SESSION 2 : Community

The Impact of Modernization on Dalit identities and Occupations among Three Dalit Communities in Kathmandu, Nepal

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Introduction

Dalit Context in Nepal

In Nepal, Dalits[1] as a group occupy the lowest position in the larger society. Historically, they were ranked at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. They were often assigned tasks too ritually polluting to merit inclusion within the traditional *varna* system. The Muluki Ain of 1854 (the Old Legal Code) organized Nepali society into five main categories, the *tagadhari* (the twice born sacred thread wearing high castes), the *namasine matwali* (unenslavable liquor drinkers), *masine matwali*, (the enslavable liquor drinkers), the impure but touchable castes (including Muslims and Europeans), and the *achuts* (untouchable castes), known today as Dalits (Hofer 1979).Differential privileges and obligations were accorded to each caste and sub-caste within the system, prescribing certain hereditary occupations for some and either allowing or disallowing ownership of land for others. Different punishments for similar crimes were prescribed based on the respective caste ranks of the perpetrator and the victim – with high caste perpetrators getting lighter punishments for crimes against those beneath them in the system and *vice versa.* This system remained until the proclamation of the New Legal Code of 1964 (Dahal et al 2002; Gellner et.al 1997 and Hofer 1979).

Despite their macro-caste status, Dalits do not constitute a homogenous group. Like other ethnic/caste groups in Nepal, their heterogeneity extends to region, language, religion and culture.

[1] The word "dalit" comes from the Sanskrit root dal, and means "held under check," "suppressed," or "crushed," or, in a looser sense, "oppressed." This refers to both the people and their deprivation/dehumanization. Jotiba Phule, the founder of the Satyashodhak Samaj, a non-Brahmin movement in Maharastra, India, a social reformer and revolutionary, used this term to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the oppressed and downtrodden victims of the Indian caste-ridden society. In Nepal, the word started being used more frequently after the 1990 democracy movement, although the definition and meaning of Dalit is still contested. But the term Dalit has been generally accepted as a separate social and political category and has entered the vocabulary of official documents.

National Dalit Commission has categorized Dalits into three broad regional groups -- Hill Dalits, Madhesi Dalits and Newar Dalits.[2]Moreover, there is a clear caste hierarchy within their ranks.

While some Dalits have been upwardly mobile and have taken advantage of the limited opportunities that exist, the majority of Dalits, as historically disadvantaged groups, lag behind in their income and asset levels, in their education and other human development indicators. Dalits comprise 13.2 percent of Nepal's total population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2011). Their life expectancy stands at 50.8 years against the national average of 59 years. Their per capita income is US $39.60, which is almost the lowest in the world. Of the thirty-eight percent Nepali population living below the poverty line, the majority are Dalits. Twenty-three percent of Dalits are landless whereas 48.7 percent have less than 0.1 hectares of land. For those who have land, cultivable land is less than 1 percent. Dalit women are ranked at the lowest rung in the Nepali social structure with a high illiteracy rate (92 percent), poor health conditions and very low wages. Dalit women engage, for the most part, in agricultural operations and constitute the major workforce doing hard manual labor. They experience most acutely the interlocking oppressions of class, caste and gender and aptly referred to as "triply oppressed" (Bishwakarma 2004; Central Bureau of Statisitcs 2001; Jha 2004, Sob 2006)[3].

Today Dalits continue to suffer from discrimination and human rights abuses. A study conducted by Action Aid (2002) listed 205 existing forms of caste-based discrimination in the in Nepal. Legal protections for Dalits have been poorly implemented, and discrimination against Dalits is still very much a part of everyday life in Nepal. Dalits face a powerful combination of social discrimination and violence that force them to endure second-class status. Government inaction helps preserve this second-class citizenship. At the same time, the number of civil society groups dedicated to welfare, advocacy and political action on behalf of the disadvantaged has grown exponentially. Indeed, Dalit organizations are now a part of the international network against racism and are active in the Dalit Social Movement (Bob 2007; Kisan 2005 and Vishwakarma 2002).

Research Methodology

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted during a period of 18 months between January 2006 to July 2007, a part of a larger study drawn from the capital city, Kathmandu. Through a multi-method ethnographic approach which included in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, participant observation, field notes and documentary evidence, this paper examines the differentiation and variation in the reproduction of Dalit identities and occupations across three group samples

[2] For a detailed listing of Dalit castes provided by the National Dalit Commission, see http://www.ndc.gov.np/caste-schedul-12-np.html

[3] These statistics have to be updated from the recent census and from other sources.

comprised (1) householders from three occupationally segregated Dalit neighborhoods, (2) individual Dalit activists in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. I interviewed participants from 15 households making up a purposive stratified sample. The sample households were spread across three occupationally clustered Dalit neighborhoods of sweeper caste *(Deulas)*, metal worker caste (*Biswakarmas)* and tailor/musician caste *(Pariyars*) communities in which emerging "modern" class or SES distinctions could also be discerned. The first two groups might be considered lower income, while the *Pariyars* tended to be an upwardly mobile group. The interviewees included, wherever possible, male and female conjugal partners or parents and children over 18, ensuring gender and generational representation. Caste-based occupational status and identity still holds strongly in a more stigmatized form for both the sweeper community and metal worker community. The tailor or musician community has been able to move from a caste-based occupational status to an increasingly market-based class position (or SES), by being absorbed into the modern music industry. Their occupation has been "neutralized" or commercialized and has a modern-day entertainment function in contrast to the other two communities.

Theoretical context

This study[4] draws upon theories of space and spatiality as salient dimensions of identity formation, postcolonial feminist theories of the intersectionality of caste, class and gender, and theories of identity formation, resistance and development of consciousness and agency.

Space is very significant to this study because conflicts and claims making related to space are central production of identity in general (Gorringe 2005). Recently theorists have argued that space is as much a social construct as it is a physical entity, and this construction is significant to processes of inclusion and exclusion.[5] Social space, in other words, is enmeshed in relations of power. In this study the concepts of everyday space and organizational space are important demarcations in charting the multidimensionality, contradictions and slippages of identity formation. The everyday space is one where society is embedded in a web of affective and routine relations. This space denotes the everyday worlds of the Dalits and the shifts between modernity and tradition, where the traditional variables of caste as an occupational, social and symbolic category encounter fragments from the distant discourse of nation-state-based legal rights. The political space in which organizations operate and which provides them with a discourse of legitimacy denotes the market place of citizenship and rights. It is

[4] Due to space limitations, I am unable to discuss the theoretical context in detail.

[5] See D. Massey 1994, Hetherington 1998, and Escobar 2001 for a more theoretical account of this relationship between social movements and social space.

here that subjects are invested with rights and freedoms, which mediate their claims-making (Green 1993; Chandhoke 2002).

As far as physical space is concerned, poor Dalits in Nepal (as in India) are also located in peri-urban spaces on the outskirts of the city because of historical residential segregation justified by the Hindu moral code (P. Sainath in Devi 2000: 50, cited in Gorringe 2005). The significance of Kathmandu (modernizing urban space) as this study's field-site must be pointed out. Given that Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world and its heavy reliance on foreign aid for "development," the common assumption is that development should be delivered to the villages (Pigg 1992; Tasuro 2001). Therefore, most poverty alleviation and development programs focus on areas outside Kathmandu. In the process of delivering development to the villages (a project which is undeniably critical), the urban poor tend not to fall under the "target groups" of donors or programs. For example, poor urban Dalits are neglected, since donors and development practitioners assume that city Dalits are far better off than their rural counterparts, and, by virtue of their location, may not face problems of poverty, exclusion and caste discrimination. As this study demonstrates, the Dalit communities selected for this research referred to this exclusion as "*Battimuni adhyaro,*" meaning that their situation is one of "darkness underneath the light" (of the city of Kathmandu). In other words, even though Kathmandu is the capital city, and well electrified in contrast to the many rural areas in Nepal, the situation of Dalit communities right within its boundaries is one of darkness, neglect and exclusion. The significance of urban Dalits as a distinct caste category, therefore, needs to be emphasized along with the more dynamic intersection of class and market economy in a modernizing urban context. The selection of three urban Dalit communities of metalworkers, sweepers and tailors/musicians living in discrete neighborhoods helps to explain the urban dimension of Dalit oppression. Moreover, as an urban center, Kathmandu is a laboratory for the emergence of market-driven class structures and for the growth of new types of economic and political consciousness which make this study even more compelling.

Kathmandu is home to several Dalit communities and the headquarters of all major Dalit advocacy organizations. The urban setting of the study provided an opportunity to investigate whether (and how) urbanity, urbanization and modernization subvert communal bases of caste and facilitate the growth of market-based individual class identities. The circumstances of the musician/tailor caste offer the clearest example of how urbanization has led to the creation of new intersections with class.

Identity: Identities are constructed and shifting, not fixed, contextual entities, which can be negotiated, contested and reformulated as categories of representation. A study of identity becomes above all a study of the process of the politics of social relations. Identities may also be forced and imposed as a result of wider inequalities of power (Chakrabarty 2003; Fernandez 1996; Goddard 2003; Kumar 1997; Jenkins 2003; Mendelsohn and Baxi 1994; Omvedt 1994). Identities and consciousness

are influenced by space and boundaries (Massey and Jess 1995; Rose 1998; Low 2001). Everyday space and organizational space generate different levels of consciousness of those wider social relations, and comprehend different levels of identity formation. Organizations play a key role in mobilizing their group members and the larger society, and in the process of destabilizing, deconstructing and transforming identities. At the same time, the importance of the everyday as "raw material" for wider civil-society political mobilization, and as itself an autonomous site of more muted political negotiation, cannot be ignored. Everyday mind-frames and the everyday world should not be underestimated as "passive." Dorothy Smith (1987) questions the seemingly "normal" or "routine" events and relationships of our daily lives and the power relations that structure them. Feminists, she suggests, should ask questions that are generated by women's everyday lives.

Intersectionality of Caste, Class, and Gender*:* Feminists have used the concept of "intersectionality" to illuminate the interlocking hierarchies of identity that characterize individual experiences and the production of social life (Chow, Wilkinson, and Zinn 1996; Collins 1990; Fereer Lorber and Hess 1999). Collins (1990: 296-8) uses the term "the matrix of domination" which includes gender but also class, race, global location, sexual preference and age. Lendermann and Brantly (2000) call these intersecting vectors of oppression and privilege. The privilege exercised by some men and women turns on the oppression of other women and men. However, the way these vectors intersect markedly affects the degree to which a common standpoint is affirmed. Among factors facilitating this affirmation are the group's existence over time, its sense of its own history as a group, its location in relatively segregated, identifiable spaces and its development of an intra-group system of social organizations and knowledge for coping with oppression. Postcolonial feminist scholars have taken this paradigm and have added caste to the matrix (Deshpande 2002; Kapadia 1995;Rao 2003;Sob 2006). It is crucial to examine how the three axes of identity – caste, class and gender – interact. The statuses of women and men are not necessarily identical on any of the non-gender axes. For instance, family groups that are upwardly mobile are ascending the class ladder because the educated male members of these families have succeeded in getting salaried jobs. But though most economists automatically assume that all members of an upwardly mobile family are of the same social class, feminist research has shown how mistaken such a view can be, since it ignores the blatant economic inequality and unequal access to resources that often exist within families.

Caste and Social Mobility: This study is closely aligned with the perspective that the historical specificity of the social formations of Nepal reside in the modes of coexistence and interactions of class and caste, rather than in the simple preeminence of one or the other. Weber (1967) has shown long ago the close association between class and informally hereditary status groups. In Weberian and culturalist paradigms, class cultures have always accreted around particularistic variables, symbols and lifestyles (often associated with select bloodlines), so that elite groups might

be solidified out of a convergence of class *and* caste features. Among Dalits, class differences emerge from both preexisting caste variables and non-traditional market variables. Despite the commonality of their status as former "untouchables," occupational groupings among them are hierarchically ranked, presenting different life chances and opportunities for social mobility. At the same time, access to education, income and consumer goods present the possibility of some transcendence of caste status. Researchers note that high castes continue to have disproportionate access to wealth and status, but the world of consumer goods offers lower castes a new, secular route of ascent in the social hierarchy. Class is thus emerging as a mode of social organization, an idiom of social life that competes with the logic of caste by structuring hierarchy around competition instead of initial endowments of karman and ritual purity (Kapadia 2002; Liechty 2003; Rankin 2004).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The sections below provide an analytical discussion on the differentiation of identities across the three Dalit occupational groups based on research findings under recurring themes, i.e meanings of Dalit identity, experiences of caste discrimination, gender dimension of caste discrimination, experience of Dalit activists and a brief discussion on the efforts of Dalit organizations

Dalit Identity

Overall, all three communities (of sweepers, metalworkers and tailor/musicians) are hesitant to call themselves Dalits because of the stigma attached to castes that were historically considered untouchables. The lower income metalworkers and sweeper caste talked about being stigmatized and discriminated by the neighbors and other people around once their identity was known. In contrast, the upwardly mobile tailor/musician caste women totally rejected their Dalit identity. There were important differences in the way people in the three communities understood their identity as Dalits – what the term Dalit meant and their own identity as low-caste people.

For the *Deulas*, the term Dalit has led more to confusion because Newars are also considered an ethnic group[6]. Although listed as hill Dalits by the Dalit commission, there were mixed views about whether they wanted to stay as Dalits or not. Unfortunately, the *Newari adivasi* movement has not addressed the complexity of caste issues faced by low caste Newars. A 65 year-old woman pointed out that other *Newar* lower castes face discrimination but they refuse to identify as Dalits. She pointed out that, for example, the *Kapali* castes (formerly musicians and death specialists) were still not

[6] See Gellner, David N. 2008. "Newars as Janjatis" for an understanding of why Newars are considered ethnic groups. Also, See Parish, Stephen M. 1996. Hierarchy and Its discontents: Culture and the Politics of Consciousness in Caste Society for caste dynamics in the Newari society.

allowed to participate in some *Newari* religious festivals. She reasoned that if their low caste and Dalit status was irrelevant, then why were they still being discriminated against? *Kapalis* persist in denying their low caste status and regrettably do not want to fight for their rights.

Many respondents seemed upset with the label because of the stigma attached to it. They note that "Dalit" sounds degrading and they do not view themselves any less than other castes. The sweeper caste, commonly known as *Podaes* (which is considered derogatory, literally denoting sweepers and toilet cleaners*),* would prefer to call themselves "*Deula." Deula* means to take turns in temples as god's gatekeepers (*deutalai palo dinu*). They proudly note that even the king used to receive *prashad* (holy offerings) from their hands when he came to the temple. They want to conceal their *Podae* (caste) identity by writing *Deula* as their surnames, which sounds more respectable. They write *Podae* (caste) in their citizenship cards. They would rather emphasize their "god's gatekeeper" role, although not everyone is active in that role. The *Deula* status conceals the stigmatized status of the sweeper or *Podae.* A 19-year-old respondent said in a sad tone that when her friends ask her what *Deula* means she simply says, "*Newar*," wanting to emphasize only her ethnic identity, and her non-*Newar* friends do not probe further. Many people in Kathmandu do not know that the surname *Deula* is that of the *Podae* caste since this mode of identification is a fairly recent practice. The *Podae* (caste) identity is not concealed for lack of reason. Many adolescents have lost friends once they have revealed their Dalit identity. They have been mistreated and humiliated in school and have refused to go back for fear of being called "*Podaes*."

Respondents in the metalworker (*Biswakarma*) community understand their lowly and outside position when they are still excluded from upper caste spaces like temples, grocery stores and teashops. Many have used surnames that are similar to upper caste names. They admit that the surnames similar to upper caste surnames work to their advantage because people treat them nicely until they find out that they are Dalits. Despite identifying themselves as "Dalits," they are still hesitant to bring up caste issues and avoid revealing their caste in a bid for assimilation into the society. Moreover, being a Dalit has a cost, what Bennet (2006) aptly calls "the caste penalty as this has resulted in discrimination and exclusion. Many Dalits in Kathmandu are denied rental accommodations and services once they reveal their caste and Dalit children are still treated badly in school (Parajuli 2006). Caste and ethnic identity are clearly socio-cultural and structural barriers to ending discrimination, poverty reduction and economic growth (Bennett 2006).

The upwardly mobile *Pariyar* community of the tailor/musician caste does not identify as Dalits. They do not agree with the way the term Dalit is used. They perceive "Dalit" as a condition of the poor and oppressed because in the words of one respondent, "we are neither poor nor oppressed." So they should not be called Dalits. A respondent's question to me captures the concerns of all the respondents from the *Pariyar* community, "Now, who would you call a Dalit -- a poor, dirty, drunken

Brahmin in a rural area or us?" They also feel that "Dalit" is a self-imposed negative term that provides others an opportunity to look down upon low castes regardless of their economic status. This term reinforces the negative stereotypes and negative self-images of low-caste people. They also view this relic of the past as a temporary condition, which will go away eventually. The members of this group view themselves as middle class and prefer to hold on to their current class status rather than their past caste status. They insist that caste-based discriminatory practices are irrelevant for them because of their relative class privilege. A mother noted, "We live in the city, we are economically self-sufficient and our children go to good schools. In fact we have tenants that are of higher castes."

On the one hand, middle class *Pariyars* reject the stigmatizing part of their caste identity that condemns them as low-caste or untouchable, i.e. their identity as a tailor caste or *Damai*. On the other hand, they have a positive identification with their caste identity as musicians, artists and performers. By referring to themselves as members of the *Pariyar* community, they emphasize their cultural identity. At the same time, they do not want to talk about the historical conditions that relegated them to the role of musicians. Instead, they attribute their ability to play music to their inherent talent, aptly expressed as "it being in the blood." An interesting observation was that some of the women had given up tailoring and had adopted such professions as teaching music in schools. While they want to give up the tailor part of their historically relegated caste identity, they want to hold on to the music part. With the boom in the music industry, their status is now elevated and they feel that their talents are respected and have a place in the market. They also have access to cosmopolitan networks in Kathmandu. The identity of middle class *Pariyars* may be viewed as a process of ethnicization of caste identity.

Experiences of Discrimination

Despite living in Kathmandu ("modern" urban space), Dalits still face discrimination, although the nature of the discrimination may differ from community to community. In this research, all respondents acknowledged that discrimination has declined since historical times, and that their children will not have to go through what they and their ancestors went through. This was an achievement in itself. Most respondents feel that caste-based discrimination has more to do with age or generational differences.

Unlike the lower class *Deulas* and *Biswakarmas*, the middle-class *Pariyars* claimed that they did not face discrimination and that caste issues were almost irrelevant for them in this "modern age." The majority were born and brought up in the city. They did not have to depend on anybody because they had their own property and lived in their own houses. Moreover, they did not eat out much, nor did they have to frequent tea shops, and city temples allowed anonymity. In other words, they did not find themselves in situations which exposed them to discrimination. As artists, they do not feel

discrimination in the workplace. Many of them were well-established in the music market and had acquired respected status. They tend to overlook cases of discrimination, viewing certain situations as temporary.

The class privilege and success of the *Pariyar* community allowed them to attribute discrimination to the behavior of Dalits. *Pariyars* stressed how religious and good they were and that they did not drink alcohol in public places or use foul language; also, they did not want to have fun all the time (all stereotypes of Dalits). They stress that they are hardworking. They feel that Dalits are treated badly because they give the rest of the society a chance to point fingers at them by drinking and not behaving properly. They are also critical of non-Dalits drinking and behaving badly but not getting labeled as such. In a way, *Pariyars'* claim of modernity and morality supports findings of Liechty's (2003) study of middle classes in Kathmandu who claim the moral middle and feel that they are appropriately modern. According to Liechty, the local middle class comprises those people carving out a new cultural space which they explicitly locate in language and material practice, between their class 'others' above and below. Middle class *Pariyars* proudly note that they have interactions with people from high castes and classes. They eagerly embrace a caste-neutral middle-class status and discourse because it represents the most solid hope for the undoing of any lingering caste residues. In a way, they might be seen as being in the vanguard of the invention of a caste-denying middle class modernity.

In contrast, poor Dalits admit their drinking habits with humor and irony, and remark that without drinking a little after a tiring day, life gets difficult. I observed alcoholism among men in both the metal worker and sweeper communities. Some women too drank their home-brewed alcohol. Because *Pariyars* have more individualistic ways of explaining their own situation, they do not criticize structural inequalities as much as the lower class communities of *Deulas* and *Biswakarmas*.

In the case of *Deulas* (sweepers), respondents felt that discrimination has slowly declined in the city, especially in places of work, due to modernization and their employers' open attitudes. Older respondents said they were treated well by their employers because they were judged by their work rather than their caste. They had actually observed changes in attitudes over the years—for example, previously they were not allowed entry into some office spaces and did only cleaning work; now, office administrators did not hesitate to ask them to buy and serve food and drinks during meetings. Untouchability practices were less common in the offices.

The most pressing problem for the community was that of employment. Their caste identity no longer guarantees them their traditional jobs as sweepers and cleaners in the city. Previously the Kathmandu municipality and other government offices had guaranteed jobs for sweepers but now this practice has ended and the opportunities are supposedly open for all. The quota system which protected them before had been discontinued. The jobs used to provide benefits and pensions. The unemployed

respondents narrated the difficulty of finding jobs because of employment opportunities favoring high caste *Bahuns and Chettris,* some of whom knew people in high places and used networks to get jobs. Respondents seemed upset that upper caste persons accept the job of sweeping and cleaning but still practice untouchability. While the upper castes are willing to do lower caste jobs because it benefits them economically, they still want to maintain their higher caste status socially. This contradiction seemed untenable and intolerable because *Deulas* see their occupational rights being taken away by other castes and they do not have the education or skills to opt for other professions.

Moreover, the new generation is losing out badly. Even though they may manage to study up to the 10th grade (because of high dropout rates and the recent trend of regular schooling, even 10th grade is a big deal), they are unable to compete with other castes in the open labor market and they no longer have special access to their traditional jobs. Many are underpaid in the private and semi-private sector due to subcontracting of their occupations. Their Dalit status, their poverty and their inability to negotiate for fear of losing the job have resulted in super-exploitation of their labor. A sweeper working in the airport told me that she earns only Rs.1900 (around $28) a month because the middle-man takes a large cut. A 38 year-old man working in a private organization earns around Rs.2, 500 (around $35) with no benefits. He has received no raise in salary despite working for 19 years. He and the other workers are scared to organize for fear of being fired.

The youth express different dreams than their parents. They are not interested in cleaning jobs. A 20 year-old young woman told me that she does not want to follow the traditional occupation of her parents. She was taking computer classes to add to her skills and waiting for her 10th grade results. Even though she failed once, she tried again. She imagined herself being well-dressed and employed as a receptionist in a clean environment. She said she preferred an office environment and a desk job over holding a broom. A19 year-old Deula male told me he was interested in doing hotel management.

In the case of *Biswakarma* workers, the older male generation is losing out. Their old profession of making agricultural tools is rendered obsolete as Kathmandu moves toward a service-oriented economy and an open market. Some are still active in the contractual system and are paid very little. Members of the new male generation who are willing to take on the modern version of metalwork, for example, making silver ornaments, are doing relatively well if they find good employers and get good orders. However, some are severely cheated and exploited. Many respondents talked about how boys (some as young as five) are kept in conditions similar to bonded labor under the pretext of training in workshops owned by Dalits (*Biswakarma*) themselves. They are paid nothing for three years and are not allowed to go home. Once their training is over, they are paid only around Rs. 500 a month. The respondents in this community felt that this exploitative apprenticeship might benefit their children by guaranteeing them employment later. This finding contradicts earlier studies

that suggested that modernization has in fact provided good employment opportunities to Dalits (Rankin 2004).

Biswakarma women are not involved in making agricultural tools. They worked in the fields and looked after their homes. When there was seasonal labor, they worked for upper castes, close to their homes. Some of them also worked in or looked after other people's fields (mostly owned by upper castes). They sometimes operated on a system of sharecropping, splitting the crop fifty-fifty with the owners. During the rice planting and harvesting season, I found out that the wage rate for men was around Rs.150-Rs.200 per day and Rs.100-Rs.120 for women. When I asked why the rates were discriminatory, the rationale given was that men have a heavier work-load, including thrashing the grain, operating machinery, and heavy lifting, and that women have a lighter work-load. However, I observed women do heavy labor as well, carrying heavy loads and thrashing the grains.

Gender Dimension of Caste Discrimination

The caste discrimination that Dalits face has a very strong gender dimension. I found more instances of women expressing discontent about discrimination and manifesting resistance within their everyday space. Women are those involved in the day-to-day activities that entail the most routinely performed rituals of discrimination—getting water, buying groceries, going to temples and performing religious duties, and taking their children to school. Perhaps this is a result of the constant re-enactment of humiliating rituals of difference and subservience marking, frustrating, and limiting women's daily access to subsistence goods and services in the reproductive and consumer spheres. More palpably apparent was the fact that women feel the oppression on a day-to-day basis more acutely than men because of the gendered division of labor, general gender ideologies and gender role expectations. The "community" for Dalit women is considered a site of disempowerment (DFID and World Bank 2006) where they have to interact with upper castes in "informal" circumstances that provide more room for arbitrariness. This is not to understate the discrimination Dalit men face. They are also victims of discrimination in their workplaces and the community, and are marginalized by the state in several areas of civic and political life. In the household, however, they have male privilege. Moreover, feminists and others have pointed out that the sectors of consumption (of goods and services) and reproduction—typically women's spheres—have been historically devalued relative to the sector of production. I found women to be more vocal about issues of discrimination. Women also shared their experiences of discrimination[7] coming from high caste women that pertained to water issues, as the

[7] Although Dalits experience discrimination, they are not passive muted subjects. The larger study found Dalits resisting in many instances and asserting their agency. This could not be addressed in this paper due

community has no taps and has to get water from a common well. Since men are exempt from this tedious task, they enjoy a distance from this everyday inter-caste interaction and do not have to deal with the resulting frustrations. So men tended to downplay discrimination. From their perspective, caste discrimination has waned and things would change with time. Women spoke of the difficulties and the daily insults they faced from both their husbands and high caste men and women. Women also seemed disappointed with their husbands' passivity. Husbands were sometimes more concerned with the sexual/gender comportment of their wives (as an apparent reflection of their own manhood and power of control) than with the latter's experiences of caste discrimination. One 45-year old woman noted: "The head of the household does not speak up and that makes it uncomfortable for women. We are accused of loitering around and talking to other men."

My observations suggest that Dalit households are patriarchal in nature, characterized by gender hierarchy and male domination. This is not surprising given the patriarchal nature of Nepali society in general (Bhattachan 2001; Acharya 2003). Although patriarchal domination is prevalent in different degrees among the three Dalit communities, it is important to note that patriarchy is not monolithic and studies have indeed found that lower caste women have more autonomy than high caste women (Cameron 1998; Kapadia 1995; Sathar and Kazi 2000 and Watkins 1996;). According to Kapadia (1995), the inferiority of women to men is accepted in all castes but there are differences in the degree to which this is the case. Differences in region, caste and class significantly affect the status of women, and these need to be considered. Cameron (1998) notes that patriarchal ideology associated with high-caste families in Nepal does not apply to women of lower caste. Gender and caste are seen as mutually constituting domains of social life as well as autonomous practices in certain contexts. Gender relations ultimately serve to reproduce caste hierarchy because the upper castes draw on aspects of both caste and gender to differentiate themselves from lower castes. Also, gender is directed toward reproduction (where both high caste and low caste women are involved in domestic chores and child care) and hence it is vital to the system's production of hierarchical differences.

From a gender perspective, the research examined the differences in women's status and meanings of gender across occupational (sweeper, metalworker, and tailor/musician) and ethnic (*Newar* and other) communities. In the metal worker community and tailor/musician community, where ownership and occupation are male-dominated, women are more dependent, enjoy less autonomy and suffer more inequality. The case of sweeper women (*Deulas*) presents a unique case. Their caste occupation being gender neutral, women have been important contributors to the household; they make important decisions at home and enjoy more autonomy. Many serve as

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to space limitation. I discuss different types of resistance in detail in the larger study. See Kharel (2010)"The Dialectics of Identity and Resistance among Dalits in Nepal" (http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/7580/).

household heads. Gender ideologies also seemed relatively liberal in this compared to the other two Dalit communities. However, overall women in all the three communities were disproportionately involved in reproductive labor (i.e., household work and child care)[8].

Perspectives of Dalit Activists

The experiences and perspectives of Dalit activists interviewed for this study corroborate the situation of Dalits in the communities described above. Dalit activists experience a split between their everyday life and political life . As they inhabit both these spaces (everyday space and political space), they are forced to negotiate multiple and sometimes conflicting levels of identity. Typically, they experience a disconnect between their everyday/private space of home, community and family, where they are discriminated against on a personal level, and the public space of political consciousness, activism and leadership, where they may attain a certain level of public respect. Dalit activists note that they have to live with this contradiction every day. This makes fighting for change difficult as expressed by one activist, "We need to find a place to stay to be able to fight for our freedom. Yet, we cannot reveal our true identity when we come home." Many Dalit leaders in Nepal are fearful of being found out and being evicted from their rented homes because of their caste identity. They are severely hampered in their public struggle against caste discrimination by their private experiences of such discrimination.

From a gender perspective, the biggest issue raised by female activists was the restriction on mobility of women, which holds even for female activists. Although restrictions may be sometimes due to well intentioned concerns—justified as necessary for protection, safety, love and care—they really limit employment opportunities for women and increase dependency on men. Female activists noted how both Dalit and non-Dalit female activists are limited when they are denied permission for overnight or weekend out-of-town workshops and training. Men learn a lot from these workshops and benefit immensely.

Women activists talk about the difficulty in making it in male-dominated organizations. They complained about the paternalistic attitudes of male colleagues and not being taken seriously. Studies of gender and organizations note the gendered structures of organizations, the practices and policies that perpetuate unequal power, rewards and opportunities, the interpersonal interactions that confirm and recreate gendered patterns, and ideologies that support these processes (Acker 1998). During the research, when the issue of low representation of female staff in organizations came up, most male activists claimed that they were eager to hire women but there weren't enough qualified and educated

[8] For a detailed gender dynamics of the larger study, see Kharel (2010)"The Dialectics of Identity and Resistance among Dalits in Nepal" (http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/7580/).

Dalit women. Some said that Dalit women simply were not interested. Countering this statement, a Dalit female activist asserted:

> I do not agree that there aren't enough educated and qualified women among Dalits when it comes to position appointments. The men do not bother to look out for qualified Dalit women. Why can't they communicate with us, take the initiative to find out about capable women? If they ask me, I can show them and bring the women to them. This is a common excuse to not hire women.

At the same time female activists note that it is important for Dalit women to raise their own voices, stand up for themselves and take a more proactive approach to address their own problems. They understand the entrenched patriarchal nature of Nepali society that includes organizational structures. In the face of a lack of assertiveness and self-representation, no-one will come to the rescue of Dalit women. In the words of a Dalit female lawyer, "When I am hungry, I am not going to feel full if you (pointing to the interviewer) eat. I have to eat myself." To sum up, Dalit female activists are fighting both caste and gender discrimination.

Efforts of Dalit Organizations

The preceding sections showed the complexities of Dalit identity and discrimination. Within this backdrop, it is important to briefly show the efforts made by Dalit organizations to address Dalit concerns in Nepal. There are two kinds of organization that voice the concern of Dalits: one kind calls for gradual inclusion of Dalits into the mainstream through advocacy and development programs. Its target groups are drawn not only from Dalit communities but also include people from other disadvantaged groups. This category of organizations includes the majority of the development organizations in Nepal that target the poor and marginalized among whom Dalits feature prominently. The other kind of organization calls for the strengthening of Dalit identity and empowerment of Dalits as a self-conscious group; the abolition of caste and casteism, including the power and privilege of the upper-castes; the abolition of "untouchability," and affirmative action for representation of Dalits in educational institutions, government institutions and parliamentary seats. The latter category, which is more relevant for my study, may be further divided into two kinds of Dalit Organizations in Nepal. The first are large national Government supported Organizations such as the National Dalit Commission, the Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO) and Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO) and NGOs, including, the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), Jana Utthan Pratisthan (JUP), the Jagaran Media Center (JMC) and the Samatha Foundation. These large NGOs have partnerships with international non-governmental organizations and also receive donor

funding. The second are the many small Dalit organizations working at the community level who use local money or may receive support indirectly from the large Dalit organizations like Dalit NGO Federation (DNF). All Dalit NGOs perform advocacy/activist functions alongside traditional development activities. The DNF is an umbrella organization of Dalit NGOs, with a membership of 344Dalit organizations. The DNF aims to eradicate caste-based discrimination through the process of empowerment, networking and alliance building among Dalit and pro-Dalit institutions (www.dnfnepal.org). It is emerging as a powerful converging point for the movement (World Bank and DFID 2006). The Dalit NGO Federation envisions a discrimination-free society in which all people including Dalits can live with respect and dignity. Many donor organizations have supported the Dalit cause, and the development assistance that Dalits receive falls within these thematic areas (Bishwakarma 2006).

1. Advocacy programs: workshops, interaction programs, mass meetings, face-to-face public hearings, lobbying and mobilization.
2. Capacity building: training for staff members, board members and frontline workers.
3. Legal Aid: free legal support, paralegal development, legal awareness training and case investigation.
4. Need based: income generation support (training, saving & credit, seed money, and income oriented programs), health and education (scholarships, awareness raising and empowerment).

The Nepali Dalit Social Movement has been supported by United Nations organizations, and other international organizations and associations. There has been considerable influence from the Indian Dalit and anti-caste movements. Dr. B. R Ambedkar is a source of inspiration for Nepali Dalit leaders. They celebrate International Day against Racism and draw upon the speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King. They also draw upon the history of apartheid in South Africa. In general, these Dalit activists appear very focused on international advocacy.

Most NGOs and INGOs have adopted the human rights discourse which has also led to the internationalization of the Nepali Dalit movement and shaped their rhetoric and strategies (Gorringe 2005). Supporters of the human rights approach note that governments with bad records can be shamed through international pressure (Coomaraswamy 2002). Dalit activists in Nepal use human rights discourse to make the case for the importance of human dignity and to expose the inhumane aspects of caste discrimination. At the same time they are also aware of the criticism of the Human rights approach especially from Dalit activists associated with political parties, mainly being viewed as a western agenda. This approach has enabled Dalit NGOs to form alliances with organizations all over

the world. Participation of Nepali Dalits in international spaces like the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), other UN conferences, and World Social Forums, allows them to bypass their own governments and appeal to the global community. Moreover, they feel that in a globalized world, it is important to form alliances and expand their network with oppressed people all over the world.

Despite the efforts made by the Nepali Dalit social movement, Dalits in the communities chosen for this research were neglected and excluded from the discourse that is occurring on their behalf. Living in the city has not improved their conditions. Respondents selected for this research were unable to identify national-level Dalit leaders and Dalit activists. None of the Dalit organizations or political parties had taken intervention programs into the metal worker and sweeper communities. Respondents recalled vaguely that government officials and, occasionally, representatives of organizations (which they could not name) had come now and then to collect information and ask for votes during elections. They were surprised to find out that many Dalit organizations existed in the city.

This study shows that Civil-society organizations are relatively impervious to the messy realities of communities that fall outside the political profile of oppressed groups that they normally work with. The leaders and organizations do not go to the communities in Kathmandu; the latter are expected to go to them. The responsibility for organizing and mobilizing and approaching organizations and state agencies is placed on Dalit communities who have little knowledge, means, and time.

Conclusion

In sum, this paper has demonstrated that class, gender and generation are crucial mediating factors in Dalit identities in Kathmandu. Within an inter-caste context, the most profound difference may be between the upwardly mobile, residentially integrated *Pariyar* community and the enduringly caste-defined, segregated sweeper and metal worker communities. It is up for debate as to whether the former represents the transcendence of class over caste or a peculiar intersection between/combination of the two. The findings have revealed the complexities of the lived experiences of Dalits at neglected points of intersection, i.e., across caste, class, gender, region and space. Class differences are evident among the three communities of *Pariyars*, *Biswakarmas* and *Deulas*. Having faced social exclusion and discrimination for centuries, Dalits today are also struggling to adapt to the fast changes that the processes of social and economic restructuring have engendered. These processes have further marginalized a large majority of Dalits and at the same time provided opportunities to a few.

The study revealed strong evidence of the continuing embeddedness of caste in Kathmandu. Their everyday experiences of discrimination force both community and political actors to strategically reveal or conceal their Dalit status depending on the situation. Despite the caste

neutralizing forces, living in Kathmandu has not necessarily improved the social and economic conditions of the majority of Dalits in this study. Modernization has not provided Dalits better employment opportunities. Their traditional occupations are threatened and challenged as all caste groups compete for jobs that used to be done by Dalits. Dalits in poor communities are not in a position to compete in the open labor market because of their lack of education and skills that such a market demands and lack of socio-economic and political intervention programs in Kathmandu. Dalit organizations have attempted to address these problems. Yet, they have not been able to reach Dalit communities in Kathmandu. Their efforts are fraught with challenges.

Nepal is going through a time of crucial political transition. The Constituent Assembly election has just been conducted. It is hard to predict what kind of Dalit identities will emerge in the future and how low caste groups will give meaning and relate to their identities. This will depend largely on how the new constitution will represent Dalits and how Dalit organizations will reach out to the Dalit masses. In the case of Nepal, this research raises further questions. Will Dalits of Nepal get a good deal in the new constitution? Will the ongoing Dalit movement percolate to and reach Dalit masses so that everyday space becomes as well an organized political space? Will poor Dalits in marginalized communities be able to reap the benefits of special provisions? Will the new political developments lift them out of "the darkness beneath the lights of Kathmandu"? Will the new constitution be able to hold non-Dalits accountable (for caste-based crimes), given that laws are already in place but implementation has been extremely weak?

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The Integration of Minority Malay Immigrants into the Core Communities in Sri Lanka: Challenges to the Malay Ethnicity

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Abstract

Ethnicity of minority group shifts with a strong influence of core ethnic groups-majority communities in a plural society. Thus, the minority ethnic groups and their members may adopt different identity patterns. As such, individuals or members of minority community who give up their ethnic identity and become identified with the larger society are integrated (Phinney, 2001:4822). Malay immigrants in Sri Lanka are largely the descendants of Malay Archipelago during the Dutch and British colonial period in the mid-17th to mid-20th century (Hussainmiya, 1990:38). Malay immigrants in Sri Lanka constitute for 0.3 percent of the total population. Since Malays are small in numbers and dispersed widely throughout Sri Lanka, living side by side with the core ethnic groups such as Sinhalese, Tamils, and Moors, the prospect for integration of Malays into the host communities is significantly high compared to other communities in Sri Lanka. Thus, this paper examines the degree of integration of Malay immigrants into the core communities in Sri Lanka and its challenges on their ethnicity. A qualitative methodology has been adapted to this study employing the techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions, and observation, coupled with using the available literature related to the topic.

The findings show that, unlike the other minority ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, the Malay immigrants have shown a great deal of inclination towards integration into the core communities in the country endangering the ethnicity of Malay immigrants. Lack of stereotyping and discrimination against Malays, shared religion, interspersed settlement, growing influence of westernization and urbanization, and flexible interpretation of religious principles are some of the reasons attributed to the integration of Malay immigrants. Most strikingly, the finding also reveals that despite the Malays are integrated with the core groups, they have significantly perpetuated their culture and ethnicity in the country and become plural in outlook as they prefer to identify themselves as Malays ethnically or racially, while being a Sri Lankan culturally or nationally.

Key Words: Ethnicity, integration, pluralism, stereotyping and discrimination

1. Introduction

"Ethnic identity discourse" has become so crucial during recent decades because questions concerning ethnic identity have become so significant socially, culturally, and politically in many of the societies we study. Although, the concept of ethnic identity has been explored both in sociology and anthropology for the last century, it became a more prominent discourse only towards the end of 1970s, particularly with growing cultural and religious revivalism that posed challenges to nation-states or countries like Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, and Sudan are classic examples to understand how ethnic conflicts, the foundation of which was ethnicity, have submerged the people into disarray, resulting in innumerable loss of lives, homelessness and displacement within or outside of their own countries.

Ethnic identity shifts in different contexts with a strong influence of other cultures in a plural society. As a result, ethnic groups and their members or individuals may adopt different identity patterns. In this context, individuals and groups who give up their ethnic identity and become identified with the larger society are assimilated (Phinney, 2001:4822). This assimilation takes place either in the absence of identity markers or when there is little desire to maintain one's ethnic identity or culture (ibid: 4823). Ethnic identity can also be renegotiated when individuals and groups move across national borders as migrants, refugees, workers, and other travellers(Phinney, 2001:4822).

A change in their ethnic identity may occur with a number of influencing factors that include age and generation of ethnic groups. As a result of these varied influences of dominant groups, sub-ethnic groups and their individual members are likely to be integrated with the former.

Sri Lanka is the home of a multicultural society with culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse communities. Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims are categorized as major distinct ethnic communities in Sri Lanka in terms of their language, territory, history, religion and culture. However, Sri Lanka has recently been in the popular discourse and debate among the scholars by virtue of the civil war that ravaged the country over the last three decades and that this had resulted in the death of over 100,000 people, mostly minorities, and forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands more internally and externally(Imthiyas & Iqbal,2011:376). The lack of understanding between the majority and minority ethnic groups, and certain political ideologies and policies formulated by the government in favour of the majority community are attributed to the protracted war in the country.

Sri Lankan Malay immigrants were largely the descendants of Malay Archipelago during the Dutch and British colonial period in the mid-17th to mid-20th century (Hussainmiya, 1990: 38) Malay immigrants in Sri Lanka constitute for 0.3 percent of the total population in Sri Lanka,[1] numbering about 54,782 at present, and are also Muslims in terms of the shared religion of Islam with Sri Lankan

[1] Collected from the Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka, 2001.

Moors and the tiny minority groups such as Memons and Borahs. Malays are highly concentrated in Colombo, Gampaha, Hambantota, Kandy, Badulla, Kurunegala, Trinomalee, and Nuwaraeliya districts in Sri Lanka(Saldin, 2006).

It is significant to note here that Sri Lankan Malay immigrants are identified as *Ja Minissu*[2] by the Sinhalese, as *Java Manusar* [3] by the Tamils and *Malai karar* [4] by the Moors(Hussainmiya,1990:07).Moreover, Sri Lankan Malays were predominantly categorized as Malays by the British colonial rulers during 19th century(ibid:38), though they were constituted with a heterogeneous group of Easterners in terms of ethnic and linguistic background such as Bandanese, Bugis, Ambaenose, Balinese, Tiodrese, Madurese, and Sundanese(ibid:45). However, despite they were a heterogeneous community, they became identified as a single Malay community (ethnic identity) through the use of the Malay language(Hussainmiya,2010:72).

Since Malay immigrants are small in numbers and dispersed widely in the Western, Central Southern, and Eastern part of Sri Lanka, living side by side along with other ethnic groups such as Sinhalese, Tamils, and Moor, the prospect of integration of Malay immigrants into the host communities is significantly high compared to other communities in Sri Lanka.

The long term existence of a minority community, in fact, in a given context is contingent on how the community perpetuates their identity markers through various means despite their existence is in a multi-cultural context. As such, an extensive form of integration may lead to the erasure of distinct social and cultural inventory of an ethnic group in a particular context. Scholars like Hussainmiya(1990), Samat(2001), Rifai (2008),and Suwarn Vajracharya(2009), have concluded that Malay immigrants have become naturalized with other Sri Lankans due to the influence of different factors. However, their studies lack empirical evidence to substantiate their arguments and some of them are not considered as scholarly studies, but website articles containing four (4) to five (5) pages. Thus, this study attempts to make a scholarly contribution focusing on ethnic identity formation of Malay immigrants and the challenges to their ethnicity due to integration into the core ethnic groups in the country, which has suffered a scholarly neglect over the years.

2. Research Objective and Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to examine the degree of integration of Malay immigrants into the core communities in Sri Lanka and its challenges upon their ethnicity. It is quite common and certain the moment a new ethnic group arrives in a new environment, they are promptly

[2] It is a Sinhala language term that denotes the Sri Lankan Malays.

[3] It is a Tamil language term that denotes the Sri Lankan Malays.

[4] It is also a colloquial Tamil language term that refers to Sri Lankan Malays.

adopted to the new condition. An ethnic group may continuously create or interpret its cultural tradition in the process of integration with other ethnic groups. The dynamics of the integration, generally, is such that the minority group will undergo into the process of acculturation. In integration, the nature of contact is that of an asymmetrical process by which an out-group comes to accept the values of the dominant group, or at least incorporates those values into its own value system, through "processes of interpenetration and fusion" (Park, 1924:735). This proposition of Park and Burgess may be simple and out-dated, but it provides a useful foundation that frames much of the current studies into assimilation.

The major problem with integration is that it is assumed that the minority groups will integrate into the majority groups to adapt to the majority culture and that the minorities will be accommodated by the host community. This preposition of the incorporation of minority ethnic groups into the majority groups may lead to the erasure of ethnic differences and cultural inventory of minority ethnic groups. Bergman (2000:10) argues that integration does not encourage multiculturalism whereby ethnic groups are able to understand and respect each other's cultures. Hence, integration is an on-going and complex process that is likely to change with time. For a multi-ethnic society, the concept of integration needs to be closely examined in the social context.

It is in this context that a study on the degree of integration of Sri Lankan Malay immigrants becomes extremely pertinent and significant, given the critical debates surrounding over the ethnic identity of Malay immigrants and the their integration that captures the attention of scholars at the present context.

This study was carried out mainly through a qualitative field research by using both bibliographic survey and ethnographic methods in the various parts of Sri Lanka where Malay immigrants are largely concentrated.

The field work consisted of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The first component of data collection of the field work was carried out based on in-depth interviews with informants, using the semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were conducted with 25 Malay informants living in different parts of the Sri Lanka. Two (2) focus group discussions were also conducted to gather data from Malay immigrants living in in places like Colombo-Slave Island (Western Province), and Kirinda (Southern Province). A descriptive analysis was largely used to analyse the data collected during the field work of this study.

3. Findings and Discussions

By discussing the conceptual framework of integration, this section delves into the integration of Malay immigrants into the core communities such as Sinhalese and Moors in Sri Lanka and its challenges on the ethnicity of Malay immigrants, followed by listing out the factors contributing such

an integration of Malay immigrants and the discussion on aspects of pluralism and hybridity of Malay immigrants.

Integration (structural assimilation) is the crux of the matter for Gordon (1964:71). The integration**,** an integral part of assimilation, occurs when the ethnic minority or immigrant and his/her descendants in later generations enter and become integrated into the formal social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of the host country (secondary relationships) and develops numerous long lasting personal friendships with the members of the majority group (primary relationships)(ibid: 71,73). While the former refers to a wide range of key integrative processes, including socioeconomic and spatial (residential) integration, the latter—extensive interaction within personal networks, and intermarriage—is likely to take place under conditions of status equality. Thus, it can vary from impersonal contacts within economic and political institutions to the personal contacts within neighbourhoods, friendship circles and marriages (Williams, 1977:95).

As a minority ethnic group descending from Malay Archipelago during the colonial period, particularly Dutch occupation of Sri Lanka, Malay immigrants had domiciled in the country as permanent citizens, just like others, enjoying all the rights and privileges that accorded to the other communities in the country. The minority status and their interspersed settlement amidst the core groups across the country propelled the Malay immigrants to integrate with the core groups in the personal, socio-cultural, political and economic spheres. In addition, the Malay immigrants themselves tend to integrate with core groups in the country as it is inevitable in the present competitive world, particularly in Sri Lanka. Illustrating on the significance of integration of Malays with core groups, Brigadier Bohran, vice president of Sri Lanka Malay Association, from Colombo notes:

> *Survival of fittest fits with the existence of our community. Older generation did not have economic or marketing interaction with majority communities in the country. Apart from cultural aspects, when it comes to socio-economic issue, it is imperative to interact with the other communities. With the world is changing, the generation must change to survive. Older generation does not have to make the present generation uncomfortable, because we also adopt ourselves. Otherwise, there is no future for them. Existence of our community depends on our excellence and competition. The more you interact or market yourself, the more successful you would become.*

The above excerpt of Brigadier Bohran suggests the nature of inevitability of socio-economic integration of Malay immigrants with the core groups in this competitive and fast-changing world, particularly in Sri Lanka, to empower themselves socially and economically. His remarks also point to the fact that unlike the older generation, it is imperative for the younger generation to integrate with

the core groups in the country if they were to mature themselves in various aspects. It is significant to note that survival of an ethnic group is highly contingent upon their socio-economic prosperity in a plural context. It is in this light, the role of minority Malay immigrants comes into play into the social and economic sphere of the country on par with other communities. Thus, the more the Malay immigrants empower themselves in the social, economic and political sphere, the more powerful or stronger they would become in the plural context of Sri Lanka, regardless of their minority status in the country in terms of numbers. It is also to be noted from his perspective that he feels that it is the responsibility of the older generation of Malay immigrants to encourage their younger generation towards such trend of integration with core groups for the future prosperity of the community in the country. In the same tone, Mona Packeer Ali and brother Jamal's daughter also observes:

> Mona Packeer Ali: *Integration with other community is the most important thing. We can't keep your culture or identity as it is and say we cannot get together with you all, because of our ethnic identity. As you are living in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country, you are most likely to be integrated with other communities.*
>
> Bro Jamal's daughter: *Being a Malay, I will not say that you have to be cornered yourself and interact with only Malays or Moors. As we are living in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic country, we have to integrate and interact with everyone.*

The above remarks of those two youth indicate the necessity and the need of integration of Malay immigrants with the core groups as they are a minority ethnic group in the country. Their assertions plainly show that purely because they are a minority in a plural community of Sri Lanka does not necessarily mean that they have to live in isolation from other communities, but instead, it is essential on the part of Malay immigrants to integrate with the core groups for their survival and prosperity in the country. Responses of the following informants plainly represent the dimension of integration of Malay immigrants with the core groups.

> Honieda Packeer: *Malays are integrated well with non-Malays, because they speak the vernacular languages perfectly well, and they take part in Sinhalese's wedding, funeral, and dansala(alms giving)as they live amongst them. Unlike the orthodox Moors, Malays are affable by nature, trustworthy and genuine.*
>
> Thajudeen Girsy, a business man from Colombo**:** *We have a good link with other communities- be it a majority or minority. Since we are conversant in all the languages in Sri*

Lanka, we have a very flexible relationship with all the communities. We are living in a barrowed land and don't own anything. We don't want to live in an alien world. We are playing the game with rest and taking whatever we can. Malays, in most of the companies, are in top ranks. Malays are getting mixed up or adultured. It is like salt water pollutes the fresh water. Mixing with other communities- ethnically it sounds good, but there are some negative impacts as well. In the long run, not only the Malays, but the other minorities will face the same consequences as the Malays. Erasure of ethnicity may happen, may be in 200 or 300 or 500 years time.

The above excerpts perfectly underline the degree of integration of Malay immigrants into the core groups of Sri Lanka in the impersonal level-secondary relationship, given the Malay immigrants' fluency in all the vernacular languages, their interspersed settlement among the core ethnic groups, and the minority status of Malay immigrants within the majority ethnic groups in a plural context of Sri Lanka. Mr Thajudeen Girsy accepts the fact that like other minorities in the country, Sri Lankan Malay immigrants will also face the challenge of erasure of their identity in the long run owing to their integration with the core groups, however, he contradicts this point saying that such trend or process will take so many years of time. However, in reality, what we witness today is that the impersonal integration of Malay immigrants with core groups also challenges their ethnicity in the island.

Furthermore, numerical strength of a community matters a lot in a plural context. In the case of Sri Lankan Malays, their numerical strength is very low compared to other minorities and thus they are susceptible to be shaped by the culture and language of core groups. In talking about the numerical strength of Malays, Prof Hussainmiya illustrates:

The integration of the community depends on the numerical strength. If a community is numerically less, it is likely that they may get absorbed with other communities-assimilated. The case of Malays in Kinniya is a typical example for the integration.

Prof. Hussainmiya's point drawing the case of Malay immigrants in Kinniya suggests that there is every possibility for Malay immigrants to get absorbed with the core groups in view of their little numerical strength in the country. The finding on the integration of Kinniya Malay immigrants with the Moors yields more intriguing facts. In the case of Kinniya Malay immigrants in Trincomalee district, they appear to have come to Kinniya during Colonial period when the Malay regiment stationed in Trincomalee and domiciled amidst the Moors, but the history has seen a high degree of

integration of such few numbers of Malay immigrants with Moors in the area over the years. Elaborating on their history, retired teacher Thowfeek from Kinniya observes:

> *A few Malays from Trincomalee regiment escaped and came to Kinniya during the Dutch occupation of Sri Lanka and they were intermarried to Moors as they were Muslims. Some of the Malays married Tamils after converting them into Islam.*

The above excerpt of Thowfeek is a clear representation to gauge of how Malay immigrants reached Kinniya and as such they intermarried with the core ethnic groups that resulted in an extensive level of integration of Malays. On the other hand, my field work in Kinniya and Muthur has not provided the substantial evidence to draw the line between the Moors and Malay immigrants there. The only thing that is discernable among the few of those who are believed to have descended from Malay origin or lineage in Kinniya is their physical feature parallel to the rest of the Malay immigrants living throughout the country. Apart from that, it is unlikely to trace their Malay language, culture, and other markers of Malay identity among those few Malays who are fully integrated with Moors in Kinniya. They and their successive generations, embraced Tamil language, the language of Tamils(Hindus) and Moors(Muslims); they married Moors as their partners; they tend to identify themselves as Sonakar(Moor); they remain vulnerable to trace their lineage with Malay world, and adopt the culture of Moors and thus they are fully integrated with the Moors. Thus, this is a good representation to show how far the integration has compromised the ethnicity of Malay immigrants in Kinniya.

When I talked to few young Malay immigrants in Kinniya whose ancestors or forefathers were believed to have reached there during the Colonial period, in order to get to know their ancestry and identity, and to my astonishment, they hardly knew their Malay ancestors and they felt comfortable in defining themselves as Sri Lankan Muslims (Sri Lankan Moors) and communicating in Tamil language. This underlines a perfect representation of integration of Malay immigrants in Kinniya-Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, which in a way endangered the ethnicity of Malay immigrants. This finding is further supported by the existing literature. Hussein (2007:426) also cites that Malay immigrants living in Kinniya in the Trincomalee District have fully integrated with Moors through intermarriages over the years and they are no more speaking Malay language, but Tamil, the mother tongue of the Moors. Thus, it can be seen clearly that the integration has significantly compromised the ethnicity of Malay immigrants in Kinniya. Interestingly, it should be noted that some Malay immigrants believe that the same fate as Kinniya Malay immigrants may befall upon the future generation Malay immigrants living throughout the country if the present trend of integration of Malay immigrants into the core communities persists for some more years. However, the degree of

integration evident among the few Malay immigrants in Kinniya(they no longer identify themselves as Malay immigrants or Javas) cannot be witnessed among the rest of the Malay immigrants living throughout the country.

Many Malay immigrant respondents in the focus group discussion I conducted in Colombo and Kirinda respectively acceded that they are well-integrated with the core groups in Sri Lanka in terms of language and culture. The following are some of the remarks made by the participants in the focus group discussion I conducted in Kirinda that represent the level of integration of Malay immigrants in Kirinda-Southern Province of Sri Lanka.

> Rionsa: *We have a good relationship with other communities here. We also speak their languages well and vice versa.*
>
> Faisal: *Sinhelese, Tamil, Moors here speak Malay language and we are maintaining a cordial relation with them. We also do business and other transactions with them.*
>
> Mustafa: *You know, a few of our Malays marry Moors as we share the same religion. We also involve Sinhelese and Moors in our fishing industry. We are really good with them and they also do the same to us.*
>
> Atham Lebbe: *Our people here have a cordial relationship with Sinhlese, Tamils and Moors here. We involve members from other communities in our business. Sine we don't have a political party, we get along with Sinhalese and support them during election.*

The above remarks of Malay immigrant respondents in Kirinda show the secondary level of relationship of integration, that is, the socio-cultural, economic and political relations of Malay immigrants there. It shows that although Malays are comfortable in their own language-Malay language, they are able to speak other vernacular languages, while the core communities in Kirinda also speak the Malay language. The findings also suggest that Malay immigrants also involve Sinhalese in their fishing industry and get along with them during the election period and thereby making sure that Malay immigrants are politically integrated with Sinhalese since the Malay immigrants are politically vulnerable with no strong constituency to represent them. Thus, it shows that Malay immigrants in Kirinda and core groups are integrated on the basis of language, economy, politics and culture, that is, in the impersonal level of integration. It is significant to note here that this type of integration inadvertently challenges the ethnicity of Malay immigrants in the Kirinda. However,

since those Malays living there as if they are living in a Malay enclave, it is largely difficult to compromise their identity, most importantly, their language.

What is also noteworthy to mention here that Malay immigrants living in Kirinda have been able to integrate with the core groups on a voluntary basis without endangering their identity, especially their Malay language, while the Malays living amidst the core groups in rest of the country are compelled to integrate with them compromising their markers of ethnic identity. Nuhman(2007:24) also noted that the Malays are well integrated into the Sri Lankan society. Although Nuhman states that Malays are integrated well with the core groups, he did not go into the facets of the integration of Malays and failed to articulate the reasons for such trends. The following responses of Malay immigrants from various parts of the country suggest that the degree of integration of Malays in the country.

> Nafeel Dulapaandan from Champa Lane: *Our relationship with other communities such as Tamils, Sinhalese, and Moors is very cordial. We take part in their funeral, weddings, and other special occasions and vice versa, without giving up our identity.*
>
> Arfeen from Enderamulla : *Our relationship with Sinhalese, Christians, Tamils, and Moors is very cordial as we interact with them in their funerals, dansala(almsgiving), weddings, and other special occasions, vice versa. We also join in the community trips organized by the Buddhist and Christians here.*
>
> Laxana Faroon from Matale: *We are integrated socially and economically with other communities. We also get along with them politically as our leaders no more interested in politics, except for a few in Colombo.*
>
> Mr Jamal Mohamed from Mabola: *Although we are living here amongst Buddhists and Christians, we feel like sisters and brothers to each other. We give and take Dhaana(alms giving) from Buddhists here and take part in their special occasions, vice versa. They are also giving their extra food and usually visit us. More importantly, we help each other and live peacefully here. We are socially and culturally knitted together with other communities here as we are educated folks. Politically, we are still lagging behind others as our people are no more interested in politics.*

The above excerpts clearly demonstrate the level of integration in secondary relations, that is, the social, cultural, economic and political integration of Malay immigrants with the core groups in

the urban and rural areas of the country. Mr Arfeen's assertion on Malay immigrants in Enderamulla-Gampaha district joining with Buddhist and Christians in trips and social gathering is axiomatic to such trend in urban areas. It yields that they are closer to each other in terms of social gatherings and weddings, and special occasions, and it also shows that Malay immigrants and non-Malays share their cookeries to each other extending their bonds further. The phenomenon of integration of Malay immigrants cut across rural and urban dimension with the Malay respondents mentioned above representing various parts of the country- rural and urban areas, and their perspective indicates that the integration is a common feature among Malay immigrants in those areas. This level of integration in the impersonal contacts also challenges the ethnicity of Malays in the urban and rural areas, most specifically the younger generation of Malay immigrants, compared to their older folks.

Interspersed settlement of Malay immigrants and Moors throughout the country, shared religion of Islam following the Shafi School of thought (Sunni Muslims), and the significance presence of Moors when the Malays were brought into Sri Lanka from Malay archipelago during the colonial period have integrated these two communities well in terms of impersonal relations. The presence of Muslim community of Moors in the country when the Malay immigrants arrived here helped preserve the cultural and religious identity of Malay immigrants and thereby their cultural and religious integration became stronger. The mosques built in Malay contantments during the colonial periods served as a place of religious integration between Malay immigrants and Moors. This has facilitated for the personal relations of integration between Malays and Moors via the intermarriages. Although some of the Malay immigrants, mainly the soldiers, arrived to the island during the colonial period with their wives and families, others tended to choose partners from the core groups, particularly from Moors. In the post-independence of Sri Lanka, this trend of intermarriages of Malay immigrants with core groups, mainly with Moors, tend to dramatically increase mainly due to their shared religion. The responses of Malay immigrants suggest that fairly a large number of inter-marriages are taken place with Moors in the present context of the country. Arfeen, a clerk in the high court from Enderamulla notes:

> *25% of Malays here are married to Moors. Even, my daughter is married a Moor here. If a Malay girl or boy marries non-Muslims, they are usually converted to Islam. There are some instances where 1 or 2 Malays married to non-Muslims without converting them to Islam. Under such circumstances, those Malays will be alienated from their families, and sometimes, such Malays might be persuaded to come again to the fold of Islam and scions of Malay community by their relatives and Ulema. There are certain people and madrasas engaging in such tasks.*

Ifran from Slave Island observes:

> *My wife is also from the Moor community. Many Malays tend to marry Moors, if they have no suitable partners in the community. There are almost 10 Malay families of inter-racial marriages in Slave Island. However, alhamdulillah, all of them are converted to Islam and their offspring is really more religious these days*

This clearly shows that the inter-marriages between Malay immigrants and Moors are significantly on the rise and further goes to show that some Malay immigrants tend to marry non-Muslims such as Sinhalese and Tamils ensuring that their partners are converted to Islam. Furthermore, in Enderamulla and Akbar Town area, Arfeen categorically states that many organizations and individuals are embarking on the task of bringing back those Malays, who married to Sinhalese or others, to the fold of Islam. This finding debunks the dominant scholarly discourse that downgrades the intermarriages between Malay immigrants and Moors. Nordhoff (2009:44) roughly estimates that approximately 10% of marriages of Malay immigrants have taken place with Sri Lankan Moors, while 5 % marriages of Malay immigrants have taken place with Sinhalese. However, the findings of the study show and debunk the claim of Nordhoff arguing that the intermarriages of Malay immigrants with Moors could be as many as 10% due to shared religion, interspersed settlement with Moors and other reasons.

However, Ansaldo (2008:20, 25) argues that the available evidence does not support to the argument on intermarriages that have taken place between Malay immigrants and Moors during colonial period and post-colonial period. However, the finding of this study critiques the claim of Ansaldo corroborating the substantial evidence for the intermarriages taken place between Moors and Malay immigrants. As such, the integration of Malay immigrants through intermarriages, particularly in urban pockets, has significantly endangered the primordial markers of Malay ethnicity, replacing with Tamil/Sinhala language and local cultures, and ceasing the Malay lineage or ancestry. This is precisely because that the Malay immigrants are largely shaped from impersonal relations to personal relations of integration through intermarriages with Moors. It could be argued that the linguistic shape of Sri Lankan Malay (SLM) is the by-product of the intermarriages between the Malay immigrants and Moors and its tangible effect reflected in SLM which is a mixture of local vernacular languages.

While intermarriages between Malays and Moors have gained free access or approbation by the Malay community, a strong sense of antipathy prevails in the community level for the intermarriages of Malay immigrants with non-Muslims such as Sinhalese. Interestingly, the most important dimension of personal relations of integration also occurs through intermarriages of Malay immigrants with Sinhalese, particularly in urban areas, though it is a handful in numbers, which has

potentially challenged the primordial traits of Malay ethnicity as highlighted in the findings. Thus, the intermarriages of Malay immigrants with Sinhalese are considered an execrable practice or taboo and consequently remedial action are promptly taken to bring those Malays back to the fold of Islam. Moreover, the finding also shows that the issue of Malay immigrants marrying Sinhalese or others may even lead to ostracization from the community, if the partner is not converted to Islam.

The integration of Malay immigrants into core ethnic groups occurs mainly due to many factors: 1) mixed educational system and working environments, and closed neighbourhood with non-Malays, 2) economic reasons, 3) shared religion-Islam, 4) easy going nature with trilingualism and flexible interpretation of Islam, 5) freedom to choose their partners, 6) Improper socialization of the parents, 7) thinly distributed settlement/interspersed settlement among the core groups, 8) exposure of westernization and modernization, and 9) conspiracy of conversion.

It is, however, noteworthy that the integration of Malay immigrants in terms of personal and impersonal relations with core communities in the country does not necessarily mean that Malays have lost their identity, but rather such processes consolidated their consciousness towards the Malay ethnicity. The responses of Many Malay informants from urban and rural areas suggest that they strongly integrate with non-Malays while being more conscious of their own ethnicity. The following are some of the responses that validate such notion:

> Nafeel Dulapaandan, Champa Lane articulates **:** *Our relationship with other communities such as Tamils, Sinhalese, and Moors is very cordial. We take part in their funeral, weddings, and other special occasions and vice versa, without giving up our identity.*
>
> Marjaana Teacher from Hambantota town notes: *You are bound to follow some elements of other culture, but you should not give up your own. While continuing with your own culture, you can adopt the other cultures if it is good. That is the key.*

The above excerpts of Malay respondents underline that Malays have largely integrated with non-Malays socially, economically and culturally in the rural areas, namely Kirinda and Champa Lane, while being conscious of their identity, and thereby perpetuating their ethnicity to some extent. It is true that they are significantly integrated with core communities in those areas, but such integration has brought about the positive outcome of pluralism on the part of Malays. While continuing to use Malay language for interpersonal communication within the community (co-ethnic group), the Malay immigrants in those areas become plural in outlook in mastering other vernacular languages such as Tamil and Sinhala as they are very fluent in it. Furthermore, while adopting cultural practices of core communities, Malay immigrants are still maintaining some elements of Malay culture, particularly the

Malay cuisines in the domestic level and special occasions in the rural areas. This stands evidence to the concept of pluralism that exists among the Malays in the rural areas of Sri Lanka.

The discussion on the pluralism as an outcome of integration has brought the aspects of hybridity that is present within the Malay community. The hybridity of Malay immigrants essentially refers to Malays' perception of two identities; one is as a Sri Lankan nationally or culturally, and another is as Malay racially or ethnically as a result of their integration with core communities in the country. This is reflected in the responses of some other Malays who I interviewed.

> Brigadier Boharan, from Colombo states: *We are Sri Lankans while perpetuating our ethnic identity. Some people think that we are Malaysians. A citizen can be Chinese, Muslims, and Hindu. We are Sri Lankan first, within Sri Lanka and at the same time, we are Malays as we have our own identity*.

> TK.Azoor, from Colombo observes: *We are basically Sri Lankans while not compromising our own identity. I would say that we are Sri Lankan by nationality, Malay by ethnicity and Muslim by religion.*

The above excerpts aptly demonstrate the dimension of hybridity of Malay immigrants in the country as they consider themselves both as Sri Lankan nationally or culturally, and at the same time as Malay ethnically or racially. This phenomenon of hybridity yields precisely because of the pluralism exhibiting among the Malay immigrants as an outcome of assimilation into the core ethnic groups in the country. This also proves the fact that assimilation of Malays brings some positive effects upon the community such as the pluralism and hybridity

In summary, the preceding section reveals that Malay immigrants have significantly integrated with both Moors and Sinhalese from the impersonal relations of social, economic and political aspects, to the personal relations of intermarriages. It shows that such integration largely challenges the primordial characteristics of Malay ethnicity such as their language, culture and ancestry or lineage. This integration of Malay immigrants with core communities occurs due to the aforementioned factors. However, it is noted that the aspects of integration of Malay immigrants with core groups brought about the positive effects such as pluralism and hybridity among the Malay immigrants in the country.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the degree of integration of Malay immigrants into the core communities in Sri Lanka. The findings reveal that Malay immigrants have strongly integrated with both Moors

and Sinhalese in the country through the impersonal relations of social, economic and political aspects, to the personal relations of intermarriages. It was further found that such integration through intermarriages has profoundly challenged the primordial characteristics of Malay ethnicity such as their language, culture and ancestry or lineage, most specifically among the younger generation of Malay immigrants as opposed to their older folks, replacing with Sinhala or Tamil languages, the dominant core cultures and ceasing the Malay ancestry or lineage with a fair number of intermarriages occurring primarily with Moors. This finding was further elaborated with the scenario of Kinniya Malays, which is a case in point of structural assimilation, since they have fully integrated with Moors having adopted Tamil language and Moor culture as a result of intermarriages and strong integration, while apparently ceasing the Malay lineage.

The findings also show that Malay immigrants tend to intermarry primarily with Moors because of their shared religion of Islam, and in some exceptional cases, with Sinhalese. It was found that the intermarriages of Malay immigrants with Sinhalese are considered a taboo and consequently remedial actions are promptly taken by the family members of those who married Sinhalese and other organizations to bring those Malays back to the fold of Islam. Moreover, the finding also shows that the issue of Malay immigrants marrying Sinhalese or others may even lead to ostracization from the community, if the partner is not converted to Islam.

The findings also reveal that the integration of Malay immigrants into core ethnic groups occurs mainly due to following factors: 1) mixed educational system and working environments, and closed neighbourhood with non-Malays, 2) economic reasons, 3) shared religion-Islam, 4) easy going nature with trilingualism and flexible interpretation of Islam, 5) freedom to choose their partners, 6) Improper socialization of the parents, 7) thinly distributed settlement/interspersed settlement among the core groups, 8) exposure of westernization and modernization, and 9) conspiracy of conversion.

On the other hand, the findings also show that integration of Malay immigrants in urban and rural areas into host communities does not necessarily mean that it has compromised or replaced the ethnicity of Malays; however, rather such integration has brought about the outcome of pluralism among the Malays as they become fluent in all the vernacular languages, familiar with all the cultural practices, and thereby being in the limelight of all segments of the people in the country. However, it is noted that however plural the Malays are, their younger generation is increasingly exposed to assimilation with the core communities, as diametrically opposed to their older ones, endangering their primordial boundaries of Malay ethnicity. More importantly, the findings also aptly report the dimension of hybridity of Malays in the country as they consider themselves both as Sri Lankan nationally or culturally, and at the same time as Malays ethnically or racially.

Overall, it was found that a vast majority of Malay immigrants have shown their voracious interest to cling on to vast vestige of their Malayness in the island amidst so much of challenges to

their ethnicity. However, it is imperative on the part of Malay organizations including their regional branches and the elites of the community to reach out to the Malay immigrants living in various parts of the country, particularly those living in rural areas, thorough various programmes to perpetuate their ethnicity in the country. The Malay immigrants would have to seek out the support of the High commission of Malaysia and Indonesia in Sri Lanka, the benevolent Malays including politicians in the Malay world who are sympathetic towards their brethren in Sri Lanka in this regard. These findings on the trend of integration, pluralism and hybrid identity of Malayness are really a significant contribution of this study since no previous scholarly studies have focused on such vastly important phenomena in relation to Malay immigrants in Sri Lanka.

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Exclusion of The Rural Households: A Case Study On Forestry Communities In China

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Since the 1980s, forestry management in many developing countries has been shifting to local institutions located inside and outside the government, with a greater recognition to the needs and role of local communities. Meanwhile, the globalization trend has increased the commercial value of forestry resources. To maintain globally competitive, national governments in these countries have opened the forestry resource markets to more private enterprises. The intertwining trends of decentralization and globalization lead to the widespread of cooperative forestry management which involves forestry users, governments, private enterprises and other key stakeholders (Carter and Gronow 2005, 3).

In China, the three decades' forestry tenure reform has contracted out various use rights of the collective-owned forestlands to the individual-household level. However, these farmers allocated with the bundle of forestry use rights are often unable to overcome the barrier to profitable production. Therefore, a large number of them have participated in the forestry resource market by forming partnerships with private firms, local governments, and middlemen. Contracting with the forestry companies has become an increasingly popular choice for the farmers, as it brings increased and more secure income, access to the marketplace, infrastructure, employment opportunities, and technical support and training (Lu et al 2002, Mayers and Vermeulen 2002, Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). The companies also find the deal to be beneficial in sustaining their competitiveness with the provision of secure forestry resource supplies, cheap labor, and low incentive and monitoring costs (Glover and Kusterer 1991, Lu et al 2002). Moreover, the Chinese government promotes this cooperation between farmers and companies, since too much fragmentation of forestry resources not only creates externalities and uncertain property rights (Mckean 1998), but also discourages the promise of agricultural industrialization.

Cooperative forestry arrangement is as likely to prevent socio-economic differentiation in the community as to enhance it. In best cases, it can act as a leveler for the ordinary households, reducing risks and increasing their access to income, purchase inputs, credit, infrastructure, equipment, new technical knowledge and markets. However, with the absence of third party intervention, the agribusiness, rural elites and large-scale growers are likely to capture larger proportions of income, thus leading to greater social-economic differentiation. Without effective official rules to safeguard the rural poor, farmers are likely to be excluded from equitable income distribution, thus intensifying

the socio-economic differentiation in the community (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Ribot 2004; Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Local government intervention constitutes a crucial institutional constraint for cooperative forestry management. It alters the balance of power and the distribution of rewards (Lu et al 2002).

In practice, effects of local government action and policy tend to vary, resulting in different distributional outcomes across regions and over time. While effective government policies of community empowerment lead to equitable distributional patterns, ineffective policies tend to reinforce the uneven playing field of class, ethnicity, gender, resources, power and economic hurdles (Ribot et al. 2006; Agrawal and Ostrom, 2008; Ribot and Larson 2012). Why do some local governments mitigate the exclusion of the rural poor while others not? What explains the varied roles of local officials in promoting the partnership between community and company in forestry production and management?

1. Local Government: Incentive and Capacity

Incentive and capacity are the key elements in examining local government actions. It takes both the will and the capacity to conform for an agency to carry out his jobs (Kaufman 1967, 161). Consistent with this perspective, the existing studies of cooperative forestry management suggest that local governments will promote equitable distributional patterns for farmers, if they are more close aligned with farmers and have sufficient capacities to carry out empowerment policies (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999, McCarthy 2001, Yasmi et al. 2005, Ravikumar 2012). The likelihood of this occurring further depends on the contextual factors, including local governments' downward accountability to farmers, upward accountability to the pro-equity supervisors, and the allocation of authority between different levels of government (Ribot 2004, Andersson 2006, Ravikumar 2012).

Despite different assumptions, many theoretical reasonings point to the weak pro-peasantry incentives of local governments in developing areas.1 Studies of forestry and agricultural policies also argue that the empirical evidence fits most of this expectation. They remark that forest-dependent people in Asia and the Pacific tend to be politically weak (Fisher et al 1997, Sunderlin et al 2007). Located in remote areas, these people are often out of the reach of the market economy, technological progress, and national political and economic structures. Hence, they have low levels of "rent" and bargaining power to push their preferences into the policy agenda. This powerlessness are further reinforced by the lack of education and literacy, and their geographic distance from urban centers (Sunderlin et al 2005, Sunderlin et al 2007). Local governments tend to provide rural communities with more private goods than public goods, so that rural elites, large-scale farmers, and private investors can individually appropriate these private goods, such as subsidized credit and inputs (Lopez and Galinato 2006). Furthermore, the government policies and regulations are often designed to

constrain economic options of forest-dependent people, which serves as a strong factor in their powerlessness (Sunderlin et al 2007).

The pessimistic views also gain supports from many Sinologists who view local governments in China as engaged in either revenue maximization or tournament-like practice. The former examines local government actions in the context of fiscal reform (Oi 1992, Walder 1998, Qian and Weingast 1998). It argues that the recentralization of revenue authority and decentralization of expenditure responsibility lead to the deprivation of fiscal capacity of the lower-level governments. Under the fiscal pressure, local officials act as revenue maximizers eager for attracting investments (Jin et al 2005). To attract the footloose investors, they are likely to discriminate against farmers by depreciating the value of forestry raw materials and labor. The state-centered approach of tournament-like competition contextualizes local governments in the centralized cadre management system (Whiting 2001, Zhou 2002). This approach sees local officials as lacking downward accountability and selectively implementing policies so as to maximize the political gains (O'Brien and Li 1999, Zhou 2007). This political incentive, complementary with the revenue-maximizing incentive, creates barriers to forestry regulation, as well as the staffing and funding of local forestry bureaus. These two approaches posit that local governments lack both the pro-peasantry incentives and capacities, therefore facilitating inequitable distributional patterns in the cooperative forestry management.

This dissertation supports a third understanding which sees local governments as hinge politicians responding to not only formal bureaucratic institutions, but also informal social institutions (White 1998, Tsai 2007). This interpretation builds on the above two approaches by adding social informal institutions to the contextual factors of local government incentives and capacities (Lin 1995). It contradicts the previous approaches in arguing that farmers are able to impose their effects to policy outcomes. It also suggests that the social informal institutions provides local officials with a moral standing and might alter their capacity and incentives in policy implementation (Putnam 1993, Tsai 2007). What is different about this research is its detailed examination of the causal mechanism. It will connect the causes and effects and explore the elements of the causal process to generate causal inferences of different policy outcomes in cooperative forestry management in China,.

The ambitious goal of this research is to explain the observed differences in the role of local governments in shaping income distribution in cooperative forestry management. By doing this, it aims to identify policy means for reducing poverty and exclusion of rural households. Adopting the multilevel institutional perspective, it contextualizes local officials in the formal bureaucratic system and informal social conditions. The formal bureaucratic system incorporates the fiscal system which determines the fiscal incentive and funding of local governments, and the personnel management system which decides the political incentive and staffing of local governments. The informal social context refers to village kinships, network ties, communal trust, and customary rules and norms. It

defines the amount of political capital of the community, which affect both the pro-peasantry incentives of the local governments and the capacity for them to do so. Nested in these institutional factors, local officials might either facilitate or mitigate the exclusion of the rural poor in the community-company forestry partnership. This dissertation will study how local officials play various roles across regions and over time. Once these roles are understood, recommendations for forestry administration and policy improvement can be designed.

This issue is crucial particularly in the case of China, since the contracting process must be negotiated through a government intermediary. Rural households in China need government approval for the transfer of forestland use rights and the registration of forestry cooperatives. Indeed, the company-community forestry deal in China are not between companies and communities, but between companies and local governments (Lu et al 2002). This issue is important also because it highlights the most marginalized people in China--the rural poor, provided with the increasingly prevalence of the community-company deal in forestry communities in China. The livelihoods of these people are crucial to evaluate the capability of the governments to address issues of inequity, poverty, and social stability. This study also contributes to the global experiences of decentralized forestry management. The ongoing debates over the natural resource management can find new proofs from the Chinese experience. This study will be one attempt that links the Chinese episode to worldwide instances of company-community deals in natural resource management.

The case study method has an affinity for generating inferences about causal mechanisms and causal effects simultaneously (Gerring 2007). This research will provide a small-N comparative case study to build hypotheses of local governments based on the multilevel institutional framework. It will focus on the within-case level of analysis to specify the causal mechanisms that explain why local governments accelerate or mitigate the exclusion of the rural poor.

A case is defined as a bounded empirical phenomenon that is an instance of a population of similar empirical phenomenon (Rohlfing 2012). Underlying this notion are two attributes of a case. First, a case is an instance of the study population, thus implying the principle of causal hegemony. In this research, cases for comparison are selected from the study population--township governments in China. The hierarchy of Chinese forestry administration involves five levels of government jurisdiction: national, provincial, prefecture, county, and township. Local governments broadly refer to refer to the governments at and below the provincial level. Since the emphasis of this research is the rural communities and farmers, it focuses on township governments--the lowest level of the Chinese bureaucratic system. It is at the township level that the ad hoc implementation of central policy occurs and that officials are most involved in the rural community activities. The second attribute refers to the bounded nature of a case (Rohlfing 2012). The focus of cooperative forestry management signifies that selected jurisdiction of townships should have one or more forestry

partnerships that involve rural households. The premise of cooperative forestry management is the privatization of forestry tenure rights; hence, the temporal starting point of the case is the 1980s when the decollectivization reform in the forestry sector began (Yin et al 2005).

For each selected case, the research will: identify the government actors and their tasks related to cooperative forestry management, measure the policy outcomes by examining objective indicators of profit margin for farmers, explore causal processes that connect fiscal and personnel management system, local social networking, and local government incentives and capacities.

2. Government Actors and Tasks

Equitable distributional patterns of cooperative forestry management depends on local government action and policy that empower the farmers rather than colluding with the agribusiness. In practice, the township government is not a holistic entity. Instead, it is composed of multiple government bodies who are responsible for different tasks related to production and circulation of forestry resources. A detailed examination of township governments indicate that the forestry station and the taxation station are involved at each node of income distribution in cooperative forestry management.

The township forestry station serves as the cornerstone of the forestry administrative system and mainly undertakes tasks of monitoring, management, law execution, dispute resolution, supervision, coordination, and provision of forestry services, techniques, and information (Chen et al 2012). It is the main regulator of forest-related activities, in charge of evaluating value of forestry resources, allocating logging quota and forestry certificates, and licensing permits for timber logging, processing, transporting and marketing. It is also responsible for registration procedures for mortgaging forestland use rights and timber ownership. Hence, farmers and local capitalists depend on the approval of the township forestry station for the transfer of forestry tenure rights, as well as logging, processing and circulating forestry products. The forestry licensing system2 indicates that the prices, quantity, and categories of forestry products do not fluctuate along the market demand-supply relationship (Rozelle et al 2000). Instead, the local forestry authority can impose strong leverage on the each levels of the forestry commodity chain.

The forestry stations in China are under three types of administration: direct supervision of the country forestry bureau, administration of leading cadres (the township mayor and the party secretary) of the township government, and dual administration of the county forestry bureau and the township government. The funding of township forestry staff depends on township treasuries as well as their own revenues from local charges and taxes to cover administrative costs (Lu et al 2002). As the agricultural tax reform reduces the amount of forestry charges and fees, forestry stations have increasingly relied on subsidies from the township governments. Township forestry stations directly

recruit forestry guards from local villages. As the lowest level of forestry officials, these forestry guards monitor illegal activities and forest fires, as well as report timber permits for township forestry stations (Xu and Ribot 2004).

Horizontally, the township forestry station needs to coordinate its work with other township sectors, such as the taxation station, the agricultural station, and the station of Industrial and Commercial Administration. The taxation station is in charge of implementing tax regulation and financial preference policies related to cooperative forestry management. It collects value added tax (VAT), turnover, consumption tax, income tax, and other local governments surtaxes. These taxes are in turn shared by county and higher levels of governments. It is also responsible for implementing financial preferential policies and subsidies to farmers and investors who join the cooperative forestry management. The township taxation stations are often under the vertical control of county taxation bureaus (Zhang 2006).

Hence, township forestry stations are the primary actor in the coordination and regulation of access to market and resources. The township taxation stations are in charge of collecting taxes and fees at various nodes of the commodity chain. By doing these the township governments have had a profound impact on income distribution of cooperative forestry management. With these formal authorities, township government sectors can intermediate the interaction between different groups and selectively provide participants with organizational, technical, expertise and personnel rents (Guo 2005, Cui 2009). By doing this, they alter the power relationship and patterns of income distribution in cooperative forestry management.

Township governments either facilitate or mitigate the inequitable distributional outcomes in cooperative forestry management. The policy outcomes are measured by the distribution of profits in cooperative forestry management through an analysis of margins and earning shares.

There are two types of partnerships in cooperative forestry management: dragon-head enterprises+farmers partnership and forestry cooperatives (Zhang 2004, Niu 2006, Huang 2011). The dragon-head enterprise that contracts with rural households mainly include domestic private companies, foreign companies, and state-owned enterprises (Lu et al 2002). Forestry cooperatives refer to a “mutual-aid economic organization” that involves the partnership between a large number of producers to pool their resources to produce and manage the forestry resources3. Rural economic elites (such as large-scale growers, individual vendors, and rural brokerages), village cadres, and outside investors often serve as cooperative managers and control the processes of decision making and income distribution (Yuan 2001, Zhang 2004, Huang and Xu 2006). The cooperative manager organizes the pooling and marketing of the forestry products, and divide the market earnings into reserved fund and profit return for members.

The two cooperative forestry management forms indicate distinct patterns of income

distribution. Farmers and the dragon-head enterprise are engaged in vertical income distribution where farmers and companies share profits at different levels of the commodity chain. While farmers obtain profits by selling forestland use rights or raw materials at the production level of market, the dragon-head enterprise captures commodity profits at the processing and circulating level. On the other hand, forestry cooperatives implement horizontal income distribution, as members share cooperative earnings at the same level of marketing. Horizontal income distribution refers to the distribution of market shares at each level, while vertical income distribution is measured by profit margin, namely per unit price minus per unit expense, at each level of the market (Ribot 2005).

In the dragon-head enterprise+farmers deal, more equitable distributional outcomes entails the increasing profit margin for farmers at the production level. Under the government intervention, the dragon-head enterprise offers different prices to farmers who thus gain various profits from raw materials. The company might buy out the forestland use rights or raw materials from rural households for a price fluctuating along market condition. This distributional pattern often takes the form of land leases, in which farmers lease out their forestland for lease fee. Alternatively, it might contract an outgrowing scheme with farmers, promising a protective price to buy their products (Vidal 2004, Ravikumar et al 2012). This offers a more stable and long-term profits for rural households.

In the case of forestry cooperatives, the indicator of equitable distributional outcomes refers to an equal share of cooperative earnings for rural households. The current forestry cooperatives generally use two principles of profit return, based on which there are two forms of cooperatives: specialized cooperatives and shareholding cooperatives (Lou and Kong 2009). In the specialized cooperative, farmers receive profit return according to their contribution in the volume of labor and trade. In the shareholding cooperatives, rural households convert their forestry property rights into stakes of the cooperative, and receive profits based on shares of stock. In practice, this stock-based distributional pattern favors large shareholders at the expense of low-income households. Regardless of the profit return principles, the degree of equity in distributional outcomes in forestry cooperatives can be measured by the share of cooperative earnings. Local governments that mitigate inequitable distributional outcomes tend to increase the market share of the disadvantaged rural households.

2.1 Fiscal and Personnel Management Systems

The local fiscal and personnel management system generates two barriers for the township governments in fulfilling its responsibilities in cooperative forestry management. First, it generates barrier for funding and staffing, leading to weak formal bureaucratic capacity of township forestry authority. Second, it creates barrier for township governments in fulfilling responsibilities to regulate industrial and commercial capital investment.

Local fiscal system in China is characterized as deconcentration. This creates barrier for

township governments in funding and staffing. Specifically, county governments tend to allocate forestry management responsibilities to the township level, while retaining the domination of fiscal authority. In many cases, while county governments are in charge of more profitable sectors, the township subordinates need to fund the less profitable ones (Zhang 2006). The rural taxation reform in the 2000s further reduced revenue income of township governments without alleviating their revenue collection responsibilities. The resultant fiscal crises have weakened fiscal autonomy and capacity of the township governments, which increasingly depend on county governments for fiscal subsidies. Similarly, township governments also retain a firm control of village cadres in fiscal affairs. Since the late 1990s, township governments have gradually controlled village accounting and cash management (Zhao 2007). The income of village cadres relies on grants from township governments.

Hence, county governments have firm control of township leading cadres, who in turn have the ultimate fiscal authority over village cadres. As the level of administration goes down, the allocation of fiscal resources descends combined with the multiplication of spending responsibilities. Under this fiscal system, the township leading cadres tend to curtain their spending on less profitable sectors and allocate the limited fiscal resources on more profitable and crucial tasks. As a result, township forestry stations are often short of funding and staffing.

Meanwhile, the local leading cadres' incentives for rural industrialization produces barriers for forestry stations to monitor exploiting behaviors by industrial and commercial investors in cooperative forestry management. The reduction of agricultural taxation in the rural taxation reform motivates county and township governments to seek other sources of income, for example, industrial and commercial taxes. Rural industrialization has become a popular option, since it increases local revenues by attracting industrial and commercial investments (Liu, Hou and Tao 2013).

The political incentives derived from the centralized cadre assessment system reflect and reinforce such efforts in attracting rural industrialization investment. County governments often prioritize rural industrialization as the top indicator in evaluating the performance of township subordinates. On the other hand, peasantry income growth becomes a less important indicator, mainly due to the cancellation of agricultural taxation. This performance contract

In sum, the local fiscal deconcentration has created a township forestry station lacking formal bureaucratic capacities of funding and staffing. Local fiscal and personnel management systems also generate strong incentives of rural industrialization among local leading cadres; their preferential policies aimed at attracting industrial and commercial capitalists create barriers for township governments to conduct regulatory activities in cooperative forestry management.

2.2 Local Social Networking

The barriers generated from the formal bureaucratic institutions also increase the

opportunities and efficacy of local social institutions in shaping policy outcomes. In addition to rural industrialization, the cadre assessment system signals a number of other tasks prioritized by the upper-level governments. Social order maintenance and rural conflict resolution constitute a crucial performance indicator for the township and village leaders. Local forestry cadres also respond to multiple tasks, including creating a favorable investment climate, protecting forests environmental services and maximizing local communities' welfare benefits (Lu et al 2002). Conflicting goals generate room for informal social networking which allows local officials to be engaged in discretion, selective implementation and symbolic compliance (O'Brien and Li 1999, Zhou 2007). Local agents gain discretion by responding to multiple principals, as the multilevel and multi-sectoral structure helps disintegrate the ultimate control of centralized authority.

The existing formal bureaucratic system not only creates opportunities for local discretion, but also increases the leverage of local social networking in policy outcomes. While it is difficult for local officials to address these tasks with so scarce political and financial resources, they are more eager to seek them from local social networking to support their operation. In other words, the fewer resources these local officials gain from the formal bureaucratic institutions, the more efforts they will spend to gain resources from the local informal institutions. Under the weak control of the central government, local officials at and below the county level become bystanders eager for privately initiated expropriation (Markus 2012). Empirical studies corresponds to this point, suggesting that comparing with higher levels of governments, the township leading cadres are more likely to use personnel ties with other officials and social groups to coordinate government tasks (Xiong 2009).

Local social institutions influence local governance through both demand and supply side of government (Putnam 1993). On the demand side, different social groups are able form formal or informal alliance to voice and hold officials accountable. Cooperative managers and companies can get their expectation in part by forming business associations, or informal alliances with supportive media, NGOs, and local cadres. Although farmers often lack organizational and collective action capacity, they are able to impose strong demands by individually appealing to upper-level governments or threats of protests. They can also form informal alliance with NGOs, media, lawyers, activists, and sympathetic officials. In addition, comparing with capitals outside the locality, farmers can make use of the extant village networking to press the local officials. However, in other cases, the village organization and networking might be hierarchical and manipulated by rural elites to voice their own interests. On the supply side, the political and economic resources provided by local networking help inducing the efficiency of government performance as well as its internal operation (Putnam 2001, Knack 2002). Local capitalists and elites can provide local governments with economic and revenue resources. On the other hand, peasantry supports constitute crucial political resources for local governments and reduce costs of policy implementation.

3. Case Selection

The cross-case level is instrumental for the choice of cases for formulating a within-case causal mechanism. This research follows the distribution-based principle of case selection to specify the causal mechanisms of local government in cooperative forestry management. The purpose of case selection is to make the selected cases with covariance in scores of the underlying causes and the outcome. The selected cases should also be representative so as to achieve the maximum degree of generalizability.

Based on the data from " 2010 Background Survey of National Forestry Stations", two provinces in China--Zhejiang and Hainan are selected to reflect differences in the formal bureaucratic capacity of township forestry stations. Three indicators are examined: 1) education degree of forestry staff (proportion of cadres with intermediate and senior professional title), 2) sources of funding (proportion of own funding, forestry fee, government fiscal subsidies, government fiscal transfer), 3) administrative system (proportion of vertical administration). Zhejiang is representative of the provinces where the forestry stations possess rich staffing and funding resources. On the other hand, Hainan represents the regions where the forestry stations are poorly staffed and funded. The indicator of administrative system implies township forestry stations' autonomy and link with local networking. Within both provinces, two counties are selected to vary in model county status for distributional patterns of cooperative forestry management. Based on the preliminary survey and cite visiting, the research will further select eight townships from four counties to conduct survey, focus group study, and in-depth interview for data collection and analysis.

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