

Ex-Haruwa and Their Educational Struggle of the Musahar Community at Siraha

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Abstract

Human agency has an enormous capacity to transform individual livelihood strategies as well as cultivate positive attitudes, collective action, and hope for the betterment of the whole community. In this paper, we argue that 'Musahars agency' (ability to act in spite of constraints) acts as a catalyst for the increment of educational status of the community and school education on the other round cultivate dynamic person for a range of social transformation. The ex-Haruwa-Charuwa and educated youths have been conducting a series of educational campaigns including school establishment. Their campaigns succeeded in terms of awareness-raising, decreasing self-humiliation, and inculcating hope for betterment among the Musahars. Because of political-economic, and caste-based marginalization, they were deprived as well as denied educational access. Few of them struggled to gain a school education and their constraints strengthen their capacity to speak out, mobilize and act collectively. The paper tried to explain the formation and mobilization of the Musahar agency for the collective empowerment of the community. We employed participatory observation, key informant interviews, and case study methods to collect information. In spite of structural constraints, poverty, and caste-based discrimination, the Musahar youths and activists succeeded to cultivate educational optimism. A separate school for the Dalits was established to attract all the Dalits into school education. Their campaigns were recognized when a large number of the Musahar students passed school-level education. Their agentive acts are lessons for the marginalized communities to transform education as well as political-economic activities and social well-being.

Keywords: Musahars, Haruwa-Charuwa, campaigns, agency, education.

Introduction

The Musahars have a supposedly long but unrecorded and not properly researched history in the country. Historically, their livelihood strategies have been closely attached to land and labor¹⁷ but ironically legal control and ownership of land and natural resources were detached from them (Giri, 2012). There were numerous stories of educational sabotage of Musahars students by landlords and teachers in the school. Perpetual class repetition, discouraging in the classroom, discrimination of marking, and demotion of position in the exam and classroom are micro-politics of social reproduction of wage labor by teachers (Giri, 2018). Land and factory owners applied hegemonic domination. After the revival of

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¹⁷Soil cutting, formation of arable land, pond construction, and agricultural labor are their traditional occupations

democracy in 1990 and the people movements of 2006/7, some of the Musahars started individual and collective educational campaigns in Siraha. The increase in Musahars literacy rates in the post-2000s made possible the emergence of a new jobs market or alternative livelihood opportunities and civil society facilitated dimensions of caste relationships. With the coordination of different agencies, Nepal RisikulSaday Welfare Society, Musahars' organization, has been conducting literacy campaigns at the Musahar settlements in the district since its inception in 2000. Society facilitated the establishment of a new school for the deprived school kids. The society also coordinated to join Musahars students in private schools free of cost. With coordination with funding agencies and individuals, it has been providing economic and material support to the school-going children (Giri, 2018). Because of multiple factors of motivation, large numbers of Musahars have been studying in school and more than 100 students have passed a secondary level in the district in 2012. Most educated youths started jobs in different institutions. Then, the educated youths started educational campaigns, activities related to the elimination of caste-based domination, participation in village politics, inter-caste marriage, and own behavior change in the community. Most of the educated youths started new professions rather than following hereditary caste-based occupations. Some of them started hotel restaurants which are completely different professions to rupture practices of untouchability and commensality. Therefore, education is not a unidimensional tool, rather it set of lived experiences that will differ from community to community.

Research Questions and Objectives

Literacy itself does have an agentive force to change the community. The ex-Haruwa-Charuwa started educational campaigns for the transformation of the Musahar community. Why does past Haruwa-Charuwa start educational campaigns in spite of social and cultural constraints? How did they organize the Musahars for the support of educational campaigns? What are the socio-cultural forces to develop the Musahar agency? What are institutional and structural difficulties in the process of campaigns? How did the school and educational campaigns transform the Musahars?

The main central objective is to examine the agentive capacity of the Musahar youths and ex-Huruwa-Charuwa. We are interested to explore relations between school education and civil society engagements facilitated not only transformed from untouchability and hereditary occupation towards the new occupation, inter-caste dining, and inter-caste marriage but also cultivate positive and agentive will power among the Musahars. This paper attempts to discuss the educational campaigns and activities of the Musahars and their motivational factors.

Methodology

Key informants' interviews, observations, and case study methods are employed to collect data from the field. Methodologically, anthropologists generally rely on ethnography, entailing not just interviewing, mapping, and other conventional qualitative research methods, but also, participant observation-long term residence in the research community during which the ethnographer observes people in their daily life activities in their own time and space. This research is based on the historical ethnographic method (Comaroff

and Comaroff, 1992; Shah, 2004: 12) in which the local historical process informed the Musahars' response to a total of their educational activities. It is within this theoretical and anthropological tradition that we analyze the Musahars' social participation and activism in Siraha. Ethnography provides the link from the past to the present. Ethnography is current history that is not only informed by the past but something that will also indicate an outline of the next emerging moment (Holmberg, 2008). We explore why particular individuals or household members succeed in education and social transformation and why others are not in both processes. The unit of analysis is issues of the Musahars agency, or their "culturally constrained capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2004:54). How agentive act supports both educational and social transformation. The first author (Madhu) has carried out extensive fieldwork, observations of different contexts, and collection of data in different years from 2013 to 2018. The first author used 'I' to refer to himself alone when he interacted with the Musahars, and Tamangs interlocutors in the field. He lived in the Musahar community at Jamdaha during his PhD fieldwork in 2012-2014, and occasional visits in 2018-2019 in the study area. Field-based information and contexts were collected by the researcher. The focus is not only on education processes and programs but also on describing the processes of social transformation i.e. how the educated youths played roles in the change in everyday life.

The second author (Prof. KC) has organized and analyzed the information by connecting interdisciplinary literature. She has read the draft article as an objective reader and revised based on data. The final revised version was prepared by both authors.

Theoretical Approach

The quest for social change is constituted by processes, shared by many active people and communities across the world today that involve sometimes significant shifts in individuals and communities. This study can be found in a multiplicity of objectives and aspirations: improved livelihood choices, economic wellbeing or prosperity, enhanced political-economic status, or social security, to name a few. The possibilities for the social transformation of the marginalized community are unlimited. Few individuals and their collective moves could have significant impacts on the life of the whole community. Sherry Ortner remarks that social actors activate their ideas to transform the systems that produce them (Ortner, 1989:14). A human agency that is the product of the structure can change the system of agency production. Emphasizing the processual nature of any 'lived hegemony', Raymond Williams reminds us that 'agency does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continuously been renewed, recreated defended, and modified. It is also continuously resisted, and limited challenged by pressures (Williams, 1977: 112).

The human agency acts in different ways in different contexts. Agency is a concept that is itself context-dependent. It is tied up with the culturally and historically variable notions of personhood that can be influenced by such things as capitalism and development endeavors. Robert Desjarlais argues that human agency in capitalism is a political-economic oriented action of the people (Desjarlais, 1997: 205). Laura Ahearn argued that human agency is attached to culturally and historically variable 'notions of personhood'(Ahearn, 2004). The development of personhood can be inclined by such

things as capitalism, development endeavors, education, gender, and opportunities. Anthony Giddens (1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Marshall Sahlins (1985), and Sherry Ortner (1995) are some good examples using of a creative agency for socio-cultural change. Although some scholars use agency as a synonym for resistance (Scott, 1990), it is important to differentiate agency from resistance moves (Ortner, 1995). Education represents pathways of learning and searches for other possibilities for a better future. In this regard, education, or the certificates, credentials, and other forms of symbolic capital that accompany different learning pathways, can be construed as a type of active human agency (Ahaern, 2004:57). She argued that school-based education was fundamental for the transformation of marriage and livelihood strategies of the Magar girls in Palpa (Ahaern, 2004). Laura Ahaern (2004) indicates that literacy does not always bring with it power but agentive act or agency-enhanced capacity to act in spite of a social constraint environment. In a similar vein, Jack Goody argued the unpredictability of literacy power (Goody, 2000:1). After the revival of democracy and freedom from the Haruwa-Charuwa form of labor, the Musahars agency mobilized its capacity in education and the betterment of the community. Based on this theoretical and methodological approach, the Musahars' educational activities, educational agency, socio-cultural consequences, and transformations are presented in the paper.

Findings and Discussion

Educational Struggle of the Musahars

Field observations and reflections of Madhu Giri, one of the authors presented here: I was heading to my field from the road head to the inner village named Bastipur in Siraha District. I reached a government primary school named Janta Primary School at the very beginning of the settlement. It was about 2 o'clock on Wednesday, March 5, 2011. There were 17 students out of the classroom. Four women were scolding the teacher because one of their sons was beaten by a Yadhav student. I was curious to know the background of women and school. I put down my backpack and asked a man (Rambihari Mandal) about the cause of women's irritation with the school. He said, " One of the Musahar boys was beaten by a high caste boy. Teachers did not care because the victim belonged to the Musahar community and the wrongdoer was a Yadhav boy. The teacher closed the school and declared that the school was over. The Musahar boy went crying home and told all the stories. Then, the Musahar women came to report but the teacher did not care about them. Therefore, women keep on scolding teachers and students". He said that Musahars do not dear to quarrel alone. This type of beating case of Musahars student has been recurring for teachers and students in the school. The beating was one of the causes the Musahar students did not like to come to school. Ramnarayan Sada, a Musahar education activist, argued that beating has both physical and psychological pain of humiliation among the victims. Scholars argue that humiliation is the experience of degrading, wounding, and suffering (Geetha, 2009). Such humiliations in schools were fundamentally observed in educational settings of the Musahar community in Siraha. The Musahar students have been victims of humiliation.

When I observed the event, we questioned James Scott's argument that weak people primarily employ hidden forms of resistance in "Weapons of the Weak" (Scott, 1985). The argument is that dominant people changed their strategies of resistance with the changes in power dimensions in society. With the emergence of civil society non-formal education programs, right-based orientations, and open market economic activities, traditional sources, and locations of power has been shifting from higher caste and land possession to civil society, educational agencies, and political parties at the local level since a couple of decades. This shift makes a significant difference in the strategies of cultural resistance against domination among marginalized people. Because of the implementation of the government educational policy 'education for all', Musahars students are provided nominal scholarships but in practice, the school administration cheated many of the students. Now, parents of Musahars students were aware of the educational support provided by the government. After realizing perpetual cheating from teachers, Nebatiya Sada (from the Musahar community) was interested to be a member of the school management committee. Nebatiya said that without changing the educational status of the Musahars, the reproduction of pauperism among the Musahars could not be eliminated. In spite of the discouraging environment of the school and the poverty of the family, few Musahar youth are successful in education. They have acted creatively and started new strategies of livelihood.

Chhedi Sada, a politically active Musahar youth failed 3 times in grade five. In spite of regular failure, he did not leave school. Later he came to know that he failed not because he was weak but because teachers intentionally gave minimum marks. The political and economic reason for his failure was teachers including their community need agro-labor. The repeated failure in the same class was a powerful tool to sabotage marginalized kids in the school. He continued school in spite of teachers' discouragement and demotion as the result. Fortunately, he passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) on his first attempt, and then he has been applying to many offices but none of them called him back for work. He dropped out in class eleven and joined politics under the Tarai-based political party. He explained more education didn't work. Musahar needs power, network, and capital to make educational degrees effective. His case is a good example to show educational infrastructure generates political and power consciousness.

Gopi Sada (22 years) was reading in class 12 in Bastipur higher secondary school in Bastipur. His father was common Musahar. He has a different story of educational success. Because of the severe punishment of a teacher, he could not hear properly. Many times he was discouraged to drop school. The school teachers also suggested to my father to send me to Punjab with other workers in the community. His father tried to drop school by sending him on wage labor in the village. His family even did not realize that Gopi's ear problem was the teachers' punishment. In the beginning class, the Musahar students did not understand the language of the texts. They were severely beaten by some teachers. His family moved to different places time and again for childhood. He dropped out of school many times and again he joined at the time of examination. Daily wage labor was the main source of livelihood for his family. If he did not go to earn food, other family

members looked down and sometimes did not serve food for absentee labor. These all problems were faced by Gopi. He used to pay school fees by going wage labor. Family members and school teachers encouraged them to go to Punjab and other places for wage labor but he did not leave school completely. When he was in class seven, his father brought a milking buffalo. It was an additional work burden initially for Gopi. His sister also continued school. Social workers and educated Musahars of the district appreciated the family for educating children. Gradually his father also realized the value of education. Then, his father started giving four glasses of milk per day to the headmaster of the school. Though he was from the Yadav community of Saptari district, he accepted milk from the Musahar. Generally, high castes accept milk and reject water from Dalits. When the headmaster got milk regularly, he encouraged and cared for both Gopi and his sister. Both of them passed class regularly. But financial problems compelled us to leave school classes time and again. Gopi told, "When I was in 10 my sister went to wage-earning for school fees, dress, stationery, and other expenditure and when she was in class 10, I supported her the same way". He said that he promised to show Musahar children can study as much as other caste groups but the Musahars will be more confused after successful education because they were uncertain and in the mist.

If Musahars send their children to school, they do so despite these obstacles. Somewhere in their resolve to educate the young generation is a plain calculation that it indeed pays. But the conclusion of a development worker is invariably the other way round that a Musahar does not value education. How do policymakers then know the Musahar and make comprehensive sense of their being? How can non-Musahars find them out of the heap of cultural stereotypes under which they are condemned to live? The significant point is that the dominant upper caste mentality ensures, through its daily discrimination that a Dalit remains a Dalit no matter how educated s/he gets. The repercussions of this demoralizing attitude are yet to be fully admitted and corrected.

From Haruwa to Educational Campaigner

Penetration of political parties in the Musahar community could be realized when a group of Haruwa-Charwa labor decided to relinquish existing patron-client relations in different villages in Siraha. At least 20 MusaharHaruwa laborers from Majaura, Tamasuiya, and Sathiyon villages on the southern border decided to be free from the system. They started campaign anti-Haruwa-Charuwa labor campaign in the three villages in the mid-1990s. This campaign was secretly planned as Scott's notion of hidden transcripts (Scott, 1985). This campaign was challenging in itself because of limited livelihood options for Haruwas and landlords could further exploit if they knew the planning. Landlords realized the hidden resistance of Haruwas when many of them refused to continue patron-client relations and it was difficult to find new Haruwa in the area. KapileswarSada (61 year), one of the freed-Haruwas from Nabarajpur Gaupalika Majhaura, decided to divert the campaign into educational awareness and opportunities for marginalized communities in his village because he has seen that his grandchildren and other Musahars' kids did not go to school. He decided to invest the rest of his time in the educational empowerment of his

caste because he thought that educational deprivation was a key factor in the perpetuation of multidimensional marginalization.

With the support of educated Musahars and the moral support of other Dalits, he established Shree Dalit Utpidit Janjati Primary School at Majhaura in 2001. According to Kapileswar, there were difficult to get moral support from the local elites and government authorities because local elites felt self-humiliation of doing nothing for the social welfare. Government authorities did not believe such an appreciative task could be accomplished by a Musahar. Kapileswar told, "It was an open challenge to landlords and higher caste people because they intended to look at us as uneducated-unemployed stock labor so that they could employ us on their farm at any time they need. The politics of discouraging Musahar kids in public school was politics of perpetual pauperization." He collected grain (husked rice) from each household of the Musahar and Dom communities to pay salaries to the teachers. After two years of the lobby and regular pressure from the district education authority, the school was registered as a government school. Then, a teacher was also posted by the district authority. Again the registration of the school was canceled because of the pressure of high caste villagers. They argued that the school should not be named Dalit Janjati. There was another school at the high caste settlement. Their question was, "why do they need a separate school close to another school?" After a year of registration, it was dismissed but Musahar activists and campaigners kept on running the school by applying the previous strategies. They perpetuated processes for the reestablishment of the legal status of the school. In 2003, the school again got registered and it has been running well. In 2012, there are 4 classrooms, and 130 students from Musahar and Dom communities. Out of four teachers, two were appointed by the government, and the rest two were supported by the local government. Kapileswar said to me, "We are successful".

The educational campaign of Kapileswar was published in Nepali Manch Monthly in 2061 BS

कपिलेश्वर : अन्नबाली उठाउँदै विद्यालय चलाउँदै

जीविका सँगै धाना उक्काको लागि काम गरिरहेका कपिलेश्वर जिल्लाको एउटा गाविसमा ४४ वर्षको कपिलेश्वर पनि उनैजस्तै रोजगारमा छन् । यो गाविसमा कृषिप्रधान गाविसको रूपमा विकास भएको छ । कपिलेश्वर जिल्लाको एउटा गाविसमा कृषिप्रधान गाविसको रूपमा विकास भएको छ । कपिलेश्वर जिल्लाको एउटा गाविसमा कृषिप्रधान गाविसको रूपमा विकास भएको छ ।

कपिलेश्वर जिल्लाको एउटा गाविसमा कृषिप्रधान गाविसको रूपमा विकास भएको छ । कपिलेश्वर जिल्लाको एउटा गाविसमा कृषिप्रधान गाविसको रूपमा विकास भएको छ । कपिलेश्वर जिल्लाको एउटा गाविसमा कृषिप्रधान गाविसको रूपमा विकास भएको छ ।

दालि सस्ती

मुकुन्दराम शर्मा

Education Campaign
A B C
Ethnic Campaign

नेपालीमान्च, फागुन-२०६१
१५ फागुन २०६१
१५ फागुन २०६१

Source: Photo taken by the researcher from Nepali Manch in 2012.

To extend the education campaigns all over the district, more than 150 Musahar Sudhar Samitis¹⁸ were mobilized to control dropout students and the regularity of school-going kids. One of the responsibilities of the Samitis was to encourage school enrolment, distribution of used textbooks for new students, and coordinate scholarships for needy students in both government and private schools. The Samitis frequently meet parents who have not sent their kids to school as well as the parents whose kids are dropped out. This campaign improved school enrolment status but it was not fully successful as its result was expected. He shared with researchers that his team kept in the lobby with private schools for a full scholarship to the selected Musahar students. So far as his information, 43 Musahar students had been studying free education in private schools around Lahan.

When we met Kapileswar at Lahan, he looked no different from ordinary Musahar. He told that he was not tired to aware the community. He appointed a youth leader in each settlement to observe the regularity of the Musahar students. He said that he visited and counseled parents of absentee and dropped-out students. His 'capacity to act in spite of constraint' (Ahearn, 2004) made him different from other Musahars. He was not educated but he came to open his eyes as a lyricist invoked at the beginning. He said to me that he was influenced by the humanitarian task of his ancestors Dina-Bhadri (their contributions to the Musahar were analyzed in earlier chapters). He was also interested to keep his name alive among the Musahars. The idea of Naam rakhane (keeping a name or earning a name) has multilayered value in society. Saubhagya Shah appropriately analyzed such an agentive inflection in terms of memo reality (Shah, 2004). Kapileswar said that he was old enough and the rest of his life was for the marginalized people. His contribution was noted by people and social institutions in the district. Sabari Sankalpa Samaj awarded him for the educational contribution of the Musahars on the occasion of Mato Diwas (Soil Day) in 2016.

To extend the education campaigns all over the district, more than 250 Musahar Sudhar Samitis were mobilized to control dropout students and the regularity of school-going kids. One of the responsibilities of the Samitis was to encourage school enrolment, distribution of used textbooks for new students, and coordinate scholarships for needy students in both government and private schools. The Samitis frequently meet parents who have not sent their kids to school as well as the parents whose kids are dropped out. This campaign improved school enrolment status but it was not fully successful as its result was expected. Lobbying with private schools for scholarships, 43 Musahar students have been studying free education in private schools around Lahan.

¹⁸ Musahar Improvement Committee was formed by Nepal RisikulMusahar welfare Society in many Musahar settlements for improvement of own Attitude and Behavioural Change (ABC campaign as they named it) in 2012. This forum has been utilized for multiple purposes by activists later.

Act of the Musahar Agency

The duality of caste behaviors still exists in this area. In private spheres, all castes people eat food-water together but in Public spheres (feast) Musahars including other Dalits are not allowed to inter-dine with other castes. Tarai caste groups are much more severe on purity and pollution in the public sphere because their caste assembly fined them if caste codes were publicly violated. For instance, Ahodhi Sada, 24 years educated Musahar of Jamdaha, was invited to the feast by Tarai middle caste in January 2012. He told:

I entered a prohibited area for the Musahars with my high caste classmate. My classmate and other many high caste people dined together in private spheres many times. My classmate was secretly ordered not to eat with me by his parents. My classmate left me without information. I dined with middle-caste older people because they could not recognize me but the food servers noticed my presence. I was trying to dismantle the public-private dual behaviors of touchable castes. After the feast, I return home. Early morning, the host came into my home and complained about my presence in the restricted area during the feast. The host was fined by caste authorities and guests for their dishonor in the public sphere. Luckily, the host did not fine me because he dined with my family members many times. It was my first attempt at public resistance against caste-based discrimination.

He argued that if he was fined for the pollution of the whole feast, he would appeal the case and call human rights activists. This kind of empowerment seems among the educated youths and it was the educational opportunity made touchable -untouchable closer and agreeable condition of inter dine. He is employed in an NGO as a program supervisor for marginalized groups. Because of the generation and education gap contradictions appeared among the youths and parents.

Shivsaran Sada (23) got married to a Newar so-called higher caste girl at Golbazar. Both of them were classmates and they fell in love when they were in class 10. After SLC graduation, they decided to elope because their marriage would not be acceptable in general conditions. They went to Bihar for a few months and the girl side filed a case in the name of girl trafficking. When they returned, both of them confessed their marriage with their own consent in front of the administration. Both of them are employed in an NGO working for educational activities. Now they are living happily. Most of the educated youths of the Musahars are employed in off-farm professions. There are many similar inter-caste marriage cases in the villages of Tarai among the educated youths.

Because of education campaigns over the last decade, many Musahars youth completed university-level education. Some of them got the opportunity to teach in private schools and campuses. Ram Sufal Sada, one of the most successful students from the Musahar community, has been teaching master' Degree courses at Lahan Campus since 2011. He has been teaching Musahars children free of cost in the morning and evening. Besides

formal education, he visits Musahars settlement and gets information about educational problems faced by students at school. He tried to solve them by visiting many schools and management meetings. He told a series of Musahars discrimination cases in schools and some successful cases of conflict management. After his attitude changed the orientation of many school teachers toward Musahars students, the number of Musahars students increased, and decrease of dropout rate in many government schools of Siraha. He is committed to the educational transformation of the community. He is hopeful for the optimistic future of the Musahars through education.

Hira Mijar Sada was accused of polluting public well water by a Tamang family on May 3, 2012. She was battered and beaten up severely. Arun Sada, the husband of Hira, a high school graduate, said that this was not the first case of dehumanization in the name of water pollution. This time Arun was in a dilemma because he was working as a Musahar rights activist in an NGO. He has educated Musahar to resist discrimination. He decided to publish the case in mass media. Uneducated Musahars have neither access to media nor dear to take out the case. Popular national and local media covered the case as a violation of human rights. Perpetrators were pressured to settle the case at the local level. The perpetrators apologized to the victim. This case is the hallmark of the victory of the Musahars over the dominant group in terms of discrimination.

After the initiation of the educational campaign by KapileSOR and the Musahar youths, admission and attendance of the Musahar students increased. Research shows that the number of students from Musahar community was significant in lower grades but their number was gradually decreasing in higher grades (Giri, 2018). Normally, as school teachers argued, the pattern of *Musahar* students' number was decreasing when the class level was increasing. We were interested to observe the regularity of the Musahar students within a year. The highest and lowest number of attendance day per month was noted. We found that the average attendance day was slightly decreased in higher class but the number of students was significantly decreased. Similarly, dropout rate was higher in the primary level in comparison to the secondary level. The higher the class and lesser the number of students (except in class 7) was the important point of observation. When observed the underlying structures of the dropout and high absence rates of the Musahar students, number of political economic factors played roles in the result. The primary factor was that the school education did not quickly contribute to their livelihood. The school environment was not favorable to the worldview of the *Musahars*. Whatever they learned in school was never used in their home and community. Nonetheless, ex-Haruwa started a campaign to send their children to school. They realized that education was the main tool to empower their family and the community. KapileSOR shared that the establishment of Dalit School was not only access to school education for the Musahar but also pride of the community.

Conclusion

While we have only managed to scratch the surface of the complexities involved in an educational struggle and the intended and unintended consequences of education, we hope

we have nevertheless provided a glimpse of some of the ways in which these cases (marriage, schooling campaign, active resistance of untouchability, sabotage of students) are situated interactional context and all of which are embedded with various educational development discourse. The ideas of active agency through cultural construction and various struggle of schooling the Musahar kids and proactive capability against caste discrimination are initiated with the leadership of educated youths. Therefore, we reiterate our earlier argument that school education has facilitated not only a shift away from social reproduction of untouchability towards inter-dining and intermarriage but also a change in how villagers conceive of their ability to act and how they attribute responsibility for events- commensality, public resistance, and off-farm livelihood. Various development projects were targeted to improve the educational status of the Musahar communities but they felt disappointed at last. The paper examines how the active Musahar agency plays a significant role in the upliftment of the educational status of the Musahars and what are micro constraints of access to education among the Musahars. The micro-politics of neighboring elites and teachers squashed the creative possibilities of Musahars' transformation long time.

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