavery. Bonded labourers, like that of the Tharu people, come from chronically poor class. 'The term chronically poor refers to a combination of material deprivation (for example, income), capability deprivation (for example, ill health, lack of skills, education), and vulnerability' (Upadhyaya, 2008: 9). Their destitution in chronic poverty led Tharu people to borrow money and food grains from the landlords in return they got enslaved in order to pay off the debt. This process gradually triggered the rise of bonded slavery in the Tharu community. This system of bondage gradually got institutionalized in the name of Kamaiya and Kamlari system. In fact, the system of debt bondage proved to be so complicated that it continued for generations and generations.

As a matter of fact, poverty is one of the major factors that pushed Tharu women into the vicious circle of debt bondage. Referring to the prevalence of debt bondage in Nepal, Upadhya points poverty as a factor fuelling bonded child labour where the children, young women in Tharu context, get bonded into labour by their parents getting some debt in return that takes years for the child to pay off. Upadhaya further notes that 'such is the extent of poverty that some parents may refuse to accept back a child who has been rescued from child labour in a government raid without compensation, or may simply re-traffic the child into labour' (Upadhyaya, 2008: 10). Thus, it is the poverty that forces Tharu women to shape their lived experiences as the Kamlaris. During my interview with my research participants, I noticed that lack of resources was the major reason behind their entrance into the bondage. All of them have the common view that they had to opt for the bondage so that they could assist their family financially. They went into the bondage so that they could get land for share cropping, they went to the bondage so that they could go to school and they went to the bondage in order fulfil their basic needs of food and clothes.

The inherent economic inequality in Nepalese society essentially plays a pivotal role to push the life of Tharu women in the bondage in the form of Kamlari system. The impoverished economic condition of Tharu families is responsible for treating Tharu young women as a commodity. In fact, Tharu women are commodified and sold into bondage. As we analyse the experiences of Kamlaris under servitude, the landlords are found treating Kamlaris as a commodity who often exploited the labor either in minimum wages or without wages in most conditions. Even after freedom, freed Kamlaris are devoid of adequate resources to generate

their income. Hence, their condition has not improved as per the expectations even after the system of bondage was outlawed. As a result of the prevalence of economic disparity, Kamlari system still functions behind the walls.

The above discussion reflects on how Tharu women have been marginalized in an intersection of oppressions based on ethnicity, gender and class. Although, I have discussed threefold oppression separately, however, the multiple simultaneous factors of oppression intersect with each other for the marginalization of the Tharu women. Thus, it is appropriate to look at their situation in order to explore the possibilities of resistance via intersectional eye incorporating gender with the analysis of race, ethnicity, sexuality and other axes of domination. Regarding the context of examining the intersections, Weldon argues that the comprehension of the ways of how women are disadvantaged as women and how the people of color have been exploited doesn't make a sense without exploring how the structures interact. She also states that 'certain aspects of social inequality, certain social problems and injustices, will not be visible as long as we focus on gender, race and class separately' (Weldon, 2006: 239). Hence, it is essential to analyse how gender, class and race interact at the same time to shape the unique experience of the disadvantaged women of color. This sort of intersectional analysis can explore the structural deficiencies and can bring possible solutions for empowerment.

Chapter VIII

8. CONCLUSION

This study, based on the lived experiences of Kamlaris, explores their plight in the post-freedom scenario. Kamalaris, the bonded slave girls from the Tharu indigenous community, fall victim to the dehumanizing practice of bonded servitude since their childhood, due the interplay of forces such as ethnicity, class and gender, all of which play a significant role in their systematic long standing domination. They often enter into servitude at the tender age of 6 or 7 and spend several years in their masters' house in an urban setting, usually far from their homes in rural villages. Being totally engrossed in domestic chores of their masters' house, they are deprived of even a basic level of education. The factors like; lack of education, lack of balanced diet, lack of proper care, excessive work, continuous physical and mental abuse, are some of the consequences that they face after they fall the victim of bonded servitude.

This study makes a historical overview of the bonded servitude in the world and focuses on its prevalence in Nepal, that has its specific affiliation with the Tharu indigenous people. Tharu people, the inhabitants of plain lands of the Terai belt from historical times, have been systematically dominated and have been left in the destitute state of landlessness that ultimately triggered the initiation of bonded servitude in the name of Kamaiya system. The Kamaiya system, associated with adult Tharu males, ultimately gave rise to Kamlari system as the daughters from the Tharu families began to be sent to the masters' house in debt bondage. The attempts of resistance of this system usually got oppressed by the ruling class since the elites from ruling class are those who welcome Kamlaris in their house.

The life of the Kamlaris was commodified. They were treated as if they were the commodities to be bartered, exchanged or even transferred. Ordinary human compassion was not displayed for them and were given the physical tasks beyond their capacity. They were maltreated and treated even inferior to their pet dogs. The suffering under servitude are of varied levels. As an outcome of hard physical labor, they got physically tired and weak too due to lack of proper diet. They couldn't get enough sleep. They suffered from homesickness due to their prolonged stay at masters' house at their childhood. They got physically, sexually and verbally abused during their stay at masters' house. They got so subjugated that they couldn't go against the oppression they faced.

Despite the formulation of various laws to eradicate slavery system in Nepal, this system prevailed. However, owing to the immense pressure built by national and international agencies and the violent strikes staged by Kamlaris demanding their freedom, Nepal government was ultimately forced to address issue of Kamlari system by putting ban on it in 2013. The ban on Kamlari system paved a way of freedom for indentured Kamlaris.

Although, the emancipation came as a positive note, however, the lack of proper government policies to rescue and rehabilitate Kamlaris eclipsed the joy of freedom. The post-freedom episode of the lives of Kamlaris started with huge pile of expectations of better life. However, their plight continued even after their freedom. They had no resources to make their livelihood. The economic condition of their family remains the same, so, returning to their families would yield nothing except the continuation of further suffering. They couldn't go to school as age factors and economic factors were their obstacles. They couldn't get other employment opportunities since they had no skills except maintaining domestic chores.

The role of the NGOs like Backward Society Education (BASE), Social Welfare Association of Nepal (SWAN), Freed-Kamlari Development Forum (FKDF), Nepal Youth Foundation (NYF) and many others is significant to rescue Kamlaris from the trap of bondage. These NGOs have also launched various programs for the empowerment of freed Kamlaris.

However, these attempts are not adequate for bringing the noticeable changes in the lives of Kamlaris in the post-freedom scenario because the structural deficiencies are rampant in the society. The structural deficiencies are inherent in every system that often are likely to turn back and tend to continue the oppression. As Freire argues, the vested interest of the oppressor always is in 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them' since this notion of the oppressor institutionalizes the exploitation of the oppressed for a long run (Freire, 2005: 74). The situation of the freed Kamlaris has not changed very much. The oppressor is in dominant position and ever tends to continue the system. There are several instances of Kamlaris returning to the servitude even after their 'freedom' because they experienced nothing new post 'freedom'. Their double marginalization continues in each and every context.

This study identifies the structural deficiencies that are responsible for the systematic exploitation of Tharu women during the servitude and even after the servitude. The intersection of oppression based on ethnicity, class and gender is responsible for the exploitation of Kamlaris and their predicament freedom. The intersection is so deeply rooted that it functions even after their emancipation. They have been stigmatized and stereotyped

after their freedom which create obstacle for their adjustment in the society. The verbal abuse and sexual abuse still continues after freedom. The interaction of their poverty, ethnicity and gender still hinders their empowerment.

To bring some noticeable changes in the hitherto situation of the freed Kamlaris, it is important to identify how the intersection of oppression based on ethnicity, class and gender works in the context of Kamlaris. Although, there have been many political movements that put class in priority, however, the monistic view of economic class alone fails to address the issue of Kamlaris. The feminist movements too do not suffice to fathom the depth of oppression that Kamlaris have been subjected to. Similarly, there are various movements being carried out by different indigenous groups and minority groups in Nepal after the new constitution was enforced in Nepal in 2015. However, there is the dire need of an approach to detect the pluralism of oppression. It is necessary to identify how these varied forms of oppressions are embedded within each other, shaping the different experiences of Kamlaris. To tackle the multiple and simultaneous forms of discrimination that Kamlaris cope with, it is an urgency to formulate anti-discrimination policies that don't treat the different forms of discrimination separately but rather treat them as interacting.

To wrap up, the current study, as the title suggests, explores journey of Tharu women from their state of servitude to independence, specifically, focussing on their unique experiences shaped by the intersection of multiple forms of oppression based on ethnicity, gender and class. This study states that there have not been any noticeable changes in the situation of freed Kamlaris after freedom since the intersection of multiple forms of oppression is responsible for their marginalization. Hence, it is necessary to grab an inclusive approach that can identify the multiplicity of oppressions and offer them the remedy from all those sorts of oppression.

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APPENDIX-I**Categorization of Indigenous People of Nepal Based on Their Developmental Stages**

Endangered Group	Highly Marginalized	Marginalized Group	Disadvantaged Group	Advanced Group
1. Kusunda	11. Majhi	23. Sunuwar	43. Chhairotan	58. Newar
2. Bankariya	12. Siyar	24. Tharu	44. Tangbe	59. Thakali
3. Raute	13. Lohmi	25. Tamang	45. Tinganule	
4. Surel	14. Thudam	26. Bhujel	Thakali	
5. Hayu;	15. Dhanuk	27. Kumal	46. Bargaule	
6. Raji	16. Chepang	28. Rajbansi	47. Marphali	
7. Kisan	17. Satar	29. Gangai	Thakali	
8. Lepcha	18. Jhagad	30. Dhimal	48. Gurung	
9. Meche	19. Thami	31. Bhote	49. Magar	
10. Kusbadiya	20. Bote	32. Darai	50. Rai	
	21. Danuwar	33. Tajpuriya	51. Limbu	
	22. Baramu	34. Pahari	52. Sherpa	
		35. Topkegola	53. Yakkha	
		36. Dolpo	54. Chhantyal	
		37. Free	55. Jirel	
		38. Mugal	56. Byansi	
		39. Larke	57. Yolmo	
		40. Lohpa		
		41. Dura		
		42. Walung		

Source: Krishna B. Bhattachan, Country Technical Notes on Indigenous Peoples' Issues Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/332c2997-792b-4ff9-95f6-30a2db2a9ed4>

APPENDIX-II

Preamble of Bonded Labour Prohibition Act 2002

Bonded Labour (Prohibition) Act, 2058 (2002)

Date of Authentication and Publication

2058.11.15 (2002-04-20)

Act Number 21 of the Year 2058 (2002)

An act made to provide for provisions relating to prohibition on bonded labour

Preamble: Whereas, it is expedient to make provisions in order to put a ban on bonded labour (Kamaiya shram), to rehabilitate the freed bonded labourers and to uplift their livelihood from the perspectives of social justice.

Now, therefore be it enacted by the Parliament in the first years of reign of the His majesty the King Gayanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

Source: <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/documents/2015/08/bonded-labour-prohibition-act-2058-2002.pdf>