

Women's Engagement in Social and Political Spheres : Insights from a Kathmandu Region Municipality

Introduction

The Global Gender Gap Index 2022 says Nepal to be the second fastest, after Bangladesh, in closing the gender gap among South Asian countries¹. Indeed, since the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008, variously composed governments have all taken the same direction of passing progressive laws in order to reach the goal of gender equality. However, there seems to be a gap between the theoretical projects of the government and their practical realization. Since the 1990s, there has been an ever growing number of NGOs and various grassroots movements fundamentally linked with the government's official development discourse. Even though “Nepalese intellectuals are quite cynical with regard to NGOs, which they characterize more as private family businesses rather than philanthropic organizations”², NGOs play a big part in spreading feminist awareness and empowerment among women, trying to truly engage them in Nepal's political life. It is crucial to understand how women react to that double, governmental and non-governmental, encouragement. How do they get socially and politically involved, how do they perceive their societal and political roles, and what struggles do they encounter?

In order to research those questions, we interviewed 8 socially and politically engaged Nepalese women, along with 4 socially and politically engaged Nepalese men. All of the interviewed persons come from one Kathmandu region municipality counting approximately 115 thousand habitants. Given the diversity of Nepal's social, political, ethical and cultural landscape, the research cannot be generalized at a country level with certainty. Nevertheless, thanks to the pairing of the interviews content with resourceful research, it definitely provides new insights regarding the current state of Nepalese women social and political engagement.

This paper presents the idea that, while Nepal has a progressive legal framework and affirmative action promoting women's participation in politics, true gender equality in the socio-political sphere remains unachieved. To support this statement, we will highlight the practical barriers women encounter in political engagement and emphasize the role of *care* in their involvement. We will then proceed to explain how the burden of developing skills necessary for political involvement, such as self-confidence, is currently placed solely on women. We will also explain how the illusory perception of gender equality among women is constructed. Finally, we will note positive signs of progress, including the perception of women as honest political contributors and an increase in feminist research.

¹ Joshi, Sajas D. (2022), “Global Gender Gap Index 2022 – Assessing Nepal's Progress”, *Nepal Economic Forums*, available at : <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/global-gender-gap-index-2022-assessing-nepals-progress/>

² *Social Exclusion and Conflict Transformation in Nepal: Women, Dalit and Ethnic Groups: FAST Country Risk Profile Nepal*, Sep. 1, 2005, pp. 14-16, available at : <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11080.7>

The necessity of social work

The dedication to social work in the Kathmandu valley is paramount. Interviewees frequently emphasized that the most crucial efforts occur at the community level, focusing on empowering and educating the population. Government laws and programs often fail to reach their intended targets due to insufficient direct intervention in these communities. In the Kathmandu region, local actions led by grassroots organizations and NGOs are regarded as the most effective by the residents. One of the male interviewees strongly affirmed that “the strength of the community level is more powerful than the central or federal government power”. At a national level, the Constitution establishes a legal framework intended to ensure rights³. For instance, Article 38th of the Constitution, which addresses women’s rights, guarantees a special assistance for women “to obtain opportunity in education, health, employment and social security, on the basis of positive discrimination”. Its implementation relies on programs such as the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy and Action Plan (June 2021), which aim to redirect efforts toward the social inclusion of marginalized groups through direct actions. However, the President of the Forum for Women, Law & Development Sapana Pradhan-Malla⁴, insists that “though law can create an external policy framework, empowerment is necessary. We have to develop the inner capacity of women so that they can claim their rights. Inclusion and empowerment go together”. That empowerment seems to be the first interest of NGOs and grassroots organizations, rather than of the government.

In fact, political institutions and grassroots movements seem to complement each other. Indeed, it was regularly mentioned that the assistance from political structures alone was insufficient and that, in order to achieve their goals, they needed the grassroots more practical and closely connected to community support. Our observations revealed that grassroots organizations effectively address immediate community issues thanks to a deep understanding of local needs and through practical actions that address them, such as business training, health awareness and rights awareness. In fact, grassroots organizations help women to learn about and make use of their rights established by the government. Consequently, social work is a necessity for significant change in the community. The community habitants seem to be well aware of it, and while they are often critical of the government associated with corruption, they always praise the non-profit grassroots organizations. This may further explain why there is a greater trust and recognition for the social work done at the grassroots level compared to the programs and rights provided by political institutions which are regarded as divided and corrupted.

Moreover, women are also empowered through their own exercise of social work. Although it may not be the primary reason for their involvement, they gain social recognition and confidence by using their skills to help others. The women we interviewed reported experiencing significant personal development due to getting involved and actually acting in

³ Government of Nepal, 2015; Constitution of Nepal, 2072 (2015), Kathmandu

⁴ Gérard Toffin, Shova Shakya. Women, Law and Democracy in Nepal. An Interview with Sapana Pradhan-Malla. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, 2011, 39, p. 155.

various organizations. One of the social workers we met explained that she doesn't make any material benefit out of her social work, and she even uses her own money for the public good when it's needed. Her services let her gain new connections with people and the recognition within the community. Thanks to this appreciation she was finally elected to be part of the board committee, which allows her to act in a more effective way.

In the article mentioned earlier, Sapana Pradhan-Malla declares: "When you work at home, the work you do is not recognized. When you work outside, your contribution is recognized economically; your independent existence as a citizen and your identity is recognized"⁵. This implies that economic independence is primordial in women's empowerment, and is achieved through their activities beyond the household as they assert themselves in roles where they are valued. In order to understand this idea, consider another example of an interviewee who got married off at age twelve and couldn't receive a formal education. It is thanks to her involvement in grassroots movements that she discovered the value of her skills by teaching them to other women in the community. Currently, she creates and sells her own handcrafts, which provide her with a certain economic independence. Thus, she not only feels like she is a valuable person, but she is simultaneously factually more independent and free.

Through their social work, women are able to network and build friendships that can be beneficial for a political career. While few pursue this path, those who do are often elected to local committees, and attribute their success to the recognition they gained from their social services and to the personal skills they learned. They turn their social work specialties (involvement in education, childcare etc.) into their local political agendas. According to one of our female interviewees "starting with social work is essential for an effective political engagement". She emphasizes the importance of being rooted in everyday community work to excel in politics. In conclusion, women's involvement in social work often sparks an interest in politics. Their strong bond to the community serves as a gateway to political involvement for women in this region.

Housewives or politicians ?

Women's engagement in social work and politics offers them a form of emancipation. However, they remain constrained by gender roles within these spheres. Due to societal norms, women often end up working solely in the field of *care*. Consequently, their social work and political actions continue to reflect their traditional roles as caregivers and housewives.

The American psychologist and philosopher Carol Gilligan⁶ argues that women, compared to men, have a different moral and psychological approach to ethical and therefore political issues. Even in politics, women tend to focus on actions of caring for others,

⁵ *ibid*, 157

⁶ Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press.

addressing their direct needs, and prioritizing compassion in ethical decision-making - just as they are expected to do in their own families. Implicating that they also focus on fields of care in politics, such as education and health. This situation isn't the result of supposedly naturally feminine qualities, but of crucial differences in lived experiences and socialization between men and women. Women's moral development is shaped by their social roles and the expectations placed upon them. Their political attitude reflects the selfless, altruistic attitude they are expected to adopt in the household.

Indeed, in the interviews, the main reason given to justify women's social and political engagement was "doing it for others" - even at personal cost. Others, as a priority over self, seem to become the center of women's personal and professional choices. Thus, women become sort of social caregivers. Their tasks include physical care, emotional support, and help in the management of daily tasks. Their family and political roles collide, and they care for children's vaccinations and education as well as for marriage counseling. For example, a high-ranked woman in politics centered her agenda on *care* with education programs and domestic violence solutions. She believes that *care*-centered agenda is at the origin of her victory in the elections, since women could feel like they relate to her and are heard. Even though social work and political involvement allow women to contribute to community progress and gain a certain level of independence, social expectations confined them to the caregiving sphere in both their private and professional lives. Moreover, an essentialization of certain female capacities seems to occur, such as sensitivity or the ability to deeply understand the needs of others. The interviewees suggest that these capacities are inherent to women's nature and are the reasons why they succeed in social work and could excel in politics. The final result is that women's jobs are often unpaid and not acknowledged as real complex work, since they are viewed as a natural extension of the female lifestyle.

Overall, gender roles constantly prioritize one and only one responsibility - being a housewife. The challenge of women's everyday lives is to balance their full-time role as housewives with other jobs such as agriculturists, social workers, and sometimes politicians. Nearly every woman we interviewed had to take on at least three full time jobs, for example being a housewife, an agriculturist and a politician. In order to get involved in the social and political life of the community, women must first accomplish all of the household chores on their own. The husband's help is extremely seldom. For instance, one of the women has to take care of her cows and 2000 chickens, while also serving as an elected member of the community board committee, while also preparing meals for the entire family, raising the children, and cleaning the property. Another woman had to decide to stop her beloved social engagement, in order to raise her children.

Knowing their condition, it would be absurd to expect women to seize political opportunities presented to them. Women are presented with opportunities, motivated to participate in democracy, but without first being unburdened of their heavy social roles. There is an expectation for them to find on their own a way of harmonizing household and outside work, instead of first addressing their most basic needs and issues (such as dividing

housework). Sapana Pradhan-Malla affirms in her interview⁷: “In our culture there is no sharing of responsibilities, so women are still expected to do everything at home. Because of that women are not able to find a balance in their professional lives, compete with male lawyers and find a balance in their own personal lives.” We can associate these words with those of a woman that couldn’t harmonize the household’s responsibilities and her high ranked job. She was able to pursue her political career and compete with male politicians, but in a big part thanks to a lighter household workload. The GESI strategy and action plan underscores the need to balance the workload in the households and to reduce women’s drudgery: “Balance the workload within households participating in value chains to optimize the positive impact on the target population [marginalized groups] and reduce drudgery and other negative impacts.”⁸ Indeed, this would enable women to work outside the household and take on significant responsibilities in their respective sectors. However, currently, in practice, the GESI’s proposition is not at all noticeable.

To conclude, women are partially forced into *care* politics, because it is the most accessible to them. The unbalanced workload in the household prevents women from higher-ranking political responsibilities. The professional inequalities between men and women are particularly obvious in this regard.

The mental load of being a Nepalese woman

Being a Nepalese woman implies being part of the population targeted by the governmental institution’s programs and NGOs actions. In her article about the women's movement in Nepal⁹, Seira Tamang explores the construction of an archetype of the “Nepali woman”. She describes it as a “contemporary misrepresentation” of all Nepalese women as one homogenized social category with the same needs and abilities. Tamang argues that NGOs rarely differentiate categories of Nepalese women and are willing to treat them all equally, thus disregarding their particular needs. This perception of women in Nepal leads to several consequences. Because they are all considered uneducated, they are denied the capacity to make decisions or even to have opinions of their own. This archetype reinforces the idea of the dominated and agency-lacking woman. Therefore, certain roles and responsibilities are perceived as inaccessible to such a woman.

Even though there are few people who embody the archetype of a Nepalese woman, the consequences of its existence are nevertheless very real and palpable. Institutions and NGOs frequently adopt this archetype as the model for their assistance and programs. However, we can easily envision that not every woman has the same traits, opinions or needs. A woman living in the capital doesn’t have the same economical or educational needs as a

⁷ Toffin, G. and Shakya, S. (2011) Women, Law and Democracy in Nepal. An Interview with Sapana Pradhan-Malla. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, 39, pp.146-161

⁸ Government of Nepal Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's Development. (2021). *Agriculture Sector Development Programme (ASDP), Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy and Action Plan*.

⁹ Tamang, Seira (2009). “The Politics of Conflict and Difference or the Difference of Conflict in Politics: The Women's Movement in Nepal.” *Feminist Review* 91 (1):61-80.

woman living in a remote province, or as one from a low caste, or even as one issued from a religious minority. Considering Nepalese women as one homogenized category, leads to irrelevant aids that exclude certain women, that are, precisely, often issues from the most marginalized groups.

Moreover, it is important to remember that this representation of the “Nepali woman” affects not only how society and institutions consider women, but it also impacts how Nepalese women perceive themselves. They might be driven to devalue themselves or play the “helpless woman” part that is imposed onto them in order to get any assistance at all. Nevertheless, despite their different life situations, the women we interviewed all saw gaining confidence as a crucial need. In their opinion, it was essential for becoming economically independent and standing up for themselves. Thanks to their social work and sometimes their political involvement, women gained confidence in their capacities and their right to speak up.

However, in their discourse, men as well as women still emphasize the lack of self-confidence in other, less politically involved, women. Many of them believe that it is the precise reason for their lack of interest in politics and in ambitious careers. Adopting the theory of the female lack of self-confidence, would be a simple way to explain why women don't leave their households. The remaining problem is that this theory is not entirely true, yet burdens women with the responsibility for their political situation - it sparks the assumption that a trait of theirs is at the source of the lack of their political involvement, without taking into account the social origin of that trait and the real struggle of overcoming it. There are plenty of reasons for the female lack of confidence in Nepal, starting from early childhood little girl's discrimination. Those reasons should first be addressed, instead of accusing women of little self-confidence and fully burdening them with changing their personality.

We noticed that the responsibility for women's emancipation relies almost exclusively on women. First of all, women are blamed for the absence of self-confidence which could help in their independence quest. For instance, one of the interviewees holds responsible women that don't grasp the work opportunities that are given to them by the NGOs. She blames the women for not grasping these opportunities, but doesn't take into account reasons that women have to do so, such as too many house chores to get involved in another occupation. It takes confidence, but also time and energy to stand against male domination in the political sphere as well as in everyday life. Yet, because confidence seems so crucial for women's emancipation, the lack of it is interpreted as a lack of determination of the women themselves to change things.

Overall, the mental load of women's emancipation is not placed upon a discriminatory society or shared with men, but placed mostly on women themselves. The assistance proposed by the NGOs and awareness programs are only focused on how women can act to be empowered and to get economic independence. Men are not involved in the process and are rarely targeted by the awareness programs to speak of dividing household workloads and other ways to directly help women's emancipation. This problem highlights the necessity of

there being empowerment actions targeting women of all social categories and of all ages, as well as men, again, of all social categories and of all ages.

The illusion of equality

Hearing statements such as “in developed areas [of Nepal], there is no discrimination” or “at my work men and women are equal,” is hard to believe, especially when considering that even in Kathmandu, women are predominantly engaged in informal work¹⁰ and face numerous cultural constraints, such as arranged marriages. While the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 shows that Nepal is the second fastest, after Bangladesh, in closing the gender gap among South Asian countries, this does not mean that women do not face significant discrimination in their everyday lives. We previously identified specific types of discrimination, including the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and family responsibilities that limit job opportunities and advancement. Yet still, most of the interviewed women remain highly optimistic about the progress of their societal circumstances. Why is this the case?

In each of their discourses, women emphasized the progress that has been achieved during their lifetimes regarding women's rights. They mentioned some legal advancements, such as the prohibition of the practice of excluding menstruating women from their homes (Chhaupadi), or raising the minimum age of marriage to 20 years old for men and women. Women also drew from personal experience, celebrating improvements in intra-family dynamics like the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, which historically were more hostile and exploitative. Nevertheless, the improvement that has been mentioned the most was the recent capacity to leave the house without requiring the husband's permission, without constant justification. Women expressed appreciation for the opportunity to lead lives both within and outside the household, and for being able to voice their thoughts and opinions even in the presence of men. Even though from an outsider's perspective the cited achievements might seem rudimentary, it is understandable why they are so praised among Nepalese women. The change in their situation occurred rapidly, over just a couple of decades, leading them to perceive it as a significant and noteworthy shift. However, it is worth noting that this perception sometimes fosters a collective illusion of having already achieved true equality in the present day. Women appear to prioritize discussing their attained rights and the politically correct notion of everyone's equality, sometimes overlooking ongoing challenges like favoring little boys over girls, unequal pay, the glass-ceiling, or even domestic violence. It is crucial not to slow down the fight for women's rights and sociopolitical awareness, and not to fall into the false belief that equality has been attained.

Social workers and women less involved in politics often believe that gender equality has been largely achieved. Working on a community level, they don't perceive many

¹⁰ Ghimire, Aakriti. (2022), “90 percent employed women are working informally in Nepal”, *The Kathmandu Post*, available at : <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/01/07/90-percent-employed-women-are-working-informally-in-nepal>

inequalities in their grassroots work, thus they tend to generalize this experience to every level of politics. However, politically engaged women are more attuned to experiencing and voicing ongoing inequalities. This dynamic illustrates the well-known allegory of the "glass ceiling" - as women rise higher in their professional positions, they encounter increasing difficulties in maintaining or advancing their careers due to gender inequalities. The Diplomat also suggests that the qualitative empowerment of women in Nepalese politics remains a challenge, as the country "has progressive laws and quotas for women's representation in politics, but patriarchy and gender discrimination run deep and influence the decisions of parties"¹¹. This statement is indeed coherent with our observations. The highest ranked women we interviewed admit to being often interrupted by male colleagues and delegated to non-decision-making tasks. One of the women claimed : "I always have to prove myself, I am constantly showing that I am fully able to do my job that I am qualified for". Therefore, discrimination persists even in more educated and professionalized environments, yet occurs in more subtle forms, such as undermining women's words and deeds, rather than simply not giving them a political position.

Overall, it is important to discuss equality in theory, to pass laws, introduce quotas, present statistics, and highlight rapid progress. However, this should not be coupled with efforts to maintain an illusion of equality where it has not yet been fully achieved.

Monarchic nostalgia?

There's no need to explain the instability of the young Nepalese democracy, however there is a need to represent women's opinions on its current state. Many western media are denouncing a surge of pro-monarchic sentiments in Nepal, while in the country it remains a delicate topic. Thus, asking socially and politically involved women about their political preference was supposed to feel deviant. However, women's answers on that topic were particularly affirmed.

According to Krishna B. Bhattachan democracy is a "matter of degree – of the degree to which the people can exercise a controlling influence over public policy and policy-makers, enjoy equal treatment at their hands, and have their voices heard equally"¹². Women's frustration with the current political situation is precisely the result of feeling powerless and unheard, despite the democratic promise that their voices would finally be respected on a national level. Many women either say that there is no good person to vote for and perceive every politician as corrupt, or declare their support for independent candidates. Opinions such as "in that time [before the establishment of democracy] there was a single king but now there are many kings [who] in the name of political benefit are establishing political instability", or "I would prefer there being only one king but one we can choose" are

¹¹ Poudel, Santosh S. (2022), "A Long Way to Go for Gender Equality in Nepalese Politics", *The Diplomat*, available at : <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/a-long-way-to-go-for-gender-equality-in-Nepalese-politics/>

¹² Bhattachan, Krishna B. (2003), *Expected Model & Process of Inclusive Democracy in Nepal*, Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology Tribhuvan University Kirtipur, Kathmandu

recurrent. Even people who aren't monarchy supporters recognize the rise of a pro-monarchic sentiment. However, are women indeed nostalgic of monarchy or of a fetishized time of complete political stability that never was ?

It is hard to acknowledge that women are nostalgic of monarchy itself, while taking into account how few rights this system granted them and how overall oppressive it was. As Sapana Pradhan-Malla states, "because of the democratic environment, we were able to express our frustrations and demands"¹³. Without it, no women's rights could be established. A politically high ranked woman we interviewed confirmed this logic by saying that "without democracy we wouldn't be sitting here and discussing politics with each other". Thus, it is clear that monarchy isn't a better system for women to enhance their social and political condition. Yet, its idealized memory paired with the disenchantment by democracy generates a feeling of nostalgia. Nostalgia of a more stable and prosperous period, even if it's an imaginary one.

That being said, many men and women expressed their hopes for the amelioration of the political system thanks to its greater feminization. The recurring idea is that women are more honest politicians, motivated by the desire to help others rather than by their personal interest. Women in politics would be more caring for their electors' needs, and less prone to corruption. It was even declared that "men are first driven by party loyalty, women think more critically because they have less to gain thanks to that loyalty". However, some of these perceived qualities of women in politics, seen as a remedy for the corrupt system, appear to stem from a stereotypical ideal of women's virtues. Women in politics would be more caring, more cooperative, empathetic and emotionally sensitive - all qualities stereotypically considered natural or inherent to women. Therefore, it is imperative to stay vigilant in regard to this type of essentialization, or making women's political success dependent on their supposed nature.

The intersectional blind spot

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality*, which has become one of the central concepts in gender studies. In her own words intersectionality is "a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking"¹⁴. Meaning that women can endure different kinds of oppression depending not only on their gender, but on its various ties to other socio-economic factors such as racial, religious or class discrimination.

Nepal, being a multi-caste/ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country, is a fertile ground for complex types of oppression experienced by different women. We can well imagine that a middle-class woman from Kathmandu doesn't face the same type

¹³ Toffin, G. and Shakya, S. (2011) Women, Law and Democracy in Nepal. An Interview with Sapana Pradhan-Malla. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, 39, pp.146-161

¹⁴ Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*

of struggles and doesn't require the same type of empowerment as a Dalit woman from a remote province. Therefore, the means of women's political empowerment should be tailored to account for various socio-economic factors that they are facing. However, while interviewing Nepalese women, we observed a complete lack of this intersectional intuition. Multiple versions of questions about the relationship between the women's political emancipation and that of other marginalized groups (such as Dalits, mother tongue speakers, religious minorities etc.) was always confronted with a similar answer, which underscores the principle that everyone is equal and that Nepalese women cannot be differentiated based on their backgrounds. Thus, the answer consists more of a wish or of a politically correct idea than of a true reflection on the political advancement of women. Based on our interviews, we are led to believe women's rights activist Durga Sob's opinion that "it is harder to convince mainstream women's rights leaders of the problems of being Dalit women, than it is to tell Dalit men about patriarchy"¹⁵. In our judgment, such a statement doesn't testify of Nepalese women's inherent ignorance or lack of sensitivity, but rather of an insufficient feminist theory awareness which could be of much benefit for the advancement of women's political struggle. This is consistent with our previous observation about the, as we called it, illusion of equality. It seems like women internalized the safe idea of everyone's equality, hence being less attentive to specific struggles of certain marginalized groups.

The government issued documents, such as the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy and Action Plan, recognize the need for a different type of empowerment for women in different situations, for example by mostly targeting the poorest regions. Yet, there seems to be a lack of such consciousness in the society, testifying to insufficient political action despite the government's proper conception of women's struggle. Moreover, according to Seira Tamang's research, even some Nepalese feminist organizations are to blame for the current lack of intersectional awareness and action. Those organizations supposedly maintain the archetype of Nepalese women as "poor women from remote illiterate and uneducated villages" that require assistance. This strategy certainly allows for the feminization of the political elite, but primarily among women from upper castes and social classes (Bahun, Chettri and Newar). The political involvement of other Nepalese women, all gathered under the same "poor and illiterate" archetype, is therefore made extremely difficult.

The topic of intersectionality in Nepalese society and political systems requires much further investigation. However, looking at the current state of gender studies in Nepal, we can have a positive outlook on future contribution regarding that subject.

Conclusion

While it is clear that the Nepalese State provides a progressive legal framework and some affirmative action leading to greater women's participation in politics, that doesn't seem to be enough in order to attain actual gender equality in the Nepalese socio-political sphere.

¹⁵ Tamang, Seira (2009). "The Politics of Conflict and Difference or the Difference of Conflict in Politics: The Women's Movement in Nepal." *Feminist Review* 91 (1):61-80.

In practice, women are still first bound to their households and communities, therefore being able to engage first in social work and more seldomly in political work. Furthermore, the responsibility for developing qualities useful in the political environment, such as self-confidence and rhetorical skills, rests solely with women. This should instead be a shared responsibility with men, who should equally learn to engage more in household duties and understand the importance of not undermining women. Overall, the mental load for getting politically involved relies almost exclusively on women that are expected to seize opportunities and better themselves without their basic needs being met first, for example without first gaining economic independence.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs of progress in the direction of the enhancement of women's political involvement. These include the perception of women's participation as a factor in creating a more honest and altruistically driven political environment, as well as the publication of a growing number of Nepalese feminist studies, including intersectional research. The rapid evolution of women's political engagement in Nepal underscores the importance of closely monitoring these developments and adjusting political measures accordingly, with the ultimate goal of achieving genuine gender equality.



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