

Social Inclusion of Madheshi Community in Nation Building

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1. INTRODUCTION

Madheshi community in spite of having a long history of origin and habitat within the present day Nepal is practically considered outsiders and they have been mostly marginalized and face exclusion in active political participation, administration and governance, decision-making and policy planning, and moreover, they face serious humanitarian problem i.e. of their true identity in their own native land. The Madheshi people feel highly discriminated and has almost lost 'the sense of belongingness to this nation'. Since the early 1990s, Madheshi people have organized community groups and formed societies or organizations for the cause of Madheshi community. The issues of Madhesh and Madheshi community have been time and again raised by Jha (1997), Lawoti (2001), Shah (2002) Yadav (2003), Gupta (2004) and few others. Many Madheshi people feel that the entire Madhesh region and its inhabitants do not practically exist in Nepal's consciousness and certainly in the consciousness of much of the outside world. Lawoti (2001) reported a very low level of Madheshi people (11.2%) in the integrated index of governance with none in culture, academic and professional leadership.

The exclusion of Madheshi community from the national mainstream, which shares 32% of the country's total human resources, has been the negative factor for the sound economic development in the country. Moreover, the spirit of harmonious partnership between the two groups of Pahadi and Madheshi community has never been developed. Socio-political and economic inclusion of Madhesh, initially considered as 'bread basket' and the major source of revenue generation, and the Madheshi people is what the country needs for building a more inclusive nation based on democratic norms and processes. This paper analyses the current status of Madhesh and Madheshi community, the emerging socio-political and economic issues, and recommends relevant research agenda on the issues of social inclusion and nation building. All the issues discussed here are data based; there are many minor issues talked very often but data and information related to those issues are not available.

2. TARAI REGION

2.1 Tarai Districts

The term Tarai is of recent origin describing the plain areas on the southern side of Siwalik range in South Asia. Tarai region, situated in the Outer Himalayan Zone, has been created by orogenic activity as well as by alluvial action in the Siwaliks and the Himalayan ranges (Spate and Learmonth, 1967). It has unique ecological features having tropical to subtropical climatic conditions. In Nepal, Tarai is geographically divided into 'Outer Tarai' and 'Inner Tarai', the later is also called '*Vitri Madhes*' – the low lying river valleys north of Siwaliks.

In 1963, government established 75 districts in the country and the previously 17 districts in Tarai were restructured into 20 districts which also included part of Siwalik range and hills. District demarcation was not based on ecological or social basis, which could have then included only the outer Tarai and *Vitri Madhes* area. All the Tarai districts have varying proportion of Siwalik and mid mountain areas, the highest being 77.5% in Nawalparasi district, 51.5% in Chitwan district, 50.8 % in Banke district and 41% in Kailali district to the lowest 8.9% in Sunsari district and about 7% in Jhapa district; the average being 32.4% for the 20 districts.

It appears that the well calculated government decision including part of hills in Tarai district aimed at gradually increasing the dominance of hill people and their distinctive culture, practices, language and architectural style of the hill region in the plains. Gaige (1975) reported the hill culture and more flexible social traditions and practices penetrating the plain region where the people practiced vegetarianism, observing dietary restrictions and considering inter-caste marriage as social taboo. The inclusion of hill areas in Tarai districts increased the number of hill people in the district reducing chances of plain people to play decisive role in political arena and the governance system in their own area. It also made the holistic planning very difficult for the Tarai districts, which since 1963 are ecologically heterogeneous.

2.2 Area and Population

The total land area in the 20 Tarai districts is 34,109 sq km which accounts for 23.1% of the country's total land area (Table 1). In 2001, 48.4% of the country's total population of 23.2 million lived in Tarai districts with a density of 329 persons/sq km. Tarai plain and *Vitri Madhesh* together covers 15.6% of the country's total area.

Table 1 Land Area in 20 Tarai Districts

Ecological area	Sq km	Percentage	% of Nepal
Mid mountain and Siwalik	11,041	34.2	
Tarai plain including <i>Vitri Madhesh</i>	23,068	67.6	
Total	34,109	100	23.1

Source: ISRSC (2004)

Note: Population for Nepal in 2001 was 23.151 million and 11.212 million for Tarai districts.

Country's total area is 147,484 sq km.

3. MADHESH AND MADHESHI

3.1 Madhesh

The term Madhes implies to the Gangetic plain and the *Vitri Madhesh* area bordering India on the southern side and spreading north up to the foothill of Siwalik range. The word Madhesh is derived from Sanskrit word 'Madhyadesh' which extends from the foothill of the Himalayan region in the north to the Vidhyachal mountain in the south situated in central India. Though the terms Madhesh and Tarai are used synonymously, it is important to note that Madhesh does not cover all parts of Tarai districts; it excludes Siwalik and mid mountain areas. Madhesh is a well defined ecological region, which is approximately 885 km long from its western boundary, the Mahakali River, to its eastern boundary, the Mechi River while its average width along its entire east-west axis is only 26 km varying from 4 km to 52 km.

3.2 Madheshi

Madheshis are the non-hill origin people living in Madhesh region. The Madheshi community is composed of the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Baisya and Dalits, and indigenous Janjati ethnic groups, other native tribes and Muslims. Gaige (1975) used the terms 'hill people' and 'plains people' living in Tarai districts, and defined a) "plains people are those who speak plains languages as their mother tongues or first language, whether they were born or live in the plains or hills"; the plains languages

being Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali, and dialects of these languages used by Janjati groups, and b) “hill people whose mother tongue or first language is one that predominates in the hill region of Nepal such as Nepali, Newari, Magar, Gurung, Rai and others. Sociologically, hill people belong to Hindu caste groups, hill Janjati groups and Newars. The hill people are also called ‘Pahadi’ or ‘Pahadiya’. Dahal (1996) divided Madheshi community into four groups a) Indigenous Janjati ethnic people living in Madhesh for generations, b) people belonging to traditional Hindu caste hierarchy, c) businessmen of Indian origin e.g. Marwadi, Sikh and others, and d) Muslims.

3.3 Historical Background

Madhesh has a long historical background dating back to the kingdom of Videha or Mithila established in eastern to central Madhesh and a part of the present day north Bihar, India (Malangia, 1997). In the mid western Madhesh, Shakyas ruled in 600 BC, the Buddha belonging to the Shakyas dynasty was born in 563 BC. Similarly, kingdoms were established in Simraon Garh in the present day Bara district. In Madhesh, several kingdoms were established and ruled by many dynasties (Thakur, 1956), which all perished with time and were abandoned and the land converted into forests. Gaige (1975) concluded: “the ancient and medieval history of this region is a cyclic one in which men and forests have dominated in terms”. Many ruins which are still to be identified and properly studied would tell the ancient history of this region. The history of Kathmandu Valley and some hill regions have been studied and reported by Pahadi scholars and historians in much detail while they ignored Madhesh region. Again, there are very few Madheshi historians and scholars who due to lack of resources have not yet studied in detail the complex ancient history of Madhesh. In recent decades, Lumbini area in Madhesh, the birth place of Buddha, received worldwide recognition and support for meaningful excavation, detail study and renovation of key sites.

The Madhesh region was annexed to Nepal during the Nepal unification period beginning the mid 1770s by Prithivi Narayan Shah, however, much of the ancient Madhesh areas ruled by various kings and principalities for centuries are now in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh states of India. Again, the Anglo-Nepalese war between 1814 and 1816, and the resulting Treaty of Sugauli and subsequent treaties with British India reduced the Madhesh region. The outer Madhesh areas south of Dang and Chitwan valleys are under the Indian territory.

3.4 Migration and Population Distribution in Madhesh

Migration in Hills

The historical evidences indicate that most of the hill people excluding the indigenous ethnic groups migrated from various parts of India (Bista, 1967). During the Muslim invasions of the 12th-14th centuries in India, the Kshatriyas and Brahmins migrated to the mountain regions of the present day western Nepal and they established principalities in hills. They accommodated some aspects of hill tribe culture to their own and developed the hill culture of to-day. Around the 12th century, there was eastward migration of people speaking a Sanskrit-based language – which later on developed as Nepali language (Clark, 1963). Comparatively inhospitable and resource poor western hills, and gradual overpopulation and agriculture deterioration pushed the hill people, both the migrants and the indigenous people, to eastern hills up to Darjeeling areas and Sikkim in India, which were less densely populated and were wetter (Gaige, 1975). This could be the reason of accepting speakers of Nepali and hill tribal languages from Darjeeling, Sikkim and nearby areas as ethnic Nepalese, who largely enjoy both the Indian and Nepali citizenship.

Migration to Madhesh

Between 1860s and 1951, government encouraged and made efforts to vertical migration of hill people in Madhesh region. The response was not much favourable due to the alien climatic conditions in Madhesh to hill people (Paudel, 1980). There were settlements in Madhesh region south from the dense forest area and *Vitri* Madhesh was inhabited by indigenous Janjati people. As land, water and forest resources were abundant in Madhesh, people from the densely populated Indian districts bordering Madhesh region having similar cultures, tradition, practices and languages migrated to various parts of Madhesh between mid 19th and the mid 20th century.

Overpopulation, agriculture and economic deterioration, natural calamities resulting famine and many other reasons pushed the hill people of both Hindu castes and indigenous Janjati groups to out-migrate in Madhesh region. Better economic opportunities, abundant land and forest resources and the malaria eradication programme launched by the State encouraged involuntary migration into Madhesh (. People migrated mostly to northern Madhesh region and *Vitri* Madhesh areas, which were forested and had smaller settlements; large areas of forests were cleared for farming and settlements, which gradually reduced access to forest resources for Madheshi people. Hill people established settlements and farming areas along East-West Highway under construction. Very few hill people migrated to already established towns such as Janakpur and practically none to the large Madhesh settlements.

Table 2 Linguistic Characteristics of Population in Madhesh Districts

People speaking languages	% of population in 1961 <u>1/</u>			% of population in 1981 <u>2/</u>		
	Eastern	Mid western	Far western	Eastern	Mid western	Far western
Hill languages	2.1- 24.5	1.2 - 6.3	3.2 – 5.8	12.1- 86.2	28.9- 66.3	46.1- 80.7
Plains languages	75.5- 97.9	93.7- 97.8	94.2 – 96.8	13.8 – 87.9	33.7 – 71.1	19.3- 53.9

Source: 1/ Census of Nepal, 1961 (as cited by Gaige, 1975)

2/ Census of Nepal, 1981

NOTE: In 1963, Madhesh districts were restructured and their number increased from 17 to 20; parts of Siwaliks and mid mountains were included in Madhesh districts.

The linguistic characteristics of population in Madhesh districts significantly changed between 1961 and 1981 due to influx of hill population in Madhesh as well as inclusion of some parts of Siwaliks and mid mountains to Madhesh districts. This marginalized the population speaking plains languages. This resulted in dominance of hill culture, tradition, practices and languages in Madhesh region particularly in Jhapa, Chitwan, Dang and Kanchanpur districts where about 67% to 85% of the district's total population consist of hill linguistic groups. The current trend of changing cultural equation indicates that in two to three decades time most of Chitwan, Jhapa, Kanchanpur, Dang, Nawalparasi, Kailali, and Morang districts, half and more of Sunsari, Rupendehi, Banke and Bardia, and the northern third of Sarlahi, Bara, Parsa and Rautahat districts the plains culture, tradition and practices would gradually reduce.

Population Distribution of Madheshi Community in 2001 (% of total population) is as follows:

Low	15.3 - 47.5%	Chitwan, Jhapa, Kanchanpur, Dang, Nawalparasi, Kailali and Morang (7)
Medium	58.7 – 61.3	Sunsari, Rupandehi, Banke and Bardia (4)
High	77.5-93.5	8 districts between Koshi and Narayani rivers, and Kapilbastu

According to 1952/54 population census, only about 6% of the population in Madhesh districts was of hill origin and the rest 94% population was composed of Madheshis of Hindu caste hierarchy, indigenous Janjati groups, Muslims and other tribes. The population dynamics significantly changed in 1981 increasing the percentage of hill people from about 6% in 1952 to 43% in 1981. The Pahadi population increased many fold from merely 142,000 in 1952 to 4.1 million in 2001 while the Madheshi population increased just over two fold from 2.5 million to 5.3 million over the last 50 years (Table 3).

Table 3 Changes in Madheshi and Pahadi Population

Year	Highland group	Lowland group	Total	% of lowland group
1952/54	142	2,246	2,388	94.1
1981	2,795	3,762	6,557	57.4
1991	3,444	5,262	8,706	60.4
2001	4,120	7,092	11,212	63.3

Source: Gurung, H. (1998). Social Demography and Expressions, Kathmandu, Nepal, 1998
CBS (2001). Population Census.

Highland people = people of hill origin; Lowland people = people of plains, Madheshi

3.5 Madheshi Community in Nepal

The 59 castes and ethnic nationalities identified in 2001 census are broadly grouped into Hindu caste hierarchy, Indigenous Janjati and Muslims and their population both in 20 Tarai districts and in other remaining 55 districts are given in Table 4.

Table 4 Madheshi Community in Nepal

Madheshi Community	Population in '000		Nepal	% of Nepal
	Tarai districts	Remaining districts		
Hindu caste hierarchy				
Brahmin/Kshtriya/Kayastha	215.7	13.3	229.0	3.1
Baisya, Yadav and others	3,126.6	168.9	3,295.5	44.3
Dalits	874.1	12.7	886.8	11.9
Indigenous Janjati	1,940.1	106.4	2,046.5	27.5
Muslim	935.5	41.7	972.3	13.2
Total	7,092	343	7,435	100

Source: CBS (2001)

Baisya, Yadav and other Hindu caste group share 44.3% of the total Madheshi population followed by Indigenous Janjati (27.5%), Muslims (13.2%) and Dalits (11.9%). Indigenous Janjati, Dalits and Muslims are socio-economically more disadvantaged compared to other Hindu castes. Brahmin, Kshatriya and Kayastha are in minority but they are relatively well-educated, resource rich and more aggressive in politics, governance and in leadership role.

Madheshi community tends to be less migratory in nature compared to hill people and they prefer to remain closely in their traditional settlements. This reduces their chances of integrating with new socio-economic environment as well as with other communities. In general, 95.4% of the Madheshi people live in Madhesh region while the remaining 4.6% live in hills and mountains. Whereas, about 18% of the hill people live in Madhesh region and they out-migrate more easily from their settlements. The hill Brahmins, Chhetris and Newars are well-educated, resource rich, more land and capital and they have achieved leadership dominance not only in their settlements or regions but also in Madhesh region.

4. RESOURCE USE AND MANAGEMENT

Most of the data and information available on natural resources such as land, forests, productivity and production, economic activities and general economics are given at district level. The data available for Madhesh region is briefly described here.

Table 5. Agriculture Land and Forests in 20 Tarai Districts

Area	Tarai districts	Madhesh region	Hilly region
Total area in Tarai districts	3,411	2,307	1,104
Arable land	1,414	1,234	180
Forest land	1,364	486	878
% of arable land	41.5	53.5	16.3
% of forest land	40.0	21.1	79.5

Source: ISRSC (2004)

The 20 Tarai districts have in total 1.414 million ha of arable land; 87.3% of the total arable land is in Madhesh region and the remaining 12.7% in hills (Table 5). Arable land covers 53.5% of the Madhesh region while only about 16% of hills in the Tarai districts are cultivated. This unbalanced arable land distribution could exert more pressure on Madhesh region for farmland resources.

Although the irrigation facility developed in the last 100 years or so cover about 62% of the total farmland but due to various technical and management problems only about 46% of the total farmland is actually irrigated at least during wet season (Shah and Singh, 2001). It has been estimated that only about 22% of the farmland is irrigated during winter months and just below 5% in spring. Multiple cropping and commercial crops would require water throughout the whole growing season. This would put barrier to economic development of Madhesh people whose economic activities are mainly agriculture based.

There is unbalanced forest distribution in Madhesh region; only about 21% of the Madhesh region is forested compared to about 80% in hilly areas of the 20 Tarai districts (Table 5). People in Madhesh region has very little access to forest resources, and again, a large chunk of the forests are located in national parks and wildlife reserves.

5. EXCLUSION OF MADHESH AND MADHESHI COMMUNITY

Nepal has become to a greater extent an unequal society in which some people or community and geographical area have prospered while many other communities and districts have not. There is strong conceptual debate around the notions that exclusion either social, economic, political or geographical have been the main causes of unequal society. Exclusion results in poverty, unequal distribution of resources and development initiatives, and inability of certain community or geographical area to participate in socio-economic and political development processes.

Social exclusion is defined as “the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society and the tendency to push vulnerable and difficult individuals in the least popular places”. Education, skills, social behaviour, social network and groups, social contact, welfare, health, child poverty and isolation and vulnerability are the key social exclusion indicators. Children living in poverty may enter a cycle of poor educational achievement, unmanageable behaviour, unemployment and homelessness.

Economic exclusion would primarily include unemployment, income, economic opportunity, social and support services such as health and drinking water and basic infrastructure. There is positive relation between social exclusion and economic exclusion; illiterate and poor individuals are even more excluded because their low ability to read and write prevents their adaptation, professional conversion and their social mobility (Layachi, 2001).

Political exclusion inhibits basic citizenship rights and when done on a large scale, it prevents communities and even geographical areas from participating in political arena, which inhibits democratic process. The key variables are basic citizenship rights, participation in political life, making public policies, decision-making process and representation.

5.1 Geographical Exclusion

In Nepal, there exist strong geographical inequalities in developing basic socio-economic infrastructures and facilities and providing development opportunity. In recent years, few researchers have linked the results of geographical exclusion such as wide spread poverty, inequality in resource distribution, increasing vulnerability and marginalizing the local inhabitants particularly in the mid-western and far-western region of Nepal with the Maoist insurgency (Nayak, 1998; Panday, 1999; Kumar, 2000; Upreti, 2002; and others).

There are examples of geographical disparity in other parts of the world e.g. Sri Lanka, Ireland, Bhutan and many other countries; in most of these countries the disparity is between the northern and the southern parts of the country. Tarai districts are located in the southern part of Nepal where 95.5% of the total Madheshi people (7.435 million) live. There are 20 districts in Tarai administrative area and 55 districts are located in hills and mountains where 82.2% of the Pahadi people live. Resource Endowment Ranking Index values are used to measure geographical disparity in the country.

a) Social Exclusion

Poverty

Worst poverty prevails in the Tarai districts. About 45% of the 20 Tarai districts have worst poverty rankings and only 25% are ranked as ‘best’ compared to 35% districts in hills and mountains are ranked as ‘best’ and 29% are ranked as ‘worst’. The Tarai districts having

good access to transportation and marketing systems are also reported to have rich natural resources endowment rankings particularly the cultivated land (Table 6).

There appears to have ethnicity and poverty interaction. Rauthat, Siraha, Mahotari, Dhanusha and Sarlahi districts, where about 78-94% of the total population is Madhesi people, are ranked as having worst poverty cases; the poverty ranking index ranges from the lowest 4 in Rautahat to 13 in Sarlahi district. The poverty level is reported to be very low in Jhapa, Chitwan and Morang districts where majority of the people are of hill origin.

Table 6. Poverty and Natural Resources Ranking Index

(Number of Districts)

Index Ranking	Group	Poverty Ranking		NR Ranking	
		Tarai districts	H/M districts	Tarai districts	H/M districts
Ranking 1-25	Worst	9	16	0	25
Ranking 25-50	Intermediate	6	20	3	19
Ranking 51-75	Best	5	19	17	11
TOTAL		20	55	20	55

Source: Sharma and Shah (2002), ICIMOD (1997)

b) Education

About 90% of the Tarai districts have a large number of educationally deprived populations compared to only about 13% in hills and mountain districts (Table 7). Siraha, Bardia, Dhanusha, Mahotari, rauthat and Sarlahi have the largest number of educationally deprived people.

Table 7. Educationally Deprived Population and Child Literacy Rates

(Number of Districts)

Index Ranking	Group	Educationally deprived population		Child literacy rates	
		Tarai districts	H/M districts	Tarai districts	H/M districts
Ranking 1-25	Worst	18	7	10	16
Ranking 25-50	Intermediate	1	25	7	17
Ranking 51-75	Best	1	23	3	22
TOTAL		20	55	20	55

Source: Sharma and Shah (2002)- New ERA, ICIMOD (1997)

Fifty percent of the Tarai districts have 'worst ranking' for child literacy rates compared to 29% in hills and mountain districts. Rauthat, Sarlahi and Mahotari are the worst in child literacy index values. Again, 40% of Tarai districts have lower overall literacy rates compared to 31% in hill districts.

b) Economic Exclusion

There is disparity in per capita budget allocation between Tarai and hill districts; 10 out of the 20 Tarai districts have 'worst' index values compared to about 17% of the hill districts. Similarly, more number of Tarai districts has lower primary sector development compared to hill districts (Table 8).

Table 8. Per Capita Budget Allocation and Primary Sector Development Index

(Number of Districts)

Index Ranking	Group	Per Cappita budget allocation		Primary sector development	
		Tarai districts	H/M districts	Tarai districts	H/M districts
Ranking 1-25	Worst	10	9	8	16
Ranking 25-50	Intermediate	5	18	8	14
Ranking 51-75	Best	5	28	4	25
TOTAL		20	55	20	55

Source: Sharma and Shah (2002)- New ERA, ICIMOD (1997)

The data and information so far available indicate that the Tarai districts having higher proportion of Madheshi population have much lower socio-economic index values compared to districts where hill people are in dominance. However, there are no information and data available for comparing hill people and plains people living in the same district; the hill people generally live in the northern part of the district, along the highways and in growth centres whereas plains people mostly live in the rural areas with less accessibility to education, health and other development parameters.

Government and political organisations have been advocating and focusing poverty reduction programme mostly in the hills and mountains, and they have been advocating the donors that only the hills and mountains have large number of poor people. It appears that the politicians, policy makers, decision makers and national planners who are mostly of hill origin ignored the socio-economic development issues of Madhesh and the Madheshi community. The fact is that the Madheshi people are not in the right place and their voices are not heard or considered.

c) Political Exclusion

Electoral Constituencies

The average population per constituency is considerably higher in Tarai districts (127,414) than in the mountain (73,026) and 109,081 in the hill districts (Table 9). This reduces the number of parliamentarians representing Tarai region where about 96% of the country's total Madheshi people live while increases their number from hills and mountains where 82% of the country's total Pahadi people live.

Table 9. Political Constituency Delineation in Nepal

	Mountain	Hills	Tarai	Total
Districts	16	39	20	75
Population ('000)	4,141	10,398	8,644	23,183
Constituencies	23	94	88	205
Population/Constituency	73,026	109,081	127,414	103,174
Population/Constituency Range	9,587 to 121,996	67,434 to 154,549	114,056 to 157,349	

Source: District Demographic profile of Nepal, Informal Sector Research & Study Centre, 2002, Kathmandu, Nepal

5.2 Exclusion of Madheshi Community

About 96% of the Madheshi community lives in 20 Tarai districts and 15 of these districts have intermediate to worst poverty situation. Although there is no authentic data available, the general observation indicate that the Madheshi people living in traditional settlements in rural areas have nominal access to social infrastructure and facilities and, moreover, the induced economic opportunities are practically non-existent in their habitats. Many of the modern day basic facilities have not yet reached Madhesh villages.

Nearly 40% of the Madheshi population is Dalits and indigenous Janjati who are inherently disadvantaged in many social and economic aspects. Again, poverty is very high among the Muslim population living in rural areas; they have average low rate of literacy and their socio-economic development voices have reached nowhere; they share 13% of the total Madheshi population

In fact, the Madheshi community has never been fully integrated in the overall political, socio-economic and human resource development agenda of the country. They have been excluded from the national mainstream. There is widespread feeling among the Madheshi community that they have been strongly discriminated and are not given proper opportunity in the country. They lack proper share in development activities and are not represented in politics or decision-making processes. Education facilities and job opportunities either in government or international organisations functioning in the country are not easily available for Madheshi people. They are not allowed to work in military service and very few people work in police service.

a) Social Exclusion

Poverty

Poverty line in Nepal is currently estimated to be 31%. However, about 46% of Dalits, 41% of Muslims and 33% of indigenous Janjati population are below the poverty line (World Bank, 2006). Together these three major ethnic groups have 52.6% of the total Madheshi population. The rest 47.4% of the Madheshi people have lower poverty level. The above poverty data indicates that a large proportion of Madheshi households are excluded from the mainstream development. Poverty itself is the main factor of exclusion; the poor people could not afford basic education, primary health care, sanitation practices and decent housing.

Land Assets

Landlessness has become a major problem among Madheshi community. The recent report indicates a grave situation particularly in Dalit, Janjati and Muslim ethnic community; about 37% of Dalits, and 32% of Janjati households do not own agricultural land while 41% of Muslims are landless. About 79% of Mushar, a Dalit community, do not own land; they have the lowest literacy rate of 7.3%.

Education

About 79% Dalits, 68% Muslims, 54% indigenous Janjati and 42% mid caste population are illiterate. The female literacy is very low, below 11%, among Dalits and Muslim. A large Madheshi population has been excluded from basic education. Again, the level of education in rural Madhesh is of much lower grade.

b) Economic Exclusion

Employment

Three castes/ethnic groups namely Brahmins, Chhetri and Newars have dominated the civil service in the country. In 1991 these three castes constituted 36% of total population in Nepal but occupied 89.2 percent of position in civil service, while Madheshi community accounted for 32% of population but occupied only 8.4% of position in civil service (Table 10). This indicates that Madheshi people have highly discriminated in government services. It is interesting to note that in 1971 these three castes had occupied 89% of posts in civil services. Thus the pattern of civil service had not much changed over the past twenty years having these Brahmin, Chhetris and Newars dominating the civil service over the years and it is very unlikely that this trend will change in near future.

Table 10. Representation of different Caste/Ethnic groups in Civil Service

Caste/Ethnic Group	% of Population in 1991	Share in Civil Service (in Percent)	
		1971*	1991**
Brahmins	12.9	32.0	41.3
Chhetri & Thakuri	17.6	21.0	14.7
Newar	5.6	36.0	33.2
Tarai (Madheshi)	32.0	7.0	8.4
Hill Social Group	22.4	4.0	2.4
Others	8.3		

Source:

* Pashupati Rana's Nepal's Fourth Plan: A Critique. (Yeti Pocket Book Ltd 1971) pp 18-19

** D.N. Dhungel's article "The Nepalese Administrative System" in Contemporary Nepal .P.P. 122-123.

Manpower involved in International organisations in Nepal and projects implemented under these organisations is given in Table 11. About 81% of the total manpower involved in the 30 multilateral agencies working in Nepal and 61 projects funded by these agencies are from Pahadi community, 14.1% are foreigners and the rest 5.2% are Madheshi people.

Table 11. Manpower Involved in International Organisations in Nepal

Organisations/ Agencies	No.	Manpower Involved, 2001			
		Foreigner	Pahadi	Madhesi	Total
International (Multilateral)	30	121 (15.8%)	608 (79.2%)	38 (5.0%)	767
Projected implemented by Multilateral Agencies	61	21 (8.6%)	209 (85.3%)	15 (6.1%)	245
TOTAL	91	142 (14.1 %)	817 (80.7%)	53 (5.2%)	1,012

Source: UNDP (2001). Directory of the United Nations and Its related Specialized Agencies in Nepal, September 2001, UNDP, Kathmandu

Judiciary

Just over 8% of the total judges in the country are from Madheshi community, while the rest 92% are from Pahadi community (Table 12). Participation of judges from Madheshi community at the Appeal Court is about 13.0%, which could be considered a 'high level of participation' compared to 6.1% at the District Courts. The lower number of judges could probably be due to a) discrimination of Madheshi community to enter into the judiciary agencies, b) low number of law graduates from Madheshi community, and c) unwillingness to join the judiciary services for various reasons.

Table 12. Man Power Distribution in Judiciary, 2001

Type of Judiciary	Pahadi	Madhise	Total	% Madhise
Chief Justice & Supreme Court Justices	18	2	20	10.0
Chief Justices of Appeal Court	10	2	12	16.7
Judges of Appeal Court	64	9	73	12.3
Judges of District Court	123	8	131	6.1
First class officers in judicial services	18	0	18	0
TOTAL	233	21	254	8.3
Percentage	91.7	8.3		

Source: HMG (2001). Nyaya Parishad Bulletin, Nyaya Parishad Secretariat, 18 December 2001 (3 Paus 1958)

Employment in Higher Posts

The Pahadi people particularly the Brahmins and Chhetris control most of the positions of power and influence the government, other governing institutions in their action. They consider Madheshi people as 'non-Nepali' or 'less Nepali' and the later gets excluded from a higher post unless a Madheshi person is in their high level of confidence. The Table 13 shows a very low level of involvement of Madheshi people in constitutional bodies and in higher posts – these people make national policies, and are the key decision makers and policy implementers.

Table 13. Madheshi Representation in Cabinet, Constitutional Bodies and High Official Posts

Post and Organisations	Posts	Pahadi	Madheshi	% Madheshi
Ministers	24	21	4	16.7
Royal Standing Committee	8	7	1	12.5
Judges in Supreme Court	21	12	2	9.5
Chiefs of the Constitutional bodies	7	7	0	0
Members of Constitutional bodies	19	17	2	10.5
National Human Rights Commission	5	4	1	20.0
National Planning Commission	6	5	1	16.7
Ambassadors/Consulate Generals	23	22	1	4.3
Secretary/regional administrators	37	36	1	2.7

Vice-Chancellors	5	5	0	0
Vice-Chancellor RONA, Royal Nepal Academy	2	2	0	0
Chief of Security forces	3	3	0	0
Dept. heads of HMG ⁷	47	43	4	8.5
Chief of Govt. Corporations and Committees	56	52	4	7.1
Chief of Govt. Information and Communication agencies	4	4	0	0
Heads of Parliamentary bodies & committees	15	12	3	20.0

Source: Singh, A. (2003) Restructuring of Nepali State: A Madheshi Perspective

Note: Number of Minister is of Girija Prasad Koirala cabinet in 2001, all the other data are before October 2002.

c) Political Exclusion

In the two houses of parliament composed after the 1991 election, Brahmins held 38.1% of the seats and Newars 8.3%, the highest proportion in all four legislatures which were the products of adult franchise (Table 14). Similarly, they continued to retain their numbers even in the election of 1999 where Brahmins and Newars held 39.6% and 8.3% respectively. Brahmins, Chhetri and Newar dominated the seats in combined upper and lower houses of parliament constituting 65.2% of seats while they represent 36% of population. On the other hand, Madhesh community constituted only 17.4% of seats while representing 32.0% of population. Thus one finds a serious imbalance in the representation in our law-making body so called national legislature.

Table 14. Representation of Various Caste and Ethnic Groups in National Legislature
(In per cent)

Caste/Ethnic Groups	National Legislature				Population
	1959	1981*	1991	1999	1991
Brahmins	27.5	13.3	38.1	39.6	12.9
Chhetri/Thakuri	31.2	36.3	18.2	17.3	17.6
Newar	3.7	8.1	8.3	8.3	5.6
Subtotal	62.4	57.7	64.6	65.2	36.1
Madheshi	22.0	18.5	19.6	17.4	32.0
Hill SocialGroups	15.6	23.0	14.7	14.7	22.4
Others	---	0.7	1.2	1.5	8.3

Source: Pashupati Rana's Article "The Evolution of Nepalese Nationalism" in Contemporary Nepal, pp 83 IIDS, The Fourth Parliamentary Election.

- Gurung, Harkha, The Sociology of Election in Nepal: 1959-81, Asian Survey, Vol XXII, March 1982, p.313

The structure in the political parties is mostly centralized and is largely non-inclusive. Again, the major leaders in any political party are the hill Brahmins and Chhetris and normally they discriminate the Madheshi people in most actions. Central Committee of any political party is vital for formulating policies and the members make collective decision for important action. It appears that the Pahadi leaders do not have confidence over the Madheshi people and they tend to exclude the latter in policy formulation and decision-making jobs. Nepali Congress and the UML are the major democratic parties in the country but they have included only few

Madheshi as members in their Central Committees (Table 15.). They advocate the proportional representation but in action it does not happen. Again, representation of Madheshi politicians in both Upper House and Lower House is considerably low (Table 16). This could greatly inhibit the democratization process in the country. The findings clearly indicate that Madheshi people are highly ignored and are under represented in the current political arena, which may, in long run, create vulnerable situation in the country.

Table 15. Central Committee Members in Major Political Parties

Political Parties	Total	Pahadi	Madheshi	% Madheshi
Nepali Congress	38	35	3	7.9
Communist Party of Nepal (UML)	69	65	4	5.8
Nepali Congress Democratic	30	25	5	16.7
Jan Morcha Nepal	44	43	1	2.3

Source: Madhesh Vani, January 2006.

Table 16. Number of Madheshi Member of Parliament in 1999

Political Parties	Total MPs		Lower House		Upper House	
	Lower House	Upper House	Pahadi	Madheshi	Pahadi	Madheshi
Nepali Congress	113	24	90	23	21	3
Communist Party of Nepal (UML)	69	20	59	10	19	1
Rashtriya Prajatantra Party	11	5	7	4	5	0
Nepal Sadbhavna Party	5	1	1	4	0	1
Rashtriya Jana Morcha	5	0	5	0	0	0
Nepal Majdoor Kishan Party	1	0	1	0	0	0
United People's Front	1	0	1	0	0	0
King's Nominees	0	10	0	0	9	1
Total	205	60	164	41	54	6
% Madheshi				20.0		11.1

Source: Parliament Secretariat Records, Singha Durbar, Nepal, 1999.

Involvement of Madheshi People in Media

Both the government and private sector or non-government media sector have excluded Madheshi people from their management committee similar to the political parties (Table 17). Media seldom raises the socio-economic, development and political issues of Madhesh and Madheshi people positively. The voices and the grievances of the common Madheshi people unless they hold a major position are lost.

Table 17. Involvement of Madheshi people in Media

	Total	Pahadi	Madheshi	% Madheshi
A. Government Media: Management Committee				
Press council	13	10	1	
Radio Nepal	5	4	1	
Gorakhapatra	5	5	0	
Nepal Television	5	5	0	
Rastriya Samachar Samiti	5	5	0	
Subtotal	33	29	2	6.01
B. Non-government Media				
Nepal Patrakar Federation	24	23	1	
Press Chautari	21	21	0	
Nepal Press Union	12	12	0	
Press Group	23	22	1	
SAAF Nepal	25	25	0	
Nepal Environment Media Group	13	15	0	
Federation of National News Media	13	12	1	
Subtotal	131	128	3	2.3

Source: Madhesh Vani, January 2006.

6. EMERGING ISSUES OF MADHESHI COMMUNITY

Madheshi community in general has been marginalized and the people suffer from a combination of linked problems such as illiteracy, poverty, poor skills, unemployment in public sector and the average low incomes. Undoubtedly, there is affluent society in Madhesh community such as Brahmin, Kshatriya and Kayastha who are relatively educated, well off, prosperous and lead a comfortable life, but they are in minority in number – just 3.1% of the total Madheshi population. The majority of the population belonging to Dalits, Janjati, Muslims and other caste groups living in rural areas are facing acute hardship. Poor investment, unplanned management of already deteriorating land resources, poor socio-economic infrastructures and facilities and lack of socio-economic planning have adversely affected the majority of the Madheshi people.

There have been little efforts to prevent social, economic and political exclusion and to reintegrate those who have become excluded through unemployment, landlessness, homelessness and so on. The past discriminatory public policies and the general unhealthy attitudes of the hill people who are in governance towards the average Madheshi have been detrimental to national integration. Their problems have not been solved or rather ignored by the State. The major emerging social, economic and political issues which need immediate to short term action are briefly described here.

a) Social Issues

1. Identity and Recognition

Most of the Madheshi people are losing their identity since they are treated as ‘less Nepali’ or ‘non-Nepali’ by Pahadi people. One of the main reasons could be attributed to their socio-cultural, linguistic and physical affinity with the communities living immediately on the other side of the border in India, which historically was a part of Madhesh. Culture, tradition, practices and language have great influence on ‘identity’ of a person e.g. a Nepali or hill language speaking person from Darjeeling or Sikkim, who have been living their for generations, is readily accepted in Nepal as a Nepali and he or she enjoys all the socio-political benefits. Whereas a Madheshi who does not speak Nepali or any other hill language and who does not follow hill tradition and practices is not easily accepted as Nepali by hill Nepalese.

2. Illiteracy and Poor Skills

There is mass illiteracy among the Dalits, Janjati, Muslims, and the other caste people living in villages. Female education is practically non-existent among many communities living outside the urban centres. The traditional society has very little changed in the last fifty years or so and due to the non-migratory nature they have little interaction with other community. Again, the level and quality of secondary or higher secondary education in Madhesh region is quite inferior compared to education in hill areas. Consequently, the Madheshi people getting all their education in Madhesh could not compete with Pahadi people having their education in hills where it is comparatively superior; they lose opportunities.

3. Poverty and Vulnerability

There is widespread poverty (45% of the Madhesh districts) among Madheshi community particularly Dalits, Muslims, Janjatis and other caste people living in traditional settlements who are nearly landless. They lack assets for economic production and the lack of food security has many widespread effects influencing health and nutritional standards as well as child education. It also forces them to have less concern for environmental considerations. Poverty and illiteracy increases vulnerability and in vulnerable society democratic values and democratization have very little meaning.

b) Economic Issues

1. Unemployment and Under Employment

In the absence of off-farm economic opportunities in villages, most of the people are under employed. In recent years, uneducated teenagers and the young people have temporarily migrated to India for economic opportunity – this has unbalanced labour supply to farming in many parts of Madhesh region. Again, there is unemployment for the educated Madheshi people in government or non-government organizations or in INGOs or international organizations working in Nepal primarily due to the exclusion behaviour of these institutions towards Madheshi. This is a serious issue to tackle.

2. Weak Social Organizations and Support Services

In the past two decades, social institutions advocating and working on social, economic and political development in Madhesh region have been formed by Madheshi community. Such entities are of varied natures and are based on castes and ethnicity, language, research and studies, human rights and advocacy, political rights, and socio-economic works. These organizations find hard to get financial and working support from the State as well as from the donor communities. In general, most of these organizations are committed to the cause of Madheshi community, but lack of coordination among them, missing unified vision, divided opinions, and unfocused objectives have made them inadequate in yielding desired results.

Again, the government support services are dwindling and have not yet reached in many villages where most of the households are Madheshi. Most of the project implementers at the district level are of hill origin and they tend to implement their programme in areas dominated by hill people due to various reasons such as good communication, high level of programme adaptation and so on.

3. Low Level of Investment and Lack of Economic Opportunity

Although government collects most of its revenue from Madhesh region, there is very little return in the form of investment in rural areas where majority of the Madheshi people live. Investment both from the government and the donor community in rural Madhesh appears to be very low. Most of the industries are located in urban centres and they could not much help the local rural people. Again, the agro-based industries established in the Madhesh region are not tied up with agriculture farming; they import raw materials from other countries which could be technically produced in Madhesh.

The issue of renovation and reconstruction of the Hulaki Road has been raised on many occasions. This road was constructed in early 20th century and connects the inner part of Madhesh region from Jhapa in the east to Kanchanpur in the west.

c) Political Issues

1. Basic Citizenship Rights

This is the major political issue still unresolved by the State or the political parties. Many of the Madheshi people who are landless or homeless – a large number of Dalits, Janjatis, Muslims and other caste people are landless- are denied of citizenship certificates. The government law and the public policies are not very clear and positive, and moreover, the persons at district level authorized to give citizenship certificates that are mostly high caste or affluent hill people usually show negative tendencies while granting citizenship. Denial of citizenship means no rights to get job in government, corporations or even private companies, can not get government support or loan from the bank or purchase land for housing or farming. Many Madheshi people have lost right to vote and it prevents them to participate in political life even at the village level. This is humiliating for the Madheshi people who are denied of their natural right.

2. Demarcation of Madhesh Districts

The current demarcation of Tarai districts does not follow any scientific, ecological or social basis. Amendment is required and a new demarcation needs to be done, which would include

only the outer and *Vitri* Madhesh region for efficient socio-economic planning for holistic development. This would increase participation of Madheshi community decision-making process.

3. Participation in Political Arena

Low level of participation in policy and decision-making body of political parties such as central committees and lack of proportional representation in parliament are the emerging issues. The political parties have so far ignored emerging issues of Madhesh and Madheshi people and the under representation prohibits advocacy for betterment.

4. Census Mechanism

Many people believe that the results of the past census are not satisfactory; the data on Madhesh population and the resources they use do not seem to be accurate. Some sample survey done in the Madhesh area indicates much higher Madheshi population than shown in the last census.

5. Migration of People in Madhesh

Madhesh region is already over crowded and the resources are dwindling to maintain the increasing population. The issue of discouraging population to permanently migrate from hills and from the adjoining areas in India to Madhesh region has been very often raised.

7. RELEVANT RESEARCH AGENDA

The inclusion of Madheshi people in the national mainstream would be the main drag on the country's economy. People believing in integration of societies often ask a question – how to achieve that goal? Social, economic and political exclusion exist in many countries and within a society or geographical area. However, there are some good examples of positively integrating the varied societies and nationalities within a country, which are all initiated at the economic and at the political level.

There is continued conceptual debate around the notions of exclusion and inclusion. How an excluded community or group could be included in the mainstream for nation building. Firstly, we need to understand the dynamic processes taking place which encourages different forms of exclusion in Nepal. There is lack of data and information on various sub components of social, economic and political exclusion. And then to investigate the institutional aspects which could prevent exclusion and promote recovery, regeneration and inclusion. These fact finding attributes would form the research agenda and discussed in a group before finalizing them. The attributes, their nature and usefulness would be more detailed in the seminar.

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