

HISTORICAL COMPENSATION: THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDERS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the subalterns' perspectives on government's scholarship program in Badbhanjyang-1, Basundol, and Kathmandu. The information was analyzed and discussed using Spivak's (1988) subaltern theory to understand Dalit as special ability group and Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986) to know their different cultural assets at least in the field of education. This study showed that scholarship program was useful to educate and encourage the Dalit children to enroll in school. However, parents had to cover the additional expenses like exam fees, stationeries, and reference books. This additional financial burden to the parents had forced them to send their children for labor work rather than sending them to school. According to them, the scholarship program has not addressed the caste based social hierarchies rather it enforced them to feel themselves as inferior being 'Dalit' because it was given on the basis of the caste, as historical compensation to educate them.

INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a multi-cast, multi-lingual, multi socio-cultural and geographically diverse country inhabited by various caste/ethnic group. Along with these diversities, there are structural inequalities in socio-cultural, economical, and educational arena based on the caste, ethnicity and gender. In the case of *Dalit*, the society is stratified and discriminatory due to the practice of caste hierarchy. *Dalit* (untouchables) is a community at the bottom of caste hierarchy. Practice of Caste Based Discrimination (CBD) like un-touchability has compelled them to live in a hostile environment subject to deprivation of all kinds like social, political, economic and educational disparities (NNDSWO, 2006).

Dalit refers to "oppressed" who are socially oppressed, maltreated giving epithet 'untouchable' economically exploited, politically excluded, academically disadvantage or sunk in the swamp, 'broken people' considered 'unclean' put at the bottom of caste hierarchical order and they are discriminated to access to resources, opportunities, services, education, modern technology and excluded from the mainstream of development and they are powerless in many ways (NDC, 2004) who

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have faced numerous problems for getting education. Overall condition of *Dalit* in Nepal is miserable as they are exploited and excluded from the mainstream of development. The total population of these oppressed people (*Dalit*) in Nepal is 37,10,575 which is 14.01% of total headcount of Nepal (CBS, 2011).

Education is regarded as the most important element to foster human development. It has been perceived as a power of enhancing the capacity of people to acquire economic prosperity and social dignity. It is also constantly reinforced by funding partners as well. Nepal has committed to fulfill the commitment of the world summit on 'Education for All' (EFA) that education is a fundamental right for all people. Commitment was made to ensure the basic and primary education for all *Dalit* girls, as well as boys. Due emphasis was given to enhance the access and quality of basic and primary education. The government, bilateral organizations, multilateral organizations and I/NGOs have offered scholarships to the *Dalit* children to enhance their access and fulfill national commitment.

Nepal Government has provisioned different types of *Dalit* scholarship, 50% girls' scholarship, Karnali zone scholarship and Martyr's children scholarship programs under the EFA program. Similarly, *Dalit* scholarship, secondary education scholarship, female hostel (feeder hostel) scholarship, remote mountain residential scholarship, and marginalized group scholarship program were under the SESP program. These scholarships were targeted to the marginalized and *Dalit* children for free and quality education and scale up their educational status. However, the results are not satisfactory because the amount of scholarship is low, school authorities are not transparent in the distribution of scholarship and stakeholders' perceptions on incentives differ.

The government of Nepal is providing scholarship to *Dalit* children through district education offices (DEO) and Kathmandu District Education Office is responsible for the same in Kathmandu district. No studies as such have been carried out in Kathmandu to look at the perspectives of the *Dalit* parents and how such programs have supported their children's education. This study is, thus, an attempt to draw the subalterns' perspectives on government's scholarship to *Dalit* children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flash report 2011/012 shows that the net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of primary level is 95.1 percent. This means that 4.9% of children in school going age are still out of school and significant number of children are either repeating the class or dropping out from school. This poses as a huge challenge for the nation in achieving EFA commitment of the

government. The section below presents the review of the relevant literature with reference to the educational access for *Dalit* children.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Education is a fundamental right of people in practice. However, there is no proper accessibility, availability and freedom for education for many *Dalit* children in Nepal. For instance, *Dalit*'s literacy rate is 59.9% in male and 34.8% in female. Their share in secondary and higher education is 23.2% in male and 11.8% in female (UNDP, 2009). Similarly, a study done by DEO shows that still 13,000 school age children are out of school in Kailali district of Nepal and most of them belong to *Dalit* community (Educational pages, p.4, 2011). This asserts that Nepali *Dalits* have been marginalized in economic, social, cultural, educational and other spheres of national life due to the state system based on feudal Hindu caste (UNDP, 2008). Because of this feudalistic mindset, *Dalit*'s educational attainment is extremely lower than that of other castes. While comparing within *Dalit* community from gender perspective, both girls and women lag behind than boys and men to a greater extent (Thapa, 2008). In total, only 1.5% of *Dalit* students are able to pursue higher education beyond the SLC (World Bank, 2006).

Literature shows that incentive and scholarship programs are access related activities, but it is also perceived as a program of enhancing the quality, relevance and equity aspect of education. Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) has carried out four studies since 1998 and one of the studies entitled "Evaluation and Review of Incentive Schemes to Encourage Participation of Girls and Women in Basic Education. Phase I" (CERID, 1998) showed that the incentive programs were not effective. Suggestions were provided to restructure the scholarship quota distribution as per the number of girl students in primary schools.

In the long past during the Vedic era, knowledge was regarded as a means of nirvana and *verna* (clan). There were no restrictions for getting education and learning Vedas for all *vernas*. (NDC, 2060). Therefore, *Verna* was not a means of discriminations rather it was just attitudinal. Categorizing at that time was based on the *vernas* by birth but not by knowledge but Manusmirti culturally restricted *Sudras* from access to education.

During post Vedic period too, *Sudras* were deprived from school and education system as *Sudras* were duly prescribed for serving to people from higher castes. Literature says that in Lichehavi dynasty, education consisted of learning the rituals and reading religious. This became the privilege of higher caste people and there was no provision of education for lower caste people. Even in Malla era (926-1825 B.S) education was at

par with ruling class people, priest and their families only restricting Sudras for education.

During Rana period (1910) too, when Junga Bahadur established a school for the children of royal families and their favored ones, marginalized and *Dalits* were restricted to be enrolled in that school. But after the first ray of Democracy in 1951, the successive government developed a policy for at least primary education accessible for all (Acharya, 2002) which resulted an access of formal education to all groups including *Dalits* in Nepal. But the deeply rooted caste based discrimination ever threw bar upon getting education for many *Dalits*.

EFFORTS TO EDUCATE DALITS

Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) 1955, under the assistance of United States, without any provision of *Dalit* education, was formed for systematizing education in Nepal which reported to be free and compulsory education and universal literacy in Nepal within 25 years (Acharya, 2002). In cooperation of USAID, the Government of Nepal commenced National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971 which rapidly expanded number of schools and introduced free primary education (Poudel, 2007). After the restoration of Democracy in 1990, National Education Commission (NEC) 1991 was formed which put forth special provision for women, physically, mentally disabled, economically and socially marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Even the new Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1991 guaranteed the rights of education irrespective of caste, gender, ethnic or social strata and paid special attention to education of educationally disadvantaged groups aka *Dalits*. The Ninth Five Year Plan (2055-2059, BS) expanded scholarship in school and higher education to increase access of *Dalit* community in technical education.

The Millennium Development Goals progress report 2005 for Nepal reported three trends related to achieving universal primary education (MDG-2). First, enrolment rates had increased, second, the gender gap had decreased, and third, there had been a steady increase in the literacy rate [Government of Nepal. National Planning Commission and UNDP 2005: 21]. However, increasing enrolment rates occurred unevenly across the country (disadvantaged and marginalized groups fell below the national average) and the enrolment of girls correlated inversely with their age.

The government of Nepal commits itself to Education for All in its National Plan of Action. In the Education For All 2004-2009 Core Document the Ministry of Education and Sports outlines three main objectives: (1) ensuring access and equity in primary education, (2) enhancing quality and relevance of primary education, and (3) improving

efficiency and institutional capacity of schools and institutions at all levels. EFA was in favor of *Dalit*. The goal of EFA clearly emphasized to expand and comprehend the childhood care and education for the vulnerable and disadvantaged children and intends to provide free and compulsory education by 2015.

The government of Nepal developed the policy to give priority on technical vocational training conducted through CTEVT to *Dalit* children. And developed the provision in 9th and 10th five years plan. There was also a provision of *Dalit* inclusion in MoES Teacher Education Project (2003-07): The Government of Nepal planned to train 2500 *Dalit* and Ethnic groups for producing trained teachers which was initially implemented in 11 districts. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Achieving universal primary education is one of the prominent goal MDG that draws all the state mechanism to achieve this goal by 2015.

Government of Nepal started to distribute *Dalit* scholarship in primary level in certain districts from 1994. The provision covered all districts in fiscal year 2004/05. Secondary school level scholarship for *Dalit* student began in 2003. Similarly government developed provision of scholarship for intelligent *Dalit* students and distributed through *Dalit* Bikas Samiti which developed the provision of Higher Education Scholarship for Bachelors and Master degree student and Technical students (Bishwakarma, April 25, 2011). Government launched multifarious type of plans and programs for increasing access to education of all.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main purpose of the study was to explore the subaltern perceptives about the government scholarship to *Dalit* children. It also aims to find out the possibilities of future alternatives to the scholarship programs. The key questions for the study included:

- (1) How did the subalterns perceive the government scholarship program to *Dalit* children?
- (2) What was the perception of non-*Dalit*, teachers, local political leaders, social workers on scholarship?
- (3) What was the role of scholarship for the elimination of illiteracy?
- (4) What were the alternatives to the scholarship program?
- (5) What were the key factors to affect education of *Dalit*?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The overall design of the study was a combination of a survey and ethnographic exploration. The study was primarily based on qualitative data although quantitative data were also used where required. In-depth Interviews, observations and focus group discussions were carried out along with the document analysis and consultation meeting. Purposive sampling method was

used from Kathmandu district from where a *Dalit* settlement was included with a school and 50 respondents representing various stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The key results drawn after the analysis of the data are as follows:

PERCEPTION OF BEHOLDERS TOWARDS *DALIT* SCHOLARSHIP

Dalits have been fighting against the caste based discrimination and they perceived the social hierarchy prevalent in the community since centuries. Economic condition and continuity of their traditional occupation, mirage intra caste discrimination, insufficient effort of *Dalit* community to take quantum jump in educational status, existing hay say type of legal implementation regarding caste based discrimination, religion faith and modern caste beguiling traits were identified some of the factors to force caste based hierarchy there. The situation is in the process of mutation in these days. They regard education as an integral part of their lives and a storm to equalize the status.

PERCEPTION OF *DALITS* CHILDREN AND PARENTS TOWARDS INCENTIVES

The policy of social inclusion promoted the positive perception of subalterns in education. Children said that the scholarship is supportive but not sufficient and the total amount of scholarship is just sufficient for two months. They expected other subsidy like school uniform, stationery, extra books in sufficient level rather than a lump sum amount only. They have also expected the school and home environment in their to be in their favor for their study. Parents also expressed the similar view and said that the amount given is not enough to cover the basic materials for their children's education and they wanted the scholarship to cover all the educational expenses. Both the parents and children have requested for materials support such as school uniform, stationery materials, school meal and other incidental expenses along with the scholarship amount so that no barriers can stop children attending schools.

The situation of *Dalit* children was really very heart touching and there was a need of emotional support in addition to the cash support they are getting. It is important to improve home environment so that it could be supportive for children. *Dalit* children are very interested to continue study but parents' poor economic condition, teacher's dominating behavior and imposed household works are hindering their attendance. In most cases parents are not supportive or there is a tussle in the family.

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS

Teachers visit the *Dalit* community with slogan of *Dalit* children school enrollment. School has got *Dalit*, girls and talent children scholarship which they distribute it in school's annual program. There were no other local scholarships distribution committee formed yet.

According to teaches, the incentive provided is not sufficient, but supportive for stationery management only. Most of parents pay their children's fees at school from the scholarship amount and spend the remaining amount for other purposes.

Regarding the performance of *Dalit* children only few *Dalit* parents come to school and ask for their children's study and about scholarship. The incentive program has increased enrollment of children at the beginning but the regularity is in question and no remarkable changes have been seen after receiving scholarship in the study of *Dalit* children.

Black Hawkins (2007) explains that there are 'at least five factors necessary for educational attainments and they are health, safe staying, enjoying, positive contribution and well economic status'. If a person lacks these factors s/he cannot attain education and *Dalit* belongs to this category which enunciates that several factors hindering education development of *Dalits* and disadvantaged people.

Blending the above versions of the authors and the primary stakeholders of education we can analyze that the main cause of self-exclusion is nothing poverty which caters dependency to upon non *Dalit*. Regular coaching and other subsidy are immensely needed. Everything is extremely rooted with poverty. Lack of favorable family environment forced *Dalit* to work outside from their early childhood. This scholarship program also could not address caste based social hierarchies rather it enforced them to feel themselves as inferior being '*Dalit*' because it was given on the basis of the caste, as historical compensation to educate *Dalit* children. *Dalit* children' perceived scholarship support as latent while the parents were unknown about this scheme. The figure below presents the snap shot view of the respondents about the scholarship program.

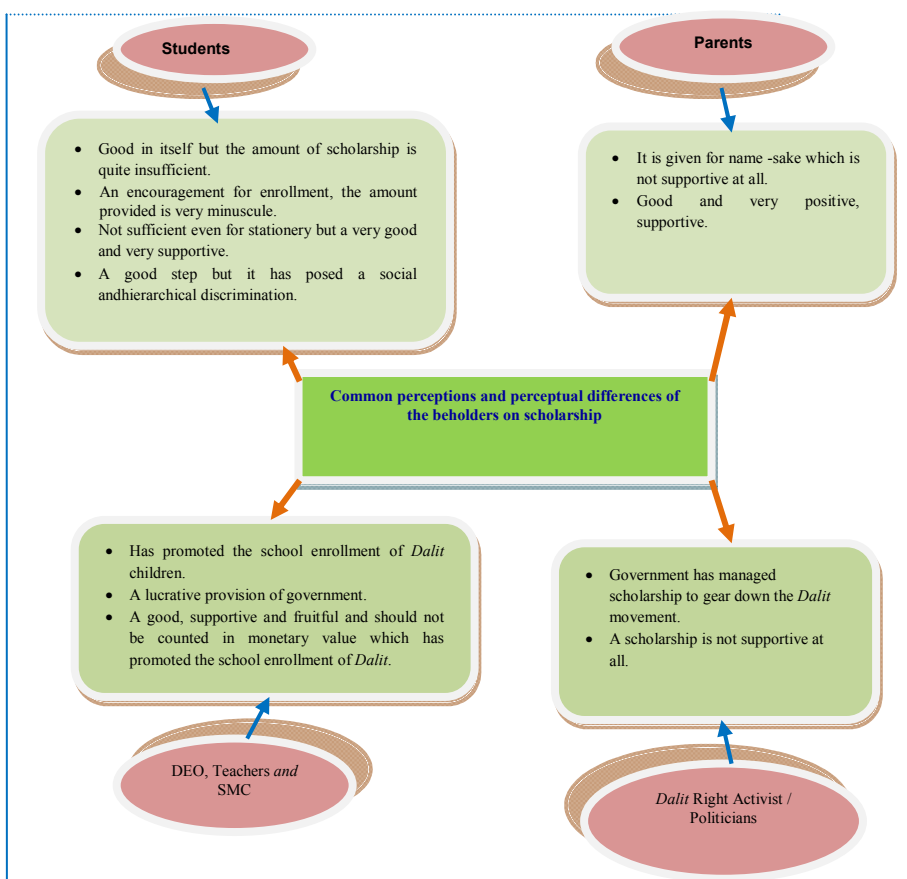
According to the respondents, this scholarship program could not address caste based social hierarchies rather it enforced them to feel themselves as inferior being '*Dalit*' because it was given on the basis of the caste, as historical compensation to educate *Dalit* children. Various forms of discriminative behavior were found yet at school as well as in community as their peer and community people behaved them. Thus, those discriminations should end in order to create morale among the *Dalit* children.

Behaviors and results are two phenomena which are interrelated. Though the discriminative nature can be psychological, they become powerful weapon to stab on emotions of a person. The scholarship was granted to *Dalit* because they were *Dalits* referring to "oppressed" who were socially oppressed, maltreated giving epithet 'untouchable' economically exploited, politically excluded, academically disadvantage or sunk in the swamp, 'broken people' considered 'unclean' put at the

bottom of caste hierarchical order and they were discriminated to access to resources, opportunities, serves, education, modern technology and excluded from the mainstream of development and they were powerless in many ways. Even the peers recognized it that *Dalit* students got scholarship because they were '*Dalits*'. So they perceived it as a form the caste based discrimination rather than historical compensation. *Dalit* children' perceived scholarship support as latent symbolic discrimination.

As Spivak (1998) said, "the subaltern can't speak. There is no virtue in global laundry list with 'women' as pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumstanced tasked which she must not disown with a flourish." *Dalit* of Baadbhnjayag can't speak; the children can't speak up of the psychological disparity they are facing. Listed as 'subaltern' aka '*Dalits*' they are smothered, provided incentives because they are *Dalits*, oppressed class and flourished their education status in socially discriminated and culturally segregated floor which is represented in the version of school teacher and member of school management committee.

It is here noted Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986),"despite the fact that cultural capital is acquired in the home and the school via exposure to a given set of cultural practices and therefore has a social origin—it is liable to be perceived as inborn "talent," and its holder "gifted," as a result of the fact that it is embodied in particular individuals. Moreover, because the school system transforms "inherited" cultural capital into "scholastic"



cultural capital, the latter is predisposed to appear as an individual “achievement.” For example, scholars have demonstrated that middle-class parents typically talk more to infants and young children than do working-class or poor parents. As a result, middle-class children often have larger vocabularies when they enter school, and subsequently score more highly on standardized tests measuring verbal skills (Hart and Risley 1999; Lareau 2003). Nevertheless, teachers, parents, and students themselves are likely to interpret the differences in test scores as a matter of natural talent or individual effort. *Dalit* parents of Baadbhanjyang were found to working class, economically poor who could manage a good environment at home for their children nor the present perception let's give suitable environment in school for study.

Bourdieu's arguments concerning cultural capital were notable because they vociferously challenged the widespread view of modern schooling as a mobility engine that promotes or demotes people through the class structure simply on the basis of their talents and efforts. Indeed, from Bourdieu's highly critical vantage point, modern systems of schooling are far more adept at validating and augmenting cultural capital inherited from the family than they are at encouraging it in children who enter the institution with few or none of the requisite dispositions and skills. Consequently, he maintained, the educational systems of modern societies tend to channel individuals towards class destinations that largely (but not wholly) mirror their class origins. Moreover, they tend to elicit acceptance of this outcome (i.e. legitimating), both from those who are most privileged by it and those who are disfavored by it (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [1970]). The incentives provided to them could hardly address these issues as well.

Politicians and *Dalit* rights activists perceived and mentioned that the amount of scholarship support program as ‘highly insufficient’ and ‘bare hallucination’ to translate social inclusion policy into action. In fact it had not addressed the issues of *Dalit*'s livelihood. According to them the *Dalit* movement is an apex, and the day for achievement is very near in which state had to compensate these so called untouchable by Hindu Varna system, discriminated in the society and excluded from social, economic, political, educational and religious life and also from the national mainstream *Dalit* people one day, which the government never wanted to see. Without addressing the issues of *Dalit* livelihood educational development would be mere a day dream. *Dalits* of Baadbhanjyang were facing hand to mouth problem, ill health, extreme hegemony, discriminated which must be addressed in a solid way first, then only education development would be possible. Therefore, they had hallucinated *Dalit* by means education incentive program.

We found *Dalits'* perspective similar to Bourdieu who argued that, above and beyond economic factors, “cultural habits and...dispositions inherited from” the families are fundamentally important to school success (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979 [1964], 14). *Dalits* who were deprived from education for centuries, though they to some extent feel education an important part of their live, family environment was not favorable for them. The family environment was either cloudy, where drinking alcohol and disturbing in studios environment was found as a latent culture of *Dalits* of Baadbhnjayang-1, Kathmandu.

Bourdieu further argued that cultural capital exists in three distinct forms (1986). In its “embodied” form, cultural capital is a “competence” or skill that cannot be separated from its “bearer” (that is, the person who “holds” it). As such, the acquisition of cultural capital necessarily presupposes the investment of time devoted to learning and/or training. For example, a college student who studied history has gained a competence which, because it is highly valued in some institutional settings, becomes an embodied form of cultural capital. Additionally, Bourdieu suggests that the objects themselves may function as a form of cultural capital, insofar as their use or consumption presupposes a certain amount of embodied cultural capital. For example, a philosophy text is an “objectified” form of cultural capital since it requires prior training in philosophy to understand. Finally, in societies with a system of formal education, cultural capital exists in an “institutionalized” form. This is to say that when the school certifies individuals’ competencies and skills by issuing credentials, their embodied cultural capital takes on an objective value. Thus, for example, since persons with the same credentials have a roughly equivalent worth on the labor market, educational degrees can be seen to be a distinct form of cultural capital. Because they render individuals interchangeable in this fashion, Bourdieu also suggests that institutionalization performs a function for cultural capital analogous to that performed by money in the case of economic capital.

Blending Bourdieu's argument that we discussed above with the *Dalits* of Badganjyang-1 it was found that cultural capital for the creation of learning world was not existed as in its “embodied” form and object from but cultural capital existed in an “institutionalized” form as competencies and skills of *Dalit* children was found only average Degree in their performance.

Spivak's Subaltern (1988) considers the third item on this list-the ante of situational indeterminacy these careful historians presuppose as they grapple with the question, Can the subaltern speak? "Taken as a whole and in the abstract this ... category ... was heterogeneous in its composition and thanks to the uneven character of regional economic and

social developments, differed from area to area. The same class or element which was dominant in one area ... could be among the dominated in another. This could and did create many ambiguities and contradictions in attitudes and alliances especially among the lowest strata of the rural gentry, impoverished landlords, peasants and upper middle class peasants all of whom belonged, ideally speaking, to the category of people or subaltern classes." *Dalit* children of Baadbhanjyang were dominated at society and school too. They had perception that they were getting scholarship because they were *Dalit* and dominated and even their peer perceived them *Dalit* and dominated in latent form.

Spivak's *Can Subaltern Speak* (1988) also articulates that for the "true" subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no representable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subject's itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual. How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak?

Dalit of Baadbhanjyang received scholarship but couldn't speak for their further improvement. It was found that largely insufficient scholarship program was in latent form of caste based discrimination. They were getting scholarship because they are *Dalit*. So they could raise their voice for alternatives which should be looked for by other intellectual. Here, as Spivak said *Dalits* are seduced in name of scholarship too.

Despite of all the aforesaid discussions, my informants foresaw scholarship support as a pathfinder for elimination of illiteracy and achieve the millennium goals. Perceived alternatives to scholarship program. Since the present scholarships are not enough, the beholders put forth some alternatives too. Local development policy has been incorporated since some a last decade and at local each VDC and Municipality certain amount of budget is allocated which is spent for village or municipal infrastructure works, and some software development work. Therefore, certain amount of budget should be allocated for the educational development of *Dalit* and marginalized children from local level as alternative of scholarship program at ground or local level. Frequent *Dalit* parents-teachers interaction program would be quite fruitful to develop friendly relationship with parents. Coordinating with school management committee, local social activist, business person, they would manage to create a special fund and launch *Dalit* scholarship program local level as well. These would be the alternatives program at

local level. Such type of programs would be launched at district and at national level too.

CONCLUSION

Nepal is a multi-caste, multi-lingual, multi socio-cultural and geographically diverse country inhabited by various caste/ethnic group. Along with these diversities, there are structural inequalities in socio-cultural, economical, and educational arena based on the caste, ethnicity and gender. In the case of *Dalit*, the society is stratified and discriminatory due to the practice of caste hierarchy. *Dalit* is a community at the bottom of caste hierarchy. Practice of Caste Based Discrimination (CBD) like untouchability has compelled them to live in a hostile environment subject to deprivation of all kinds like social, political, economic and educational disparities. *Dalit* are socially oppressed, maltreated giving epithet 'untouchable' economically exploited, politically excluded, academically disadvantage or sunk in the swamp, 'broken people' considered 'unclean' put at the bottom of caste hierarchical order and they are discriminated to access to resources, opportunities, services, education, modern technology and excluded from the mainstream of development and they are powerless in many ways who have faced numerous problems for getting education. Overall condition of *Dalit* in Nepal is miserable as they are exploited and excluded from the mainstream of development. From this study it is concluded that the beholders inculcated positive ideas towards education because of the scholarship support program but they had challenges of livelihood and deeply rooted social stigma to be addressed.

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