

## Empowerment under Globalisation — Making Markets Work for Women

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### Abstract

The paper reviews the impact of commercialisation of the village economies and globalisation of the national economy on women's 'opportunity spectrum' and explores their empowering and disempowering features for women. Conclusions are based on review of: (a) macro-level available information on Nepal's developments in the last 15–20 years and (b) in-depth analysis of two village level surveys through time (1977–78 and 2004–05) and 100 factory workers from Kathmandu. The paper concludes that, although development programs in rural areas have increased women's role in domestic arena and visibility in community affairs, much deeper interventions are needed in patriarchal ideology and structures to empower them in the full sense. Secondly, while women's move to the factory work in export industries does provide her access to at least some income and increases her political consciousness, old social discriminatory structures and international competition combine to keep both poor women and men in extremely exploitative conditions, which are more disempowering than empowering.

### Keywords

Subsistence, market, gender, globalisation, empowerment, opportunity spectrum, discriminatory

### Nepal — geography, people and the economy

Nepal, situated between India and China, is a country of varied geographical features, flora and fauna. Geographically, it has three ecological regions, the high mountains with Himalayan cold climate, the mid-Hills with temperate climate and the Indo-Gangetic plains, the Terai.

Traditionally, Nepalese society has multiple social divisions based on ethnicity, geography, and caste, which have important implications for gender analysis. According to the 2001 census, there were 100 ethnic/caste groups and sub-groups in Nepal, of which, the Indo-Aryan group constituted 57 per cent and the Janajatis<sup>1</sup> (Tibeto-Burman and some other Terai groups) about 37 per cent. The religious minorities — Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others — accounted for four per cent. About one per cent did not report their ethnicity/caste or religion. All three groups are divided in multiple sub-groups. Dalits among the Indo-Aryan groups are at the bottom of both income distribution and human development, while the Tamangs among the Hill Janajatis and some other tribal groups of Terai lag far behind others. This ethnic/caste diversity plays a major role in determining women's life options in Nepal.

The other feature, which is a key factor in determining women's economic and non-economic roles, is the nature of its economy. Twenty five years ago, the Nepalese economy was dominated by subsistence agriculture; 61

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<sup>1</sup> In Nepal, the division indigenous/non-indigenous does not apply as in US. There are no categories such as tribal or scheduled caste or Harizans as in India. People are categorised by ethnicity and caste. Low caste people are grouped as *Dalits*.

per cent of the GDP and nearly 38 per cent of exports were contributed by the agricultural sector. In 1980, 94 per cent of the population lived in rural areas and 91 per cent derived their livelihood from agriculture. More than 70 per cent of the rural household income was home produced (Acharya and Bennett 1981). It was estimated that, in 1977–78, in Nepal's rural areas, less than one-third of the total rural household income passed through market transactions, i.e. either exchanged for money or bartered for other goods. Another study (NRB 1988) showed that about 67 per cent of the income was derived from household enterprises, 61 per cent from agricultural enterprises and the rest from others. Wage and salary constituted only 26 per cent of the household income. The majority of workers were self-employed.

The liberalisation process was started in this scenario, in November 1985 with nearly 15 per cent devaluation of the Nepalese Rupee with convertible currencies.<sup>2</sup> All round economic liberalisation process gained momentum after the newly elected government was installed in mid 1991.<sup>3</sup>

Reforms encompassed both internal and external sectors. Changes aimed at a shift in the focus of development strategy, from an inward import-substituting industrialisation (ISI) to an export-led growth so as to derive benefit from the globalisation process. The process was wide and deep — liberalising all sectors and adhering to the minimalist government philosophy (Acharya et al. 1998).

Exposure of the economy to external sector was greatly increased. As a percentage of GDP, the foreign trade increased from 24 per cent in 1985–89 to 40 per cent in 2000–03. The real GDP and per capita income growth, however, remained around four to five per cent until 2000. Since then it has declined due to the Maoist insurgency in the country. The contribution of agriculture to GDP came down substantially from about 65 per cent in 1981 to 47 per cent in 1991 and 38 per cent in 2001. A recent poverty assessment study (The World Bank 2005) based on 1995–96 and 2003–04 Nepal Living Standard Survey, shows that in this period the overall poverty level has declined from 42 per cent to 31 per cent, in spite of the insurgency. The decline has been observed both in urban areas (from 21 per cent to nine percent) and rural areas (43 per cent to 35 percent). Much improvement has taken place in overall women's access to education and health status, as indicated by the literacy rates and life expectancy (details in the next section). Women's participation rate in the non-agricultural sector is increasing. A number of export industries such as carpets and garments have created some new employment opportunities for them.

Yet, a Maoist insurgency has been going on in the country for the last ten years claiming more than 13000 lives and doing innumerable damage to the country's fragile infrastructure. It is said that about 30 per cent of the Maoist insurgent army are women. Most Maoist recruits have been from traditionally disadvantaged groups from the Terai and the Hills. Migration from rural to urban areas, to India and to overseas in search of employment increased tremendously both because of economic needs and because of Maoist insurgency (Seddon et al. 2000). What has happened?

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<sup>2</sup> Nepal maintains dual system of exchange, one with India with free convertibility with Indian Rupee, and another with other convertible currencies.

<sup>3</sup> Nepal underwent a mass-movement for changing the system of governance from the managed democracy with absolute powers to the King but with elected house and local bodies, to a multi-party democracy with the King as the constitutional monarch.

The reduction in contribution of agriculture to GDP was not matched by concomitant reduction of its role as employment provider, which remained at 66 per cent in 2001. Agriculture stagnated; as subsidies on fertiliser and other inputs were withdrawn, it could not face competition from the subsidised Indian products. Traditional village crafts and small scale industries were driven out of existence creating mass scale unemployment among such craft-workers, men and women. I have analysed elsewhere (Acharya 2003c; Acharya, Khatiwada and Aryal 2003c) how the economic processes triggered by the development policies have increased disparities leading to impoverishment of large sections of the population in rural areas. The development community has arrived at similar conclusions belatedly (Nepal HDR 2004; Poverty Assessment Study, The World Bank 2005).

Increasing disparities have multiple dimensions — between urban and rural areas, between hills and Terai areas, between migrant and non-migrant households, well educated and non-educated and among people of various caste/ethnicity as also between men and women. The results from my current field study, confirm the increased disparity between the hill and the Terai areas and within the villages.

In terms of 1977–78 prices the average household income has almost doubled in 2004–05 in the Terai village but declined slightly in the hill case. But per household asset has increased in the hills and decreased in the Terai village. Per cent of land in the asset structure has declined in Terai and increased in the hills. This can be attributed only to the stagnating agriculture and its declining charm as a source of employment in the hills. Relatively better off hill people are shifting their residence to Terai or urban areas and choosing alternative employment avenues, leaving their land to those who remain in the village or selling them. It seems that migrants from the hills also prefer to shift their residence to urban areas. The Maoist Insurgency in the hills has accelerated this process. On the other hand, there is little permanent migration from the Terai village and land is successively divided and sub-divided among the brothers, resulting in reduced assets per household.

Commercialisation of the rural economy has increased as indicated by increased proportion of agricultural products sold (12 to 35 per cent in the Terai village and four to eight per cent in the hill village) and increased proportion of cash in the household income (from 23 to 48 in Terai and four to eight in the hill). On the other hand, contribution of wage/salary income has increased in the Terai but declined in the hills, indicating a decline in local employment opportunities. In 1978 in the hills, *perma* system, that is labour-exchange with no direct calculation of who owed how many days, prevailed. Today the system is also changing — each household had to pay back in days of labour and if not in cash. In the Terai areas also kind payments were being slowly replaced by cash. All these changing features of the village economy have different implications for men and women and for different social groups, which I analysed in an earlier study (Acharya 2000). The objective set for this study was to explore specifically their impact on women's overall status.

### **Objectives and methodology**

The precise objective set for this paper is:

- to review the impact of commercialisation of the village economies and globalisation of the national economy on women's "opportunity spectrum" and to explore their empowering and disempowering features
- to draw policy implications for women's empowerment.

Many scholars (for example North and Cameroon 2003; Wichterich 2002) from other countries have investigated such issues in other contexts. Others (Rai 1999; Sassen 1998) have analysed them in the context of the globalising labour market. They contend that the expansion of wage employment opportunities for women in labour-intensive export industries or sweat-shops in international metropolises has not liberated women from the traditional patriarchal structures and ideology, but only internationalised and consolidated them. Such issues have been explored by many feminist authors in South Asia also. Reviewing them, Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1999) draw similar conclusions.

Most of these authors, however, do not focus on the precise processes involved in internal market penetration. Moreover, because they have dealt mostly with more advanced developing countries and areas where market penetration was already deep, they have tended to be more concerned about the withdrawal of the state than about the effects of deeper market penetration in the hinterlands. But in countries and areas like Nepal with many remote and difficult to reach regions, the latter may be more important than withdrawal of the State which was never there as a service provider any way. So my paper focuses on analysing the impact of such internal processes of market transformation.

In Nepal also much discourse is taking place on how women have been empowered by various programs and projects. Recent studies covering these aspects have focused on women's access to services (NHDR 2004; Bennett and Gajurel 2005) and on political/administrative power structures, although the latter does try to capture some aspects of social empowerment, by including indicators on mobility, violence and voice. Bennett and Gajurel conclude that high caste rural women are more empowered today than 25 years ago, but not all women. Further, this study relates to rural areas only. My current study, although based only on case studies of limited scale, expands on the understanding of empowerment and covers both rural and urban scenarios.

### ***Defining empowerment — its indicators***

In development discourse, empowerment is often analysed in terms of increasing women's access to services and participation in community affairs, and their number in political and administrative decision-making positions. Access to economic resources has been added recently (for example NHDR 2004) to the empowerment indicators. But such participation and access are only first necessary steps towards their empowerment.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, encompassing all spheres of life, including the social context. As per the South Asian Women's meeting conclusion (Basin and Dhar 1998) it is an ongoing dynamic process which enhances women's and any marginalised and alienated groups' abilities to change the structures and ideologies that keep them subordinate. It is a process of making present power structure more inclusive to all — women and men of various creed, caste, class, ethnicity and race.

The final goal of empowerment is to transform the ideology and practice of domination and subordination, challenge and transfer existing power structures, systems and institutions which have upheld and reinforced this discrimination and gain access to and control over material and knowledge resources. In summary the process may be viewed in the following three dimensions:

1. Increasing women's relative access to economic opportunities and resources — such as, employment, credit and wealth including land and technology and apparently non-economic resources such as education, knowledge, and health which are primary to human development
2. Raising social consciousness of women and men about the symptoms and causes of the oppressive religious, economic, cultural, familial, and legal practices, changing the perceived social images of women as individuals, strengthening their capacity to take action for changing the gender roles
3. Finally, increasing women's political power-through women's organisations, solidarity, and collective action and effective voice and presence at decision making positions

While economic and social empowerment is a necessary condition for attaining the position of political power, political power enhances the opportunities for economic and social empowerment. Political ability to bring about changes in women's legal status, to direct resources to women, and to get access to positions of power is of crucial importance.

In this study I have tried to go beyond the usual service and formal political position-oriented measures of empowerment and to evaluate the changes in the opportunity structure and social environment for women. The indicators used to measure such process are not perfect, but do indicate the progress and challenges ahead. Two major points to be noted about the gender indicators are that they must always be comparative with men and must capture the social differentiation as far as possible.

### ***Methodology and data sources***

Answers to the questions posed are sought on the basis of a three-part exploration: (a) a macro- level review of Nepal's developments in the past 15–20 years, (b) a field survey and in-depth analysis of developments in two villages, one each in Terai and the Hills, which were also studied in detail in 1977, (c) a comparative study of certain indicators of gender status of rural women and urban factory women-workers, and finally (d) a review of the experience of other countries.

Both macro- and micro-level (1977–78 and current field survey) data are used. At the macro level available data have been analysed on shifting spheres of work, from self-employment to wage employment, from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors, and to various occupations and gender status in each of them, opportunities for migration, social and human development indicators for both sexes and their relative positions etc. At the micro-level household and individual data have been collected for 25 households and 25 each of men and women from two villages and 50 men and 50 women factory workers from Kathmandu. This article presents some of the salient features of the findings.

### **Impact on women — opportunities and challenges**

As discussed in the previous section, for analytical purposes the empowerment process may be viewed in three dimensions, economic, political and social. This section proceeds to analyse Nepalese women's progress in those dimensions. Before going to details of each component it is relevant to mention that women as a group are disadvantaged all round. Women of historically disadvantaged and exploited social castes and ethnicities are most disadvantaged in access to power structure and modern education and employment, together with their men, as evident from Figure 1.

Figure 1 (from a study by Tanka Prasad Acharya Memorial Foundation (TPAMF) 2005) features an index of comparative access of men and women of various caste and ethnicities to literacy and education also as positions of power. Indicators included in this indexing are male and female achievements in the field of literacy (literacy rate) and education (percent of men and women with graduate + post graduate education) and percent of legislators, senior administrators, politicians, managers + professionals and associate technical workers categories among the economically active population.

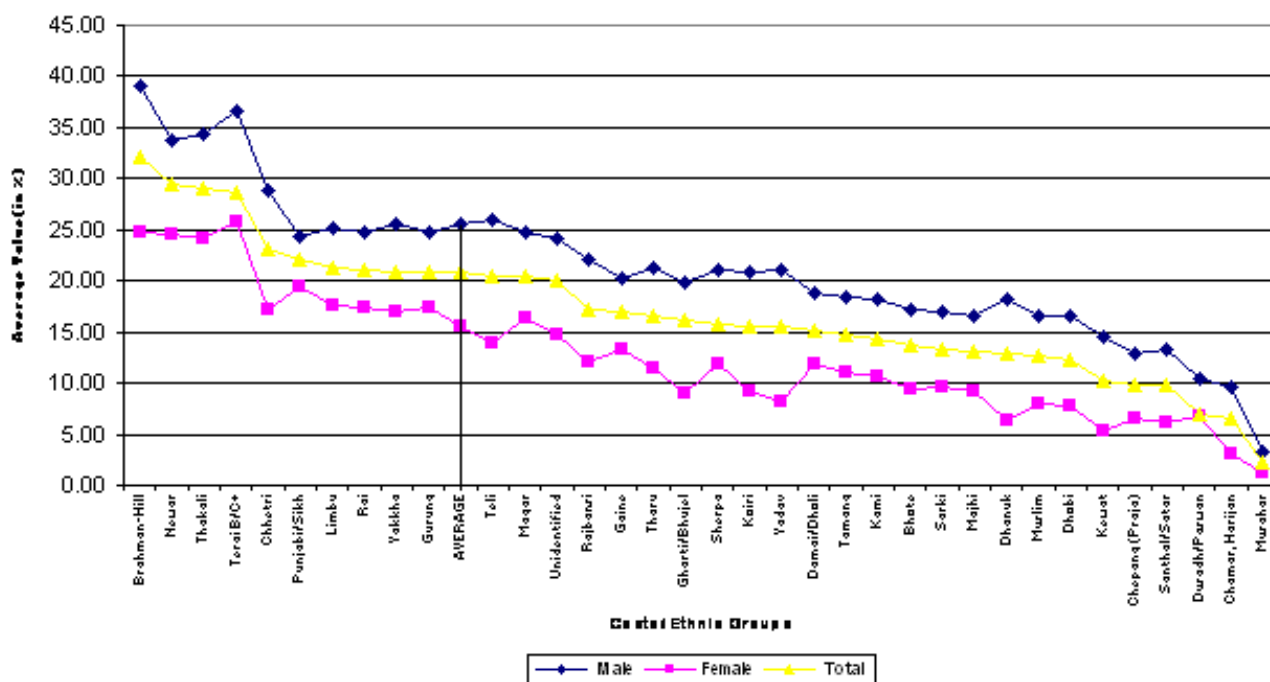


Figure 1. Average value of selected individual characteristics of caste/ethnicity by gender, Nepal 2001 (TPAMF 2005)<sup>4</sup>

Men and women of Newar and Brahmin/Chettri and Thakali, traditionally powerful and urban trading groups, top the score board. Mushars, the landless *dalits*, and some other tribes of Terai are at the bottom. But women are far below men throughout on the achievement curve. In no group do achievements of women match those of men, except for Mushars, where both men and women are at the bottom of the scale. It illustrates the differentiating impact of the current development pattern.

Figure 1 also shows wider differences between male and female indices among the Terai groups in general (10 to 12 points) and Hill Brahman/Chhetris and Thakalis. The differences are highest for the Hill Brahmans. Thus, in the case of women the culture also plays an equally important role in determining women's opportunities structure.

<sup>4</sup> The Census 2001 reported 103 social caste/ethnic groups some of them having less than 0.1 per cent of the population, they had to be grouped some how. They were classified into 35 categories including the group of others. This classification has been based on: (a) socio-cultural background; (b) eco-region; (c) population size; (d) the kind of housing unit occupied; (e) literacy and educational attainments; and (f) access to jobs in emerging better paid modern sectors and prestigious occupations entailing power and control over national resources.

### ***Economic dimension***

Work opportunities and in a private property based society ownership of assets determine the economic options for an individual or the group. Women in Nepal are relatively disadvantaged in both fields.

#### *Work opportunity and workload*

A high proportion of Nepalese women are economically active. In 2001, this rate varied between a minimum of 44 per cent and a maximum of 55 per cent depending on whether the extended economic activities defined to include water and fuel collection and processing of secondary products<sup>5</sup> are included or not. Economic activity rates of both men and women for both rural and urban areas, for all ecological and development regions have increased between 1991 and 2001. More rural men and women are economically active than urban men or women. The urban rural differences are much higher for women. This difference of 28 per cent in 1991 has, however, declined to 20 per cent in 2001, as more women are entering the urban labour force as wage workers. It means opportunities for women's employment have expanded faster in urban areas for women after liberalisation as in other countries (Acharya 2003b).

Nevertheless, the trend observed internationally, that shift of the production processes from the household to the market in the early stages of capitalist development tends to reduce women's role in the economic activities, is visible in Nepal as well, despite globalisation. While 58 per cent of rural women were economically active in 2001, only 38 per cent of urban women were reported so. This shows declining economic opportunities in comparative male/female perspectives, although expanding in absolute terms.

Several factors hinder women's participation in the organised labour market as compared to men's, when the production activities are externalised from the household to the market place. Participation in the market as elementary workers is usually not acceptable to middle class households, unless it becomes economically necessary for the household. Further, with industrialisation, the separation of reproduction (reproducing human beings) and production of goods and services becomes inevitable spatially, and women with young children have difficult choices to make on whether to give up their visible economic work, take their children to work place or leave them without good care and supervision. The choice often imposed by the social expectation on women is to give up their visible productive role, if family finances allow for it. Poorer mothers often take their babies and children to work place, which seldom have child-care facilities. Moreover, women from the rural labour class, who work in the labour market, lack the necessary educational prerequisites to work in the modernised sectors. When employed, like in carpets and garments, they are at the bottom of the earning scale even though the skill required to weave the intricate patterns of carpet is much more than working on a conveyer belt.

Of those women who were not economically active, the majority were so because they had to perform household chores. In the case of men, the majority among the inactive were so because of study, indicating another dimension of social discrimination.

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<sup>5</sup>Included as economic in the System of National Accounts as per the United Nations Manual, since 1993.

Women generally have longer hours of work than men. This has been a consistent finding of studies in the last 25 years (Acharya and Bennett 1981; NRB 1989). The Nepal Labor Survey (CBS/NPC 1999) once again showed that women contributed 84 per cent of household time devoted to its maintenance and care.

However, current field data from the two villages and urban areas do show that this difference may be declining among the factory workers. Urban working women have highest work hours but men have started to share in household work and child care (Table 1). In the Terai village as well, the men interviewed reported spending substantial time in child care. In the hill village, on the other hand, men reported spending less time on such activities. Migration did not seem to have any impact on the work hours of the remaining household members in Sirsia, probably because of an excessive population pressure on land in these areas.

**Table 1. Time use data for adult women and men, 2005**

Selected indicators	Rural				Urban	
	Sirsia (Terai)		Katarche (Hill)		-Kathmandu	
	men	women	men	women	Men	women
A1. Regular economic activities	9.4	7.5	7.9	8.2	9.0	8.7
A2. Extended economic activities*	-	1.7	1.4	1.4	--	--
A3. Household chores and care activities	1.4	3.7	0.7	3.0	2.2	5.0
A4. Other work	0.6	---	0.3	---	0.3	-
<b>A Total work hours</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>13.7</b>
<b>B. Other activities</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Going to school/college	0.2	-	0.1	-	0.2	-
Social work	1.7	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.5	-
Leisure and personal care	2.2	0.4	3.5	1.1	3.5	3.0

Source: Field study

\*Since it is for the factory workers, no extended economic activities were reported.

A1= Agriculture (farming, kitchen garden, post harvest cleaning, winnowing, storing marketing) livestock related (grazing animals, collection of leaves, cleaning of animal sheds, milking and feeding of animals etc and marketing products) and salary/wage work or other income earning.

A2 = Fetching water/firewood/food processing for household consumption.

Compared to 1977–78, the work load of women had declined somewhat in the hill village while for men it had remained at a similar level. It emerged from the focus group discussions that this was partly accounted for by development of a piped water supply and mainly by mill processing of grains. In 1978, such food processing and water collection had taken nearly 9 per cent of total work time. But, reported work hours had greatly increased both for men and women in Terai.<sup>6</sup>

### *Employment status*

The next question is where are the women working? Do they have equal opportunities in well paid jobs? An overwhelming majority of economically active population, both men and women, is still self-employed. This is true for all caste and/or ethnic groups (TPAMF 2005). Sixty-two per cent of economically active men and nearly 84 per cent of women were in self-employment and family labour in 2001. This shows the low proportion of commercialisation of the labour market and low employment opportunities in the organised sector despite globalisation. As per these figures, wage employment opportunities had expanded much faster for both women

and men during the eighties (before liberalisation) than during the 1990s (after liberalisation). Female proportion of employees (wage workers) in total female labour force has remained almost constant since 1991, despite of the expansion of carpet and garment exports. For men it has increased by about 6 per cent.

Women constitute much lower proportion of wage-workers in the non-agricultural sector generally (Table 2). While they constituted 33 per cent of the agricultural wage labour in 2001, their share in the non-agricultural wage labour was only 18 per cent, a decline of one per cent from 19 per cent in 1991. Thus compared to 1991, in the non-agricultural sector, wage labour opportunities for women seem to have rather declined relative to men

**Table 2. Percent women by main sectors and wage /non-wage, (1981-2001)**

	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>I. Agriculture</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>48.1</b>
Self-employment	37.3	46.6	50.0
Wage employment	16.8	25.0	50.6
<b>II. Non-agriculture</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>34.3</b>
Self employment	18.0	29.8	33.0
Wage employment	14.5	18.9	17.7
<b>Overall</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>40.4.</b>	<b>43.2</b>
Self employment	36.8	45.3	50.2
Wage employment	14.7	22.6	22.4

Source: Acharya (2003b)

Further when one reviews the composition of the occupational groups by gender it is clearly visible that women are concentrated among the non-skilled elementary workers (Table 3). Gender composition of prestigious occupations is changing only slowly. In the agricultural occupations women constitute 48 per cent. On the other hand, in the group of professionals and technicians, which comprises, teachers, trained nurses, doctors, engineers, professors etc they constitute only about 19 per cent. Among the administrative workers that is senior officers, legislators and managers their share is even less, only 14 per cent. The increase in women's proportion among the administrators by four per cent indicates a positive trend, reversing the decreasing trend observed in 1991 compared to 1981.

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<sup>6</sup> This needs further investigation as current time-use data was collected by recall.

**Table 3. Female proportion in labour force by occupation (1981–2001)**

Occupations	1981	1991	2001
<b>II. Agriculture, forestry and fishery workers</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>45.1</b>	<b>48.1</b>
<b>II. Non-agricultural occupations</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>34.3</b>
Administrative workers, legislators, senior officers, managers, etc.)	6.6	9.3	13.8
Technicians and associate professionals	16.6	15.1	19.0
Clerks or office assistants	5.8	10.0	12.8
Service, shop and market sales workers	14.6	23.9	24.7
Production workers	19.2	15.8	44.1
<i>of which:</i>			
Craft and related workers			44.6
Plant and machine operator and assemblers			13.0
Elementary occupations (other than agriculture)			48.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>43.2</b>

Source: Acharya (2003)

Among the production workers, who are mostly wage workers, women constitute 44 per cent. Even among the production workers, they are relatively concentrated more among the elementary workers. Among the traditionally female stereotyped jobs in carpet, garments, and woollen goods, they constitute high proportions, which is reflected in their percentage among the craft workers. In contrast among the plant and machine operators, that is the expanding modern mechanised jobs, their percentage is a mere 13 per cent. Thus unlike in other countries even the magnitude of female employment opportunities generated by these industries has been limited.

#### *Wage rates and working conditions*

As per the Constitution of Nepal (1990) and legally, women are entitled to equal pay for similar jobs and enjoy a series of gender related privileges such as pregnancy leave, infant-feeding intervals during work hours, crèche facilities, etc. But women are discriminated in practice, because they are concentrated in lower paying jobs (Table 4) and in the informal sector.

**Table 4. Wage rates, 1995–96 to 2003–04**

Details	Agriculture		Non-agriculture	
	1995–96	2003–04	1995–96	2003–04
Men	44	85	76	137
Women	35	65	57	101
Female/male ratio	0.80	0.76	0.75	0.75
Urban	47	88	83	163
Rural	40	75	73	129
<b>Nepal (2003–04 prices )</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Nepal (1995–96 prices )</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>89</b>

Source: NLSS (2003–04)

Overall, women's wage rates are only about 3/4 of men's wages. Moreover, in agriculture this ratio has declined in the past ten years. Further real wages have declined in agriculture while increasing by 20 per cent in the non-agricultural sector. From the discussions in the Hill village it emerged that men preferred to migrate temporarily to urban areas for higher paying wage work, rather than seek wage work in the village. Women had much less options and opportunities for such work. The current field survey of 50 men and 50 women from manufacturing and service sector in Kathmandu indicates extremely unfavourable work conditions for men and women in the carpet industry, which employs primarily rural migrants with low educational levels but high carpet weaving skill. Garment industry conditions and pay scales seem to be only slightly better for women (Table 5) than those in carpets.

**Table 5. Work conditions and pay-scale by industry (percent)**

	Carpets		Carpets + garments = export		Noodles + hotels		All	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>I. Total number of workers (number)</b>	39 (66)	61 (104)	46 (117)	54 (138)	74 (648)	26 (230)	64 (831)	36 (472)
<b>Total interviewees No.</b>	10	10	20	20	30	30	50	50
<b>Percent by pay scale/1</b>								
1000-3000	80	100	40	70	10	10	18	34
3001-6000	20	---	10	30	67	50	60	42
6001-9000	---	---	40	---	20	23	16	14
9001 and above	---	---	10	---	3	17	6	10
<b>II. Mode of Payment</b>								
Daily wage /piece rate	80	100	65	70	33	3	42	32
Temporary/permanent	20	---	35	30	67	97	58	68
<b>III. With training</b>	2	5	25	55	9	40	28	46
<b>IV Level of satisfaction</b>								
Satisfactory	10	30	10	20	10	10	10	14
Good	40	50	60	50	37	60	46	56
Not good	50	20	30	30	53	30	44	30
<b>V. Living quarters</b>								
Home	---	---	---	10	60	73	36	48
Factory provided	90	70	60	35	---	---	24	14
other	10	30	40	55	40	27	40	35

Source: Field survey

1/ Nepalese Rupees 70.35 = US\$1

One hundred per cent of female and 80 per cent of male carpet weavers earned less than US\$40 a month. Nobody earned more than US\$ 80 a month in carpets and garments, that is, in the export industries. All women and 80 per cent men in carpets are paid on a piece basis. Combining the major export industries, carpets and garments, about 70 per cent of workers are paid on a piece basis, which means there is no job security or provisions of leave or other facilities. Thus, both pay scale and working conditions in these export industries seem to be much worse than either in food or hotels, whose products are more domestic-market and tourism oriented. These industries employed 97 per cent women on a permanent basis and had provisions of legally required leaves and other facilities.

A social analysis of these groups shows that carpet workers are mostly migrants from rural areas, other than Brahmin/Chettri and Newars, live in factory provided dormitories, four in one room (12 by 12 feet) and take their children to work. They come from landless or near landless families with less than 0.05 hectare of land. In other industries workers are more evenly distributed between the urban and rural origin, migrants and non-migrants and caste/ethnicity. This clearly shows how traditionally discriminatory structures get transferred to the factory space.

Overall, larger proportion of women workers were in lowest earning brackets than men, but they also had longer work experience. They worked less than men by only one hour. On the average those at the lower end of the pay scale, both men and women, worked longer hours. Men and women had similar number of schooling years in the lowest and higher earning brackets, but women had lesser education in the US\$40-80 earning bracket.

Generally, women did not fare as well as men. Nevertheless, only 20 per cent of the women workers interviewed in the carpets and 30 per cent of all women workers were not happy with the working conditions, while much higher percentages of men expressed dissatisfaction with them. This shows the higher level of insecurity women feel because of lack of alternative work opportunities.

#### *Access to property*

Women are still discriminated legally, in inheritance rights in the parental property. Although they may inherit until married, once married they have to return the inherited property to the natal household. On the other hand, on marriage they become equal co-person in their husband's property in the marital household. However, they have very little control over such household property. Therefore whether a woman has any personal property means a great deal for her freedom of choice at the primary survival level. On this indicator, women score very low.

Only about 11 per cent of households reported some land in female legal ownership. Similarly only about six per cent of households had some house in women's name. Only 7 per cent of households reported female livestock ownership, despite multiple credit institutions targeting and funding this activity for women. These figures contrast starkly with the fact that most households (88 per cent) lived in their own houses and majority of households (76 per cent) had some farm land and animals (71 per cent). Overall, only 0.8 per cent of the households had all three, house, land and livestock in women's names. More than 80 per cent of households in all regions had no property whatsoever under women's ownership. Low property ownership of women was true for all the ecological and development regions.

Cast or ethnicity did not make much difference to this general pattern (TPAMF 2005). In spite of the cultural differences between the Indo-Aryan and the Tibeto-Burman groups, and even within each of these groups in terms of social customs governing gender relations, land is inherited universally in all communities from the father to the son and women lag far behind men in access to economic resources and consequently in access to knowledge and modern avenues of employment.

### ***Political dimension***

Political sphere may be viewed as composed of several layers, household, community and larger public arena. The indicators used in this analysis show male/female participation rates in public arena and decision-making within the household. Only qualitative information from secondary studies and current field work are available on actual effectiveness of their voices.

### ***Household level***

Starting from inside the household, between 1978 and 2005, generally the proportion of joint decisions had increased except in capital and investment decisions in the Hill village, in which it has declined. In 1978 in the Hill ethnic communities, women brewed alcohol and cooked food and sold in the local market. Currently very few such or alternative small scale business or trading opportunities exist in and around the village as home brewing of alcohol for sale is prohibited while factory produced alcohol is every where. The home spun cloth also, where men and women worked, has been replaced by factory produced or imported cloth.

From our analysis of women's such activities and household decision-making pattern, we (Acharya and Bennett 1981) deduced that market participation gives women greater voice in the household decision-making as well. A comparative analysis of the role of women traders and general village women in the household decision-making in the current Terai village, also confirms to this pattern. Urban women factory workers also seemed to make more decisions by themselves in all categories.

In rural areas some women could make domestic decisions by themselves. Domestic decisions include matters about purchase of daily needs such as food, vegetables, keeping of household money, lending and taking small amount of loans etc, while education related questions were whether to send the children to school or buy educational accessories for them. However, in domestic matters also joint decisions predominated, which is quite a change over the 1978 decision-making pattern, when on these matters self decision by women predominated.

**Table 6. Decision -making in the household (Percent of the decisions made)**

Kind of Decisions (Female Respondents only)	Katarche			Sirsia			Sirsis-trading women			Urban		
	Self	J+C	DM	Self	J+C	DM	Self	J+C	DM	Self	J+C	DM
I. Farm management and labour decisions	---	80	30	10	73	38	---	66	30	18	82	28
II. Domestic Decisions	41	45	63	42	49	61	47	42	32	73	27	57
III. Capital and investment related	4	65	18	---	96	43	---	83	36	22	77	4
IV. Education	28	50	56	43	56	60	80	20	50	31	69	61
<b>All Categories</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>

J+C = Joint or with consultation with other household members

DM = Percent of interviewers reporting any decision in this field, i.e. in rest of the cases either no decision was made.

#### *Community level*

Women's role in the local community affairs is reported to be increasing as many development programs in the government sector directed to rural areas — NGOs and INGOs — all agencies have been relying heavily on group based approaches for delivery of their programs. The DFID/World Bank study (2005) on social and gender assessment (GESA) estimated that there were some 400,000 development oriented groups or local organisations currently in operation in Nepal. Another nation-wide sample survey (Bennett and Gajurel 2004) relating to inclusion and empowerment found one-quarter of the 2000 men and women respondents interviewed to be members of at least one group. Women's groups are becoming vocal about their needs and aspirations.

The Report, however, concludes that despite the overall empowering and inclusive impact of group membership, the overall picture on the ground was mixed one. This is because higher caste men and women were more likely to be group members than other castes and ethnicities. Larger proportions of women participated in groups than men, but on measures of community level empowerment women fell below men. The study found that group membership also contributed to women's empowerment within the household.

The current survey shows that while the Terai village had many active groups, primarily engaged in savings-credit activities, the hill villagers were only active in the community forestry. Yet, women's participation in the Terai village was limited to attending meetings and even all-women groups were still controlled by men, particularly among the women of better-off households. The woman who was local woman representative in the outgoing executive body of the village level local self government (VDC), complained that men did not listen to her. This has been a constant complaint of the elected or nominated women in the local-self-government (see MWCSW/MGEP/UNDP and Sahavagi 2004). But having a woman from an elite household of the community in this Terai village as member in this public body itself was a progress as compared to 1978. Then also, there was a mandatory provision for at least one woman member in the village body. But no so-called 'respectable household' was willing to nominate a member to the same. So a woman who was considered to be a commercial sex-worker was nominated to the position and everybody laughed at her (Acharya 1981).

### Larger public arena

Voting participation in both villages has remained more or less at the 1978 level. Awareness of women's rights in 2005 as compared to their awareness of Nepal Women's Organization and Women's Social Services Council, which were the only women related institutions existing visibly in 1978, has increased notably, from a minimum of 1.5-3.1 per cent to 31-37 per cent in the villages. But awareness about the district and national politics measured in terms of their knowledge about the Prime minister, parties in power, legislative representative from the area and district chairman and had increased only marginally compared to 1978.

Moreover, women's awareness of such politics was not anywhere near men's awareness. Less than five per cent of women in the Terai village were aware of such issues. Also, a higher proportion of men than women discussed issues heard from the media after wards. In contrast few women in Sirsia did so while a substantial per cent did so in Katarche. Men were much more aware of national and local political issues than women in rural areas. In urban areas such differences did not exist (Table 7).

Analysing the political awareness indicators in terms of the four sphere model, it seems that market participation itself does not contribute to women's political consciousness or voice in larger public arena. Compared to other women traders, voting participation was lower and a lower percentage of them were aware of women's rights. But trader women did seem to be more aware of local politics. Compared to rural women, much higher percentages of women factory workers were aware of laws about women's rights and national politics. Both men and women factory workers were much less aware of the local metropolitan issues.

Generally, on all indicators women fared lower than men in political consciousness. Many more women than men did not even have citizenship in rural areas. In Nepal a citizen identity card is required everywhere for official transactions. Not having a citizenship identity card itself is a set back.

**Table 7. Percentage of rural/urban men and women aware on political issues and voting, 2005**

Selected indicators	Rural				Urban		
	Sirsia		Katarche				
	Men	Women					
	Overall	Traders	Men	Women	Men	Women	
<b>I. Citizenship</b>	100	76	80	96	72	88	90
<b>II. Voting</b>	92	54	50	68	48	59	56
<b>II. Awareness and contact</b>	42	16	22	35	30	44	42
a. Local politics/community affairs	76	11	70	57	26	46	34
b. National politics	41	4	---	37	22	41	28
c. Women's representation	---	3	20	---	15	---	22
d. Laws about women	46	37	29	54	31	80	79

Source: Field Survey

Mkt. = Local trading women

At the state and larger public arena, women's access is minimal. As discussed above, they constitute only 14 per cent among the class of decision makers — legislators, politicians, administrators, managers, senior officers etc. In civil service they constitute only seven per cent. Most of them are concentrated at lower levels. There are no women at the highest level of Civil Service, Special Class officers.

Women in general fare very badly in positions of power structure. Except for the lowest level of local governance, where 20 per cent of the elected position has been reserved for women since 2000, women's representation did not cross one per cent in any position. They constitute less than ten per cent in the executives of the nationally recognised political parties. There have never been more than two women in the Cabinet, even when it comprised 43 to 45 members, almost one-fourth of total parliament members. Women can never match up to the behind the scene power plays, which take place for dividing the positions. In the Parliament at the highest level they constituted 7 per cent, even though three Parliamentary elections were conducted during the 12 years of multi-party rule (Acharya 2004a). The Constitution has made it mandatory for the political parties to have at least five per cent women candidates. Parties have seldom gone beyond this minimum. In the Judiciary, women fare even worse. Of the 242 Judges, working in different parts of the country, only four are women (LAMA 2004, as quoted in DFID/World Bank 2005).

### ***Social dimensions***

A woman's access to health and education services is often taken as indicators of her social status and achievements in this area as indicators of her empowerment. However, a woman's health and educational achievements are a product of multiple dimensions of her subordination determined by patriarchal structures and ideology. The social ideology of proper gender roles determines her access to education, information, division of labour and employment avenues, and ultimately her 'opportunity spectrum' and life options. The focus of this paper, therefore, is social empowerment beyond education and health indicators, which may improve with development without substantial change in the discriminatory gender structures and ideology.

Every so-called 'civilised' society has its own specific forms of control on women's lives. In South Asia, social and ideological control is fortified by making women's access to resources and property legally conditional on her marriage and sexual behaviour. This is where the gender ideology is most strongly rooted and most difficult to measure quantitatively. An attempt has been made in this study to look beyond health and educational access and measure those underlying social factors which determine her 'opportunity spectrum' in totality.

### ***Seclusion and mobility***

One indicator often used to measure her empowerment is a woman's freedom to move out of the household and participate in public life. Another is freedom from violence, which is a basic human right. In addition to this, her options about marriage may be considered as the ultimate measure of her control over her own 'life options', besides economic resources and educational access.

The current village studies and its comparison with 1977–78 information shows that women's overall mobility has increased. Bennett and Gajurel's study (2005) cited above also draws similar conclusions.

Traditionally, in Nepal, the Indo-Aryan culture idealises women's seclusion, which may manifest in various forms, from veiling in Terai communities to restrictions on mobility of young women in other parts of the country. Therefore her mobility may be taken as an indicator of her freedom. But for the Tibeto-Burman women, who have been relatively free to move around, her increased mobility may only be an indicator of increased accessibility of the area. Development of transport infrastructure itself also may lead to increased mobility generally without any change in social ideology of seclusion. My field data shows that, compared to the Terai village, a relatively greater proportion of women respondents from Katarche and Kathmandu reported visiting natal home, friends or sisters. This seems to be a product of three factors: cultural composition of the sample population (relative proportions of Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman groups), better transport facilities and changing cultural behaviour of the urban factory workers.

In terms of freedom to get out of the household and participate in group activities also, women in the hills of Nepal have moved rapidly, after the democratic changes of 1991. Women are organised into multiple groups, attending their meetings and participating in group activities at the community and village level. Particularly the higher caste women in the hills have advanced rapidly in this field (World Bank/DFID 2005). Even in the Maithili community of Sirsis, which I studied, women have given up veiling of the face. Just covering back of the head is considered adequate. This is a great change from a situation where even the men of the household could not recognise all women members of the same household because they had never seen their faces (Acharya 1981). Yet, at a deeper level, women's options have not expanded much. They can become members of village level groups and participate in them, as long as it is economically beneficial for the household. Moving beyond that will take a much longer time.

Marriage and children are still the first priority for women, for both men and women in almost all communities, but to a much higher degree in the Indo-Aryan groups, where the ideology of purity of the female body as described by Bennett in 1983 rules still very strongly. For women, besides the social need to produce progeny, marriage is also seen as a primary means of livelihood in almost all communities, since land and property is inherited along the patri-line, from father to son (Acharya and Bennett 1981; Gurung 1999). This results in a high proportion of married population.

Even in 2001, 78 per cent of the women and 48 per cent of men were married before they reached the age of 25. Nearly two per cent of the 10-14 year-old girls and 33 per cent of girls aged 15-19 were already married. As a result the mean age of marriage is still quite low for women at 19.5 for Nepal, 20.7 for urban and 19.3 for rural areas. It is increasing both for women and men but the rate of increase has been slow for women, 2 years in two decades. Moreover, the gains are very unevenly distributed among various regions of the country (Acharya 2003b). The far-west and the Terai Region lag far behind other regions.

In the Terai village also marriageable age for girls seemed to be improving to 16-17, but 20 was the maximum limit set. Neither men nor women had much choice in selecting marriage partners in Terai (Sirsia), while in the hills (Katarche) and among the Kathmandu factory workers women and men seemed to have some say on such issues. But even in these areas a greater proportion of men had such choice. But, most of the women, who answered positively to this question either in Katarche or Kathmandu, belonged to the Tibeto-Burman groups.

The Hindu ideology of sexual purity of women prohibits remarriage for women. Even in 2001, there were women widowed already by 19 years of age. Young widows, particularly, in the Indo-Aryan community, are subject to covert and overt violence and face both psychological (as forerunners of misfortune) and physical violence, often for their share of property. A strict code of conduct imposed on them, as to their clothing, food habits, mobility, etc. is breaking only slowly. Although not many cases of domestic physical violence were reported in the current field study, alcohol- and polygamy-related violence in the domestic arena is reported high all over Nepal and across all communities (SAATHI and The Asia Foundation 1997). The 2001 Census showed that a total of at least 559 thousand women (about 49,000 in rural areas and 65,000 in urban areas) were living in polygamous marriages.

#### *Family planning, fertility and health*

Only a small proportion of couples in rural areas use family planning options or professional help in pregnancy or delivery. This is also reflected in the current case study findings (Table 8). Only 13 per cent of women in Sirsia and Katarche used either prenatal or delivery services. Similarly, son-preference, in varying degrees, prevails in all communities. Consequently, the fertility rate (TFR), although starting to decline, is still higher than in other South Asian countries at 4.2 in the mid 1990s.

**Table 8. Social — attitudes and practices, 2005 (percent of responses)**

Selected indicators	Rural					Urban	
	Sirsia			Katarche			
	Men	Women		Men	Women		
		Overall	Traders				
<b>I. Intended age of marriage for girls</b>							
Below 16	12	32	40	-	4	-	2
Ages 16-25	80	64	60	64	68	64	60
Ages above 25	-	-	-	-	-	12	8
<b>II. Social freedom</b>							
Who visited places	---	20	---	---	71	--	65
Who choose spouse	8	0	0	72	32	40	34
Who new spouse before marriage	8	0	0	76	48	46	40
Discuss with spouse about more children/FP	76	44	none	68	56	70	70
<b>III. Family planning and health</b>							
Practice family planning	12	40	none	56	52	48	44
Use of pre-natal + delivery services	---	13	none	---	13	---	51
<b>IV. Polygamous marriages</b>	8	8	none	4	4	2	16

\* Included questions like whether it was right for husbands to slap his wife or blame use shamans against witches.

These percentages signify those who said no.

"---" The question was not relevant to men or was not asked to them or was not processed separately.

Sex composition of a country as reflected in the sex ratio (men per 100 women) is one of the most important indicator of women's overall status in a society. It reflects overall survival chances of women and men at birth and also differential rates of male/female immigration and out migration. In Nepal the sex-ratio was changing in favour of women in the eighties, indicating women's improving access to services and survival chances. Women's life expectancy has increased from 50.3 in the mid 1980s to 60.7 in 2004. Women now may expect to live longer than men by a few months.<sup>7</sup> Still the difference between the survival chances of women and men is lower than in other South Asian countries. Maternal mortality, with Nepal still at 415 per thousand births, is one of the highest in the region.

Moreover, the sex ratio has slightly increased during the nineties and it may worsen as in North India, as greater number of families start practicing family planning and have access to technology for sex-selection of the child before birth. Given a strong son-preference, wider practice of family planning may by itself lead to this male preponderance even without any fetus abortion. For example two-son families tend to sterilise themselves, while families with several daughters tend to not to do so until a son is born. Already girls have less chance of being born. Lower access to health care and food in conditions of resource scarcity in the family further impair their survival chances. The under-five mortality rate is still substantially higher for girls. The female/male, death ratio in this group of population is 112.4, although declining from a level of 187 in 1980.

### *Education*

Similarly, the social compulsion of marriage and then expectation of children are major impediments to women's advancement in education and career jobs, in addition to opportunity cost of educating daughters to the natal families. In the Indo-Aryan communities it is a matter of honour for the family whether they can marry off their daughters in a timely fashion or not. Further, on marriage, daughters have to transfer to the husband's household and the natal home may not claim any part of her earnings and she has no responsibility to them. Nor can she have any claim on their property and resources.

On top of this, the natal households have to give dowry/Tilak<sup>8</sup> in her marriage. The practice of dowry/Tilak is increasing in magnitude and spreading in communities which did not have it before. In Sirsia, the answers to the question about whether it prevails was 100 per cent positive. To whether it was increasing, decreasing or remaining same, 100 per cent said it was increasing. In Katarche 66 per cent respondents said it prevailed and 94 per cent among them reported it to be increasing. Among the urban workers also, 50 per cent said they practiced dowry and 75 per cent of them said it was increasing. These proportions are much higher than those of Janajatis in Katarche and the urban sample (only 48 per cent and 28 per cent respectively). This indicates that the practice is spreading even among Hill Janajatis, who did not practice it traditionally.

The practice of dowry/Tilak is becoming a real barrier to girls' higher education particularly in Terai communities. Parents have to find grooms with higher education for girls with such education and grooms with higher education are demanding increasing amounts as Tilak. The higher the degree, the greater is the price. In other communities also, the form of dowry/Tilak has acquired new dimensions, as the prospective husbands have

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<sup>7</sup> World-wide, women live longer than men.

started to look at it as seed capital for new business or their own overseas trips, motorbikes, cars, TVs, and other consumer durables. Although this is more of a middle and educated class phenomenon, it is putting much social pressure on the lower middle class as well. While searching for bridegrooms for their daughters, they may be outbidded in the marriage market.

Thus, the globalisation of market and the consumer culture have not done away with the onerous system of dowry/Tilak, but have converted it into a vehicle for promotion of consumerism and seed capital for new business and made it more onerous for families to have girls. This whole system of compulsion of timely marriage of their daughters for the parents, the daughter's total transfer to a final household, and then the compulsion of having sons and child care responsibilities after marriage, put a cap on women's chances of higher education. Both tradition and the spread of consumer culture combine to limit her educational perspectives.

On the other hand educated grooms also want brides with minimum education. This puts pressure on parents to give them the minimum of education so that they become marriageable. This has contributed to increasing women's literacy and some schooling. Such attitudes and behaviour are clearly reflected in the statistics (Table 9).

**Table 9. Selected educational indicators, (1981–2001)**

Indicators/Years	1981	1991	2001
Female literacy rate 15 years+	11	23	34
Difference in male-female literacy rates ( percentage points)	23	34	31.3
Female per cent among full time students	27.2	34.7	43.1
People with primary education ( No. of women/100 men)	41.5	53.5	76.8
With SLC and above ( No. of women/100 men)	21.0	28.2	43.2
With Graduates and above (No. of women / 100 men )	18.4	22.5	22.9

Source: Acharya (2003b, 1994)

Although the literacy and schooling rates of both men and women have been increasing significantly in the last three decades, gender disparity is decreasing only slowly, particularly at higher levels. In comparison to men, women are relatively disadvantaged at all levels of education, but are most disadvantaged in access to higher education.

While the proportions of both girls and boys going to school are only half of the national enrolment rate in rural areas, girls still faced much discrimination in access to quality education (Table 10). Boys everywhere were given opportunity for better education by sending them to private schools or//and to cities while the girls, particularly from villages, had little such opportunities. Daughters of factory workers had much better chances of quality education but still less than sons from those families. Thus migration of men to urban areas as factory

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<sup>8</sup> Dowry is given to daughters, in principal it is her property. This practice prevails in the Hill communities. Tilak is given to the bridegroom or his family, on which the girl has no claim even in principal. In Terai communities both dowry and Tilak prevail.

workers does seem to increase scope of advancement for the next generation of girls, but still less than for boys.

**Table 10. Social schooling variables (percent)**

Variable	Katarche	Sirsis		Urban
		Overall	Trader-women	
<b>School going children</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>60</b>
School-going sons	33	33	50	63
School-going daughters	30	30	8	57
<b>Type of school</b>				
<b>Sons</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Government	81	54	100	33
Private	19	46	0	67
<b>Place of school</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Cities	24	13	100	73
Village	76	87	0	27
<b>Daughters*</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Government	100	86	100	41
Private	0	14	0	59
*No daughters from the villages were in city schools, 28 per cent daughters of urban parents were in village schools				

#### *Environment for social change*

Despite the current discriminatory behaviour towards girls, the current field survey does show some attitudinal changes towards girl's education, whereby an overwhelming majority of men and women in urban areas wanted to educate their children as much as children wanted or as they could (Table 11). Many rural parents said this also: as much as the children wanted or they could afford. Education topped the list of qualities they wanted for their children, both for sons and daughters and in urban and rural areas.

Ability to earn a living and work hard was second in the priority list in urban areas for sons and daughters — but in Sirsia prettiness still figured as the second desired quality for daughters. In 1978, hard work for girls and prettiness occupied first and second places as qualities wanted in a bride, while for bridegrooms the first desired quality was wealth and second education.

A series of questions was also asked to test the social environment for change towards a more equitable society. It is revealing that the overwhelming majority everywhere were in favour of reservations in educational institutions, political positions and civil service for all, women, ethnic groups and *dalits*. A higher proportion of women than men of Sirsia were in favour of women's rights. In Katarche and urban areas the reverse was true, but the difference was not very high.

**Table 11. Social attitudes and images, 2005 (percent of responses)**

Selected indicators	Rural Sirsia		Katarche		Urban	
	M+F responses		M+F responses		M+F responses	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>I. Images of ideal men/women (multiple choice)</b>						
Educated	80	56	56	50	67	76
Able to earn living	44	-	36	40	44	66
Attractive/pretty	-	58	-	-	-	-
<b>II. What happens if not educated? (multiple choice)</b>						
Not able to earn living	54	28	58	38	91	64
Hard to marry	18	74	18	40	17	54
<b>III. Level of education wanted for children?</b>						
Some education	4.6	23.5	33.3	33.8	1.6	1.5
SLC (finish school)	41.9	50.0	23.8	16.1	7.2	7.5
As much as wants/l can	53.5	26.3	42.8	49.5	91.0	90.6

Questions included in this group were on divorce, daughter's inheritance, widow remarriage, equal and full citizenship rights, and abortion. It is also revealing that generally, proportionately more men than women thought that it was alright to use a little violence against their wives or witches. The questions on social issues enquired whether it was alright for a husband to slap or beat his wife sometimes or to use shamans against witches, to observe caste system, and to take money for sending girls for employment.

**Table 13. Social attitudes and images. Percentage with positive attitude to social changes and practices, 2005**

Social Issues	Rural				Urban		
	Sirsia		Katarche				
	Men	Women		Men	Women	Men	Women
		All	Traders				
<b>Positive attitudes</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>
Social Issues*	53	73	85	69	78	93	96
Women's rights*	50	60	20	70	65	68	64
Reservations for women	100	88	90	82	100	90	98
Reservations for <i>Dalits</i>	88	88	90	68	84	94	98
Reservations for ethnic groups	100	100	90	76	88	94	100

\* See the text for description.

## Conclusions

Nepal was at an earlier stage of development wherein the subsistence economy played a much larger role than in other South Asian countries. With the acceleration of the liberalisation process and market penetration to hinterlands, local production structures have been destroyed to a large extent, creating mass unemployment and deep class differentiation. Although remittances from the migrants and foreign aid have kept the economy

going and even helped to reduce the proportion of households below the basic-needs-income level, income disparity has increased substantially. In many cases the process has accentuated the traditional social divisions rather than eliminating them. Areas with relative infrastructure advantage and groups with educational access are exploiting opportunities provided by new job openings and migration. Agriculture and hill rural areas have lagged far behind. Women in the hills have suffered much more from this process than men.

The penetration of market in the hinterlands and development programs directed to women and men, have opened up new opportunities for women and men. But men of traditionally powerful groups are moving much faster to take advantage of the diversified opportunities provided by such developments. The relative disadvantage of women vis-à-vis men is declining only slowly or even increasing in many fields; for example under five mortality rates or well paid work opportunities. The gender specific differences in the opportunity spectrum are accentuated by caste and ethnic disadvantages, although women uniformly fare worse than men in all groups. At a deeper level, the traditional forms of gender exploitation have acquired new dimensions and forms with development. A major policy conclusion that emerges from an analysis of a woman's 'opportunity structure' and 'socio-political status in totality' is that it is not sufficient just to increase women's income by a marginal amount and help them gain a greater role in the household decision making process or voice in the community affairs. Much deeper social interventions are needed in discriminatory patriarchal structures and ideology.

Although the move of rural poor women and men to factory work in labour-intensive export industries has given them some alternative source of income and widened the scope for a woman's individual choice, old discriminatory structures and international competition have combined to keep their working conditions inhuman. Old social discriminatory structures have been shifted to the modern jobs as well. Brahamin/Chetri and Newar men and women are working in factories and hotels under better working conditions; poor rural migrants from the disadvantaged ethnic groups have to work under inhuman working conditions. Women are more disadvantaged than men on these jobs. Her working and living conditions, long-term likely impact on her health, increased risk of violence she faces in the public arena — all may have put her in a more exploitative situation than in the traditional villages, based on subsistence agriculture and personal relations.

Further, the plight of women workers in export industries in Nepal does not seem to be better or worse than in the garment industry in Bangladesh as described by Ahmed (2004) or the export-zone workers in India featured in Banerjee (1991). Still the national government is pressed to liberalise the labour market regulations further. To ameliorate their plight, interventions are needed in their favour, not against them. Given the politicisation of women on the world scale, such interventions are needed in the international arena.

In terms of the empowerment indicators used in the current analysis, market participation and the exposure of women to international and national feminist movements do seem to increase their political consciousness. However, their influence on social ideology seems to be minimal. Women have not been able so far to put their agenda on the political priority list of those in power or political parties. Moreover, in terms of economic impact, globalisation's primary impact has been intensifying further the class/caste/ethnic differentiation, which is destabilising the whole society as evidenced by the fast spread of Maoist Insurgency.

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Appendix 1. Percentage of caste/ethnic composition of the population in Nepal, 2001

Caste Hindus (57.5%)	High (32.8%)	<b>A Hill/Terai B/C+ (a.1+a.2)</b>	<b>32.8</b>
		<b>a.1 Hill B/C+ (1+2)</b>	<b>30.9</b>
		1 Brahman (Hill)	12.7
		2 Chhetri, Thakuri, Sanyasi	18.1
		<b>a.2. Terai B/C+ -</b>	<b>1.9</b>
	3 Brahman (Terai), Rajput, Kayastha, Baniya, Marwadi, Jaine, Nurang, Bengali	1.9	
	Middle (12.9%)	<b>B Terai Middle Castes (Include 4-7)</b>	<b>12.9</b>
		4 Yadav	3.9
		5 Teli, Kalwar, Sudhi, Sonar, Lohar	3.2
		6 Koiri, Kurmi, Kanu, Haluwai, Hajam/Thakur, Badhe, Bahae, Rajbhar	3.6
		7 Kewat, Mallah, Nuniya, Kumhar, Kahar, Lodha, Bing/Banda, Bhediyar, Mali, Kamar, Dhunia	2.2
	Dalits (11.8%)	<b>C Dalits (c1+c2)</b>	<b>11.8</b>
		<b>c.1 Hill Dalits (8-11)</b>	<b>7.1</b>
		8 Kami	3.9
		9 Damai	1.7
10 Sarki		1.4	
11 Gaine, Badi		0.0	
<b>c.2 Terai Dalits: (12-15)</b>		<b>4.7</b>	
12 Chamar		1.2	
13 Musahar		0.8	
14 Dhusadh/Paswan, Tatma, Khatway, Bantar, Dom, Chidimar		1.6	
15 Dhobi, Halkhor, Dalit/Unidentified Dalit	1.1		
Janajati (32.2%)	Newar & Thakali (5.5%)	<b>D Janajatis (d1+d2)</b>	<b>37.2</b>
		<b>d1 Hill Janajatis (d1.1+d1.d2)</b>	<b>28.5</b>
		d1.1 Newar/Thakali (16+17)	5.5
	Other Hill Janajatis (23%)	16 Newar	5.5
		17 Thakali	0.1
		d1.2 Other Hill Janajatis (18-28)	23.0
		18 Magar	7.1
		19 Tamang	5.6
		20 Rai	2.8
		21 Gurung	2.4
		22 Limbu	1.6
		23 Sherpa	0.7
		24 Bhote, Walung, Byansi, Hyolmo	0.1
		25 Gharti/Bhujel, Kumal, Sunuwar, Baramu, Pahari, Adivasi Janajati	1.5
		26 Yakkha, Chhantal, Jirel, Darai, Dura	0.2
27 Majhi, Danuwar, Thami, Lepcha	0.7		
28 Chepang, Bote, Raji, Hayu, Raute, Kusunda	0.3		
Terai Janajatis (8.7%)	<b>d.2 Terai Janajatis (29-32)</b>	<b>8.7</b>	
	29 Tharu	6.7	
	30 Dhanuk	0.8	
	31 Rajbanshi, Tajpuriya, Gangai, Dhimal, Meche, Kisan, Munda	0.7	
32 Santhal/Satar, Dhangad/Jhangad, Koche, Pattarkatta/Kusbadiya	0.4		
Religious Minorities & Others (5.3%)	<b>E Religious Minorities</b>	<b>4.3</b>	
	33 Muslim, Churoute	4.3	
	34 Panjabi/Shikh	0.0	
	<b>35 Unidentified/Others</b>	<b>1.0</b>	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>