

## **Land in Daughter's Name**

- Mohan Bhandary

Ram Narayan Choudhary of Purbakusaha VDC, Ward No. 7 (Sunsari) is planning to put his land (6 Bighas) in his two daughters' names after the programme "Maitighar Gudi Samuha" was implemented in his village. His two daughters are 6 years old Radhika and 3 years old Alina.

The programme was initiated in Ward No. 3, 4 and 7 of the VDC which has a large settlement of ethnic communities such as Tharu, Mandal, Mushar, etc. After the initiation of the programme, daughters of 30 families have been provided land through three groups. The Mandal family of Ward No. 7 has already transferred the land in their daughters' names. Sanischara Mandal has distributed his land among his three daughters after being influenced by the programme initiated by Nepal Environment Journalists Group and Environment Support Fund with the objective of making daughters independent since childhood.

According to Dilip Kafle, Assistant Coordinator of Environment Support Fund, tree plantation and vegetable farming is done on the land for income generation and the profit from this is deposited in the daughters' names. They are also provided skill development training. The dowry system is very rampant especially in the Terai area. Therefore, the programme has especially targeted the ethnic groups of the plains so that the women of these communities can stand on their own feet even if their marriage goes bad.

The programme was implemented in Jandol VDC of Saptari two years back. At present, it has been extended to Sitapur and Hariharpur VDCs of Saptari with the support of Environment Support Fund. There are a total of 180 participants (daughters) in 18 groups in the programme. Although the programmes in both Sunsari and Saptari are the same, the names are different since daughters are affectionately called Daiya in Saptari and Gudi in Morang.

This programme was not designed by any experts or specialists. It came through discussions among the village people and the credit of this new initiative goes to Prema Kumari Choudhari of Jandol VDC. According to Shiva Kumar Budathoki, President of an NGO called Community and Private Forest Development Center, Prema Kumari Choudhari approached the Community Agriculture Forest Programme supported by Churiya Forest Development Project with the concept since she herself was a victim of a bad marriage.

There is discrimination between sons and daughters since childbirth and women become victims especially after marriage. Therefore, if a family thinks about a daughter's future right from childhood, then she will not have to face the torture that may arise later. This feeling has been generated in each family where the programmes have been initiated. According to Nilima Choudhary, Facilitator of the programme, all the families have cooperated after they understood the concept.

According to Shiva Kumar Budathoki, even if a small plot of land is separated, a total of 55 saplings can be planted out of which if 30 trees survive then a profit of Rs. 10,000 can be made from one tree by the time the daughter will be of marriageable age. The total amount that will be generated through the 30 trees will be Rs. 3,00,000. Profit can also be gained through vegetable and other farming until the trees grow bigger. Forest specialist, Budathoki has been monitoring this programme since he had been involved in Community Forest Agriculture Programme implemented by Churiya Forest Development Project.

Rajkumari Majhi of Purba Kusaha – 4, Sitapur has included her daughter in the group and decided to separate a plot of land for her daughter after she saw the positive impact of the programme.

Sanischara Mandal, who has just transferred his land among his three daughters, mentions that the whole programme is for the benefit of daughters. The parents will have less load of dowry if they start thinking about their daughters since childhood and even if the marriage goes bad, the daughter will be able to initiate some business through the capital.

The programme also provides opportunities for skill development training which has been embraced by the ethnic communities. As per the programme, groups are established in every locality where a leader and a treasurer is selected and all the others become members. A joint committee representing one member of

each group is formed and a secretary is appointed. Each group will have a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 13 members. This democratic process while forming groups will also help in leadership development among the communities. Women who were unable to speak up before the implementation of the programme have started voicing their opinions after the programme.

The programme has been initiated in a few places as a pilot project, but the villagers have demanded an extension of the project to more backward communities after its positive impact. According to Dilip Kafle, the Environment Journalist Group does not have a very high budget therefore, the government has to take the initiative. The Environment Support Fund has spent a total of Rs. 3,00,000 in the two projects in Sunsari and Saptari.

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Sancharika Lekhmala/Sancharika Samuha

### Women Entrepreneurs Need New Vision

- Maina Dhital

Hajuri Bista, who lived in Paris for a considerable period, became restless after she settled in Kathmandu despite being a well-heeled woman with grown up children. She was thinking of doing something as she had seen well-to-do women of developed countries doing modest business.

At the same time she came across an advertisement placed by WEAN Cooperative in the 1990s and came into contact with WEAN. Women Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal (WEAN) Cooperative is an organization established with a view to organizing women entrepreneurs and helping them in marketing their products.

At that time WEAN provided entrepreneurship training to about four dozen elderly women, but very few of them involved themselves in enterprises. And some of the enterprising women including Hajuri Bista decided to prepare pickles. Hajuri began with preparing pickles of garlic, ginger, fish and meat. Till that time only the pickles of mango and laps were known to the local people.

Druk brand pickles imported from India was very popular among the Nepalese, which was almost the synonym for pickle. At such a juncture of time, WEAN Cooperative introduced the pickles prepared by Hajuri and other women to the local market. People preferred the local pickles to the Indian ones and WEAN christened its product as Navaras, the nine flavours. Navaras found a place in the shelves of modest groceries to big departmental stores.

Entranced by the growing popularity of Navaras, quite a few women received pickle preparation training and entered into the business. As a result, there is a tough competition among the women entrepreneurs. Now even Navaras is facing the problem of market while the new entrants have not been able to establish their brands.

Similar trend is dogging the handicraft business. Most of the women entrepreneurs go for existing business rather than finding new avenues. The more the people are in the same business, the harder it becomes for the new entrants. It leads to diminishing interests of consumers that directly bring down the price and their utility.

Nepalese pashmina was very popular in the international market about three years back whose exports was worth Rs 5 billion and 640 million in fiscal year 2000/01. But its exports plunged to Rs 1 billion and 410 million in the next fiscal year.

Nepalese pashmina was sold like hot cakes after Queen Elizabeth of the United Kingdom wrapped herself in pashmina shawl publicly. An unexpected number of people began producing pashmina products, which led to an unhealthy competition compromising with the quality of the products. It is the prime factor behind market crash though some attribute some national and international factors to the un-thought-of decline in the demand for pashmina products. According to the organization of the pashmina entrepreneurs, about 80 per cent of the newly set up industries have been closed down.

Success gained from copying others is ephemeral.

Now entrepreneurs need to diversify their products in order to cater to the changing taste of customers. There are a very few women who dare abandoning traditional business and go for a new ones. It would be wiser to make a survey and study the market than opening a business allured by the success of the predecessors. Although some government and non-government organisations have been extending support to women entrepreneurs, they have also not been able to give up the traditional practice. There is a growing need of organizations that support and train women entrepreneurs by studying the market and commissioning a survey.

Carrying a market survey before doing a business pays the investors. Shyam Kakshapati can be taken for example. Entered into business from Shyam's Grocery, Kakshapati now owns around a dozen bakery cafes. He is probably the first person to open fast food outlets. He jumped into the venture after studying the taste of customers. "I came to the conclusion that the young generation is in want of a place where they can eat delicious foods at comparatively lower price and an entertaining environment. And I opened The Café De Park at Ratna Park", Kakshapati relates his past.

In 1976 he opened Nanglo Bakery Café. Now there are a lot of people who have opened fast food cafes emulating the success of Kakshapati. Take New Baneshwor for an instance. A number of fast food cafes stretched from Babarmahal to New Baneshwor has made the section of the road 'fast food street'. "Now there is tough competition. Therefore, the new generation should not jump into any business without making market study", shares Kakshapati his experience.

Laxmi Sharma is such an entrepreneur, whose journey into entrepreneurship is filled with adventurous stories. Begun from 'grassroots' Laxmi Sharma now owns Laxmi Wood Crafts who produces buttons from wasted bones and horns of animals and pieces of woods. In her own words it is an 'ever green business'. "My nature of not following others led me to this business", she says. Quality, price and delivery determine the market of products, she adds.

AC Nelson Multi-national Company known as Org Mark has been carrying out researches and surveys for the past one decade, but it has not been able to commission market surveys for new entrepreneurs. "Most of our clients are multi-national companies", says Research Executive Manorama Adhikari. She said that none of the local companies wants market research and survey and particularly the company has done survey for WHO, PSI, UNICEF, GTZ, Bottlers Nepal and Nepal Lever Limited. Although magazines like Himal and Business Age have got research done, not other company has asked for such service yet, but we are ready to offer the service, she further said.

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A Macho Man has 10 Wives.....

- Baburam Dhakal

Asma Gyawali, a grade three student of V. S. Niketan, pulled out her book and pointed to her parents the phrase "daughter's birth, lost destiny" mentioned in the book. Then she questioned her parents about the meaning of the phrase. The parents became very uncomfortable with the grave questions that their daughter was putting forth. They tried to provide answers to their daughter but failed. They had no option but to tell their daughter that she was very young and that she would understand once she grew older.

The context is of the popular Nepali proverbs and their impact on the society. There are many proverbs in the Nepali language. Some of these proverbs challenge the whole value of humanity. These proverbs define women as low level human beings. Some examples are: daughter's birth, lost destiny; late birth but son necessary; a macho man has 10 wives, etc.

These are proverbs which common Nepali people use all the time and some of these are even included in text books. Although the proverbs look different in nature, all of them provide the same message that women are weak and vulnerable and they cannot be compared to men. Since their birth they are defeated by men and they can be either raised or thrown out.

Incidents in the world history have already proved that women are not weak in any sector and they are not slaves of men. In reality, they are co-friends and competitors of men. In the 21st Century, the support of these proverbs is being taken in our society to cover this reality. Ashma Gyawali is a proof that the patriarchal society is becoming successful in their venture. There are many more Ashma Gyawali's. If a child is taught that women are defeated by men right from birth, how will they be able to compete in future ?

According to journalist, Purushottam Dahal, the proverbs should not be questioned since they only give sign meaning and are based on mythology. Dahal further adds that this issue must not be taken up in the name of women's equality. The proverbs do not discourage women who want to advance in any sector. The user has the right to use the proverbs accordingly.

Advocate Sapana Malla totally disagrees with Dahal's comments. According to her, the proverbs do create an indirect negative impact in the society. The proverbs help in developing negative thoughts among girls right from their childhood which does not let them become totally independent. Advocate Malla stressed on the need to find an alternative word for 'Mr' used in the court.

The other thing is that social and political activists who advocate for women's equality use these proverbs all the time. On one hand they advocate for women's rights and on the other hand they use proverbs which degrade women. Therefore, their activities are questionable. According to Pratibha Subedi, President of Women Awareness Center, the proverbs accidentally come out while speaking and the NGOs should be more aware of this.

Mina Poudyal, Chief of OXFAM mentions that there is a huge difference in the thoughts and views of those who have become feminists because of a job and those feminists who have been motivated thinking about the changes in the society. All these proverbs must be totally eliminated if women equality is to be achieved. The feminists who have been motivated for changes are aware of this. But, the feminists who have jobs and are influenced by the western culture do not show any concern in this issue.

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Sancharika Lekhmala/Sancharika Samuha

Court's Decision on Women Related Case

Ananta Raj Luitel

When Shree Prasad Upreti, Principal of Basundhara Boarding School was sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment and half of his property was granted to the child victim in the case of raping an eight year old child, his wife fainted in the court. The thought of being a rapist's wife must have upset her more than the separation from her husband.

On the day that the court made the decision, the Upreti family members were not only anxious but, also furious. The wife fainted and the handcuffed husband was furious at the decision made by Advocate Dr. Anand Mohan Bhattarai. He not only used abusive language but also screamed that he should have been given the death sentence instead of 8 years imprisonment. He was trying to show his innocence by asking for death sentence. But, the decision had already been made based on the proof that was produced against him.

The decision of the court came right after the decision on marital rape had been announced. The decision on marital rape was announced by Senior Advocate Laxman Prasad Aryal, Chief Justice Kedar Nath Upadhyay and Advocate Krishna Kumar Burma on 2nd June 2002. Column 1 on forceful rape of the Country Act states that rape committed with or without agreement against girls, widows, other's wife, women under 16 years of age and without consent of women over sixteen years of age is defined as forceful rape. Advocate Meera Dhungana had filed a petition since the column did not have any provisions on relations with the husband.

The court ordered the government to amend the law incorporating 'one's wife' in the law. Also the court had eliminated column 7 which stated that Rs. 500 would be levied for a person raping a commercial sex worker as unequal after a writ petition by Advocate Sapana Pradhan Malla. Thus, criminals cannot go free by raping a sex worker.

The decision made by the court in 1999 on the Annapurna Rana case was also very popular. The High Court had defied the ruling made by Kathmandu District Court to check the virginity of Ms. Rana to decide whether she was married or not. Ms. Rana had filed a writ petition against the decision made by the Kathmandu District Court stating that it defied the right to privacy stated by Clause 22 of the Constitution. The High Court had read out the clause and decided that the virginity test would not find whether she was married or single. It was stated that having a child or not would not be important in deciding whether she was married or not. It further mentioned that a child can be born through relationships other than marriage. The clause mentions that unless the law requires, a person has a right to the body, residence, property, correspondence or information.

The High Court had also ordered the government to amend the law on equal property rights on a writ petition filed by Advocate Mera Dhungana in 1997. On the basis of this, the 11th Amendment Bill has already been passed by the Parliament. The question of the Bill being fully for women still remains. But, it can be said that this is a positive step towards equal property rights.

All the decisions related to women made by the High Court were debatable. There were certain accusations that the court made the decision with disregard to the society and in some cases that the decision was in favour of women. But, the overall decisions are in favour of women empowerment. Thomas Cole had said "Privacy is the highest level of a person's physique and independence lies on this". Most of the decisions made by the court are based on women's personal independence.

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Modern Slavery

- Sharada Sharma

"Hey, how long are you taking to wash the dishes" Renu's mother in law's voice can be heard screaming. A 23 year old woman is seen washing a load of dishes in the mid heat.

Renu (name changed), who had completed her intermediate, was married to a person named Ravi Sharma (name changed) of Dang 8 years ago. According to the villagers, after completing higher studies, Ravi went in search of political bearings. After 18 days of marriage, Ravi just disappeared. Renu does not know where her husband went and her life has become miserable after that.

Women from the village say that Renu is abused by all her family members with the blame that she was the one who contributed to her husband's disappearance. Renu has to look after all the household chores from 3 in the morning to 10 at night. She has her first cup of tea after cleaning up and serving tea to all the others. According to tradition, the daughter-in-law has to eat or drink last. Sometimes, her father-in-law leaves early in the morning and she has to wait for him to come back until she can eat.

She does not even have the time to comb her hair and her mother in law starts shouting to finish work fast and help comb her hair. After she finishes her work in the kitchen, she has to go out to collect firewood. She massages her mother in law's feet in the evening and her husband's sisters also want their feet to be massaged. After all this work, she can have her privacy only after 10 pm.

In summer, the water in the well goes low and Renu has to struggle harder to take out water. She has to provide water to 12 of her family members and her hands get scorched by pulling the rope. None of the family members sympathize with her. Her uncle brought her ointment for the bruise but her mother in law abused her saying that she was having illicit relationship. Thus, Renu is banned from speaking with anyone.

After 8 months, Renu receives a letter from her husband. In the process of the coming and going of her husband, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter. Ravi slowly starts increasing his visits to home but Renu's agony is still there. Ravi wants to help Renu but he is scared of his mother and sisters. In one incident, while Ravi is helping Renu to pull water, the mother comes out and abuses him for being henpecked.

According to the villagers, if Renu talks about her plight with anyone, she has to listen to lots of abuses at home. Sometimes Renu feels that she should go back to her home but she has four other sisters and the society would not think it appropriate that she stay at her parent's home after marriage.

Renu gives birth to a son after two years. A mother of two, Renu has somehow managed to raise her children and look after the household as well. With tears welling in her eyes, she mentions that the children have not been provided any clothes in her husband's home. All the clothings were sent by her parents. Even the milk that they drink is brought by her father. The school expenses are by paid by her parents. Renu is unable to share her agony with her parents or her sisters for the fear of increasing their burden.

The Mother's Group in the village decided to encourage and support Renu but the mother in law blamed the group for being home breakers. But the group persisted in helping her and including her at least for 20 – 25 minutes. The group plans to help Renu by providing her loan to start a small business. Ravi supports this idea but his family is against it since there will be no one to look after the home. But, there is hope for Renu that the Mother's Group will be able to help her stand on her own feet.

Most of the women in Dang face the same problem as Renu. Even an educated woman has to face much suffering if she is married to an uneducated family

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