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Gender Analysis of Primary Social Studies Textbooks in Nepal

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Abstract: Gender representation in school textbooks has been researched and discussed extensively in a serious academic tone since the early classic studies by second wave feminists in the 1970s and 1980s using content analysis approach. The feminist poststructuralists, using qualitative approaches, asserted that textbooks are gender bias: these carry significantly more males than females, and both females and males are portrayed within their traditional gender roles. Keeping in view the persistent gender in textbooks, the study examines gender bias in primary level social studies textbook of grade V in Nepal. Content analysis approach that involves the descriptive statistics tool was used to count the number of male and female and calculate the percentage. The frequency and percentage of male and female gender characters are calculated. It reveals that 52% (176) male and 48% (160) female characters are utilized in the existing primary level social studies textbooks of grade V. 16 more male characters have been found in the textbooks. Accordingly, social studies textbooks of grade V have gender unfriendly characters, contents, activities and student evaluation procedures. Therefore, it should be revised as soon as possible to make it more gender sensitive and gender friendly.

Keywords: Male character, Female Character, Gender bias, social studies textbooks.

1. INTRODUCTION

School textbook are powerful means through which children learn their social, moral and cultural ideas and gender relationship. Accordingly, textbook is an essential medium of power that shapes the ways in which children think about themselves and society (Parajuli 1992). The texts and illustrations embedded into textbooks determine models of thought and offer preferred position to boys and girls. On the other hand, textbook provides messages about right and wrong, the beautiful and the hideous, and what is attainable, what is out of reach, and play central role in the development of gender identity and develops overall development of children (Foucault 1980). Along with parents, teachers, peers and television, textbooks contribute to how children understand what is expected of females and males, and shape how they think of their place in the social structure. Through textbook, children learn to constitute themselves as bipolar males or females with the appropriate patterns of power and desire. It clearly sheds light on the importance of textbook for children.

Western second wave feminists initially started to investigate on issues of gender bias in schools textbooks using content analysis approach during 1970s and 1980s. The main focus in content analysis approach involves the quantification of images and activities to see how many men/boys there were in relation to women/girls, what roles they were portrayed in and the terminology used to speak about males and females (Tietz 2007). The findings of such studies were that there were more males and they were engaged in different occupations and were undertaking a different and wider range of activities to that of females. Nevertheless, the focus on frequency and numbers of male and female were thought inappropriate for explaining gender power relationship. It was this discontent with mere numbers of male and female characters that poststructuralist perspective appeared in educational research in the late 1980s. Poststructuralist perspective drew attention to and provided ways of interrogating meaning in text. Here the focus shifted from simple frequency to a more complex and sophisticated stage than the one practiced by second wave feminism. Feminists' analysis of textbooks focused on the exploration of underlying meaning, forms of relationship metaphor, pattern of power desire created in this text (Skelton and Francis 2009). Although some studies on gender

representation in children's literature have revealed some signs of improvement since Weitzman et al.'s classic study more than 35 years ago, the recent research studies across nations also continue to claim the stereotypical and underrepresentation of women and girls in textbooks. This analysis reveals the most important fact that the issues of gender discrimination is still in existence. Gender biased representation in textbooks continue to exist despite the CEDAW condemnation of textbooks that are stereotypical on gender role (Smith 1987). Gender bias in school textbooks takes many forms and it is subtle and difficult to detect. It is embedded in the content of the texts, pictures, activities, exercises, classroom deliveries, student evaluation procedures, school environment and so on (Brugeilles and Cromer 2009). It further creates and sustains a view of the world in which male activity and male persons are given primary importance and greatest value, while female activity and female persons are marginalized, made invisible or downgraded (Wolpe 1988).

In the context of Nepal, textbook writing and development process is completely in an infant phase. Prior to 1951, almost all the texts and other educational materials were imported from India for use in schools of Nepal. The textbooks imported from India were traditional, influenced by the Hindu religion, and male dominant. At the same time, subject matters of the textbooks were based on the Indian traditions, culture, norms and values (Upraity 1962). So, subject matters related to Nepal were not incorporated in these textbooks. On the other hand, these textbooks were gender biased and female and girls were neglected in these textbooks. After the establishment of Gorkha Bhasha Prakashani Samiti (Sajha Prakhan) some books got published in Nepali and some of them were used in Nepalese schools. The Nepal National Education Planning Commission recommended the need of a curriculum in 1954 and subsequently the Department of Education published primary and lower secondary school curriculum in 1958. The private publishers started getting textbooks written on the basis of the curriculum and the government started the selection of textbooks and prescribed them for schools. During this period, human rights, women rights, child rights and concept of gender were incorporated in the textbooks (MOE 1999). On the other hand, human rights and gender friendly textbooks were not prescribed by the government or banned by

the government. Active monarchy governed the all bodies of the state during this period. Hindu religion, traditional belief, autocratic political ideology, non-progressive philosophy guided the king's vision, idea and philosophy (Wood 1958). So, the then textbook writers were not able to break the traditional trend and were not able to write gender friendly textbooks.

In 1961, the Ministry of Education established Educational Material Center (now Janak Education Material Center) equipped with the trained textbook writers and a printing press. Some textbooks were written by these trained writers. The education press printed the books and they were distributed to schools. The Ministry of Education had the policy of selecting the textbooks from among the available ones on the basis of competition and assigned a specific textbook for the specific district or zones of the country (MOES 2001). As most private publishers had profit as the prime motif, the qualities of the textbooks were far from satisfaction. Moreover, the private publishers were not interested in making the textbooks available in remote and mountain areas of the country (MOES 2008). This scenario of the initial textbook writing and production reveals that gender friendly textbook production was not possible. Production of adequate textbooks and distribution of textbooks to all students were major challenges at that time. Anyone could not raise voice against the gender discrimination and quality of textbooks because the government was not able to distribute the textbooks to all children of the nation. In a situation like this, there was no question of gender friendly textbooks.

After the establishment of the Janak Education Materials Center, it took all responsibility with regard to the publication and distribution of textbooks of school education. Government of Nepal has made textbooks available to all students of grade I to III free of cost. The girl students of 18 remote districts receive free textbooks. These textbooks were available to all students of the country. This was the first phase of textbooks development and parents, stakeholders and leaders of the nation did not raise voice on gender discrimination. They were happy because their children received textbooks easily from the government. But the parents were not aware of the textbooks' biasness and quality which had hampered the future of their children. In 1981 Curriculum

Implementation Plan was implemented throughout the country and curriculum of 1971 was revised with the view to make it more objective and qualitative. Curriculum was revised and textbooks were written accordingly. But the educational philosophy was the same. King Mahendra wanted to impose his traditional educational vision into Nepalese people. So the king got the educationists prepare the school textbooks according to the norms and values of the Panchayat Polity. The major aim of the curriculum and school textbooks was to prepare the child who was loyal and obedient to the crown and Panchayat. The Panchayat system did not respect human dignity.

Popular movement of 1991 restored democracy in Nepal. This movement brought to an end the feudalistic Panchayat polity; it created a climate that lends itself to openness in thinking. Consequently, the country felt the need for improvement in the whole education system. Taking into the changed context of democracy, social customs and values, multiple demands of knowledge and science in the world and the changing needs and aspiration of the people the government appointed a National Education Commission to reform the whole education system in Nepal (MOES 2008). At the same time, a new primary education curriculum was introduced from the academic year 1991/1992. It was claimed that human rights, women rights and child rights were the backbone of the multiparty democracy (Pandey 2008). Accordingly, curriculum and textbooks of the school level were also revised. Human rights and child rights were incorporated into primary education textbooks for the first time in Nepal. Actually, it was a historical event of Nepal. But these adequate and sufficient subject matters were not included in the textbooks. Similarly, gender issues were not incorporated in the textbooks of primary education.

Primary education curriculum of 1992 was revised in 2003. The prevailing structure of school education curriculum and textbooks was again revised in line with the changed context of Nepal. The major intention of the revision was to make the prevailing education system qualitative, relevant, gender friendly, and capable to meet the need of the 21st century. Accordingly, incorporation of democracy and human dignity was one of the major intentions of the curriculum. Although human rights and child rights were incorporated in the social studies

curriculum, women rights or issues related to gender and gender discrimination was not included in the primary education textbooks (Joshi & Rose 1966). Most of the male and female characters of textbooks are engaged in the most traditional, gender stereotype and orthodox roles. Primary education is the foundation age of the children. Most of the behaviours, habits and attitudes are shaped at this period. If social studies textbooks do not provide education on gender issues, children won't be aware of gender discrimination (National Indigenous People Foundation 2006).

In most primary schools of developing countries, textbooks are often the only educational materials available. They are the most visible and tangible form of educational program for children, teachers, parents. Textbooks are considered as an authoritative source of knowledge. For most of the teachers, textbook is the curriculum and important means and ends of education. In a situation like this, if textbooks are defective or biased towards gender, the knowledge or skills learned through such textbooks would not be useful and productive for society. If traditional beliefs, norms and values, superstitions, bad customs and gender biasness exist in the textbooks, it could not produce gender sensitive and democratic citizens. So this study has been carried out to find out whether the contents incorporated in the social studies textbooks of grade five are women friendly and relevant to gender sensitization.

2. RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

More than two decade have already elapsed since Nepal signed the major human rights related international treaties and covenants such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and so on. At the same time, the existing constitution of Nepal includes many topics related to gender (Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction 2011). Three Year Human Rights National Plan of Action (2010-2013) prepared by the Government of Nepal has made significant provisions for the rights of women. It has introduced special programs for women from all sectors. Another Three Year Approach Paper (2011-2014) also

laid more emphasis on rights and all-round development of women. National Action Plan against gender based violence prepared by Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Minister states that gender based violence will be controlled and security and protection will be provided to women. The plan has set the objectives to undertake legal and institutional reforms for ending gender based violence, ensuring the access of persons affected by gender based violence (Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, 2011). These legal arrangements seem sufficient for an all round development of women and girls. But the actual scenario is quite different. Classrooms are not safe for girls. Curriculum and textbooks are biased towards girl students and pedagogical activities carried out by the school teachers are full of gender discrimination.

The Nepal Government's Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has issued the National Plan of Action for the implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 2004. This Plan of Action specifically calls for the amendment of discriminatory laws and formulation of appropriate laws. The same Ministry adopted another National Action Plan on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. If we know these legal arrangements regarding women, anyone cannot think about gender discrimination in Nepal. Actually, all these laws, bylaws, rules and regulations and other legal provisions are adequate and relevant. But these laws and bylaws are not practiced in actual daily life. There is a subordinate role for a woman in family and society. The nature of the prevailing society is patriarchal. It is very difficult to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination from the existing society. This fact clearly shows that educational materials like textbooks should be free from gender discrimination. So this investigation has been carried out to analyze social studies textbooks of grade V from gender perspectives.

In 2003 primary education curriculum has been revised to make it progressive, qualitative and relevant to the changed social political educational context and to incorporate the provisions mentioned above. Accordingly, detailed outlines of intended learning outcomes, relevant contents, child centered pedagogical activities, materials and student evaluation procedures are designed in this curriculum. Now a question

raises here whether all of these arrangements related to prevailing social studies curriculum and textbooks are suitable, adequate and relevant. Certainly the answer is not easy. It requires a detailed study on the prevailing social studies textbook of grade V. So, this study has been carried out to fulfill the objective just mentioned.

Purpose of the Study: The present study is an attempt to analyze the male and female characters present in the primary level social studies textbook of grade V and their transaction. The study was formulated mainly with the following objectives:

- to find out male and female characters used in the social studies textbook of grade V, and
- to deliver suggestions and recommendations to make social studies textbooks more gender friendly.

Research question: How is gender represented in primary social studies textbooks of grade V currently use in government schools in Nepal in terms of male and female characters?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

During the research, a number of studies have been found out. But all of these studies were not relevant for this study. So, some relevant studies are reviewed and presented in this section. In this context, Shah (2012) conducted a research on gender representation in English Language textbooks in Pakistan, Iran, and Hong Kong. The results revealed that there are more male characters than female characters in both texts and illustrations in English textbooks. Accordingly, Jafri (1994) analyzed the primary and middle school Urdu Language, Pakistan Studies and English textbooks. She concluded that women were underrepresented and portrayed in stereotyped roles and women were mostly shown busy with household chores or sitting passively or quietly. Men were identified by their jobs or professions, e.g. doctor, engineer, carpenter, potter, farmer, postman, etc. whereas women were always the daughters, sisters, wives or mothers. Jafri further concluded that the history taught at the schools was purely male oriented and women's roles in any Pakistan movement were ignored altogether. Mirza (1999) conducted a comprehensive review of the primary school textbooks prescribed by the Punjab Textbook Board. He found that out

of 56 occupations mentioned in the textbooks, the females were portrayed in only 19 occupations. Accordingly, female characters were the reflection of traditional images and portrayed in the activities which do not demand the creative potentials of individuals, i.e. cooking, running households. On the other hand, the males were portrayed in the power oriented activities, i.e. fighting wars, selling, boating, flying, driving, etc. Skelton (2006), in a study of school textbooks, concluded that of the total human characters found in the textbooks 6. 87% were female. The study reveals that men were generally portrayed in the public domain as bread winners and women within the confines of the family as home-makers. Similarly, men have been assigned a wide range of activities. The work associated with male images involved intellectual, organizational and problem-solving skills and female images were found to be associated with nurturing and service oriented work such as housewife, teacher and nurse. Any study has not been carried out in Nepal to analyze the textbooks from gender perspectives. This study has been carried out in order to fulfill this gap.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study examines gender biasness in primary schools mathematics textbooks in Nepal. Content Analysis approach that involves the descriptive statistics tool was used to count the number of male and female characters. The frequency and percentage of male and female gender characters were calculated. It is seen as a method in which content of message form the basis for drawing inferences and conclusion about content (Nachmias and Nachmias 1976).

Sample: Social studies textbook of grade V was used in the present study to count the male and female characters given in the textbook. Curriculum Development Center was the publisher of the social studies textbooks. Accordingly, Dik Bahadur Rai Dina Nath Gautam, Dilli Prasad Sharma and Mahendra Bist were the writers of the book. Altogether seven units were analyzed to fulfill the objectives of the present study. This textbook was piloted in various districts. On the basis of the piloting the textbook was again revised and finally implemented throughout the country. This textbook has been implemented in the government primary schools only. Some boarding schools have used its English version in their classrooms. But most

private boarding schools have different books of social studies than government primary school. Boarding school's textbook has not included in this study.

Data Analysis: In the present study, tallies were used to count the numbers of male and female characters utilized in social studies textbook of grade V. Similarly, percentages of the male and female characters were also calculated on the basis of the total numbers of male and female characters. At the end, contextual meaning was derived, results were found out and final report was prepared.

5. RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

There are seven units in the social studies textbooks of grade V. First unit namely "Oneself, One's Family and Neighbourhood" has been presented in table-1. This table shows the total numbers of male and female characters. To find out the actual status of the male and female character given in the lesson, first of all, existence male and female character was counted. For this purpose, tallies were used to count numbers of male and female characters given in the text. After the summation of the tallies, total numbers was found out and percentage was calculated. At last, a table was prepared. Total numbers of male and female characters of the first unit is presented in Table 1 given below.

Table 1: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-1: Oneself, One's Family and Neighborhood

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lessons	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		All	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Occupation of my neighbor	9	18	6	14	15	16
2.	Social etiquette	7	14	24	55	31	33
3.	Help in the work of communities	2	04	9	20	11	12
4.	Respect to other	16	31	5	11	21	22
5.	To know other	17	33	0	0	17	18
	Total	51	100	44	100	95	100

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

The heading of the first unit is 'Oneself, One's Family and Neighbourhood'. There are five lessons in unit one. In this unit 51

(54%) male characters and 44 (46%) female characters are used. But this difference is not unsatisfactory. Accordingly, there are 17 male characters in lesson five with no female character. Various text, pictures, examples, exercise and activities are utilized in unit one to transfer the knowledge and information to children.

The heading of unit number two is our traditions, social norms and values. In this unit, 7 male and 17 female characters play various roles to deliver the message of the text. The number of male and female characters utilized in this unit is not satisfactory because the existence of the male and female characters is only 24. This numbers is comparatively less and unsatisfactory. More gender sensitive texts could be utilized in this unit. Relevant pictures, exercises and activities could be included in the lesson. Generally, language, text and presentation seem fit and fine but traditional meaning of the masculine and feminine continued to persist along with the oppositional, emotional-rational, nature-culture and dependent-autonomous. Frequency and percentage of the male and female character in unit number two is given in Table-2.

Table 2: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-2: Our tradition, social norms and values

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lesson	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		All	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Our traditions	4	57	5	29	9	38
2.	Our language and clothing	1	14	1	6	2	8
3.	Our festivals	1	14	1	6	2	8
4.	Our country our pride	-	-	4	24	4	17
5.	Ideals peoples of our district	1	15	6	35	7	29
	Total	7	100	17	100	24	100

Source: social studies textbook, grade V (2003)

The heading of unit 3 is Social Problems and Solutions. This unit is also suitable for gender topic, and gender discrimination could be presented as social evils or problems in this unit. But any subject matter is not given in this unit. Female characters are more than the male characters. 19 male characters exist in the unit whereas 36 female

characters are presented in this unit. Comparatively, nearly double female characters are utilized in this unit. As in unit two, very few human characters are represented in the unit 3. Analysis of the unit is presented in the Table-3 given below.

Table 3: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-3: Social problems and solutions

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lesson	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		All	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	To be aware of drug addiction	4	21	10	28	14	25
2.	To be ware of thefts	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Don't imitate other's culture	3	16	-	-	3	5
4.	Reconciliation	2	11	22	61	24	44
5.	Social organizations	9	47	3	8	12	22
6.	Role of our local bodies	1	5	1	3	2	4
	Total	19	100	36	100	55	100

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

Table 4: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-4: Civic sense

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lesson	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		All	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Our rights	5	45	9	31	14	35
2.	Our duties	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Our national heritage	-	-	2	7	2	5
4.	Our social rules and regulations	3	27	2	7	5	13
5.	District Development Committee (DDC)	-	-	1	3	1	3
6.	Functions of DDC	3	28	-	-	3	8
7.	Respect and reconciliation	-	-	15	52	15	38
	Total	11	100	29	100	40	

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

Another important unit of the social studies of grade V is civic sense. Gender discrimination is directly related to civic sense. Because of the lack of the proper knowledge on civic and political subject matters, most of the teachers have traditional belief and thought. Such

types of teachers discriminate female from male. At the same time, most of the teachers have no preliminary knowledge on various aspects of gender discrimination. On the other hand, gender related subject matters are not incorporated in this unit as well. There are 11 male characters and 29 female characters in the various lessons of Unit-4. The numbers of male and female characters is presented in table 4.

Our Earth is the heading of unit 5. This unit is suitable for gender problems. Although the heading is not suitable, some lessons are suitable for gender topics such as our neighbouring countries. Gender discrimination status of these countries could be taught to the children. Accordingly, the knowledge on solution of gender related problems could be instrumented in the text. Any subject matter pertaining to rights and gender discrimination is not included in this unit. But this is the unit where most parts of the Asian countries are included. South Asian countries such India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan are included in this unit. So, this unit could be proved as an excellent unit for gender related subject matters.

Table 5: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-5: Our earth

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lesson	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		All	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Natural features of Nepal	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	Climate and social life styles of Nepal	2	15	4	31	6	23
3.	Natural vegetation	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.	Soil of our country	-	-	6	46	6	23
5.	Sketches of maps	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.	To fill the symbol in map	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Uses of globe and map	11	85	3	23	14	54
8.	Our neighbouring countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan and Bhutan	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Our neighbouring countries: Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	13	100	13	100	26	100

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

There are equal male and female characters in this unit. But no male and female characters are mentioned in most of the lessons of this unit. For example lesson no. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are designed without human characters. Accordingly, there are 6 female characters in lesson no. 4 whereas male characters are not included. Luckily, there are equal numbers of both male and female characters in this unit.

Various historical events are included in unit 6. Headings such as Ancient Nepal, Historical Personalities, Head of the State, and Head of the Government are given this unit. This unit is also suitable for gender related topics. Females of the ancient period who fought against gender discrimination could be instrumented in this unit. Various examples such as Prime Minister, Ministers, Member of Parliament and leaders who made great contribution in the field of gender discrimination could be best examples for gender inclusion. But the female personalities who made great contribution to build the nation are missing from the textbook and primary level social studies curriculum. So, there is sufficient room for gender related subject matters in this unit.

Table 6: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-6: Our past

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lesson	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%		
1.	Household goods of ancient period	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	Historical personalities of our community	3	4	3	20	6	7
3.	Ancient Nepal	21	30	-	-	21	25
4.	Janak, Sita, Buddha, Arniko, Shankhar, Ansubarma	10	14	7	47	17	20
5.	Prithivi Narayan, Balabhadra, Amar Singh	21	30	-	-	21	24
6.	Our great personalities	11	16	5	33	16	19
7.	Head of state and government	4	6	-	-	4	5
	Total	70	100	15	100	85	100

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

The numbers of male and female character could be found out from Table 6. There are 70 male characters and 15 female characters. There is great variation between male and female characters. More male characters are used in lesson 3 and 5. There is no character in lesson no.1 whereas 3 male and 3 female characters are given in lesson no.2. This unit utilized the highest number of male characters in the text.

Our Economic Activities is the heading of unit 7. The main cause of gender discrimination is economic power. Generally, male members of the family handle all the economic activities of the family whereas female members cannot take part in the household decision making process. So, gender discrimination starts from the family. Accordingly, economic condition of the whole state generates the imbalance in gender and it helps to create gender discrimination. This unit is also suitable for gender topic. Lessons such as national products, uses of the national products and economic activities of our country are relevant for the inclusion of gender related topics. But gender related subject matters are not incorporated in the various lessons in this unit.

Table 7: Analysis of the Gender Biasness in Unit-7: Our economic activities

Lesson no.	Heading of the Lesson	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers Male and Female	
		Male		Female		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%		
1.	Occupation's of inhabitants of Dolma's District	-	-	4	67	4	36
2.	Goods of schools	1	20	-	-	1	9
3.	National productions	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.	Uses of national products	4	80	2	33	6	55
5.	Economic activities of our country	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	5	100	6	100	11	100

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

Only 5 male and 6 female characters are given in this unit. Altogether 11 characters are included in this unit. There are no male and female characters in lesson no. 1, 3 and 5. A number of female characters could be used in this unit. Besides, females' important roles could be displayed and gender discrimination minimized through

various lessons of this unit. But topics related to gender are not given in this unit. The numbers of male and female characters are presented in Table 7.

Although textbook writers tried their best to balance male and female characters, presentation of pictures is not satisfactory as there are more male characters than females in important lessons and texts. There are so many great female personalities in the history of Nepal. Women made great contribution from ancient period to modern period in Nepal. In ancient times, there were Sita Bhirtuti, Gargi and a number of great female personalities. Medieval and modern period also had great female politicians and leaders. These characters are not included in the textbooks. A number of studies carried out in the Asian countries and abroad reveal that female personalities are missing from the school textbooks. These studies further show that school textbooks are embedded with gender biasness against female characters in the texts and illustrations. The present study has proved the same once again.

Merely equal numbers of male and female characters in the textbook is not a proof of gender equality; presentation of the subject matter, language, activities and objectives of the lesson are also important factors. Most pictures and characters of the existing social studies textbook of grade V are not able to communicate about the importance of gender studies. Social studies textbook is embedded with biasness in favour of male characters which affects the self-esteem and self-confidence of female students. Gender biased culture of the textbook prevents all round development of the personality of children, specially the girls. They impose traditional belief, cultures, norms and values on children. It clearly indicates that textbooks of the primary education have sufficient room for improvement. It calls for further detailed study in order to revise, improve and redesign the social studies textbooks of grade V.

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This critical review vividly shows that social studies books consist of significantly more men than women in text contents and illustrations. The review reveals that not only are females portrayed less often than males in the books, but both genders are frequently presented in

stereotypical gender roles as well. It can be asserted that this portrayal of males and females in stereotypical ways makes counter gender socialization difficult. The present study makes it further clear that the wide prevalent gender biasness in the textbooks is an indication of gender discrimination across the country.

A consolidated summary of the male and female characters is presented in the table 8. The table reveals that there are 176 male characters and 160 female characters in social studies textbook of grade V. This result proves that there is gender discrimination in the social studies textbook of grade V. Mineshima (2008) investigated gender representation in English Language textbooks and found out that there are more male characters than female characters in both texts and illustrations in English textbooks in Pakistan and Iran. Similarly, Sunar (2011) carried out a study on the mathematics and science textbooks in China and the UK and found that there were 515 (55.3%) male and 416 (44.7%) female characters in the four volumes of mathematics textbooks. The present study has also found that there are 52% (176) male and 48% (160) female characters in the social studies textbooks of grade V which is presented in Table 8. So, the present study once again has proved that social studies textbook of grade V is also biased towards women.

Table 8: Consolidated number of Male and Female characters

Lesson no.	Heading of the Unit	Frequency and percentage of Male and Female				Total Numbers	
		Male		Female		All	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Oneself, One's Family and Neighborhood	51	29	44	28	95	29
2.	Our tradition, social norms and values	7	4	17	10	24	7
3.	Social problems and solutions	19	11	36	23	55	16
4.	Civic sense	11	6	29	18	40	12
5.	Our earth	13	7	13	8	26	8
6.	Our past	70	40	15	9	85	25
7.	Our economic activities	5	3	6	4	11	3
		176	100	160	100	336	100

Source: social studies textbook grade V (2003)

Analysis of male and female characters of social studies text books of grade V clearly shows that the textbook is full of cosmetic bias. Actually, cosmetic bias offers an illusion of equity to teachers and students who may casually flip the pages of a textbook. Though there are a number of illustrations of women and girls in the text books, most of them are mothers and teachers. Most often women characters are shown passive and menial and most of the times in the illustrations women are shown watching rather than doing. It is quite clear from the analysis of the textbooks that despite an explicit policy of gender sensitization of school curriculum, the situation on the ground level has not improved a great deal. Traditional meanings of the masculine and feminine continue to persist along with the oppositional, dichotomous categories of active-passive, emotional-rational, nature-culture and dependent-autonomous. Gender sensitive material in the text books should be prepared based on a feminist knowledge base. Without this knowledge base, those who are given charge of writing textbooks will restrict themselves to superficial tinkering either by increasing the number of times women are visually or verbally represented in the books or by facile role reversals.

7. SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Children learn appropriate gender roles from several different sources. The first source is family and the second source is school. In the school, gender roles are learned mostly through the textbooks and the teaching-learning process. Through their textbooks, children learn gender roles for females and males. According to the learning children shape their behavior, attitude, and develops skills. So, textbooks play an important role in the life of children. If textbooks are not written fairly, textbooks are biased towards gender, it could not be hoped that textbooks would produce democratic citizens. The prevailing social studies textbooks of grade V have some gender unfriendly characters, contents, activities, exercises and languages. So, topic, subject matters, learning materials, activities, languages, exercise and learning environment used in the textbook should be revised from gender perspectives.

The result of the present study reveals that there are 52% (176) male and 48% (160) female characters in the social studies textbooks of

grade five. Actually, numbers of male or female characters do not matter. But it is also one of the gender bias symbols of the textbook. Accordingly, the studied textbooks have traditional and stereotype role for female in the lessons and activities. Such textbooks limit girls' and boys' career opportunities, activities, behaviour and even their personal and social lives. Therefore it is recommended that schools and textbooks should be made gender friendly as soon as possible and all of the curriculum designer, textbook writers and teachers, writers and other reference material developers should pay attention on the issue. Accordingly, another important finding of the present study is that most of the contents of the social studies textbooks are suitable for gender and gender discrimination. Topic such as social norms and values, social problems and their solution, civic sense, our past and our economic activities are the most relevant topics which are directly or indirectly related to gender and their various aspects. Modern and improved role might be added in the social norms and values. Various types of the awareness activities related to gender discrimination could be incorporated in the civic sense and life and contribution of the great female personality might be instrumented in the history topic. This is how we could make social studies of grade V a gender friendly textbook of school education.

Presentation of the characters, themes of the passage, message delivered, language, activities assigned to the characters and exercises designed for the student evaluation clearly reflect the ideology of gender. Gender policy could guide the whole education system. So, education system should have a clear gender vision and perfect plan for the uplift of the gender. Textbook development policy respects the traditional Hindu norms and values. Most of the textbooks of Nepal have more or less followed the Hindu traditions, cultures and value system. At the same, it supports radical feminism indirectly. These ideas are controversial and unsatisfactory. So there should be a clear vision about gender in the sector of education. Likewise, pedagogical arrangements of the prevailing primary level social studies curriculum and textbook seem adequate and satisfactory. But if curriculum and textbooks are scrutinized from gender perspectives, there is sufficient room for revision, improvement, correction in the pedagogical aspects. .

The present findings are similar to the most recent findings of content analysis on gender characters and gender roles in various textbooks such as English Language, Social Studies, and Science and Accounting textbooks used by other scholars. So, prevailing social studies textbooks should be revised in order to make it more gender sensitive and gender friendly.

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